

## 3.4 Career guidance and counselling

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### Career guidance and counselling services

A young person in Estonia can use the offer of guidance and counselling services as part of the education system and as part of active labour market services.

#### Education system service

Lifelong guidance has been practised in Estonia for years. The service has been called in different ways – the latest version being “*career services and counselling services for special educational needs*”.

The national basic school (the basic compulsory education is the nine-year comprehensive school) curriculum and national upper secondary school curriculum include eight compulsory central topics (cross-curricular topic), one of them is the topic which supports pupils' career planning: “Lifelong learning and career planning”. In addition, the curricula are accompanied by the syllabi of the elective subject and an elective course in careers education, which enhance the use of this possibility in the school curriculum.

In addition to the guidance opportunities provided in the framework of the curriculum, there are centres to provide the service outside the school for young people. There are 16 centralised public centres in all counties. The regional youth guidance centres, called Pathfinder centres (Rajaleidja), provide free educational counselling services, where different problems regarding a young people studying or behaviour are being addressed (that prevent their successful educational path). They also support adults, who are around that concrete young person in order to guide how to support the youngster, what kind of services the young person needs, etc. There are

different specialists that work in Pathfinder centres - social pedagogue, special pedagogue, speech therapist, and a psychologist. The Pathfinder services are provided by the [Education and Youth Board](#).

The career services are provided by the Estonian [Unemployment Insurance Fund \(Töötukassa\)](#) starting from 2017. The main tasks are intermediating career information and career counselling. The main goal of the career services is to support people in thinking through their choices in education and work life. The services are targeted to all people, including young people, job seekers, employees, parents, and retired people. There are career counsellors and career information specialists, who provide the full career service.

### Labour market service

The provision of national labour market services including career information service and career counselling and the payment of labour market benefits in Estonia is organised by the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund through its regional departments, which are located in every county. The legal basis of the activities of Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund is the [Unemployment Insurance Act](#), which describes the unemployment insurance system and the organization of Unemployment Insurance Fund, and the [Labour Market Services and Benefits Act](#), which contains the provisions concerning job mediation and related services. Career information is accessible through Unemployment Insurance Fund web portal and public career information rooms in the offices of Unemployment Insurance Fund are open to all, including the opportunity to take part in the workshops and receive help finding career information. Starting from 2015, career counselling in Unemployment Insurance Fund is open to all people (being previously limited to groups of the population already having problems at the labour market ie unemployed).

Unemployment Insurance Fund (Estonian PES) at [www.tootukassa.ee](http://www.tootukassa.ee) has a self-service portal for job-seekers and employers. Job Seekers can do following: draw up a CV, look/apply for a job, receive automatic job offers, fill in job-search diary, follow-up decisions regarding registration and benefits, follow up the activities in the individual action plan, search and register for a training course, notify of getting a job, submit registration application, submit unemployment benefits applications, apply for a business start-up subsidy and follow up services and upload business reports.

In addition, there are several job search portals available for job-seekers by private providers.

There are services available through helpline by phone – one central service in labour sector is available for all introducing services and disseminating contact information; regional services within the education sector – every regional centre has publicly announced the phone. Pathfinder ([rajaleidja.ee](http://rajaleidja.ee)) has a central e-mail service. When a client identifies the region of origin, the relevant regional centre is responsible for the response.

Guidance services in the education system are independent of the Youth Guarantee's scheme.

### Main actors

Lifelong guidance services are provided both in the public and private sector. At the national policy level, the responsibility is divided by two authorities – [Ministry of Education and Research](#) and [Ministry of Social Affairs](#) (labour affairs). The two main public service providers in the field of lifelong guidance are [Education and Youth Board](#) in the education sector and the Unemployment Insurance Fund (Estonian PES) in the employment sector. Foundation Innove provides services in and its' guidance centres in counties (16 centres) and the Unemployment Insurance Fund has labour offices in all counties. Educational institutions are there for learners in formal education.

### Lifelong guidance forums.

Co-operation, co-ordination and exchange of information within the institutional network in the fields of education, guidance, youth work and employment is essential to efficient and coherent guidance systems. Lifelong guidance forums are an important feature to bring together actors and stakeholders in partnerships. Estonian career guidance forum was established in 2008 when involved stakeholders agreed that there is a need for a common understanding and leadership, strategic thinking at the national level. The membership includes representatives from the ministries of education, labour and economy, public employment service, training institutions, employer, client and practitioner organizations. Since 2012, the scope of the forum enlarged – special focus is on children and youth with special educational needs.

Guidance services are independent of the Youth Guarantee's scheme.

## **Funding**

The guidance services are currently financed with the support of EU structural assistance, specifically ESF. The services in the education sector (which are more directly targeted to youth and which also include pedagogical counselling and other support for learning) have a dedicated budget 34.9 million euros for the years 2014-2020. The services provided as the active labour market measures (where young people are one of the target groups among other population) have a dedicated budget of 5.2 million euros for the years 2015-2020.

## **Quality assurance**

The quality of guidance services is supported for both sectors (i.e. education and labour market) through activities of the [Education and Youth Board](#), which one department coordinates the guidance service for the education sector. The department coordinates cooperation, networking, research and methodological support for guidance services.

Guidance research in Estonia is procurement based i.e. there is no dedicated funding allocated for any national research units and there are several organizations including universities and private companies, which have experience in the field.

In 2006 and 2011, two major national studies were undertaken by Foundation Innove (starting from 01.08.2020 the [Education and Youth Board](#)) to build the evidence-base for career guidance. The aim of the study was to evaluate the citizens' awareness of career services and their career planning skills, analyse the availability of career services and cooperation between different stakeholders at providing career services in Estonia. In 2014, several other studies were undertaken in order to assess the field. One study was targeted to assess the long-term usefulness of the training and methodical materials and the needs of career specialists. The [results](#) showed that the training activities were generally useful, but the specialists need more methodical materials and training regarding that. Another [study](#) regarding the impact of career education in general showed that the career

education was considered as a normal part of formal education, the career lessons were useful, but lots of critics were targeted to different tests that were too superficial and students need more practical approaches and methods.

There are specific indicators set to measure the results of the activities in the period 2014-2020:

- Share of students who have newly benefitted from individual career information and/or individual counselling in the third level of basic education and who are pursuing studies at the next educational level on 10 November of the calendar year following the completion of lower secondary education
- Share of small (less than 150 students) general educational schools which use ESF supported counselling services provided by regional guidance centres
- Number of children, learners and young people who have received individual educational guidance and career services
- Number of students who have received individual career information and/or counselling in the third level of basic education

The outcomes of the quality assurance activities implemented in Estonia support further development of the services and design of policy measures. As the services are currently financed by ESF, the conditions apply set for EU structural assistance.