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Title: International review of the effects of COVID-19 on career guidance policy and practice

Year: 2021

Version: Accepted version (Final draft)

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Please cite the original version:

Kettunen, J. (2021). International review of the effects of COVID-19 on career guidance policy and practice. Euroguidance Insight Magazine, (2021).

<https://www.euroguidance.eu/resources/publications/insight-magazine/insight-september-2021>

International review on the effects of COVID-19 on career guidance policy and practice

Cedefop, ILO, ETF, the European Commission, ICCDPP, OECD and UNESCO jointly implemented a flash international survey between 8 June 2020 and 3 August 2020 on how career guidance services responded to the challenges posed by Covid-19.

The responses were collected via an online survey. The invitation to participate was sent to decision-makers responsible for arranging guidance, organisers of guidance, and various organisations in the sector. A total of 963 persons in 93 countries took the survey.

According to the results, 40% of the respondents reported that career guidance had received policy attention or policy action in national measures initiated due to the pandemic, but, at the same time, 40% said that the pandemic had not increased attention given to guidance. The respondents stated that increasing cooperation between different administrative sectors and service providers had emerged as an even more important issue due to the pandemic. However, it appeared that more cooperation was taking place among service providers than among the ministries responsible for guidance.

Practically all countries had started with remote guidance practices as the main service mode at the time the survey was administered. According to the respondents, it was to a large extent possible to maintain the previous level of guidance services, except for intensive personal guidance. The telephone was mentioned as a viable communication tool alongside various online tools, especially in situations where the individuals had limited opportunities to access the internet or experienced difficulties with text-based interaction. *Most practitioners expressed a willingness to utilise technology more than before the pandemic.* At the same time, they expressed the need for more support and training *in order to be able to operate in new technological environments in a professional capacity.*

According to the results, the demand for guidance increased during the first weeks of the pandemic. The respondents said that individuals were hoping for more up to date information on the labour market and training opportunities and more refreshment of job-seeking skills. The uncertainty of the labour markets seemed to have increased the need for psychosocial support, for example among students finalising their studies, or temporarily laid off employees. Customers felt that the increasing supply of remote guidance and the use of technology were positive. On the other hand, the pandemic was limiting the availability of guidance for example among employees in small and medium-sized businesses, small entrepreneurs, for older adults, residents living in rural areas, or customer groups requiring special support.

According to the respondents, more attention should be paid to guidance in national strategies implemented after the pandemic. The cooperation between ministries should be increased, especially when it comes to applying technologies and developing personnel skills. Multiprofessional, basic services should be widely available online or at local service locations either individually or in group-based forms. Telephone services should be maintained as part of this package. The

importance of guidance included in the curricula of various schools and educational institutions was emphasised. Job shadowing and/or on-the-job training provide students with first-hand experience of the labour markets. In addition, the better availability of real-time labour market information should be developed nationally for the benefit of employers, training organisers, guidance professionals, and students.

Based on the survey findings, the seven organisations have authored the final report, “Career guidance policy and practice in the pandemic ”, published by Cedefop https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/4193_en.pdf