

POLICY BRIEF

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Elontila

National Evaluation of Lifelong Guidance 2023–2024

Janne Varjo, University of Helsinki

Jaakko Helander, Häme University of Applied Sciences

Mira Kalalahti, University of Jyväskylä

Tina Lauronen, Research Foundation for Studies and Education (Otus)

The Status of Lifelong Guidance in Finland

Lifelong guidance services play a key role in supporting individuals' learning and career paths and in strengthening their social inclusion. In Finland, the management and development of these services is spread among several different parties, such as schools and educational institutions, employment services and youth guidance services.

In the ELONTILA evaluation study, a systematic picture of Finland's lifelong guidance information, advice and counselling services was created and their functionality was assessed. The study included a review of lifelong guidance research from the past five years and a more detailed examination of the local implementation of the lifelong guidance strategy. In addition, the guidance services and targeted youth work offered as part of lifelong guidance to people capable of part-time work and study were surveyed in greater detail.

Clients are quite satisfied with the services they receive

When looking at lifelong guidance as a whole, clients are quite satisfied with the information, guidance and counselling services they receive. Clients of educational guidance services were the most satisfied. Customer feedback was also positive in targeted youth work. The greatest variation was recorded in employment services, which clients found to be fragmented at the time of study.

Guidance services are not equally accessible to everyone

In the lifelong guidance evaluation study, a clear distinction is made between the availability and accessibility of services – the existence of lifelong guidance services does not in itself guarantee equal access to services for all individuals.

Lifelong guidance services are generally well available. However, to obtain guidance, you often need to know how to actively apply for it yourself. Individual life situations or, for example, linguistic, cultural or gender-related diversity are not always recognised in guidance services. This reduces the accessibility of services.

Regional differences must be taken into account when developing guidance services nationwide

There are significant regional differences between urban and sparsely populated areas. There are plenty of guidance services available in large cities. In sparsely populated areas, distances and poor mobile networks, for example, are a reality of day-to-day life, reducing the accessibility of guidance services.

Guidance for people capable of part-time work and study requires special skills

The information, guidance and counselling services for people capable of part-time work and study are spread across various sectors and operators in the service system. Knowing the services and service paths of each target group is challenging for both professionals and service users. Service users may not always have the energy or initiative and skills to find and request services themselves.

Targeted youth work plays a significant role in lifelong guidance

Outreach youth work and workshop activities are forms of targeted youth work that reach youth and young adults in the most difficult situations. Customer relationships are often long-term. The concepts used in targeted youth work differ from those used in the education and employment sector. Therefore, it can be difficult to perceive information, guidance and counselling services as part of targeted youth work.

Lifelong guidance services involve multiple operators, sectors and fields

In the Nordic context, Finland has invested heavily in multi-administrative cooperation in the form of the lifelong guidance forum and network, for example.

Ohjaamo centres are an example of a Finnish lifelong guidance service involving multiple operators, sectors and fields, with which users are very satisfied.

Identified challenges in lifelong guidance and recommendation for addressing them

Challenge 1: Not everyone has equal opportunities for career planning

Regional differences must be better identified and recognised to ensure the availability, equality and customer orientation of lifelong guidance services.

The development of career planning skills must be added cross-sectorally and systematically to guiding documents at all levels, using, for example, the framework for career planning skills. Individuals must have the opportunity to develop their career planning skills through multiple channels and under guidance at all stages of life.

Challenge 2: Needs for coordination in the lifelong guidance system

The development of multisectoral lifelong guidance requires cooperation and coordination between different ministries, especially in drafting regulations streamlining information transfer, among other things. From the perspective of lifelong guidance, it is important to more closely coordinate cooperation between operators in different sectors at the national, regional and local level.

Multisectoral cooperation must be developed between education organisers, employment services and health and social services, as well as collaboratively between low-threshold non-binding services for young people from the perspective of lifelong guidance. More comprehensive information production methods enabling service monitoring are needed to support coordination.

Challenge 3: The opportunities offered by digitalisation have not been used effectively enough to develop guidance

The comprehensive use of digital options in information, guidance and counselling services requires stronger planning across the board, from the strategic level to the individual service provider. Digital guidance services must be researched and developed so that they promote accessibility from the customers' perspective and do not weaken it for customer groups that need in-person guidance sessions. The accessibility of digital guidance services will be promoted by the Osaamispolku.fi service from the beginning of 2025.

Challenge 4: Global phenomena are causing pressure to change guidance competence

It is important to continue to develop socioculturally sensitive, sustainable and accessible lifelong guidance services.

Further attention must be paid to the establishment of gender- and culture-informed and anti-racist guidance and the development of competence.

Rapid changes in society and lifelong guidance require guidance professionals to continuously monitor their operating environment. The competence and competence development of guidance professionals, and the competence descriptions of guidance training, must be regularly reviewed with respect to the changing needs in guidance competence.

Further information

Professor Janne Varjo, University of Helsinki, janne.varjo@helsinki.fi

Senior Specialist, Anna Toni, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment ,
anna.toni@gov.fi

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