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# European Network of Public Employment Services Mutual Learning

PES Network Seminar

'Career Guidance and Lifelong Learning'

28-29 June 2017

Discussion Paper



Written Robert Arnkil, Timo Spangar and Raimo Vuorinen / supported by Naomi Williamson, ICF  
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## **EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

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The European Network of Public Employment Services was created following a Decision of the European Parliament and Council in June 2014<sup>1</sup>. Its objective is to reinforce PES capacity, effectiveness and efficiency. This activity has been developed within the work programme of the European PES Network. For further information: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/PESNetwork>.

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<sup>1</sup> DECISION No 573/2014/EU

## Foreword

Public Employment Services (PES) across Europe face major challenges in relation to a changing labour market, and new work and career patterns. An important part of the response to these challenges is building and fostering a system of career counselling, vocational guidance and lifelong learning in order to strengthen and maintain the employability of the workforce.

Different countries, regions and localities within Member States have different developmental paths, challenges and resources to deal with these challenges, and they are at different stages of evolution. Career counselling and vocational guidance itself has changed over the years. Furthermore, the policy and governance concerning the position and resources given to PES vary and are changing across Europe.

While there are generic structures, elements and practices in place across Europe, a tailored approach that emphasises the employability of the workforce in various settings is needed, giving PES an important conductor / catalytic role in building a system and mobilising resources for career counselling, vocational guidance and lifelong learning. In this concept paper, present and future challenges, policy drivers, structural and practical elements are laid out. But each PES needs to identify for themselves their particular set of challenges and build a future-proof strategy for partnership building.

## 1. Changing nature of work and careers

### 1.1. Policy drivers and key concepts

#### 1.1.1. Policy drivers

The European Parliament and Council invites the PES Network to support initiatives aimed at better skills matching, decent and sustainable work, enhanced self-motivated labour mobility and facilitating the transition from education and vocational training to work. This includes support for the provision of guidance and the enhanced transparency of skills and qualifications as agreed in the 2014 Decision on enhanced cooperation between Public Employment Services<sup>2</sup>.

The Council Resolution of 21 November 2008 on better integrating lifelong guidance into lifelong learning strategies<sup>3</sup> invites Member States to make use of four guiding principles to support the lifelong career transitions of citizens: encourage the lifelong acquisition of career management skills; facilitate access by all citizens to guidance services; develop the quality assurance of guidance provision; and encourage coordination and cooperation among various national, regional and local stakeholders.

Nearly 70 million Europeans struggle with basic reading and writing, calculation and using digital tools in everyday life. In response, the Council adopted on 19 December 2016 a Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults<sup>4</sup>. The Council recommends that Member States design upskilling pathways for low-skilled adults in three steps: skills assessment; provision of a tailored, flexible and quality learning offer; and validation and recognition of skills acquired.

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<sup>2</sup> Decision No 573/2014/EU of the European Parliament and the Council of 15 May 2014 on enhanced cooperation between Public Employment Services (PES) [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv%3AOJ.L\\_.2014.159.01.0032.01.ENG](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv%3AOJ.L_.2014.159.01.0032.01.ENG)

<sup>3</sup> [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32016H1224\(01\)&from=EN#ntr8-C\\_2016484EN.01000101-E0008](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32016H1224(01)&from=EN#ntr8-C_2016484EN.01000101-E0008)

<sup>4</sup> [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:JOC\\_2016\\_484\\_R\\_0001](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:JOC_2016_484_R_0001)

In order to secure professional transitions<sup>5</sup> in the current labour market, the initiative for a European Pillar of Social Rights<sup>6</sup> sets out recommendations that active labour market policies, such as counselling, training or active job searching, can help to increase employment opportunities for jobseekers and improve job-matching.

European policy initiatives point to the importance of quality guidance provision for all citizens as a prerequisite for the effective implementation of skills and employment policies. They also call for the strengthening and coordination of the work of PES, career guidance providers, and education and training institutes.

In addition, the Youth Guarantee<sup>7</sup> calls for the need to offer early school-leavers and low-skilled young people pathways to re-enter education and training, or second-chance education programmes to enable them to obtain qualifications. The Youth Guarantee also recommends that Member States ensure that young people have access to information about the services and support available to them, by strengthening cooperation between employment services and career guidance providers. PES, together with other partners supporting young people, are invited to provide personalised guidance that helps smooth transitions from unemployment, inactivity or education to work.

### 1.1.2. Key concepts

*Transitional labour markets (TLM)*<sup>8</sup>. The concept of transitional labour markets (TLM) describes the promotion of transitions through various aspects of working life, transitional security and meaningful, gainful transitions in a lifelong careers, in 'spaces of transitions'. Employment is understood in a holistic way – as sustainable employment, including domestic life, voluntary and free time, and lifelong learning.

*Public employment system*. Public employment system (instead of Public Employment Service) refers to a broader network, where PES participates as a builder and catalyst alongside other agencies. The concept therefore recognises the various institutional settings that exist in different countries, while emphasising the importance of collaborative governance and focussing on the employability of the workforce, in accordance with employers' demand and need for labour.

*Career pathway/career transitions*. People's careers have i) a *beginning phase*, where acquiring basic skills, prevention of early school leaving (ESL) and NEETs, and transitions within and from education are important, ii) a *middle phase*, where acquiring and sustaining a job is the key question, and iii) a *late phase*, where questions of work-ability and the transition to voluntary work and pension become important.

*Career guidance/career counselling/vocational guidance/lifelong guidance*. Lifelong guidance has been defined by the European Council as 'a continuous process that enables citizens at any age and at any point of their lives to identify their capacities, competences and interests, to make

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<sup>5</sup> European Commission: [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/secure-professional-transitions\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/secure-professional-transitions_en.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/deeper-and-fairer-economic-and-monetary-union/towards-european-pillar-social-rights\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/deeper-and-fairer-economic-and-monetary-union/towards-european-pillar-social-rights_en)

<sup>7</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2013:120:0001:0006:EN:PDF>

<sup>8</sup> Schmid G. 1995, « Is Full Employment Still Possible? Transitional Labour Markets as a New Strategy of Labour Market Policy », *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, SAGE, 16, 429 – 456  
<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0143831X95163005>

See also: Gazier, Bernard and Gautie, Jérôme (2011) "The "Transitional Labour Markets" Approach: Theory, History and Future Research Agenda," *Journal of Economic and Social Policy*: Vol. 14: Iss. 1, Article 6.  
<http://epubs.scu.edu.au/jesp/vol14/iss1/6>

educational, training and occupational decisions and to manage their individual life paths in learning, work and other settings in which those capacities and competences are learned and/or used'<sup>9</sup>.

*Career management skills (CMS)*. These refer to the acquisition of a set of competences (knowledge, skills, crafts, attitudes) that enable citizens at any age or state of development to manage their learning and work-life paths. The knowledge, skills and attitudes concern personal management (like self-knowledge and social skills) and career management (using information about learning and work opportunities, making career decisions and successful transitions, and crafting a career). These knowledge, skills and attitudes develop over time with different expectations of competence mastery at different stages of life. Some of these skills are generic across life situations; others are specific to the career phase, learning and working identity formation, and decision-making.

*Hybridisation of work and careers*. PES traditionally focus on salaried, regular employment, rather than on entrepreneurial or freelance employment. But salaried, self-employment and entrepreneurial careers are becoming more common and mix more often. A career might start as salaried but morph into an entrepreneurial career (or vice versa), and entrepreneurial skills are increasingly needed to cope with changes in working lives and careers. This is also seen in the collaborative / or 'gig economy', with the rise of different digital platforms that open up new forms of employment.

*Career counselling as an 'enrichment space'*. Career counselling is a service that supports individuals to mould and shape their working life. Career counselling provides individuals with time and freedom to think about their personal relationship with work, the working life options they have and how these interact, in a supportive dialogue with counsellors and their peers. The concept 'space' refers to a learning space, psychological, social, physical and virtual space for development.

*Career craft*. The skills to manage a career in the changing and transitional labour markets have been called different names (skills, crafts, competencies) depending on the emphasis. Calling it a *career craft* indicates that the individuals have to create their own unique way to relate with working life at any point of their career pathway. *Crafting a career* is the goal of career counselling process. 'Craft' also indicates that the process of career counselling is very *practical*, 'hands-on' and creative. Sustainability comes with the individual's increased capacity of 'crafting' their individual working life relationship.

## **1.2. The changing world of work**

The world of work is continually and rapidly changing, calling for proactive responses to new demands. Demographic change, new attitudes of young people towards work, increased migration and persistently low employment rate amongst vulnerable groups, all pose significant challenges for Member States – and for PES and their partners. The nature of work is changing as well: technologies are changing working life by creating new forms of employment, while making other forms of work obsolete.

Future scenarios of work and careers are mixed. Some scenarios suggest a precarious future where there is tough competition for scarce quality jobs. In these 'worst-case' scenarios the individual is left in a precarious position, often barred from jobs, drifting, without a real possibility to develop their skills and forced to take low-quality jobs. Persistent low participation rates disproportionately affect certain groups. Insufficient participation of low-skilled young people, people with caring responsibilities, people aged 55 and older, migrants and their children, women, disabled people, the long-term unemployed, people in poverty and other disadvantaged groups, remains a structural problem. In addition, educational gaps widen.

Other scenarios suggest a more positive 'crafted future' where people shape their lives and work. This means proactivity in developing their skills, knowledge, competencies and attitudes, and combining knowledge from different sectors and types of careers. This hybridisation of careers

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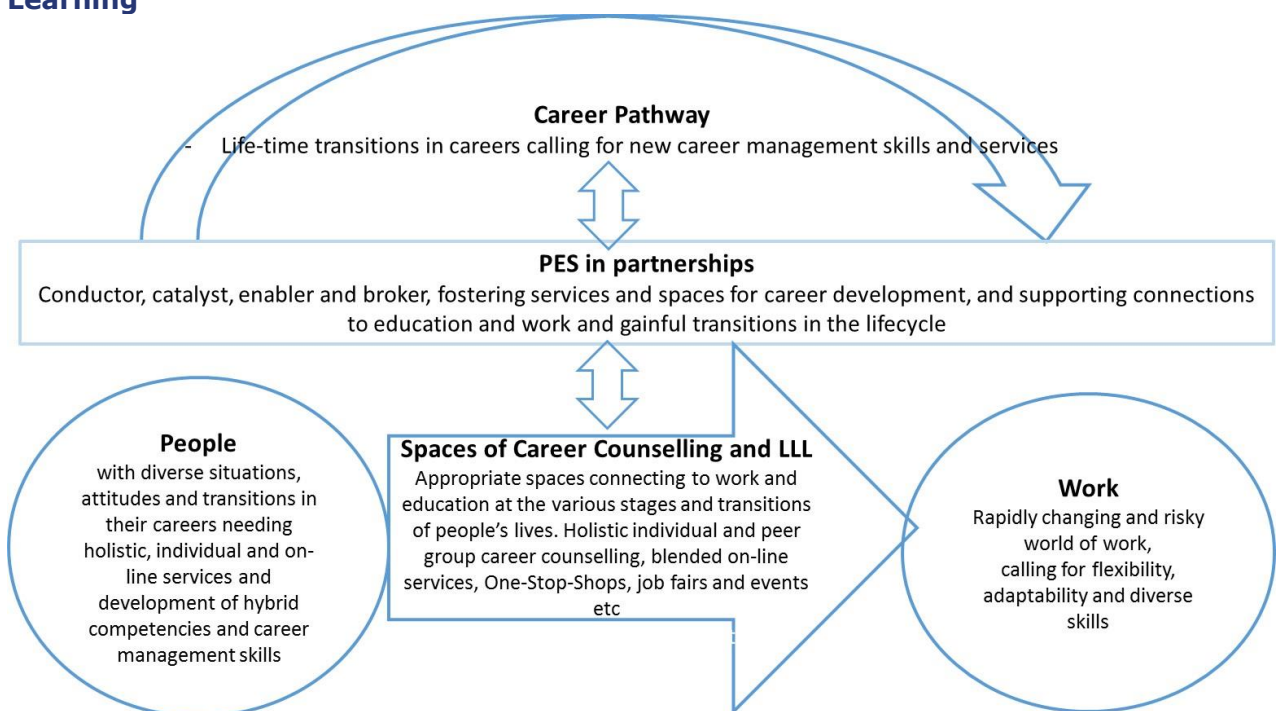
<sup>9</sup> [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressData/en/educ/104236.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/educ/104236.pdf)

and work calls for cross-cutting abilities such as negotiating, making deals, networking and using modern technologies. To ensure a positive outcome, individuals will need to connect with different knowledge communities - be they in work or voluntary work, free-time or hobbies - in order to accumulate diverse skills and social capital, and to be a part of a community. This also requires good connections to companies and understanding of future skills demands. PES will have a role to play in terms of supporting, developing and maintaining people's abilities to make these connections, and to develop individuals' ability to 'craft' their careers.

As the Transitional Labour Market (TLM) concept implies, the career pathway of people is full of transitions – within basic education, from education to work, changes in employment and life situations and health. These transitions present both opportunities and risks. Such changes mean that careers become more diversified for each individual and, by implication, services such as career counselling and vocational guidance need to become more diverse and tailored at the same time, in order to enhance the employability of these individual and connect them to the needs of the labour market. It also means that individuals' sources of income or social security will change several times in their lives, and these will need to be supported through PES services with their partners.

Together, this calls for new kinds of holistic career management skills for individuals, and for holistic services – in PES and in partnerships - that can foster these skills and secure gainful transitions in career pathways. By implication, PES and their partners will also need to improve their capabilities to meet the needs of individuals' changing work-life values and their increasingly diverse careers. Career counselling can provide 'spaces' ('spaces' understood as physical, virtual and mental spaces) for career connections and development. These relationships are shown in Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1: Career Pathway, PES, Career Counselling, Vocational Guidance and Lifelong Learning**



## 2. PES as conductor and promoter of career counselling and vocational guidance

Career counselling services vary according to the context and operational models of the national PES systems. Services differ when produced as in-house services, in a partnership with other players, or when purchased from existing suppliers. However, for PES to be an effective conductor, they need to have a clear understanding of customer's career guidance needs, what counselling enrichment spaces are needed, who the players in the field are, and how the services shall be organised to enhance the individual's active movement in labour market transitions.

PES can play a role of conductor, enabler and builder of bridges and networks in the national Public Employment System. This is done in partnership at different phases of the career pathway. It means adopting a 'co-creation' and continual development approach within PES and with partners, customers, citizens and communities. It also means, increasingly, a shift from service *provision* to *commission* of services by PES.

***In the beginning phases*** the ambition is for individuals to secure a good education, strengthening their employability in the face of the changing world of work. For PES, this means collaborating with education, social partners and companies in order to build and secure good career guidance systems, services and information. It also means supporting transitions to further education and/or first employment, and to support the prevention of early school leaving (ESL) and NEET. PES also provide in-house services at early stages through labour market information and forecasts, career information and awareness raising events and job fairs.

***In the middle phases*** of the pathway the ambition is for individuals to foster a sustainable career. PES needs to collaborate with employers and also with education, private services, trainers, NGOs and social partners. This middle phase is full of transitions which are often risky and challenging: first jobs; returning from unemployment, family and sick leaves; and re-education. PES's role here is a conductor, co-creator and enabler of different kinds of 'counselling opportunities' suited to individuals' needs. This means providing one-to-one, group or one-stop-shop services, as well as on-line services and digital platforms to support the development of connections.

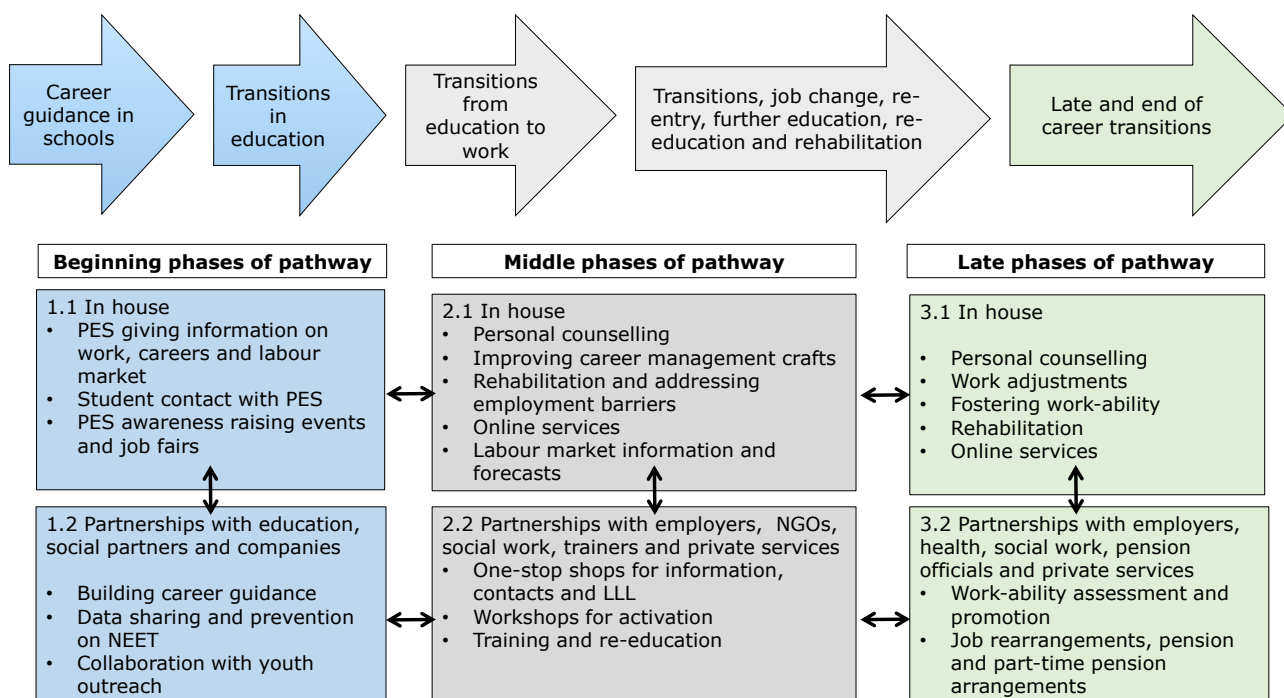
***In the later and last phases*** of the pathway the ambition is for individuals to secure work-ability and a dignified end to their career. PES collaborates with employers, health, social services and pension services. In counselling the later phases of a career, demands for job readjustments and retraining, and the challenges of work-ability and redundancy can be processed. Career counselling through PES can offer both individual and peer group services, which provide information and rehabilitation.

The life-cycle approach supports flexible transitions and pathways between full-time work and full-time retirement. Guidance, including easy access to information, enables the pre-retired to identify their capacities and interests to get further involved in voluntary work, and in social and leisure activities.

These phases are shown in Figure 2 overleaf.



**Figure 2: PES, partnerships and different stages of the career pathway**



### 3. Spaces and features of career guidance in PES

#### 3.1. Transformation of career counselling and vocational guidance

The concepts and practices of career counselling and vocational guidance are today transforming from the old "industrial model" of counselling and guidance to better reflect the skills needs of service-based and digital economies. For more than two decades, a shift away from the traditional way of comparing working life and job requirements to an individuals' skills and dispositions, has been undergoing in career counselling.

Today the focus of career counselling is on developing and enhancing the individual's relationship with working life. Working life choices are dealt with in the context of the customers' life situations as a whole and in the context of their life course. Career counselling helps customers to innovate new working life relationships, fostering the customer's belief in their skills, raising their self-esteem and giving them hope in facing the often-challenging life changes they must encounter.

From the employment perspective, career counselling today positions itself as a method for supporting employees in their labour market transitions. Career counselling helps customers to deal with those transitions, thus contributing to the development of career competences that are needed to move to the next phase in their career pathway.

In supporting customers in their labour market transitions, there are five key dimensions where career counselling and vocational guidance can play a useful role:

- (1) Career counselling and vocational guidance provide a platform for customers' self-assessment, helping them to identify their current skills, their working life interests, and explore the work-life balance.
- (2) Career counselling and vocational guidance provide a systematic and supportive process for preparing customers' working life decisions.

- (3) Career counselling and vocational guidance are a platform for networking, reaching out and going beyond only reflecting on ones' own, thus connecting customers with the counsellor, peers in group counselling, employers, education providers and other relevant players.
- (4) Modern career counselling and vocational guidance provide customers with a multichannel platform for action, consisting of various methods for assessing career choices, practical work trials and internships, and engaging with modern means of job search and labour market information. Career counselling constitutes an "enrichment space", in its different forms, in customers' career pathways and in their labour market transitions.
- (5) Career counselling and vocational guidance provide a systematic follow-up of customer development in the course of their labour market transitions.

Depending on the position of career counselling and vocational guidance at different phases of customers' pathways, the career guidance needs of PES customers may be identified more clearly. At the beginning phase of the career pathway, career counselling might be useful for customers who need, for instance: an enrichment space which provides a platform for self-assessment and skills identification; a more systematic process for making career decisions; an opportunity to raise their self-esteem and encourage them to move forward in their life; or to enable a dialogue with the counsellor, peers or employers. Equally, career counselling can provide a similar enrichment space at the middle and late phases of customers' career pathways.

### **3.2. Bridging PES, career counselling and vocational guidance**

Lifelong guidance for the employed covers a range of learning activities and products that enable them to take stock of their present work situation (role, conditions, content), the competences they have acquired from work and their validation, and to plan further learning and work transitions, including transitions into retirement.

Guidance for unemployed adults refers to a wide range of career counselling and vocational guidance activities and products that help unemployed jobseekers to improve their employability skills and reintegrate in the labour market. These activities include: assessment, profiling or screening, assistance in managing job changes, coaching in career management and social skills, job-brokering and advocacy, job-search assistance activities, counselling, job club programmes, provision of labour market information, and, if relevant, use of psychometric tests. Employment counselling, a basic service delivered by PES counsellors, is aimed at the sustainable activation and labour market integration (assessment, profiling, etc.) of the unemployed. Specialist career guidance may be provided by PES for those who are seeking a more comprehensive solution e.g. a low-skilled unemployed young person or adult who wishes to pursue a VET programme.

#### **3.2.1. Monitoring and follow-up of guidance services**

Modern career counselling constitutes a service focusing on the individual's personal relationship with working life, by providing them with a methodology to support them to plan work and life. Traditional statistics to evaluate the effectiveness of these services by measuring, for instance, placements into working life or education, or of the measures taken in the counselling process, and customer satisfaction surveys, are not sufficient. The modern monitoring and follow-up methods describe the customer development in a more holistic way, taking into account the key elements of a successful career decision-making (skills, clarity of goals, trustfulness, job-seeking skills, etc.), as well as core dimensions of assessing the customer's life as a whole: such as social connections, support from significant others and quality of living conditions.

As such, there is a need to develop follow-up and monitoring methods that may be used at the customer level, which combine the qualitative approach and the quantitative approach, synthesising the case approach (the 'idiographic') and the more sociological ('nomothetic') approach, at the administrative and management level.

As a result, new monitoring and follow-up methods make the career counselling process more visible, and the data that is collected enables a dialogue between career counselling practitioners, management, partners and also customers.

There is a growing international trend to develop new holistic monitoring and follow-up methods for career guidance. For example, Canada developed methods in line with holistic thinking. Within the EU, Hungary and four other countries have piloted the method of a 'Careers Service Impact Inventory'. In Finland, the Employment Radar is now being adopted as an integral part of career guidance services within PES, and as a part of a national lifelong career guidance policy.

### **3.2.2. Forecasting and anticipating skills needs**

The question of the future of working life has become an integral part of the PES career counselling and vocational guidance process. Counsellors require education and labour market forecasts which are easy to use, clear and understandable, so that they can actively support and guide jobseekers in making sustainable choices. Jobseekers need information on the trends and expected changes in work, in order to make proactive choices and build sustainable careers. Questions both parties face include: what jobs will there be? Which skills and qualifications will they require? Supplementing national and local-level forecasting data, the EU has also developed EU-level labour market and skill overviews through the Skills Panorama.

### **3.2.3. Collaborating with employers**

Traditionally, career counselling has been about supporting employees' capability to navigate the labour market. Today, career guidance needs to be developed in closer contact with employers. Closer contacts to workplaces allow customers to be in more direct contact with working lives. They also provide a "real-life platform" for customers to shape and mould their working life relationship. The future of career counselling is likely to evolve into a service which, not only supports the needs of individuals, but also supports the development of enterprises' competence level and competitiveness.

### **3.2.4. Promotion of entrepreneurship as positive career options**

The hybrid nature of current working life calls for a closer relationship with entrepreneurialism which should be included in career guidance, by connecting career guidance with various platforms to support start-ups or developing the growth of businesses.

More generally, entrepreneurship is now conceptualised as enhancing 'enterprising skills', meaning these skills are also useful to those who do not start their own businesses. Ten years ago, the European Commission identified a 'sense of initiative and entrepreneurship' as one of the eight key competences necessary for a knowledge-based society. This has since been developed into a competence framework<sup>10</sup>. The framework describes entrepreneurship as a transversal competence, which can be applied by citizens to all spheres of life from nurturing personal development, to actively participating in society, to (re)entering the job market as an employee or as a self-employed person, and to starting up ventures (cultural, social or commercial). Such skills also include a good ability to negotiate, network, make and close deals and contracts. In career guidance, supporting customers' development of enterprising skills is supporting the need to be innovative and active in the modern labour market.

### **3.2.5. Investment on training of PES personnel**

Modern career counselling has become a multi-professional and multi-disciplinary effort. PES face the challenge of ensuring that the guidance services they provide meet the quality criteria of good guidance services. By using professional psychologists and counsellors as the core catalyst of career guidance skills, upgrading PES personnel and having a broader staff base are more important, together with partners and outsourced career counselling.

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<sup>10</sup> European Commission (2016), EntreComp: The Entrepreneurship Competence Framework <http://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC101581/lfn27939enn.pdf>

The European Commission Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL) published a European reference competency profile<sup>11</sup> for PES and European Employment Services (EURES) counsellors in 2014, which included foundational, customer interaction and supportive competences. The aim was to take into account the scope and diversity of tasks that employment counsellors deal with. These tasks require a comprehensive set of competencies to help PES in their contribution to the European 2020 Strategy<sup>12</sup> goals, and to transform PES organisations into activation- and customer-oriented transition agencies, working closely with employers and playing a leading role in partnerships.

The counselling and guidance elements of employment counsellors' roles were recently strengthened<sup>13</sup>, leading to a job profile that now combines a broker, counsellor, social worker, and administrator. This differentiation of tasks requires a broader range of interdisciplinary knowledge comprising both theoretical foundations (with psychological knowledge being more important in relation to career guidance counsellors) and a profound knowledge of the labour market situation and trends, placement, integration and active labour market policies.

### **3.2.6. Career counselling and vocational guidance as a means for improved customer-driven and customised service processes**

Many PES are, for various reasons, traditionally focussed on jobseekers; therefore they have so far focused mainly on finding work for jobseekers as quickly as possible. This traditional role is now changing from fast activation of jobseeker to more *sustainable* activation. 'Sustainable' means, for example, focusing more on employability, skills upgrading and training. This also indicates that the significance of career counselling and vocational guidance is growing as a part of the 'sustainable activation'.

'Sustainable activation' also mean that PES services are now more processual and continuous by nature. The services are not 'one-off' services anymore. 'Sustainable and processual' services can only be based on personalised, tailored and customised services. Modern career counselling is tuned up with that kind of service spirit. Career guidance may be considered to be contributing to sustainable and processual services in PES more generally and helping the PES to move into a new and updated modern, personalised service culture.

### **3.2.7. Developments in face-to-face, virtual and blended spaces in career counselling and vocational guidance and lifelong learning**

The use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) provides opportunities for career guidance in PES by providing an interactive working space where a synchronous or multi-synchronous collaboration occurs with or without the help of practitioners. With modern tools the latest labour market information is accessible for jobseekers, practitioners and employers. The technology facilitates communication and enables collaborative development of career-related content among users. PES can effectively use these services to provide a cohesive and co-ordinated approach to deliver integrated and cost-effective career guidance services. Jobseekers also expect and require that PES have modern and up to date ICT services, which not only provide information but allow them to develop their own careers.

In many Member States, the function and role of ICT in career guidance, and the focus on strategies and policies are interrelated and interconnected. ELGPN (2015)<sup>14</sup> connects ICT to the

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<sup>11</sup> [ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=14100&langId=e](http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=14100&langId=e)

<sup>12</sup> [ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=9690&langId=en](http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=9690&langId=en)

<sup>13</sup> This was developed through the European Commission Mutual Learning Programme for Public Employment Services and the previous PES to PES Dialogue programme (2010-2014) which identified that the skills and competences of employment counsellors are critical for achieving the goals of the European Employment Strategy. The programmes stressed that, in many countries, a shift has taken place in the roles of PES, which originally functioned as more passive and administrative authorities.

<sup>14</sup> ELGPN [European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network]. (2015). *The Guidelines for Policies and Systems Development for Lifelong Guidance: A Reference Framework for the EU and for the Commission*. Saarijärvi, Finland. Retrieved from: <http://www.elgpn.eu/publications/elgpn-tools-no-6-guidelines-for-policies-and-systems-development-for-lifelong-guidance>

following seven policy and implementation challenges in widening access: coherence and consistency in service design, channelling, differentiation, penetration, targeting, marketing, and co-creating the services<sup>15</sup>. Policy-makers and other stakeholders need to recognise the variation and diversity that exists in the current understanding of ICT's role in relation to both Labour Market Skills Intelligence (LMSI), and national lifelong guidance policies. Based on a recent study<sup>16</sup> in 25 EU Member States, this role can be conceptualised as a continuum ranging from 'unexploited and emerging' use, to 'strategic' use of ICT (see Figure 3 below).

**Figure 3: Varying conceptions of the use of ICT and how this relates to national guidance policies**

	<b>Unexploited</b>	<b>Emerging</b>	<b>Acknowledged but fragmented</b>	<b>Strategic</b>
Policy/strategy focus	Gathering and publishing information	Developing the use of ICT	Maximising the use of ICT	Systematising the use of ICT
Rationale for ICT use	Costs	Widening access	Effectiveness	Efficiency
Approach to ICT	Technology focused	Content focused	Methodologically focused	Systemically focused
Function of ICT	Means for delivering information	Medium for one-to-one communication	Space for career services	Impetus for change and reform
Distance career services	Non-existent	Asynchronous	Synchronous	Multi-synchronous
Funding	Project	Programme	Co-funding	State coordinated
Monitoring/evaluation focus	Volume	Usability	Impact	Accountability

At one end of the spectrum, the countries in the study are simply identifying the use of ICT and applying it to career services, whereas at the other end of the spectrum, the focus is on the systematic use of ICT for the improvement of service delivery. Moreover, policy-makers need to understand the critical differences between their current understanding and a more advanced understanding. A more advanced understanding is important when considering the development and successful implementation of existing and emerging technologies in blended service delivery. If the perceived function of ICT is limited solely to an information delivery channel or the development of fragmented tools for different user groups, the full potential is not utilised either in the formation of lifelong guidance policies, nor in the integrated service delivery. The

<sup>15</sup> In this wider context, ICT relates to the products, infrastructure, and electronic content that enhance policy and systems development for career services, resources, and tools. It refers to how interactive services, resources, and tools are designed and developed for citizens, how citizens use these, and how such use reshapes their design. It also refers to the digital competency required to use ICT in a career development context.

<sup>16</sup> Kettunen, J., Vuorinen, R., & Ruusuvirta, O. (2016). European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network representatives' conceptions of the role of information and communication technologies related to national guidance policies. *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance*, 16, 327-342. doi:[10.1007/s10775-015-9313-7](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10775-015-9313-7) [Open access](#)

long-term goal is to bridge the technological gap between organisations which are well equipped and those which are not, as part of the national strategies for digital skills<sup>17</sup>.

## 4. Challenges and success factors

A few key features stand out for PES to integrate career guidance and lifelong learning into the national employment system. Firstly, each PES should identify key labour market transitions that need to be supported by career guidance. Secondly, PES should identify the customers who would gain most from widening and deepening their working life relationship with the help of a career counselling. Thirdly, PES need to identify other players that produce relevant career guidance services and clarify with whom they can develop partnerships. Fourthly, PES should develop a conducting and catalysing role that is in accordance with their national context – a consistent yet tailored approach is needed at national, regional and local level.

Finally, below is a sample of questions that PES can reflect on in preparation of the seminar taking place on 28–29 June 2017:

- What are the future strategic challenges facing your PES in building, catalysing and conducting a system of career counselling, vocational guidance and lifelong learning, that contributes to strengthening the employability of the workforce in your country?
- How could the position of career counselling, vocational guidance and lifelong learning services be strengthened as a part of your Public Employment System?
- Where is your PES focussing efforts at the different stages of the career pathway – where are you strong, and where are there development needs?
- What good practices and emerging innovations in the field of career counselling, vocational guidance and lifelong learning in your country come to mind?
- What are the challenges and developments concerning the use of ICT in career counselling and lifelong learning in your PES?

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<sup>17</sup> European Parliament. 2017. *Draft report on New Skills Agenda for Europe*. Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, Committee on Culture and Education. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-%2f%2fEP%2f%2fNONSGML%2bCOMPARL%2bPE-600.967%2b01%2bDOC%2bPDF%2bV0%2f%2fEN>