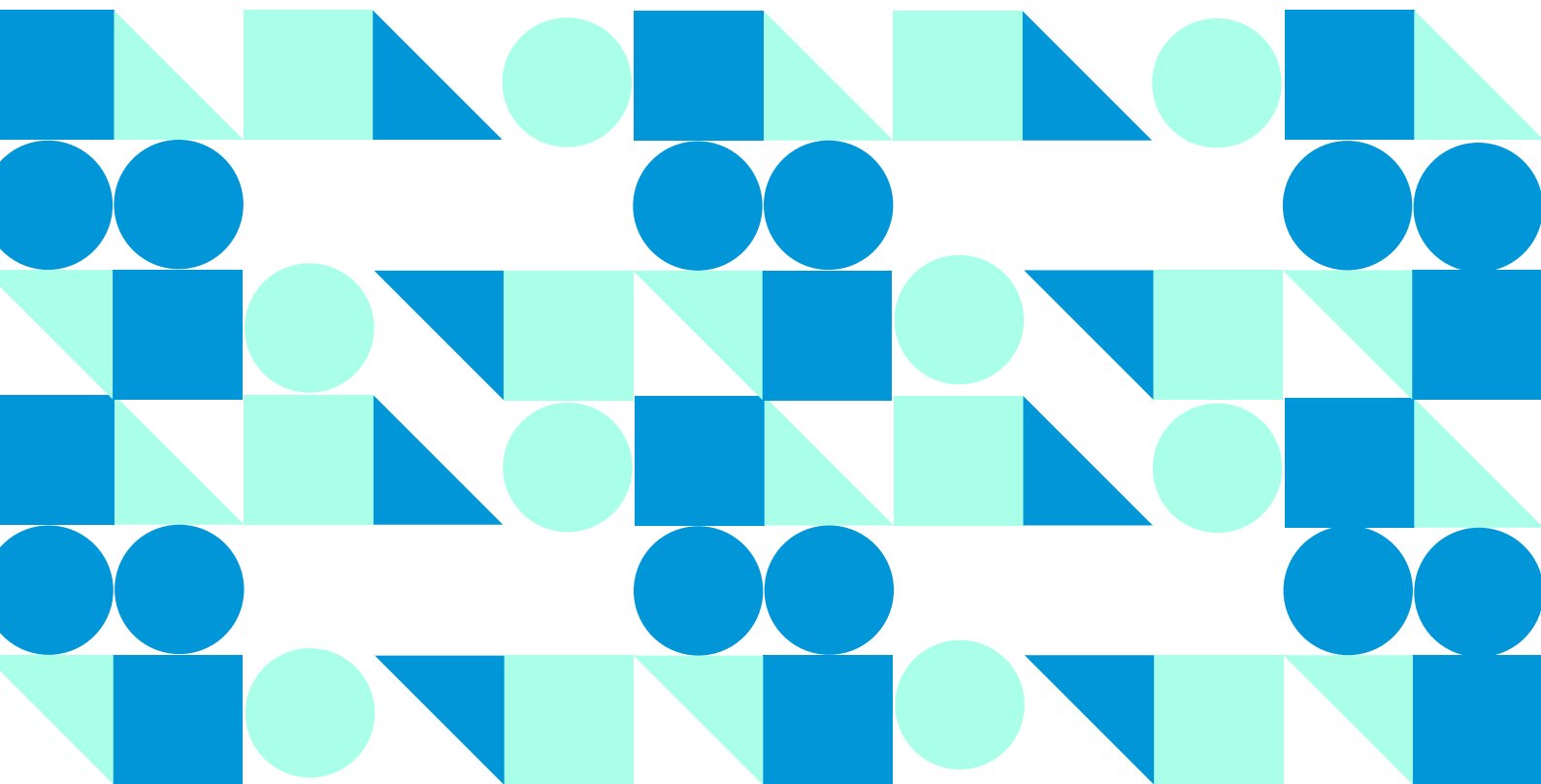




Research paper

Towards European standards for monitoring and evaluation of lifelong guidance systems and services (Vol. II)

A preliminary list of indicators
for quality frameworks





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The **European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training** (Cedefop) is the European Union's reference centre for vocational education and training, skills and qualifications. We provide information, research, analyses and evidence on vocational education and training, skills and qualifications for policy-making in the EU Member States. Cedefop was originally established in 1975 by Council Regulation (EEC) No 337/75. This decision was repealed in 2019 by Regulation (EU) 2019/128 establishing Cedefop as a Union Agency with a renewed mandate.

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Foreword

There is little doubt that career guidance is becoming more important as individuals must navigate ever more complex and dynamic career pathways. By providing tools, resources, information, and professional expertise, career guidance helps motivate and enable people to engage and progress in learning and careers.

While the importance of career guidance is increasingly emphasised in EU and national skills strategies and other policies, there is a lack of standardised monitoring and systematic evaluations of guidance activities in most Member States.

This report is the second volume of a Cedefop study on developing EU standards for monitoring and evaluating (M&E) lifelong guidance systems and services. With a view to setting up outcome-focused M&E systems, this report focuses on evidence gathered on career guidance for adults, both backward-looking (past practices) and forward-looking (identified innovative practices with potential).

The list of proposed indicators is intended as a basis for discussion that will need to be further developed as part of adequate quality frameworks for lifelong guidance. Every country is confronted with different challenges and diverse institutional makeups. Indicator users will need to adapt the proposals to specific national and local standards. Nevertheless, we believe that the proposed indicators may help policy dialogue and represent a first step towards the development of agreed EU standards for national, regional, or organisational quality frameworks for lifelong guidance.

Cedefop will continue supporting these developments, and the use of effective and coordinated cross-sectoral approaches to monitoring and evaluation of lifelong guidance in the EU Member States, as well as the exploration of common standards and indicators.

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Executive summary

Aims and scope of the study

This report is the second volume of a Cedefop study on developing standards for monitoring and evaluating (M&E) lifelong guidance systems and services in the EU context. The study aims to expand the evidence base on outcomes and impacts of career development support, with the focus on how this can be done, and has been done, and where innovation is needed. It focuses on how indicators can help develop common or agreed EU standards for national (or regional or organisational) quality frameworks for lifelong guidance, which are designed to achieve an integrated vision of the results and outcomes of career guidance over time. This volume focuses on evidence gathered on career guidance for adults.

M&E seeks to inform the planning, design and delivery of career development and lifelong learning support measures to benefit individual users. With effective feedback systems and supporting policies in place, M&E should benefit career support providers through service improvement, better training and competence development of career practitioners and other relevant professionals.

The report limits its scope by examining career guidance activities and those that are connected, which aim to support career development of adults (over 18 years). As career development tools and practices can be increasingly designed to service multiple age groups, some measures also cover young people under 18, but the main focus here is on provisions that cover adults. In addition to those measures and activities dedicated specifically to career guidance, including career-related advice and career counselling, other measures include the integration of:

- (a) outreach and information to prepare individuals for vocational training, learning activities and the labour market;
- (b) assessment and audits of skills and career interests;
- (c) validation of non-formal and informal learning services;
- (d) basic skills training and motivational training programmes to prepare adults in VET or other programmes;
- (e) short-term work experience, career sampling, or job shadowing.

Cedefop, including this report and its associated volumes (Cedefop et al., 2022 and Volume III, forthcoming), adopts the same broad understanding of lifelong guidance and the operation of its providers distributed throughout its system. In this way, following the EU definition (Council of European Union, 2008) lifelong guidance is seen as a continuous process that enables individuals, at any

age and at any point in their lives, to identify their capacities, competences and interests, to make 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.

Based on a selected literature review, an empirical analysis of current practice in some EU Member States, and using a linear logic model, the report proposes, as a basis for discussion, some indicators that could be used in M&E quality frameworks for lifelong guidance. The indicators are not prescriptive or final: they are a tool for policy dialogue and reflection on how to move towards common ground at European level. The report also reflects on drawbacks and main problems in tackling the development of indicators, incorporating discussions with European and international lifelong guidance experts for any proposed indicators and considers the next steps.

Methodology and data collection

Data on current M&E practices of adult career support activities were collected through desk research and stakeholder interviews in selected Member States.

Following a review of selected relevant literature at EU, international and national levels, case study countries and measures for in-depth research were chosen, based on a review of country practices and national data. From the documentary review, 40 career development support measures were selected from nine countries (Belgium-Flanders, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, France, Italy, Lithuania, Austria, and Finland). Interviews were carried out with key policy stakeholders and representatives of other relevant national institutions to obtain more detailed insights and M&E data, such as the content of evaluations and the type of aspects monitored. A working logic model was drawn up to guide the empirical research to define the potential elements, indicators and intended areas for coverage.

Data triangulation of the empirical evidence and literature review resulted in a first list of proposed indicators, which were discussed in an expert workshop organised by Cedefop in March 2022.

The empirical work for this second report was done in parallel with the first report *Towards European standards for monitoring and evaluation of lifelong guidance systems and services* (Cedefop, 2022). Volume I, which comprises a collection of research papers, focuses on methodologies for M&E evaluation in adult career guidance and career development services. The papers offer a vision for the way forward on M&E, make proposals and outline a range of methodologies at different levels of the guidance system, which focus on outcomes-based

measures (public policy, provider level, client-facing services). Links between Volume I and II are explored in the final chapter of this report.

A third strand of the overall study draws on the empirical evidence from the cases and investigates the costs of adult career development support. It aims to understand where and how data can be collected, and methods for estimating the costs of publicly funded measures connected to career guidance and to explore the level of investment in adult learning and careers (Cedefop, forthcoming).

Literature review and previous work

The M&E studies identified several career development and career guidance activities. The studies use various indicators covering inputs, outputs, outcomes, and impacts of career guidance measures, but these frequently focus on individual short- and medium-term outputs and outcomes, often related to aspects of career management skills (CMS) (ELGPN, 2016) even where they do not specifically refer to the concept. The level of analysis and focus of the studies was also important because there are examples focusing specifically on more internal processes and effects of investment in career staff training in a provider organisation, for example. This type of data was not considered but could be interesting for future analysis.

The literature discusses individual outcomes, which usually depend on the characteristics and needs of beneficiaries and the nature of the intervention or measure, but it does not often focus on intermediary outcomes associated with the aims of career counselling or career support measures. Indicator data in the literature are collected from primary (mainly interviews and surveys) and administrative sources (usually from the service provider). Overall, the literature reveals the challenge of isolating the outcomes and the impact or effect of career guidance interventions from those of other concurrent or subsequent activities and individual subjective perceptions and experiences.

The literature covers organisational and policy levels less frequently and systematically than the individual level. It provides few examples of how evaluative data are used to improve career guidance services and the work of career practitioners and other professionals providing career support.

Few evaluation studies used counterfactual quantitative evidence. There are also few examples of studies using either experimental or quasi-experimental designs; in most of these the conclusion had problems and limitations.

Barnes et al. (2020) indicate that the lack of standardised and systematised monitoring in most Member States hinders systematic evaluation of costs and results.

The literature identifies many challenges in M&E of career guidance, as well as other services supporting individuals, including gaps in evidence. However, it provides a useful starting point for developing robust and effective indicators that would potentially support development of a quality assurance M&E framework for lifelong guidance, which is a further step.

Evidence from selected measures

Observations were made of approaches and processes in M&E for 40 measures in nine selected countries (Belgium-Flanders, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, France, Italy, Lithuania, Austria, and Finland). The analysis reveals gaps in the continuous and consistent collection of monitoring data on participants (service users) in lifelong career guidance measures for adults. Often, different systems are used to monitor different measures, either because the services are not part of a wider monitoring system for lifelong career guidance or because it is left to contractors or agencies to collect data, and this information and evidence is not brought together and compared over time. Quality and depth of data vary between measures in the same country. Data are, mostly, collected to meet organisational mandates. M&E for service improvement to meet client needs, accountability and transparency in decision-making is not always a clear priority.

There are signs of a lack of common understanding and clarity over the outputs, outcomes, and impacts that a measure could be expected to achieve, also in relation to the agreed aims of career guidance. This may explain the variation in M&E approaches for similar measures and the considerable gaps in the coverage of outcomes and impacts. Information material for M&E actors is not always helpful. It often provides a range of parameters for quality assurance rather than focusing on simpler sets of achievements and the means of measuring them.

There is also a lack of coordination between different funding bodies which may have separate data needs depending on their beneficiaries (organisations, companies, stakeholders, clients) and sponsors. Different ministries, European Social Fund managing authorities, and regional or local partners, for example, require different data. Outsourcing of services and activities may provide one explanation why coordination is lacking. There are examples of measures that split responsibility for individual career guidance services between several partners.

Outsourcing sometimes has fragmented services. Different providers can offer the same measure, often with no coordinated M&E efforts for that measure. Fragmentation and lack of coordination make it difficult to determine patterns and levels of integrated service provision (i.e. where clients have different,

sometimes more complex needs, or combinations of advice, information, and career counselling) to support individual learning and career pathways.

The analysis reveals limited recognition of either the value of collecting data to benefit users' experience, or of a culture of evaluation, or of ways to achieve this cost-effectively. Monitoring systems reviewed seem not to exploit opportunities to collect data while participants are engaged in career guidance and development activities. M&E seems to be treated separately from front-line service provision. This implies additional expense in employing additional specialist staff to collect and analyse data, particularly if front-line practitioners are not involved and service users are not providing continuous feedback.

Based on these observations, across the nine case study countries in the measures selected, some common challenges are that:

- (a) no country has a holistic central M&E system for lifelong guidance at national, regional or other level, which hampers improvements in M&E;
- (b) outsourcing of measures from public employment services to various service providers, without specific monitoring data requirements, poses difficulties in creating a common M&E system;
- (c) lack of multi-stakeholder cooperation in operating activities under a single measure can create problems for M&E.

Working logic model

Career guidance is not a linear process: its effects may be incremental or felt over time and it is always provided and used in a context as a deeply social activity. However, a linear logic model was helpful in generating evidence about M&E indicators. It acted as a heuristic and promoted discussion on indicator selection, the data available, and which methodologies to use. The model guided the fieldwork, country case studies and structure for the M&E indicators proposed.

The logic model was inspired by different categories of literature applicable to M&E in this field, particularly Barnes et al. (2020), the Quality-assurance and evidence-base (QAE) framework (ELGPN, 2016), and the Kirkpatrick model (Kirkpatrick, 1994).

Establishing monitoring and evaluation indicators

Quality frameworks comprise different components depending on the approach taken at national, regional, or organisational level. With those frameworks, M&E indicators must consider the characteristics and aims of the intervention or

measure being evaluated, including its socioeconomic context and any larger quality framework. A framework can help to achieve a coherent and systemic approach and an integrated vision of lifelong career guidance.

Developing M&E indicators requires the following three levels:

- (a) conceptual: to define the theoretical architecture of the framework and describe the concept(s) to be measured;
- (b) empirical: the indicators used to measure the conceptual dimensions;
- (c) pragmatic: the usability and relevance of the indicators with respect to the measure being evaluated.

The SMART criteria (Doran 1981), shown in Table 1, were applied to select the most relevant indicators from those identified in the literature review, from the analysis of practices in the nine selected countries, and the working logic model based on previous work on quality assurance frameworks in career guidance.

Table 1. **SMART criteria for the selection of indicators**

Criterion	Description
Specific	The indicator must capture the essence of the desired result, whether it measures outputs, outcomes, or impact. It must be evidently related to direct achievements of a particular intervention and sufficiently accurate.
Measurable	The indicator must be observable, or otherwise have the capacity to be analysed, tested, or challenged to determine progress.
Achievable and attributable	The indicator must be achievable with respect to its targets. This means changes to the indicator may be anticipated if the intervention is appropriate.
Relevant	The indicator must be related to the type of intervention being measured, as well as its expected results. In this case, indicators must be chosen to enable the improvement of particular services.
Timely	The indicator must be timely with regard to time spent on data collection and in terms of the time difference between the output delivery and expected change in outcomes or impacts.

Source: Doran (1981).

Two additional criteria were considered: frequency, the indicator should be commonly used for some services or measures; and applicability, the indicator should apply across different guidance systems and not be over-dependent on context. Where indicators failed the SMART+ criteria the literature has been used to fill gaps.

Indicator selection also partly depends on the data collection. Monitoring activities should collect enough data ideally over time to study short-, medium- and longer-term outcomes. This can include data on the socio-demographic profile of the participants and other characteristics, such as number and type of other related measures in which they have already taken part, the length of unemployment (and reasons for it), and work and training experience/qualifications. This information is necessary to assess the impact of measures comprehensively, and for users to self-assess their own progress and career development.

Data can be collected through quantitative or qualitative methods (see also Cedefop, 2022). The data might come from audits and self-reporting of organisations and practitioners, administrative data, surveying participants, qualitative interviews, tests, or other assessment methods, such as portfolios. Data may also come through existing international or national datasets that can be used in outcome and impact studies. For example, the [OECD Career readiness project](#) provides information on how best to prepare young people in changing labour markets for success in adult working life.

A first list of indicators

Based on the work above, a list of potential indicators was compiled. These focus on the pragmatic level and are detached from any specific national context. They seek to find common ground in the EU on feasible and potentially comparative indicators that could help develop comprehensive quality frameworks that extend beyond indicators. Indicators comprise the following types defined for the study:

- (a) input and process indicators: to monitor elements such as practitioner competence, citizen or user involvement, service provision and improvement;
- (b) output indicators: to monitor the short-term immediate performance of a measure. They can be related to client satisfaction and the characteristics or numbers of participants;
- (c) outcome indicators: to monitor the medium-term performance of a measure. They can be related to the increased knowledge/skills, changes in career-related behaviour or changes in career and learning;
- (d) impact indicators: to monitor the long-term performance of a policy measure (effect). They can be related to the increased employability and adaptability of individuals, socioeconomic wellbeing, or higher income and, at a social level, increased participation in education and training or reduced social welfare costs.

An overview of the potential monitoring and evaluation indicators derived from the empirical work and a review of selected literature is set out in Tables 2 to 5 below. The indicators are grouped through target elements, and the full versions are in the main body of the report.

Indicators are not in themselves a quality framework and should not be used in isolation: they are part of a comprehensive quality framework designed to achieve an integrated vision of the results and outcomes of career guidance, especially over time and cumulatively, and cover specific levels and aspects that should fit together. However, single or sets of indicators can be adopted selectively.

A quality framework can include national standards, agreed definitions of lifelong guidance, values, and agreed aims across the labour market, education, training, youth, and social sectors, and policy areas of the guidance system covered by the framework (see also Cedefop et al., 2022). Cedefop maintains an [Inventory of lifelong guidance systems and practices](#), which has a monitoring structure based on a reference framework, with qualitative elements that can be integrated into a quality framework.

The proposed indicators are a first step towards creating agreed common European standards and a way of promoting indicator use for continuous evidence collection and service improvement. The indicators are not prescriptive or finalised but are for policy dialogue and reflection in the move towards common ground at European level. The indicators need to be adapted to national circumstances and specificities of the guidance system that is being monitored, and/or the relevant measures and activities. Most of the proposed indicators are quantitative (based on collection of quantitative data) although qualitative data is also valuable and can also be transformed into qualitative metrics and could improve current systems.

Table 2. **Input and process indicators**

	Target elements	Further specified elements	Potential indicator
1	Practitioner competence	Recognised qualifications relevant to careers sector	Recognised qualifications relevant to careers sector: share of fully qualified practitioners
2		Engaged in continuing professional development	Number of CPD hours undertaken in 1 year at a career practitioner level and at manager of career development services level
3	Citizen/user involvement	Ease of access to relevant services and products	Specific policy and targets set for equality and diversity in service design and delivery: % of individuals from diverse backgrounds representing their views on careers service design and delivery

	Target elements	Further specified elements	Potential indicator	
4			Careers dedicated staff to client ratio	
5			Cost per intervention for example numbers of staff hours and overhead costs divided by numbers Of differing types of interventions	
6			Participation of users	An agreed percentage of citizen/end-user representatives informing the management team responsible for annual and long-term planning
7		An agreed level of user participation in follow-up evaluation surveys		
8		Service provision and improvement:	Quality management system (QMS)	Evidence of a QMS to an agreed national common standard to include at minimum measures of: (i) practitioner competence; (ii) citizen/user involvement; (iii) connectivity to education and labour markets; (iv) benchmarking and actions for continuous improvement
9			Service provision and improvement: Appropriate ICT tools and software	Level of financial investment in ICT equipment and software, for example breakdown of actual costs compared to previous year
10			Up-to-date knowledge in and expertise of education and labour markets	Level of investment in labour market information resources and training. Access to national, EU and international databases on learning and work opportunities / qualification equivalences / job descriptions (breakdown of costs for developing on-line and off-line publications and materials; staff time spent on LMI training and resource developments compared with option of buying in consultancy expertise)
11	Profile and characteristics of practitioners		Level of investment in staff training. % of staff trained and associated costs	

Source: Cedefop.

Table 3. **Output elements**

	Target elements	Further specified elements	Potential indicator
1	Client satisfaction with services provided	Perceived quality	Share of individuals satisfied with the quality of services expressed as a percentage of total surveyed participants.
2		Perceived effectiveness	Share of participants claiming that participation in the measure increased their chances to find employment or achieve better career prospects

	Target elements	Further specified elements	Potential indicator
3	Output by characteristics of the participant	By general individual characteristics of participants	Gender, age, ethnicity and attainment, domestic situation, geographic location, education (both level and field)
4		By career-related background of participants	Employment status of the participant before the intervention/experience, length of time a participant has been unemployed prior to accessing the service (if relevant); information about all active labour market activities in which the individual participated 3 years prior; whether the user was registered in PES before the activity, for how long the individual participated in an active job search
5	Number of participants	Who completes activity/steps	Share of participants who complete an activity
6		Who progresses on pathway	Share of participants involved in other career services/activities or integrated ones (e.g. motivational training, longer term guidance) 1 month after participation in an activity.

Source: Cedefop.

Table 4. **Outcomes elements**

	Target elements	Further specified elements	Potential indicator
1	Increased knowledge/skills	CMS	Share of individuals whose career management skills (CMS) increased after the interventions/experience with career services: comparison of before and after using qualitative (e.g. portfolios) and quantitative assessment
2			Increase in individual's career management skills: comparison of changes before and after the intervention
3		Decision making capabilities	Diminished career decision-making difficulties
4	Changes in career-related behaviour	Job searches	Changes in job searches by (former) participants
5		Job applications	Track job applications by (former) participants
6		Job interviews	Track number of job interviews obtained by participants
7	Changes in career and learning	Progress to learning	Share of individuals who participated in education and training during the last 4 weeks (measured 3 and 6 months after an intervention)
8		Progress to employment	Share of participants finding employment (measured 3 and 6 months after an intervention)
9		Career progress	Share of participants who changed their job (position or field) after the intervention (measured 3 and 6 months after an intervention)

	Target elements	Further specified elements	Potential indicator
10		Participation in volunteering activities	Share of participants who started participating in volunteering activities (measured 3 and 6 months after an intervention)
11		Combined indicator – participants involved in E&T, employed, self-employed, or actively volunteering after an intervention	Share of participants involved in E&T, employed, self-employed, or actively volunteering (measured 3 and 6 months after an intervention)

Source: Cedefop.

Table 5. **Impact elements**

	Target elements	Further specified elements	Potential indicator
1	Education and training	Increased qualification level	Share of further education activity participants who increased their initial qualification level 1 year after this activity
2		Increased participation in adult learning	Share of participants who participated in education and training activities over the last 4 weeks (measured 1 year after participation in activity)
3	Increased employability	Employment	Share of participants employed 1 year after an activity
4		Job opportunities	Share of participants who had a job opportunity/proposal over the last year compared to individuals who did not participate (% of X- % of Y)
5	Socio-economic wellbeing	Higher salary	Comparison of participants' salary 1 year before and after an activity
6		Improved wellbeing	Comparison of participants' satisfaction in life before and 1 year after an activity
7		Perceived benefits of the measure	Share of participants claiming that participation in the measure increased their chances of finding employment or resulted in better career prospects
8	Increased participation of adults in E&T	Increased participation of adults in E&T	Share of adults who participated in education and training activities over the last 4 weeks in the country/area of intervention
9		Comparison participants versus not participants	Share of participants who participated in education and training activities over the last 4 weeks (measured 1 year after participation in activity) compared to similar group of individuals who did not participate (% of X- % of Y)
10	Improvement in employment	Long term unemployment	Long term unemployment rate in a country
11		Employed after 1 year	Share of participants employed 1 year after an activity compared to the similar group of individuals who did not participate

	Target elements	Further specified elements	Potential indicator
12		Work experience	Share of participants employed in the workplace in which they gained short-term working experience 1 year after an activity
13	Reduction in the cost of social welfare	Reduction in the cost of social welfare	Savings expressed as spending of Job Seeker Allowance and other benefits that would be paid to individuals who were employed after the activity.
14	Income	Average income	Average monthly earnings in a country/area of intervention
15		Increased salary	Share of participants whose monthly income has increased over the last 6 months (measured 1 year after the activity)

Source: Cedefop.

Expert critique of the proposed indicators

In March 2022, the proposed indicators were discussed at an [expert workshop](#) organised by Cedefop, with invited participants working in Europe and internationally in career guidance, at national, European and international levels. One aim was to find common ground on M&E in lifelong guidance and to contextualise the work done on indicators, from the perspective of those in the field. Participants brought expertise and experience in career development, as well as methodologies and research in monitoring and evaluation, especially in public policy and provider contexts. Contributors to *Towards European standards for monitoring and evaluation of lifelong guidance systems and services (Vol. I)* (Cedefop et al., 2022) presented papers exploring the proposed elements related to indicators, methodological options, and models for M&E across different countries, different levels (client-facing, provider organisations, system-wide), and career guidance settings in the labour market and education and training sectors. Innovation was also in focus, drawing on previous work and findings in the literature, but aiming to extend with fresh insights on expected intermediary outcomes instead of relying on short-range indicators and methods limited to individual employment or entering training, which depend on numerous factors.

Discussion made clear that any eventual quality framework or approach to M&E in career guidance must consider both qualitative and quantitative data and methodologies, including feedback from users such as assessing their own experiences and satisfaction with services.

The workshop also provided insights into how to use the proposed indicators to move towards common standards for M&E of career guidance in Europe. According to the workshop participants, a common minimum list of indicators can be used to:

- (a) focus on improving individual, social, economic, career development outcomes for all individuals and groups through user feedback and joint development of services;
- (b) address immediate issues related to quality of services and service needs, in specific guidance or economic sectors;
- (c) build the evidence base longer term on the benefits and results of career guidance and career development interventions, and promote and focus research, while utilising existing evidence not always utilised, even retrospectively when clients see benefits of early support and career learning;
- (d) find agreement on indicators and measures across sectors (education and training, employment, youth, health, civil society, inclusion, etc.) for key areas in lifelong career guidance, which take account of context such as local needs and realities, but are complementary and improve long-term individual outcomes;
- (e) develop tools, evaluation methods and strategies for collecting and analysing evidence on inputs, lifelong career guidance development processes, outputs, and outcomes, such as tracking tools for informing clients on typical pathways and plan B options, while enhancing their CMS and career adaptability
- (f) develop and improve common quality frameworks that aim to encourage dialogue with key stakeholders with different expectations of career guidance to find solutions and locate gaps in services;
- (g) improve service coordination, reduce duplication of services, and use integrated policy approaches that benefit users through single access points;
- (h) support broader national/EU strategies on skills, employment, lifelong learning and coherently integrate career guidance into skills strategies, particularly in strengthening attention to career management skills and career adaptability.

The way forward

Considering the bigger picture, this report and other project outputs will feed into proposals to update the *Guidelines for policies and systems development for lifelong guidance* (ELGPN, 2015a). This is currently in progress within Cedefop as an activity of the CareersNet network of independent career guidance experts and will involve other stakeholders and actors.

The guidelines provide ‘...advice and reference points for lifelong guidance policies and systems across the education, training, employment and social fields in order to improve the career learning experience of EU citizens and strengthen the professionalism of career services and tools’ (ELGPN, 2015a, p.56).

The proposed indicators are based mainly on existing practice and data availability at the time of data collection. There have been many important developments since that time in career guidance provision, in the organisation of services, in research and the evolution of technology in the career field, including in respect to AI and machine learning, and large language models. Of importance will be to consider immediate, intermediate, and longer-term impacts, as discussed in the workshop. This report is a first input towards developing European standards for M&E of lifelong guidance systems and services and towards promoting indicator use for evidence collection in quality frameworks that bring together stakeholders with a unified focus on improving the career learning experience and outcomes for the European public. The next step is further consultation with stakeholders on M&E needs and possibilities.

Consultation should aim to build consensus and share experience on indicators and relevant methodologies, methods of data collection and the resourcing of M&E systems. A standard methodological approach will need to consider how to monitor and evaluate the different aspects of a single intervention at client level or series of steps, a specific policy measure and tools used, as well as the overall system, while being adaptable to the many contexts where career support and guidance are made available to individuals.

CHAPTER 1.

Introduction

1.1. Background and policy context

Lifelong guidance is increasingly important for adults. Faced with socioeconomic and technological changes that are making the labour market more dynamic, complex, and unpredictable, individuals need to be able to adapt to, predict and steer change and keep building their skills and competences. They also need some security and a stable enough career for a healthy work-life balance and wellbeing. Career pathways have become more diverse: individuals now experience several transitions during their professional careers. Lifelong guidance supports individuals by increasing adults' capacities to engage in work and learning, manage career transitions, use available resources and to make informed and meaningful choices about their education, training, and work pathways, during transitions and other career stages. Intermediary changes are a focus of career guidance at the heart of career development.

The importance of career guidance is increasingly emphasised in EU and national skills strategies and policies, underlining the urgent need for adequate national and regional capacity to support individual career development. By prioritising quality assurance of guidance systems, the 2008 Council resolution on integrating lifelong guidance into lifelong learning strategies, paved the way to developing effective lifelong guidance systems and services in Member States (Council of the European Union, 2008). The 2020 European Skills Agenda (European Commission, 2020) and current policy framework acknowledges the need to support individuals in their lifelong learning pathways, and in their skills development. It places career guidance at the centre of three of its initiatives: strategic national upskilling; individual learning accounts; and micro-credentials. There are also the latest action plans during the (2023) Year of Skills, particularly in the skills-first approach and how to support policies to this effect.

This study takes a relatively holistic view of individual support to careers and learning provided publicly, investigating diverse activities directed toward supporting individual career processes and plans along the life path. This includes consideration of earlier career learning and experiences as significant to adult transitions and integration into the labour market and lifelong learning, and the acquisition of career management skills and the development of career adaptability across sectors in education, training, and the labour market. Lifelong guidance forms the core of career development provisions throughout people's lives and

encompasses the development of strategies, competences, and skills to manage transitions (Cedefop, 2005, 2011; Council of the European Union, 2008; OECD 2021a, 2021b; Barnes, et al., 2020).

Career guidance and lifelong guidance (LLG) define processes and activities that support individuals in making informed and meaningful decisions about their education, training, and work pathways. Career guidance often occurs at transition points for an individual and can be regarded as reactive. LLG as a resource for individuals, however, takes a more proactive, lifelong perspective on careers and is a process that individuals can engage in across domains (see Barnes et al., 2020).

Evidence suggests that delivery of lifelong guidance is becoming more coherent and coordinated, while new and innovative modes of delivery are emerging in response to labour market changes, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic (Harrison, 2021; Cedefop et al., 2021). Use of digital technology, providing more tools and methods for career management skills development, has accelerated since the pandemic. The balance of other delivery methods, self-help services and resources should be examined in relation to the potential to improve user experiences and service effectiveness.

Guidance systems in many countries have seen substantial development, but there remains a lack of standardised monitoring and systematic evaluation of guidance activities in most Member States (Barnes et al., 2020). Indeed, Barnes et al. (2020) reflect that the lack of standardised and systematised monitoring of inputs, processes, and outcomes of these activities in most Member States, hinders the systematic evaluation of costs and results. Lack of a standardised approach limits collection of the evidence required to assess how a measure is performing and the need to improve service quality; this, in turn, prevents development of national cross-sectoral monitoring approaches.

Current standard monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of labour market policies differentiates poorly between services that support individuals. Career guidance is blurred with other provisions or services that might support capacity development, acquisition of qualifications, steps toward empowerment, and engagement, as well as labour market integration. As these services are normally not differentiated, it is difficult to understand the expenditure allocated to them and their relative results. The trend towards combining the efforts of several organisations to support individuals' career processes and plans – though positive in many ways – creates an obstacle to obtaining a comprehensive view of aspiring lifelong learning strategies. As national systems progress towards an advanced standard of support to individuals along their life paths, the more complex becomes the task of evaluating what works for individual careers, and what is effective and efficient.

1.2. Aims and scope

1.2.1. Report aims

This report is the second volume of a Cedefop study on developing European standards for monitoring and evaluating (M&E) lifelong guidance systems and services, expanding the evidence base on outcomes and impacts of career development support. It examines how this can be done, has been done, and where innovation is needed. It focuses on how indicators can help develop common or agreed European standards for national (or regional or organisational) quality frameworks for lifelong guidance, the latter of which are designed to achieve an integrated vision of the results and outcomes of career guidance over time. This volume concentrates on evidence gathered on career guidance for adults.

The report explores the advantages of reaching a consensus on shared methodologies and possible indicators to provide continuous feedback to improve services at different levels of the guidance system, and to enable cross-country policy reflection and learning. Volume I, also on monitoring and evaluation, published in 2022, already introduced some implemented and proposed methodological approaches and possibilities for innovation that aim at the core of career guidance (Cedefop et al. 2022).

Volume II looks at the common and different ways that countries gather evidence and the data and some methods they use to monitor and evaluate processes, outputs, outcomes and effectiveness of their publicly funded services, and the potential role of partners and stakeholders. Input indicators are also explored but are more the focus of Volume III (forthcoming), dealing with understanding how to estimate costs and participation. The present report also looks at how evidence from evaluations and innovative methodologies introduced in the literature can help achieve an integrated vision of the results of guidance interventions.

The report proposes indicators for M&E of career guidance as well as the discussions around those indicators by experts in the field, and their suggestions for next steps needed. The indicators are not prescriptive or final. They are a first step towards developing common European standards and to encourage use of indicators in eventual quality frameworks, which are ideally developed through stakeholder agreement and expertise in concepts and methods in the career development field. These indicators, which measure diverse types of outcomes, are a tool for policy dialogue and reflection on how to move towards common ground at European level. The report also reflects on drawbacks and main problems in tackling the development of indicators for monitoring and evaluating outcomes related to users' experiences with career guidance.

1.2.2. Scope of activities covered in measures and limitations

This study examines specific activities in the context of publicly funded labour market initiatives, with some covering education and training more broadly in selected countries, aiming to support individual career development. It focuses on career guidance and career development support for adults but acknowledges that the meaning of career guidance is a concept relevant in education, training, and employment policy, which, often, is not fully visible outside its dedicated settings (e.g. guidance services or career education courses) and among career professionals, or when expressed as learning outcomes (e.g. acquisition of career management skills).

The measures reviewed include career guidance activities and those that are connected, which aim to support career development of adults (over 18 years). As career development tools and practices can be increasingly designed to service multiple age groups seamlessly, some measures also cover young people under 18, but the focus here is on provisions that cover adults. In addition to those measures and activities dedicated specifically to career guidance, including career-related advice and career counselling activities explored, the measures reviewed include the integration of:

- (a) outreach and information to prepare individuals for vocational training, learning activities and the labour market;
- (b) assessment and audits of skills and career interests;
- (c) validation of non-formal and informal learning services;
- (d) basic skills training and motivational training programmes to prepare adults in VET or other programmes;
- (e) short-term work experience, career sampling, or job shadowing.

Cedefop, including this study and its associated volumes, adopts the same broad understanding of lifelong guidance and the operation of its providers distributed throughout its system. In this way and following the EU definition (Council of the European Union, 2008), lifelong guidance is seen as a continuous process that enables individuals, at any age and at any point in their lives, to identify their capacities, competences and interests, to make 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. As such, lifelong guidance covers a range of individual and collective career guidance related activities, resources and tools, and diverse providers and settings, related to information provision, career counselling, competence and skills assessment, support and acquisition of decision-making and career management skills, etc. These aim to provide access to, and support for, individual decision-making on careers and career development, lifelong, which includes

learning and education, employment opportunities, labour market integration and other life decisions affecting careers.

The exploration of these measures and activities, and the context in which they are developed, necessarily influences the indicators that have been found and proposed. The activities under study are mainly connected to labour market initiatives that have some component of career guidance or that are connected to it in different ways (see Chapter 3, Table 10). Exploration of monitoring and evaluation of career guidance from a systemic perspective, which is a further development, is treated in Volume I (Cedefop, et.al, 2022), while the current volume focuses on a relatively limited number of initiatives and indicators with the aim of building up our evidence base for monitoring and evaluation. The indicators and practices collected in the 40 measures studied are rather limited and do not always reflect the literature reviewed, as well as other previous research and work on framework development focused on career guidance specifically for adults.

1.3. Methodology, data collection and report structure

The methodological building blocks of the research mirror the structure of the report as follows.

Chapter 2 presents an initial analysis of a selection of literature on the monitoring and evaluation of lifelong guidance and career development services at EU, international and national levels, focusing on measuring the impacts and evidence of results of the relevant services and measures.

Chapter 3 presents the empirical research consisting of stakeholder interviews and information gathered in a selection of Member States on current and past experiences in M&E of lifelong guidance and career development services. This analysis was based on the results of the literature review and complemented by document analysis in selected countries. From a total of 456 career development support measures reviewed across the EU Member States, 144 were identified as measures that include career guidance activities included in the scope of the study. Of these, 40 were selected in nine countries (Belgium-Flanders, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, France, Italy, Lithuania, Austria and Finland) for in-depth analysis. Interviews were carried out with key policy stakeholders and representatives of other relevant institutions at the national level to obtain more detailed insights as well as further M&E data (e.g. on contents of evaluations and/or type of aspects monitored) where possible.

A preliminary list of M&E potential indicators in lifelong guidance and career development support is proposed in Chapter 4. The suggested indicators consider the diverse national contexts and variety of services covered. The list needs to be

understood in a wider context of building a developed quality framework of a comprehensive nature and agreed by stakeholders on the expectations and aims of lifelong guidance, adapted to the national context, with indicators (and targets) that can be used across settings and levels with a few minimum common standards.

In Chapter 5, the report presents the summary of main feedback and specific comments gathered during the expert workshop *Supporting careers and learning: towards common standards for monitoring and evaluation in Europe* organised by Cedefop in March 2022. This feedback addresses the list of indicators and overall approach in the context of further developing a quality framework for M&E of cross-sectoral indicators presented in Chapter 4. The chapter concludes with the way forward and further research needed.

CHAPTER 2.

Literature on M&E indicators

This chapter summarises the findings of literature analysis on commonly observed M&E practices, existing frameworks, and toolkits in lifelong guidance in the EU. It aims to gain insights into the position at the time data were collected, identifying M&E approaches in lifelong guidance and career support services, their concepts and definitions, the measures, and the critical elements for robust M&E systems. The review was a step towards building and understanding possible indicators and helped guide and complement the case studies. It is important when considering developing standards for M&E. The present volume draws mainly on empirical data collection surrounding career guidance for adults, and the logic model constructed based on the literature outlined in Section 2.1. Volume I (Cedefop et al. 2022) contains also other relevant literature.

2.1. Literature review

2.1.1. Anticipated challenges and lines of enquiry

M&E studies analysed cover a range of career guidance and career development activities. Often, they are studies of integrated employment or career support activities in public employment services (Behaghel et al., 2014; Bennmarker et al., 2013), which may not always include career guidance specifically, but some study specific activities, such as career guidance, career counselling, and job search assistance, at national, regional, local or provider level. Generally, the studies focus on target service users who are unemployed jobseekers, but some include employed and unemployed service users.

The following lines of enquiry were set out to guide the literature review.

- (a) What are the studies aims?
- (b) What indicators, data sources and methods are commonly used?
- (c) What are the limitations of the indicators, data and methods used?
- (d) Which aspects in defining lifelong guidance and career support systems are common?
- (e) What contextual factors are considered as central to developing and applying a robust M&E framework?

2.1.2. Literature review: M&E aims, methods and data sources

2.1.2.1. *Aims*

Based on the literature, M&E can have the following objectives:

- (a) analyse service outputs and outcomes (including user satisfaction) to help decide if it is performing well. Often, this involves checking service achievements against objectives or targets (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2013; Ipsos Mori, 2018; Hooley et al., 2015; Bowes et al., 2013; Lane et al., 2017; Gloster et al., 2013; Mackay et al. 2015);
- (b) compare different modes of delivery in the same service (Bowes et al, 2013);
- (c) compare two or more services. Several studies compare public and private provision (Behaghel et al., 2014; Benmarker et al., 2013; Krug and Stephan, 2013);
- (d) assess tests and trials of new methods of delivery (Belot et al., 2019; Hooley and Rice, 2019);
- (e) analyse the impact of new or temporary services (Hechtlinger and Gati, 2019; Belot et al., 2019);
- (f) assess service impacts at individual and organisational level (Lane et al., 2017; Sanders et al., 2019; Whiston et al., 2017; Schober and Langner, 2017; Perdrix et al., 2012; Neary et al., 2015; Percy and Dodd, 2020);
- (g) assess wider impacts of services in society and the economy (Hooley and Dodd, 2015; Hooley, 2014; Hughes and Hogg, 2018; Percy and Dodd, 2020);
- (h) analyse transnational and national quality assurance practices and propose new areas where quality must be assured (Dodd et al., 2013; Hooley, 2019).

2.1.2.2. *Methods*

The literature suggests that M&E methods to capture and analyse data are varied, but there is also a lack of consistency and coherence across these methods. Most of the studies reviewed focus on quantitative methods and there is a mix of experimental, quasi-experimental, pre-post studies, and snapshots which draw on administrative data, surveys, and interviews.

Studies using longitudinal (pre- and post-intervention) survey and administrative data provide evidence on outcomes, (Lane et al., 2017; London Economics, 2012; Perdrix et al., 2012; Ipsos Mori, 2018; Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2013; Hechtlinger and Gati, 2019) but cannot measure the effectiveness of the intervention, compared to non-interventions or standard interactions with jobseekers or other clients. M&E studies often seek to show evidence of best practice, but the lack of longer-term outcome data makes it difficult to draw conclusions (Neary et al., 2015).

Some evaluation studies have used a counterfactual quantitative approach to measure added value, value for money and comparative efficiency and effectiveness of different services/approaches/pilots (Gloster et al., 2013; Hooley, 2019; Barnes et al., 2020; Cardoso et al., 2014). However, there are not enough such studies to provide strong evidence of impact, in part due to difficulties in creating appropriate counterfactual methodologies with scarce data and due to the nature of career guidance and the multiple influences on individual careers.

Some studies used experimental or quasi-experimental designs focusing on differences between public and private service providers (Behaghel et al., 2014) or the effects of contracting out employment services (Benmarker et al., 2013; Krug and Stephan, 2013), but most have problems and limitations to their conclusions.

Availability of analyses of value for money is limited (Hughes and Hogg 2018; Behaghel et al. 2014; Benmarker et al. 2013; Lane et al. 2017). As it requires systemic information on costs (inputs), which is often not readily available. All studies faced difficulties establishing costs at the level needed to compute unit costs and returns on investment. Behaghel et al. (2014) found that the French public employment service had not developed the accounting tools to identify the costs of service components.

The literature identifies indicators for career guidance services and gives examples of their use but does not provide a comprehensive range of indicators or empirical evidence of a strongly developed approach to evaluation (Weber et al., 2018). While M&E studies are often used as a managerial tool for accountability of publicly funded services, they tend to lack a systematic or systemic approach needed in lifelong guidance for service improvement (Plant and Haug, 2018). Percy and Dodd (2020) argue that public accountability of government services typically focuses on short-term outcomes which evidence the extent to which services have performed well and customers (service users) are satisfied.

Barnes et al. (2020) argue that many countries have space for monitoring based on short-term perceptions of services by clients, but rarely on an understanding of the results of the process. This study, after a review of monitoring methods across 23 EU Member States, also finds M&E methods are not operationalised around the aims and objectives of specific career guidance development interventions and intermediary outcomes expected by providers, clients and practitioners. The lack of a standardised approach limits the evidence required to assess performance completely and to improve quality.

Studies considering the standardisation and quality assurance of career guidance (Hooley, 2014; Hooley and Rice, 2019; and Dodd et al., 2019) highlight the complexity and heterogeneity of M&E methods. Further, analyses usually focus

on inputs and outputs, while few cover outcomes or impacts at the needed levels (frontline, organisation, region, public policy, etc.) and according to the relevant expectations of providers and the public. Most quality assurance standards cover some outputs, mainly client satisfaction, but none reviewed for this volume cover outcomes. However, literature on quality assurance provides reference points for using indicators but falls short of expectations of covering the whole logic model used to guide the study.

2.1.2.3. *Data sources*

Data used in the studies are gathered from primary sources (interviews, surveys, focus groups) or extracted from administrative data collected by the service provider. This is usually the national public employment service or a national agency.

Many studies combine these sources and, a notable gap for future development, only a few use survey data collected by career guidance services themselves. Surveys often collect information from users at different stages of their engagement and afterwards to measure progress, though some are only carried out once at a specified point. Administrative data is similarly used in a few studies to capture individual users' progression.

Data limitations in the literature review are common to those found in studies of social policy interventions, and include:

- (a) availability (Behaghel et al., 2014 observe that administrative data do not say why people leave the unemployment register);
- (b) limited sample sizes (Belot et al., 2019; Di Fabio and Maree, 2012);
- (c) sample attrition used in consecutive surveys because of survey fatigue over time (Perdrix et al., 2012);
- (d) difficulties in matching observations from different datasets, which reduces the size of the final dataset for analysis (Lane et al., 2017);
- (e) geographic coverage of data being limited to one region or locality, reducing representativeness and generalisation of the findings to national system level (Di Fabio and Maree, 2012; Sanders et al., 2019).

2.1.3. M&E indicators in the literature

The literature identifies various indicators for M&E relevant to the study's scope. However, there are fewer evaluation studies and less consistency in the impacts they measure.

Most studies cover individual outputs and outcomes (e.g. Neary et al., 2015, Perdrix et al., 2012). Some also cover organisational outputs and outcomes (e.g. Plant and Haug, 2018). Data are broken down by participant/service user

characteristics and/or background. A few assess the wider impacts of services in society and the economy (e.g. Hooley and Dodd, 2015; Hughes and Hogg, 2018; Percy and Dodd, 2020). Tables 6 to 8 present the indicators described in the literature. They are classified according to indicator type and, where relevant, the level at which they are measured (individual, organisational/service or system/policy level).

Table 6. **Overview of output indicators used in literature**

Indicator	Description and literature sources
Number of participants	Service users registered for an activity. Behaghel et al., 2014; Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2013; Hughes and Hogg, 2018; Ipsos Mori, 2018; Perdrix et al., 2012; Plant and Haug, 2018.
Number of participants who complete an activity or steps within it	Registered clients who attend the activity either fully (complete the activity) or partially (complete units within the activity). Behaghel et al., 2014; Belot et al., 2019; Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2013; Ipsos Mori, 2018; London Economics, 2012.
Number of participants who progress on pathway	Refers to an activity or process which prepares users to progress onto learning (opportunities), employment or longer pre-employment or work. Behaghel et al., 2014; Belot et al., 2019; Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2013; Ipsos Mori, 2018; London Economics, 2012.
Satisfaction with the use of career development activities	Client perceptions as to whether the activity helped with individual career development. Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2013; Hooley et al., 2015; Ipsos Mori, 2018; Plant and Haug, 2018.
Other	Participation in multiple interventions: London Economics, 2012; Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2013; Perdrix et al., 2012; Whiston et al., 2017. Use of career tools (e.g. portfolio, CV builder, skills tests) Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2013; Belot et al., 2019; (web based); Gati and Levin, 2015.

Source: Cedefop.

Table 7. **Overview of outcome indicators used in literature**

Level	Indicator	Description and literature sources
Individual	Increased knowledge and skills	Relates to career management skills (CMS). Bimrose et al., 2011; Hooley, 2014; Watts, 2014; Hooley and Dodd, 2015; MacKay et al., 2015; Ipsos Mori, 2018; Plant and Haug, 2018; Percy and Dodd, 2020. Also refers to personal added value: personal skills, self-confidence, ability to make decisions for the future. Cardoso et al., 2014; Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2013. Includes diminished career decision-making difficulties. Perdrix et al., 2012.

Level	Indicator	Description and literature sources
	Progress to learning opportunities	Refers to entering an educational or training programme following on from progress on pathway to learning initiated through an activity. Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2013; Hooley, 2014; Hughes and Hogg, 2018; Ipsos Mori, 2018; Plant and Haug, 2018.
	Progress to longer pre-employment/ work experience	Refers to entering sustained employment following on from progress on pathway to longer pre-employment initiated through an activity. Percy and Dodd, 2020; Perdrix et al., 2012; Hughes and Hogg, 2018
	Progress to employment	Refers to transition from unemployment to employment following on from progress on pathway initiated through an activity. Behaghel et al., 2014. Hooley and Dodd, 2015; Ipsos Mori, 2018; London Economics 2012.
	Career progress	Denotes when users changed career, were promoted or improved their salary. Belot et al., 2019; Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2013; Ipsos Mori, 2018. Refers to when service users progressed in existing employment (e.g. promoted to a higher position). Perdrix et al., 2012. Plant and Haug, 2018.
	Other	Job quality: Krug and Stephan, 2013 (accumulated earnings) Job satisfaction: Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2013 Progress to volunteering experience: Ipsos Mori, 2018 Social Capital (membership in networks and other social structures): Hooley and Dodd, 2015
Institutional	Better match between learning offered and skill training needs	High success rates on above individual-level outcomes demonstrating relevance of the activity. Hooley, 2014; Hooley and Dodd, 2015
	Improved capacity of organisations to provide career development activities	Professional practice of practitioners. Department for Business, Education and Skills, 2013; Watts, 2014; Hooley, 2014; Weber et al., 2018; Gloster et al., 2013; Bowes et al, 2013
	Improved know-how and raised quality standards on career development service provision	Involvement of users in the design of guidance services. Dodd et al., 2019; Hooley, 2014; Hooley, 2019; Plant and Haug, 2018; Weber et al., 2018.
	Other	Referral mechanisms to other career development or support services: London Economics, 2012; Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2013 Ipsos Mori, 2018; Gloster et al., 2013; Bowes et al, 2013 Partnership working, integration of services: Bowes et al, 2013.

Source: Cedefop.

Table 8. **Overview of impact indicators used in literature**

Level	Indicator	Description and/or literature sources
Individual	Increased qualification level	Watts, 2014; Hooley, 2014
	Increased employability	Readiness for employment. Bimrose et al., 2011; Behaghel et al., 2014; Perdrix et al., 2012; London Economics, 2012; Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2013 Ipsos Mori, 2018; Hooley, 2014; Hooley and Dodd, 2015
	Higher salary	Ipsos Mori, 2018
	Increased participation in lifelong learning	Department for Business, Education and Skills, 2013; Ipsos Mori, 2018; Hooley, 2014
	Improved wellbeing	Satisfaction with life. Perdrix et al., 2012.
Society/ System	Increased participation of adults in education and training	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2013; Ipsos Mori, 2018; Watts, 2014; Hooley, 2014; Hughes and Hogg, 2018
	Increased employment	National employment rate. London Economics, 2012; Behaghel et al., 2014; Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2013; Ipsos Mori, 2018; Belot et al., 2019; Hughes and Hogg, 2018
	Reduction in the cost of social welfare	Cost savings in payments of Job Seeker Allowance and other benefits. Hughes and Hogg, 2018; Behaghel et al., 2014; London Economics, 2012; Belot et al., 2019; Watts, 2014; Weber et al., 2018; Hooley and Dodd, 2015
	Other	Education to work transitions: Watts, 2014; Hooley, 2014; Hooley and Dodd, 2015; Percy and Dodd, 2020 Average wage spent in the local economy: Hughes and Hogg, 2018; Social equity, legislation, integrated systems: Watts, 2014; Social inclusion: Hooley, 2014; Improved health, reduced crime: Hooley and Dodd, 2015
Economy	Higher productivity	Hooley, 2014; Hooley and Dodd, 2015; Percy and Dodd, 2020
	Higher wages	Increased revenue: Hooley and Dodd, 2015, Hughes and Hogg, 2018; Ipsos Mori, 2018; Percy and Dodd, 2020

Level	Indicator	Description and/or literature sources
	Other	Labour market efficiency (supply meets demand): Watts, 2014; Hooley, 2014; Hughes and Hogg, 2018; Hooley and Dodd, 2015; Percy and Dodd, 2020 Direct fiscal benefits accrued from job and learning outcomes; 'knock-on' benefits from sustained job outcomes: Hughes and Hogg, 2018 Flexible and mobile labour market, living standards, deficit reduction: Hooley and Dodd, 2015 Perceived efficiencies through contracting out services: Krug and Stephan, 2013; Belot et al., 2019; Bennmarker et al., 2013.

Source: Cedefop.

2.1.4. Overview of literature on M&E frameworks and toolkits

The diversity of systems for lifelong career guidance services presents challenges in assessing and measuring the effectiveness of lifelong guidance policies and practices across the EU.

A review of reference frameworks and publications covering M&E of lifelong guidance and career support services provides a context for placing and understanding indicators, as well as insights into what to consider when looking for common indicators across countries. The main reference frameworks concerning M&E are also set out below. They rely on evidence in literature as well as practices (combining practice and theory) experienced by providers and in client-facing services, as well as normative sources based in the stated aims of services and measures. Additional literature and surveys are also included.

2.1.4.1. *Lifelong guidance policy and practice in the EU*

Barnes et al. (2020) list the following key features that, they argue, should characterise lifelong guidance systems:

- (a) lifelong guidance legislation – to control provision of services, qualifications, and national accountability of services;
- (b) strategic leadership – the EU and national policy and systems that guide development, management, and delivery;
- (c) scope of provision in different contexts – where guidance provision is situated and how it is organised in and across different contexts;
- (d) lifelong guidance and lifelong learning strategies and policies – the existence, inter-connectedness and/or relationship between the policies in defining the role of guidance in lifelong learning;
- (e) coordination and cooperation – actors involved in the organisation and delivery of systems and how they are coordinated;
- (f) delivery of guidance – the models that define how services are provided;

- (g) labour market information – labour market data that are collected and disseminated;
- (h) ICT strategy – how ICT will be developed and integrated;
- (i) ICT operationalisation – how technology is used and why;
- (j) professionalisation – qualifications, knowledge, skills, and ethical standards required by those delivering services;
- (k) evidence of impact of lifelong guidance – how services and outcomes are measured to inform development.

2.1.4.2. *Quality assurance and evidence-based (QAE) framework*

The QAE framework (ELGPN, 2016) aims to support countries in gathering robust data to inform and improve the quality of their lifelong guidance provision, and to contribute to the knowledge and evidence base in a systematic manner, which should improve services. It strongly emphasises the need to ensure that the inputs, outcomes, and impacts are effectively monitored and evaluated.

It identifies a series of related elements that should be built into national systems of career guidance services to support quality service delivery and underpin the collection of data on the performance of interventions:

- (a) practitioner competence;
- (b) service provision and improvement;
- (c) cost-benefits to government;
- (d) citizen/user involvement;
- (e) cost-benefits to individuals.

2.1.4.3. *The Kirkpatrick model*

The Kirkpatrick model (1994) identifies five interrelated levels of impact resulting from training and career development interventions which straddle outputs, outcomes, and impacts:

- (a) First level, reaction: how participants (service/learners) describe their experience of the intervention, if it was worth their while;
- (b) Second level, learning: extent to which is it possible to quantify what participants have learned, e.g. the acquisition of career management skills (CMS);
- (c) Third level, behaviour: extent to which the intervention changes the behaviour of participants to one that facilitates positive outcomes in career development/progression;
- (d) Fourth level, results for individuals: lasting impacts on individuals such as increased academic attainment, career progression;

- (e) Fifth level, results for organisations: lasting positive impacts on service delivery mode.

2.1.4.4. *ELGPN, tool 3: the evidence base on lifelong guidance*

This ELGPN toolkit provides a synthesis of the existing evidence on the effectiveness of lifelong guidance and implications for system design (ELGPN, 2014). It recognises the relationship between quality and evidence, whereby monitoring and evaluation activities can be important both for improving quality and addressing questions of evidence and impact. A distinction between monitoring and evaluation of lifelong guidance is offered, as well as different approaches to measuring the relationship between inputs and outcomes. It offers a description of the measurement of different levels of impact, reflecting on the Kirkpatrick model adapted to impacts of lifelong guidance (Kirkpatrick, 1994) as well as distinguishing different types of outcomes and impact (relating to educational, economic and employment and social outcomes). It provides different M&E approaches to data collection that can be used in of lifelong guidance.

- (a) Snapshots: taking a picture of what is happening (through surveys, interviews, or observation) and identifying whether stakeholders feel it useful.
- (b) Benchmarking: comparing snapshots of what is happening with a target or goal. Benchmarks can be either theoretical (what should be happening) or empirical (what happened when it was tried elsewhere).
- (c) Before-and-after studies: snapshots before and after the programme, to try and identify what changes have happened as a result.
- (d) Then-and-now studies: asking research participants to identify what has changed compared to how things were before implementation.
- (e) Longitudinal tracking: continued engagement with research participants to explore the long-term impacts of guidance.
- (f) Controlled trials: what happens to a cohort of clients who access career development services (the experimental group) compared to a similar cohort who do not use them (the control group). Researcher confidence in this kind of study increases if individuals can be randomly allocated to these different groups.
- (g) Cost-benefit analyses: exploration of the relative size of the inputs and outputs of a process. This is usually quantified by using financial measures.

2.1.4.5. *The EU public employment service network strategy 2020 and beyond*

The strategy (European Network of Public Employment Services, 2018) describes how rapid change and uncertainty will impact the efficiency and effectiveness of public employment services. To promote modernisation, the document outlines an

approach to renewing conventional functions and strategic changes of public employment services to:

- (a) adopt a holistic approach to tackling new labour market challenges to support jobseekers and job changers to develop their own career narrative with greater emphasis on the development of career management skills and 'after care' services to ensure job seekers remain and progress in work;
- (b) increase collaboration between PES and partners to enable better matching and transitions, with quality support services to increased number of service users and ensuring best match with employer demands and needs;
- (c) join up with the skills and education agenda to support transitions between the labour market, education, and training;
- (d) focus on sustained outcomes through secure professional transitions by working with employers and relevant labour market actors and supporting them to deal with labour market shortages;
- (e) actively encourage the use of career management tools and career adaptability to support the sustainable integration of individuals into the labour market.

To ensure maximum labour market policy impact, the document outlines key approaches to support the PES becoming more flexible, evidence-based and focused on employment outcomes, better able to demonstrate their added value and return on investment.

2.1.4.6. *The public employment service (PES) network bench learning manual*

The PES bench learning manual (Fertig and Ziminiene, 2017) emphasises the need to cooperate, exchange ideas and participate in mutual learning to improve the quality of guidance services, given the wide range of guidance-oriented activities in which PES may engage within the employment sector (e.g. career counselling, assessment of skills, provision of career and labour market information). The manual describes bench learning as an iterative process using a 'build-up approach' to improve institutional performance and a continuous change management process. The bench learning model incorporates quantitative (analysis of performance data) and qualitative (continuous process of PES self-evaluation, peer, and expert review) data and the use of performance indicators which cover aspects relating to the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of service provision.

2.1.4.7. *QUAL-IM-G*

QUAL-IM-G is an Erasmus + project which built on the experience of different projects on quality assurance for career guidance. The aim of the project was to

produce sustainable and transferable outputs to strengthen the implementation of QA systems in career guidance services in the project partner countries (Slovakia, Czech Republic, and Norway) and in other national contexts and transnational organisations. Project outputs (QUAL-IM-G project, 2019) relevant to developing and implementing M&E systems include:

- (a) Output 1, an analytical paper on quality assurance practices, which examines variations in approaches to quality assurance and considers how quality assurance standards address evaluation of guidance services;
- (b) Output 2, mentoring programmes providing guidance for practitioners on compliance with quality standards;
- (c) Output 3, certification procedures and recommendations for organisations in accordance with a certification development framework;
- (d) Output 4, Quality development framework (QDF) for career guidance providers that contains several tools, including for self-assessment designed to support service providers with continuous and sustainable quality development in career guidance provision for the individual guidance professional and the organisation providing career guidance services. Implementation of the QDF is based on voluntary participation. The QDF is applicable to quality standards (where they exist) in the different partner countries and focuses on indicators and existing standards for career guidance that are most commonly present in different European quality frameworks. The classification used in the QDF follows the key domains of quality assurance defined by Hooley and Rice (2018). These domains include policy, organisation, process, output/outcome and consumption where related criteria and indicators have been established. For outputs/outcomes, indicators relating to the opening up of educational or vocational opportunities/placement, contact with the world of work, unemployment rates, supply of skilled workforce, and social costs of unemployment are proposed;
- (e) Output 5, audit procedure: an internal audit checklist for career guidance for organisations providing career guidance to enable them to assess the extent to which they fulfil quality standards.

2.1.4.8. *OECD surveys including career guidance indicators*

The OECD has developed surveys on career guidance that can inform the development of monitoring and evaluation indicators. In *Career guidance for adults in a changing world of work* (OECD, 2021a), the OECD builds on an online survey of adult experience with career guidance in six countries. The report provides insights into the coverage and inclusiveness of career guidance, provision and

service delivery, governance, and funding as well as quality and impact of service provided.

Coverage and inclusiveness pertain to collecting information on the share of adults using career guidance services and their characteristics (low-educated, age, rural versus city living) as well as the readiness of adults to use career guidance services. The OECD survey also examines informal types of career support. The provision covers the type of providers (PES, education, and training institutions). Governance and funding looks into who is responsible for career guidance and how the different levels interact. Quality and impact is mainly reported through questions related to user satisfaction and outcomes of the process and combined with information collected from the policy questionnaire on professional training and other aspects such as labour market information, skills profiling or quality standards required to providers. This was further explored in the Canadian case (OECD, 2022).

The OECD is also exploring indicators related to career guidance for the young, especially teenagers, focusing on career readiness, using a variety of literature and surveys. Particularly relevant is the analysis of longitudinal databases from 10 different countries (Covacevich et al., 2021). The longitudinal datasets permit the analysis of the relationship between certain guidance activities students undertake as teenagers and their employment situation 20 to 23 years later. The report explores in what way teenagers 'explore the future': if they have career reflection activities, career conversations, workplace visits and participate in fairs, among other activities. They record if students have had part-time work, work placements or volunteering during their teenage years. Finally, the report also investigates the way students think about their future and job prospects. The analysis highlights the importance of longitudinal databases that can provide insights into specific aspects related to career guidance and its effectiveness, and how constancy of an indicator framework can provide valuable insights at a broader level.

2.1.5. Key literature review findings and conclusions

The M&E studies reviewed use various indicators covering outputs, outcomes, and impacts. Processes are also reviewed to some extent. The research initially reviewed, not exhaustive, mostly focuses on individual short- and medium-term outcomes, often on individuals' increased knowledge and their development of so-called 'soft skills' to progress into employment or to participate in further learning. Important are career management skills (CMS), which are the competences that help individuals identify their skills, to develop career learning goals and take action to progress in their careers. Indicators less frequently measure intermediate

effects, such as improved job search skills and sourcing labour market information, which increase chances of finding a job, and longer-term outcomes such as employment retention and career progression.

Outcomes often depend on or are influenced by the beneficiaries' characteristics, such as gender, age, educational attainment, domestic situation, location, and labour market status and experience. Outcomes also depend on the intervention, which can vary in terms of intensity, duration, individual or integrated activities, and the experience of practitioners. Some outcomes may also be steps in a process, such as an improvement in job readiness.

Indicator data are from primary (mainly interviews and surveys) and administrative sources, usually collected by the service provider; typically this is the national public employment service which has data on participant characteristics and progress. Administrative data is often used to follow users over a fixed period to examine what difference the intervention made to users. Surveys are also periodically carried out to collect data on individuals' outputs and outcomes. It may also be possible to use international data sets to influence the choice of indicators.

The literature reveals the challenges of isolating the outcomes and impact of career guidance from those of other concurrent, embedded, or subsequent activities. For instance, it may be difficult to distinguish outcomes of career guidance from learning and employment that follows.

Organisational and policy levels feature more in evaluations than monitoring studies, and are covered less frequently and systematically than the individual level. The literature does not provide examples of how evaluation data are used to help develop career guidance services and professionals.

The availability of analyses of value for money is limited, as it requires systematic information on costs (inputs) and outcomes, which very few studies have managed to compile exhaustively.

The literature review indicates some possible new directions for monitoring influenced by the status and role of career guidance in skill policies, and how practice has changed since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. It does not reflect advances, however, in terms of the evolution and establishment of new systems.

The literature reviewed illustrates many of the challenges in M&E of career guidance. These should be considered in developing an M&E framework that captures data for indicators which will evidence outputs, outcomes and impacts at the individual, organisational/employer and society/economic levels.

Academic and grey literature sources reviewed acknowledge the lack of evidence of the outcomes and impacts of career support and lifelong guidance

services for adults. This shortage stems from a lack of information on M&E processes, their development, and implementation. There is a notable lack of evidence on input indicators such as numbers of professionals in the field and the costs of, and investment in, their continuous professional development across different settings and sectors.

According to Barnes et al. (2020) who reviewed the coordination, funding, delivery, and structure of lifelong guidance (LLG) across Member States: 'Evidence suggests that there is a need to improve the monitoring of the inputs and outcomes of LLG with guidance on implementing new measures of impact for guidance services (such as measures of soft outcomes and distance travelled models) and activities across different contexts to support the delivery of LLG.'

The study also argues that an 'absence of standardised monitoring of inputs, processes and outcomes in most Member States do not allow for consistent assessment and evaluation of resource usage and results' and advocates adopting minimum monitoring standards for lifelong guidance.

Literature on M&E frameworks and toolkits expressly acknowledges and addresses some gaps in evidence. It provides a useful starting point for developing a robust and effective M&E framework, which includes indicators and could, potentially, guarantee evidence-based intervention design and accountable service delivery. This would improve opportunities to build the knowledge and evidence base on the results of career support interventions, particularly those reflecting the aims of career guidance provided by professionals trained in specific procedures and methods for building individual capacities.

CHAPTER 3.

Empirical findings on indicator use in selected countries

This chapter presents the results of research on national experiences of M&E of career guidance and counselling services for adults in selected countries. It discusses the rationale for selecting 40 lifelong guidance and career guidance measures across nine Member States for analysis. It maps the measures, according to the type and range of activities they cover. A typology classifies the measures according to their level of intensity, considering the different demographic user groups they serve. Findings on the use and coverage of M&E indicators are presented by:

- (a) indicator type (output, outcome, and impact);
- (b) types of measures (activities they cover, target user groups and intensity);
- (c) the countries studied.

The chapter ends with a discussion on gaps and limitations in the M&E of measures and actions to address them.

3.1. Case study country and measure selection

Of 456 career development support measures reviewed across the Member States ⁽¹⁾, 144 were identified as measures that include career guidance activities specifically or measures integrated with:

- (a) outreach and provision of information with the purpose of preparing individuals for vocational training or organised learning activities and labour market (re-engagement group/individual information sessions, provision of labour market information);

(1) The measures come from a documentary review of country practices, national data, including administrative information, available evaluation/assessment reports and studies. This also entailed a follow up of the initial literature review sources – including a review of country records in Cedefop's Inventory of lifelong guidance systems and practices (Cedefop, 2020); DG Employment's Labour market policy statistics and country reports (European Commission, 2018a, 2018b); and the national reports of the Independent national experts network in adult education and adult skills commissioned by DG Employment.

- (b) advice and career guidance (job search assistance, networking, coaching, mentoring, individual career counselling, group career counselling, peer career learning);
- (c) assessment and audits of skills and career interests;
- (d) services responsible for validation of non-formal and informal learning;
- (e) short-term work experiences/career sampling (or job shadowing);
- (f) basic skills training and motivational training programmes linked to the preparation of adults in in VET or other relevant programmes.

Criteria for selecting countries aimed to achieve:

- (a) balance of Member States across different and distinct national welfare and lifelong learning systems;
- (b) geographic spread across Europe;
- (c) different extents of adult learning participation;
- (d) countries with data availability relating to M&E data and results.

The nine countries selected were Belgium-Flanders, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, France, Italy, Lithuania, Austria, and Finland.

Across the nine countries, 40 measures were chosen from the 144 possibilities for research (see Table 9). The 40 measures were selected based on an assessment of data availability on outputs, outcomes, and impact of career guidance. Selecting these measures does not imply they are the most representative or largest in terms of scope and size in each Member State, but they are believed to maximise insights into existing M&E indicators.

Interviews were undertaken, in the nine countries selected, with national experts directly involved in the 40 measures. The research analysed experience in the M&E of lifelong guidance services and indicators used.

Table 9. **Measures selected per country**

Country & measure code	Title of measure in English	Title of measure in the original language
Austria		
AT1	Counselling for jobseekers and enterprises	<i>Beratung durch Betreuungs- und Beratungseinrichtungen (BBE)</i>
AT2	Career information centres	<i>Beratung in BIZen</i>
AT3	Individual action plans	<i>Betreuungsvereinbarung; Individuelle Betreuungspläne</i>
AT4	Educational guidance and counselling for adults	<i>Initiative Bildungsberatung Österreich im Bereich Erwachsenenbildung</i>
AT5	Work assistance for the disabled	<i>Arbeitsassistenten für Behinderte und sonstige Unterstützungsmaßnahmen der BSBs (Bundessozialämter)</i>
Belgium-Flanders		
BE-FL1	Career guidance vouchers	<i>Loopbaancheques</i>

Country & measure code	Title of measure in English	Title of measure in the original language
BE-FL2	Individual vocational training programme (IBO)	<i>Individuele beroepsopleiding (IBO)</i>
BE-FL3	Validation of non-formal and informal learning	<i>RAC/VPL</i>
Denmark		
DK1	Careers guidance services provided by trade unions	<i>Karrierevejledningstjenester leveret af fagforeninger</i>
DK2	eGuidance and guidance website for adults	<i>eVejledning og</i>
DK3	The Danish Agency for Labour Market and Recruitment (National PES)	<i>Styrelsen for Arbejdsmarked og Rekruttering (STAR)</i>
DK4	Online guidance for HE studies	<i>Studievalg Danmark</i>
Germany		
DE1	Integration agreement	<i>Eingliederungsvereinbarung – Jobcenter</i>
DE2	Vocational information centres BIZ	<i>BIZ Berufsinformationszentrum</i>
DE3	Activation and placement voucher (AVGS)	<i>Aktivierungs- und Vermittlungsgutscheine</i>
DE4	Educational guidance in Berlin	<i>Beratung Bildung und Beruf Berlin – Berliner Modell</i>
DE5	Telephone Hotline Further Education	<i>Infotelefon Weiterbildungsberatung, BMBF</i>
Estonia		
EE1	Career counselling	<i>Karjäärinõustamine</i>
EE2	Job search training/workshop	<i>Tööotsingu töötuba</i>
EE3	Peer coaching	<i>Kogemusnõustamine</i>
EE4	Coaching for working life	<i>Tööharjutus</i>
EE5	Job club	<i>Tööklubi</i>
EE6	Youth prop-up programme	<i>Noorte Tugila</i>
Finland		
FI1	One-stop guidance centres	<i>Ohjaamo</i>
FI2	PES career counselling and guidance services	<i>Työ- ja elinkeinotoimisto (TE-toimisto)</i>
FI3	Multi-sectoral joint services promoting employment	<i>Työllistymistä edistävät monialaiset yhteispalvelut (TYP)</i>
France		
FR1	Advice in professional evolution	<i>Conseil en Evolution Professionnelle, CEP</i>
FR2	Local missions	<i>Missions Locales</i>
FR3	Plan for investment in competences	<i>Plan d'investissement dans les competences, PIC</i>
FR4	Career support provided by the job centre	<i>Accompagnement Pôle Emploi</i>
Italy		
IT1	Youth Guarantee:	<i>Garanzia Giovani</i>
IT2	Reintegration voucher:	<i>Assegno di Ricollocazione</i>
IT3	Single employment voucher	<i>Dote Unica Lavoro</i>
IT4	Extra-curricular internships in Emilia-Romagna region	<i>Tirocini extracurriculari – Emilia Romagna</i>
Lithuania		

Country & measure code	Title of measure in English	Title of measure in the original language
LT1	Let's move! (YG)	<i>Judam</i>
LT2	Enhancing youth social competences (YG)	<i>Jaunimo socialinių kompetencijų didinimas</i>
LT3	AIKOS: Open information, counselling and guidance system	<i>Atvira Informavimo Konsultavimo Orientavimo Sistema</i>
LT4	Career support service package (Multiple services under the one package)	<i>Karjeros palaikymo paslaugų paketas</i>
LT5	Professional rehabilitation:	<i>Profesinė Reabilitacija</i>
LT6	EURES	<i>EURES Lietuvoje</i>

Source: Cedefop.

3.1. Measure types and service user groups

The measures can be roughly divided into eight categories in terms of activities. Table 10 shows the distribution of activities by measure:

- (a) Outreach and basic activation;
- (b) Provision of information: Group or individual; Provision of labour market information. (Info prov.);
- (c) Advice and guidance: Job search assistance, networking with professionals and employers, coaching and mentoring, individual/group career counselling, peer career learning, referrals to other services. (Adv. Guid.);
- (d) Assessment/audits of skills and career interests (Skills aud.);
- (e) Validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL);
- (f) Short-term work experiences (ST w-exp.);
- (g) Motivational training (Mot. Train.);
- (h) Basic skills training (BS train.).

Table 10. Measures per country according to activities covered

	Outreach	Info prov.	Adv. guid.	Skills aud.	VNFIL	ST w-exp.	Mot. train.	BS train.
AT1								
AT2								
AT3								
AT4								
AT5								
BEen1								
BEen2								
BEen3								
DE1								
DE2								
DE3								
DE4								
DE5								
DK1								
DK2								
DK3								
DK4								
EE1								
EE2								
EE3								
EE4								
EE5								
EE6								
FI1								
FI2								
FI3								
FR1								
FR2								
FR3								
FR4								
IT1								
IT2								
IT3								
IT4								
LT1								
LT2								
LT3								
LT4								
LT5								
LT6								
Total	14/40	38/40	37/40	23/40	12/40	14/40	11/40	11/40

In green: activities covered under the measure.

Note: DK3 "Public Employment Services" covers the entire lifelong guidance service offer which includes the following sub-measures: Bridge-building for young people; Ambassadors for education and training; Ready to go.

Source: Cedefop.

Based on the activity types outlined above, the measures were classified from least to most comprehensive, relative to their activities, into four types (Table 11). All measures provide either information or guidance and advice to varying degrees, some with initial outreach. Some provide further activities such as skills assessment and validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL), short work experiences, and motivational or basic training. Measures that primarily centre on initial outreach and basic information provision are in Type 1, having the least comprehensive offer of activities. The measures with the most comprehensive offer of activities to support adults in learning and career progression or development are in Type 4.

Table 11. **Typology of measures**

Type	Measures	Number of measures
Type 1: Outreach, provision of information, advice and/or guidance	AT2, AT4, DE2, DE3, DE4, DE5, DK1, DK4, EE1, EE2, EE3, IT2, LT3, LT6	14/40
Type 2: 1 + skills assessments and/or VNFIL	AT3, BE-FL3, DE1, DK2, IT3	5/40
Type 3: 2 + work experience or training	AT1*, AT5, Be-FL1, Be-FL2, EE4, EE5, FI2, FR1, FR2, FR3, IT1, IT4, LT2, LT4, LT5	15/40
Type 4: 2 + work experience and training	DK3, FI1, FI3, EE6, LT1, FR4	6/40

NB: *AT1 has no skills audit or VNFIL activity

Source: Cedefop.

To compare and analyse use and coverage of M&E indicators in measures of the same or a similar type, it was important to consider if the measures are universal or they target specific demographic groups, as well as the intensity of support they offer. Target user groups are divided into nine categories:

- (a) All adult user groups: unemployed, including PES registered and non-registered (All);
- (b) Long term unemployed (Unempl.);
- (c) Employed (Empl.);
- (d) Jobseekers: including employed and unemployed (Jobseek.);
- (e) Young adults: aged 18-29 (Youth);
- (f) Older workers: aged 55+ (Older);
- (g) Low-qualified (Low qual.);

- (h) Low-skilled (Low skill);
- (i) Other: includes women, migrants/refugees, persons with disabilities, lone parents, former prisoners, apprentices, under redundancy notice, career changers (Other).

Specific demographic user groups (i.e. jobseekers, young adults, older workers, low-qualified, low-skilled and others) are targeted by some measures (22 out of 40) across each of the four types. The more comprehensive the measure (Type 3 and 4), the more they target specific user groups. Measures that offer more activities tend to be targeted at a multiplicity of specific demographic groups. This is important when examining the use and coverage of M&E indicators across individual measures.

The intensity and length or frequency of support offered to individual participants (service users ⁽²⁾) varies considerably across the measures. It is important to distinguish between information only and career counselling: counselling is oriented to problem-solving and support, with discussions on work and life experiences, skills and career aspirations, planning and expectations, etc. Using this distinction, measures are grouped according to their level of intensity and support (Level 1 being low level of intensity and Level 4 being high level of intensity). Intensity of career counselling is likely to affect coverage of indicators for monitoring and/or evaluation purposes. Table 12 shows the intensity across the four types of measures. It shows that the more comprehensive the offer of activities by measure (Type 3 and 4), the more intensive the level and length of support. Type 1 measures, which are generally interactive online information systems providing information on careers and education and training opportunities (with or without practitioner presence), vary in their level of intensity and length of support. Intensity and length of support tends to be lower for measures that are universal and open to all the adult population, a high level of intensity.

Table 12. **Intensity and length of support by measure type**

Level of intensity	Type 1	Type 2	Type 3	Type 4
Level 1: Measures with a sole/main focus on providing information infrastructure	AT2, DE2, LT3	DK2		

⁽²⁾ The terms 'participants' and 'service users' are used in this report interchangeably to mean the persons who participate in/use the services; they may also be part of a group of users.

Level of intensity	Type 1	Type 2	Type 3	Type 4
Level 2: Measures with a focus on providing short advice/tailored information	DE5, DK1, DK4, LT6			DK3
Level 3: Measures combining short advice/tailored information with the provision of short counselling processes	AT4, DE4, EE1, EE2	AT3, DE1	BE-FL1, FI2, FR1, FR2, LT4	FI1, FI3, FR4
Level 4: Measures providing blends of short and extended consultation processes/long-term case management	DE3, EE3, IT2	BE-FL3, IT3	AT1, AT5, BE-FL2, EE4, EE5, FR3, IT1, IT4, LT2, LT5	EE6, LT1

NB: *AT1 has no skills audit or VNFIL activity.
Source: Cedefop.

3.2. Findings on use and coverage of M&E indicators

Having been grouped by type, target user group and level of intensity of support, the measures were mapped according to use and coverage of M&E output, outcome, and impact indicators. Table 13 presents a list of the output, outcome, and impact indicators across the 40 measures.

Table 13. **Overview of minimum output, outcome, and impact indicators**

	Indicator
Output	Number of participants
	Profile of participants
	Number of participants who complete an activity (process) or steps within it
	Number of participants who progress on pathway to (pre)-employment or learning
	Satisfaction with the use of career development activities
Outcome	<i>Level of the individual</i>
	Increased knowledge and skills
	Progress to learning opportunities
	Progress to longer pre-employment/ work experience
	Progress to employment
	Career progression
	<i>Institutional level</i>
	Better match between offer of training and skills needs

	Indicator
	<p>Improved capacity of organisations to provide career development activities</p> <p>Improved know-how and raised quality standards on career development service provision</p>
Impact	Level of the individual
	Increased qualification level
	Increased employability
	Higher salary
	Increased participation in lifelong learning
	Improved wellbeing
	Level of society
	Increased participation of adults in education and training
	Increased employment
	Reduction in the cost of social welfare
	Level of the economy
	Higher productivity
Higher wages	

Source: Cedefop.

3.2.1. Use and coverage of indicators by outputs, outcomes, and impacts

3.2.1.1. Output indicators

Across the 40 measures, there is a good coverage of output indicators. All except two collect data for numbers of participants (however, few distinguish between new participants and returners.)

Some 31 of the 40 measures collect data for indicators on the profile of participants that can be used to understand output data. Data are mostly limited to age, gender, professional status, and educational attainment. However, there are gaps and inconsistencies in the quality of information collected which can limit comparisons of sub-groups of participants. As participants can have multiple, complex strengths and needs, limited information on participant profiles can lead to a lack of understanding of their needs and the interventions best suited.

Universal measures available to all adults, which are generally interactive online information systems, usually did not collect much, if any, data on participant profiles. Comprehensive measures, frequently targeted at various user groups, tend to collect participant profile data, such as measures combining career guidance with skills assessment, those combining work experience or training with skills assessments and VNFIL.

Most measures (27 out of 40) collect data for the completion indicator. These tend to be comprehensive measures supporting unemployed job seekers and are specifically designed for vulnerable groups. This enables close monitoring of the service user groups, with good examples being observed in the Guidance and counselling PES service in Austria (AT1) and the Professional rehabilitation measure in Lithuania (LT5).

There are significant gaps in the range and quality of indicators monitoring progress on pathways to (pre)-employment or learning, with only 23 measures collecting data for this indicator, which is more important for comprehensive and intense measures where progress towards a job or training could be expected.

Data to monitor participant satisfaction with activities/services are collected in various ways by 17 of the 40 measures. Measures with satisfaction output indicators use questionnaire surveys, which tend to capture the immediate effect on participants leaving an activity. Some measures aim to capture satisfaction at different stages along with other data on outcomes.

3.2.1.2. *Use and coverage of outcome indicators*

Across the 40 measures, there is relatively good coverage of a few outcome indicators at the level of the individual, but poor coverage at other levels.

For outcome indicators at the individual participant level, there are significant gaps and inconsistencies in coverage relating to increased knowledge and skills. Only six measures (AT2, AT4, BE-FL2, FI1, FI3, IT4) have indicators relating to this, despite it being an expected outcome indicator for most measures, particularly those for the unemployed. Examples of such indicators include whether participants have increased their knowledge and skills since before the intervention, and whether they have acquired self-confidence to use a skill, such as in making career-related decisions (FI1; One-stop guidance centres: FI2; PES career counselling and guidance services: FI3; Multi-sectoral joint services promoting employment).

It is unclear why most measures do not have outcome indicators on applying skills and understanding, or to changes in attitudes and behaviours. A challenge for these indicators is differentiating between different dimensions of knowledge and skills and identifying those on which the intervention is focusing. Research literature shows a range of outcomes that can include career adaptability skills, behavioural and attitudinal changes (see Bimrose and Hearne, 2012; Brown and Bimrose, 2014, 2015, 2018; Johnston, 2018).

Few measures attempt to monitor whether individuals have gained knowledge through use of tools or assessments of different kinds or by participant self-

assessment on completion. Most measures that offer skills audits or VNFIL do not collect data on increased knowledge and skills.

There are also significant gaps in the range and quality of indicators monitoring progress to learning. Indicators measuring progress to learning and the outcome should be integral where some or all participants are expected to engage in education and training provision to acquire skills, but only 17 out of 40 measures collect data for this indicator. Good examples of this include the Guidance and counselling PES service in Austria (AT1), Educational guidance measure in Germany (DE4) and the Career counselling and guidance PES services in Finland (FI2) which follow-up participants 3 and 6 months after completion of their intervention to capture their participation in learning.

Just under half of the measures (19 out of 40) collect data on progress to longer pre-employment or employment. This indicator tends to be in measures offering a range of activities including basic skills training and short-term work experience opportunities. Where this is done, data on progression to different categories of employment status attained is collected. For example, progression to marginal employment, wage-subsidised employment, permanent and temporary employment, full and part-time. Such examples can be found in the case of the Counselling for Jobseekers and Enterprise PES measure in Austria (AT1) and the Single Employment Voucher measure in Italy (IT3). Few measures monitor progress to employment and link it with other progress indicators such as sustainability of employment and further progression to jobs. Both the Job Club and Youth Prop-up measures in Estonia (EE5, EE6) collect data on the employment status of participants 12 months after completing the programme, while the Professional rehabilitation measure in Lithuania (LT5) monitors employment status 3, 6 and 12 months after completing the intervention.

No measure that has sustained employment as an expected outcome collects data on the characteristics of the jobs found by the participants (occupation, wage, sector) and so are unable to monitor job quality. However, nine measures collect other data at 12 months after the intervention has been completed to monitor career progression.

Coverage of outcome indicators at institutional level is scarce. No measure collects data on the suggested indicator for 'better match between offer of training and skills needs'. With changing labour markets and new forms of work, pressure is increasing on public employment services and other providers of career support to understand these changes and prepare and match jobseekers to new modes of employment according to their needs, profile and competences.

Only one measure, IT1 Youth Guarantee, collects data on the capacity of organisations to provide career development activities. It also collects data on

participants' satisfaction, but it is not clear whether results on participant satisfaction serve to estimate improvements in organisational capacity building. Elsewhere, under the One-stop guidance centres measure in Finland (F11), centres are required to undertake self-evaluation of the services delivered in terms of cost-efficiency. No measure studied collects data for an indicator on 'improved know-how of organisation staff and raised quality standards on career development service provision'. This may reflect shortcomings in accountability and quality assurance.

3.2.1.3. *Use and coverage of impact indicators*

Overall, there is poor coverage of impact indicators to monitor longer-term results and evaluate benefits and effects, making it difficult to estimate (economic and social) returns on investment in career development support. For some measures, this is understandable given their low intensity. Use of impact indicators at individual, societal and economic levels are discussed below.

Impact indicators at the individual level have significant gaps in coverage of increased levels of qualification. No measures include education and training activities that could lead to a formal qualification (e.g. DK3, FR2, FR3, FR4, IT1, IT2, LT5), achievement of a skill certification or an increased qualification level.

Data for the increased employability indicator is only collected, in different ways, by seven measures (AT1, F11, F12, F13, IT1, IT2, IT3), reflecting the lack of data collected on sustainable employment and the limited use of evaluation studies.

Impact indicator on higher salary is provided by just one measure, which relates to the evaluation of Counselling for jobseekers and enterprises in Austria (AT1), with the employment situation of participants 2 years prior to and after participation examined. Data include increased participation of adults in lifelong learning but not increased qualification level. Data are collected by two measures for an indicator on increased participation in lifelong learning (AT1, F1). Very few measures collect data on improved wellbeing, a key challenge being how to measure the causal relationship with participation in a career guidance service.

There are significant gaps and inconsistencies in using impact indicators at the societal level. Only the PES measure in Denmark (DK3) collects data on the increased participation of adults in education and training; there is some overlap with the outcome indicator on progress to learning and impact level indicator on increased participation in lifelong learning, where measures also include education/training activities leading to a qualification. Similarly, there are significant gaps and inconsistencies in the use of the indicator on increased employment. The Youth Guarantee (IT1), The Reintegration Voucher (IT2) and Multi-Sectoral Joint

Services Promoting Employment (FI3) measures are examples that use this indicator.

No measure collects data on the reduction in the cost of social welfare, which could provide evidence of a fall in social security claimants after engaging with the service and the financial benefits this brings in relation to the measure's value for money. The available information also did not include further use of complementary survey data, for example, to capture any impact on the cost of social welfare benefits.

Economic impact indicators are also poorly covered. There are no data on the longer-term outcomes of measures, such as higher productivity, reductions in skills gaps and shortages, lower unemployment, and higher wages. These types of indicators are relevant for large-scale measures such as national programmes with high intensity interventions.

3.2.1.4. *Key observations*

Across the 40 measures, the following general conclusions can be drawn.

- (a) There is good coverage of output indicators to monitor immediate results.
- (b) There is relatively good coverage of a small range of outcome indicators at the individual level, but poor coverage of outcome indicators at other levels.
- (c) There are significant gaps in use and coverage of impact indicators to monitor longer-term results and evaluate benefits and value for money, but such indicators would be appropriate for large-scale measures.
- (d) There are inconsistencies and shortcomings in indicator coverage in all nine countries. Some measures offer activities not covered by indicators.
- (e) Indicator coverage tends to be more extensive when measures target specific demographic user groups or offer extended and specialised counselling services.
- (f) For measures that offer similar career guidance services use of indicators is inconsistent. Very few have the range of indicators that might be expected to cover the services being provided. Inconsistencies may be due to how different providers perceive M&E and resource it.
- (g) Evaluation in career guidance and support for adults is neither systematic nor commonplace, while monitoring seems more systematic, albeit largely across a range of basic output indicators.

3.2.2. **Use and coverage of indicators by type of measure**

This section presents the main findings of the empirical research on the use and coverage of M&E indicators by the typology of measure according to the comprehensiveness of the activities they cover.

Type 1: Outreach, providing information, advice and/or guidance (14 out of 40).

Type 2: Type 1 + skills assessments and/or VNFIL (5 out of 40).

Type 3: Type 2 + work experience OR training (15 out of 40).

Type 4: Type 2 + work experience AND training (6 out of 40).

Findings are summarised in Table 14.

Table 14. **Overview of output, outcome, and impact indicators by measure type**

	Indicator	Type 1	Type 2	Type 3	Type 4	
Output	Number of participants	13/14	5/5	15/15	6/6	
	Profile of participants	8/14	3/5	12/15	6/6	
	Number of participants who complete an activity (process) or steps within it	5/14	4/5	13/15	5/6	
	Number of participants who progress on pathway to (pre)-employment or learning	4/14	3/5	9/15	6/6	
	Satisfaction with the use of career development activities	4/14	2/5	7/15	4/6	
Level of the individual						
Outcome	Increased knowledge and skills	2/14	0/5	2/15	2/6	
	Progress to learning opportunities	5/14	0/5	6/15	5/6	
	Progress to longer pre-employment/ work experience	5/14	1/5	8/15	4/6	
	Progress to employment	6/14	1/5	9/15	6/6	
	Career progression	2/14	0/5	2/15	3/6	
	Institutional level					
	Better match between offer of training and skills needs	0/14	0/5	0/15	0/6	
	Improved capacity of organisations to provide career development activities	0/14	0/5	1/15	0/6	
	Improved know-how and raised quality standards on career development service provision	0/14	0/5	0/15	0/6	
	Other				1/6 ⁽³⁾	
Level of the individual:						

⁽³⁾ Centres undertake self-evaluation of service delivery.

	Indicator	Type 1	Type 2	Type 3	Type 4
	Increased qualification level	0/14	0/5	0/15	0/6
	Increased employability	1/14	1/5	3/15	2/6
	Higher salary	0/14	0/5	1/15	0/6
	Increased participation in lifelong learning	0/14	0/5	2/15	0/6
	Improved wellbeing	0/14	0/5	1/15	2/6
	Level of society:				
	Increased participation of adults in education and training	0/14	0/5	0/15	1/6
	Increased employment	1/14	1/5	1/15	1/6
	Reduction in the cost of social welfare	0/14	0/5	0/15	0/6
	Level of the economy:				
	Higher productivity	0/14	0/5	0/15	0/6
	Higher wages	0/14	0/5	0/15	0/6
	Other				2/6 ⁽⁴⁾

Source: Cedefop.

All Type 1 measures perform monitoring on at least one output indicator, with 'number of participants' and 'profile of participants' being the indicators most frequently monitored. There are otherwise significant gaps in the coverage of indicators on 'number of participants who complete an activity (process) or steps within it', and 'progress on pathway to (pre) employment or learning'. Only four Type 1 measures monitor participant satisfaction.

Just under half of Type 1 measures (6 out of 14) cover outcome indicators, with 'progress to employment' being the one most frequently monitored, and 'increased knowledge/skills' and 'career progression' least monitored. On impact indicators, with its focus on labour market reintegration and its offer of in-depth and extended counselling services, IT2 is the only Type 1 measure that collects data on the 'increased employability' indicator at individual level and the corollary 'increased employment' at the level of society.

⁽⁴⁾ In Finland, the evaluation of the One-stop guidance centres (FI1) reported net benefits to the public sector economy. Cost savings are also reported in the Multi-sectoral joint services promoting employment measure (FI3). There are no clear insights into how a measurement of cost savings is derived at for FI1 or FI3.

For the remaining Type 1 measures, coverage of impact indicators may not be so relevant since they all centre on initial outreach and basic information provision. These measures often act as a stepping-stone to more advanced and intense support measures which will impact more greatly on the participants' skills and professional development.

For Type 2 measures, overall coverage of outputs indicators is good across the measures, albeit with some gaps and inconsistencies. For example, BE-FL3 combines extended counselling services with VNFIL but does not collect data on indicators related to 'number of participants who progress on pathway to (pre)-employment or learning' or 'satisfaction with services received'. Looking at outcome indicators, there is little use and coverage among Type 2 measures (covered in only one of the five measures ⁽⁵⁾) with IT3 being the exception. This is the Single employment voucher measure that targets specific user groups and includes skills audit and VNFIL in addition to extended counselling. Outcome data on progress to longer pre-employment and progress to employment is recorded. This measure is also the only Type 2 measure that has impact indicators, monitoring whether its activities impact positively on the employability of its participants.

For Type 3 measures, use and coverage of output indicators is relatively comprehensive, with all measures recording data on the number of participants. However, there is a tendency for Type 3 measures that entail short-term work experience but no training (BE-FL1, IT1, IT4, LT5) not to record data on the number of participants who progress onto a learning or employment pathway. Just less than a half of Type 3 measures record data on participant satisfaction with the activities.

All Type 3 measures cover at least one outcome indicator except for EE4 (Coaching for working life) and FR1 (Advice in professional evolution), which would denote shortcomings in M&E for these measures. The outcome indicator most frequently covered across Type 3 measures is 'progress to employment', which appears to be logical as measures in this group entail either (basis skills and/or motivational) training or short-term work experience.

The coverage of impact indicators at individual level is limited among Type 3 measures (3 out of 15: AT1, FI2, IT1). No pattern seems to emerge from the analysis. For example, AT1 and IT1 entail extended and specialised counselling services and include impact data. Other measures in this group also entail the same activity but do not cover impact indicators.

⁽⁵⁾ See Finland's OCGE measure (FI1).

Type 4 measures entail the most comprehensive offer of activities and have a relatively comprehensive coverage of indicators: this is the case for output indicators. All Type 4 measures cover at least one outcome indicator, with 'progress to employment' being covered across them all. Progress to learning is also a widely covered outcome indicator, which can be explained by the comprehensiveness of Type 4 measure activities combining skills audits and VNFIL with training. Coverage of impact indicators – at individual, society, or institutional level – is limited. The Finnish measures stand out as having the most extensive coverage of all types of impact indicator.

Key observations relating to the analysis of measures by type and range of activity they cover can be drawn from the small and varied selection of measures studied:

- (a) The more comprehensive the measure, the wider the use and coverage of indicators, especially output indicators;
- (b) While impact indicators appear to be marginally better covered among Type 3 and 4 measures, significant gaps remain. This suggests that evaluation of measures for career guidance is neither systematic nor common, while monitoring seems more systematic, albeit predominantly across a range of basic output indicators;
- (c) Indicators, generally, tend to focus on individuals rather than organisations.

3.3. Gaps in data and methodology limitations, and actions to address them

The literature review and analysis of country practices reveal common challenges related to gaps in the use and coverage of M&E data. The empirical review of the measures reveals gaps in the continuous and consistent collection of monitoring data on participants in lifelong career guidance. Often, separate systems for monitoring measures are established, either because services are not part of a wider data monitoring system, or because it is left to contractors/agencies to collect data. Fragmentation means that data quality and depth can vary between measures in the same country. Data are mostly collected to meet organisational mandates. Broader monitoring and evaluation objectives of accountability and transparency are not always clear priorities.

There is a lack of common understanding and clarity over outputs, outcomes, and impacts that a measure is expected to achieve, which may explain much of the variation and the gaps in coverage. Guidance material is not always helpful as it often provides a range of parameters to provide quality assurance rather than focusing on simpler sets of achievements and means of measuring them.

There is also a lack of coordination between different funding bodies. Different ministries, ESF managing authorities, and regional/local partners, for example, require different data. Outsourcing of services and activities may be a reason for this. There are measures where responsibility for career guidance services is split between several partners.

Outsourcing to various service providers has led to service fragmentation. Activities offered under any one measure can be provided by different providers, often with no coordinated M&E efforts. Fragmentation and lack of coordination mean that it is difficult to determine patterns and levels of integrated service provision to support individual learning pathways. However, it can be overcome through central direction and multi-stakeholder cooperation on monitoring data ⁽⁶⁾.

There is limited recognition of the value of collecting data and a lack of a culture of evaluation and ways of achieving it cost effectively. Monitoring systems reviewed seem inefficient in how they exploit opportunities to collect data while participants are engaged. M&E is treated separately from front-line service delivery, which can lead to added expense to employ additional specialist staff to collect and analyse data, particularly if front-line practitioners are not involved.

3.3.1. Common challenges and ways to address them

None of the nine countries has a central M&E system for lifelong career guidance. This is both a key structural limitation and a barrier to encouraging M&E. M&E is complicated by outsourcing measures from the public employment service to other providers in certain countries, without clear monitoring data requirements. Further, the lack of multi-stakeholder cooperation in running different activities under a single measure also poses problems for M&E.

There are possible solutions and actions to address these issues.

- (a) Engaging service providers in a quality assurance framework for career guidance, which gives greater emphasis to outcomes and impacts (see Hooley and Rice, 2018).
- (b) Increasing service providers' appreciation of the benefits of M&E in order to resource it better. Adequate resourcing guarantees the implementation of M&E methodologies suited to capturing progress towards well-defined strategic objectives.
- (c) Encouraging service providers to develop their own service logic models (based on the model devised for this study with guidance on indicators appropriate for the activity). This could ensure more indicators are considered depending on the complexity, intensity, and duration of the activities.

⁽⁶⁾

- (d) Providing resources and guides tailored to career guidance services, such as from the *Erasmus+ QUAL-IM-GUIDE project* and the ELGPN, to help with methodologies such as longitudinal e-surveys.
- (e) Supporting national developments of participant data collection systems through peer learning, such as the public employment service Bench learning programme (Fertig and Ziminiene, 2017), to help align M&E systems to strategic goals and expected outcomes of measures.
- (f) Promoting evaluations and providing advice on how to overcome the challenges they face.

Immediate actions could include the following.

- (a) Resourcing to support the professional development of practitioners: awareness raising on M&E and evidence-based decision-making.
- (b) Developing frontline expertise to understand the purpose of M&E data for improvements to services.
- (c) Peer learning on M&E among stakeholders and service providers involved in the delivery of services.

Longer-term actions could include the following.

- (a) Encouraging and supporting integration and centralisation of data management systems across service providers: vertical integration.
- (b) Encouraging and supporting institutional change and collaborative governance to develop a more unified service offer and data collection systems around a common strategy for adult support for careers and learning: horizontal integration.

CHAPTER 4.

Towards M&E indicators for career guidance

Based on the literature review, the country case studies, indicators in the QAE framework (ELGPN, 2015b, 2016) and the Kirkpatrick model (Kirkpatrick, 1994), and using the logic model designed specifically for this study (Section 4.1.2), this chapter proposes potential M&E indicators for career guidance interventions and processes for selecting them. The proposed list of indicators can be used as a discussion tool and for reflecting on what data is available in a country, and how a quality framework could be developed. The work presented here is a first step towards creating agreed common European standards and for promoting indicator use for evidence collection as one feature of quality frameworks.

4.1. Determining indicators and methods

4.1.1. Conceptual basis

A conceptual basis is essential for all the agreed elements to be assessed and monitored in a comprehensive quality framework.

Developing M&E indicators requires three levels:

- (a) conceptual, to define the theoretical architecture of the framework and describe the concept(s) to be measured;
- (b) empirical, the indicators used to measure the conceptual dimensions;
- (c) pragmatic, the usability and relevance of the indicators with respect to the measure being evaluated.

The focus here is on the pragmatic level. Indicators need to consider the characteristics of the specific measures, the socioeconomic context, and the relationship with any quality framework or standards applicable at national, regional, or local levels. Not all indicators should be used in every context and at every time. Data availability is also important, especially for the career guidance cross-cutting nature and challenges in collaborating with a range of actors across sectors.

Although this study does not reach a comprehensive system of indicators within a full quality framework, stakeholders developing such a product would benefit from consideration of these levels. On a smaller scale, these ideas informed work on the suggested indicators presented in Chapter 4 and were observed in participant contributions to the Cedefop workshop on M&E in lifelong guidance in

March 2022 (Chapter 5) and are consistent with agreed methodological principles on links between concepts and indicators (Boudon and Lazarfeld, 1965).

4.1.1.1. *Key terms*

The conceptual basis required a working meaning of the key terms ‘monitoring’, ‘evaluation’, ‘indicator’ and ‘target’ in relation to career guidance related interventions departing from a common understanding.

- (a) Monitoring: continuous collection, analysis, and use of information/evidence about service delivery or an ongoing intervention to ensure it is implemented according to plan or expected development, which is also associated with relevant quality or service standards, or reference frameworks (such as the ELGPN guidelines mentioned earlier).
- (b) Evaluation: process of assessing results of either an ongoing or completed intervention at a fixed point in time. Evaluations determine whether the intervention is successful based on the extent to which it meets a series of set (or ex-ante) targets and objectives, and quality standards/criteria.
- (c) Indicator: a quantitative or qualitative parameter that measures performance of a policy intervention over time. Indicators should reflect the purposes of a policy intervention. Ideally, for an indicator to be useful in monitoring and evaluation (quantitative), it must be defined, measured, or calculated in the same way for a relatively long period of time. This is important so that statistics are comparable across different places and in the same place over different times. There are also qualitative indicators that identify key areas to be monitored for progress.
- (d) Target: the point (or benchmark) to be reached or maintained. Targets show whether a measure is fulfilling its objectives or not, and by how much. Targets are more sensitive to the context in which an intervention operates (national settings, groups targeted) than indicators. This report, however, does not present quantitative targets.

Indicators and targets inform on performance. Monitoring provides a feedback loop where the outputs, outcomes and impacts achieved by a measure inform on the appropriateness, the expenditure, and activities it provides.

In evaluation, indicators provide data on inputs, processes, outputs, outcomes and impacts to answer questions about efficiency and effectiveness and inform policy. Ongoing evaluation, such as feedback, takes place before an intervention is concluded, and can inform decisions on how to revise a policy intervention.

Career support and guidance are designed to empower individuals towards positive change. The impact of quality career support should be measured by the individual and community in specific ways, and any M&E model must reflect this.

4.1.2. Logic model

M&E informs planning, design and delivery of career development and lifelong learning support measures to return benefits to individual target service users. With an effective feedback system and supporting policies, M&E should improve services and inform practitioner training and competence development.

Career guidance is not a linear process. The effects of a series of guidance interventions may be incremental or experienced over or after a long period of time. However, it was considered helpful to use and adapt a linear logic model to generate evidence about M&E indicators to support indicator selection, identification of available data, and appropriate methodologies. The model helped guide fieldwork, the country case studies and the structure for the indicators selected.

Logic models have an input-process-output-outcome-impact sequence representing a linear process of a policy intervention. Figure 1 shows this sequence and potential indicators. The model is a representation, it does not depict reality, but it shows potential indicators and target areas and their linear relationship. Indicators can vary according to context, such as when used at different levels (client-facing services, organisation, or public policy) or areas (education, training, or employment).

The logic model is inspired by the literature review (particularly Barnes et al., 2020), the Quality-assurance and evidence-base framework (ELGPN, 2015a, 2016), and the Kirkpatrick model characteristics (Kirkpatrick, 1994).

- (a) Outputs measure intervention short-term performance and are related to its operational objectives. They are divided into two groups: individual, to monitor the intervention's scope (such as number of participants), and institutional, to help monitor the quality of the career guidance process in relation to tangible results of a measure or activity.
- (b) Outcomes measure the intervention's medium-term performance and are closely related to its strategic objectives. Benefits relate to the individual and could be economic, social, emotional, or relational and include greater resilience or career adaptability (Brown and Bimrose 2014; 2015; 2018).
- (c) Impacts measure an intervention's long-term performance (effect) and are related to strategic policy objectives. Three types of impact indicators cover the individual, society, and the economy (including social inclusion, local development, upskilling, etc.).

4.1.2.1. Challenges to consider

It is assumed that there can be dedicated M&E systems for lifelong career guidance for adults, which aim to provide evidence to improve performance of

interventions and services and, in the best case, feed into the wider LLG system or into other systems in which career guidance is embedded. Improvements can involve readjustments in terms of inputs or resources dedicated to an intervention (of varying sizes). However, it is difficult to collect precise data on inputs and to establish causal links between level or nature of inputs and performance of an intervention.

It is also assumed that M&E systems across Member States are of a similar level and broadly reflect the dimensions of the logic model, although all Member States have different experiences of M&E for lifelong career guidance for adults. It should be noted that the proposed indicators are detached from any specific national context.

Constructing a consolidated and overarching approach to M&E also assumes a chain of effects leading to any possible outcome or impact (Robertson, 2021). The logic model assumes that certain intervention activities and processes have positive effects at the individual level. The model also assumes that the level of expenditure or scale of input is commensurate to the scope of the intervention.

Figure 1. Logic model with examples of possible target elements and indicators

INPUTS	ACTIVITIES (processes)	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES	IMPACTS
<p>Public expenditure on activities identifying:</p> <p>Expenditure by activity (direct and indirect)</p> <p>Expenditure by funding source (public and private)</p> <p>Unit costing by activity (direct e.g. staff cost; indirect e.g. facility cost)</p>	<p>Outreach:</p> <p>Activation and motivational activities</p> <p>Provision of information</p> <p>Provision of advice and guidance:</p> <p>Coaching and mentoring, job-search assistance counselling and career management support, referrals to other services</p> <p>Assessments/skill audits:</p> <p>Includes assessment of career aspirations</p> <p>Validation of non-formal and informal learning</p> <p>Motivational training</p> <p>Short-term work experiences</p> <p>Basic skills training</p>	<p>Number of participants</p> <p>Number of participants who complete an activity (process) or steps within it</p> <p>Number of participants who progress on pathway to (pre)-employment or learning</p> <p>Satisfaction with the use of career development activities</p>	<p>Individual:</p> <p>Increased knowledge and skills</p> <p>Progress to learning opportunities</p> <p>Progress to longer pre-employment/work experience</p> <p>Progress to employment</p> <p>Career progression</p> <p>Institutional:</p> <p>Better match between offer of training and skill needs</p> <p>Improved capacity of organisations to provide career development activities</p> <p>Improved know-how and raised quality standards on career development service provision</p>	<p>Individual:</p> <p>Increased qualification level</p> <p>Increased employability</p> <p>Higher salary</p> <p>Increased participation in lifelong learning</p> <p>Improved wellbeing</p> <p>Society:</p> <p>Increased participation of adults in education and training</p> <p>Increased employment</p> <p>Reduction in the cost of social welfare</p> <p>Economy:</p> <p>Higher productivity</p> <p>Higher wages</p>

Source: Cedefop.

4.1.3. Applying SMART criteria

SMART criteria (Doran, 1981) were applied to select the most relevant indicators from those identified from the literature review, previous work on quality assurance frameworks and practice and activities in the nine countries studied.

Two additional criteria were considered for the selection (SMART+):

- (a) frequency: the indicator should be commonly used for some of the services or measures. A more rarely used indicator could be valuable if it was being used in development work;
- (b) applicability: the indicator should be applicable across different systems for career guidance and not overly dependent on context.

Table 15. SMART criteria for the selection of indicators

Criterion	Description
Specific	The indicator must capture the essence of the desired result, whether it measures outputs, outcomes or impact. It must be evidently related to direct achievements of a particular intervention and sufficiently accurate.
Measurable	The indicator must be observable, or otherwise have the capacity to be analysed, tested or challenged to determine progress.
Achievable and attributable	The indicator must be achievable in view of its targets. This means changes to the indicator may be anticipated if the intervention is appropriate.
Relevant	The indicator must be related to the type of intervention being measured as well as its expected results. In this case, indicators must be chosen to enable the improvement of particular services.
Timely	The indicator must be timely with regard terms of to time spent on data collection and in terms of the time difference between the output delivery and expected change in outcomes or impacts.

Source: Cedefop based on Doran (1981).

Input indicators are also included in the logic model. Input indicators relate to resources to deliver the activities being monitored, such as funding, and quantity and quality of staff. Process indicators (such as activities) can help explain outputs and outcomes (Redekopp, Bezanson, and Dugas, 2015), including those linked to quality standards and delivery of consistent professional services. In the field of career development, however, a range of factors can have an influence on individual and social outcomes.

4.2. Proposed M&E indicators

Proposed M&E indicators are set out in Tables 16 to 19 below. They are presented grouped through target elements, specified in the third column, which represent areas for M&E to consider. The fourth column shows the main rationale for including the indicator and where the indicator might have been used or defined. Where the indicator was used in several measures for each country, 'Common in the measures studied' is shown. The column also shows where indicators were not used to monitor the measures analysed but are included based on concepts or the literature review and supported by experts in the field.

This is not a quality framework but a step towards building one. The indicators are not exhaustive or prescriptive, but a tool for policy dialogue as a step towards common ground at European level. They are both found in the countries, in the literature, but more work is needed to develop them in view of new findings and advances in the field of career guidance in different contexts, and in view of different user groups, not all considered in the study. Any indicators will need to be adapted to national circumstances and specificities of the lifelong guidance system that they are monitoring.

Table 16. **Input and process indicators**

	Target elements	Further specified elements	Potential indicator	Comment
1	Practitioner competence	Recognised qualifications relevant to careers sector	Recognised qualifications relevant to careers sector: share of fully qualified practitioners	Used in Italy under the Youth Guarantee (IT1)
2		Engaged in continuing professional development	Number of CPD hours undertaken in 1 year at a career practitioner level and at manager of career development services level	As defined in the QAE framework. No evidence found in the measures under study.
3	Citizen/user involvement	Ease of access to relevant services and products	Specific policy and targets set for equality and diversity in service design and delivery: % of individuals from diverse backgrounds representing their views on careers service design and delivery	This indicator helps to assess the availability and usefulness of individual plans. No evidence found in the measures under study.
4			Careers dedicated staff to client ratio	Common in the measures studied. Most of PES collect this information
5		Participation of users	Cost per intervention e.g. number of staff hours and overhead costs divided by numbers of differing types of interventions	As defined in the QAE framework. No evidence found in the measures under study
6			An agreed percentage of citizen/end-user representatives informing the management team responsible for annual and long-term planning	As defined in the QAE framework. No evidence found in the measures under study
7		An agreed level of user participation in follow-up evaluation surveys		
8	Service provision and improvement	Quality management system (QMS)	Evidence of a QMS to an agreed national common standard to include at minimum measures of: (i) practitioner competence;(ii) citizen/user involvement;(iii) connectivity to education and labour markets;(iv) benchmarking and actions for continuous improvement	As defined in the QAE framework. No evidence found in the measures under study
9		Service provision and improvement: Appropriate ICT tools and software	Level of financial investment in ICT equipment and software e.g. breakdown of actual costs compared to previous year	

	Target elements	Further specified elements	Potential indicator	Comment
10		Up-to-date knowledge in and expertise of education and labour markets	Level of investment in labour market information resources and training. Access to national, EU and international databases on learning and work opportunities / qualification equivalences / job descriptions (breakdown of costs for developing on-line and off-line publications and materials; staff time spent on LMI training and resource developments compared with option of buying in consultancy expertise)	
11		Profile and characteristics of practitioners	Level of investment in staff training. % of staff trained and associated costs	

Source: Cedefop.

Table 17. **Output elements**

	Target elements	Further specified elements	Potential indicator	Comment
1	Client satisfaction with services provided	Perceived quality	Share of individuals satisfied with the quality of services expressed as a percentage of total surveyed participants.	In the measures studied, not all countries monitor this aspect systematically. Usually only questions about the overall quality are asked. Participants are rarely asked whether they believe that the measure has improved their career prospects.
2		Perceived effectiveness	Share of participants claiming that participation in the measure increased their chances to find employment or achieve better career prospects	
3	Output by characteristics of the participant	By general individual characteristics of participants	Gender, age, ethnicity and attainment, domestic situation, geographic location, education (both level and field)	Common in the measures studied
4		By career-related background of participants	Employment status: employment status of the participant before the intervention/experience, length of time a participant has been unemployed prior to accessing the service (if relevant); information about all active labour market activities in which the individual participated 3 years prior; whether the user was registered in PES before the activity, for how long the individual participated in an active job search	Because of limitation of administrative data in some countries, details of participants' career-related background are not currently monitored

5	Number of participants	Who completes activity/steps	Share of participants who complete an activity	Common in the measures studied
6		Who progresses on pathway	Share of participants involved in other career services/activities or integrated ones, (e.g. motivational training, longer term guidance, etc.) 1 month after participation in an activity.	Because of limitation of administrative data in some countries, details of participants' further path from career services is not systematically monitored

Source: Cedefop.

Table 18. **Outcomes elements**

	Target elements	Further specified elements	Potential indicator	Comment
1	Increased knowledge/skills	CMS	Share of individuals whose career management skills (CMS) increased after the interventions/experience with career services: comparison before and after.	Almost all studies analysed emphasise the need to measure/assess learning outcomes. However, there are few cases where learning is systematically monitored in real life cases. Most countries monitor some aspects of improved knowledge. Moreover, before and after methods to assess outcomes over the life course are missing.
2			Increase of individual's career management skills: comparison of changes before and after using qualitative (e.g. portfolios) and quantitative assessment	
3		Decision making capabilities	Diminished career decision-making difficulties	
4	Changes in career-related behaviour	Job searches	Changes in job searches by (former) participants	Little evidence was found in the measures under study that monitor these aspects. There are very few studies assessing these indicators. However, there were signs of interest in carrying out a pilot and monitoring these indicators.
5		Job applications	Track job applications by (former) participants	
6		Job interviews	Track number of job interviews obtained by participants	
7	Changes in career and learning	Progress to learning	Share of individuals who participated in education and training during the last 4 weeks (measured 3 and 6 months after an intervention)	Common in the measures studied.
8		Progress to employment	Share of participants finding employment (measured 3 and 6 months after an intervention)	
9		Career progress	Share of participants who changed their job (position or field) after the intervention (measured 3 and 6 months after an intervention)	A high number of career guidance service providers are used to monitoring progress of unemployed participants There is no evidence of countries (measures) that monitor this aspect.
10		Participation in volunteering activities	Share of participants who started participating in volunteering activities (measured 3 and 6 months after an intervention)	

11		Combined indicator – participants involved in E&T, employed, self-employed, or actively volunteering after an intervention	Share of participants involved in E&T, employed, self-employed, or actively volunteering (measured 3 and 6 months after an intervention)	Combined indicators are rarely monitored in the measures reviewed
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Source: Cedefop.

Table 19. **Impact elements**

	Target elements	Further specified elements	Potential indicator	Comment
1	Education and training	Increased qualification level	Share of further education activity participants who increased their initial qualification level 1 year after this activity	Countries usually monitor increased qualification level only after (formal) training activities. However, based on the logic that career guidance services are expected to result in further education and training, increased qualification might be monitored.
2		Increased participation in adult learning	Share of participants who participated in education and training activities over the last 4 weeks (measured 1 year after participation in activity)	Common in the measures studied
3	Increased employability	Employment	Share of participants employed 1 year after an activity	Common in the measures studied
4		Job opportunities	Share of participants who had a job opportunity/ proposal over the last year compared to individuals who did not participate (% of X- % of Y)	
5	Socio-economic wellbeing	Higher salary	Comparison of participants' salary 1 year before and after an activity	Most public career guidance service providers are used to monitoring progress of unemployed participants
6		Improved wellbeing	Comparison of participants' satisfaction in life before and 1 year after an activity	The measures can be found in few of the reviewed measures but is referred to in the literature
7		Perceived benefits of the measure	Share of participants claiming that participation in the measure increased their chances of finding employment or resulted in better career prospects	There is no evidence of this indicator being monitored in measures analysed in this project. Inclusion of this indicator might (partly) solve one of the identified monitoring and evaluation challenges (difficulties in linking impact to career guidance)
8		Increased participation of adults in E&T	Share of adults who participated in education and training activities over the last 4 weeks in the country/area of intervention	Monitoring systems used in measures analysed focus on individual short- and medium-term outcomes

	Target elements	Further specified elements	Potential indicator	Comment
9	Increased participation of adults in E&T	Comparison participants versus non-participants	Share of participants who participated in education and training activities over the last 4 weeks (measured 1 year after participation in activity) compared to similar group of individuals who did not participate (% of X-% of Y)	
10	Improvement in employment	Long term unemployment	Long term unemployment rate in a country	There are some examples of comparing target users and counterfactual groups. However, they are rare.
11		Employed after 1 year	Share of participants employed 1 year after an activity compared to the similar group of individuals who did not participate	
12		Work experience	Share of participants employed in the workplace in which they gained short-term working experience 1 year after an activity	
13	Reduction in the cost of social welfare	Reduction in the cost of social welfare	Savings expressed as spending of Job seeker allowance and other benefits that would be paid to individuals who were employed after the activity.	Monitoring systems used in measures analysed focus on individual short- and medium-term outcomes
14	Income	Average income	Average monthly earnings in a country/area of intervention	Monitoring systems used in measures analysed focus on individual short- and medium-term outcomes
15		Increased salary	Share of participants whose monthly income has increased over the last 6 months (measured 1 year after the activity)	

Source: Cedefop.

4.2.1. Data collection methods

Selection of indicators depends, to some extent, on the data collection and sources used. Monitoring activities should collect enough data, ideally over time, to study short-, medium- and longer-term progress and eventual outcomes. This can include data on the socio-demographic profile of the participants and other characteristics such as: number and type of other related measures in which they have already taken part; the length of unemployment (and reasons for it); and work and training experience/qualifications. This information is crucial in assessing the impact of measures comprehensively, and for users to self-assess their progress and career development.

M&E in empirical evidence studied (see also Harrison et al., 2022) uses two main types of data collection and sources of data:

- (a) quantitative methods, which seek to measure how an intervention is or has been performing. These are limited to quantifying an intervention's inputs, outputs, outcomes and impacts to produce statistics and statistical analyses;
- (b) qualitative methods, which seek to describe why an intervention is or has been performing the way it is. These methods are wider in scope. They can involve the analysis and synthesis of perceptions of service quality, or relationships between inputs, outputs, outcomes and impacts. Data collected through qualitative methods can be also quantified or made measurable to some extent.

Various data sources are identified in the literature and case studies.

- (a) Audits and self-reporting of organisations and practitioners, mostly used for output indicators at organisational level.
- (b) Administrative data on the characteristics of participants, tracking their status and progress over time.
- (c) Surveying participants to gather missing administrative data, or measure participants' satisfaction with services and participant perceptions about their own careers and the effect of support interventions.
- (d) Qualitative interviews, to complement satisfaction or other service user surveys to gain more insights into the effects of interventions and what may have influenced the outcomes.
- (e) Tests or other assessment methods, such as portfolios, to assess and monitor the learning and skills acquired by participants. For several possible reasons, this is not commonly discussed in the literature as monitoring and evaluation, but sometimes as career learning outcomes.
- (f) Existing international and national datasets that can be used in outcome and impact studies, for example, the OECD Career Readiness project.

Data collected using scales that enable marking of progress in the client's journey over several sessions can help understand where progress is made. This be transformed into quantitative data for indicators and assessments of outcomes at different time points (see Cheung and Jin, 2016; Hirschi and Valero, 2015).

CHAPTER 5.

Critique and ways forward

The proposed indicators were discussed in a [Cedefop workshop in March 2022](#). [Participants were](#) experts and others working in career guidance (researchers, policy experts, practitioners and trainers, service managers, policy makers and consultants, across education, employment, youth, and social inclusion sectors) including those developing M&E methodologies and carrying out research, especially in public policy. Through presenting Cedefop work in the area, the aim was also to renew discussions on common indicators and methodological approaches in the field; and, nationally, how to capture effectively the outcomes that guidance professionals, users and policy makers can agree should be monitored across the guidance system. A key focus was on how to expand the evidence base on career guidance results and impacts, to inform policy-making better and to be designed to benefit the users of services.

Experts came from organisations such as the European Commission, European Commission Public employment service network (PES Network), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the European Training Foundation (ETF), OECD, UNESCO, and Cedefop and from countries inside and outside the EU. They included authors of the working papers in the collection *Towards European standards for monitoring and evaluation of lifelong guidance systems and services* (Cedefop et al., 2022), who presented their work in relation to proposed indicators and on methodological innovations in practice and as proposed ways forward.

Overall, participants agreed that indicators were valuable, especially when moving towards comprehensive quality frameworks at national level, to help consolidate the lifelong guidance systems, and then applicable at cross-country level to serve several purposes, though not without challenges. For example, there was a distinction between the focus of many of the indicators on relatively small interventions and what would be required from M&E of guidance provision at the level of the service or LLG system as a whole (youth and adults). Similarly, in many countries the work of the public employment services extends well beyond career guidance, so the relevant ministry may have a broader M&E remit.

With attention to the value of career guidance at the heart of career development, interest in M&E and indicators is growing; this is part driven by crises and shifting labour markets but also as an outcome of years of collaboration by international and European organisations, particularly in country reviews, and different European networks and dedicated projects worldwide.

Experts provided their feedback on the proposed indicators and how they may be adapted, discussed ideas on the development of a quality framework for career guidance (including indicators but extending beyond them), and agreed on some common ground on how to proceed both to develop a comprehensive system of indicators and to create a methodological approach with some minimum standards adaptable to EU countries. This delivered advantages in achieving a consensus on shared methodologies and/or minimum indicators to meet the need for continuous feedback and improvement of delivery at different levels of the system. It also enabled cross-country policy reflection and learning. It was agreed that fundamental challenges are still observed, for example, in agreeing on expected outcomes of career guidance and what can be taken as evidence.

5.1. Feedback on proposed indicators and methodologies

Participants at the workshop agreed that the proposed indicators presented cover the most pertinent issues but they need further work. Indicator development should continue to use existing policies and research to avoid reinventing ideas already in circulation. Although some indicators are easier to collect, quantify, and analyse than others, these indicators should not become more important than others, such as qualitative data, or than the actual framework implementation. All indicators and evidence need to be valued and achieved as part of an integrated vision of the outcomes of career guidance, relevant to each context and part of an overall picture. Participants commented that integrated human resources (HR) policies will be difficult to realise but reference to the employment sector and companies responsible for some elements of outcomes may trigger career guidance development for the employed.

5.1.1. Reflecting and supporting practitioner professional development

Indicators should support the continuous professional development of career guidance professionals (Bimrose and Brown, 2019; Bimrose et al., 2019). For example, turnover among careers practitioners could be an indicator, as average tenure gives a sense of experience and levels of retention. Practitioner self-evaluation of skills was also suggested.

Indicators should also consider that practitioner jobs vary. An intervention might involve many different aspects for clients, such as learning, validation of prior learning, or outreach activities. It is important to understand what tasks have been carried out and in what way they might (or not) be connected to each other, as well to the output, outcomes, and impact, and to the processes. It is also important that

indicators consider an outreach perspective. The proposed indicators work mostly for career providers or centres but do not consider adjunct services that might play a major role in outreach measures.

If indicators are too behaviour-related, not everything will be captured. There was also a sense that the proposed indicators presented are disconnected from career guidance practitioners in that they lack the perspective of the deeply social, human, and interactive nature of career guidance processes. This is particularly relevant for practitioners working with vulnerable groups – a key dimension of professional competence – which may require specialisation or increasing training for staff universally. Working with diverse user groups – such as those who may be at a disadvantage or experience barriers due to their status as migrants, inmates, people with disabilities or others – requires sensitivity to their needs and quality training. That is difficult to capture through indicators, but it is important to account for and register these intangibles. There is sometimes a need for the metrics to be less standardised and flexible enough to accommodate these realities.

5.1.2. Career guidance indicators and other policy priorities

Indicators should consider how career guidance outputs, outcomes and impacts can contribute on different levels and as inputs to other processes and provisions: individual career development as part of other policy priorities, such as in education, training, and skills development of young people; the individual and society; and improving provision and system capacity.

For comparison and peer learning across countries, common lifelong guidance indicators could be incorporated into the European statistical system. For example, indicators from the adult education survey (AES), the labour force survey (LFS) or the European Union statistics on income and living conditions (EU-SILC) could be considered in relation to guidance intervention. The OECD's work on PISA results, connected with employment information (OECD, 2021b), is an example of integrating career support questions and developing indicators coherently.

5.1.3. Indicator adaptations, individual and user orientation

In considering the proposed indicators, it is important to reflect on the level at which each indicator is collected and how it can be aggregated at higher levels to provide information on different levels of decision making. From a systemic perspective, as guidance takes place in different settings and contexts, the different aspects to consider and monitor will differ from measure to measure. The proposed indicators must be adapted to the characteristics of the specific intervention of interest, its

socioeconomic context, and in relation to any quality assurance framework or standards applicable at the national, regional, or local level.

Indicators should consider local adaptability, user orientation links to career guidance processes, as well as targeted interventions and steps. A user-centred approach implies preparing and enabling resource-efficient, sustainable changes based on progressive needs and user involvement informed by needs of groups and individual, local labour market and social conditions.

5.2. Rationale and purpose of M&E and indicators

5.2.1. Indicators in an M&E quality framework

Emphasis was placed on the need for a M&E quality assurance framework in career guidance, which includes indicators, stressing that the indicators are not a framework in themselves. A framework would have to be flexible, able to accommodate close connection to career guidance practices and specific circumstances but also based on stakeholder agreement, appropriate levels, and the overall lifelong guidance system in the most comprehensive approach. The papers in Volume I (Cedefop et al., 2022) presented at the workshop provided ample examples of different approaches, also depending on country setting and state of play, and the challenges of frameworks in regional contexts.

A common understanding of career guidance in different contexts is needed, as well as a shared understanding of the system and activities in the framework in which indicators would be placed at EU and national levels. There is no one-size-fits-all model of career guidance systems and policies, but some aspects are comparable.

There is also a need to clarify the rationale for building a common quality framework in the EU and moving towards common standards for M&E of lifelong guidance systems and services. It is important to be clear on how indicator data will be used other than for provider improvements and better services for users. Concern is often raised about the uses made of data on certain outcomes, such as payment by results for contracted services, and its consequences for system quality, stability, coherence and for clients in accessing services when needed.

As career guidance is a personalised service that responds to individual needs and life characteristics, monitoring guidance requires an understanding of the starting point and life situation of the individual undertaking guidance and their control of the process and agency. The level of complexity of the needs and personal situation of individuals will have an impact on the time, energy, and resources as well as tools required, thus impacting the monitoring and evaluation

of any intervention. This includes digital, self-help tools, and those that are staff-assisted. A framework could help examine the conditions for carrying out career work, such as ratio of staff to clients, service structures and resources, availability of real-time quality labour market information, and training for staff, and help increase cross-country comparisons.

For reliability and validity, some suggestions supported high-quality indicator work infrequently for sub-samples, rather than trying to cover all indicators and all service users, especially in respect to short-term outcomes and impacts. On the other hand, the aim of system development lends itself to approaches that find ways of obtaining data efficiently but without overlooking parts of the guidance system.

5.2.2. The benefits of systemic approaches and networked services

M&E systems/approaches which can be translated into a coherent and user-friendly service must adapt coherently across several different elements: levels, lifelong guidance sectors, client interface (including specific groups), organisations/services, national/regional policy strategy and priorities. A systemic approach also implies a networked/collaborative model. Cooperation and systems that work together are important and can provide grounds for shared understanding for driving policies. Some countries have limited cooperation between different policy areas. Jointly funded cross-sectoral services could encourage cross-sectoral indicators.

Different assumptions, questions and gaps need to be considered in each of these contexts and for the overarching aspect of all of them. Funding and joint resources are tied to clarifying these assumptions, context, and evidence needed/accepted by different stakeholders in design of M&E. Such analysis of assumptions and questions requires expertise, career guidance knowledge, particularly of processes (interventions) and expected outcomes, as well as methodological expertise working with different types of data in smaller, qualitatively oriented, and larger-scale impact studies. Cooperation with experts in IT development in M&E, in specific data collection systems for monitoring, also proves increasingly essential, but data protection, ethics and anonymity is a concern, and the techniques of anonymised data collection of great interest. This may benefit users comprehensively, and engage them through their accessing and contributing to their own data, and assist practitioners in carrying out their work through liaising with key professionals to enrich the evidence base.

5.2.3. Client satisfaction and quality assurance

Increasing client satisfaction through user feedback at organisational/provider level helps ensure overall quality and practitioner competence and training. Data

collected from clients need to inform the design of services as well as national policy-making, so output information at one level will act as inputs at another level, creating feedback loops in a systemic approach. However, schools or public employment agencies or other providers often lack sufficient quality assurance mechanisms more generally, with career guidance included. Using institutional indicators that are relevant to career guidance can help track the role or effectiveness of career interventions along the life path, such as in transitions to different levels of education (e.g. EQAVET); an example is students whose studies were interrupted or who become disengaged and managed to return to education and training. The monitoring system can go beyond user feedback and can include formative evaluations with results users can directly access, where practitioners and clients come and learn together as they progress within the intervention. Career guidance can be cumulative, so a longer-term perspective on quality is possible. Final interventions may not always fully explain results: they need to be seen holistically in a lifelong perspective. There are many circumstances around the guidance intervention at the interface between the service user and the practitioner/services that cannot be observed or measured, and assessment of their impact is not straightforward. Further, guidance interventions are often interconnected and integrated, providing training, financing, career counselling and/or credentialing, and it can be difficult to see which intervention led to the desired outcome and what other factors have mediating roles. Qualitative dimensions, narratives, and quotations from the users' perspectives, as well as success stories and good practices, could enrich the M&E process and provide concrete examples for those who need them.

5.3. Building quality frameworks using common minimum indicators

The proposed indicators are preliminary, as a first step toward finding common agreement on minimum standards suitable for the EU context but also as an inspiration for building national frameworks and systems for measuring and assessing outcomes, for collecting evidence and drawing attention to the value of career guidance to encourage greater investment. National quality frameworks need to be anchored in a particular vision and local values, and key stakeholder agreement. The indicators presented here need to be expanded and improved. They are not meant to be used in isolation, but as part of a comprehensive national (or regional) quality framework designed to achieve an integrated vision of the results and outcomes of career guidance. This may involve combining information from other supporting services as well. This requires viewing of results

cumulatively over time, and at various levels (policy, provider, client-facing services) and which considers career guidance holistically, for example, as is discussed in Vol. I (Cedefop et al, 2022).

However, at the workshop, it was agreed that a common minimum list of indicators can be used to:

- (a) focus on improving individual, social, economic, career development outcomes for all individuals and groups through user feedback and joint development of services;
- (b) address immediate issues related to quality of services and service needs, in specific guidance or economic sectors;
- (c) build the evidence base longer term on the benefits and results of career guidance and career development interventions, and promote and focus research, while utilising existing evidence which is not always being used, even retrospectively when clients see benefits of early support and career learning;
- (d) find agreement on indicators and measures across sectors (education and training, employment, youth, health, civil society, inclusion) for key areas in lifelong career guidance, which take account of context such as local needs and realities, but are complementary and improve long-term individual outcomes;
- (e) develop tools, evaluation methods and strategies for collecting and analysing evidence on inputs, lifelong career guidance development processes, outputs, and outcomes, such as tracking tools for informing clients on typical pathways and plan B options, while improving their CMS and career adaptability;
- (f) develop and improve common quality frameworks that aim to encourage dialogue with key stakeholders with different expectations of career guidance to find solutions and locate gaps in services;
- (g) improve service coordination, reduce duplication of services, and use integrated policy approaches that benefit users through single access points;
- (h) support broader national/EU strategies on skills, employment, lifelong learning and coherently integrate career guidance into skills strategies, particularly in strengthening attention to career management skills and development of career adaptability.

This report and other project outputs will feed into Cedefop proposals initiated within the CareersNet network of independent experts in lifelong guidance and career development, for updating the *Guidelines for policies and systems development for lifelong guidance* (ELGPN, 2015a); these provide ‘...advice and reference points for lifelong guidance policies and systems across the education, training, employment, and social fields to improve the career learning experience

of EU citizens and strengthen the professionalism of career services and tools' (ibid. p. 56).

The proposed indicators are based mainly on a limited number of existing measures and data availability at the time of data collection (2019/early 2020, so pre-pandemic) as well as literature and previous work in the field including toolkits, surveys, and frameworks. There have been many important developments since that time in career guidance provision, in the organisation of services and development of strategies and professional service tools, in research and the evolution of technology in the career field, including in respect to AI and machine learning, and large language models. Self-help services and career platforms are ever-present and integrated with diverse information and tools for career building, even for service professionals. Of importance will be to consider immediate, intermediate, and longer-term impacts, as discussed in the workshop.

This report is a first input towards developing standards for M&E of lifelong guidance systems and services in the EU context and designed to help build the evidence base on career guidance outcomes. It helps promote indicator use in quality frameworks for better evidence collection, bringing together stakeholders with a focus on improving the career learning experience and outcomes for the European public. The next step is further consultation with stakeholders on M&E needs and possibilities. Consultation should aim to build consensus on indicators, methods of data collection and the resourcing of M&E systems. A standard methodological approach will need to consider how to monitor and evaluate the different aspects of a single intervention at client level or series of steps, a specific policy measure and tools used, as well as the overall system, while being adaptable to the many contexts where career support and guidance are made available to individuals.

Acronyms

AT	Austria
BE-FL	Belgium-Flanders
DE	Germany
DK	Denmark
EE	Estonia
ELGPN	European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network
FR	France
IT	Italy
LT	Lithuania
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
PES	public employment services
ROI	return on investment
VET	vocational education and training
VNFIL	validation of non-formal and informal learning

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Towards European standards for monitoring and evaluation of lifelong guidance systems and services (Vol. II)

A preliminary list of indicators for quality frameworks

This report is part of a Cedefop project on developing European standards for monitoring and evaluating lifelong guidance systems and services (measures and activities). It proposes indicators according to type (input and process, output, outcome, impact), target elements (such as practitioner competence, client satisfaction, increased knowledge, and skills of service users) and characteristics for each indicator. The list is not exhaustive nor prescriptive, but a first attempt to present some of the most relevant and common indicators across the EU, based on the literature review and analysis of 40 measures in selected Member States. Also included is feedback from stakeholders, including field experts, which represents current discussions.

The indicator list is a tool for policy dialogue and reflection on how to create common European standards. It seeks to promote meaningful and innovative indicator use for evidence collection, building on existing research and prior work, in developing quality (assurance) frameworks for lifelong guidance.



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