

ETF-ILO NATIONAL CAREER DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT SYSTEM REVIEWS

Questionnaire and country reports

NATIONAL CAREER DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM REVIEW REPORT

ARMENIA
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List of abbreviations

| | |
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| ACTU | Armenian Confederation of Trade Unions |
| CGCDC | Career Guidance and Capacity Development Centre |
| ELFDD | Employment and Labour Force Development Department |
| ETF | European Training Foundation |
| GoA | Government of Armenia |
| ILO | International Labour Organization |
| ISCO | International Standard Classification of Occupations |
| MoLSA | Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs |
| MoE | Ministry of Economy |
| MoESCS | Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport |
| MoF | Ministry of Finance |
| MoTAI | Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organization |
| NSS | National Statistical Service |
| RA | Republic of Armenia |
| RUEA | Republican Union of Employers of Armenia |
| SEA | State Employment Agency |
| SNCO | State Non-Commercial Organization |
| TVET | Technical and Vocational Education and Training |
| USS | Unified Social Services |
| VIAR | Virtual & Augmented Reality |

2. CONTEXT AND SYSTEM OVERVIEW

2.1. Context

There has never been an active, well-established career development support system in Armenia. Perhaps one such system existed during the Soviet years, however, it had largely imitative and figurative character and was primarily cognitive, highly ideologized, not people-centred, and disconnected from the labour market. After the restoration of the independence of Armenia, the systemic changes that took place in the country as the result of the formation of market relations, the new ideological approaches and practices in the fields of education, social protection, cultural and spiritual development have significantly changed also the former Soviet system of career guidance. The old system ceased to exist, and the new one as such was not created until 2012.

Taking into account the centuries-old traditions of the Armenian family, the quality and peculiarities of the familial, interpersonal relations, the opinions of the family elders have been decisive in the choice of occupation, especially the opinions of the parents, who were mostly guided either by their personal preferences, the availability of financial resources or the attractiveness of prestigious occupations. A certain role was played by the call to continue the occupational traditions of the parents. The opinions of the social environment, friends, also random opportunities and coincidences had a certain role. There has been no particular reliance on career guidance or counselling services. The only counsellor has

been the school subject teacher, for whom, as a rule, the student's academic progress has been a priority.

Despite reforms, the issue of terminology still remains a problem in Armenia. The term "professional orientation" has been used in Armenia since Soviet times, and is enshrined in documents, programs, scientific articles. Meanwhile, the term "career" in accordance with Soviet stereotypes, is understood only as a job promotion. In fact, the term "professional orientation" used in Armenia is identical to career guidance, therefore, throughout the text of this review, ETF recommendations for key definitions and scope have been taken as the basis for the use of the terms.

As of January 1, 2021, the population of Armenia is 2,963.3 thousand people, according to the State Statistical Committee of Armenia. The proportion of the urban to rural population is 64% to 36%, respectively. The gender proportion of the Armenian population is 47.2% of men and 52.8% of women. As of the beginning of 2021, the average age of the population is 36.9 years, and for men and women: 34.8 and 38.8 years, respectively. Ethnically, 98.1% of the population are Armenians. Yezidis, Russians, Assyrians, Ukrainians, Kurds, Greeks, Jews, Georgians and other nationalities live in Armenia.

As of the beginning of 2021, 63.8% of the permanent population of the Republic of Armenia is of working age (16-62)¹ years old), 21.5% is of age under the working age (0-15 years old), and 14.7% is of age over the working age (over 63 years old).

According to the data² of the Department of Employment and Labour Force Development of the Unified Social Service of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia (formerly the State Employment Agency of the Republic of Armenia, reorganized in 2021), as of December 1, 2021, the number of job seekers registered in the regional centres has been 86.9 thousand people, which has decreased by 1.7% as compared to the same period of the last year. Rural residents made up 38.7% of job seekers or 33.6 thousand people as compared to 33.1 thousand people in the last year.

From the jobseekers registered in USS 66.4%, or 57.7 thousand people, has received status of unemployed... This figure has decreased by 2.6% as compared to the same period of the last year. The number of unemployed women is 64.1% of the number of unemployed, or 37.0 thousand people, the number of young people - 18.8% or 10.8 thousand people. And the number of unemployed people with disabilities is 4.4% or 2.5 thousand people.

The regional centres have registered 24.9 thousand first time job seekers, of which young people of age 16 to 29 make up 34.6%. According to the structure of the educational background distribution, the number of those with higher and postgraduate education is 13.1% of the total number of the unemployed; the number of those with secondary vocational education is 17.0%; the number of those with primary vocational education is 4.9%; the number of those with general secondary education is 55.5 %; the number of those with special general, basic general and elementary education is 9.5%.

In the total number of the unemployed the proportion of those with higher education in humanities, education and pedagogy, economics and management continues to be high; among those with a secondary vocational education the unemployment is high in the backgrounds of education, healthcare, economics, management and services; among those with primary vocational education the unemployment is high in the backgrounds of art and design, economics and management, means of transportation and light industry.

People with no profession make up 65.0% of the total unemployed.

The number of unemployed, registered in USS, with 1 to 3 years of unemployment is 27.1% of the total number of unemployed; those with more than 3 years of unemployment is 47.1%, and those with 1 year of unemployment is 25.8%.

According to the structure of the age group, the number of unemployed of age 16 to 29 is 18.4%; of age 30 to 44 is 42.0%; of age 45 to 54 is 20.5%; and people over 55 are 19.1%.

¹ According to RA law of State pension, retirement age in Armenia is 63 years old for those who have working experience.

² <https://employment.am/am/408/LinkPage.html>

Among the unemployed 95.2% are uncompetitive in the labour market, meaning they are facing employment challenges and require up-skilling/re-skilling.

By the sectors of the economy, the largest share of the employment distribution among job seekers has been 19.0% in the sector of wholesale and retail trade and automobile and motorcycle body-shops; 16.4% in the sector of industry; 18.5% in the sector of other services; 9.7% in education and 36.4% in other sectors.

In the total number of vacancies declared by the employers the biggest shares were for positions requiring:

- high qualification in healthcare occupations, educators, to some extent architects, also engineers and related professionals;
- medium qualification mid-level medical staff (support staff); specialists in finances, trade, arts, entertainment;
- low qualification operators, cashiers and related occupations, shop sales personnel and product exhibitors, workers providing other personal services; also skilled workers in food processing industry, civil construction and other.

Vacancies that did not require qualifications accounted for 24.3% of the total.

2.2. System overview

During the recent decade, the attitudes of society towards career guidance and the position of the state governing bodies in respect of investing in the career development support system have changed. Currently, career guidance services are in demand, especially among school-age children and young people, and the number of companies and individuals offering services similar to career guidance has increased. NGOs operating through various grant programs are implementing one-time event-based (not fundamental, not continuous) projects, which mostly have informing character about different occupations.

The reforms aimed at establishing a national career development support system in the post-Soviet Armenia have begun in 2012 when the GoA had approved the "Concept for the Development of a Career Guidance System in the RoA"³. The concept prescribed for the first time that in a free market economy with a rapidly changing labour market, a career development support system should provide services to people throughout their lives, regardless of age or social and employment status. It was determined that the purpose of the system is: "Creating the opportunity of free, conscious choice of professional activity, which corresponds to the interests, needs, peculiar characteristics of the person, as well as the demand of qualified, competitive human resources in the labour market, throughout their lives." Based on the model of the career development support system proposed by the Concept, its implementation process continues to this day.

The state bodies responsible for the development and implementation of the policy of the career development support system are the MoLSA, and the MoESCS. The MoLSA, (through Methodological Centre for Career Guidance SNCO, 2013-2017, "Career Guidance and Capacity Development Centre" branch of the National Institute of the Labor and Social Research SNCO, 2018 till now⁴), provides career guidance and career education models, methodology, development of technologies, and capacity

³ <http://www.irtek.am/views/act.aspx?aid=68214>

⁴ CGCD Centre was established in 2006 (Government Decision № 1915-N, 14th December 2006) with the support of a WB-funded programme Social Protection Administration Project (SPAP) as the Youth Professional Orientation Centre SNCO. The Centre was renamed in 2013 as Methodological Centre for Professional Orientation, and since then it has become responsible for the development of policy and methodology in the field of Vocational Orientation and Career Guidance. In 2017, according with the Government Decision № 1159-N, 22nd September 2017, it was reorganised into a National Institute of the Labor and Social Research branch as Career Guidance and Capacity Development Centre. Until 2013, CGCD Centre was providing Career Guidance services directly to the beneficiaries, i.e. general school pupils, VET and university students and graduates, as well as to adults.

building for service providers and monitors the establishment of cross-sectoral networking ties. The MoESCS provides the operational and institutional basis for the introduction of career guidance services in the field of education and training.

Since 2013, the CGCD Centre has developed and tested career guidance and career education models, methodologies for implementing the system in general education, VET facilities, regional employment centres, child care and protection facilities. Before the adoption of the Concept, career guidance activities in these institutions were not systemic, were carried out on the initiative of individual professionals, often services were limited merely to providing information or visits to vocational training institutions.

In 2013-2020, more than 900 educators were trained by the CGCD Centre, based on the directive of the MoESCS for the introduction of career guidance services in schools. The preference for the choice of participants was given to the deputy directors for specialized educational assistance, social educators and psychologists of schools. The specialists who received training were provided with methodological support. The work with the students was carried out mainly in the 8th to 9th grades (13-14 years old) and in high school (15-17 years old), however not in a systemically consistent and regular way.

After the evaluation of the results of the pilot programs, in 2019-2020 the MoESCS has started the process of overall institutional introduction of career education in schools. The "Educational Methodological Manual for Practitioners Carrying Out Career Guidance in General Education Schools" developed by the CGCD Centre was approved by the Academic Council of the Armenian State Pedagogical University after Kh.Abovyan by the order of the Minister of ESCS and was commissioned to be used in schools. The standard and curricula of the "Career Guidance" course for 8 to 11 grades were developed and approved by the order of the Minister of ESCS in 2021⁵. In the 2021-2022 academic year, career guidance clubs were introduced in all 80 middle schools of the Tavush region as a mandatory component of the educational process. The program of the GoA for 2021-2026 is planning to introduce the career education component in all 1345 state schools by 2026. The work on the introduction of career education in regional schools is coordinated by the Education Departments of the regional administrations.

Student career guidance activities in VET institutions have acquired a systematic character only after 2013. Before that, a few selected VET institutions had organized reciprocal visits to schools on the initiative of the principals, have made presentations of specialties taught at VET institutions and described the conditions for receiving an education there, but the overall investment was made in 2018-2020 when funds were allocated from the state budget of the GoA for one career guidance and career education position in each VET institution. The CGCD Centre for institutional implementation has developed models of standard operational procedures, regulatory by-laws and job descriptions for career guidance specialists, which have been approved by the VET Management Boards. These specialists are continuously trained, receiving methodologies and tools for conducting individual or group counselling of students. At present, all 96 VET institutions in the country have proper career guidance staff. Twice a year, the MoESCS and the CGCD Centre are jointly monitoring the career guidance activities to check the involvement of students and the level of employment of the graduates.

Career guidance for people who are not competitive in the labour market is carried out in regional SEA centres. According to the model and methodologies developed by the CGCD Centre, the specialists of the SEA Regional Centre have mainly disseminated career guidance through group trainings aimed at basic employability skills, compiling a CV and pitching oneself to a potential employer. Since April 2021, after reorganizing the SEA and creating the Unified Social Service (USS)⁶ within the MoLSA, currently the model and methodology for the implementation of career guidance services are being reviewed.

⁵ The order of the Minister of ESCS, 24.09.2021, № 1602-Ս/2

⁶ The main goal of USS is to install effective mechanisms for implementing the government's policy in the field of social security, in particular, the system of integrated social services based on a unified system for assessing social needs. The single social security service unites the social service, the system of family benefits, the disability and employment and pensions systems. The main goal is not only installing the one-stop-shop principle, but also a comprehensive assessment of social needs of a family.

Career centres in universities were established already in the 90s. However, each university's career centre has its own statutory functions, stipulated by its internal charter, with various differences across institutions. Youth career guidance activities are prescribed in the youth policy pursued by the MoESCS. Similar services can be delegated to different NGOs. Adult career guidance activities are carried out by NGOs, in some cases in close cooperation with public authorities such as in Sisian city by the Adult Education Centre of Sisian in cooperation with DVV International in Armenia.

Thus, the public administration system has been consistently working in recent years on creating a career development support system which will provide free, accessible services for the conscious choice, effective planning and lifelong career development. The MoLSA and MoESCS are actively involved in this process. For the general implementation of the process, funds have been allocated from the GoA state budget, in particular, to the MoLSA for providing methodology and continuous development of professional capacities of practitioners; and to the MoESCS for implementing the relevant services in VET institutions and creating proper positions in their staff. This process is supported by donor organizations or local companies that have received grants for inter alia assisting with logistics, substantial technical support and through development of visual tools.

3. POLICY FRAMEWORK

The importance of career guidance, career education and career development support services for workers regardless of age is enshrined in a number of laws and legal acts of the GoA. In particular, Article 5 of the Law "On General Education"⁷ stipulates that: "The general education is aimed at the intellectual, mental, physical, and social development of the learner, the formation of his/her personality as a future citizen, for an independent life, career development and preparation for career education."

The Law of the RoA "On Social Assistance"⁸ stipulates that social assistance services for individuals are also aimed at "developing the capacity to use professional skills or acquire new professional skills; career guidance of individuals for creating affordable conditions for working with the previous or new professions, career education, vocational training (raising or upgrading qualification, training for a new occupation, preliminary vocational training, handcraft training), occupational adaptability, finding a suitable employment, ensuring self-employment."

The Law of the RoA "On Social Protection of Children Left Without Parental Care"⁹ stipulates that the state employment service shall carry out career guidance for children of age 16 and left without parental care, who have applied to them."

The provision of access to career guidance services is enshrined in the "Revised European Social Charter"¹⁰, to which the RoA has joined in 2004. The obligations under Article 9 of the Charter prescribe: "In order to ensure the effective exercise of the right to career guidance, the Parties undertake an obligation to provide or if necessary, to promote a service that will assist all persons, including those with disabilities, in making career choices and progress in career development; while taking into account their individual characteristics and relevance to professional opportunities. This support to the young people, including school children and adults should be provided free of charge." The Article 9 has not been validated by GoA yet.

The reforms of the career development support system were launched in 2012 by the concept "Development of the career guidance system in the RoA" and the Program of measures for its implementation in 2013-2015 approved by the GoA. In the same year, the GoA adopted the

⁷ <https://www.arlis.am/documentview.aspx?docid=71908>

⁸ <https://www.arlis.am/documentview.aspx?docid=94972>

⁹ <https://www.arlis.am/documentview.aspx?docid=51820>

¹⁰ <https://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?docid=24230>

"Employment Strategy of the Republic of Armenia for 2013-2018"¹¹, the "National Program for VET Development"¹², which include among their priority tasks the introduction of career guidance services.

In all the above-mentioned laws and legal acts, the tasks and problems of career development support services are separated within a specific sector framework. The only cross-sectoral policy paper is the "Work Armenia" strategy, its Action Framework for (2019-2023) and financial assessment¹³, developed by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in 2019, and adopted by the GoA. The document was developed with the participation of all government agencies related to education and labour market, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders. This strategic document outlines the priorities for developing new quality, competitive labour force, cross-sectoral active cooperation, collection and compilation of reliable and comprehensive information in a single database along with the structural changes in the economy. The implementation process of priorities has been hindered by Covid-19 and Artsakh War. Deadlines for the strategy are currently being reviewed.

In the scope of "Work Armenia" strategy, the Edu2Work platform¹⁴ was designed that aims at analysing the trends of the labour market in Armenia. The platform scrapes and analyses job announcements posted on ten online job portals in Armenia. The information presented in the platform is being updated daily and a new concept for the platform development is in process. Currently work is being done on establishing the e-borsa state platform by MOLSA that will include Edu2Work platform as a tool. In this regard Edu2Work platform includes a part of labour market information in Armenia.

The introduction of a life-long universal, integrated system of career development support in Armenia is guaranteed by the Government's program 2021-2026¹⁵. A number of measures approved by the program are aimed at institutionalizing career guidance clubs for 8th to 11th grades (13 to 16 years old schoolchildren) in all schools of the country by 2026 based on the club models that are already introduced. They will be coordinated and implemented by deputy directors for specialized educational assistance, social pedagogues and/or psychologists. The program also provides access to career guidance services for not competitive individuals in the newly established regional Unified Social Service Centres¹⁶, which provide employment services; introduction of career guidance activities in the child care and protection institutions; raising the efficiency of career guidance units in professional educational institutions and introduction of career education elements in VET and universities, such as the "Career Management" module for graduating students, etc.

The "State Standard for General Education"¹⁷ approved by the GoA in 2021 has defined the final results of professional self-determination abilities in elementary, middle and high schools, which should be ensured through career education. The Minister of ESCS has issued a decree in 2021 which is approving the "Career Guidance" training course standards and curriculums stipulated for the 8th to 11th grades. 34 hours are allocated for "Career Guidance" training course per year for 8th-10th grades, 15 hours for 11th grade. The training course is comprised of 26 modules that include 10 modules for each year during 8th and 9th grades, 6 modules for 10th grade and "Career Path" research for 11th grade (see thematic plan in appendix).

The pilot implementation of the Career Guidance training course standards, that was adopted by the Ministry of ESCS, is carried out in all 80 middle schools of Tavush region, where "Career Guidance Clubs" were created in the course of 2021-22 academic year. "Career Guidance Clubs" are based on the "Career Guidance" training course that is implemented by pedagogues trained by CGCD centre.

For the joint implementation of career guidance services in the VET system, yet in 2013 the MoESCS had approved the model of the statutory by-laws of the career guidance units and had provided the job

¹¹ <http://www.irtek.am/views/act.aspx?aid=68183>

¹² <http://www.irtek.am/views/act.aspx?aid=66602>

¹³ <http://www.irtek.am/views/act.aspx?aid=152312>

¹⁴ <https://edu2work.am/>

¹⁵ <https://www.gov.am/am/Five-Year-Action-Program/>

¹⁶ <https://www.arlis.am/documentview.aspx?docid=150385>

¹⁷ <https://www.arlis.am/documentview.aspx?docid=149788>

description of a career guidance practitioner (find the regulation of the career guidance units and the job description of the career practitioners in appendix). Since the Unit is mentioned in the regulation, each VET institution has one career guidance practitioner to perform career guidance activities and run an information desk located in a visible place in the college territory. The practitioners provide services not only to VET student applicants and their parents, but also to VET students and create links with the employers and other partners. At present, all 96 VET institutions in the country are guided by the same regulations, approved by the Management Board of the VET institution.

One of the challenges of the career development support system in Armenia is the lack of a qualification system for career guidance practitioners. Although, since 2013, training and continuous capacity building of practitioners, who provide career guidance services, and the supervision of trained specialists at their workplaces is carried out by the Career Guidance and Capacity Development Centre within the system of the MoLSA of the RoA. The training programs are designed according to the specifics of the institutions which are providing career guidance services. For the selection of specialists, the preference is given to specialists with basic qualifications in psychology, social pedagogy, management of human resources and other related professions.

Summing up, it should be stated that the MoLSA has initiated the development of a strategy for the labour and social protection system, one of the priorities of which is to encourage employment and create a competitive workforce. Mutually beneficial cooperation has been established at the national level between the MoLSA and the MoESCS, as well as the structures that are subordinated to them. Based on the clear distribution of functions, the Law of the RoA on the State Budget prescribes the distribution of financial resources accordingly. In particular, the funds allocated to the MoLSA are intended for the development of training modules and methodologies for the continuous training of practitioners, and the funds allocated to the MoESCS are stipulated for the wage payment to career guidance staff positions.

4. COORDINATION AND COOPERATION

4.1. Promoting coordination, cooperation and good governance

The main state agencies responsible for the implementation of the career development support system in Armenia are the MoLSA and the MoESCS. The main player supporting the implementation in the state system is the CGCD Centre which operates in the system of the MoLSA. The main goals and objectives of the CGCD Centre are to provide career guidance models and career guidance methodology, practitioners training, and supervision of trained specialists. It performs the following functions:

- 1) Develops a methodology for career guidance and career counseling, regardless of age and social status of people;
- 2) Develops the methodology of career guidance and career counseling for students in vocational educational institutions;
- 3) Develops curricula aimed at developing the basic set of skills for self-assessment, career management, entrepreneurship, self-employment and entering the labour market for primary, middle, and higher education institutions;
- 4) Develops the methodology of career guidance and career development for individuals outside the education system who do not have a clear choice of profession, work and occupation, who are in urgent need of retraining and requalification for adaptation to the demands of the rapidly changing labour market;
- 5) Supports the activities of career centres in vocational educational institutions, for example through provision of methodology and capacity development of career guidance practitioners.
- 6) Designs training curricula and training plans for professional development of career guidance practitioners;

7) Carries out training courses for the specialists responsible for career guidance and career counseling who are engaged in career guidance support system;

8) Monitors the work carried out by the specialists for career guidance, gives them professional and methodological support and provides counselling (supervision);

9) Assists in the solution of adult career guidance issues by supporting universities, NGO's, adult education centres with methodology provision, organizing career and job fairs, conducting career management skills development trainings;

10) Conducts internships and trainings for university students specialized in social pedagogy, psychology, social work, HR that can work as a career guidance practitioners after graduation;

11) Carries out research and studies on the labour market, occupations, professions, and their qualifications;

12) Organizes regional, republican, international workshops, conferences, exhibitions and fairs;

13) Prepares educational-methodical manuals;

14) Carries out public awareness raising activities;

15) Cooperates with public administration bodies, local self-government bodies, general education-vocational education institutions, social partners, other non-governmental organizations, and the mass media;

16) Makes suggestions for the improvement of career guidance policy, strategy, implementation forms and methods in the RoA.

With such centralized coordination, all career guidance organizations have begun to think the same way over time. The change of thinking is obvious, because the society and systems connected with the choice of profession of a post-Soviet state were carriers of a different way of thinking; and consequently the tasks and objectives of career guidance were considered only on the level of public education, thus concentrating on merely guiding the career choice through interdisciplinary connections. It is because of post-Soviet thinking that there is still a problem of understanding in "career guidance" and "career education" as "professional orientation" and other related terms exist not only in the society, but also in the academic community and public administration system, which results in still using the term "professional orientation" in scientific articles, research and political concept papers.

The unified methodology developed by the CGCD Centre is currently guaranteed for use in both social services and all levels of formal education. The peculiarity of the proposed and currently implemented model is that it ensures the continuity of career guidance activities, the joint work of the institutions responsible for these services: school, college, vocational school, university, social services (part of which is also SEA), as well as the active involvement of community organizations and employers, which may be one of the criteria for assessing the quality of their work. Respectively, various inter-sectoral workshops and specific training programs are frequently organized.

Within the framework of its statutory functions, based on the identified problems and successful examples, the CGCD Centre makes suggestions for the forms and methods of improvement of career guidance, career development support policy and strategy in the RoA.

The CGCD Centre is also the structure which is uniting the public sector in this area, avoiding duplication of different programs as much as possible, involving the testing of different models and evaluation of their effectiveness. As a result of such collaborations, a number of career guidance models were tested in schools and VET institutions (World Vision Armenia in the regions of the Republic, Save the Children in the framework of the EU program "EU for Youth: Skills for the Future" in 10 schools, Children of Armenia Foundation in Armavir region, Strategic Development Agency in Syunik region, Armenian Red Cross Society in Tavush and Gegharkunik regions, GIZ and partnership and training NGO in Syunik region and others). However, there is no accreditation or regulation for the private sector to stick to the methodology provided by the centre yet.

A successful example of inter-systemic cooperation at the national level have been the activities of the Methodological Council in 2013-2017 which was established to support the work of the CGCD Centre. The council created by the order of the MoLSA consisted of representatives of the Ministries of LSI,

ESCS and Economy, a number of research institutions, and the Republican Union of Employers. The main functions of the Council were:

- assessing the developed methodologies and programs;
- guarantee the publicity of the results of research, developed training methodologies and their practical applicability;
- support the organization of conferences and workshops;
- and other activities like ensuring active involvement, dialogue, awareness raising among the state agencies and stakeholder research institutions.

However, within the framework of optimization of the state system, the GoA has dismissed the staff and cut the budget of the CGCD Centre in 2017, changed its legal status and re-established it as a branch of the National Institute of Labour and Social Research, and the Council was abolished.

Along with the registered achievements, it is necessary to highlight the issues that hinder the establishment of a career development support system and its effective operation. The involvement of social partners and sector employers is not active at the national level. There have been attempts to fill the gap in the field of VET through the National Council for VET Development, which was established in 2008 by the decision of the Prime Minister of the RoA with the purpose of reforming vocational education and training, and is based on the principle of social partnership. In the sphere of labour and employment, the Republican Tripartite Commission can be considered, which was formed as the requirement of the Republican Collective Bargaining Agreement¹⁸, and the latter, among other things, is obliged to support the development of an effective career development support system based on the existing analyses and the employers' demand.

Human and material resources are not sufficient though. After the reorganization of the CGCD Centre, staff was reduced to 12 positions (professional staff - 10 specialists). In the last three years the funds were cut for the event "Provision of Career Guidance Methodology and Training of Practitioners" by the Law of the RA on the State Budget. The VET institutions and schools are currently not sufficiently sustained with appropriate resources for implementing career education. They often lack a separate designated room, logistical facilities, and supplies and other resources. The newly formed regional Centres of Unified social service have been allocated with resource rooms which can be used as facilities for career guidance group work, but there is limited possibility for individual counseling.

The other important issue is professional qualification of practitioners. The CGCD Centre provides training courses and continuous methodological support to trained specialists and professional counseling in the workplace (educational supervision). The program of the first training course includes the transfer of basic knowledge, the development of skills for the practical application of the key skills and modules. It lasts 40 academic hours, followed by ongoing discussions and meetings both individually and in groups. However, the results are moderate given the high rate of turnover of practitioners from the system, low salaries, etc. Therefore, the main proposal for solving the problem is the establishment of a qualification institute for career counselors on the basis of the CGCD Centre with the involvement of academic institutions (universities).

4.2. Key civil society stakeholders

Civil society stakeholders have a role to play in career development support services in Armenia. A number of non-governmental organizations is operating in the country. In addition to their main functions, they have developed original programs aimed at career guidance of teenagers and young people. In particular, the Armenian HR Association has developed an original program called "Zoom in". Organization "Kime" has developed its own "Discovery" program, Skillford has its "Professional Compass" program (which has currently stopped providing services though), and CareerLab has the program "My skills are my future".

The "zoom in!" program is designed based on the "DISC" (Dominance, Influence, Steadiness, and Conscientiousness) model of personality types and PAST-PRESENT-FUTURE approach in facilitation.

¹⁸ <https://arhmiutyun.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/>

It will help teenagers explore the different opportunities in various fields where they would like to develop further and gain more understanding of their motivations and aspirations. It's designed for the age groups of 14-17 and 18-29.

The mission of "Kime" vocational orientation club is to help 12-17 year old youth to discover their worth and love themselves that will result positively in their professional choice. It is aimed at increasing the responsibility level for their own future and overall, and at providing an opportunity to discover different professions and occupations. It also engages parents in the professional choice process, so that they can guide their children wisely, know their strengths and weakness understand and respect their choices and believe in their own children.

Skillford is a centre for vocational orientation and life skills development that targets 14-17 years old youth. "Professional Compass" training program gives the teenager an opportunity to discover own abilities and ambitions, to choose right profession that will be enjoyable except for being a source of income. It helps to set goals and find a path to the realization of it, to increase the inner motivation, to believe in own strength, to become independent and responsible. The centre also offers trainings for parents.

CareerLab provides services for a wide range of beneficiaries: teenagers, parents, people with disabilities, women that are not competitive in the job market. According to the proposed program, conscious professional choice is a mix of three factors: discovery of personal qualities and preferences, provision of information on the job market of Armenia, provision of information on education and training opportunities in Armenia. The core of the program is the development of career management skills.

Career guidance activities carried out by private companies are not certified by the state, there are no mechanisms for assessing their quality. Employee career development issues are part of the functions of HR managers in companies. However, it is not clear whether companies are providing career development services to their employees. There has been no published research on this topic and there is no legal obligation for companies to provide career development support.

Mainly large employers within the framework of their corporate social responsibility missions, develop separate programs and implement youth career guidance. Such initiatives have been launched in particular by the employers of telecommunication sector (VivaCell with the program "VivaStart"), information technology sector (Softconstruct), production (Coca-Cola Hellenic Armenia with the program Quick start) and the employers of banking sector. On the other hand, the motivation of employers in providing career guidance services for young people is conditioned by their own problem of attracting future human resources, because, for the time being, the recruitment of adequate staff for the existing vacancies is problematic.

Parental involvement in career guidance services is often provided in public schools on their individual initiative. Parental councils, one of the main goals of which is to "involve parents in students' extracurricular activities and to participate in the creation of necessary conditions for students' education and upbringing", are often actively involved in schoolchildren's career guidance and career awareness raising activities. They present their professions and occupations, ensure the acquaintance with the work process, organize master classes, etc.

Career guidance services in non-formal adult education institutions are not regulated. They are integrated in professional training courses.

In the last decade, job fairs have been organized more often both in Yerevan and in all communities of the Republic. Sometimes they have also a sectoral orientation. They are arranged within the framework of state employment programs, by the commission of donor organizations or on the initiative of NGOs. Career guidance services are often offered in the course of the currently arranged job fairs, taking into account their demand. The services are provided by the HR specialists of employers or career guidance practitioners.

As the observations have shown, career guidance activities don't have a legal basis and are not widespread among employers. But career guidance services are demanded in companies. According

to a research report¹⁹ conducted by the Public Policy Institute in 2020 on the involvement of highly skilled workers in the Armenian labour market, "The Employers are most concerned about the employees' values and attitudes towards the work. They give high importance to the sense of responsibility, dutifulness, willingness to work, honesty and courtesy. In second place are the social communication skills, in particular, teamwork, interpersonal, leadership skills, organizational skills, activity and initiative expressed in the course of work, as well as the balanced, conflict averse individual characteristics. In the third place are the skills related to the practical application of knowledge, especially the skills of job division, planning, time management, respecting deadlines, personal growth and self-improvement."

It should be noted that there is no skill validation and recognition system in Armenia.

5. MAIN SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES

The opportunities for career guidance services regardless of age, social or employment status are not yet fully provided in Armenia.

The process of choosing a profession begins at school age when the child tries to get to know the world of professions, understand the opportunities of education and the demand of the labour market. In the scope of this review report, a survey was conducted in 2021 November for assessing the situation in 800 out of 1400 schools (57% of all schools). As a result, it was discovered that 33% of the surveyed general education schools have professionally trained career guidance teachers (the majority had got their training at the CGCD Centre, and 83% of them delivers career education training using the common methodology²⁰ provided by the CGCD Centre. In addition, 66.5% of schools (mostly in high schools) that had participated in the survey carry out some career guidance work like organizing visits of schoolchildren to universities or VET institutions, inviting specialists for career talks, although these teachers have not received any professional training.

Actually, only 21.4% of Armenian schools currently provide career education in grades 8 to 11. It is carried out within the framework of the career guidance clubs in accordance with the prescribed curriculum, one academic hour per week, by the educators who have been trained by the CGCD centre and have received the appropriate teaching-methodological materials. The career education is carried out according to a standard developed on the principle of modular education, and by grades in accordance with the grade curricula. The curricula, depending on the topic, include provision of information, assessment and testing programs, exercises and practical work, watching films about different professions and discussing them, extracurricular visits to enterprises and educational institutions, meetings with highly respected persons in the community, professionals and school graduates. In addition to group work, there is also individual counselling with the students and their parents, as well as conversations with subject teachers.-

Access to remotely provided and digital services in Armenia is still limited. Some testing programs are available on the CGCD Centre's official website. As a result of these services, the educators responsible for career education (deputy principals, social educators, psychologists, class senior teachers or other subject teachers) summarize their opinions and the results of each student at the end of the academic semester for performing an impact assessment. Thus, the career practitioner assesses the impact of career guidance services on the decision of teenager.

Before the outbreak of COVID-19 almost no institution had ever conducted distance learning activities and lacked the necessary experience. It became a major problem when there was a need for transition to full distance learning format. It should be noted that the reasons for not being able to manage career guidance activities properly during distance learning period presented by career

¹⁹ <https://edu2work.am/case-studies>

²⁰ Career Guidance and Capacity Development Centre, Publications, <http://www.mycareer.am/arm/resources/>

guidance practitioners included the lack of motivation of students, unavailability of internet connection, as well as the absence of necessary materials that should be used in distance learning and the lack of ICT equipment.

MoESCS in cooperation with CGCD Centre developed virtual career education lessons, which were broadcasted on public television. Online career guidance activities and webinars have been conducted by the career guidance practitioners for TVET students and job seekers.

In those schools where career education has not yet been introduced, the career guidance activities can be performed by the initiative of the principal or subject teachers. These activities are mostly carried out in high schools (14 to 16 years olds), they organize discussions with specialists, visits to employers or vocational educational institutions. However, they are not consistent and continuous.

The component of career education in the middle schools is introduced at the national level by the MoESCS of Armenia, in cooperation with the educational department of the Municipality of Yerevan and the regional administrations (the territorial state administrations).

The students of all 96 VET institutions in the country have access to career guidance and career education services. The practitioners of vocational orientation and career guidance (the positions are named in accordance to the official list of jobs) submit their action plan to the Management Board of the VET institutions at the beginning of each academic year, with which they work with the students. The services include providing trainings for development of career management skills, individual counselling, organizing internships, work-based training, creating relations with the regional employment centre, involvement in volunteer activities, and support for future employment (see methodological guide developed by CDCD Centre in Appendix).

The practitioners keep an individual case for each student. Twice a year they present statistics on student career guidance services. Vocational orientation and career guidance practitioners undergo mandatory training that depends on the number of students and demand, ongoing counselling and are supervised by the CGCD Centre, receiving the necessary methodology and toolkits. Practitioners present their annual work plan to the VET management board for approval and it includes career guidance service provision as well as the mandatory trainings for the coming academic year. It should be added that the vocational orientation and career guidance practitioners in the VET institutions are actively involved in the quality assessment, job-based training, apprenticeship and internship processes of their institutions, some of whom also teach the subjects "Communication Skills" and "General Work Skills" modules. In the last three years, the practitioners have been more actively involved in various training programs for developing their personal and soft skills: communication, negotiation, networking, presentation etc.

The career education and career guidance component is introduced in the VET institutions at the national level by the MoSECS of the RoA with the participation of the management board of the institutions.

University students should apply to their university Career Centres (they have different names in different universities) to receive career guidance services. However, as a result of the survey implemented in the scope of this review report, it was discovered that the career centres of the universities perform different functions, so it is difficult to assess the level of their involvement in the students' career development process. Each university has its own model.

People not in formal education, NEETs, adults, people who are not competitive in the labour market can receive career guidance services in the regional centres of Unified Social Services, which operate in the capital city and all regions of the republic (49 centres). Following the reorganization of the regional State Employment Centres, currently a new career guidance model is being developed, based not only on the career guidance services provided by the wish of the visitors (jobseekers, unemployed), but also whenever the social workers identify the need for career guidance as a result of the needs assessment. However, the model is not yet fully implemented at the national level, and there is no designated and trained professional staff.

There are quite a few private companies which provide career guidance to teenagers, young people and their parents, and their services are available mainly in the capital city.

In terms of the state employment policy, the work in the regional centres of USS is organized and coordinated, by the Employment and Labour Force Development Department, which is a professional structural subdivision in the USS System. The main goals and objectives of the ELFD Department are:

1) Ensuring competitiveness in the labour market by forming the conditions of inclusion, meeting the demand for the labour force, ensuring effective realization of the existing labour supply for permanent or temporary employment;

2) Ensuring systemic access to data on newly created jobs and vacancies for both employers and job seekers;

3) Ensuring and supporting the services leading to conscious choice of profession and effective career management in education and social systems, aimed at building a competitive labour force potential.

There are 4 divisions in the structure of the Department:

- 1) Division of Coordination of Employment Programs;
- 2) Division of Cooperation with Employers and Migration;
- 3) Division of Development of Labour Force and Career Guidance;
- 4) Division of Planning and Developing Applications for Projects.

5.1. Education, training and work based learning for youth

1) General education

The content of general education in the Republic of Armenia is regulated by the state standard of general education. After reviewing the document which was active since 2010-2011, the Government of the Republic of Armenia approved the new "State Standard for General Education" in 2021. It has been developed according to a new principle, which defines the expected skills and abilities (competencies) of the graduates of the main program of middle education. The main curricula of the secondary education are aimed at building the expected learning outcomes of the graduates of elementary, basic and secondary education programs, the minimum and maximum learning loads according to the levels of education, and the principles of the academic progress assessment system. The definitions of the competences are based on the Council of Europe's Competent Culture of Democracy (CDC) competencies. This document has defined as well the career education outcomes of the graduates of elementary, basic and secondary programs in three levels of education, which are:

The graduates of the elementary program shall be able to...



The graduates of the basic program shall be able to...



The graduates of a secondary program shall be able to...



identify the importance of the job, recognize different professions and occupations, identify them by their working tools, instruments and functions

discover and develop their interests and preferences and make preliminary self determination basing on the possibilities or opportunities suggested by the vocational education

have career preferences basing on the supply of the labour market and self identification, and be able to present the professions of their choice

While the component of career education is introduced in grades 8 to 11 as a compulsory club, at elementary and basic education level, career learning is integrated in existing subjects namely "I and the world around me" in elementary school; and "Social science" in middle school. According to the pilot standard of the "Career Guidance" training course and its curricula approved by the order of the Minister of ESCS in 2021, it is defined that "according to the proposed methodology, the career guidance services in schools is an important component of the educational process".

Firstly, the methodology of work carried out in the educational process, should be emphasized and prioritized, then it shall be developed and supplemented by disciplinary or interdisciplinary connections. The methodology is based on the identification of the student's personal qualities, preferences, interests, the development of key competencies, the transfer of information, the knowledge of professions, and recognition of significance of different subjects from the point of view of different occupations. The recommended time for the Career Guidance program is 34 hours per year (one meeting per week), and in the 11th grade, 15 hours for an individual career path research in addition. The research is considered to be the final assignment for students. The student presents the chosen profession, the reason of the choice, the education opportunities for the chosen profession, own vision of an occupation and the factors that affected the choice.

According to the curriculum, the extracurricular visits (at the employer's workplaces, educational institutions, USS, etc.), meetings with the parents and personal counselling, organization of career and profession exhibitions, and participation in career fairs are mandatory. The course can be conducted only by a trained and qualified specialist (currently the only state body conducting professional training is the CGCD Centre operating in the system of the MoLSA, and the preference is given to the school social pedagogue, psychologist and the deputy principal for professional educational assistance), who must be selected by the school beforehand, taking into account the professional and personal qualities necessary for teaching the "Vocational Guidance" course.

In 2019-2020, Save the Children-Armenia, within the framework of the program "EU for Youth: Skills for the Future" has provided support for the interior decoration of the vocational/career guidance clubs in 10 schools of the country, and means for purchasing office supplies and furniture (tables and chairs for group and individual interactive training, computers, projectors and other equipment).

Thus, in 90 out of 1,400 public schools of the Republic, career education is carried out in the format of clubs, with the standard "Career Guidance" (extra-curricular) and educational curricula, two teachers are engaged from each school. In 240 schools they provide unregulated career guidance services, therefore other information is not available.

2) Vocational education and training (VET)

According to the by-laws of the career guidance departments in VET institutions, the main goal of career guidance is to increase the competitiveness of students and graduates in the labour market and develop career management skills through provision of career information, counselling, career education and guidance services. The description of the position of career guidance and career development practitioners clearly defines their functions, which are divided into three directions: provision of career guidance information and counselling, support for obtaining employment and performance of administrative work, like keeping statistics and data on students' pathways, developing monitoring reports in due order (see job profile of the VET career practitioners in Appendix).

VET is one of those unique systems where the career development support processes are fully integrated and coordinated at the national level, and the career education and guidance services are provided on the local level based on the defined functions and monitoring requirements. As a result of the evaluation of the successful pilot projects implemented with the consultative support of the European Training Foundation (ETF) since 2013 and the implementation and impact assessment of preconditions defined by the EU budget support "Better Qualifications for Better Jobs", the RA state budget allocated funds for creating one specialist position in all 96 VET institutions of the Republic within 2018-2020. Since 2018, around 49 million AMD (approx. 88.3 thousand Euro) have been foreseen annually for the salaries of those Career practitioners.

The work of vocational education and career guidance practitioners begins before the admission, when in cooperation with public schools they raise student awareness, organize visits to VET schools, arrange master classes, as well as individual counselling with parents and prospective applicants. In the learning process, they are guided by the methodology provided by the CGCD Centre for the individual and group work. They conduct as well non-formal training courses for students to develop career management skills. CGCD Centre designed and provided 10 modules for career guidance to the practitioners. For example, "Career Management", "Self-assessment", "Communication skills", "Entrepreneurship skills", "Leadership and Management", "Lifelong Learning in Career Development", "How to write a successful CV", "Self presentation and job interview". They actively cooperate with the community employers, Unified social service specialists, NGOs, involving them in the work with students. Specific time or duration is set for the provision of services; and the minimum requirement to the function of Career Guidance is defined as requirement to provide the 10 modules, personal consultations must be organized with each student, the number of cooperating employers, and referral to the USS etc.

The practitioners build a database of career guidance and employment support activities with the students (in MS Excel format), according to which the summary data are submitted to the VET Department of the MoESCS twice a year. After a student turns to the Career centre, the practitioner registers them for different events and informs about new opportunities periodically.

An assessment conducted by the CGCD Centre in 2020 found that the total number of students applying to career guidance departments in VET institutions has been 2,477. Psychological pedagogical testing and individual counselling has been conducted with 475 students who had applied to the career guidance practitioners. A total of 2197 students have participated in the courses, of which 1565 or 71% have been graduate students.

Overall, according to the CGCD Centre, 97.34% of all VET graduates in 2018-2020 have been involved in various career guidance services throughout their studies. During 2018, about 154 thousand people applied and received consultations and referrals through regional centres of the SEA. Of them, more than 20 thousand people benefitted of career guidance (vocational orientation) services. Job placement was promoted for about 11,996 job seekers, including 8,159 (68%) women; youth aged 16-29 old made 3,894 or 33%. 83% or 9,932 individuals who were supported with job placement were persons uncompetitive in labour market. The level of **VET graduates' job placement** remains relatively low (73-74% of those who sought job and around 40% according with the received qualification). The main factors of that, according to the stakeholders' assessments, are unfavourable situation with the opening of new job places, low salaries and unattractive working conditions, as well as existence of considerable shadow economy. Another factor is that for the most of occupations, there is no regulation in terms of

education level or even the profile. This results in a situation when many jobs relevant to VET, are occupied by people with higher education or without any professional education²¹.

In conclusion, it should be noted that over the past five years, EU-supported NGOs (People in Need, Education and Business Partnership Foundation, World Vision Armenia, Strategic Development Agency, etc.) have provided significant support to VET institutions, including for improving the career guidance process, creating new opportunities, establishing connections, and developing the capacity of professionals. The VET sector is also in the focus of attention of other donors - GIZ, UNDP, USAID, etc. Career guidance practitioners are actively involved in the implementation of a work-based learning system, and the organization of short-term (up to 3 months) trainings for adults. Career and job fairs organized in Yerevan and regions have become tradition, with the active participation of career guidance practitioners from VET institutions, who are ensuring the participation of student volunteers, who organize master classes for school students, etc. The students of VET institutions have many success stories to share, when after the job fairs they receive offers of internships, jobs and study opportunities abroad from employers and organizers.

3) Higher education

Career guidance services for students studying in universities are provided by career Centres (the subdivisions performing these functions are titled differently in different universities). In order to get the picture of the current situation, in the scope of this review report, a survey has been conducted in 27 universities of the country, 21 of which have responded. According to the results, in 12 universities the legal basis for the operation of career guidance units is their charter. However, the study has shown that even the functions of these centres are different in different universities. Each university has its own regulations and services. The majority of universities doesn't provide personal consultations. They are mostly organizing trainings. In 19 universities that have participated in the survey, the career guidance centres are performing career guidance and employment support for students and graduates. A staff position for a career guidance practitioner is available in 20 educational institutions. There are student and alumni career guidance databases in 17 universities.

Universities mainly take an active part in the job fairs organized in Yerevan and the regions. For some universities (National Agrarian University of Armenia, French University, Armenian State University of Economics, Brusov State University of Foreign Languages, Eurasia International University, etc.) it has already become tradition to organize internal job and/or career fairs at the end of every academic year. Many events in the sphere of school to university communication or networking and student career guidance have become tradition. In particular, the Brusov State University and Eurasia International University career Centres, are holding such events with long-term student career management skills development programs in regional schools. CGCD Centre provides methodology for the trainings while the programs are designed by universities.

A good example comes from Brusov State University, where on the basis of the Career guidance center they created the "Smart Entrepreneurship Centre" to encourage the development of students' career management, entrepreneurial and networking skills with the employers. The Department of Development and Corporate Relations Service of the French Armenian University which carries out career education and career guidance activities at the University, has successfully implemented the PPP - "Projet personnel et professionnel" course for all university students. It promotes the development of students' career management skills, and increases the competitiveness of graduates in the labour market.

Nevertheless, it is difficult to form an unequivocal opinion on the effectiveness of the career Centres of universities. This is stated in "Work, Armenia" strategy task²², approved by the GoA: "Although the universities have career guidance centres, but their functions, methodology, and then the results are not clear. In addition, working closely with career centres can provide useful information on alumni career

²¹ Torino Process 2018-2020 in Armenia, <https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/news-and-events/events/torino-process-2018-2020-armenia-preparing-tomorrows-skills>

²² <http://www.irtek.am/views/act.aspx?aid=152312>

development trends that can be used to develop policies. "To solve this problem, Action 3.1 requires the "Review of the principles of operation the career guidance Centres of universities" (2020-2023).

In addition, the regional centres of Unified Social Services work with VET institutions and career Centres of higher educational establishments to support youth employment. They hold state employment programs, awareness-raising meetings on the labour market demand with students, jointly organize job fairs, etc. The cooperation with schools at this moment is not very active.

5.2. Unemployed support and support to NEETs

Career guidance services for job-seekers who are unemployed, uncompetitive in the labour market, including young people, are provided in the regional centres of the Unified Social Services (formerly the SEA) within the MoLSA, which operate in 49 communities of the country. Due to the ongoing reform process, it is however difficult to tell how the career guidance services will be provided in it.

Services include career guidance needs assessment for job seekers, career development information and counselling for involvement in the employment support state programs. All job seekers have the right to use career guidance services. Before the reforms, the regional centres of the SEA were carrying out also group work with their customers and delivering trainings. In some centres there were job clubs, the purpose of which was to promote the employment of young people and women through continuous meetings and trainings. Currently, in the regional centers the citizen is provided with a complex social service, that is, social needs assessment, provision of pension, functional assessment of pension, giving disability status and employment services. As a result of the reforms, the staff providing employment services in the regional centers has been optimized. According to the data of Statistical Services of the RoA, as of October 2021, the Unified Service Centres since the beginning of 2021 have provided career guidance services to 12,710 visitors, which is 22.7% of the job seekers who have received counselling.

Armenia ranks 13th in the region with the number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET). The proportion of young people who did not complete upper secondary education and are NEETs is high, although the overall rate fell from 27.5% in 2015 to 23.9% in 2019 (Armstat, 2021). The female NEET rate remains higher, at 30.7% in 2019.

During the last year, the young people who took part in the 44-day war in 2020, including those with disabilities, were singled out as separate targets, also due to their large number, taking into account their age group (during the war they were conscripts 18 to 20 years old). The majority of these young people do not have a profession, or after demobilization still continue vocational education in VET institutions or universities. The Government of the Republic of Armenia has given priority to meeting the need of career guidance services, training and employment support. For this purpose, active cooperation has been established between different spheres like healthcare, education, social protection.

Due to the introduction of the USS system since April 2021, the model of identifying the need for career guidance and providing adequate services is currently under review. According to the model, career guidance services can be provided not only to job seekers who have applied to the USS centres, but also to citizens whose career guidance needs were identified by the social workers within the analysis of their family cases. As a result, it is expected that through career guidance services, steps will be taken for motivating individuals from families which are registered in the social protection system as insecure and are receiving social support benefits to become economically active again. In order to implement the model, it is necessary to develop the capacities of human resources and supply them with necessary information and tools.

5.3. Workers/Employed

There are no separate studies on career development support and career guidance programs and initiatives for private sector workers in Armenia, so it is difficult to analyze the overall picture and the situation. From random interviews with human resource management specialists, it can be concluded that systematic career development support and career guidance activities are carried out in typically

large and medium-sized enterprises. There is no information about such practices in SMEs and micro enterprises.

According to the data of the state statistical service "On Vocational Training of Employees" collected from large and medium-sized organizations engaged in the monitoring of the vocational training of employees at the expense of the employers, 29% of the selected cluster of employees were trained in educational institutions in 2019, and 67% directly in the employing organization; and 3% abroad. The trainings were conducted for the purpose of vocational upgrading, retraining, raising qualification / or they had been in the form of internships. It is evident that the development of career management skills is not singled out in the main areas of skill development.

The number of economic entities in the informal sector in Armenia is 185.8 thousand, their employment rate is 354.0 thousand people (average 1.9 people). According to various methodological calculations, the number of unregistered employees in Armenia ranges from 300,000 to 700,000. According to the results of a "The needs of unregistered employees and problems in Armenia" survey conducted in the scope of Open Society Foundation in 2020, the main areas of informal, unregistered work in Armenia are:

- services
- seasonal work
- agriculture
- private in-house services: construction repair and renovation services at individual level, babysitting, house cleaning
- blue-labour work
- mass media
- activities of individual creators in the fields of entertainment, art and culture.

From the point of view of state support, one of the tasks of the Unified social services centres is to support the employment of able-bodied members of the welfare receiving households which are registered in the social protection system as economically insecure by involving them in the employment supporting programs. However, directing people in an informal economy or unregistered working individuals to the formal field and creating opportunities for them for receiving formal support is not singled out as a task.

There is a need for separate research in this area.

The system of recognition of the results of non-formal education has not been introduced in Armenia yet.

6. FUNDING

The state bodies responsible for financing and managing career development support services are the MoLSA and MoESCS each within its competence. According to the 2021-2026 program of the GoA, the MoLSA is responsible for providing methodologies and developing the capacities of specialists for implementing career development support system services in formal education and social services. Therefore, according to the Law of the RoA on the State Budget, since 2013 till today, the MoLSA has been receiving funds within the framework of the program "Provision of Career Guidance Methodology and Human Resource Training". With these funds, the MoLSA has been delegating relevant services to the CGCD Centre operating in its system. In 2013-2021, in parallel with the expansion of the implementation of the career development support system, unfortunately, the allocated funds were reduced, and the staff of specialists of the CGCD Centre was optimized. The budget allocated to the CGCD Center in the last three years is about 24 million drams (it is equal to about EUR 43.4 thousand).

According to the Law of the RoA on the State Budget, since 2018, funds are allocated to the MoESCS for creating one full-time position of career guidance practitioner in each VET institutions of the country.

In general education institutions the career education services are provided within the framework of funding stipulated for the activities of the school clubs. If the school has the necessary resources, it can open a career guidance club. In general, in order to have it mandatory in all schools, the assignment of the MoESCS is necessary to provide appropriate measures.

Within the framework of the project "Programs and Measures for the State Youth Policy" of the Law of the RoA on the State Budget, in 2021-2026 also funds were allocated to increase the awareness and involvement of young people in the career guidance services through non-formal training courses.

In April 2021, the Department of Employment and Labour Force Development was created in the system of USS singling out the importance of introduction and development of career guidance services. The functions of this department, while not implemented yet, include providing career guidance and career development support services to population regardless of age and social status (job seekers, workers, adolescents in day care and full day care facilities, youth, migrants, conscripts and other individuals), designing methodologies and planning working with the visitors of the resource rooms of regional centres on individual and group basis for self-sustenance; assessing the need for training specialists who provide career guidance services, implementing capacity building, monitoring and supervising their activities; creating information databases necessary for career guidance, career management, etc. The staff members of this department are civil servants.

In the formal education system and social services the career guidance is provided free of charge.

The implementation of the career development support is assisted by donor organizations, which support the implementation of those initiatives or arrangements which have not been implemented due to the lack or scarcity of the state funding. For example, creating conditions for the activities of vocational guidance clubs in middle schools, logistical support to VET institutions, additional training of career guidance specialists, publication of teaching manuals, etc.

At present, not all schools and VET facilities are sufficiently equipped to provide career education and career guidance services, and the VET regional Centres are being renovated and refurbished, however they still do not have a separate space for individual career guidance services.

Juxtaposing the problems of the introduction of career development support system and the amount of state funds allocated for their solution, it should be stated that they are not comparable. With the funds allocated to the CGCD Centre annually, it is planned to train only 140 career guidance practitioners per year and to provide continuous counselling to 300 practitioners who have already been trained, whereas in 2022 more than 1000 practitioners will need training. At the same time, the CGCD Centre does not have sufficient human resources.

The active involvement of employers and their unions and compilation of supporting funds could be seen as an opportunity in addition to the state budget funds as well as contributions of donor organizations.

7. ACCESS

The reforms of the introduction of the career development support system in Republic of Armenia during the post-Soviet times started in 2012. When the government approved the concept for the development of the career guidance system in the Republic of Armenia, the program of measures for its implementation for 2012-2015 followed. It was the first concept paper that introduced that career guidance services should be available to all persons, regardless of their age, social or employment

status. According to the concept, the main structures for providing career guidance services were public schools, VET institutions, universities, employment and integrated social centres.

However, the provision of lifelong career guidance services in the Republic of Armenia, regardless of the person's age and social work status, is not yet fully implemented. Pupils do not have access to career education at all schools, not all universities provide career guidance services to the students, and the newly formed USS that includes the State Employment Agency, does not have solid basis for providing career guidance quality services for the jobseekers, unemployed and NEET.

However, the legal and operational basis is set for investing in this direction during the coming years. According to the "Work for Armenia" strategy approved by the Government of Armenia, as a sectorial document, and the Government Program of the Republic of Armenia for 2021-2026, measures were allocated to ensure access to career guidance services in formal education system and social services.

The Law on Employment of the RoA defines the criteria for determining the competitiveness of the unemployed in the labour market and ensuring the employment of a person who is not competitive in the labour market.

The career guidance services are in principle available to individuals who are not competitive in the labour market, such as long-term unemployed, economically inactive youth, NEETs, migrants and refugees, women, people with disabilities, people living at the border or in the highlands, former prisoners released on parole and under probation, victims of trafficking, and others, at regional Unified Social Service centers.

In case of employment of a person who is not competitive in the labour market, the employer is given a one-time compensation within the framework of the state employment program. The program stipulates two sub-programs which can be implemented jointly or separately. The first sub-program suggests one-time compensation to the employer for training the not competitive persons, providing a monetary compensation. The other program is suggested as a one-time compensation to the employer for the reasonable adjustment of the workplace for a person with disability.

The program "Support to small business activities of people who are not competitive in the labour market" implemented by the USS Centre in the framework of the state employment regulation programs can be considered as a form of a state aid meant to motivate coming out of the informal economy. The program may include people who are not competitive in the labour market. Within the framework of the program, non-competitive persons are provided with the necessary support for starting a business: consulting, training, development of an entrepreneurial business plan and guiding its implementation. On the basis of a positively assessed business plan, a not competitive person is given financial support to start a small business. The assistance includes one-time reimbursement of 75% of the value of fixed assets (with a limited amount of funds), reimbursement of 25% of the salary of the hired employee (not more than 50% of the minimum monthly salary), one-year reimbursement of 50% of the rental value, the income tax of the person generated by the entrepreneurial activity, as defined by law, and assistance for paying the designated social payments (not more than in the amount of the minimum monthly salary), for a period of one year.

The services are available in all the communities of the Republic through 49 regional centers of USS. Digital service tools are not yet in use.

At present, the introduction of career guidance services in the regional centers of USS is still in progress. In the newly created system, there is an issue of involving career guidance specialists, training, continuous development of skills and providing methodology in close cooperation with CGCD Centre. The peculiarity of the new model of the unified social service from the point of view of the career development support system is that if previously the career guidance service could be received by the visitors of the regional centres, now the social worker can identify the need for career guidance or refer a person to an employment specialist.

8. USE OF TECHNOLOGY

Digital technologies are not yet widely embedded in career development support services and processes in Armenia. Digital career guidance testing tools developed by the CGCD Center are available on the Center's website at www.mycareer.am. A video material with innovative VIAR technology has been developed with the support of GIZ to present the careers of the hotel industry within the framework of career education. However, full career guidance services are not yet available to the general public.

The lack of complete information on labour supply and demand hinders the development of sound economic, social and educational policies.

Currently, within the framework of the employment services provided by the state, to be launched in February 2022, the system of digital and remote services is being developed, which is part of the electronic information platform providing information on the employment and labour market operated by the MoLSA. The above mentioned services are included in the actions of "Work Armenia" strategy. The purpose of the information system "Electronic Labour Exchange (e-borsa)" is to reduce the inconsistency of provided information by automating the business processes in the field of employment services, thus promoting employment. The system aims at the following:

- Collection of comprehensive data on labour supply and demand;
- Automatic matching of labour supply and demand, i.e. creating a job seeker and employer relationship;
- Increasing the effectiveness of active employment policy;
- Ensuring the factual basis of economic, social and educational programs in the medium term.

The system, among other processes, will also provide online career guidance services for young people, job seekers, with tools developed using innovative technologies.

The Edu2Work platform was created in 2019 within the framework of the "From Education to Work" program implemented by the National Innovation Center for Sustainable Development Goals in cooperation with the Public Policy Institute. The program is part of the "Work for Armenia" initiative of the Deputy Prime Minister's Office of the RA. The results of the project will serve as proposals to support the development and implementation of the Government policy.

The purpose of the Edu2Work platform is to assess the dynamics of the rapidly changing labour market and labour supply and demand in Armenia. It analyzes thousands of vacancy announcements that are published on 10 online platforms in Armenia, giving the user an opportunity to get acquainted with the current "forecasted demand" of the Armenian labour market and make more informed career decisions. The platform uses innovative technologies, from automated online job posting to machine learning analysis to capture the full picture of the job market. The full potential of big data science and behavior has been used to develop a platform for fact-based policy development.

The Edu2Work platform is a result of public and private sector collaboration. It is made for three main groups of users:

1. Students and career center professionals can use the Edu2Work platform to understand labour market trends, to find the career that best suits them, to identify the most in-demand professions and skills.
2. Policy makers and researchers can use this AI based platform to see in real time the overall picture of the labour market segment which is reflected in online announcements, to track labour market changes over time across regions, to identify the most sought-after occupations and skills by employers, to develop policies and to target investment opportunities in different areas.
3. Universities and other educational institutions can use the platform to identify the most demanding jobs, track changes in the labour market at all skill levels, assess the relevance of their curricula, adapt them to labour market requirements, develop curricula based on data provided by employers, and guide the students.

The platform compares the data taken from the online Armenian labour market and presents the most demanded professions, skills, the level of required qualification and work experience. However, the information included in the platform does not fully reflect the picture of the Armenian labour market, as the information system does not integrate the information on vacancies advertised by public administration, announced by local self-government bodies, and the demand for low-skilled labour.

9. QUALITY OF PROVISION OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT SERVICES WITHIN A CULTURE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

9.1. Standards

There is no standard for the qualification, formal assessment of skills and knowledge of career guidance practitioners in Armenia. There is neither a qualification recognition nor certification system. However, for the implementation of the career education and career guidance services in basic, middle and high schools, the VET institutions, and the Unified Social Services regional centres, there is an important precondition that these specialists shall be trained by the CGCD Centre, with an appropriate methodology and program. The training programs of the CGCD Centre have been developed based on two components: the development of competencies of a career guidance specialist and knowledge and skills development with the application of the proper methodology for specific targets of these services (school, young people, job seekers, not competitive persons). The methodologies of development of the competencies of the career guidance professionals are based on the framework of International Competencies for Educational and Vocational Guidance Practitioners Approved by the General Assembly, Bern, 2003²³. However, this document is neither adopted nor ratified in Armenia.

The duration of the training program is 40 hours, after which the specialists of the CGCD Centre continue to provide professional advice and methodological support. It can be done at the workplace of an individual, at the office of the career guidance specialist, using counseling or coaching techniques. The need for additional training of practitioners is assessed in the process, according to which further trainings are planned.

There are no universal mechanisms for evaluating the quality of career education and career guidance practitioners in Armenia. However, in order to monitor the work in VET facilities, the CGCD Centre, with the expert support of the ETF, has developed and introduced monitoring and evaluation criteria in 2015, according to which specialists from the relevant department of the MoESCS together with the CGCD Centre regularly visit the VET facilities and monitor the provided services. Monitoring is also based on the regulations developed by CGCD Centre that is used by all VET institutions. The Methodological Guide developed by CGCD Centre provided the content and methodology for Career Advice, Career education, Career Information and other career guidance activities. It also includes Career Guidance service modules for individuals and groups.

For career guidance services, preference is given to professionals with a bachelor's degree in social pedagogy, psychology, social work or HR qualifications. However, this requirement is not prescribed in any document. The CGCD Centre works closely with higher education institutions which are training specialists with the mentioned qualifications, to review the curricula, include and regularly update a separate "Career Management" module, organize student internships and prepare them for future employment.

²³ <https://iaevg.com/Framework>

In this context, one of the primary tasks is the creation of a national system of training, qualification and skills recognition of career guidance specialists, the inclusion of the occupation of career guidance in the register of occupations of the RoA.

9.2. Staffing

Career support services are provided as a separate staff position under the same name of occupation only in VET institutions and universities. The job profile of the VET institution's career guidance specialist is attached (see appendix). According to the job profile, the practitioner ensures the productive career guidance service provision to the students. These services include three main scopes: provision of accurate and up-to-date information to the students on career opportunities (on profession, vocational training institution, occupation, workplace, etc.), progression routes, choices, where to find help and how to access it; provision of advice through activities that help young people to gather, understand and interpret information and apply it to their own situation; and provision of impartial guidance and professional support to help young people understand themselves and their needs, overcome barriers, resolve conflicts, develop new perspectives and make progress.

As for the professional competence of VET career guidance practitioners, that was surveyed by CGCD centre in 2020, 34% of the respondents have had a professional qualification, 9% have been psychologists, the rest have had other qualifications. And 60% of the survey participants have been combining / will be combining the responsibilities of a career manager with other functions, 34% will be performing only career services, and 6% are still non-staff employees. 100% of the survey participants could use MS Word, 84% MS Excel and 62% MS PP programs. The vast majority of practitioners - 87% - rate their communication skills as "good" and 12% as "excellent". The average rating was 4.11 on a scale of 1 to 5. A high rate of creative thinking was revealed among 36% of practitioners, and the vast majority, 64%, have shown an average indicator of creative thinking.

Career education in general education schools is carried out by the school's deputy principal, organizer of the school educational activities, social pedagogue, psychologist, whose job descriptions have a separate career guidance function.

In particular, this function entails "participating together with the teacher in identification of students career guidance needs, discovering talents, developing and preparing students for work activities, taking into account their abilities and preferences", "performing psychological-pedagogical study and observation in the course of learning and in each age period, helping to develop proper behavior, promoting the development of their knowledge, abilities, skills and performing career guidance." In case of absence of the above-mentioned positions in schools, the career education is provided by the subject teacher.

Within the framework of employment services, there is no separate staff unit and position in the regional USS Centres, based on the regular list of position titles in the civil service system. In April 2021, a separate subdivision was established at the USS Head Office, the Sub-division of the "Labour Force Development and Career Guidance". The main functions of this subdivision are directly related to the introduction of career guidance services in the USS system, the formation and development of links with the formal education system. The number of workers in the division is 9.

In the formal education and social services systems of Armenia, the initial and continuous training of career guidance specialists is carried out by the CGCD Centre. It has a systemic nature, is based on the state order and the assessed need. At the end of the training the participants receive only a certificate of participation.

After the optimization of 2018, professional staff of the Center consists of 10 specialists (12 people in the staff list). The works are carried out by two divisions: methodological and training, information-analytical. The methodological and training division is responsible for methodology, development of training programs, trainings-supervision, and the information-analytical division is responsible for gathering information about the labor market, education, professions, occupations, establishing relations with partner-employers, and raising public awareness. Before that (2013-2017), more than 20

specialists worked in the CGCD Center, experts from the scientific field were regularly involved in the work.

The training programs implemented by the CGCD Centre are based on the characteristics of the target groups by age and social status. The training programs have different contents for school teachers, employment specialists and career guidance specialists working with young people. At the same time, the description of the career management support system in Armenia, the best international practices, main theories and professional requirements for career guidance specialists are the mandatory components of all programs.

Generally, there are no organizations providing career guidance training in the private sector. Within the framework of various grants, NGOs provide training on specific topics, such as: new emerging needs for capacity building of career guidance professionals in the face of new global and local challenges, mastering the technologies of remote services, using digitized tools, competing in the labour market, and applying new technologies for working with workers in non-standardized forms of employment.

The quality of career development support services largely depends on the qualifications and skills of specialists. Therefore, the introduction of the qualification system of career guidance specialists, the creation of wider opportunities for education and training, the creation of mechanisms for the recognition of skills are a priority. For that purpose, it is necessary to consolidate the private sector around the state system, to attract additional funds.

9.3. Quality of data and information

As already mentioned, formal education and social services use career guidance and career education methodology designed by the CGCD Center. It includes models and techniques of service provision, theory, education programs, curriculums and modules. The suggested methodology is developed according to the age group (schoolchildren, youth, adults), social status (job-seekers, long-term unemployed and others), functional assessment (people with disabilities).

Information on forecasted demand for occupations, professions, labour market and skills remains a problem for career guidance professionals. There is no unified information platform from which this information would be available in a verified and constantly updated manner.

There is information on vacancies on more than 10 online platforms. The most viewed platform for vacancies is www.staff.am which can be accessed also from all social networks. It is an AI powered online recruitment platform with 100,000+ registered job-seekers and 4,000+ registered companies. They provide quality recruitment services to companies of all sizes. Staff.am is Armenia's most popular job and recruiting marketplace that is already changing the way how people search for jobs and how local and international companies recruit talents in Armenia.

Job-seekers view job listings, and apply directly via staff.am, getting access to fully transparent and informed recruitment process throughout the job application lifecycle. Registered job seekers get noticed by companies and can be invited to apply for a vacant position that has been declared. Job-seekers are provided with a number of online tools such as job alerts, verified skills and badges, etc. Registration for job-seekers is free of charge.

For employers, staff.am offers full scale recruiting solution to help attract high quality candidates at a fraction of budget and time of other channels. It offers searching the database of potential job-seekers who are registered in staff.am. The fully accessible database of job-seekers grows by time. The number of joined job-seekers increases providing opportunity for the employers to consider them for other positions. Number of other tools, such as employee reviews, company management dashboard, application form builder, and more make the whole recruitment process much more productive. It has commercial purposes, employers pay a set fee for publishing ads. Besides, according to the co-founder, the platform is intended for medium and highly qualified specialists entering the labor market for the first time. Therefore, the announcements for craftsmen with low qualifications are not even published.

Information on vacancies in the public administration and local self-government system is published on the official website of the Republic of Armenia at www.azdarar.am.

Career guidance professionals receive information on the labour market, the demand and forecasts of skills from the recently launched platform edu2work.am.

The "Nork Technology Centre" of the MoLSA operates a joint search engine "Work without Borders - Armenia" at www.workforall.am, which was created for universal access to the labour market of the Eurasian Economic Union member states. It allows job seekers to search for vacancies in the five EEU countries: Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia.

Information on the demand for not high quality or low-skilled specialists is available at www.list.am, where, however, the information is neither protected nor verified, unlike the previously described platforms.

Thus, access to accurate, reliable, up-to-date general information necessary for career guidance is limited. By the order of the Minister of Economy of the RA, an interdepartmental working group was set up to work on the issue. The members of this working group are the officials of the Ministries of Economy, MoLSA and MoESCS, and the representatives of the private sector and employers.

9.4. Monitoring, evaluation and policy feedback

Full and comprehensive information is available only on career services in VET institutions. All VET institutions in Armenia have a separate position for practitioners, career guidance services are monitored and evaluated twice a year according to two main criteria that are set beforehand. The work carried out with students and the provision of employment of graduates is being monitored. Unlike other systems, VET institutions have a separate toolkit for monitoring career guidance (presented in the appendix), which requires to follow the set indicators. Accordingly, a career guidance database of students has been established for tracing the graduates. The most recent career guidance monitoring indicators of the alumni, provided by the CGCD Centre of the MoLSA and corresponding departments of the MoESCS are presented in this table.

| | 2018-2019 | 2019-2020 | Total |
|---|-----------|-----------|--------|
| 2019 number of VET graduates | 7,418 | 11,000 | 18,418 |
| From them: received career guidance services in 2019 | 7,218 | 10,711 | 17,929 |
| Total (%) | 97.30% | 97.37% | 97.34% |

The data are provided by the relevant departments of the MoESCS and CGCD Center of MoLSA for the purpose of evaluating and monitoring of the career development support services.

The general investment in elementary, basic, middle and high schools is still in progress, thus the monitoring data is not complete. The information on the activities of the career centers in higher education institution has been collected in the framework of this review report from each institution and university and the picture is not complete, as not all HEIs have responded to the survey. As for the career guidance in the field of employment services, the processes triggered by the formation of the USS centres are just beginning, the work done in the past is generally not continued, there is a need to introduce a new model of services and provide training to specialists.

There are 41 state universities in Armenia, including their regional branches, 26 private, and 3 interstate universities. A survey has been conducted in universities within the framework of this review report to monitor the activities of career centres and according to the results there is at least one position in 20 universities (including state, private, interstate) which provide career guidance services. There is no unified approach to the implementation of career guidance services. Data on expenditures and investments are not available either. Therefore, it is not possible to evaluate.

Career guidance specialists in USS regional centres have not been assigned yet. However, as one of the important functions of the centre is to provide career guidance services to job seekers, according to the Statistical Service of the RA, as of October 2021, 22.7% of job seekers have received career guidance services in the regional USS Centres, since the beginning of the year.

It should be noted that there are no separate mechanisms for calculating budget expenditures for the implementation of a career development support system based on service efficiency. Budget allocations for methodology, staff training and supervision are given to the MoLSA. The calculation is based on a not financial indicator, the number of trainees (300 specialists in 2014-2017, 140 specialists in 2018-2021), the number of training manuals or guidelines (2 per year: service delivery models and methodology, criteria, curricula, modules, tools, etc). These services are provided by the staff of the CGCD Centre, as needed, together with invited lecturers and experts. In 2013-2017 the Center had 20 staff members, but in 2018-2021 only 12 (the reductions were made for the optimization of the public administration system). In order to provide career guidance services in the VET system, the budget allocations have been directed to the Ministry of Education and Science to ensure the provision of full-time career guidance specialists. As a non-financial indicator of the assessment is taken the number of students served by each specialist.

At present, the GoA continues to prioritize the measures aimed at balancing the education and labour market, aimed at human capital formation, and at envisaging the final investment of the career development support system in the Action Plan of the Government of the Republic of Armenia for 2021-2026. It stipulates as well the introduction of a monitoring and evaluation system.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations do not represent final solutions but are aimed at guiding policy and practice discussions. They follow the key pillars of this report and cover system, provider and practitioner level:

Policy framework

Short-term

- Establish an inter-ministerial working group with a clear operational mandate and participation of ministries (education, labour, youth, economy, social policy, agriculture, finance, territorial administration), employers and employee organizations, research and NGOs; to build trust and a common understanding/terminology, engage into a joint process, at first, being to discuss the outcomes of the review of the national career development support system aimed at
 - (1) developing a national theory of change (ToC)²⁴, as long-term vision guiding the development of a national career development support system, and action plan(s) to prioritise certain reform initiatives
 - (2) developing a joint understanding of the wished outcomes of career guidance for individuals, organisations and society across ministries, sectors and education levels

medium-term to long-term

²⁴ See p. 17: <https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/developing-national-career-development-support-systems>

- Develop a cross sectoral career guidance strategy bringing the education and employment side under one roof with participation of stakeholders across ministries (education, labour, youth, economy, social policy, agriculture, finance, territorial administration), employers and employee organizations, research and NGOs.

Coordination and Cooperation

Short-term

- Develop an annual action plan of the inter-ministerial working group starting already with 2022 that ensures the important involvement of social partners and employers at national level
- Build on the strong mandate/role given to the CGCD centre to not only maintain but expand the strong integrative power of its work and enhance the building of a national career development support system across sectors and client groups; this requires however providing more resources to the centre (see more recommendations below). Related to coordination and cooperation, an increase in resources of the centre can be achieved through a partnership between the CGCD centre and universities, where universities through their research staff could in particular take over the education and training, and mentoring/monitoring role; also teacher training institutions can be active partners in education and training; it should be considered if CGCD could be the body to practically coordinate a national inter-ministerial working group (as recommended above)
- Maintain the lead role of the CGCD centre to define and develop methodologies, train CG practitioners, monitor and provide support and let the Department “Labour Force Development and Career Guidance” be the implementer in the USS centres to establish CG – avoid adding a new player in this role of methodology development as it will lead to fragmentation again
- Oblige private and civil society career guidance providers to comply with the standards developed by the CGCD centre to ensure quality of the emerging private practice (accreditation etc.)

Medium-term to long-term

- Review the legal status of the CGCD Center (now a branch of a state non-profit organization within the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs) by establishing a Career Development Support System Foundation that will operate not only with the state funds but also with private investments, actively involving sector employers.

Services

Short-term

- Give high priority to shaping and implementing the career development support services within USS through which services get ‘universalised’ and are provided to every person.
- Integrate in the new USS career guidance model (services within employment centres) particular (outreach) activities for different groups like NEETs, or directing people in the informal economy to the formal economy, or work with disabled people

- Review and revise the career learning programmes for primary, basic, middle and secondary school levels: extending the learning outcomes along the concept of developing career management skills towards “learning about myself”, “learning about the world of learning”, next to “learning about the world of work” (also going beyond learning about professions) to facilitate first and foremost personal development and the development of a mindset that is entrepreneurial, critical, self-directed, showing agency, next to the more strait forward learning of CV writing, identification of job vacancies etc., which helps address high unemployment amongst youth with general, middle education and helps prepare all learners for their future.
- Add work based learning opportunities, job shadowing, school companies, mock interviews etc. to general education career education and career guidance work, as the real experience in a professional environment creates different learning opportunities and helps develop interests and develop future professional identities
- Ensure that career guidance services provided by VET and Higher Education career guidance practitioners to schools follows the approach of providing solid evidence on the value of an education programme for future employability and possible career pathways based on LMI, tracer study results etc and clearly refrains from “marketing for a VET centre and its programs”, which does not help at all in taking a well informed decision
- Ensure that career guidance services provided by VET and Higher Education career guidance practitioners to schools do so in close partnership with other education and training providers, the public employment service, employers, parents and unions to inform potential future students and not just act as school in silo – obviously, the existing cooperation within a national inter-ministerial working group builds strong grounds for regional and local partnerships
- Cooperate with adult learning institutions (public, NGOs, private) which provide soft entries into the world of learning through life skills trainings, career education programmes for adults to reengage unemployed or marginalised groups which are not competitive into further learning; those rather motivational activities can lead to personal development plans which may include (short) vocational trainings etc.
- Make parental involvement an official part of the CGCD centre’s methodology to leverage on the individual initiative of individual schools that already do so

Medium-term to long-term

- Integrate the approach applied in VET colleges around career guidance centres into general education institutions to accompany career education for all (CG clubs) with career guidance offers for those who want or need more support. This could also be realised through a cooperation with the regional USS centres that visit schools regularly to provide services.
- Diversify methodologies for career guidance to meet the needs of various client groups and go beyond career guidance based on personality traits
- Develop key competences from primary onwards together with career management skills, as those transversal skills cannot be learned in a couple of hours as per the current CG learning programme, but are developed over a long time and become part of a person’s behaviour

Funding:

Short-term

- Identify as high priority funding sources to increase sustained funding for the work of the CGCD centre as a key player to build a unified and coherent national career development support system
- Identify funding sources for supporting career development support for MSMEs workers in the light of the digital and green transition in particular

Medium-term to long-term

- Ensure sustained funding through RA state budget of at least one career guidance practitioner in all 96 VET institutions and all general education institutions (primary, basic and upper, middle, secondary, high)

Access:

Short-term

- Research the need for career development support for workers in MSMEs, review existing and identify possible measures to provide career development support to workers in MSMEs, in close cooperation with employer organisations and trade unions, reflecting also on their role
- Identify how the use of ICT can support enhancing access to services

Medium-term to long-term

- Propose state employment support a new project to assist workers in the informal economy.

Use of technology:

Short-term

- Identify how the career development support system can be effectively and efficiently enhanced through the use of ICT to support traditional services (e.g. harnessing the potential for connecting stakeholders: individuals-employers, schools-employers, practitioners-individuals, etc.; facilitating self/career/opportunity exploration and acquiring skills for deciding and acting; increasing accessibility: offering one-stop-shop information points, providing LMI, etc.), thereby ensuring the interoperability of ICT services from different actors and to use the potential of ICT to bring together the different elements of the career development support system in education, employment, youth etc. areas as an integrative factor to improve effectiveness and efficiency
- Select existing media used also during the pandemic (radio, TV etc.) and build on successful use for career guidance service provision
- Ensure that the “e-borsa” platform designed by MoLSA meet the needs of various users group
- Ensure that the Edu2Work Platform integrates as well information on vacancies advertised by public administration, announced by local self-government bodies, and the demand for low-skilled labour

Medium-term to long-term

- Invest in ICT infrastructure, e.g. create WLAN access points at public places like a square in a village to provide internet access also in remote areas
- Ensure the availability of regularly updated LMI for the use of various user groups (clients, CG practitioners, policy makers etc.) – ideally on a unified information platform from which this information would be available in a verified and constantly updated manner.

Quality, professionalisation and continuous improvement:

Short term

- As high priority, develop, under the leadership of the CGCD centre, qualification/occupation standards of career guidance practitioners for all practitioners across policy areas (education, employment, youth, private sector etc.), which shall also build the basis for recognition of prior learning/non/informal learning to recognise skills developed by practitioners in the form of official qualifications
- Ensure that teacher training institutions are also providing training and continuous capacity building for career guidance practitioners in close coordination with the Career Guidance and Capacity Development Centre based on general qualification/occupational standards. This way all subject teachers can receive trainings and more people can be trained in parallel.
- Use training of trainers (ToT) approach in the training of career guidance practitioners to increase the amount of trainings and support provision, e.g. by identifying highly motivated specialists in municipalities, regions who train others, hence, increasing the impact of the CGCD centre's training activities
- Include the occupation of career guidance practitioner in the register of occupations of the RoA
- Extend the function of career guidance and career development specialists in VET (and later general education) by adding the key task of a coordination role to ensure involvement and cooperation with internal (subject teachers etc) and external stakeholders (employers, public institutions providing LMI, parents etc.) in career education and career guidance
- Involve all universities to jointly review the mandates and activities of career guidance centres and practitioners in universities as per "Work, Armenia" strategy task 3, Action 3.1 "Review of the principles of operation the career guidance Centres of universities" (2020-2023), and develop a coordinated approach to professionalising services: practitioners should be covered by general qualification/occupational standards for all practitioners; functions should be aligned according to the overall objective to support individuals in the development of career management skills, coordinate internal and external stakeholders for the provision of career guidance and career education etc.

Medium to long term

- Develop assessment methods and tools (e.g. portfolios) to assess the achievement of learning outcomes related to career management skills learning programmes

- Officially recognise the initial and continuous training of career guidance specialists carried out by the CGCD Centre in the NQF as e.g. micro credentials (avoid handing out just a certificate of participation)
- Make tracer studies mandatory for all education institutions as tool to inform career guidance work
- Revise and validate terminology of career development support policy and services considering international standards and terms
- Introduce monitoring and evaluation of career education and career guidance in general education to assess effectiveness of career guidance and career education in schools looking at (a) data on inputs, including expenditure, number of practitioners, number of primary, middle and secondary institutions providing career guidance and career education and in which form services are provided (across curricular, extra-curricular, as stand-alone subject, career centres per school), number of online services and their form (one-stop website entry point, several diverse offers on websites of different stakeholders, various apps; what is offered online, e.g. self-learning, LMI, job offers, international job offers etc.), (b) data on service outputs, such as number and type of interventions, number and type of clients (for schools and PES etc.), and (c) data on outcomes including learning outcomes, changes in employment status, transitions in training and education, transitions in employment status; learn from M&E practices in VET
 - o Extend the VET indicators through adding also output and outcome indicators
- Ensure to pool all monitoring data from VET, higher education and general education for the analysis by the inter-ministerial working group

EXEMPLARY REGULATION OF THE VET INSTITUTION'S CAREER UNIT

I. GENERAL PROVISIONS

1. The VET Institution's career unit (hereinafter referred to as Unit) is established by the order of the educational institution's Director and is responsible for the efficient career guidance service provision to students'.
2. Within the framework of career guidance functions the Unit cooperates with RA Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Methodological Centre for Professional Orientation SNCO (hereinafter referred to as Centre), regional and local centres of the State Employment Service Agency (hereinafter referred to as SESA), relevant state and other private organisations.
3. The training of the Unit's specialists (career consultant) and methodological support to service delivery are carried out by the Centre.
4. The Unit's works are planned and implemented by the career consultant and in case of his/her absence by the substituting specialist assigned under the Director's order or by the job profile.
5. The Unit's regulation is approved by the VET institution's Board.
6. The Unit organises and implements its activities within the annual work plans approved by the Director.

II. MAIN GOAL AND FUNCTIONS OF THE UNIT

7. The main goal of the Unit is to promote the enhancement of students' and graduates' competitiveness at labour market and the development of their career planning skills by providing career information, advice, career education and guidance services.
8. The Unit implements the following functions:
 - a. provision of career information, advice and guidance services to students in individual modes;
 - b. if necessary, the identification of visitor's personal qualities, hobbies, skills by using psychometric methods such as testing, communication, observation (development of an individual programme aimed at the final result);
 - c. gathering information on the education and training, priorities of economy, labour market (local, regional, national and international) analyses and forecast and dissemination them among the students in print and online modes;
 - d. provision of group (through non-formal training programmes) and individual services directed to the development of skills for the first access to labour market;
 - e. creation and maintenance of career resource library (data on students, graduates, educational establishments, partners and employers);
 - f. notification about and creation of opportunities for searching of vacancies, voluntary and public works, in self-service mode;
 - g. organisation of and notice on such active events as seminars, workshops, round-table discussions, lectures, open classes, non-formal trainings, fairs and exhibitions;
 - h. direction of job seeking students to SESA regional and local centres to get involved in state employment programmes;
 - i. involvement of the social partners, employers, trade unions in the organisation of students' career counselling activities;
 - j. implementation of administrative activities:
 - 1) planning and management of the Unit's activities,

- 2) maintenance of permanent communication with other units, lecturers and other relevant employees of the institution,
- 3) running of the administration, making of reports, data registration etc.,
- 4) provision of internal and external communication, including publication of the Unit's works for wider range of students and the community.

III. THE METHODOLOGICAL AND MATERIAL PROVISION

9. The Unit:
 - a. has a separate area (a room, hall, etc.) for the organisation of its activities and for students' individual service provision,
 - b. has a regularly updated information board at a visible place in one of the halls of the institution,
 - c. is furnished with property and equipment for both implementation of administrative activities and students' career education and information service provision,
 - d. has a relevant methodology to work with students.

JOB PROFILE

OF THE VET INSTITUTION'S CAREER UNIT'S COORDINATOR (CAREER CONSULTANT)

POSITION TITLE: Career Consultant

I. GENERAL PROVISIONS

1. The career unit's coordinator of the VET Institution under the RA Ministry of Education and Science (hereinafter referred to as Consultant) is appointed and dismissed by the Institution's Director.
2. A capable adult who meets the requirements Prescribed under the points 6-9 of the present profile can be assigned in the position of Coordinator.

II. LABOUR MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITY

3. Consultant directly subordinates and is accountable to the Institution's Director.

III. JOB PROFILE

4. Consultant ensures the productive career guidance service provision to the students. These services include three main scopes:
 - a. **Information:** provision of accurate and up-to-date information to the students on their career opportunities (on profession, vocational training institution, occupation, workplace, etc.), progression routes, choices, where to find help and how to access it;
 - b. **Advice:** provision of advice through activities that help young people to gather, understand and interpret information and apply it to their own situation;
 - c. **Guidance:** provision of impartial guidance and professional support to help young people understand themselves and their needs, overcome barriers, resolve conflicts, develop new perspectives and make progress.

IV. MAIN FUNCTIONS

5. The Consultant's functions are:
 - a. implementation of information and consulting works, within the framework of which the Consultant:
 - 1) conducts information and counselling activities with students to disclose their personal and working preferences and interests/inclinations,
 - 2) applies methods identify students' personal and professional competences and skills,
 - 3) guides in career choice and planning,
 - 4) provides information on available and predictable vacancies at labour market,
 - 5) provides information on employers' requirements,
 - 6) provides information on learning opportunities and conditions, training terms and regulation in the VET institutions and other educational establishments,
 - 7) promotes the development of skills for participating in the job interview, developing competitive CV, finding a job, developing working and professional skills, making progress, etc., through group training courses,
 - 8) provides feedback to students and alumni;
 - b. support to employment provision, within the framework of which the Consultant:
 - 1) cooperates with employers to get information on available and predictable vacancies and provides them to students,
 - 2) enables students and graduates to strengthen the knowledge acquired in the VET institutions through volunteer work under the support of employers,
 - 3) supports employers in admitting students to work by disseminating announcements, gathering CVs, guides students to employers by compliance,

- 4) organises the process of participating in job interview with the employer.
- g. performance of administrative activities, within the framework of which the Consultant:
 - 1) keeps statistics and data on students' [educational and work] pathways,
 - 2) develops monitoring reports in due order,
 - 3) carries out other relevant functions in due order.

V. REQUIRED QUALIFICATION, KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

- 6. Consultant must have higher education, preferably with qualification of psychologist, psychologist-pedagogue or social worker, and have excellent command of Armenian language.
- 7. Consultant must have knowledge on the following:
 - a. legal acts regulating the VET sphere, especially RA laws, RA Government decisions, orders of RA Minister of Education and Science, etc.,
 - b. current and predicted developments of local, regional, national and international labour markets.
 - c. requirements submitted to separate occupations.
 - d. career guidance theory and practice.
 - e. state employment guarantees for young people.
 - f. principles and psychological-pedagogical methods of social work.
 - g. staff and administrative work management.
- 8. Consultant must have the following professional and key skills:
 - a. organisation and conduction of individual and group work,
 - b. coaching and facilitation,
 - c. interpersonal communication,
 - d. oral and written communication,
 - e. work planning and organisation,
 - f. time management,
 - g. reasoning and orientation in different situations,
 - h. coordination, analysis, processing of information,
 - i. computer driving.
- 9. Consultant must possess the following personal characteristics:
 - a. aspiration towards continuous development,
 - b. initiative,
 - c. honesty, care and reliability,
 - d. social sensitivity,
 - e. flexibility and allocation of attention.

Consultant is obliged to maintain the standards of professional and moral ethics.

KEY TASKS AND METHODS OF CAREER UNIT OF THE VET INSTITUTIONS

(Review from the Methodological Guide developed by CGCD Centre)

1. Career advice – information, advice and guidance to individuals and groups on career choices.

Methodology:

- Face to face interviews with knowledgeable staff,
- Group discussions led by knowledgeable staff, non-formal training,
- Psychometric testing and identification of need.

2. Career education- learning activities for students to develop and assess their career choice skills and knowledge including:

- Interview preparation,
- Constructing a CV,
- Letters and forms of application,
- Time management skills,
- Understanding personal skills and qualities,
- Job search techniques.

Methodology: work at home using provided materials; focussed lessons in groups; visit to employers; inputs from past students and employers; career fairs and exhibitions; sessions in other parts of the curriculum.

3. Career information – access to local, national and international information on vacancies (local, national and international), labour market, separate occupations, education and training, human resource development.

Methodology: career fairs and exhibitions; visits to employers and SESA territorial centres; inputs from employers and past students; internet research; display of vacancy notices from newspapers; information library; job study research, publication etc.

4. Additional tasks

- Organisation of job, career and profession fairs.
- Establishing links with employers, SESA and other organisations.
- Administrative work, feedback provision etc.

NOTE. CGCD Centre (formerly Methodological Centre for Professional Orientation SNCO) of the RA Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, within the framework of its functions, shall render continuous support to the establishment of career units and staff retraining in the VET institutions in cooperation with RA Ministry of Education and Science and its relevant units.

Individual and group basis Career guidance service provision modules of the VET institutions are the following:

The aim, mechanisms and appropriate methodology of providing individual consultancy:

- a) student's first individual interview questionnaire
- b) identification of personality types according to J. Holland – test

Module 1. Personal self-assessment and SWOT analysis

Module 2. Critical and creative thinking

Module 3. Communication

Module 4. Game-debate (conduction technique)

Module 5. European 8 key competences

Module 6. Adult learning

Module 7. How to look for a job

Module 8. How to develop competitive CV

Module 9. How to write cover letter

Module 10. How to participate in the job interview

APPENDIX

“CAREER GUIDANCE” THEMATIC PLAN OF A TRAINING COURSE IN GENERAL EDUCATION SCHOOLS

| # | NAMES OF MODULES AND THEMES | NUMBER OF HOURS |
|------|--|-----------------|
| | 8th grade | 34 |
| | THE WORLD OF OCCUPATIONS AND THE BASIC CONCEPTS OF CAREER GUIDANCE | |
| | The importance of choosing a profession | 1 |
| | The main concepts of career guidance | 1 |
| | The factors of career choice | 2 |
| | SELF ASSESSMENT | |
| | Level of ambitions: setting objectives | 2 |
| | My self-portrait | 1 |
| | THE INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS OF A PERSON AND THE CHOICE OF PROFESSION | |
| | Types of individual temperaments and the choice of profession | 4 |
| | The place and role of the preferable profession in the world of professions | 2 |
| | PLANNING THE ACTIONS | |
| | The ways of choosing a profession | 1 |
| | Efficient or reasonable time management | 2 |
| | Integration of the individual and social environment anticipations / the public opinion | 2 |
| | PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION AND THE LABOUR MARKET | |
| | Description of one working day of different professions | 3 |
| 6. | WATCHING VIDEO FILMS AND DISCUSSING | 6 |
| 7. | MEETING WITH PROFESSIONALS | 2 |
| 8. | VISITING ENTERPRISES AND EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS | 2 |
| 9. | INDIVIDUAL COUNSELING | 2 |
| 10. | MEETING WITH PARENTS | 1 |
| | 9th grade | 34 |
| 1. | SELF ASSESSMENT | |
| 1.1. | The interests and preferences of an individual in the process of choosing a profession | 1 |
| 1.2. | The self-discovery and self-identification of an individual | 2 |
| 1.3. | The characteristics and behavioural patterns of successful person | 2 |
| 2. | THE INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS OF A PERSON AND THE CHOICE OF PROFESSION | |
| 2.1. | The characteristics of professional types | 3 |
| 3. | PLANNING THE ACTIONS | |
| 3.1. | The descriptors of the preferable profession and individual characteristics | 3 |
| 4. | PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION AND THE LABOUR MARKET | |
| 4.1. | The vocational educational system of the RA; the vocational educational institutions in the RA | 2 |
| 4.2. | Juxtaposition of the demand and supply in the labour market | 2 |
| 4.3. | The skills of making effective decisions | 2 |

| | | |
|--------------|---|------------------|
| 5. | PERSONAL GROWTH AND CAREER PLANNING | |
| 5.1. | Career planning | 2 |
| 5.2. | The eight key/universal European skills (competencies) | 2 |
| 5.3. | Communication skills | 2 |
| 6. | WATCHING VIDEO FILMS AND DISCUSSING | 2 |
| 7. | MEETING WITH SPECIALISTS | 3 |
| 8. | VISITING ENTERPRISES AND EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS | 3 |
| 9. | INDIVIDUAL COUNSELING | 2 |
| 10. | MEETING WITH PARENTS | 1 |
| | <u>10th grade</u> | <u>34</u> |
| 1. | PERSONAL GROWTH AND CAREER PLANNING | |
| 1.1. | Career planning | 1 |
| 1.2. | Motivation /reasons: characteristics and ways of formation | 2 |
| 1.3. | Skills of presentation | 2 |
| 1.4. | The art of convincing | 2 |
| 1.5. | Critical and analytical thinking | 3 |
| 1.6. | Entrepreneurial skills | 2 |
| 1.7. | Leadership, main characteristics, types and forms of expression | 3 |
| 1.8. | Self-sustenance; self-regulation | 2 |
| 1.9. | A productive team in the process of operation | 3 |
| 1.10. | Skills of resolving conflicts | 3 |
| 1.11. | Writing a CV and searching for a job | 2 |
| 2. | WATCHING VIDEO FILMS AND DISCUSSING | 1 |
| 3. | MEETING WITH SPECIALISTS | 3 |
| 4. | VISITING ENTERPRISES AND EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS | 3 |
| 5. | INDIVIDUAL COUNSELING | 1 |
| 6. | MEETING WITH PARENTS | 1 |
| | <u>11th grade</u> | <u>15</u> |
| 1. | RESEARCH PROJECTS | 15 |
| TOTAL | | 117 |

LIST OF DOCUMENTS USED FOR DESK RESEARCH

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13. "Career Guidance" training course standard and curriculums, The order of the Minister of ESCS, 24.09.2021, № 1602-U/2
14. "Career Guidance Clubs in target schools" assessment, Save the Children, "Prisma" research and analysis, EU program "EU for Youth: Skills for the Future" in 10 schools
15. Republican Collective Bargaining Agreement, <https://arhmiutyun.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Erakoxm-verjin.pdf>
16. Public Policy Institute, Research report 2020, "Highly skilled workers in the Armenian labour market", <https://edu2work.am/case-studies>
17. Career Guidance and Capacity Development Centre, Publications, <http://www.mycareer.am/arm/resources/>
18. Methodological and training manual for Planning and Implementation of Career Guidance services in General Education Institutions: 2021- Yerevan
19. Manual "Career Management", 2015- Yerevan
20. Manual "Career orientation for Adult", 2015- Yerevan
21. Guide on development of the VET institutions Career Centres, 2013, Yerevan