

# **NATIONAL CAREER DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM REVIEW REPORT**

AZERBAIJAN  
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# 1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASAN	State Agency for Public Service and Social Innovations under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan
AzNQF	National Qualifications Framework of the Republic of Azerbaijan
CMS	Career management skills
DOST	Agency for Sustainable and Operational Social Security under the MLSP
GDP	Gross domestic product
LLL	Lifelong learning
MLSP	Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Azerbaijan
NSO	National Observatory on Labour Market and Social Protection Affairs under the MLSP
SAVE	State Agency on Vocational Education
SEA	State Employment Agency under the MLSP
SSC	State Statistical Committee
UIF	Unemployment Insurance Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VTC	Vocational Training Centre

## 2. CONTEXT AND SYSTEM OVERVIEW

### 2.1. Context

Azerbaijan's national development strategies and their implementation plans adopted in the last decade have highlighted the development of human capital and the establishment of an effective social security system as one of the central issues. The provision of human resource development through LLL is one of the critical factors for a stable and prosperous development of the new national socio-economic system.

The Employment Strategy of the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2019-2030 emphasises that globalization, rise of new jobs, application of modern production and management technologies, and modernization of job places increase the need for high-skilled workers with high level competencies and necessitates the implementation of rapid improvements in the field of education, training and skills development. The Strategy also includes a set of actions on the development of outcome-based NQF, support to the development of competency-based curricula, and development of a system for recognition of competencies obtained through non-formal and informal learning. The boosting of employment rates for all groups of population is the objective.

Currently the MLSP and SEA play the central role in provision of career guidance to unemployed persons, job seekers, and youth. Measures are implemented in accordance with the Active Employment Programme. The MoE has specific tasks in preparing youth for active citizenship, wilful choice of profession and employment. It's responsibility is to ensure a conducive environment for learners to acquire knowledge, skills and competencies in accordance with the State Education Standard. Ministry of Economy takes into account competences of school leavers and graduates to plan how these competences could be absorbed in the labour market. MLSP reacts on employer's needs, assisting them in finding skilled workforce, etc.

Career guidance in Azerbaijan as a national policy is described as a 'hidden' element integrated into LLL or national employment strategies. The guidance support is more visible in employment strategies implemented through active labour market measures. The Action Plan on the Implementation of the National Strategy for the Development of Education in the Republic of Azerbaijan is oriented towards creating content of a competency-based personality-oriented education. But, there is insufficient attention on measures that assist learners to acquire career management skills (CMS)<sup>1</sup>. Career education is undervalued as a set of preventive measures to reduce the number of dropouts and youth at risk and the number of persons not in employment, education, and training (NEET), and undervalued to empower all to identify their capacities, competences and interests, to make educational, training and occupational decisions and to manage their individual life paths in learning, work and other settings in which these capacities and competences are learned and/or used.

The analyses of relevant legal acts and documents, as well as interviews indicate that career guidance provision in Azerbaijan is rather seen as part of the 'portfolios' of different ministries (of education, employment, or other areas) without any department or unit (except VET Agency under the MoE) being responsible specifically for career guidance within these ministries or across. There is no transparent mechanism for inter-ministerial communication and cooperation or coordination on career guidance. There are no visible indication describing a systemic approach in provision of career guidance services.

The qualification requirements of existing guidance advisors are insufficient. There are no hands-on training opportunities for qualifying in formal education system. The use of ICT is not leveraged for system building or service integration or to broaden access to career guidance services and there are no developed instruments and procedures to assess the quality and effectiveness of the services provided.

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<sup>1</sup> For a definition, please see <https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/investing-career-guidance>

Over the last decade, several donor-financed projects have been implemented in Azerbaijan to improve career guidance services in education and employment sectors. However, none of the projects are currently being continued and none of their results are being implemented by any institution.

Demographic profile of the age structure of Azerbaijan's population for 2020-2030

Age structure	2020 (%)	2025 (%)	2030 (%)
65+	7.3	9.4	12.5
30-64	47.9	49.1	47.3
15-19	21.3	17.8	19.5
0-14	23.5	23.8	20.8

Source: United Nations, department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2015). World Population Prospects: The 2015 Revision, Key Findings and Advance Tables. Working Paper No. ESA/P/WP.241.

The total **employment** rate in 2019 was 95.2%<sup>2</sup> while the official unemployment rate was 4.8% (4.0% for males; 5.7% for females). Between 2019 and 2020, unemployment increased due to COVID-19 pandemic with youth unemployment (15-29 years) remaining high at 11.2% (9.6% for males and 13.0% for females).

Employment and unemployment rates				
	2019		2020	
	% males	% females	% males	% females
The total employment rate (age group 15+)	96.0%	94.3%	94.0%	91.6%
Youth unemployment rate (age group 15-29)	7.4%	10.3%	9.6%	13.0%

Source: SSC

The proportion of youth (aged 15-24 years) not in education, employment or training (NEETs) was around 17.7% in 2019. Employment strategy for 2019-2030 aims to decrease the number to 15% by 2030.

Addressing the lack of available skilled workers is a key issue for economic diversification of the country. Indeed, in the 2018 EU-Azerbaijan Business Climate Report only 32% of EU companies doing business in Azerbaijan state to be satisfied with availability of skilled workers.

At the same time, given the high proportion of young people entering the labour market every year, addressing the skills mismatch is equally critical to reduce (youth) unemployment in Azerbaijan. Only 32.5% (30.4% for female) in employment have vocational qualifications, while every year, around 40% of secondary school graduates enter the labour market with no vocational qualifications.

According to the statistics 22.8% of the population of Azerbaijan, or 2.3 million of the country's population were youth (15-29 years old). 50.5% of youth lives in urban places, 49.5% in rural places, 47.6 percent. Less than 70% of the population is currently within the working age range of 15 to 64; a share that is estimated to remain at that level until at least 2025. In such a context, investments in human

<sup>2</sup> State Statistics Committee, 2020 – Labour Market statistical yearbook (page 23)

capital, education and youth are key factors for the promotion of stability and long-term economic resilience.

Employment strategy for 2019-2030 states that, high share of women and youth among the unemployed is one of the main problems in the labour market.

Over the last ten years, the unemployment rate among young people aged 15-24 has decreased, reaching 12.9% in 2017 (14.9% among women), which is 2.6 times higher than the national average. Among young people aged 15-29, this figure was 9.2% in 2017 (11.0% among women), i.e. 1.8 times higher than the national average.

Based on year 2020 results of the sample statistical survey on Labour force (Economic activity of the population), 1378.0 thsd. youths aged 15-29 years were economically active, of which 1223.9 were employed persons. Men (661.6 thsd. persons) among employed youths predominated women (562.3 thsd. persons). According to the results of the survey, number of unemployed youths aged 15-29 years made 154.1 thsd. persons, including men – 69.9 thsd. persons, women – 84.2 thsd. persons.

10.6% of 154.1 thousand unemployed youths aged 15-29 years have higher education, 11.9% – secondary specialized, 4.4% – primary vocational, 59.5% – complete secondary, 13.4% – general secondary education, 0.2% – primary education.

Unemployment among youth was 11.2% in 2020.

Age groups	Economically active population		including			
			employed		unemployed	
	Total	women	Total	women	Total	women
Total	5252,5	2567,5	92,8%	91,6%	7,2%	8,4%
15-19	107,6	48,0	84,6%	83,1%	15,4%	16,9%
20-24	500,9	234,2	85,0%	82,6%	15,0%	17,4%
25-29	769,5	364,3	91,9%	90,3%	8,1%	9,7%

Source: SSC

According to the census of 2009, 8.4% of the population consists of ethnic minorities such as Tats, Talysh, Lezgins, Avars, Armenians, Turks, Kurds, Molokans, Ingiloyes, Tsakhurs, Khynalygs, Buduqlus, Grysz, Russians, Ukrainians, Georgians and others. Disaggregated unemployment statistics is not carried out for ethnic groups of population.

## 2.2. System overview

### Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population

The following institutions are dealing with career development support under the MLSP:

1.	National Observatory on Labour Market and Social Protection Affairs under the MLSP	Identifies skills and training needs
2.	State Employment Agency	Designs and coordinates the implementation of career development support activities

3.	Regional Employment Centres and DOST Centres	There are 22 regional employment centres that provide career guidance and counselling services. DOST Centres provide career information to the unemployed.
4.	Regional Vocational Training Centres	There are 4 Regional vocational training Centres that deliver training courses of up to 6 months , also covering a component on career development. 3 new regional training centres are planned to open in upcoming year.

### **National Observatory on Labour Market and Social Protection Affairs (NSO)**

NSO was established with Public Legal Entity status in 2019 and started to function in 2020. Reason for its foundation was establishment of monitoring and forecasting system that will lead to better decision making in employment. Mission of the NSO in labour market is: i) Assessment of current situation; ii) Study the development trends; iii) Conduction of monitoring; iv) Public legal entity dealing with analysis and forecasting aimed at more effective and sound decision making for policymakers. NSO can publish reports and disseminate information about its findings. NSO can carry out analytical research, analysis and scientific research by state order, as well as within projects financed by international and local donor organizations. Data obtained by the observatory is usually disseminated to the general public and used for career guidance services in SEA and DOST offices.

NSO's policy agenda on LLL is to improve and strengthen capacity of the country in i) data collection (monitoring, observations, surveys); ii) Analysis and processing (think tank); iii) Forecasting; iv) building a platform for discussions and dialogue on research and proposals; v) identifying solutions (training, proposals, learning, etc.).

NSO is a public legal entity under MLSP but a semi-independent organization. The authorized fund is one mln. AZN and is formed at the expense of the Unemployment Insurance Fund under the MLSP. As well as, 2.6 mln AZN were allocated for the maintenance of the NSO. The observatory is engaged in activities of national and (or) public importance. The Observatory may engage in income generating activities to achieve the objectives set out in the Charter. The NSO has an independent balance sheet, property, treasury and bank accounts, a logo (emblem), a stamp with the name of the Ministry and its own name, appropriate stamps and letterheads.

### ***Regional Employment Centres and DOST Centres***

*Role of Regional Employment Centers and DOST Centers in lifelong learning and adult education:* Regional Employment Centers subordinated to/ under SEA were approved by the Decision of the Board of the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Azerbaijan and re-registered as public legal entities by the Territorial Tax Offices of the State Tax Service under the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Local bodies of SEA or "DOST" Centers receive applications from persons wishing to be involved in vocational training, register them as job seekers and unemployed persons, and refer them to an institution that carries out vocational training (VTCs). In addition to this, local bodies of SEA, in turn, identify the institution that provides additional vocational training, choose it, approve its list, formalize relationships with it, publish the list, prepare relevant documents for the purpose of formation and financing the vocational training group, as well as carry out monitoring of training. Application to SEA and DOST Centers is free of charge. The centers are funded from the state budget.

### ***Vocational Training Centres***

*Role of Vocational Training Centre:* Vocational Training Centers subordinated to SEA provide vocational training for job seekers and unemployed persons on the basis of the order of the Agency and employers, as well as other applicants to acquire a specialty (profession) according to the needs of the labor market and (or) a new specialty (profession); organizes paid short-term courses and thematic trainings at the request of individuals and legal entities; participates in the process of recognition of skills acquired through



informal and non-formal methods together with the relevant state bodies and carries out activities in other areas identified by the legislation.

Thus, the main role of Vocational Training Centers is to help registered job seekers and the unemployed persons to ensure their employment by providing quality education in modern professions and specialties in accordance with the requirements of the labor market. Employed jobseekers can also apply to DOST and SEA Centers.

### **Ministry of Education**

MoE<sup>3</sup> responsibility is to ensure learner's realization of his/her talents and abilities, in **preparation for independent life and wilful choice of profession**, development of active civic position, respect and tolerance for national and universal values, human rights and liberties, freely using modern information and communications technologies, and other technical means, acquisition of the basics of economic knowledge, communicating in one or several foreign languages, etc. Work of MoE related to career guidance can be divided into education levels such as general education, vocational education and higher education.

#### ***General education***

The Education Institute under the Ministry of Education has developed methodological tool for career guidance practitioners and is carrying out online and offline trainings for practitioners (mainly school psychologists) from 4100 schools in Azerbaijan. The trainings are planned to be finalized by February 2022. After training finalization, career guidance will be carried out in all pillars of general education: primary education, general secondary education and complete secondary education. Main practitioners of career guidance are school psychologists and teachers. School psychologists are full-time employees of schools and they play an important role in identification of interests of pupils in different vocations. Career guidance is carried out both in integrated format as a part of subjects taught and as a separate measure (company visits, presentations etc.). Parents can be involved during identification of vocational interests and skills of pupils.

#### ***Vocational Education***

VET Agency provides career guidance and counselling services for students and potential students, and graduates transitioning from school to work, as well as ensures cooperation with employers, etc. These services are carried out by teachers and deputy directors responsible for education and training. Activities for potential students include visits to general education schools and organization of open house events for schools, while for the students of the vocational education institutions it includes tours to companies, organizing internships for VET students, etc. The Agency in cooperation with SEA has organized job fairs in 2021. This arrangement is expected to be repeated in the coming years.

7 pilot vocational education institutions (3 in the regions, 4 in Baku) are planned to open career support centres in their facilities within EU funded project "VET for the future development of VET providers' excellence in Azerbaijan" (2020-2024) implemented by the UNDP.

#### ***Higher education institutions***

Law on "Higher education" is still in process of development. Currently most of the HEIs have independently established career centres and provide assistance to students with finding jobs. Currently there are 51 universities in Azerbaijan, 40 being public and 11 private universities. Career centers usually provide career counselling services, assist in job-seeking, CV development, preparations for interviews, organize job-fairs, company visits etc.

### **Ministry of Youth and Sports**

Currently, there are 35 Youth Houses (centres) all over the country, five of them in Baku under the supervision of the Ministry of Youth and Sport. However, no information on particular career guidance activities is available. In 2019, the Ministry developed 25 animation videos "My specialty" about the most demanded occupations in the labour market though. This activity was carried out in direction of career guidance to inform the youth about the most demanded occupations.

Employer Organizations and other public agencies are not active in providing career development services.

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<sup>3</sup> Law on Education

### 3. POLICY FRAMEWORK

To support UN's Sustainable Development initiatives the **"Azerbaijan 2030: National Priorities for Socio-Economic Development"** approved by the Presidential Decree dated 2 February, 2021 sets human capital development as one of the priorities. Priority number three is "Competitive human capital and space for modern innovations" and activity plans are being developed for implementation of these priorities. The other priorities include, sustainably growing competitive economy; society based on dynamic, inclusive and social justice; great return to the liberated territories; clean environment and "green growth" country.

The **"Strategic road maps for the national economy and main economic sectors"** approved by the Presidential Decree aims to define the country's development goals up to 2025 and target vision after 2025, and priorities to ensure their implementation. Human capital development is determined as one of strategic targets to strengthen competition capacity through a useful cooperation among all components of Azerbaijani economy. Human capital plays a determining role in increased labour productivity, sustainable economic growth, increased competitive capacity in manufacturing and services sectors and the country's integration to global markets. In order to achieve this, improved quality at all pillars of education, continued development of staff knowledge and skills through trainings, harmonization of qualified staff training with labour market requirements, encouragement of investments by companies in research and development, efficient use of existing human capital is needed. This will be provided at two levels: (1) improvement of education quality at all pillars for the purpose of human capital formation and development; (2) encouragement of continuous development of human capital, investments in research and development in order to improve labour productivity.

**The Strategic Road Map for the development of vocational education and training** in the Republic of Azerbaijan (approved by Presidential Decree on 6 December 2016,) focuses on short, medium and long-term development until 2025 and will require a well-qualified human-resource base. To support the goals, education and training system will need to undergo substantial changes, improving not only formal education system but strengthening the adult learning provision and creating more LLL opportunities as well.

"Poor career guidance in general schools" was detected as the main problem in the Strategic Road Map for the development of vocational education and training in the Republic of Azerbaijan. Targets for the period **after 2025** are: "During this period career guidance will be effectively conducted in general education institutions. **Education advisors** in primary schools shall ensure that pupils choose appropriate vocational training institutions and programmes from an early age. Various events and competitions will be organized to provide pupils with vocational education information. The skills of pupils in crafts and vocational areas will be assessed at an early age, and the teaching materials and systems will be digitalized".

**The State Programme "Youth of Azerbaijan in 2017-2021"** adopted by the President of Azerbaijan Republic plans to "increase level of awareness on specialty and profession selection, labour market and employment among young people". This is aimed at strengthening youth career guidance work, expanding their knowledge on the most demanded professions and specialties in labour market. Responsibility for the implementation of State Programme is delegated to the Ministry of Youth and Sport. 25 animation videos were developed about most demanded occupations in the labour market.

To implement the State Programme "Youth of Azerbaijan in 2017-2021" the following measures for career guidance for young people are determined in the Action Plan "Preparation of methodological tools for occupation consultancy and career development for young people and organizing consultancy services" (responsible bodies: MLSPP, ME, MYS):

- Organizing job fair for young people (responsible bodies: MLSPP; period: 2017-2021); annually around 100 job-fairs are organized in cities and rayons
- strengthening career guidance (professional orientation), increase awareness on most demanded occupations and specialists in labour market (responsible bodies: MLSPP, ME, MYS; period: 2017-2021)

Career guidance services are organized according to Article 22 of law on “Employment”. In order to implement Article 22, regulations on “**Provision of career guidance services**” were approved by the Decision of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan No. 266 dated 11.06.2019. The Regulations specify the directions and methods for providing career guidance services. Services are provided for job seekers including employed, unemployed persons, students, pupils and their parents.

Currently career guidance is conducted by the SEA and education institutions in accordance to the “**Law on Employment**” and “**Rules for implementation of career guidance services in general education institutions**” approved by the Cabinet of Ministers on 12<sup>th</sup> of May, 2020. According to the Rules, objectives of career guidance are:

- informing students about the required knowledge, skills and competencies in occupations and specialties;
- formation of students' ability to use knowledge, skills and competencies in the process of choosing an occupation and specialty;
- to direct students to the choice of relevant specialties and occupations in accordance with their interests, skills, abilities and personal qualities and to provide them with professional advice;
- ensuring the connection between the education and labor market for the development of human capital and ensuring the transition from education to the labor market;
- assisting in the formation of the minimum skills required to start employment;
- informing students about career planning and lifelong learning opportunities;
- instilling basic entrepreneurial skills in students and encouraging them to create their own jobs in the future;
- formation of basic knowledge and skills of students related to vocational education in general education thereby giving them a free choice in career planning.

The Rules also foresee the organization of career guidance work in school and forming vocational-oriented classes in schools.

Article 22 of the “**Law on Employment**” is related to the organization of career orientation services. According to this article the relevant institution conducts interviews and tests with students, pupils, job seekers and the unemployed to organize career guidance, to help them choose an occupation and specialty in accordance with education, skills and personal qualities, and provides consulting services aimed at shaping their interests.

The above mentioned legal-normative documents did not present a definition of career guidance and counselling. There are no mechanisms on coordination, monitoring and evaluation of career guidance and counselling services.

## 4. COORDINATION AND COOPERATION

This section details aspects related to formal coordination, strategic leadership, governance and cooperation between stakeholders.

### 4.1. Promoting coordination, cooperation and good governance

Currently there is no systemic and coherent communication and coordination mechanism among responsible bodies, stakeholders, employers and other involved parties to plan and provide career guidance services in place. Currently the MLSPP and SEA play the central role in provision of guidance to unemployed persons, job seekers, and youth. Measures are implemented in accordance with the Active Employment Programme. The MoE has their specific tasks in preparing youth for active citizenship, wilful choice of profession and employment.

The State Employment Agency cooperates through regular and ad hoc meetings with MoE, Ministry of Economy and other relevant ministries, employers and entrepreneurs' confederation, trade unions, local executive and self-governing bodies, and other active employment arrangements. According to the Law of

the Republic of Azerbaijan "On Employment", SEA prepares and submits a draft of the national employment programme defining the annual activities of the Service to the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Also, according to the law, Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population and Local Self-Government Bodies, employer organisations and trade unions are preparing the country and territorial employment programmes providing employment assistance. These programmes are based on indicators of economic and social development forecasts. The country's Employment Program is approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and territorial employment programmes are approved by the local executive authorities.

The role of guidance and counselling activities are not specifically highlighted in employment programmes. The employment plans primarily emphasize the implementation of active employment measures. The content of provided guidance is more about the provision of information on vacancies in labour market which cannot be considered to be comprehensive content of career guidance services.

Only in the area of general education, the mechanism for the communication, cooperation, and coordination among involved parties in planning and provision of career guidance services is defined by the "Rules for implementation of career guidance services in general education institutions". According to the Rules, Trainings shall be implemented by pedagogical staff (appointed coordinator for the group) of general education institutions, non-governmental organizations, private enterprises in coordination with the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Awareness-raising events are regularly organized with the participation of students, taking into account the age characteristics of children studying at different levels of general education. These events include information about occupations, presentations by professionals of various fields, visits to companies etc. The activities are discussed in the Pedagogical Councils (council of teachers and managers of school) and included in the annual action plan (Articles 3.2 and 3.3.).

## 4.2. Key civil society stakeholders

The "Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH" conducted the activity "Capacity building on Career Guidance for Specialists of Employment Centres and Vocational Schools" in 2018. In January 2018, the project conducted assessment of capacities of career guidance practitioners of Employment Centers (MLSP) and VET Agency by contracting an international expert on TVET and Employment. During assessment mission, the needs and structure of the trainings have been discussed with the partners (around 10 employment centres, 5 VET schools and 2 VTCs from Baku and regions). Based on the results, modules for a 9-day training were developed and introduced to the target group involved in career guidance activities. Trainings were held within period from February 27 to March 2, and the second round took place from April 2 to 6, 2018. Career guidance specialists from employment centres and teachers from VET schools participated in the trainings.

The project "Profession guidance" was initiated by the Employer's Confederation in 2016 with the support of MoE. The project aimed at organizing workshops for pupils from grades 9-11 in more than ten general education schools in Baku city and Ganja then extended to Lankaran and Khachmaz regions. The purpose of workshops was to assist learners in choosing a career path in accordance with their interests and abilities and labour market needs. Invited professionals from different occupational areas ran the workshops and visits have been organized to the enterprises. Employer's Confederation is supporting translation of software program on "Atlas of future occupations" from Russian to Azerbaijani (Russian software program) and this program will be submitted to the Ministry of Education in upcoming months.

Junior Achievement Azerbaijan has implemented various projects in the field of career guidance and development for youth. Some of the activities include:

- **Build the Future: Career Planning and Development for Secondary School Students** - The project is supported by Chevron Khazar and engaged more than 2047 students during 2015-2019 academic years. Starting from the 2017-2018 academic year, the project was organized jointly with the "Friends

of School” and a total of 60 student-trainers were involved. The objective of the project was to prepare youth for their future career, develop their professional skills, and encourage youth to run their own business;

- **Youth Empowerment and Leadership Program** – the project (2019-2020) was funded by the EU and UNICEF. The main objective of the project was to enhance professional skills and employment opportunities for young people and implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Youth and Sport of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Youth Foundation, and UNFPA. The project worked closely with Binagadi, Khazar District Youth House, Mingachevir City Youth House, Shamkir, Bilasuvar, and Kazakh Youth Development and Career Centers. The YELP project gathered 1,500 young people from various age groups to increase work readiness and career planning, and 240 people for financial literacy and entrepreneurship.

## 5. MAIN SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES

The main activity of SEA in career guidance is career guidance services provided in the general education institutions and in SEA offices. Desk research showed that about 118,138 persons in 2018 and 134,760 persons in 2019 were provided with career guidance services. This is 2.3% and 2.6% of economically active population in 2018 (5133, thousand) and 2019 (5190, thousand), respectively. Beneficiaries of career guidance services were job seekers and pupils who usually were informed about methods for selecting right professions, most demanded occupations and specialties by employers who volunteered to make presentations on the current situation in the labour market.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the SEA launched “**Alo Career**”, an online support service aimed at assisting the personal and professional development of individuals during the pandemic, ensuring the availability of career guidance services for the target groups, the quality of services provided and prompt response to the request. 5 webinars were held with 250 participants, 734 persons used these services and 1332 individual meetings were held. Currently the customer satisfaction rate is above 98%. The aim of the support services are the following:

- career planning, goal setting,
- selection of occupation,
- labour market and job search,
- providing recommendations and evaluating the preparation of resumes,
- provide necessary assistance in preparation for job interviews.

“**Bacar**” (learn a skill) is another service of SEA that includes a career guidance component. “Bacar” will be an online platform with three components: training on self-employment and electronic process of selection of career pathways; career guidance and vocational training activities will be carried out online using special innovative approaches (online tests) and simulators. The career guidance component of the project includes information about occupations, vocational diagnostics and support for career choice. The main target group is unemployed and jobseekers nationwide.

The general education schools carry out career guidance services in line with the sample activity plan approved by the Ministry of Education. The activities cover the whole academic year for all grades, without mentioning exact hours allocated to the services. The activity plan includes 6 main directions:

1. Organization of activities by the pedagogical council. At this stage career guidance coordinators are designated and activity plan is developed based on the sample activity plan. This is usually carried out before the academic year starts.
2. Awareness raising activities includes information about various occupations (by subject teachers), games and competitions about occupations (by coordinators, children union heads), presentations on occupations of parents and characteristics of occupations. This direction also includes excursions to various companies.
3. Identification of vocational interests and skills. These activities are carried out by coordinators and school psychologists. It includes identifying individual and psychological characteristics of

learners, their interests towards entrepreneurship and vocational directions. The results can be discussed with parents of the learners.

4. Diagnostic activities: these activities are carried out in the beginning of each academic year for all grades. It includes surveys and tests for identifying individual and psychological characteristics of learners, development of personal career portfolio for pupils that are used throughout whole general education and are further developed every year.
5. Consultation services: these activities include grouping of pupils in line with their interests and skills according to the results of diagnostic measures and informing them about programs offered in HEIs, secondary specialized education institutions and vocational education institutions. Individual and/or group consultations are carried out for career planning and identifying perspectives in labour market.
6. Training activities: these activities include establishment of vocational-oriented courses, cooperation with vocational education institutions, training of modules for acquiring skills and knowledge in given vocation as well as assessment and certification. These activities cover complete secondary education stage.

Career guidance in vocational education is carried out by teachers and deputy directors responsible for education and training. This includes visits to general education schools, organization of open house events for employers and schools, organizing tours to companies, organizing internships for VET students, etc. Currently there is no dedicated staff member allocated for this purpose. 7 pilot vocational education centres are planned to open career support centres in the framework of the “VET for the future development of VET providers’ excellence in Azerbaijan” project (2020-2024). These centres will have staff members responsible for career guidance and counselling.

The situation is different for higher education institutions. Currently there are 51 HEIs in Azerbaijan. As independent entities some of the HEIs have established well-functioning career centres to assist students in their future career pathways and further education. Some of them are mentioned in the table below. Information on further education and LLL possibilities in universities was gathered through official university web-pages.

Higher Education Institutions	Career counselling and further education
<b>Universities under the Ministry of Education</b>	
1. <b>Azerbaijan State University of Economics</b>	Career Center Further Education Division under Distant, part-time and further education Centre
2. <b>Baku State University</b>	Career Planning Center
3. <b>Azerbaijan State Oil and Industry Education</b>	Graduate-career Center
4. <b>Azerbaijan State Pedagogical University</b>	Continuous Education and Training Division
5. <b>Azerbaijan University of Architecture and Construction</b>	Experience and career center Requalification faculty
6. <b>Azerbaijan University of Languages</b>	Further Education and experience faculty Germanic Studies Institute / Goethe and Schiller Centre Confucius Institute Other language and culture centres
7. <b>Baku Slavic University</b>	Department of practice and career development of graduates
8. <b>Baku Music Academy named after Uzeyir Hajibeyli</b>	Further Education Division
9. <b>Baku Engineering University</b>	Department on work with enterprises and career



10. Sumgait State University	Career Center
11. Lankaran State University	Practice, potential development and career division
12. Ganja State University	Practice and career center Further Education Faculty
13. Azerbaijan State Academy of Physical Education and Sport	Career Center
<b>Private Higher Education Institutions</b>	
14. Western Caspian University	Training Centres
<b>Higher Education Institutions under other ministries and committees</b>	
15. Academy of Public Administration under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan	Requalification courses
16. ADA University	Career Management Center
17. Baku Higher Oil Academy	Lifelong Learning faculty
18. Azerbaijan University of Tourism and Management	Career Counselling and Communication division
<b>Higher Education Institutions of Special Purpose</b>	
19. Azerbaijan State Customs Committee Academy	Lifelong learning division

Source: Official web pages of universities

The Youth Development and Career Centre was launched in November 2018 under the Youth Foundation of the Republic of Azerbaijan. According to the Order of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated October 1, 2019, in order to ensure the comprehensive development of young citizens living in cities and regions in accordance with the state youth policy it was decided to open offices of Youth Development and Career Centres in Haydar Aliyev Centres. These centres are currently functioning in 52 centres in Azerbaijan. In 2019 4 million AZN was allocated from the reserve fund of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the Youth Foundation of the Republic of Azerbaijan to establish the Youth Development and Career Centre. The Youth Foundation is a public legal entity.

The NGO Junior Achievement carried out a project (2019-2020) with the Ministry of Youth and Sport of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Youth Foundation, and UNFPA to enhance professional skills and employment opportunities for young people. In cooperation with various youth centers the project covered topics such as enhancing work readiness, financial literacy and entrepreneurship.

## 5.1. Education, training and work-based learning for youth

According to the Law on General Education one of the objectives of the general education institutions is to provide career guidance services to the pupils. The aim is to prepare pupils for career choice and employment. In order to inform pupils about the labour market and vocations two different activities are organized by SEA and MoE.

SEA organizes visits to general education institutions no less than once in a month. Trained professionals provide career guidance services for the pupils of the general education institutions. This is carried out in line with the “**Rules for implementation of career guidance services in general education institutions**” adopted in 2020. Rules include aims and organization of career guidance. Aims include the following:

- informing students about the required knowledge, skills and competencies in professions and specialties;

- formation of students' ability to use knowledge, skills and competencies in the process of choosing a specialty and profession;
- to direct students to the choice of relevant specialties and professions in accordance with their interests, skills, abilities and personal qualities and to provide them with professional advice;
- implementation of information on ensuring the connection between the education and labour market for the development of human capital and ensuring the transition from education to the labour market;
- assisting in the formation of the minimum skills required to start employment;
- informing students about career planning and lifelong learning opportunities;
- instilling basic entrepreneurial skills in students and encouraging them to create their own jobs in the future;
- Formation of basic knowledge and skills related to vocational education in the general education level of students by giving them a free choice in career planning.

Organization part of the rules include the following activities and guiding notes on how to organize them:

- Awareness raising activities: information about occupations considering the age groups of pupils;
- Getting information about vocational interests and abilities: these activities include pedagogical employees and parents. Specialists get to know individual and psychological characteristics of pupils;
- Diagnostic measures: carrying out tests and surveys to know motivation, skills and interests of pupils;
- informing students about higher education, specialised secondary education and vocational education programs in accordance to their interests and abilities;
- Training activities: These activities are aimed at developing practical skills needed in the labor market. These topics are included in the content of subjects and extracurricular activities in the curriculum.

At the same time MoE provides career guidance services in general education schools. For these purposes the Education Institute under the Ministry of Education has developed a methodological tool for career guidance practitioners and is carrying out online and offline trainings for practitioners (mainly school psychologists) from 4100 schools in Azerbaijan. Career guidance is carried out in all pillars of general education: primary education, general secondary education and complete secondary education. The tool includes information about aim, content and responsibilities of career guidance counsellor, organization of career guidance services, as well as, vocational interests and motives of diagnostic.

Aims, content and responsibilities include legal basis of career guidance, factors affecting career choice, principles of career guidance work and inclusion of new occupations in career guidance. The principles include the following:

- Public importance of career guidance;
- Scientific character of career guidance;
- Principle of consciousness;
- Taking into consideration age characteristics of pupils;
- Taking into consideration individual characteristics of pupils;
- Systematic and consistent approach;
- Succession principle;
- The principle of compliance of the capabilities and abilities of the individual with the requirements of the chosen profession;
- Independence and freedom of choice;
- Taking into account demand of labour market.



Organization of career guidance services include methods of organization, planning, recommendations for career planning, etc. topics. Diagnostics include methods of identifying motivations for choice of professions, methods of identifying interests of pupils and organising work with parents.

The law on “Vocational education” does not mention career guidance services, but various activities are carried out in this direction. Job exhibitions and fairs are organized in joint cooperation of SAVE and SEA. These active labour market programs provide career information to students of vocational education institutions, at the same time inform the employers about the potentials of the students. The project “VET for the future development of VET providers’ excellence in Azerbaijan” (2020-2024) funded by the EU and implemented by the UNDP is planning to open career support centres in 7 vocational education centres (in Baku, Ganja, Jalilabad and Shaki). For these purposes, trainings, webinars and team building exercises were organized in July 2021 for career coordinators in VET centres to improve their skills and capacity. At the same time the project developed a new career guidance and counselling methodology and guidelines for the establishment of Career Support Centres.

According to the official web-sites of HEIs, around 10 HEIs under the Ministry of Education have developed their career centres. One of the best practice examples is the University of Economics. Azerbaijan National University of Economics - UNEC Career Centre employs two full-time staff members. Sponsors from leading companies finance several activities. Primary services to students provided free of charge are:

- Training sessions for potential graduates (improvement of soft skills, such as self-marketing, resume writing, CV building, leadership etc.).
- Bimonthly info tours/visits to companies (online system for registration of students to take part in the tour).
- Three-time-a-week Business Club events to improve English/Russian language skills free of charge. Access to bank sponsor events.
- Biannual (January, May) Job Fair Day in cooperation with 60-70 companies, an open event for UNEC students as well for students from other universities. During this event, companies organize simulations of a Job Interview.
- Radio UNEC - a bimonthly broadcast “Career 360 degrees” in cooperation with social media network.
- Face-to-face service: career coaching on how to find a job and psychological advice regarding specific personal issues of students.
- A portal for companies to meet students and vice versa: companies may place information on their business profile and employment offers. Students, on their part, may create their personal profile and add their CV built according to the template provided in e-format.
- UNEC organizes Job Fairs for disabled people in cooperation with companies who are ready to employ persons with disabilities (call centres, design etc.).
- UNEC is a member of international virtual company Pen International led by Germany. This activity facilitates the development of skills for self-employment. Groups of UNEC students have an opportunity to establish a virtual company and run it virtually in the international market for three weeks.
- A mechanism for monitoring graduate career development currently does not exist. The intention to establish the Alumni Association is under discussion. 83% of graduates are employed after graduation (SES statistical data), 17% of graduates with Bachelor degree continue studies at Master level programmes, including abroad, or are enrolled in the National Army.

## 5.2. Unemployed support and support to NEETs

The share of young people not in education, employment or training ('the NEET rate') represents the number of young people aged 15-24 not in education, employment or training as a percentage of the total youth population. It serves as a broader measure of potential youth labour market entrants than youth unemployment since it includes young people outside the labour force who are not in education or training. In Azerbaijan, the share of NEETs was 17.7% in 2019. There is a NEETs gender gap in Azerbaijan, with more women being NEETs than men. In 2019, 16.0% were men, and 19.6% were women. Over the past decade, the NEETs rate has shown a modest decrease. In 2010, it stood at a high of 22.1%, while in 2015, it was

18.0%. However, since 2020 and the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the NEETs rate is expected to have increased<sup>4</sup>.

Graduates, job seekers, unemployed persons or others face challenges in planning career pathway due to not have sufficient information, lack career management skills or require specific upskilling/reskilling support. In this regard, career guidance services play an important role to help individuals understand the education system and meet labour market needs through upskilling/reskilling. In Azerbaijan, career guidance is one of the active labour measures with vocational training of unemployed and jobseekers, support to self-employment, job fairs and labour exchanges, paid public work and etc. Desk research showed that about 118,138 persons in 2018 and 134,760 persons in 2019 were provided with career guidance services. Beneficiaries of career guidance services were job seekers and pupils who usually were informed about methods for selecting right professions, most demanded occupations and specialties by employers and provided with information on the current situation in the labour market. However, activities on career guidance services are very limited in Azerbaijan. It usually includes providing information on current situation of labour market and most demanded occupations and specialties in labour market, employment opportunities on existing profession and specialty, and opportunities on vocational and further training.

### 5.3. Workers/Employed

Cooperation between vocational education and employers is increasing. This can be seen both from agreements signed between employers, VET Agency and vocational education institutions. At the same time joint activities between SEA and SAVE can also be seen in the recent two years. Cooperation between vocational education institutions and employers is becoming mutually beneficial. Employers use vocational education institutions to increase qualifications of their employees and to retrain them, at the same time to employ graduates of the schools. Vocational education institutions profit from this cooperation by providing their students with places for internship and using qualified employees of the employers to improve education. Example of this cooperation can be seen in Jalilabad VET school in furniture production.

Some of the largest employers in Azerbaijan have established their own career centres. The career centres include activities to recruitment of new employees, increase qualifications of their employees (academies, vocational education institutions) and to promote their employees. One of the examples is Azersun Holding's Azersun Career centre. The website of the centre includes links to create CVs, job advertisements, Azersun Academy's courses etc. One of the main mobile operators Azercell has also established its career centre for recruitment, training and promotion.

To support career development in the informal sector the government has approved guidelines for validation of non-formal and informal learning. Implementation of assessment and recognition procedures started in 2020 by Education Quality Assurance Agency (EQAA). 14 qualifications are available for VNFIL and so far 119 persons applied for assessment and recognition. 51 persons passed the initial review process and 43 persons participated in knowledge assessment. 24 persons participated in assessment of skills, competence and experience. 11 persons were awarded with diplomas and 16 persons were awarded with certificates. The process is new and demand is increasing. The EQAA plans to increase number of qualification available for VNFIL and number of applicants is expected to increase in the future. VNFIL was carried out for 5 qualifications (Drywall installer and repairer, Barber, Plastic pipe welder, Mobile phone repairer and Confectioner) and 22 applicants (43%) applied for Barber qualification.

Although, the pace of increase in cooperation between vocational education and employers is observed in recent years, lack of incentive mechanism to encourage employers is one of the main barriers. Incentive mechanism will motivate employers to accept more students to internship programs, to attend in organization and management of education, development of educational resources, etc. Another barrier is lack of social dialogue between government, vocational education institutions and employers. The social

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<sup>4</sup> European Training Foundation, 2021 – Azerbaijan - Education, Training and Employment Developments 2021

dialogue enables to build a strong relation between all involved parties in developing vocational education policy including organization of career guidance.

## 6. FUNDING

Provision of career guidance services is funded through the budget of the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF). Reviewing laws on Unemployment Insurance Fund (2018, 2019, 2020) show that 1,150,000 AZN, 1,300,000 AZN, 2,000,000 AZN and 2,000,000 AZN have been allocated for career guidance services in 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021 respectively. This is a share of 1.3% in 2018, 1.3% in 2019, 1.6% in 2020 and 1.3% in 2021.

According to the Law on Budget of Unemployment Insurance Fund for 2022 the amount allocated to career guidance stayed the same and 2,000,000 AZN were allocated to the career guidance services. This is 1.1% of the total budget of the unemployment insurance fund.

Career guidance is not a priority in distribution of budget of the Unemployment Fund. Additional funding by social partners is a realistic option in the area of VET at least, but as the quality of VET does not meet fully the needs of social partners, especially employers, currently they are not interested in contributing directly to funding career guidance services.

## 7. ACCESS

22 offices of SEA and 5 offices of DOST cover all regions of the country. Career guidance services as one of the active labour measures are carried out by these offices for unemployed and jobseekers, self-employment, and employed. Job fairs and labour exchanges, paid public works etc. are typical services.

The project "Creation of inclusive and decent jobs for socially vulnerable groups" implemented by the UNDP and SEA started in 2019 January and is expected to last till 2024. The aim of the project is to increase the potential of unemployed and job-seekers from vulnerable groups and create opportunities for their involvement in productive employment in the labour market. 12 rayons and cities (Sabunchu and Binagadi rayons of Baku, Absheron, Shamakhi, Zagatala, Shamkir, Barda, Fuzuli rayons, Sumgayit, Mingachevir, Goychay and Ganja cities) were selected as pilots for the first year of the project.

To cope with the pandemic situation the SEA also launched "Alo Career" and "Bacar" projects to reach citizens online.

The Ministry of Education carries out career guidance services in general education and vocational education throughout the country. Sample activity plan for career guidance services in general education is approved by the minister. The activity plan covers the whole academic year.

SAVE together with the SEA organizes job fairs for students from vocational education institutions. Lack of well-elaborated client profiling system and limited labour resources is one of the main barriers to carry out career guidance services for unemployed and jobseekers.

## 8. USE OF TECHNOLOGY

Two projects of the SEA especially stand out for the use of technology during the COVID-19 pandemic situation.

**"Alo career"** a support service aimed at assisting the personal and professional development of individuals during the pandemic, ensuring the availability of vocational counselling services for the target groups, the quality of services provided and prompt response to the request. This project creates chances for citizens

to use “Zoom” to contact the Agency employees and get support on career planning, selection of occupation, preparation and evaluation of resumes, and assistance in preparation for the job interviews.

“Bacar” (learn a skill) as another future service of SEA with a career guidance component allows users to join online information sessions and trainings on self-employment, career guidance and vocational training activities. Career guidance component of the project includes information about occupations, vocational diagnostics and support for career choice.

“Strategic Road Map for the development of telecommunications and information technologies in the Republic of Azerbaijan” was approved in 2016 and one of the main components of the Road Map was Priority 2.4 “Improvement of electronic services of government agencies”. Improvement activities in this area could also increase the quality of data used in career guidance.

At present Employment sub-system under MLSP services is under construction. This platform will have career part which will support users to create CVs and find new jobs.

Weak internet connection and lack of computers of locals in rural areas is one of the main barriers for citizens to access career guidance services.

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

This section analyses aspects which contribute to raise and maintain the quality of provision, including the definition of standards of service and ethical treatment of personal information, professionalization and training of practitioners and other staff, quality of tools, methodologies and information.

### 9.1. Standards

Desk research proved that currently there is not any higher education institution in Azerbaijan offering a diploma program on career guidance or professional training courses leading to upgrading advisor’s qualifications. Advisors’ skills on career guidance services are upgraded by short-term courses organized by SEA. The trainings are usually organized at regional training centres of SEA or secondary schools. The participants are trained on topics like the implementation of practical activities for career guidance, how to provide career guidance services, presentation of occupations, diagnosis of occupational interests etc.

The Education Institute under the Ministry of Education has developed a methodological tool for career guidance practitioners (for all pillars of general education) and is carrying out online and offline trainings for practitioners (mainly school psychologists).

The EU Funded “Support to implementation of NQF in Azerbaijan” (2018 January – 2020 October) project developed a qualification standard, occupational standard, curricula and assessment standard for Career Guidance Counsellor qualification in 2020. The standards were developed in consultations with SEA, universities, practitioners and experts of the field. The qualification falls under the AzNQF level 5, sub-bachelors’ level of education. It is not offered by any education institution yet and there is no plan to establish post-graduate courses for the preparation of career services specialist. However, there is the possibility to establish such course under the supervision of the MoE.

### 9.2. Staffing

#### Staffing in SEA:

Career guidance and Vocational Training Department of the SEA consists of 5 employees. Other than that main part of staffing related to the career guidance services are in 22 regional offices of SEA. Depending on

the size of the SEA office, there is at least one specialist dealing with career guidance. Their skills on career guidance services are upgraded by short-term courses organized by SEA.

#### **Staffing in MoE:**

According to the sample activity plan for the general education institutions to carry out career guidance services, the services are provided by school psychologists and career guidance coordinators as full-time positions. Practitioners from 4100 schools in Azerbaijan are trained in accordance to the newly developed methodological tool. The trainings are conducted in online and offline formats.

Hindering factors currently are the lack of materials for career guidance practitioners' professional development and shortages in finding specialized professionals for delivering career services.

### **9.3. Quality of data and information**

Information and intelligence to support career development is delivered by National Skills Observatory (NSO). The maximum number of positions for Observatory is 70 employees. Currently, 54 employees work for NSO. The observatory applies cutting edge corporate management instruments. In general, NSO receives official requests through MLSP, however NSO can also receive unofficial requests (paid requests by companies). Around 60 policy documents related to the analysis of the labour market (several of them related to LLL and adult education) were developed, but there is not any published report yet. NSO implements the following ongoing activities in the field of labour market:

- On-the-job training based on international experience, analysis of internship mechanisms and preparation of proposals, study of the possibility of applying the “dual education” system;
- Analysis of the characteristics of the national labour market for pandemic and post-pandemic periods;
- Analysis of statistics of able-bodied inactive population and preparation of proposals on their involvement in the labour market;
- Preparation of proposals for improving the system of vocational education, secondary specialization and higher education in accordance with the requirements of the “National Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning”;
- Analysis of issues of effective use of human capital in Azerbaijan and preparation of proposals for the next 5 years.

NSO implements the following ongoing activities in the field of training and education:

- Creating a database of training suppliers;
- Training “Instructions on conducting telephone conversations with respondents” was organized for the staff of the National Observatory;
- Training on “Instructions for using the SoGoSurvey platform” was conducted for the staff of the National Observatory;
- Training for employees of the National Observatory on various topics (MIS training – 1 hour x 5 groups, a total of 42 employees, training “Order and Chaos” – 2 hours, a total of 50 employees, training “Canvas Business Model” – 2 hours, a total of 32 employees) internal trainings were conducted;
- “Organizational Culture and Work Ethics” training for new employees of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection;
- Around 10K employees work in MLSP and its organizations. So, the NSO should also train (data collection, data processing, data analysis, conduct surveys and interviews, policy design, forecasting etc.) these employees in the future;

- There are 600K disabled, so NSO is going to study skills of this group and involve them in trainings in the future.

Main source of NSO for data collection is administrative information mainly from SEA and education institutions. As well as NSO is planned to obtain missing qualitative and quantitative data through surveys. NSO planned (according to its Charter and annual internal activity plan) to collect data on demanded skills and occupations in the labour market and this information will be used by SEA for delivering career services and education institutions for development of competency-based curricula. Main barriers are in collecting student tracking data from education institutions and limited resources for conducting surveys.

## 9.4. Monitoring, evaluation and policy feedback

Currently no comprehensive monitoring and feedback exists covering the whole career development support system in Azerbaijan. Individual projects carry out customer satisfaction surveys, mainly online. For example, “Alo career” customer satisfaction survey with above 98% customer satisfaction rate.

Proposals for the implementation plan of a Concept “National System of Career Guidance and Counselling in Azerbaijan” developed by the EU funded “Support to implementation of NQF in Azerbaijan” project (from 23 January 2018 till 22 October 2020) recommended the establishment of a quality assurance system, monitoring and evaluation of effectiveness in providing career guidance services. The project recommended cooperation of the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population for strengthening quality assurance and evidence base in career guidance. Responsibility on information, guidance, and counselling service quality assessment and evaluation of effectiveness is delegated to relevant subordinate bodies of MoE and MLSP following the existing legal procedure. Data on users of career services is available in bulk format without disaggregation for age, gender, region etc.

# 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 participation of employer and employee organizations, researcher representatives and NGOs to build trust and common understanding through engaging into a joint process, like discussing the outcome of the review of the national career development support system aimed at
  - (1) developing a national theory of change (ToC)<sup>5</sup>, 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

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<sup>5</sup> See p. 17: <https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/developing-national-career-development-support-systems>

- Include a clear definition in terms of the outcomes of career guidance and in terms of the scope and role of career guidance in contributing to wider employment, social and education outcomes for individuals, organisations and society in a law (Career guidance services were emphasized in the law on “Employment”, but there is no definition.). A stand-alone Lifelong Career Guidance Strategy or LLL strategy that integrates career guidance could build an integrative framework that provides clarity to all actors. A clear legal mandate needs to be given to a body responsible for overall coordination of career guidance in the country across ministries (MoE and MLSPP, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Finance), employers and employee organizations, research and NGOs. This will allow to integrate services and actors to a system. Such a body could take the form of an inter-ministerial working group (national career guidance forum) or an existing (SEA) or new agency, and needs the resources, including financial, to fulfil its role.

## **Coordination and Cooperation**

### **Short-term**

- Develop an annual action plan of the inter-ministerial working group starting already with 2022.
- Build on good practice cases of fruitful cooperation between employers, VET Agency and vocational education institutions like in the case of the Jalilabad VET school in furniture production to increase qualifications of employees and to retrain them, to secure employment of graduates and internship places for students as well as using qualified employees of the employers to improve education

### **Medium-term to long-term**

- Ensure strategic cooperation with employers/employer organisations at national, regional and provider level to involve the world of work in career guidance activities in education and facilitate the work at provider, e.g. school, level
- Establish public-private partnerships e.g. for realising large scale ICT services (see example<sup>6</sup> “Atlas of new professions”)
- Ensure official permanent status and funding of a coordination body

## **Services**

### **Short-term**

- Offer work-based learning schemes to all students in different forms to allow for making real life work experience that helps develop interests and iteratively build future professional identities, as well as job shadowing, mock interviews, student companies etc.
- Offer special services for NEETs and for rural youth
- Identify the most effective media used for career guidance during the pandemic (TV, radio etc.) and build on that to continue the outreach to especially rural population

### **Medium-term to long-term**

- Diversify career guidance methodologies by adapting methodologies to client groups (from NEETs to disabled, to employed etc.) moving beyond the “testing and matching” approach (using e.g. narrative approaches like storytelling, culturally adapted psychometric and non-psychometric tests)

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<sup>6</sup> See p. 51: <https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/international-trends-and-innovation-career-guidance-volume>



- Ensure a multi-channel approach to the delivery of career-guidance services to meet the needs of diverse clients, increase access to and the quality of guidance services: from telephone, online, distance (telephone, radio, TV), personalised, group to self-directed service offers, and involvement of parents and/or the wider community
- Shift from support for making career and/or education choices at transition points through provision of “information” about learning opportunities and about occupations towards enabling individuals to manage their own education and careers, with a focus on increasing lifelong career adaptability and employability through career management skills development. Dedicated learning programmes are to be developed and integrated from primary school onwards until higher education as they aim at learning about oneself, learning about the world of learning and work, and are therefore geared towards preparing individuals holistically for their future (either as part of existing subjects, or as stand-alone subject and/or integrated through extra-curricular activities).
- Ensure that Micro, Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (MSMEs) receive support in the career development of staff, as they have limited resources for this task, inter alia through leveraging the role of NSO, and social partners who can provide skills needs assessments and forecasting (for sectors), facilitate cooperation with adult learning and vocational education and training institutions for continuous professional development, also tapping into formalisation of non-formal and informal learning at the workplace and the recognition of prior learning.
- Develop career guidance services through specialized Youth Houses outside of formal education

## **Funding**

### **Short-term**

- Allocate more funds to trainings for career guidance practitioners for online service delivery as COVID-19 showed the importance of digital services.
- Increase the coverage and awareness of programs like “Alo Career”

### **Medium-term to long-term**

- Ensure an increase in specialized professionals for delivering career services, through creating specialised qualifications and education pathways, through outsourcing to NGOs already active in this field (while this requires accreditation or other quality assurance), retraining other specialists also those currently registered as unemployed etc. and earmark clear funds for this task of increasing staff
- Identify in close cooperation with social partners new funding sources for ensuring access to career guidance services for all employed people within private and public sector and all vulnerable groups (e.g. in precarious employment or informal sector) facing the need for re/upskilling in the context of digital and green transitions. Given the Azerbaijan case, a special focus shall be put on career guidance support to those employed in sectors hit most by the greening of the economy.
- Expand the amount of financial resources for career guidance services to fulfil the needs of the new profiling logic (see recommendation below) as the share of financial resources spent on career guidance services is very low in comparison with other measures/programs funded by budget of UIF

## **Access**

### **Medium-term to long-term**

- Develop a proper client profiling system to ensure tailoring services to the specific needs of individuals, thereby improving the quality and effectiveness of services, and to ensure dealing



effectively with the increase of clients with limited resources: clients can be grouped according to their needs, e.g. those that can be referred to self-help services (e.g. online), those with limited, and those with intense support need. Also different qualifications of practitioners are required for these different support roles, ensuring that only some need to be highly trained and specialised.

- Ensure outreach strategies and activities to rural areas and specific client groups such as NEETs are in place

### **Use of technology**

#### **Short-term**

- Ensure integration of existing ICT services and face-to-face services to improve resource efficiency and service effectiveness
- Provide both in urban and rural areas public space with free WLAN access and/or access to computers with internet to overcome the challenge of limited access to internet

#### **Medium-term to long-term**

- Ensure interoperability of ICT services from different actors
- Use the potential of ICT to bring together the different elements of the career-guidance system as an integrative factor to improve effectiveness and efficiency
- Use ICT in career guidance as a support for 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.)
- Develop a publicly accessible, interactive, centrally maintained comprehensive single entry e-information resources on learning opportunities and the world of work for career guidance providers and users developed to address the different needs of users (like parents), including inter alia a detailed description of the education system, education levels, entry requirements to a next level of formal education, recognition of non-formal education, including recommendations on how to use AzNQF website, register of qualifications, labour market information etc.

### **Quality, professionalisation and continuous improvement**

#### **Short term**

- Develop training modules for managers of career guidance provider organisations and staff of ministries and agencies responsible for career guidance to deal with the new role of providers in the coming future and the paradigm shift in career guidance practice that is necessary to remain effective and efficient as service in the light of changing labour markets and skills requirements
- Establish an interdisciplinary working group of researchers, representatives of career guidance practitioners and clients to develop a diversified set of career guidance methodologies, tools, and materials for career guidance practitioners (for their work and for their professional development)
- Develop ethical standards including on the use of ICT for all career guidance practitioners across sectors and policy fields
- A minimum amount of continuous professional development hours within a calendar year should be included in each career guidance practitioner's annual performance objectives or provider organisation's annual action plan (related to learning about new and diversified methodologies, profiling, adapting approaches to individuals needs etc.)
- Make tracer studies for upper secondary, VET and Higher Education institutions mandatory to collect information on their graduates which directly informs career guidance work and curriculum development

- Develop simple client feedback forms to capture client satisfaction

#### Medium to long term

- The output of the EU funded project “Support to implementation of NQF in Azerbaijan” (from month/year to moth/year) should be officially adopted and leveraged: qualification standard, occupational standard, curricula and assessment standard for Career Guidance Counsellor qualification at AzNQF level 5 to inform the development of new and the adaptation of existing education and training programmes and courses, and to promote the profession. Ensure that the qualification is appropriate to fill positions required for the profiling logic developed for the country.
- Develop specific Bachelor and Master degree programmes for career guidance practitioners with high qualification need according to the profiling logic developed.
- Next to qualification standards of practitioners, ensure provider quality through e.g. accreditation of providers according to national service standards and ethical standards (standards are to define the service outcome for clients across education, employment, youth, social service sectors (career management skills), the standards of career practitioners’ competencies, the standards of organisation of career guidance services (covering conditions, requirements and principles essential for quality provision of services from an organisation’s perspective), and the standards of career guidance programmes (providing a structural framework for developing and delivering services and activities in an organisation).
- Create a culture of continuous policy and service improvement through continuous monitoring and evaluation of policies and practices. Involve the interdisciplinary working group of researchers in conducting research on policy and service effectiveness and impact. Ensure input and output of career guidance services is monitored regularly. Monitoring of career guidance in education settings should be integrated into overall monitoring approaches for the educational level/institution.

## List of documents used for desk research

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7. The State Programme "Youth of Azerbaijan in 2017-2021", 2017 (<http://www.e-qanun.az/framework/36474>)
8. Strategic road maps for the national economy and main economic sectors, 2016
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13. Law on "Education", 2009 (<http://www.e-qanun.az/framework/18343>)
14. Regulations on "Provision of career guidance services", 2019 (<http://www.e-qanun.az/framework/42636>)
15. "Rules for implementation of career guidance services in general education institutions", 2020 (<http://www.e-qanun.az/framework/45034>)
16. EU Business Climate Report 2018 – Perceptions of EU businesses active in Azerbaijan
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18. ILO, Developing national career development support systems, 2021 (<https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/developing-national-career-development-support-systems>)
19. Review of existing LLL provision in Azerbaijan, ETF, 2021
20. European Training Foundation, 2021 – Azerbaijan - Education, Training and Employment Developments 2021

## Web-sites

21. Azerbaijan State University of Economics - <https://unec.edu.az/>
22. Baku State University - <http://bsu.edu.az/>
23. Azerbaijan State Oil and Industry Education - <http://asoiu.edu.az/>
24. Azerbaijan State Pedagogical University - <https://adpu.edu.az/>
25. Azerbaijan University of Architecture and Construction - <https://www.azmiu.edu.az/>
26. Azerbaijan University of Languages - <https://adu.edu.az/>
27. Baku Slavic University - <https://bsu-uni.edu.az/>
28. Baku Music Academy named after Uzeyir Hajibeyli - <https://www.musicacademy.edu.az/>
29. Baku Engineering University - <https://beu.edu.az/>
30. Sumgait State University - <https://sdu.edu.az/>
31. Lankaran State University - <https://lsu.edu.az/>
32. Ganja State University - <https://gdu.edu.az/>
33. Azerbaijan State Academy of Physical Education and Sport - <http://sport.edu.az/>
34. Western Caspian University - <https://wcu.edu.az/>
35. Academy of Public Administration under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan - <https://dia.edu.az/>
36. ADA University - <https://www.ada.edu.az/>
37. Baku Higher Oil Academy - <https://www.bhos.edu.az/>
38. Azerbaijan University of Tourism and Management - <http://atmu.edu.az/>
39. Azerbaijan State Customs Committee Academy - <http://asca.gov.az/>
40. Junior Achievement - <http://ja-azerbaijan.org/>