

Communiqué 2019

Leading career development
services into an uncertain future:
Ensuring access, integration and innovation

Summary

Career is the individual's path through life, learning and work. How people live their lives, build their skills, care for their families and work in the labour market has implications for society and the economy. Because of this governments, societies, employers and educational organisations have an interest in supporting people to build good, productive and meaningful careers. Citizens who can effectively manage their careers are better placed to respond to changes in the labour market, develop their skills and contribute to society and the economy.

The issue of how governments can support citizens to build fulfilling careers was the focus of the ninth International Symposium for Career Development and Public Policy in Tromsø, Norway on 17th–20th June 2019. During the Symposium representatives from 33 countries and from UNESCO, the OECD, European Commission, European Training Foundation and the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, dialogued and identified a range of effective policies and practices. These discussions are summarised in this Communiqué.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Addressing a changing context

1. Develop a cross-sectoral strategy for career development¹ and embed it into wider skills, education, employment and social policies.
2. Strengthen quantitative and qualitative evidence on career development to support decisions about policy and practice.
3. Create mechanisms for sharing and learning from international policy and practice.
4. Ensure that career development programmes and services develop citizens' ability to manage their own careers.

Improving access

5. Increase awareness of, and access to, career development programmes and services.
6. Recognise the diversity of users of career development programmes and services and ensure that provision recognises this diversity.

Integrating career development into society

7. Establish mechanisms to support co-ordination and co-operation between government departments and agencies with responsibility for career development and associated fields.
8. Empower citizens to shape career development programmes and services.
9. Develop and resource a national body to support consultation and co-ordination in career development.

Supporting innovation

10. Provide resources to support innovation and space for piloting new career development programmes and services.
11. Adopt an integrated and transformative multi-channel approach to the delivery of career development programmes and services.
12. Ensure that career development professionals are highly trained and supported to continue to innovate and develop their practice.

¹ The activity described as 'career development' in this Communiqué is also known by other terms such as career guidance and lifelong guidance in different countries.



Introduction

Career is the individual's path through life, learning and work. How people live their lives, build their skills, care for their families and work in the labour market has implications for society. The path that individuals take through their lives makes a difference to the organisations in which they work and the societies in which they live.

The future is not fixed but is rather dependent on individual and collective decisions and actions. Moving to take up a new job, set up a new business, share parental leave, reduce the hours you spend in paid work, enroll in adult learning or leave school are all career decisions that have a profound impact on individual wellbeing and livelihood as well as on wider society. Because of this governments, societies, employers and educational organisations have an interest in supporting people to build good, productive and meaningful careers.

Many governments have developed a range of policies, programmes and services to help individuals, families and communities to learn about education and work, make successful transitions and develop and manage their careers. These *career development* interventions can be provided in the education system, in employment services and in workplaces and communities. The activities which comprise career development programmes are diverse and can be funded and delivered in a variety of ways.

Career development links with a wide range of wider policy agendas. Most notably it contributes to:

- *economic policy* by increasing the efficiency of the labour market and improving the signalling of the skills and labour that the economy needs;
- *educational policy* by helping citizens to understand educational pathways and consider how they will deploy the skills and knowledge that they acquire in the education system across the rest of their lives; and
- *social policy* by equalising access to information and opportunities and helping citizens to build a critical understanding of the education system and the labour market.

The issue of how governments can support citizens to build fulfilling careers was the focus of the ninth *International Symposium for Career Development and Public Policy* in Tromsø, Norway on 17th–20th June 2019. The Symposium was organised and funded by Skills Norway with the support of the International Centre for Career Development and Public Policy (ICCDPP). It was attended by 160 delegates representing 33 countries, and representatives of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), UNESCO, the European Commission (EC), the European Training Foundation (ETF) and the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop).

In advance of the Symposium, participants submitted country papers and four thematic syntheses were prepared which addressed the:

1. context and challenges for career development policy;
2. aims for, and access to, career development programmes and services;
3. integration of career development policies, programmes and services into wider society; and
4. leadership, innovation and change for the future.

These syntheses are available on the Symposium website² and provide an evidence base for participating countries and international organisations. During the Symposium representatives from countries and international organisations discussed the four themes, shared perspectives and identified a range of effective policies and practices. These discussions are summarised in this Communiqué. It draws together international good practice and makes a series of recommendations which countries can draw on and adapt to their own cultural and political contexts.

² See <https://www.kompetansenorge.no/iccdpp2019/key-outcomes/syntheses-papers/>.



Theme #1



Context and challenges for career development policy

There are a range of political, social, economic and technological issues that are impacting on people's lives and careers. These include automation, conflict, demographic changes such as an aging population, digitalisation, environmental change, the 'gig economy', globalisation and growing migration, political instability, social inequality, urbanisation, the growth of unregulated and unreliable sources of information (including career information) and a range of other issues.

These issues shape people's careers, opening new opportunities and posing new challenges. For many people building a personal response to such changes will require the development of new skills, attitudes and capabilities including new career management skills. These issues are also likely to be challenging for organisations to negotiate whilst successfully recruiting, retaining and developing staff.

Career development policies, programmes and services can empower individuals by supporting them to explore the labour market, analyse changes and build responses to these changes that enhance resilience and ensure their livelihoods. It can support employers by strengthening the links between education and employment, addressing skills needs and smoothing labour market transitions. It can also serve to enhance equality and social inclusion by providing useful information and access to networks for the disadvantaged.

Most countries participating in the symposium reported that their government recognised the value of career development as a part of public policy and was currently increasing public investment in the field.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COUNTRIES

- 1. Develop a cross-sectoral strategy for career development and embed it into wider skills, education, employment and social policies.** Career development policy is typically characterised by the involvement of multiple ministries, jurisdictions and stakeholders. Establishing a strategy which draws on evidence and international learning and makes explicit connections to wider skills, education, employment and social policies can enhance the effectiveness of policies and programmes.
- 2. Strengthen quantitative and qualitative evidence on career development to support decisions about policy and practice.** There is a substantial evidence base on career development interventions that can be used to inform both policy and practice. Governments should seek to make use of this and to contribute to it through supporting, funding and commissioning research and evaluation. It is also critical that practitioners are engaged in the creation and use of evidence and theory in their day-to-day practice.

3. **Create mechanisms for sharing and learning from international policy and practice.** Career development is an international field of practice, policy and research. It is important that countries continue to dialogue with others to facilitate learning. This may take the form of regional collaborations, cross-border benchmarking, the commissioning of international evidence reviews and engagement with international organisations including the ICCDPP.
4. **Ensure that career development programmes and services develop citizens' ability to manage their own careers.** Career development is a lifelong activity through which citizens shape their engagement in life, learning and work. It is not just about making decisions during key points of transition. Career development programmes and services should empower citizens and support them to develop their own careers. Countries should identify what career relevant skills and knowledge (career management skills) are valuable in their context and embed them in the education system and wider skills development policies.

Theme #2



Aims for, and access to, career development

Career development supports the achievement of a broad range of social policy goals. For young people, such goals include reducing early school leaving, engaging young people with vocational and higher education, supporting successful transitions to education, training, and employment and empowering young people to pursue fulfilling careers and ensure their livelihoods. For adults, they concern upskilling and reskilling, lifelong learning, employment and employability, and managing multiple work transitions. For employers, they concern addressing skills shortages and workforce adaptability. For education systems, they can improve the retention, performance, and progression of students. For vulnerable groups in society, they address social justice through education and workforce participation. Despite these high expectations, in many countries, access to career development programmes and services is limited with many individuals e.g. working people, people living in rural areas and disadvantaged adults, often struggling to access support. For others, particularly those engaged in unwanted and unexpected labour market transitions, the need for career development programmes and services is acute, but access can often be limited.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COUNTRIES

5. **Increase awareness of, and access to, career development programmes and services.** Career development should start early and continue throughout life. Access to career development programmes and services is underpinned by citizens' understanding of the concept of career, recognition of the possibility of

developing their career and awareness of the opportunities offered by professional career development programmes and services. Countries should increase citizen's understanding of career as something that they have a right to, audit citizens' demands for career development support and increase the availability of career development support across the life course.

- 6. Recognise the diversity of users of career development programmes and services and ensure that provision recognises this diversity.** Career development programmes and services are utilised and experienced differently by different groups of citizens e.g. young people in and out of education, workers with a varying range of skills, those transitioning in the labour market, refugees, ethnic and religious minorities and people with disabilities. Consequently, it is important that the design and organisation of such programmes and services recognises the diversity of these users and addresses questions of access and quality for each of these groups.

Theme #3



Integrating career development into wider society

Career development is a complex activity which requires the co-operation of a wide range of actors. Within government there is a need to co-ordinate the activities of multiple ministries, whilst outside of government employers, trade unions, educators and citizens all have a stake in the policies, programmes and services provided. A key challenge for career development policy is to find ways to ensure that all of these diverse actors can work together effectively.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COUNTRIES

- 7. Establish mechanisms to support co-ordination and co-operation between government departments and agencies with responsibility for career development and associated programmes and services.** Career development typically crosses multiple ministries and government agencies. Given this it is important to establish co-operation mechanisms within government, across ministries, departments and agencies and jurisdictional levels.
- 8. Empower citizens to shape career development programmes and services.** The people who use and benefit from career development programmes and services should be central to defining what these include and how they work. This should include gathering regular feedback and satisfaction surveys but should go beyond 'consultation' and 'feedback' to include involving citizens in the design and development of programmes and services.

Theme #4

Leading innovative change for the future

Career development policy and practice continues to move and develop in response to the changing context. It is important that policymakers understand the possibilities offered by a range of innovations and consider how they can best be applied in context.

As well as focusing on the area to innovate in, successful innovation requires careful implementation planning from governments. The movement from idea to innovation to implementation does not just happen, it needs to be led and managed, funded and resourced.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COUNTRIES

- 10. Provide resources to support innovation and space for piloting new career development programmes and services.** Governments need to provide career development programmes and services with the funding and opportunities to undertake bold experiments by piloting new ideas and evaluating their impact carefully.
- 11. Adopt an integrated and transformative multi-channel approach to the delivery of career development programmes and services.** Citizens want to be able to access career development programmes and services through a variety of different modes and approaches. Effective career development programmes and services use digital and analogue technologies and integrate them with face-to-face approaches to delivery. Such an integrated multi-channel approach has the potential to transform career development programmes and services in ways that enhance both access and quality.
- 12. Ensure that career development professionals are highly trained and supported to continue to innovate and develop their practice.** Effective career development is dependent on highly qualified professionals with access to continuing professional development. Governments should support the profession to continue to innovate, make use of new technologies, research and theories, and deal with the future as it unfolds.

