

Career Guidance in Slovenia



Slovenia, a small country with 2 million inhabitants, is situated on the crossroad between Italy, Austria, Hungary and Croatia. As a result, changes in the region always have a strong impact on the situation in the country. According to recent indicators, the situation is currently relatively good. The economy is doing well and many people are relieved after the many years of difficulties which were experienced since the beginning of the world economic crisis in 2008. The number of unemployed which was close to 125.000 in 2013 dropped to 85.000 in February 2018

https://www.ess.gov.si/trg_dela/trg_dela_v_stevilkah

The labour market reacted with increased demand, accentuated due to a smaller generation of young people entering the labour market. These economic and demographic factors have improved expectations considerably for the young adults who are looking for a job and who now have more perceived opportunities. However, often these opportunities, like in many other countries, do not match their initial expectations.

Traditional career guidance providers

Traditionally the providers of career guidance services are schools and national public employment services. Each school has a counselling service which, among many other duties, also provides career guidance. Counsellors mostly organise guidance activities (information sessions, visits to schools, companies, fairs etc.) and provide individual counselling sessions/ group sessions. Career education is provided as a cross-curricular activity but research shows that this provision is modest.

Employment services provide various forms of guidance for the unemployed. All unemployed persons meet employment advisers and agree on an employment plan; which might include not just job-searching activities but also training and various active labour market measures including job-search, in-depth career counselling and

workshops. Clients might also use career centres http://english.ess.gov.si/vicc_ncc where they have access to career resources, e-career development tools, individual counselling etc. Some career guidance activities are, like other measures, provided by external providers which are licenced by the labour ministry.

New providers

The European Social Fund programme (ESF) is a crucial source of financing career guidance in Slovenia considering that the national budget is restricted. As a result, some new guidance providers have emerged and some interesting guidance projects have been accomplished or are under way. I will just mention two networks of providers, financed mostly through ESF, which cover the entire country:

University Career Centres

Career centres within higher education do not have a long tradition, but the pace of development is fast. Staff of the centres are young, creative, open to cooperation and in less than 10 years they managed to develop guidance services which are widely accepted by students. As an example you can look at the website of the Career Centre of Ljubljana University <https://www.kc.uni-lj.si/about-career-centres.html>

Adult Education Guidance Centres (ISIO centres)

ISIO centres play an important role in supporting adult education. These centres are coordinated by the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education http://www.acs.si/guidance_and_validation. All together 16 ISIO centres operate in Slovenia, some centres were introduced 16 years ago and can in fact not be considered as new. The following link offers you the possibility to learn about the wide range of activities which ISIO centres provide to support adult learners <http://tvu.acs.si/paradaucenja/video3/>

New target group

The lack of an adequate labour force in many economic sectors is quite a new phenomenon in Slovenia. In the past it was limited to the construction and a few other sectors. Consequently, the attitude of employers and government regarding older workers has started to change. Now the focus is more on the “older adults”, i.e. potential employees over age 45. This criterion has been chosen not because people over the age of 45 in Slovenia are treated as old but because figures show that in reality employers do not seek to actively train / develop their employees when they reach this stage. The Government allocated substantial resources (ESF financial perspective 2014-2020) for the “professional and personal development” of 45+ employees. The goal is to stimulate older workers not just to “wait for retirement” but develop their competences thus giving stronger contributions to their work environments. The idea is also to spread their tacit knowledge through inter-generational co-operation. The project is not just about professional competences but also about health and well-being. Within the process; each company has to develop a HRM strategy for 45+, developing individual career plans and employee training opportunities. They do all this in cooperation with training centres and external counsellors. The project seems promising, in the first week of its roll out, 930 companies applied, now it has started, we wait for more results.

E-tools

National portal for career information

The Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training provides professional support for

career guidance in School and VET education. Support also includes a national website on career information My Choice ‘Moja izboir’ <http://www.mojaizbira.si> which includes information about schools, education/training programmes, occupational descriptions, occupational videos etc. <http://www.mojaizbira.si/poklic/fizioterapevt>

E-guidance tools

Various e-tools for career planning are available on the website of The Employment Service of Slovenia. For many years we use the tool “Where/how?” which is an adapted version of ‘Adult Directions’ (Cascaid Ltd., UK), one version is adapted for young people another for adults <https://www.kaminkako.si/kudos#/>

Challenges

We have many. In spite of some impressive achievements there are some gaps which hinder the overall effectiveness of career guidance. Within schools (grades 1-9) there is currently a heavy burden on the shoulders of school counsellors. It is desired that career guidance fulfil a more central position in the school and in the curriculum.

Another challenge is related to the use of e-tools in guidance. Such tools exist and clients use them but we lack evidence as to what they really learn, how they benefit, and how e-tools support other functions in a career development process (learning, decision making) not just information.

Career guidance qualification is another challenge. Though in some sectors, the training of counsellors is well developed, it is fragmented. The lack of certified training is not good for the professionalism of career guidance as evidenced when institutions have difficulties in finding providers who can provide quality services.

Slovenia has changed a lot in the last two decades. Foreigners who visited Ljubljana 20 years ago said it is beautiful but “nothing is happening”. Today Ljubljana is no more a sleeping beauty but a vibrant cosmopolitan city <https://www.urbanadventures.com/blog/ljubljana-european-green-capital-2016.html> listed in tourist guides as a must-see destination. I hope that our career guidance provision will make similar progress.



The Author

Saša Niklanovic is independent consultant in the field of career guidance. He started his career as a career counsellor in the Employment Service of Slovenia (ESS), Regional office Ljubljana. He then led various career guidance projects including the Introduction of Job-clubs (1995), the reform of the ESS Career Guidance Service (1996-1999) and the establishment of a National Resource Centre for Career Guidance (1999). He is author of several articles and manuals on guidance services and methods. In the period from 2004 to 2006 he led the Slovene National Guidance Policy Forum and worked as a member of the European Commission’s Expert Group on Lifelong Guidance. He is a member of the Board of Directors of the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance (IAEVG) since 1999.