



WAKEUP
your vocation

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS ON GUIDANCE AND EDUCATION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE'S TRANSITION TO A NEW WORLD OF WORK

- PROJECT RESULT 3 -



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INTRODUCTION

This compilation of Policy Recommendations is the result of the Erasmus + project *Wake Up your Vocation* on future skills and empowering educators for career guidance. The project consortium is constituted by Fundación Santa María la Real (Spain), Znanje na Djelu (Croatia), ALFA (Italy) and Goethe-Institut e.V. (Germany) that collaborated from November 2021 until November 2023. The project's aim is to reduce the gap between the educational system and the labour market to promote the labour insertion of young people.

Throughout the project piloting that reached over 1000 students and 140 parents, through independent research and questionnaires, in depth interviews with 11 education stakeholders, as well as an online workshop these policy recommendations have been harvested. In a final step, they have been reviewed by policy makers participating in the final conference of the *Wake Up* project. They are responses to remaining challenges, shortages or barriers regarding the education, vocational and guidance systems in the project countries, regarding future skills and career guidance.

These Policy Recommendations shall inspire different education stakeholders and specifically policy makers to keep improving the situation and perusing necessary reform efforts.

How to read the Policy Recommendations?

The Policy Recommendations are sorted by regions: the first ones are valid for the European level and the following are applicable to the partner's countries Spain, Croatia, and Italy.

All Policy Recommendations follow the same structure:

- Title of the recommendation
- Who should act?
- What needs to change?
- Why is this change necessary?



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE EUROPEAN LEVEL



BOOSTING CAREER GUIDANCE

WHO?

European Commission, Council of the EU

(European Parliament, Committee of the Regions, Economic and Social Committee)

WHAT?

Career guidance should be a priority in the context of the European Year of Skills from May 2023 to May 2024 and beyond, across the EU's policies and programmes.

This should include specific conferences, enhanced exchanges of good practices among Member States or dedicated Council Conclusions.

WHY?

Various good practices on career guidance exist across Europe. However, its delivery is very heterogeneous and mostly insufficient. Good examples could inspire improvement across Member States and regions. Guidance is essential for preventing skills mismatches, drop-outs, and a shortage of certain workforces.

The last Council of the EU Resolution on guidance dates back to 2008. The reinforced Youth Guarantee of 2020 stresses “counselling, guidance and mentoring”. However, the issue being at the cross-roads of the education and employment fields, competences overlap and complicate legislation, exchanges, or systemic changes, in particular coming from a European level due to subsidiarity.

MORE COUNTRY SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS ON LABOUR MARKET TRANSITION AND SKILLS ACQUISITION

WHO?

European Commission

WHAT?

The European Semester Process should put more emphasis on (vocational) education policies, education, and employment stakeholder collaboration, as well as skills delivery for orientation and labour market integration. ESF+ funding could reinforce this prioritisation.

WHY?

Education not being a main competence of the EU, these fields are often left behind in the semester process. However, school-to-work-collaboration and labour market orientation are key to drive economic development and transmit the skills for the green and digital transition. In particular, since the Semester Process has a stronger link to EU funding, namely through ESF+, such recommendation would incentivise action where it is most needed.

MORE LEARNING MOBILITY FOR EDUCATORS, COUNSELLORS, AND MENTORS

WHO?

European Commission, Parliament, and Council of the EU (Committee of the Regions)

WHAT?

EU funding programmes such as Erasmus + should continue to increase their support for learning mobility among pupils, students, but also educators and career counsellors.

Introduction of a mentorship programme where experienced professionals guide young people in their chosen careers, fostering practical insights, networks, and transnational exchange of vocational practices.

WHY?

Education systems, learning experiences, but also career guidance would benefit from more internationalisation, exchanging good practices, increasing awareness of global trends and solutions. Educational staff plays a multiplier role that can contribute to more systemic improvements regarding the delivery of quality orientation and future skills. A mentorship programme could not only foster the internationalisation but also further bridge the gap between education system and the labour market.

INVESTING IN EDUCATION

WHO?

European Parliament, Commission, Council of the EU and Committee of the Regions

WHAT?

Funding programmes (such as Erasmus+ and the European Social Fund) as well as the NextGenerationEU recovery instrument need to further increase the European financial support for (vocational) educational. Upcoming calls should focus on topics such as future skills like digital skills, green skills, lifelong learning, and early career guidance.

NextGenerationEU investments should focus more on people's skills development to drive the twin-transition.

WHY?

Sufficient funding would permit educational reforms that permit to innovate methods, update contents, and increase the quality of learning, guidance, and labour market integration.

Moreover, more well-funded innovative European pilot projects, could enhance and scale good practices to a degree that they would inspire and foster systemic improvements across all EU member states. Early and preventive intervention in favour of young people's skills prove to be more (cost) effective than (active) labour market interventions or social spending later in life.

EU-WIDE RECOGNITION OF QUALIFICATIONS AND SKILLS

WHO?

European Parliament, Commission, Council of the EU & national Governments

WHAT?

Establish a standardised system for recognising cross-border skills and qualifications to facilitate labour mobility within the EU. Enhanced recognition of university and vocational degrees as well as key competences all over the EU.

WHY?

This would facilitate learning and labour market mobility within the EU as well as transferring skills, knowledge, and best practices all over Europe.



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SPAIN

IMPROVE WORKING CONDITIONS FOR TEACHERS

WHO?

National and regional governments

WHAT?

Improve working conditions for teachers and standardise them nationally (e.g. less short term-contracts, better trainings, social and financial recognition, smaller classes). More stability is needed in the Spanish educational system after many years of changes in regulations in the past years.

WHY?

Improved working conditions and payment will support and motivate current teachers as well as improved attractiveness of these profession in the future. More motivated and skilled teachers will result in better more individual learning experiences for students and pupils. A stable educational system brings security and confidence to the teachers operating in this field.

ESTABLISH VOCATIONAL ORIENTATION AND GUIDANCE IN EDUCATION CURRICULA

WHO?

National government

WHAT?

The education curricula need to make space for quality vocational orientation and guidance. Teachers and tutors need to be trained accordingly. Open spaces for collaboration with the world of work (employers and trade unions etc.) should be enabled. Especially in the last year of secondary school there should be a bridging course to prepare the pupils for the transition from school to work, for example through internships.

WHY?

Ensure high quality, early, continuous, and individual vocational orientation and guidance across the country for every pupil. Vocational orientation should go beyond an hour of collective tutoring or extra hours at VET schools. Foster practical experiences to smoothen the transition to work.

TEACHER TRAINING ON ORIENTATION

WHO?

National government, Ministry of education

WHAT?

Establish a standardised and regular quality training on orientation for teachers and counsellors, included in the working hours, mandatory for all teachers to conduct. Creating mentorship programmes for new teachers, pairing them with experienced educators for mutual learning. Ensuring a continuous professional development framework, for teachers to stay updated with the latest teaching methods and technologies.

WHY?

Empower teachers and counsellors through up-to-date vocational orientation and guidance tools and knowledge. Raise awareness and capacity for early orientation and collaborations with the world of work among educators. Avoid that training and life-long-learning is an individual responsibility of particularly motivated teachers beyond paid working hours. By introducing mentoring programmes, a sense of self-efficacy and ownership would be fostered, making it not an individual but shared group responsibility amongst teachers. Good practices could be shared more easily.

ESTABLISH NATIONAL ORIENTATION STRATEGY

WHO?

National government/local governments and stakeholders

WHAT?

Create a dedicated framework with clear responsibilities for early, continuous, individual orientation and guidance across institutional levels. Bottom-up involvement of all relevant educational and labour market stakeholders. National strategy of involving orientation in the curriculum but implementation can be individual in schools with decentralised activities.

WHY?

Ensure systematic and strategic approach to orientation and guidance. Foster collaboration across institutional levels and sectors. Establish more participatory approaches.



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CROATIA



IMPROVE WORKING CONDITIONS FOR TEACHERS

WHO?

National and regional governments

WHAT?

Improve working conditions for teachers and standardise them nationally (e.g. less short term-contracts, better trainings, higher payment, social and financial recognition). The issues teachers face include: non-competitive base pay, an increased in workload and administrative tasks, no overtime compensation, no compensation for any additional activities (e.g. project participation and most importantly vocational guidance activities, etc.).

WHY?

Improved working conditions and payment will support and motivate current teachers as well as improved attractiveness of these profession in the future. More motivated and skilled teachers will result in better more individual learning experiences for students and pupils. Avoid lack of qualified teachers and counsellor in rural areas and small towns.

If there was legal ground to pay out honoraria for such additional work, for many teachers there would be an incentive for doing this extra work like providing vocational guidance.

FIGHT CORRUPTION IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

WHO?

European / National education and anti-corruption system and Ministry of education

WHAT?

Ensuring fair and transparent school governance and depoliticising recruitment processes through independent oversight, specific standards, monitoring, and complaint mechanisms. Set nation-wide clear and transparent criteria for the hiring commission in Croatian schools. Additionally, there should be a recruitment training for the people in the hiring commissions as they need to learn how to set the testing and employment criteria, promoting a culture of excellence.

WHY?

Ensure quality, transparency, and equity in the education sector. Especially in Croatia unfair practices can easily take place as the rating system for new teacher applicants depends on a hiring commission in the respective school. The hiring commission in each individual school sets the criteria themselves, there are no objective standards applied nationwide or regionally. Usually, the hiring commission is appointed by the school principal who are mostly appointed through political relations.

EDUCATIONAL REFORMS

WHO?

National level, Educational Ministry, and stakeholders

WHAT?

Reforms needed in Croatia especially on vocational guidance, reforms on curricula in general as pupils are very absorbed by the number of different subjects. Also, the educational system is not in sync with the world of work and the reforms so far have not adequately addressed it.

WHY?

Staying up to date with regards to future trends, technologies, and developments in the labour market as well as society to truly prepare young people for their future. Quality control and continuous improvement of educational system and its results. The last big reform (2019-2020) and the next ones to come in Croatia did not address vocational guidance or were systematically and logically implemented in the educational system. Pupils are overwhelmed with number of subjects, there is little time or space for critical thinking or problem-solving activities or additional content like vocational guidance and skills of the future.

TEACHER TRAINING ON ORIENTATION

WHO?

National government, Ministry of education, Agency for education (Agencija za odgoj i obrazovanje), Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education (Agencija za strukovno obrazovanje i obrazovanje odraslih), Higher education system and universities.

WHAT?

Establish a standardised quality training on orientation for teachers and counsellors, also considering pupils with learning disabilities. Teachers and counsellors need vocational guidance training, but they also need accurate and up-to-date information on the labour market and employer demands. Currently, all vocational guidance activities are up to the individual teachers, counsellors and schools, there is no systematic approach as far as training or the implementation.

WHY?

Improve the connection of educational system and world of work. Empower teachers and counsellors through up-to-date vocational orientation and guidance tools and knowledge. Vocational guidance, especially for pupils with learning disabilities requires specific training and expertise to ensure quality and capacity for early orientation and collaborations with the world of work among educators. Include vocational guidance as subject for university programs for teachers.



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ITALY



TEACHER TRAINING ON ORIENTATION

WHO?

National government, Ministry of education

WHAT?

Establish a standardised quality training on orientation for teachers and counsellors.

Although new reforms haven been introduced this year, there is a lack of support from the Ministry to the schools to understand the new guidelines and implement them. In addition to this, there are considerable differences between the regions regarding the reforms, leaving some school offices with delays and little resources to implement the new regulations.

WHY?

Empower teachers and counsellors through up-to-date vocational orientation and guidance tools and knowledge. Raise awareness, ensure quality and capacity for early orientation and collaborations with the world of work among educators.

IMPROVE WORKING CONDITIONS FOR TEACHERS

WHO?

National and regional governments

WHAT?

Improve working conditions for teachers and standardise them nationally (e.g. less short term-contracts, less bureaucracy, more stability). Improve reputation of teaching profession by providing stable positions for young teachers. Working conditions should reflect the considerable time investment of teachers in their own education.

WHY?

To avoid a rigid educational system and to make teaching profession more attractive.

Improved working conditions and payment will support and motivate current teachers as well as improved attractiveness of these profession in the future. More motivated and skilled teachers will result in better more individual learning experiences for students and pupils.

Prevent future shortage of teachers.

INVESTING IN EDUCATION

WHO?

National and regional government (autonomy at regional level when it comes to funding).

WHAT?

Increase investments in educational infrastructure, equipment, and design of schools, especially in remote areas. Funds must be allocated according to the local or regional needs.

WHY?

Overcoming major discrepancies between different areas in a country (North-South imbalance). Ensure equality in education and labour market entrance for all pupils in the country.

COLLABORATION BETWEEN EDUCATION AND WORK / VET

WHO?

National government, education, and employment sectors

WHAT?

Introduce programmes of cooperation between companies and schools (e.g. internships, work shadowing programmes, bringing “role models” in schools) or foster already existing relationships between educational institutions and local businesses. Encouraging joint initiatives for skills development and job placements and create a national database of industry-specific skill requirements, guiding educational institutions in aligning their curricula with market needs.

WHY?

Raise awareness and engage pupils as well as their families for VET and its added value. Facilitate collaborations between schools and companies to boost innovative pathways. Enhance guidance and orientation to give pupils very practical ideas of future occupations and labour market trends. Overcome outdated stereotypes regarding certain “prestigious” careers through information, transparency, and skills matching.

QUALITY CONTROL IN TEACHING

WHO?

National / regional ministries for education

WHAT?

Establish independent quality control, support, monitoring, and evaluation for teaching through transparent standardised processes (including pupils surveys and external testing).

WHY?

Empower, support, and oversee teachers. Ensure self-awareness, motivation, quality of teaching and vocational guidance through feedback, controlling and dedicate training. Increase quality of education, possibly through a system of rewarding hard-working teachers and sanctioning the ones not aligning with the standards of the Ministry.

FIGHT CORRUPTION IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

WHO?

European / National education and anti-corruption system

WHAT?

Fight corruption and nepotism from European to local level, especially in the educational sector. Ensuring fair and transparent school governance and depoliticising recruitment processes in the education system through specific standards, monitoring, and complaint mechanisms that enhance stakeholder's awareness.

WHY?

Ensure quality, transparency, long-term coherence, and equity in the education sector. Protecting teachers and pupils from abuse of power and prevent misuse of funds.



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