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Country Report
Czech Republic

Habitus Sensitive Guidance for Underprivi- leged Milieu

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ReachOut to the 'Left-Behind' – Improving guidance for working
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1. Introduction

1.1. What is at stake?

Recent changes on the labour market pose a lot of challenges having different causes. Common changes are so-called megatrends that fundamentally affect entire economies and, secondarily, labour markets. Those are mainly globalisation, digitalisation, climate changes and demographic and societal changes. Some of these trends result in incremental changes, while others are more disruptive or 'game-changing'. They have, for instance, an effect on the structure of the economy and the labour market, and on the design of industrial relations as well as on changes in proportions in forms of work and increasing precarity component when trying to find a new balance between flexibility and security in the labour market.

All these changes in the labour market have an impact on the workforce. They need to respond adequately to remain competitive in the labour market. As many comparisons documented, education is increasingly becoming an important and strong determinant of employment and career. With changes on labour market and with rising knowledge requirements, the approach and willingness to educate is getting even more essential. By lifelong learning, an employee can be rewarded by a higher status and more interesting and usually better rated work. However, this is affected by labour market situations and status of specific working groups or specific individual situation of an employee and their access to information. Also, education as such becomes, in the process of change and expansion, more and more a prerequisite for career success, whereby other factors might gain weight with respect to the details of selection and allocation.

Regarding this, an approach to information and education as well as the connection to educational guidance can be perceived as a comparative advantage. Noticeably disadvantaged in this respect are working people who could be described as belonging to the underprivileged milieu or lower underprivileged milieu (Bremer, 2017), where still major barriers in approach to education and further training exist. Those people which are part of underprivileged group are mostly characterized by lower education and skill level, but also by lower participation in education and educational guidance as well.

1.2. The ERASMUS+ Project: Reach Out to the “Left-Behind” – improving guidance for working persons from the underprivileged milieu”

Responding to the challenges outlined above, the Erasmus funded project ReachOut (2022 – 2024) aims at the improvement of the adult education sector by enhancing the competences of educators and other adult educational staff and by creating upskilling pathways and rising accessibility and adult education take-up. Practitioners will increase their competences in offering guidance to the target group of working persons from the underprivileged milieu and their special needs for orientation and empowerment.

The project is dealing with upskilling educational and vocational guidance practitioners and the increase of their competences and knowledge in offering and providing guidance to the underprivileged milieu which are within the project framework understood as working persons from the underprivileged milieu, from the prime working age who have a less stable form of gainful work (e.g. frag-

mented, precarious, low paid, marginal, partly declared). They have a certain distance to formal education and guidance: low-qualified people, which can be very basic level of education and functional illiterates. Some of those working persons can have migration or refugee background so that just little knowledge of the national language or systems applied.

The Erasmus+ ReachOut project is working with the assumption that education in general and adult education in its specific environment is an efficient way how to improve and extend the access to adult training and upskilling. At the same time, the project withiest based on the fact that guidance professionals providing guidance and counselling have to tackle the challenge of dealing with people in a changing society with changing needs for guidance and empowerment. They are not confronted with a unique situation; on the contrary, large differences in milieu and habitus of the guidance users and their backgrounds can be assumed.



The general idea of the project is to display adequate guidance where each individual can be supported in accessing appropriate education and training opportunities in adult education and to have a clear picture about her/his individual skills needed.

The intention of the project is to extend the accessibility and increase the participation in adult education. It can be achieved by well-focused guidance and well-designed support in the accession to appropriate education and training opportunities in adult education. Very important are motivation strategies by adapting guidance offers to the target group of working persons from the underprivileged milieu. What remains essential in this process is the knowledge about their individual skills needed.

The project is working with three main direct and indirect target groups to improve the situation in educational guidance for the underprivileged milieu. Those target groups were identified as follows:

A/ Guidance Practitioners and their organisations, who are confronted with the challenges of working with persons from the underprivileged milieu, whose habitus differs greatly from that of the guidance practitioners themselves (e.g. due to their educational background).

B/ Working persons from the underprivileged milieu, from the prime working age who have a less stable form of gainful work (e.g. fragmented, precarious, low paid, marginal, partly declared). They have a certain distance to formal education and guidance: low-qualified people, which can be very basic level of education and functional illiterate. Some of those working persons can have migration or refugee background so that just little knowledge of the national language or systems applied.

C/ Governing Actors on regional, national and European level. For example, stakeholders responsible for educational guidance and training and stakeholders like policy actors in the field of strategic programme development and funding.

The project is implemented by a European consortium consisting of institutions with long-standing expertise in the field of educational guidance, labour, and labour market and education policy, policy analysis, consulting, scientific research:

- ÖSB Social Innovation gemeinnützige GmbH (AT) – leader of the project
- bbb Büro für berufliche Bildungsplanung (DE)
- Andragoski Center Republike Slovenije (SI)
- Research Institute for labour and Social Affairs (CZ).

1.3. About this report

The report will critically analyse and describe the systems by which guidance is delivered to individuals in all countries involved in the project and will map the state of the art and situation related to the policy and practice of professional educational guidance offering guidance to working persons from the underprivileged milieu. In addition to the best-practice examples, the respective weak points are also addressed. The analyses will be also interpreted in the light of the last social and political developments and need to respond to current events connected to changes on the labour market and additional requirements to the labour market and guidance systems.

After outlining the situation concerning guidance systems and the situation in involved countries, the report will focus on the description of the specific target group hidden behind the term 'underprivileged milieu', which can be composed in each partner's country in a specific way. Both the qualification of the group and the quantification of the group will be described.

This report will help to create a solid base for the identification of the status quo, key actors, potentials, possible bottlenecks and challenges relevant for each country. On the basis of the outcomes of the particular national contribution the Self-Study-Manual ("Experience and Cases from working with the Underprivileged Milieu") and the Policy Paper ("Habitus Sensitive Guidance – Recommendations for Policy Makers" are compiled).

2. Situation of working people from underprivileged milieu

In the second chapter there are defined the (indirect) target groups of interest. First part is dedicated to comparative analysis based on data from Eurostat and the second part is focused on the situation of working people from unprivileged milieu in the Czech Republic. Outcomes of the second chapter are essential for proper understanding of the research projects conclusions.

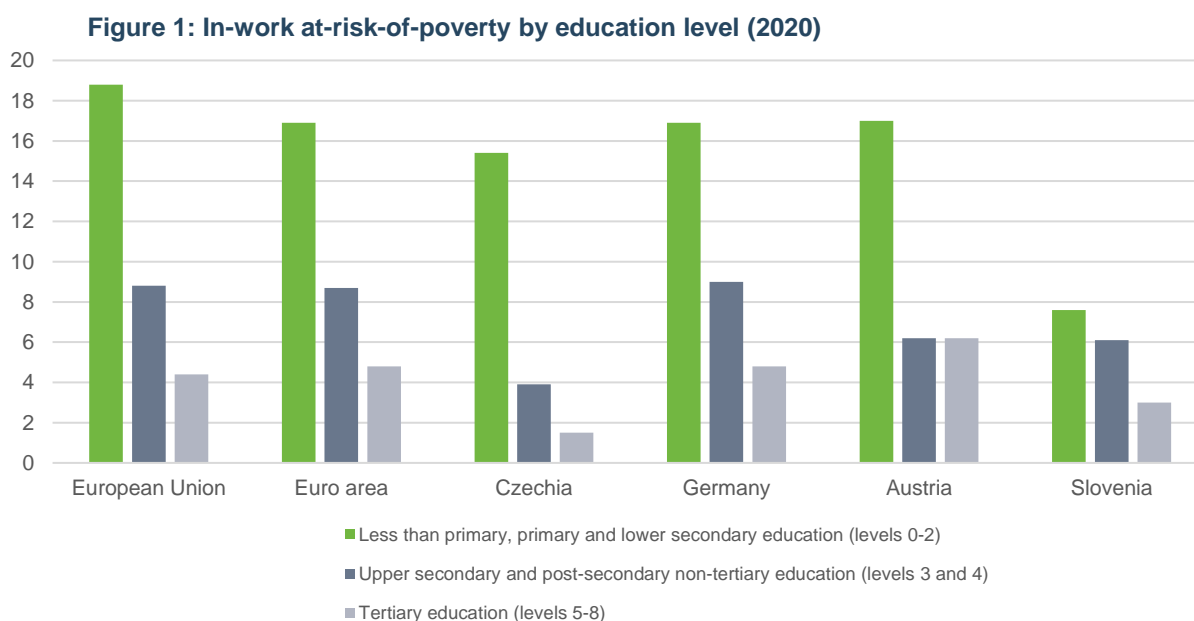
2.1. Defining the object of investigation

The ReachOut project focuses on groups in precarious employment. These are people with a form of gainful work which is however fragmented, low paid, blurred, marginal, partly declared or even undeclared. Such characteristics can be related to both employees and self-employed persons.

The (indirect) target groups are specified by a certain distance to formal education and guidance. This deficiency weakens the position in the labor market and limits the possibility of career growth and getting out of poverty. Described characteristics define relevant groups in the practice of educational guidance.

2.2. Working people from the underprivileged milieu in European Union

To illustrate the situation in the EU and selected countries, we can use data from the EU-SILC. These data allow us to picture the portion of in-work at-risk-of-poverty depending on an educational level.



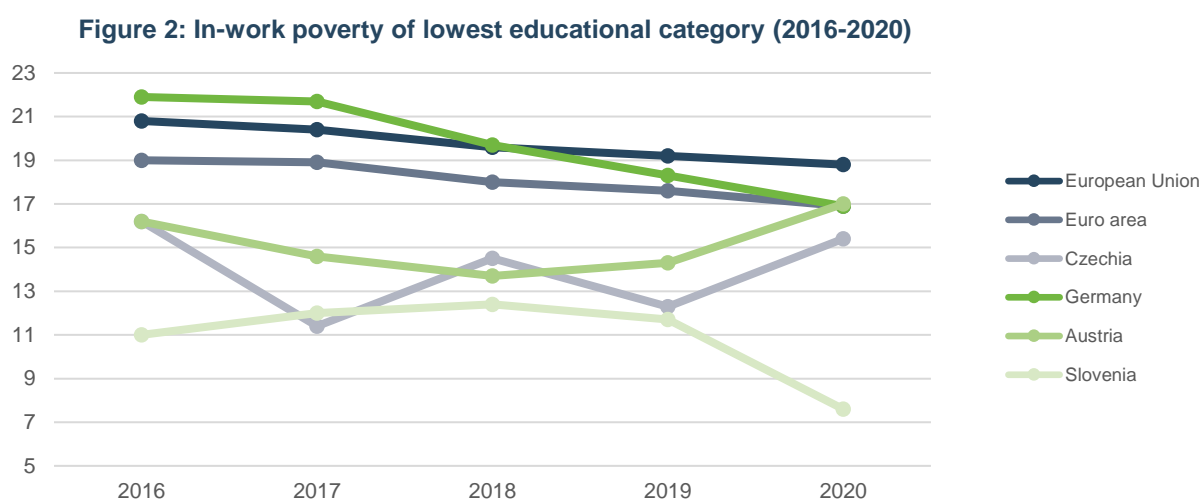
Source: Eurostat, 2022

In Figure 1 we may recognize the distinct effect of low education. Persons with less than primary, primary, and lower secondary education are most often at risk of in-work poverty. In 2020 the lowest

rate of 7,6% was in Slovenia. Other selected countries were close to the union average. In Czechia it was 15,4 %, in Germany 16,9 % and in Austria 17 %.

As could be expected, with higher levels of attained education the portion of persons at risk of poverty declines. On the other hand, it does not decline linearly. We may observe a gap between the category of lowest education and the two other categories for higher education levels (in 2020, only Slovenia represented an exemption from the pattern). This observation highlights the importance of qualification and competencies for people from underprivileged milieu.

If preceding years were considered, we could notice that the relevant ratios for persons with upper secondary, post-secondary and tertiary education (two higher categories) are quite stable. Within the category for lowest attained education (most relevant in this project), more volatility can be observed. This is illustrated in Figure 2.



Source: Eurostat, 2022

In the period from 2016 to 2020 there was a slow decline recorded in Germany, similarly as on the level of the EU and Eurozone. In contrast, Czechia, Austria, and Slovenia experienced more dynamics, mostly in 2020, which was the first year of the pandemic of COVID-19. Recorded changes were undoubtedly affected by applied social and anti-pandemic (compensation) policies.

While comparing and interpreting these data we should keep a sceptical view and consider the national specifics in all selected countries. To allow deeper analysis, we investigate the situation in Czech Republic in detail in the next subchapter.

2.3. National situation of working people from underprivileged milieu

In terms of poverty and inequality, Czech Republic usually stands very well compared to other countries in the EU, or in the OECD. However, the picture made by the international rankings is not exhaustive. This chapter presents a broader perspective and discusses the situation in Czechia detailly.

According to Eurostat (2020) there were 21,9 % of people living in poverty or at risk of social exclusion in the European Union. In the Czech Republic, there was the lowest value recorded (11,5 %). Similarly, OECD data (2022) show that there is the second lowest rate of poverty in Czechia (5,6 %) after Iceland (4,9 %). The phenomenon of poverty is therefore frequently downplayed. On the other hand, issued statistics omit a few important factors.

While assessing the poverty, only incomes of regular character are included. In result, persons with higher savings may fall under the poverty line, although they cannot be actually considered poor. Lower level of savings is at the same time one of differing features of Czech pensioners and pensioners in western Europe (Prokop 2020). Furthermore, the common calculation of poverty rate neglects distraint deduction, which applies to nearly 7 % of all inhabitants in the Czech Republic (CBCZ, 2022).

Most importantly, the calculation of poverty rates is based on national median income, so the threshold is different in each country. If EU median income is used to assess the rate of poverty, we observe a sharp border between western and eastern countries. Below 50 % of European median income lives 41,8 % persons in Czechia, while this portion does not exceed 4 % in any of western countries. For example, in Germany it is 3,5 % and in Austria 3,0 % (European Commission, 2020).

Similarly, Czech Republic stands very well in international comparison of income inequality. With a Gini index of approximately 25 points, it is the country with the most equal income distribution within the European continent. For example, in Austria there is Gini of 31 points, in Germany 32, in Italy 36 and in Bulgaria 41 points (UNU-WIDER, 2021). On the other hand, income inequality does not present a full picture of economic inequality, which has many different aspects.

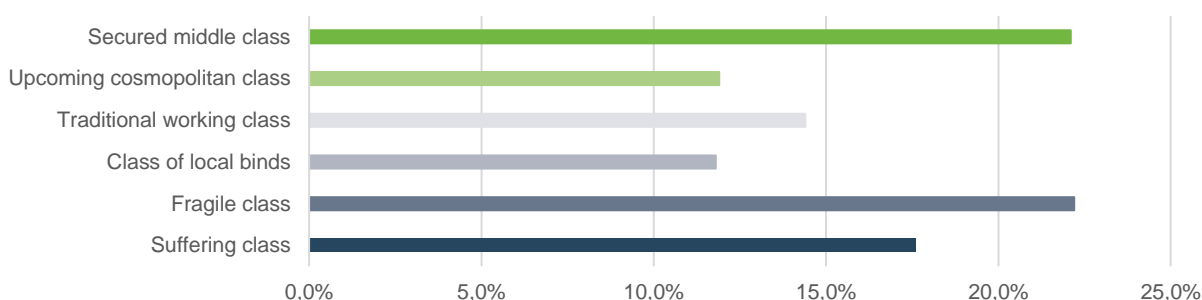
Difference between average gross earnings of male and female employees is 16,4 % in Czech Republic, which is 3,4% over the EU level (Eurostat, 2022). In comparison to other developed countries, there are also higher regional inequalities (OECD, 2016). In structurally affected north-west Bohemia there live four times more people below poverty line than in prospering regions (Prokop, 2020). Another aspect of economic inequality is inequality of wealth distribution. In Czechia, it is estimated that the top 1 % holds 36,1 % of all assets, which is 4th highest concentration in Europe (Komárek, 2021).

Above mentioned facts are the reason, why inequality and poverty in Czech Republic are sometimes called “hidden” and therefore off the media's and policymaker's attention. Its consequences are however not hidden, but real and pressing. To be able to deal with it, we need to recognize the situation of the relevant social groups.

A unique opportunity to explore the social stratification offers the project “Divided by freedom” created under Czech Radio on 30th anniversary of the Velvet revolution (Prokop, et. al., 2019). The research uses specific methods to distinguish between social classes. Apart from typical economic capital such as incomes or wealth it takes into account social capital (scope of social network, having someone to ask for help or advice), cultural capital, and human capital.

From the perspective of the ReachOut project, human capital is essential. It includes ability to speak English or other western language, ICT, and digital competences. Lack of the human capital limits the living conditions of lower class and two out of three lower-middle classes. Figure 3 illustrates the social stratification of the Czech society.

Figure 3: Structure of Czech population



Source: Prokop et. al., 2019

Secured middle class possess accumulated wealth, and social capital, while Upcoming cosmopolitan class dominates with its digital competences, human and cultural capital. Both belong to the higher-middle class.

The lower-middle class composes of Traditional working class, Class of local binds and Fragile class. Only class with solid human capital among these is the Fragile class, which is on the other hand trapped in low-wage positions and lacks accumulated wealth. Traditional working class and Class of local binds are limited by the shortcomings in language, or digital competences, but on the other hand possesses satisfactory level of wealth or incomes.

The lowest identified class is called Suffering class, as it suffers from lack of all types of capital. These people often live in poverty, with little prospect of any improvement. This class fulfils the criteria of the ReachOut project and can be considered to the (indirect) target group in the Czech Republic.

For the members of the Suffering class is typical low education. They usually live in larger towns, in structurally affected regions such as the western Bohemia, or northern Moravia. They are typically low-qualified workers in precarious jobs, having no assets, or social background to rely on. Lack of property relates to a higher portion of rental housing (41 %, which is most of all classes) and frequent housing instability. Most of them are women of higher age, however 14 % of them are also young people and 32 % middle-aged people (Prokop, et. al., 2019).

Described group accounted for almost 18 % of Czech population in 2019. In consequence of the events of 2020-2022, we may expect the numbers of these people to increase and the situation of currently poor groups to worsen. First of such was the pandemic crisis, followed by war in Ukraine and related waves of refugees and swift inflation.

The pandemic shock affected mostly workers in unstable, poorly protected and low-paid jobs, as was illustrated for example for Great Britain (Bludell et. al., 2020), Italy (Carta, De Philippis, 2021), or United states (Kantamneni, 2020) and others. On the Czech labour market, the situation was similar. Pandemic crisis had the most detrimental impact on employees with precarious jobs without proper contract as are part-timers, or persons working on “false self-employment” (Bittner, 2020).

In Czechia, the total portion of low-qualified workers was 4,36%, meanwhile in shot-down sectors this share was 6,28 %. Similarly, the national share of term contracts and self-employed persons was 16,45 %, but nearly 37 % in areas of the economy with limited or interrupted activity. These groups were also underrepresented in terms of share of occupations with possibility of work from home (Bittner, 2020). We may conclude that “Restrictions and social distancing exacerbated inequalities in the labour market” (Vyhlídal, 2021).

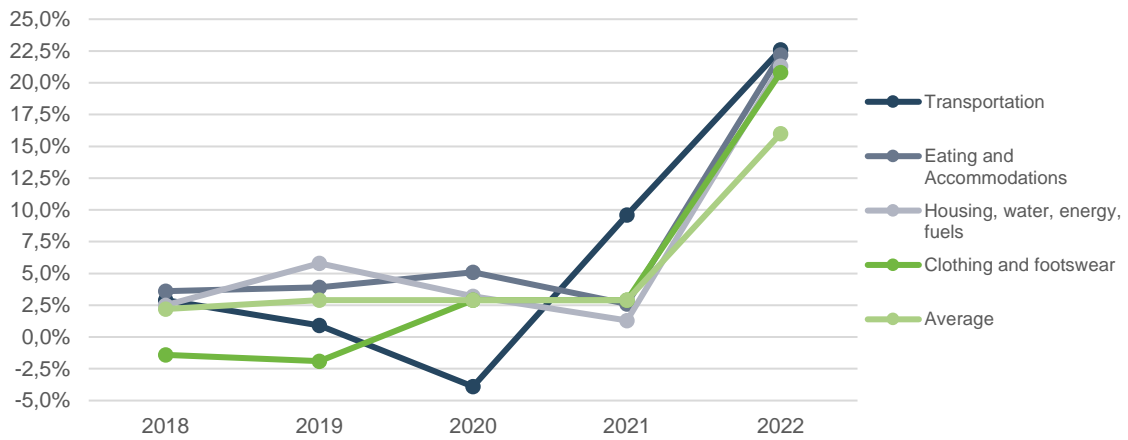
The government accepted measures to mitigate the impact of the pandemic restrictions and to prevent rise of unemployment and drop of incomes. Unfortunately, before the pandemic faded away, the economy was hit by another crisis. The war in Ukraine caused an influx of refugees and accelerated the inflation.

Most refugees headed to Poland or Romania, however Czech Republic also belonged to one of the target countries. As of 7th of June 2022 it was estimated that over 366 thousand individuals were granted temporary protection status (UNHCR, 2022). In just three months, the population of Czech Republic increased by nearly 3,5%.

So far, we have little information of their qualification, it is however clear that due to language barrier and due to (un)familiarity with legal and cultural environment, their position on the labour market will be fragile.

Another pressing issue, which affects all Czech inhabitants is swift inflation, which is fourth highest in the EU (EUROSTAT, 2022). Its dynamic is captured in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Structure of Czech inflation (selected items)



Source: CZSO, 2022

In May 2022 interannual rise of the consumer price index was 16%. Higher rises were recorded for example in case of transportation, housing, energy, and fuels (more than 20%). These and similar items displayed on Figure 4 are necessary for living and clearly account for a larger part of low-income groups budgets.

Described phenomena will have a substantial impact on the defined (indirect) target group in the Czech Republic. Consequently, we may expect the numbers of persons within the group to enlarge and their living conditions to deteriorate.

3. Resulting challenges for the Guidance System

The history of educational and vocational guidance has had a long-standing tradition back to the 1920. Today, in the Czech Republic educational and vocational guidance system is provided by many actors from different sectors. The most important are the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Both ministries are managing networks providing day to day career guidance and counselling. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports oversees guidance for initial trainees, while the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is responsible for services provided to adults under labour market policies. The National Guidance Forum, established in 2010, acts as an advisory body to the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour in the field of guidance. On top of this, nowadays the role of NGOs grows steadily as a key player, specifically as a provider of guidance services to disadvantages and/or specific target groups.

3.1. Structure of the Guidance System

From the school level up to the tertiary professional level, career guidance and counselling services are regulated by the Education Act¹, the Government Decree on the Provision of Counselling Services in Schools and School Guidance Facilities², the Act on Teaching Staff³ and other related legislation. Career guidance and counselling for pupils and students is provided directly at schools and school guidance facilities. These provide standard guidance services free of charge on the request of pupils, their legal representatives, schools or educational facilities.

Under the Higher Education Act⁴, universities are required to provide candidates, students and other persons with information and counselling services relating to their studies and to employment opportunities for graduates of study programmes. Most public universities provide this service through in-house Career Counselling Centres.

Under the Employment Act⁵ the Implementing Decree⁶ and other related legislation, career guidance and counselling services for people requiring assistance in employment matters are provided by the Labour Office of the Czech Republic (Úřad práce České republiky, ÚP) and private employment agencies.

¹ Act No. 561/2004 Coll., on pre-school, basic, secondary, tertiary professional and other education (the Education Act)

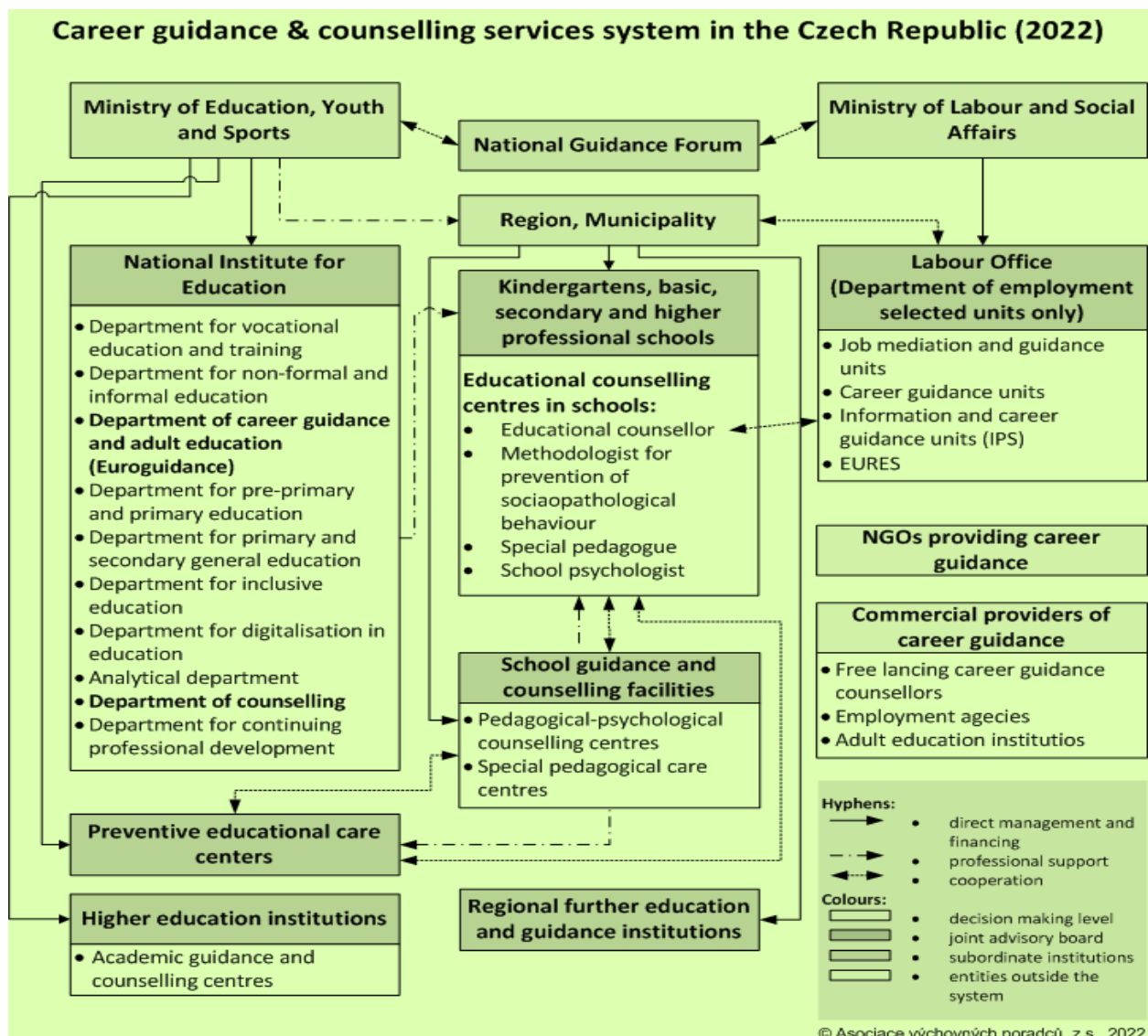
² Decree No. 72/2005 Coll., on the provision of counselling services in schools and school guidance facilities.

³ Act No. 563/2004 Coll., on teaching staff

⁴Section 22 (d) of the Act on higher education institutions No. 111/1998 Coll.

⁵ Act No. 345/2004 Coll. on employment

⁶ Decree No. 518/2004 Coll., implementing Act No. 435/2004 Coll., on employment.



The activities of both these guidance systems are merged to provide counselling services to pupils leaving primary and secondary school. To a certain extent, both guidance systems use the same work procedures and sources of information. Although the official documents do not specifically state that this should be an integrated system of guidance services, the basis for such a system is being unsystematically, but progressively, developed in both sectors.

Career counselling services for adults within the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs are provided by the Labour Office, through whose activities jobseekers and the unemployed are supported in their search for employment and assisted in the transition of recent school leavers to the labour market.

In addition to the Labour Office, other actors provide careers advice for adults, including NGOs, employer associations and private employment agencies. A wide range of services for specific target groups is provided by non-governmental organisations and funded by different sources, mainly on a temporary basis (e.g. the European Social Fund, the European Lifelong Learning Programme, etc.). Career counselling projects funded by EU sources have been expanded where delivered by external specialists, however these are not always well linked with other services and for the most part they operate independently of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and the Ministry of Labour and

Social Affairs. Awareness of their activities is therefore fragmentary. However, those activities have contributed to the development of career guidance/counselling in the Czech Republic and have created a need for regulation of the whole range of career counselling services as a profession, with its own professional standards and training. Some elements of careers counselling, such as preparation for job interviews, support in creating CVs and information on employment relations, are provided online.

The Czech Republic is also involved in the Euroguidance network for career counsellors and the Eures network, which provides services to citizens interested in employment in EU Member States.

Key players in the process:



The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport is responsible mainly for the systemic framework of continuing education, incl. accreditation of retraining programmes — Development of National qualification framework, incl. the system of verification and recognition of further education outcomes — Outline of general framework and support through a financial development programme for lifelong learning programmes developed at HEIs (the University of the Third Age).

The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is responsible for state employment policy, including the fulfilment of the role of National Coordination of Labour Offices which provide information and guidance services related to (continuing) VET; organise and co-finance retraining of job seekers.

The Ministry of Industry and Trade is responsible for support for retraining of employees with respect to the competitiveness of industry and the introduction of new technologies.

All ministries are responsible for vocational training in regulated professions within their respective sectors and for the verification and recognition of further education outcomes and participation in the preparation of qualification and assessment standards in their sectors.

Social partners creating environment in order to encourage companies to proceed education and training on the place.

Regions – Councils for education, training and employment are building links between the world of education and the world of work and supporting of adult education services provided by schools or regional centres for lifelong learning.

Schools (basic, upper secondary, tertiary professional or other educational institutions) are primarily organise coherent adult education programmes, providing a certain level of education through other than full-time forms of study. These programmes at upper secondary and tertiary professional levels are mostly provided in fields for which full-time programmes also exist. All schools can also organise various continuing education courses, including retraining, but they have to gain a special accreditation. Adult education is also organised by basic art schools and language schools authorised to organise state language examinations.

Higher Educational Institutions provide adults the opportunity to study in all types of study programmes, either in the form of distance learning or combined distance and full-time study.

HEIs provide lifelong learning courses in addition to their regular study programmes. Courses can be offered free or for a fee, and can be career-related or for personal development.

Non-profit organisations, enterprises, institutions and state administration and commercial educational institutions. These organisations provide courses of various types, subjects, levels and duration. Courses are offered depending on current supply and demand. In general, the most frequently offered courses are those in foreign languages, ICT, management and accounting. Depends on the type of organisation and source of financing it can be provided for free or for fee.

Retraining institutions which can be various institutions which were granted accreditation from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports to provide retraining. Retraining courses organised within active employment policy aim to increase the employability of job seekers and groups threatened with unemployment.

Legislative environment

As there is a number of organisations involved in the system of the Guidance a set of a legislative norms is set to regulate the environment and the competences of each actor. In between the most crucial ones it must be mentioned those in the Figure 5 below.

Figure 5: Legal Basic of the Guidance System in the Czech Republic

<p>Legal Basic/Policies</p> <p>Educational Sector - the Czech education system operates in accordance with the Education Act (561/2004, in force since 2005) which regulates education from pre-primary to upper secondary and tertiary professional and school services, including guidance and counselling, the Act on Teaching Staff (563/2004, in force since 2005) and the Decree on in-service training of teaching staff (317/2005) which regulate the teaching profession at the same levels of education. Details on guidance and counselling are set out in Decree No. 72/2005.</p> <p>Other acts from the educational sector:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Act No. 561/2004 Coll., on pre-school, basic, secondary and tertiary professional and other education (the Education Act)• The Act on Teaching Staff and on amendments to certain Acts regulates requirements for the performance of educational staff's duties, their in-service training and career progression. Teaching staff responsible for guidance services at schools up to tertiary professional level include: educational counsellors; school prevention specialists; school psychologists; and special school teachers.• Act No. 109/2002 Coll., on institutional care or protective care in school facilities and on preventive care in school facilities and on amendments to other Acts.• The Higher Education Act (No. 111/1998), amended several times, extended the non-university and private sectors of higher education. The majority of these are no longer state institutions (with the exception of military and police higher education institutions which are entirely state-funded) but public institutions (state-subsidised) that manage their own property and have wide-ranging autonomy.• The Act on Verification and Recognition of Further Education Outcomes (No. 179/2006) opened up a new pathway for adults to obtain a certificate for a qualification attained in practice without formal education. <p>Employment Sector - the Employment Act (Act No. 435/2004 Coll.) regulates the provision of the state's employment policy, the goal of which is to attain full employment rate and to protect against unemployment, fair treatment and ban on discrimination for persons asserting their right to employment, the activities performed by Labour office and their powers, the assessment of natural persons' health condition and healthcare providers' cooperation with the assessment of their health condition, the right to employment. Active employment policy measures also include counselling, which is provided or organised by the Labour Offices for the purpose of determining the personal qualities and level of qualification of natural persons in order to choose a career, to broker a suitable employment, to select vocational training for disabled persons and to choose suitable active employment policy instruments.</p> <p>Other acts from the employment sector:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the Act on the Labour Office of the Czech Republic and on amendments to related Acts (Act No. 73/2011 Coll.) was adopted; it institutes a General Directorate of the Labour Office which is responsible for public employment services (PES) in the Czech Republic.
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With the aim to increase the quality and also accessibility of education the education policy strategy is regularly formulated. The current Strategy 2030+ is a key document for the development of the Czech Republic's education system in the decade 2020-2030+. The aim of the defined procedures is to modernize the Czech Republic's education system in the field of regional education, extracurricular and non-formal education and lifelong learning, to prepare it for new challenges and at the same time to address the problems that persist in the Czech education system⁷.

⁷ <https://www.msmt.cz/vzdelavani/skolstvi-v-cr/strategie-2030>

Financing

Expenditure on education in the Czech Republic comes mainly from public funds: from the central state budget and from the budget of the territorial administrative units – regions and municipalities. Funds are also raised from schools' economic activities and from schools' participation in international programmes.

Adult retraining programmes were largely funded from the Operational programme Human Resources and Employment (under the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs) or the Operational programme Enterprise and Innovation in the case of company employees.

3.2. Description of the situation, challenges and trends of the Guidance System

Although examples of good practice in vocational education are growing in numbers, as employers are successfully involved in vocational training and in providing pupils with work experience, there is not yet a systematic and well-functioning link between the sphere of education and the world of work, enabling the school system to respond to the changing demands and needs of the labour market. It is necessary to expand the possibilities for training pupils and students in the real working environment. Therefore, the introduction of a dual system of education in a modified form, adapted to conditions in the Czech Republic, i.e. using the broadest possible opportunities and forms of voluntary cooperation between schools and companies, will be supported. Direct communication with representatives of employers will also be supported in order to set up information transfers on the possibilities for the vocational training of pupils in the real workplaces of employers, and on the potential benefits stemming from this cooperation (see Strategy for the Education Policy of the Czech Republic 2030+).

The activities of the guidance systems are merged to provide counselling services to pupils leaving primary and secondary school. To a certain extent, both guidance systems use the same work procedures and sources of information.

A crucial challenge is the ageing teaching population, as the average age of teachers at upper secondary education is 49.4 years. Although average salaries were increased, the teaching profession, even at tertiary level, suffers from low attractiveness.

As the industry sector plays an important role in the economy of the country, the industry 4.0 revolution is posing challenges like digitalisation and automation. Additionally, SMEs, a significant factor in the country's economy, are sensitive to economic fluctuations and often need to address skills mismatch.

Another challenge is further promoting quality in-company WBL, increasing learning options in a real-work environment and easing graduate transitions from school to the labour market. Better matching of skills supply and demand is also needed. Linking IVET programmes with relevant qualifications in the national register of qualifications should further support responsiveness and flexibility to labour market needs.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the digital skills gap, deepening the digital divide, and pointed out the need for digital transformation and increasing and improving digital capacity. At

the same time, it has speeded up the development of digital skills and competences of VET teachers and learners.

In autumn 2020, to address the challenges identified above, the new strategy 2030+ was adopted, promoting the introduction of dual system elements in VET, and fostering cooperation between the world of schools and business. The strategy also prioritised quality assuring WBL and developing a quality standard for practical training (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2020).

In the upcoming period, the education ministry intends to modernise and equip schools, to enable them introducing digital technologies, supporting innovation, revising curricula and carrying out new methods of instruction and assessment. The ministry will also focus on teacher initial and continuing training, and the professional development of headmasters. VET education fields are expected to benefit from curriculum renewal by 2023. An emphasis will be on developing a common basis among relevant fields of study, allowing learners to make a career choice at a later stage of their studies, reducing the possibilities of a wrong choice and postponing early specialisation. The number of fields of study will be reduced.

4. Good Practice Examples

Title of the good practice case Language Skills of Ukrainian refugees	
Country	Czech Republic
Main goals and objectives	To teach Ukrainian refugees in the Pilsen region the Czech language up to A2 level in accredited courses of the Ministry of Education
Size of the programme (local/regional/federal) + number of users if data available	Regional, 500+
Duration of implementation (start – end of the intervention)	June 2022 - September 2023
Short description of the example, containing: (service offered) (instruments involved - i.e. technologies, changes of organisation of activities, case management methodology, up-skilling, other?) (implementation actions – what measure have been taken to ensure implementation of the initiative)	<p>2 accreditation educational programmes - full-time teaching (syllabi given by the Ministry of Education)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - for beginners (A1) 60 lessons + 2 hours exam - follow-up course (A2) 120 lessons + 2 hours exam <p>Free of charge for participants, reimbursed by the Labour Office as a chosen retraining, A2 level is a basic prerequisite for functioning at work and in the environment of a foreign country, without language independence a Ukrainian is often a victim of employment agencies that exploit him/her and are not interested in his/her integration into the environment. Czech is also a prerequisite for entry to other retraining courses (one cannot study a retraining course in a foreign language or take exams). A2 language level is a condition for permanent residence in the Czech Republic.</p> <p>Motivation for joining the course: get a qualified job, work in your field.</p> <p>Organisational instruments: developed a whole system of working with Ukrainian refugees, from registration through QR code, involvement of Ukrainian-speaking phone operators, individual consultations on the phone, considering the whole family situation that affects the possibility of studying a foreign language (babysitting, care for the elderly, constant departures for family or documents...)</p> <p>Implementation actions. Introduction of a new way of internal administration, use of digital tools for initial contact but also for feedback after the course. More than ever, a deep understanding of the target group in their needs, not only educational (community and family functioning, different information sharing, use of social networks...). A new recruitment method has been developed and is still being adapted. Ongoing mutual consultation of the training team, sharing of experiences, methodologies, tools.</p> <p>Educational content: some recommended topics should be discussed carefully in view of the war situation and not insist on answers that increase the stress of the participant (e.g. common questions about family). Increased empathy of trainers required.</p>

Title of the good practice case Language Skills of Ukrainian refugees

Challenges encountered and how they were addressed

Problems: although refugees have the desire to study and work on themselves, they often do not understand how the system works (they did not come to the Labour Office, they did not submit an application for retraining on time or at all, which is linked to the application to become a candidate or job seeker, often wrong steps in contact with the office). Apparently, the functioning of the offices is very different in the two countries. Occasional "stowaways in courses" (I came with my wife, a friend, after all it's free), constant changes in personal life leading to the need to change the time of attending the course (morning/afternoon/evening/weekend). Sometimes misunderstanding of the rules of the chosen retraining - 80% attendance to be able to take the exam. Very problematic transcription of names into Latin (completely different for the same names) leading to confusion in the office and with staff not proficient in Cyrillic. Sometimes reluctance to respect the rules. For some participants, the transition from Cyrillic to Latin for the first time.

Effect and impact
(*what has been in actual impact of the case? For instance, shorter transition periods, more security etc. If data is not available, effects*)

The recruitment method has so far reached 1,760 registered persons who have expressed interest in studying ČJ and improving their position in the labour market. Of these, however, approximately 25-30% eventually entered the courses, some in both courses. The assumption of a high percentage of non-completion of courses was not confirmed if they had already entered the courses, in most cases attendance was perfect or excused within the 20% absence limit. It must be said, however, that the first wave of refugees were persons with their own professional anchorage in Ukraine and often university education. Approximately 70% of the registered candidates never enrolled in the courses, despite the fact that the organizational staff attended to them individually and addressed their situation. The commitment of 80% attendance or fear of possible sanctions by the authorities was not satisfactory - in many cases a course with a free attendance regime was recommended, run by volunteers, charitable institutions, etc., where there is no strict obligation to attend. Already between the first and second course participants were finding employment on their own, were able to write a simple professional CV, and after the second course they started approaching employers and responding to advertisements. Most of the graduates want to continue their profession in the Czech Republic and are taking further steps to do so - nostrification of diplomas, further courses, etc. However, it should be noted that there are significant individual differences between the use of Czech by people living only in their native language community and those who speak Czech more often (accent, syntax, vocabulary). Refugees greatly appreciate follow-up care - job placement or help in finding a job.

Title of the good practice case Language Skills of Ukrainian refugees

Lessons learnt

(what lessons have been learnt from the practice – could other countries learn anything from this case?)

The willingness to learn the language of the country where I am a refugee or economic migrant increases with the prospect of settling in the country or spending a longer period of time there. On the part of the organiser, it is necessary to take a respectful approach at all times, but to ensure that the rules are clear and followed.

If the language study is preceded by a thorough analysis of the individual situation and subsequent job search assistance (including integration courses, etc.), the learner's motivation is clearly higher and the results are often better. The complexity and coherence of activities is important, not just the pressure on language learning. The experience of the war refugees from Ukraine is specific, as the situation is completely new and they do not know whether they will return, which affects their educational needs and their decision on employment (skilled or unskilled work). Interestingly, Ukrainians who have been living in the Czech Republic for several years have also started to show interest in learning the language (confirming the fact that economic migrants have very little motivation to learn the language and integrate into Czech society).

Yes, the practice changed over the course of several months, the original hypothesis about leaving the courses did not come true, on the contrary, recruitment measures had to be significantly strengthened and the organisation of work had to be changed before the start of the courses.

We see the importance in the refugees' willingness to communicate and integrate with the local population, which also weakens the functions of employment agencies and the exploitation of workers, but also improves the refugee's position in the labour market and prevents the formation of refugee ghettos and conflicts with the local population.

Links

www.grafia.cz

Title of the good practice case Outplacement	
Country	Czech Republic
Main goals and objectives	<p>The object of the project is to help employees of enterprises undergoing structural changes and which are therefore forced to lay off their employees. The project aims to increase the adaptability of these employees to find new jobs. The redundant employees have the chance to find a new job before the end of their current employment.</p> <p>The goal is also focused on employers who can continue to retain long-standing workers for whom they no longer have a job, and thanks to the project they can retrain them for another position. Companies can also expand and hire new employees, and the Labour Office will contribute to their wages.</p>
Size of the programme (local/regional/federal) + number of users if data available	National
Duration of implementation (start – end of the intervention)	1.6.2020 – 31.7. 2023
Short description of the example, containing: (service offered) (instruments involved - i.e. technologies, changes of organisation of activities, case management methodology, up-skilling, other?) (implementation actions – what measure have been taken to ensure implementation of the initiative)	<p>The main focus group for which services are delivered are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees with an anticipated termination of employment due to mass redundancies, of which the employer has informed the regional branch of the Labour Office of the Czech Republic in writing. • Employees who are in the notice period. • Employees who have concluded an agreement with the employer on termination of employment. • Employees whose fixed-term employment contract is coming to an end. • Employees who have concluded an agreement with the employer for work activity. • Employees who cannot or have been prevented from performing their work due to an obstacle to work on the part of the employer as referred to in Sections 207 to 209 of Act No 262/2006 Coll., the Labour Code, as amended. • Employees who terminate their employment in accordance with the provisions of Section 56 of Act No. 262/2006 Coll., the Labour Code, as amended. • Existing employers whose employees are on notice or are expected to terminate their employment within a few months. • New employers who take on redundant employees.

Title of the good practice case Outplacement

Employees and employers can benefit from the following project activities:

Monitoring of employers and selection of participants

- Provision of monitoring and counselling for employers, both monitoring of employers who are going to lay off their employees and monitoring of employers who declare that they will hire new employees.

Involvement of participants in the project, initial interview and counselling

- Based on the data on companies facing problems and considering redundancies, information meetings are held at the companies' premises or at the Labour Office of the Czech Republic, where potential participants can have their questions about the project activities answered and, where appropriate, questions about registration with the Labour Office of the Czech Republic. The aim of the meetings is to achieve the involvement of participants in the project activities.

Training courses on labour law, financial literacy and soft skills

- Project participants are included in this key activity on an ongoing basis according to their individual needs and their current situation. **The aim is to provide training courses to participants immediately after they enter the project**, i.e. while they are still employed. Courses are designed not only for project participants who are still in employment, but also for those who have not been able to find suitable employment quickly and have already registered as job seekers with the Labour Office of the Czech Republic.

Retraining and training activities

- **The aim is to provide retraining and educational activities for project participants according to their individual requirements and considering their employability on the labour market.** Retraining is focused on acquiring professional knowledge and skills required on the labour market in order to help project participants prepare for a specific position and/or expectation on the labour market and thus increase their employability and employment.

Job placement

- Employment mediation in the project is implemented in the form of unsubsidised jobs or jobs whose financing is supported using funds provided by the Operational Programme Employment.

Title of the good practice case Outplacement	
	<p>Accompanying measures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - As part of the implementation of the counselling activities, the project participants may use accompanying measures. These include, for example, reimbursement of proven travel expenses. In justified cases, participants will also be able to make use of babysitting services for children and other dependent family members. <p>Participants may also be reimbursed for initial medical examinations or for examinations required for entry into retraining or employment.</p>
Challenges encountered and how they were addressed	No specific challenges detect so far.
Effect and impact <i>(what has been in actual impact of the case? For instance, shorter transition periods, more security etc. If data is not available, effects)</i>	The employee is receiving consultation support in very short time most commonly in the stage when she/he is still formally “employee”.
Lessons learnt <i>(what lessons have been learnt from the practice – could other countries learn anything from this case?)</i>	<p>For employers’ side the possibility of covering some of the financial costs (e.g. wage cost during the training of employees up to 100%; training allowance of up to 85% of the cost of retraining or training; or wage allowance for new employee up to 15 000 CZK per month up to 9 months) seems to be very attractive.</p> <p>The whole project helps them to solve the organisational changes on company level still supported by the official institution who guaranties to make all decisions in line with the legislation.</p> <p>To employees an accompanying measure are helping to act both to be able to contact Labour Office regularly and to take part in re/training lessons.</p>
Links	https://www.uradprace.cz/web/cz/outplacement-out-

Title of the good practice case Support for information and counselling centres of the Labour Office of the Czech Republic (PIPS)	
Country	Czech Republic
Main goals and objectives	<p>The main objective of the project is to increase the capacity, comprehensiveness and quality of services provided by public employment service institutions by achieving the target of 90 functional, equipped information and counselling centres of the Labour Office of the Czech Republic (hereinafter IPS), with personnel, educational, presentation and diagnostic facilities. These include 77 IPS at the Contact Points of the Labour Office of the Czech Republic (district level) and 13 IPS at the Contact Points of the Labour Office of the Czech Republic (lower level), where, in terms of availability of services to clients of IPS, additional IPS will be established.</p> <p>The aim is that the IPS will be a basic executive unit providing erudite, individual and group services, effective and tailored services that are accessible to all (remote locations, excluded or vulnerable groups on the labour market, lifelong career counselling, psychological services and will be active in working with clients on the retraining and education side).</p> <p>Another objective of the project in the area of provision of quality career counselling services is to standardise the equipment and activities of the centres.</p> <p>Specific objectives of the project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to upgrade and expand the technical equipment of the IPS (presentation, educational and ICT equipment) to a standardised level, to staff the activities of the IPS, update methodologies and information materials in the field of career guidance, increase the professional level of IPS counsellors.
Size of the programme (local/regional/federal) + number of users if data available	National
Duration of implementation (start – end of the intervention)	1.1.2017 – 31.8.2023
Short description of the example, containing: (service offered) (instruments involved - i.e. technologies, changes of organisation of activities, case management methodology, up-skilling, other?) (implementation actions – what measure have been taken to ensure implementation of the initiative)	<p>Labour market institutions and their employees are direct target group with special focus on employees of counselling units, both at the central level and at the regional and local level. They are actively involved in the implementation of project activities with the aim of innovating the provided services in the field of career counselling by providing quality facilities (material and technical equipment, training, didactic support, promotion of IPS services, deepening cooperation with local actors in the field of career counselling).</p> <p>Another set of activities is delivered to the relevant labour market actors and their employees whose are e.g. schools, local self-government units, but also employers and other entities such as educational institutions and non-profit organizations.</p>

Title of the good practice case	Support for information and counselling centres of the Labour Office of the Czech Republic (PIPS)
	The example of action can be described as a close and active cooperation of the Labour Office of the Czech Republic or IPS in providing relevant information on the labour market in relation to career guidance with regional labour market actors in the field of initial and further education has an impact on these institutions, which will be supported by obtaining relevant information on future labour market needs. The IPS is part of a system whose function implies close cooperation with all the actors involved in vocational choice
Challenges encountered and how they were addressed	The main challenge was to attract the institution to trust and to be part of the co-operation chain.
Effect and impact <i>(what has been in actual impact of the case? For instance, shorter transition periods, more security etc. If data is not available, effects)</i>	
Lessons learnt <i>(what lessons have been learnt from the practice – could other countries learn anything from this case?)</i>	
Links	https://www.uradprace.cz/podpora-informacnich-a-poradenskych-stredisek-uradu-prace-cr-pips-1

5. Conclusions and Main Recommendations

Development of society will be strongly accompanied by increasingly strong need of modern technologies use, including robots and autonomous systems, and also in the context of new environmental, economic and social challenges, such as sustainable development.

According to OECD studies⁸, most existing positions will be transformed, new positions will be created and some existing positions will disappear altogether. It will be more necessary than ever to develop both general and vocational skills throughout life. For this reason, a flexible lifelong learning system must be built and promoted, enabling people to enter it at any time and any age, to identify the knowledge and skills they need, to supplement such knowledge and skills according to their individual requirements, and to have the skills and knowledge they have acquired validated in a nationally recognised system. To set out an effective education and training system, which will give workers the skills needed by the labour market and offers opportunities and incentives for education and training throughout their working lives, some additional effort and investment will be demanded.

Our work was specifically focused on a group of people from disadvantaged backgrounds, for the purposes of a project implemented in an international context we use the term "underprivileged background". The second chapter is describing the group of "working people from the underprivileged milieu". It is a target group where the biggest impact described in previous paragraph can be expected. On the level of the EU, we recognized the distinct effect of low education. Persons with less than primary, primary and lower secondary are most often at risk of in-work poverty. The situation in selected countries was discussed in general. Later, we specified characteristics of this group in the Czech Republic.

In the Czech Republic, it typically applies to low-qualified workers in precarious jobs, with little assets, or social background to count on. Most of them are women of higher age, usually living in larger towns, in structurally affected regions such as the western Bohemia, or northern Moravia.

Consequences of recent economic and political development, such as swift and uneven inflation, or influx of war refugees from Ukraine deepens the insecurity of their economic position. These findings stress and underline the goals of the Reach-Out project.

As concerns the education system (including the life-long-learning part), it should create a positive attitude towards learning and to prepare to learn continuously throughout all live. Educational institutions have the task of encouraging people of all ages to be entrepreneurial on a personal, professional and social level – to acquire the skills to learn independently and to seek opportunities to put those skills and knowledge into practice in accordance with their abilities. The educational system should prepare individuals to be as much as possible openly react and to respond to new trends, situations and the associated new, ever-changing challenges in the life. The educational systems should be created in such way to support this effort.

As a result of the perception of lifelong guidance as a cross-sectoral, long-term investment that often has policy implications for two or more ministries, the main impact of guidance interventions may not always be fully evident in the area in which they are implemented. For example, counselling that takes place in a school setting has a number of positive benefits for the education system, but also has

⁸ Good Jobs for All in Changing World of Work, The OECD Job Strategy,

implications for further education, including university, and has labour market implications. It is therefore crucial, when finalising policies and identifying the impacts of those policies, to bear in mind this lifelong, long-term and meso-sectoral nature of the framework in which the policies are reflected.



Where it starts?

Schools and formal education are forming our attitude and basic knowledge, that is why it is necessary to find the optimal mix of subjects and then revise the framework curricula accordingly. School-leavers must have the competences necessary to enter the labour market, while the subsequent system of training in the professional environment will be loosely build on the previous phase of the education system. School-leavers also have to have acquired the competences for studying and participating in civic life, so that they are prepared for lifelong learning, development and their role in society. In general terms, the education system should prepare school-leavers to be equipped with competences that are transferable over different times, fields and roles in life.

It is important to provide appropriate structure of counsellors and educational advisors as concerns both the quality and the quantity. Counsellors and advisors should be supported in up to date knowledge obtaining and using of the right set of skills and tools that enable them to approach and work with the underprivileged milieu.

It could be recommended to put more emphases on creating conditions to involve more experts in the field in teaching and to organise placements for teaching staff at companies. Cooperation with employers' representatives will be developed, supported by an agreement on the division of responsibilities for the different areas of initial training.

The systemic involvement of relevant ministries (e.g. the Ministry of Industry and Trade, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Regional Development, and the Ministry of Transport) and regions (depending on the link between the sectoral structure and the system of fields of study) in supporting the relevant schools or fields of study will be initiated through a government-approved action plan, which will be drawn up. Employers will also be involved in direct and indirect support to schools under cooperation agreements.

Due to the involvement of many actors and the long-term impact of the policies in place, it is advisable to recommend the development and continuous updating of a lifelong strategy for the effective development of lifelong guidance policies that would effectively target different age groups.

As it was mentioned several times – additional emphasis needs additional financial sources as well as human resources.

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