



International

WB Policy Definition Report Definition of last WB policies and regulations on Career Guidance in Albania, Montenegro and Kosovo

Development of Career Guidance training for VET experts

Created by:



Version: 02


Project: 101183192 – CG-International – ERASMUS-EDU-2024-CB-VET



Co-funded by
the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.



Work Package	WP2
Task	T2.1
Due date	30/04/2025
Submission date	29/04/2025
Re-submission date	16/04/2026
Deliverable leader	APPK
Authors	Agron Hajdari and Furtuna Shabani
Reviewers	Iva Perkovic, Clara Badenes, Pilar Ripollés, Annalisa Palano, Iikka Upanne, Robbin Bosch, Qendresa Svirca, Shyhrete Rushiti Selimi, Jelena Drobnjak, Bebjana Lala
Version	V2
Open license	 <p>This deliverable is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International Licence (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0). This means that the material may be used, shared, adapted and redistributed for non-commercial purposes, provided that appropriate credit is given to the authors and the project, and that any adaptations are shared under the same licence.</p>

Index

List of abbreviations.....	3
1. Introduction.....	4
1.1. Background and context of career guidance in the Western Balkans (WB).....	5
1.2. Importance of career guidance in Albania, Montenegro, and Kosovo.....	6
1.3. Purpose and objectives of the report.....	6
1.4. Methodology and sources of information.....	7
2. Needs Analysis: Current Challenges and Specific Regulations.....	7
2.1. Overview of existing career guidance frameworks in Kosovo, Albania and Montenegro.....	7
2.2. Gaps and challenges faced in each country.....	13
3. Defining Career Guidance.....	16
3.1. The role of career guidance in the education and employment sectors.....	16
3.2. Theoretical foundations and international perspectives.....	18
3.3. Key stakeholders and their roles in career guidance implementation.....	20
4. Donor Activities in Career Guidance Development.....	23
4.1. Major donor organizations and their contributions.....	23
4.2. Ongoing and completed donor-funded projects.....	24
5. National Regulations on Career Guidance.....	28
5.1. Policy frameworks and legislative measures in Albania, Montenegro, and Kosovo.....	28
5.2. Institutional responsibilities and governance structures.....	30
6. Review of Previous Actions: Successes and Challenges.....	33
6.1. Identification of effective strategies and models.....	33
6.2. Key challenges and reasons for past inefficiencies.....	34
7. Recommendations and Proposed Actions.....	36
7.1. Policy and regulatory recommendations for each country.....	36
7.2. Proposed strategies for strengthening career guidance systems.....	37
7.3. Future project ideas and actions for sustainable career guidance reforms.....	39
8. Conclusion.....	39
8.1. Summary of key findings.....	39
8.2. Final reflections and policy implications.....	40
8.3. Next steps for advancing career guidance in the Western Balkans.....	40
References.....	41



List of abbreviations

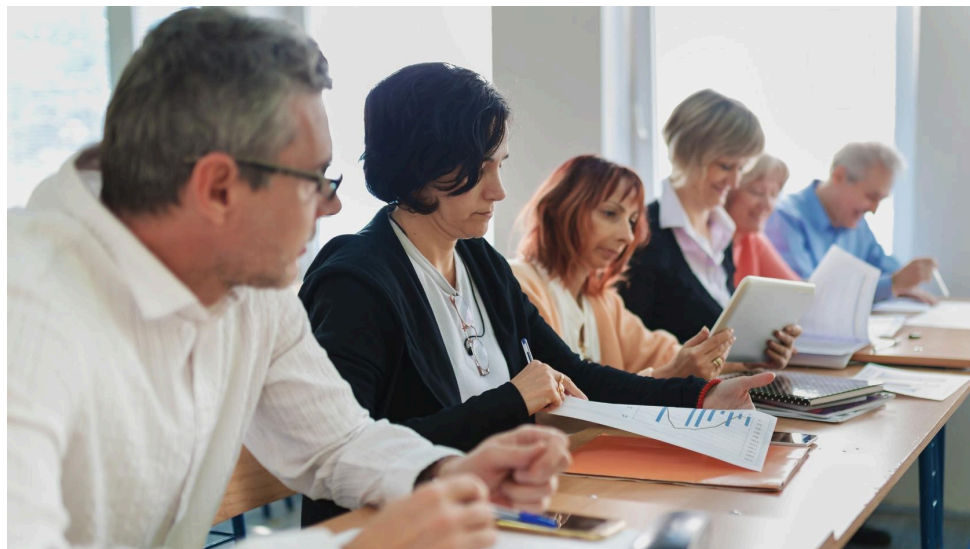
AI	Administrative Instruction
APPK	Employment Promotion Agency Kosovo
AVETAE	Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education
CB	Capacity Building
CG	Career Guidance
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
EAM	Employment Agency of Montenegro
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
HEI	Higher Education Institution
ILO	International Labor Organization
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
MESTI	Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation
NEET	Not in Education, Employment, or Training
NQA	National Qualifications Authority
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
PES	Public Employment Services
SBCC	School-Based Career Center
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
VET	Vocational Education and Training
WB	Western Balkans



1. Introduction

Career guidance has emerged as a crucial component in the educational and employment policies across Albania, Kosovo, and Montenegro, driven by socio-economic transformations, demographic shifts, and ongoing integration efforts with the European Union. This report provides an extensive analysis of the current state, challenges, and opportunities within the career guidance frameworks of these Western Balkan countries.

The importance of robust career guidance systems cannot be overstated, particularly given the persistent challenges of youth unemployment, skills mismatches, and the necessity for lifelong career development. Effective career guidance ensures better alignment of educational outcomes with labor market demands, facilitates smoother transitions from education to employment, and contributes significantly to economic growth and social inclusion¹. The primary objective of this report is to offer a detailed examination of current practices, regulatory frameworks, and donor-supported initiatives in career guidance across Albania, Kosovo, and Montenegro. Additionally, the report aims to identify key challenges, highlight effective models, and propose actionable recommendations for policymakers, practitioners, and stakeholders to further strengthen career guidance systems. The methodological approach involved comprehensive reviews of policy documents, strategic frameworks, and relevant legislation, supplemented by insights from international donor activities and project evaluations. This collaborative perspective aims to foster mutual learning, policy coherence, and sustainable development in career guidance across the region.



¹ OECD. (2004). Career guidance and public policy: Bridging the gap. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

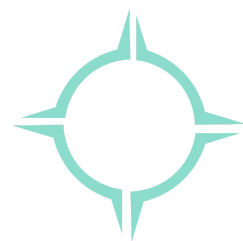


1.1. Background and context of career guidance in the Western Balkans (WB)

Career guidance in the Western Balkan region has gained strategic importance amid ongoing reforms in education, employment, and youth policy. Albania, Kosovo, and Montenegro are responding to complex socio-economic challenges, including high youth unemployment, persistent labor market and skills mismatches, and high emigration rates, particularly among the young and educated. In this context, career guidance is increasingly recognized as a critical mechanism to support individuals, especially youth in navigating transitions from school to work and in making informed career decisions throughout their lives. The alignment of national career guidance systems with EU practices and international frameworks has been a key priority, supported by the integration of CG into education strategies, VET reforms, and employment programs. Governments in the region have worked to institutionalize career guidance within schools, vocational training centers, and employment services, with the aim of improving individual career management skills and supporting inclusive economic development.

While all three countries: Albania, Kosovo, and Montenegro share a commitment to developing a strong career guidance system, the conceptualization and implementation of CG differ in several key aspects in the three countries:

- In Kosovo, CG is largely operationalized through School-Based Career Centers and digital platforms such as Busulla.com, emphasizing practical guidance and labor market alignment. The country has also formalized the role of career advisors through national occupational standards for CG.
- Montenegro has adopted the Strategy for Lifelong Career Guidance (practitioners), building a system that combines school career teams, university centers, and the Employment Agency, with relatively more institutional integration and a stronger focus on governance and policy coherence.
- Albania is still in a more formative stage, with fragmented provision of services across institutions. While CG is referenced in many sectoral strategies, coordination, standardization, and professionalization of advisors are ongoing challenges.





1.2. Importance of career guidance in Albania, Montenegro, and Kosovo

Career guidance plays a pivotal role in tackling education-to-employment transition challenges across Albania, Montenegro, and Kosovo. In Albania, career guidance is embedded within national education strategies and is seen as a tool for promoting lifelong learning and employability, particularly through the integration of guidance services in vocational education and active labor market programs. Montenegro views career guidance as a strategic response to the emigration of youth and the need to better prepare individuals for an increasingly dynamic labor market. Through legislative and policy efforts, the country has prioritized improving coordination between the education and employment sectors to ensure informed career decision-making. In Kosovo, where youth unemployment and skills mismatches remain high, career guidance is considered essential for fostering career management competencies, improving access to labor market information, and promoting social inclusion. Initiatives such as the establishment of School-Based Career Centers and the adoption of national occupational standards for career advisors demonstrate Kosovo's growing commitment to institutionalizing career services.



1.3. Purpose and objectives of the report

The core aim of this report is to examine and define the current policy and regulatory landscape related to career guidance in Albania, Kosovo, and Montenegro. It seeks to provide a structured overview of national frameworks, institutional responsibilities, and donor-supported initiatives that shape career guidance systems in these countries.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.



More specifically, the report pursues the following objectives:

- To identify and compare recent policy developments and strategic measures in career guidance across the three countries;
- To evaluate the extent to which national approaches are aligned with European Union principles and international best practices;
- To assess the effectiveness of implementation mechanisms and highlight existing gaps within each national framework;
- To offer practical recommendations to policymakers, education authorities, employment institutions, and other relevant stakeholders for enhancing career guidance systems in line with evolving labor market needs and educational reforms .

1.4. Methodology and sources of information

The report is based on a qualitative and desk-based research approach, relying primarily on the review and analysis of national policy documents, legal frameworks, strategic education and employment plans, and donor program materials relevant to career guidance in Albania, Kosovo, and Montenegro. In addition to national sources, the report draws on international references from organizations such as the European Training Foundation (ETF), the European Union, the International Labour Organization (ILO), and other actors engaged in education and labor market reform in the Western Balkans. Where possible, the desk review was complemented by insights gathered from institutional consultations and expert contributions provided by stakeholders directly involved in the development and implementation of career guidance policies and services. This methodological approach enables a comprehensive overview of current practices, institutional settings, and development needs across the region.

2. Needs Analysis: Current Challenges and Specific Regulations

2.1. Overview of existing career guidance frameworks in Kosovo, Albania and Montenegro.

Career guidance in Albania has undergone significant developments in recent years, aiming to assist individuals in making informed educational and occupational choices. *Career guidance services in Albania are provided by various bodies (universities, VET institutions, National Agency for Employment and Skills, municipalities, projects etc.) and are governed by several legal frameworks. Albania has been working to enhance its career guidance and counselling services to fully understand*



the crucial role that it plays in assisting people to make informed decisions about their professional career². **The legal frame appears to be quite wide and recently updated.**

- In Albania, career guidance features in the new national Strategy of employment and skills 2023-2030, its enforcement plan and youth guarantee enforcement plan 2023-2024. It is defined in the Vocational Education and Training (VET) Law and the Employment Promotion Law, which were both drafted with the contribution of all key stakeholders.
- Reference to CG is also made in Law No. 69/2012: "On Pre-University Education System in the Republic of Albania", as amended, Law No. 70/2016 "On Craftsmanship" - crucial to the development of vocational education and training, pursuant to Article 55, central and local government bodies cooperate with the Chamber for career counselling of participants in the craft training system;
- Law No. 247/2010 "On Albanian Qualification Framework", as amended, facilitates the work of CG practitioners in informing about learning opportunities; and/or it will facilitate continuity in the education system, thus ensuring that each chosen path leads to further learning opportunities and does not create dead ends;
- Law No. 75/2019 "On Youth" assigns local self-government units the responsibility to design and implement local youth policies. **Key duties include safeguarding youth rights, establishing local youth councils, coordinating and supporting youth empowerment activities, promoting youth well-being and development, and encouraging volunteerism and informal education.** The Labor Code does not specifically address career guidance but adheres to international conventions ratified by Albania.

In Kosovo, the establishment and evolution of career education and guidance services since 2002 have been **significantly influenced by international cooperation**, with notable support from the EU/KosVET projects, the International Labor Organization (ILO), and the European Training Foundation (ETF). The focus has been on training employment advisors and vocational training coordinators, initiating school-based guidance systems, and developing strategic frameworks for career education and guidance. Recent efforts, like the establishment of the Career Counselling Center in Pristina with donor support and DANIDA's program to establish student service centers in VET schools, aimed at connecting students with practical learning opportunities and supporting career decisions. Despite these initiatives, challenges remain in sustaining these services without external support. **Overall, the career development support system in Kosovo remains largely donor-driven, highlighting the need for more robust, sustainable domestic initiatives.** The system involves a broad network of stakeholders, including government ministries, public institutions, the private sector, NGOs, and donor organizations, all aiming to support citizens in managing their careers and making informed

² CONTRIBUTION OF PARTNER COUNTRIES TO THE EU YOUTH WIKI, CHAPTER III: ALBANIA, Employment and entrepreneurship, Lutjona Lula, December 2023, page 10.



choices about education, training, and employment³. The **EYE project** has significantly impacted Kosovo's educational and employment landscape by establishing **eighteen career centers nationwide**. These centers serve over 13,000 VET students and 38,000 primary school students, offering guidance on career choices and development. Collaboration with over 2,000 businesses has enabled practical skill development and employment opportunities for students, with more than 10,000 finding their way into the labor market. Local municipalities, in partnership with these centers, have adopted policies to facilitate youth transition into the workforce, exemplified by the introduction of new vocational profiles like wood processing in response to local industry demands. The establishment of a Community of Practice (CoP) among career centers and the advocacy for local ownership and reduced donor dependency highlight the project's sustainability and scalability efforts. This initiative has also enhanced the reputation of VET schools and career counseling, leading to increased student enrollment and highlighting the need for career guidance from an early age⁴.

The diagram below provides an overview of the Kosovo career development support system:

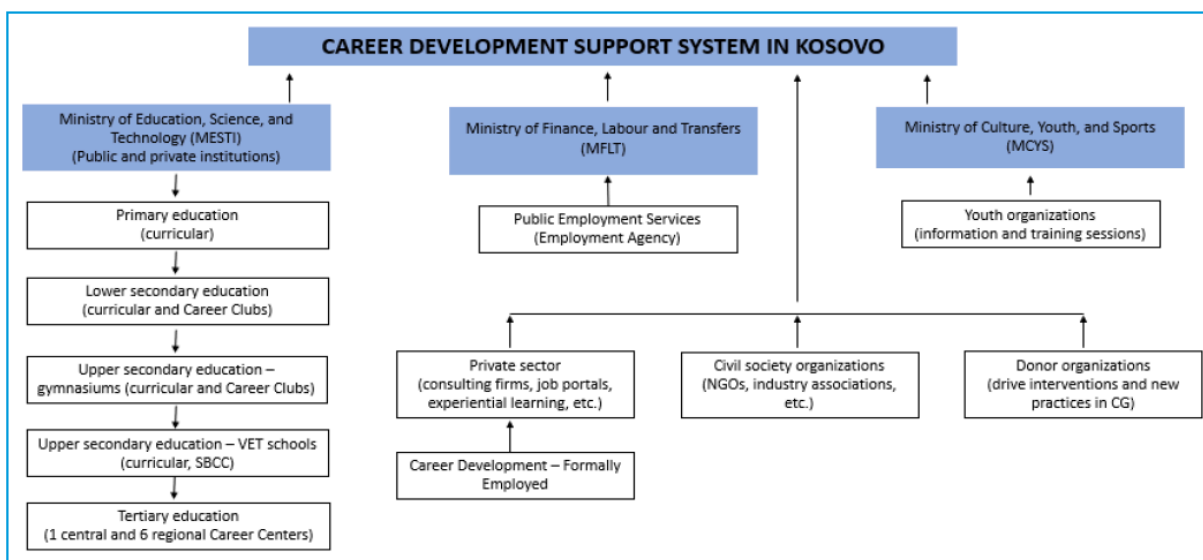


Figure 1: The diagram below provides an overview of the Kosovo career development support system
Source: National Career Development Support System Review – Kosovo, May 2022, European Training Foundation (ETF)

- Between 2004 and 2008, Kosovo made notable progress in developing career guidance policies and systems, largely due to external support and initiatives aimed at establishing foundational structures. This period marked the beginning of formal career guidance services within the education and employment sectors⁵.

³ National Career Development Support System Review – Kosovo, May 2022, European Training Foundation (ETF)

⁴ School-based Career Centers In Kosovo Are Changing The Future Of Work For Youth, EYE Project, 16.08.2023

⁵ icdpp.org



- In subsequent years, efforts intensified to integrate career guidance into the educational framework. **The establishment of School-Based Career Centers in various municipalities exemplifies this commitment. These centers aim to reduce youth unemployment and enhance vocational education standards by providing tailored career guidance services⁶.**
- The Employment Strategy 2024–2028 further underscores the government's dedication to improving employment services, including career guidance. The strategy emphasizes the need for individualized assessment, employment counseling, and career guidance to enhance job matching and support the transition of unemployed individuals into the workforce⁷.
- From 2013 to 2024, the Enhancing Youth Employment (EYE) project in Kosovo, facilitated addressing youth unemployment. The facilitation focused on bridging the communication gap between policymakers and businesses. This gap often results in outdated laws, curricula, and insufficient career guidance. Unlike other initiatives that operate independently, EYE promoted collaboration among stakeholders. EYE is a project of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and implemented by HELVETAS and Management Development Associates (MDA). EYE's strategy for career guidance in VET institutions is the facilitation of effective, quality, and sustainable career services provided through the School-Based Career Center (SBCC) with qualified career advisors. This required the empowerment of municipal leadership and effective public funding mechanisms to support the sustainability of career services.
- As societal norms shift and social media influence individual choices, more young Kosovars are enrolling in VET institutions, with 53% of upper secondary students choosing VET in 2020/21, including 42.3% of girls. The number of financially sustainable SBCCs established has reached 19 in EYE's partner VET schools which have around 12,000 students, while another 6 SBCCs have been established by other donors, copying the SBCC model. Since the first SBCC started operating in 2016, around 150,000 career services have been provided to VET students and 9th graders. Of the users, 41% were women and 2% were minorities⁸.
- In 2017, the National Qualification Authority (NQA) of Kosovo approved the National Occupational Standard for Career Advisor, establishing a structured framework for career guidance professionals. **This standard defines 12 core functions that career advisors must perform to ensure high-quality career guidance and counseling services across education and employment sectors.** The introduction of this occupational standard represents a significant step in formalizing and professionalizing

⁶ helvetas.org

⁷ Employment Strategy – Kosovo 2024-2028, https://kryeministri.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Employment-Strategy-2024-2028.pdf?utm_source=chatpt.com

⁸ Navigating labor market through school-based career guidance in vet institutions in Kosovo. Achievements, challenges, and the way forward. 30 August, 2024. <https://www.helvetas-ks.org/eye/en/publications>



career guidance services in Kosovo, ensuring alignment with national and European policies⁹.

Career education in Kosovo is implemented through various models: integrating career education into the curriculum, establishing career centers at schools and local levels, providing individual career guidance, and using virtual platforms like Busulla.com for career information and counseling. Secondary schools and career advisors utilize Busulla.com to help students explore educational and career opportunities, conduct market needs assessments, and organize visits to vocational schools and gymnasiums.

To enhance career management skills, career advisors must conduct group training sessions and individual consultations, helping students strengthen their employability and career planning competencies. By structuring career education within the curriculum, career centers, and digital platforms, Kosovo aims to equip students with essential career navigation skills for a dynamic labor market¹⁰.

Montenegro has developed a robust career guidance system anchored in several key legislative frameworks, including the Law on Primary Education, Law on Vocational Education, and the Strategy of Lifelong Career Counselling (2016-2025). CG services in Montenegro are structured around School Career Teams, University Career Centres, and the Euroguidance Centre, which aims to coordinate educational institutions with employment services. Montenegro has emphasized aligning vocational education with labour market needs, although implementation remains uneven across regions. The foundation of Montenegro's career guidance system is established through several key laws and strategies:

- Law on Primary Education: Introduced in 2002 and amended in 2017, this law emphasizes the importance of career guidance in elementary education¹¹.
- Law on Vocational Education: This legislation focuses on providing students with the necessary knowledge and skills for life and work, aligning with their personal interests and facilitating career orientation¹².
- Strategy for Lifelong Career Guidance (2011-2015): This document set the initial framework for developing continuous career counseling, aiming to align with European Union recommendations¹³.

⁹ Occupational Standard: Career Advisor. <https://akkks.rks-gov.net/Documents>

¹⁰ Guide for Training Teachers and Career Advisors, GIZ 2024, https://mda.al/4_udhezues_per_trajnimin.pdf

¹¹ Zakon o osnovnom obrazovanju. Official Gazette of Montenegro, No. 64/2002; amended by No. 31/2005, 49/2007, 45/2010, 73/2010, and 47/2017.

¹² Zakon o stručnom obrazovanju. Official Gazette of Montenegro, No. 64/2001; amended by No. 49/2007, 45/2010, and 39/2013.

¹³ Strategija celoživotnog profesionalnog usmeravanja i savetovanja u Crnoj Gori 2011–2015 Government of Montenegro, Ministry of Education and Sports, 2011.

- Strategy for the Development of Vocational Education (2010-2014): This strategy outlines measures to enhance vocational education, including aspects of career guidance and counseling¹⁴.
- Strategy of Lifelong Career Counselling in Montenegro (2016-2025) continues the efforts to improve the career counseling system, focusing on connecting educational paths with the labor market¹⁵.

Montenegro offers a variety of services to support career guidance:

- School Career Teams: Within the education system, career guidance is facilitated by school teams comprising pedagogical and psychological services that assist students in making educational and career choices.
- University Career Centers: The University of Montenegro's Career Development Centre offers services including career guidance, information dissemination, and counseling to prepare students for the workforce.
- Euroguidance Centre: Established within the Ministry of Education, this center focuses on enhancing cooperation between schools, the Employment Agency, and local communities to improve career guidance and counseling services.

In 2023, UNICEF advocated for all high schools in Montenegro to offer career guidance and on-the-job training to every student, aiming to support adolescents' transition from school to the labor market and contribute to Montenegro's sustainable development¹⁶.



¹⁴ *Strategija razvoja stručnog obrazovanja u Crnoj Gori 2010–2014*, Government of Montenegro, Ministry of Education and Sports, 2010.

¹⁵ *Strategija celoživotnog profesionalnog usmeravanja i savetovanja u Crnoj Gori 2016–2025* Government of Montenegro, Ministry of Education, 2016.

¹⁶ UNICEF -

<https://www.unicef.org/montenegro/en/stories/job-training-become-part-all-high-schools-regular-education>



2.2. Gaps and challenges faced in each country

Career Guidance in Albania has faced several significant limitations through the years. One of the main challenges is that Career Guidance is a relatively new service, and as such, it is not well understood or properly implemented by both users and providers, while it may be well noted that knowledge, tools, and professionals in the field are limited. Further recruitment tends to be based on personal knowledge of candidates, with such knowledge being shared within extended family and community circles¹⁷.

In Albania, despite growing institutional recognition of career guidance, the system continues to face several significant challenges:

1. Lack of Awareness and Understanding:
Career guidance remains a relatively new concept, often misunderstood or underutilized by both service providers and users.
2. Fragmented Institutional Framework:
CG services are delivered by multiple uncoordinated actors (ministries, municipalities, VETs, HEIs, NGOs), with no unified national strategy or clearly defined roles across institutions.
3. Insufficient Human Resources and Training:
There is a shortage of professionally trained and certified career advisors. Staff often lack access to continuous professional development or dedicated time for CG tasks.
4. Limited Integration into Curricula:
In general secondary and even some vocational education institutions, career education is not systematically embedded in the curriculum, and where it exists, it's treated as an extracurricular or elective subject.
5. Uneven Access and Availability:
Career services are more accessible in urban centers (e.g., Tirana), while rural areas remain underserved. There is also limited infrastructure (e.g., career centers, digital tools) outside key municipalities.
6. Weak Stakeholder Collaboration:
Collaboration between schools, HEIs, employers, and public employment services is limited, hindering comprehensive and labor market-aligned career guidance provision.
7. Absence of a Monitoring and Evaluation System:
There is no national framework to assess the quality or impact of CG services, which hampers evidence-based improvements and policy development.

¹⁷ European Training Foundation. (2022). *Review of National Career Development Support Systems in the Western Balkans*, page 15



In Kosovo, despite notable progress in establishing a career guidance system through donor-supported initiatives, digital platforms like Busulla.com, and formalization via administrative instructions several challenges persist that limit its full effectiveness.

1. Limited Availability and Access:

Career guidance services are not uniformly available across all municipalities and educational institutions. Many VET schools lack qualified career advisors or dedicated infrastructure, leaving gaps in student support, especially in rural areas¹⁸.

2. Lack of Standardization:

There is no unified model for delivering career guidance, leading to inconsistencies in quality and implementation across regions. Some VETIs have fully operational School-Based Career Centers (SBCCs), while others do not¹⁹.

3. Weak Integration with Labor Market Information:

Career guidance services are insufficiently connected to real-time labor market data. This affects the relevance of career advice given to students and limits alignment with industry needs²⁰.

4. Lack of Trained Professionals:

Many career advisors lack formal training and certification. Although a national standard has been introduced, the rollout of structured training and professional development is still limited²¹.

5. Limited Employer Engagement:

There is inadequate cooperation between educational institutions and employers, reducing opportunities for internships, apprenticeships, and work-based learning experiences²².

6. Heavy Reliance on Donor Support:

The career guidance system remains largely dependent on donor support raising concerns about long-term sustainability²³.

7. Insufficient Use of Digital Tools:

While digital platforms exist, such as Busulla.com, there is untapped potential for expanding virtual counseling, AI-based career matching, and online mentorship.

8. Weak Monitoring and Evaluation:

There is no national framework for assessing the effectiveness of career guidance services, making it difficult to measure impact or improve service delivery based on feedback²⁴.

While in Montenegro, some of the key challenges in supporting Career Guidance are:

1. **Insufficient Resources and Funding:**

¹⁸ [Kosovo Education Strategy 2022-2026](#).

¹⁹ Enhancing Youth Employment (EYE) Project Reports, HELVETAS 2023

²⁰ MESTI Administrative Instruction on Career Advisors in VET Institutions, 2023

²¹ National Occupational Standard for Career Advisor, NQA, 2017

²² Busulla.com usage data and impact reports (EYE/MESTI)

²³ European Training Foundation (ETF), National Career Development Support System Review – Kosovo, 2022

²⁴ Report on the Evaluation of Career Centers in IVET, EYE Project, 2021



Career guidance services, especially at the school level, often suffer from limited funding and resources. This includes a shortage of trained career counselors and support staff, which reduces the quality and accessibility of career guidance.

2. Limited Access to Career Guidance Services:

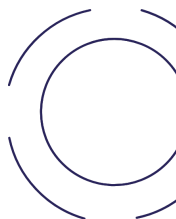
Career guidance services are not universally available across all regions of Montenegro, particularly in rural areas. This creates inequalities, as students and job seekers in less urbanized areas have fewer opportunities for counseling and career planning.

3. Cultural and Societal Expectations:

In Montenegro, like in many other countries, there are strong societal expectations and traditional views regarding career choices. These pressures may limit young people's ability to explore diverse career paths freely and may push them into occupations that are more culturally accepted rather than those aligned with their personal interests and skills.

4. Mismatch Between Education and Labor Market Needs:

The educational system in Montenegro sometimes does not fully reflect the needs of the labor market. Many graduates face difficulties in finding relevant employment, as the training they received does not always match the skills employers seek. This highlights the need for better integration of career guidance services with the needs of the economy.





3. Defining Career Guidance

“OECD defines Career Guidance as “services and activities intended to assist individuals, of any age and at any point throughout their lives, to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers”.

As for the CG International project, we extended this definition and described *Career guidance as a process of assisting individuals in making informed decisions about their education, training, and career paths. It involves providing support, information, and resources to help individuals understand their interests, strengths, and aspirations, as well as exploring various career options and pathways. Career guidance aims to help individuals identify and pursue fulfilling and rewarding career opportunities that align with their skills, values, and goals. This process often includes assessments, counseling, exploration of educational and training options, and development of employability skills.*

3.1. The role of career guidance in the education and employment sectors.

Career guidance services in Albania are provided by various bodies and are governed by several legal frameworks. Career Guidance in the education sector is provided at different levels of education to help students make informed decisions about their academic and professional futures. *In pre-university education, Albania has adopted a new “competence-based” curriculum. Different career guidance modules have been used in the form of extracurricular activities. Career education is one of the elective modules. In Vocational education and adult education institutions - Career education is an integral part of the school curriculum, which is frequently complemented by extra-curricular activities, often in cooperation with companies²⁵.*

In general, Secondary Education career counseling is less structured but is being introduced through school advisory services. In order to better guide the path to higher education and career, every year the ministry in charge for education altogether with education bodies in charge at local levels, (DRAP/ZVA), schools, Universities organize “Graduate information days”, where graduates (18 years and older) are informed on career counseling and higher education. In Higher Education Institutions: All universities (public and non-public) have appointed full-time staff to manage the Career and Alumni Centers. They have made available an office within the institutions and are offering CG due to their obligation regarding institutional accreditation process, and to a growing awareness about the importance of career guidance services for student orientation in the labor market and in their academic and professional development. Enhanced collaboration with the business is a must but yet, HEI and their structure need to be attentive on how to draw business attention and improve collaboration.

²⁵ European Training Foundation. (2022). *National Career Development Support System Review – Albania*, page 13



Career guidance in Kosovo plays a critical role in bridging the gap between education and employment, particularly in addressing youth unemployment and aligning education with labor market demands. Over the past two decades, Kosovo has made notable progress in integrating career guidance into its education and employment frameworks, supported by international projects and national strategies²⁶.

In the education sector, career guidance is institutionalized through school-based career centers, digital platforms such as Busulla.com, and the integration of career education into curricula. These mechanisms help students develop the skills and knowledge necessary to make informed career decisions and transition smoothly from school to work. The Education Strategy 2022–2026 emphasizes career guidance as essential for vocational and general secondary education, promoting lifelong learning and employability²⁷.

In the employment sector, career guidance supports jobseekers through municipal career centers and national employment services, offering individual counseling, skill assessments, and job matching services. Initiatives like the Enhancing Youth Employment (EYE) project have contributed to establishing sustainable career services in VET institutions and municipalities²⁸. Furthermore, the introduction of the National Occupational Standard for Career Advisors by the National Qualifications Authority in 2017 professionalized the sector, outlining key competencies required for effective guidance across both sectors²⁹. Thus, career guidance in Kosovo serves as a key instrument for workforce development, social inclusion, and economic mobility.

Montenegro utilizes career guidance extensively in both education and employment sectors to enhance employability, reduce youth unemployment, and better match educational outcomes with labour market needs. School-based career teams and university career centres play key roles in education, while employment agencies provide targeted career counselling and job placement services, especially for youth and vulnerable groups.

Career guidance in Montenegro is systematically embedded in both the education and employment sectors, guided by national strategies and supported by legislative frameworks.

In the education sector, career guidance is implemented primarily through³⁰:

- School Career Teams established within primary and vocational schools. These teams consist of pedagogical and psychological staff who assist students with educational planning and career orientation.
- University Career Centers, such as those at the University of Montenegro, offer structured support in career planning, job search skills, and employer networking. These centers are often supported by EU and national projects.

²⁶ National Career Development Support System Review – Kosovo, European Training Foundation (ETF), 2022.

²⁷ Kosovo Education Strategy 2022–2026

²⁸ Enhancing Youth Employment (EYE) Project, HELVETAS & MDA, 2013–2024

²⁹ National Occupational Standard for Career Advisor, National Qualifications Authority (NQA), 2017

³⁰ Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation of Montenegro – Career Guidance Strategy (2023).



- The Strategy for Lifelong Career Counselling (2016–2025), which forms the national policy backbone, promotes a lifelong, inclusive approach to guidance services in education and transitions to work.

In the employment sector, career guidance is provided by:

- The Employment Agency of Montenegro (EAM), which delivers career counseling, vocational guidance, and job-matching services. These are especially targeted at unemployed youth and vulnerable groups.
- Local employment offices, which collaborate with educational institutions and employers to support skills development aligned with labor market needs.
- Programs like Youth Employment and Career Guidance, supported by donors including the ILO and EU via IPA funding, have aimed to improve access to counseling and integrate labor market information into guidance services.

3.2. Theoretical foundations and international perspectives

In Albania, when it comes to career guidance, personal preference came second to such goals, and as a consequence there seemed to be little use for career guidance, which at best languished as a sub-discipline of vocational and differential psychology, if at all³¹. In attempting to conform to the Acquis, Albania has developed a number of sectoral strategies, focusing on such key areas as the economy, employment, and education, with many of these referring directly or indirectly to career guidance³². In this context, EU policies have influenced the stance on career guidance. On the other hand, the international and regional organizations through project-based initiatives have prepared the grounds to implement models aligned with best practices.

Career guidance in Kosovo is increasingly shaped by international best practices and theoretical foundations that emphasize lifelong learning, equity, and labor market relevance. The theoretical basis is rooted in the lifelong guidance approach promoted by the European Union, which views career guidance as a continuous process that supports individuals throughout their lives in making educational, training, and occupational choices.

Kosovo's legal and policy frameworks reflect these foundations, aligning with instruments such as the EU Council Resolution on Lifelong Guidance (2008) and the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network guidelines. The integration of career management skills (CMS) into curricula and the emphasis on informed decision-making are consistent with the constructivist approach to career development, where individuals actively shape their own career paths based on personal strengths, values, and labor market opportunities³³.

³¹ ETF, 2022, page 15

³² European Training Foundation. (2022). *Review of National Career Development Support Systems in the Western Balkans*, page 19

³³ European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network. (2015). *Guidelines for policies and systems development for lifelong guidance: A reference framework for the EU and for the Commission*. University of Jyväskylä.



International cooperation has played a vital role in aligning Kosovo's career guidance system with these perspectives. Projects funded by the EU, ETF, and SDC (e.g., EYE project) have helped establish standards for career advisors, promote the use of digital tools like Busulla.com, and encourage stronger connections between schools and the world of work³⁴.

Career guidance in Montenegro is primarily built upon the principles of lifelong learning and employability, as outlined in national strategies and aligned with European guidance frameworks. The foundation for career guidance is established in the Strategy for Lifelong Career Guidance (2016–2025), which promotes a system that supports individuals at all life stages and in all transitions between education, training, and employment³⁵. This strategy emphasizes accessibility, inclusion, and a holistic approach to guidance, in line with the EU's recommendations on lifelong learning and guidance services³⁶.

Montenegro's approach is also informed by the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network, which serves as a key reference for structuring policies and systems that ensure quality, continuity, and coherence in career services across education and employment sectors³⁷.

In terms of practical implementation, Montenegro integrates career guidance through career centers in schools and Employment Agency offices. The system reflects commitments made under the Southeastern Europe 2020 Strategy and other regional cooperation initiatives that aim to align national career guidance with labor market demands³⁸.

Additionally, international organizations such as the ILO, ETF, and EU Delegation to Montenegro have supported capacity-building, policy development, and the creation of tools for career guidance, especially for youth and vulnerable groups³⁹.



³⁴ Enhancing Youth Employment (EYE) Project, HELVETAS/MDA, 2013–2024

³⁵ Ministry of Education of Montenegro. *Strategy of Lifelong Career Guidance in Montenegro 2016–2025*.

³⁶ European Commission. *EU Guidelines for Lifelong Guidance and Counseling Policies and Systems* (2015).

³⁷ European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network. *Guidelines for Policies and Systems Development for Lifelong Guidance*, ELGPN Tools No. 6, 2015.

³⁸ RCC (2013). *South East Europe 2020: Jobs and Prosperity in a European Perspective*.

³⁹ ETF (2020). *Career Guidance in the Western Balkans – Regional Overview*.



3.3. Key stakeholders and their roles in career guidance implementation

Career guidance in Albania involves multiple stakeholders:

Government institutions and public sector

1. Ministry in charge for education (MAS)
 - Develops national education policies related, *inter alia*, to career guidance.
 - Ensures career education is integrated into training curricula.
 - Oversee the implementation of career services in schools and universities.
 - National Agency for Employment and Skills (NAES) that (Operates under the Ministry of Finance and Economy).
 - Supports reskilling and upskilling programs for job seekers and workers.
 - Manages Public Employment Services (PES), offering career counseling, job matching, and vocational training.
2. Public Employment Service Offices offer career guidance services. Employment offices provide information and guidance related to questions of career choices and career development, types of training or study course, occupational changes and mobility, further training and retraining, placement and self-employment, as well as to all labour-market related issues including labour market schemes and financial assistance.
3. Municipalities: The formal role and functions of the municipalities in the field of vocational education and training and employment is indirect, through their mandate to work for local economic development. A career centre at city level (in Tirana) has been operational since 18 December 2020. The centre is open to everyone (for students and adults). This office is now well established and fully functional and provides training to students on how to prepare a career folder with the first necessary documents and how to create them.
4. Higher Education Institutions through their career units/centers provide counseling, internship opportunities, and employer connections.
5. International and regional organizations support career guidance through different projects, mobility programs, promote best practices in lifelong learning and career counseling.
6. Private sector and business stakeholders collaborate with schools and HEIs to provide internships, offer input on skills demand and labor market trends, and may be part of different common projects.
7. The Chamber of Commerce and Industry in cooperation with the Municipality of Tirana and the Ministry of Education and Sports, organize the Work & Study fair. The aim of



the fair is to enable educational institutions, universities, and VET providers to present to students the study offers and conditions of the new academic year. Work&Study Fair is the only nationwide fair that goes to every city in Albania and then to Tirana to bring the opportunity for all Public and Private Universities to present their study offers and employment offers for all persons of Interest in Employment not only in Tirana but also in the Districts.

8. Trade Unions and Employers' Associations: Generally, the employers' associations operating in Albania are not engaged in CG issues. There is no direct involvement of the trade unions in Education and Training but as social partners they are consulted by the Government for important strategies related to employment and vocational training.
9. Civil Society and NGOs involved on project based initiatives to conduct inter alia, career guidance programs for young people and /or vulnerable groups.
10. HR Agencies provide private job placement services, offer corporate training and reskilling programs.

The implementation of career guidance in Kosovo involves a wide range of stakeholders working across different levels of the education and employment systems. At the national level, the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation (MESTI) plays a central role in shaping policies, coordinating initiatives, and overseeing the integration of career guidance into the formal education system⁴⁰.

Career guidance in Kosovo is implemented by a broad network of stakeholders spanning the education, employment, and development sectors:

1. Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI)

- Develops and oversees national education policy related to career guidance.
- Issues administrative instructions formalizing career advisor roles and institutionalizing career centers in VET schools.
- Coordinates integration of CG into the curriculum and national education strategies.

2. Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education (AVETA)

- Manages vocational education institutions such as Centers of Competence.
- Supports the implementation of career guidance programs within the VET sector.

3. Municipal Education Directorates (MEDs)

- Responsible for employing and supervising school-based career advisors.
- Facilitate the local implementation of CG services in schools and communities.
- Foster partnerships between schools and local businesses to provide internships and hands-on training.

4. National Qualification Authority (NQA)

- Validates the National Occupational Standard for Career Advisor (approved in 2017).
- Ensures alignment of CG qualifications with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).

⁴⁰ Kosovo Education Strategy 2022–2026.



5. International Development Agencies and Donor Programs

- Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC): Through the Enhancing Youth Employment (EYE) project, established 19 School-Based Career Centers (SBCCs) across VET schools.
- HELVETAS and DANIDA: Have supported the development of CG infrastructure and advisor training.

6. Digital Platforms and Innovation Hubs

- Busulla.com: A nationally recognized digital platform offering:
 - o Self-assessment tools.
 - o Career information linked to market needs.
 - o School and program exploration.

7. Civil Society and NGOs

- Implement donor-funded CG initiatives targeting youth and vulnerable groups.
- Facilitate community-based career awareness, especially in underserved municipalities.

In Montenegro, the career guidance implementation involves coordinated efforts across several key institutions:

1. The Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation leads in shaping national career guidance policies in the education sector. It allocates resources, integrates guidance into curricula, and ensures coordination with the Ministry of Labor to align education with labor market needs⁴¹.
2. The Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare supports employability through policies that emphasize career guidance for job seekers and vulnerable groups. It provides labor market data, promotes lifelong learning, and develops programs to enhance workforce skills⁴².
3. The Employment Agency of Montenegro delivers career services to unemployed individuals and youth. It offers job search assistance, training programs, labor market information, and liaises with employers to match skills with workforce demands⁴³.
4. Schools and universities offer guidance services that support educational and career decision-making. Secondary schools assist students in choosing further education paths, while universities focus on transitioning students into employment⁴⁴.
5. Vocational Education and Training (VET) institutions provide career counseling tailored to practical professions. They facilitate apprenticeships and align training programs with labor market needs to ensure students gain relevant skills.

⁴¹ Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation of Montenegro – Career Guidance Strategy (2023).

⁴² Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare – National Employment and Skills Strategy (2022–2026).

⁴³ Employment Agency of Montenegro – Annual Report (2023).

⁴⁴ ETF (2022). Mapping career guidance and counseling in Montenegro



Career guidance counselors, present in various institutions, offer personalized support to students and job seekers. Their role includes assessing individual interests and capabilities, advising on educational and career options, and helping with transitions and upskilling⁴⁵.

4. Donor Activities in Career Guidance Development

4.1. Major donor organizations and their contributions

Career guidance is based on three important elements: information, education and counselling. For several years, career guidance in **Albania** has been the focus of many different projects, supported by various stakeholders and donors. *Career counselling specialists are supported through donor projects*⁴⁶. *Data on the exact amount of career financing that comes from the state budget are not available. Funded career guidance and counselling services are also provided by programmes such as RisiAlbania, which specifically works with young people to offer more work opportunities in a sustainable and comprehensive way*⁴⁷.

Besides the national authorities that have supported different initiatives described in section “National Regulations on Career Guidance”, below, some of the main donor organisations are as follows:

European Union (EU): The EU has funded initiatives like the "EU for Youth" (EU4Youth) project, aiming to harmonize Albania's youth employment policies with European standards.

US Embassy in Albania has also supported the establishment of careers offices in the Mat Municipality and Kukës, in northern Albania⁴⁸.

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) is instrumental in supporting Albania's vocational education and training (VET) and employment policy reforms to improve institutional capacities, develop demand-driven services, and foster public-private partnerships in the labor market ecosystem by means of Skills4Job. 'Skills for Jobs' (S4J) is a project mandated by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and implemented in Albania by Swisscontact. The S4J project addresses the main challenges of the Albanian Vocational Education and Training system by investing in ensuring systemic change, capacity development and empowerment of key actors. The S4J project supports partner VET providers in Albania in terms of: establishing close relations between private sector companies and other partners, diversification and improvement of the VET offer, application of new ways of inclusive

⁴⁵ Law on National Vocational Qualifications and Career Guidance Services, Montenegro.

⁴⁶ European Training Foundation. (2022). National Career Development Support System Review – Albania, page 13.

⁴⁷ Lula, L. (2023). Contribution of Partner Countries to the EU Youth Wiki: Chapter III – Albania: Employment and Entrepreneurship. European Union–Council of Europe Youth Partnership, page 10

⁴⁸ Lula, L. (2023). Contribution of Partner Countries to the EU Youth Wiki: Chapter III – Albania: Employment and Entrepreneurship. European Union–Council of Europe Youth Partnership, page 10.



learning and quality, work-based learning in businesses and organizational development and institution empowerment⁴⁹.

RISIALBANIA together with Helvetas, launched the newest initiative aimed at introducing career guidance services at the municipal level through the mobilization of young people.

Medicor Foundation: This foundation has co-financed projects such as "Boost Employment," which aims to enhance labor market inclusion in Albania and Kosovo.

Etc.

Donor organizations have played a vital role in developing Kosovo's career guidance system, especially during its formative years. The European Union and European Training Foundation (ETF) have provided strategic frameworks and technical assistance for integrating career guidance into education and employment systems⁵⁰. The International Labour Organization (ILO) has supported employment advisory services and vocational training coordination. A significant contributor has been the Enhancing Youth Employment (EYE) project, funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and implemented by HELVETAS and MDA. EYE established 18 school-based career centers and facilitated partnerships with over 2,000 businesses, enabling more than 10,000 young people to enter the labor market. The Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) also contributed by establishing student service centers in VET schools to support practical learning and career decision-making⁵¹. These donor-led initiatives have not only improved infrastructure and service delivery but also promoted sustainable practices, such as municipal ownership and career advisor certification.

In Montenegro, several international donor organizations have played a critical role in developing and supporting career guidance systems.

The European Union has been a major contributor through its *Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA)*, supporting reforms in education, employment, and social inclusion. The EU's funding has enabled the development of strategic frameworks and pilot projects that link education with labor market needs.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has actively supported Montenegro in implementing policies aimed at youth employment and vocational education. The ILO's assistance focuses on career guidance as a tool for increasing employability and promoting decent work, especially for vulnerable groups⁵².

The World Bank has contributed through education modernization projects, with a focus on improving access to quality education and better aligning educational outcomes with labor market demands. These efforts have included the enhancement of career guidance services within schools and employment institutions⁵³.

⁴⁹ Swisscontact. (2024). Enhancing the Engagement of Private Sector in the Governance of Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Albania. Skills for Jobs (S4J) Project.

⁵⁰ European Training Foundation (ETF), *National Career Development Support System Review – Kosovo*, 2022.

⁵¹ Ministry of Education (Kosovo), *Annual Report on Donor Support in Education*, 2021.

⁵² ILO Montenegro, *Youth Employment and Skills Development Projects*, 2021

⁵³ World Bank, *Montenegro Education Modernization Project Reports*, 2020.



4.2. Ongoing and completed donor-funded projects.

In Albania, the European Union (EU) has funded initiatives like the "EU for Youth" (EU4Youth) project, aiming to harmonize Albania's youth employment policies with European standards. This project focuses on ensuring that young individuals not in education, employment, or training (NEET) receive quality job offers, continued education, apprenticeships, or traineeships within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education.

Medicor Foundation has co-financed projects such as "Boost Employment," which aims to enhance labor market inclusion in Albania and Kosovo. The project focuses on digital solutions, equal access, guided matching, and engagement of public and non-public stakeholders to improve employment opportunities for marginalized and youth groups. The "Boost Employment" project aims at changing the livelihood of unemployed job seekers in Albania and Kosovo, through digital solutions, equal access, guided matching and engagement of public and non-public stakeholders⁵⁴

Albania Career Development Association (ACDA) is a non-profit organization dedicated to advancing education and practice in career counseling and development. It collaborates with various sectors, including K-12 education, post-secondary institutions, non-profits, government, and the corporate sector, to guide individuals through work, learning, and life transitions. The association offers services such as professional development, publications, advocacy, and recognition for achievements in career development⁵⁵.

DM Consulting Services team has created a material - "an educational guide that provides structured information regarding the steps that one must follow to have a stable and successful career"⁵⁶ as well as special section in its website dedicated to Career Guidance⁵⁷

The first local office offering career counselling services to the community was established in 2021 in the Municipality of Tirana. The municipalities of Berat, Lushnje and Elbasan are taking steps to establish such centres, with the support of RisiAlbania, a project of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. The EU for Municipalities programme in Albania has supported the southern Municipality of Përmet to establish a careers office. The US Embassy in Albania has also supported the establishment of careers offices in the Mat Municipality and Kukës, in northern Albania⁵⁸.

⁵⁴ <https://www.swisscontact.org/en/projects/boost-employment>

⁵⁵ See: www.acda.al

⁵⁶ May be found here <https://duapune.com/career-guide>

⁵⁷ See here: <https://duapune.com/blog>

⁵⁸ CONTRIBUTION OF PARTNER COUNTRIES TO THE EU YOUTH WIKI, CHAPTER III: ALBANIA, Employment and entrepreneurship, Author: Lutjona Lula, December 2023, page 10



In June 2020, Partners Albania, part of the implementation consortium of [RISIALBANIA](#) together with Helvetas, launched the newest initiative aimed at introducing career guidance services at the municipal level through the mobilization of young people. The ultimate goal of establishing career guidance services in municipalities is to reach young people and enable them to adapt their decisions and actions in terms of educational, training, and occupational choices. Initially, the initiative was implemented in 9 cities where 28 local NPOs were organized in 9 coalitions (one from each city). To address these limitations, RisiAlbania has undertaken a comprehensive strategy in: (i) Building the institutional capacities of Career Guidance service providers. An innovation here has been offering career guidance as a community service for the first time in Albania, inspired by a Swiss model but adapted to the Albanian environment. (ii) Developing and improving the content and tools of Career Guidance. This includes developing content for the 100 most in-demand professions in the market, four standardized tests specifically for the Albanian context, and a resource website www.karriera.tirana.al, where young people can find all the information related to Career Guidance. The project has supported the improvement of the dedicated master's program "Professional Orientation" at the University of Tirana, Faculty of Social Sciences, from which new qualified professionals in this field graduate. Faculties of Social Sciences of the University of Lausanne and the University of Tirana signed a memorandum of understanding. This collaboration focused on transforming the Faculty of Social Sciences in Tirana into a center of expertise by improving the Master's program and scientific research, as well as developing tools for career counselors. The Faculty of Social Sciences (FShS), University of Tirana (UT) is the only institution in Albania that offers an academic program for the preparation of career counselors - Professional Master "Professional Guidance"⁵⁹.

In 2020, "Skills for Job" (S4J) a project of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), implemented in Albania by the organization Swisscontact published Career Guidance, Guide for Vocational Education and Training Providers. The aim of the guide is to provide clear, simple and applicable guidance for IoAFPs on how to provide career guidance and counselling services to students and trainees. The guide is based on the relevant regulatory framework, the experience of the "Skills for Work" project, as well as best models at European level and beyond⁶⁰.

Since 2018, Albania's National Employment Service, supported by GIZ, has implemented "Start SMART," a 10-day career orientation training focusing on enhancing young job seekers' personal strengths and soft skills for improved labor market entry. After successful initial trials in five Vocational Training Centers (VTCs), the program expanded nationwide, now reaching all ten VTCs. Over 11,000 individuals have participated, with more than 100 trainers certified to deliver the program and train further staff⁶¹

⁵⁹ <https://fshs-ut.edu.al/programe-t-e-studimit-pedagogji-psikologji/master-profesional-orientim-profesional>

⁶⁰ Leka, L., Bino, B., Dibra, S., & Papa, A. (2020). *Orientimi për karrierën: Udhëzues për ofruesit e arsimit dhe formimit profesional*. Projekti "Aftësi për Punë" (S4J).

⁶¹ European Training Foundation. (2022). *Review of National Career Development Support Systems in the Western Balkans*, page 30.



Kosovo has benefited from several donor-funded projects aimed at strengthening career guidance, particularly in vocational education and training (VET). A key initiative is the Enhancing Youth Employment (EYE) project, supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and implemented by HELVETAS and MDA. Since 2013, EYE has established 19 financially sustainable School-Based Career Centers (SBCCs) across VET institutions, offering over 150,000 career services to students and 9th graders, and facilitating connections with more than 2,000 businesses⁶². Another notable intervention is the Busulla.com platform, developed with donor support to offer digital career guidance tools, labor market information, and self-assessment tests to students across Kosovo⁶³. Additionally, DANIDA (Danish International Development Agency) contributed to the establishment of student service centers in VET schools to connect students with practical learning opportunities and enhance career decision-making⁶⁴.

In Montenegro, donor-funded projects have played a central role in advancing career guidance services, particularly by aligning them with labor market demands and improving access for youth and vulnerable groups. These initiatives have emphasized the professional development of career counselors, curriculum reforms, and institutional cooperation across the education and employment sectors.

The European Union, through its Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA), has supported numerous initiatives. Among the ongoing projects is the EU Support for Youth Employment and Social Inclusion, which incorporates career guidance components aimed at helping young people transition into the labor market. A completed initiative, Support to Vocational Education and Training Reform, focused on strengthening Montenegro's VET system by embedding career guidance services and improving student employability⁶⁵.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has also been active. An ongoing project, Youth Employment and Career Guidance, collaborates with education and employment services to expand access to labor market information and personalized counseling. A previously completed project, Youth Employment and Empowerment through Career Guidance, worked to integrate structured career guidance within educational institutions and national youth employment strategies⁶⁶.

The World Bank is currently implementing Montenegro Education and Employment for All, which includes elements of career counseling to ensure that graduates are equipped with skills demanded by employers. An earlier project, Employment and Vocational Education and

⁶² HELVETAS. (2023). *EYE Project Achievements*.

⁶³ Kosovo Education Strategy 2022–2026. Ministry of Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation (MESTI).

⁶⁴ National Career Development Support System Review – Kosovo. European Training Foundation (ETF), 2022.

⁶⁵ EU Delegation to Montenegro. (2021). *Support to VET Reform Project*.

⁶⁶ ILO. (2020). *Final Report: Youth Employment and Empowerment through Career Guidance in the Western Balkans*.



Training Project, successfully promoted the integration of career guidance in Montenegro's VET sector, enhancing the job readiness of vocational graduates⁶⁷.

5. National Regulations on Career Guidance

5.1. Policy frameworks and legislative measures in Albania, Montenegro, and Kosovo

In **Albania**, career guidance features in the National Strategy for Employment and Skills (2019-2022) which was then replaced with the new strategy. The National Strategy for Employment and Skills 2019 - 2022 (Decision No. 659, dated 10.10.2019), the main policy document that guides the implementation of actions related to employment and skills development in the country, was abrogated and new national Strategy of employment and skills 2023-2030, its enforcement plan and youth guarantee enforcement plan 2023-2024 were adopted with the decision of the Council of Ministers Nr. 173, date 24.3.2023⁶⁸. This strategy aims to develop skills and better align labor market demand and supply to increase employment opportunities. Key strategic objectives include reducing skill mismatches, enhancing skill levels among the working-age population, and improving labor market functionality.

Youth Guarantee Program. Launched in November 2023, the Youth Guarantee program ensures that every individual under 30 receives an offer for employment, education, or training within four months of registering with employment offices. By December 2024, the program had assisted 543 young people across Albania, providing tailored support such as training opportunities, professional internships, and job placements.

In 2023, the ministry in charge for education approved "The career orientation guide for the 9th grade⁶⁹" which was prepared by the working group with representatives of the Ministry of Education and Sports (MAS), Agency for Quality Assurance of Pre-University Education (ASCAP), General Directorate of Pre-university Education (DPAP) in cooperation with the leaders of schools in basic education. It emphasizes that Current policies for pre-university education in Albania and the National Education Strategy 2021-2026, in coherence with European policies, declare as a priority area the strengthening of students with the necessary skills that ensure their fulfillment as individuals, the fulfillment of social responsibilities and preparation for the labor market.

⁶⁷ World Bank. (2021). *Project Completion Report: Employment and VET Support in Montenegro*.

⁶⁸ <https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/alb215894.pdf>

⁶⁹ It corresponds to ISCED 2 - lower secondary education [arsimi i mesëm i ulët] ISCED 2 composed by four classes (classes VI-IX). The pupils that are 16 years old but did not complete primary education can complete it in part-time schools. Basic education for pupils with limited abilities is organized in special schools, in special classes within normal schools or integrated in normal classes.



Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-University Education (ASCAP), in cooperation with teachers, managers and education specialists, has drafted the Guide for the teacher coordinator of career counseling in lower secondary education, who will serve as a structured support that will help career counseling coordinators provide personalized support for each student, thus contributing to the improvement of their professional orientation⁷⁰.

As of fall 2024⁷¹ The Minister of Education announced the process of selecting teachers who meet the criteria for the two new roles that will be implemented in the country's schools: the Coordinator Teacher for Career Orientation and that of Quality Assurance in the school. These new positions will be the main pillar to support students in professional orientation and improve the quality of teaching.

Kosovo has developed several strategic and legislative frameworks to institutionalize career guidance within its education and employment systems. The Kosovo Education Strategy 2022–2026 identifies career guidance as a key component of improving the transition from school to work and aligning education with labor market needs⁷². This strategy emphasizes the institutionalization of school-based career centers, the integration of career guidance into curricula, and the professionalization of career advisors. Legally, the framework is supported by the Law on Vocational Education and Training (No. 04/L-138), which mandates the inclusion of career guidance in all vocational programs. Complementary laws such as the Law on Pre-University Education (No. 04/L-032) and the Law on National Qualifications (No. 03/L-060) further reinforce the role of career guidance within the education system. A major step forward was the adoption of the Administrative Instruction on Career Advisors in VET Institutions (2023) by the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation (MESTI). This regulation defines the roles, responsibilities, and funding mechanisms for career advisors, formalizing their position within vocational schools⁷³. The National Occupational Standard for Career Advisor, approved by the National Qualification Authority (NQA) in 2017, also sets out core competencies for career guidance professionals in line with European standards⁷⁴.

Montenegro has adopted a comprehensive set of policy frameworks and legal instruments that support the development and delivery of career guidance services. These policies are closely aligned with the country's goals of improving employability, promoting lifelong learning, and integrating education with labor market needs. The National Employment Strategy 2021–2025 emphasizes strengthening career guidance as a tool for increasing employment, especially among youth and vulnerable groups⁷⁵. Similarly, the Vocational Education and Training (VET)

⁷⁰ Agjencia e Sigurimit të Cilësisë së Arsimit Parauniversitar. (2024). *Udhëzues për mësuesin koordinator të këshillimit të karrierës në arsimin e mesëm të ulët*.

⁷¹ According to the Minister of Education, 4,635 students were enrolled in vocational education this year (2024–2025), 10% more than a year ago.

⁷² Kosovo Education Strategy 2022–2026, MESTI.

⁷³ Administrative Instruction on Career Advisors in VET Institutions, MESTI, 2023.

⁷⁴ National Qualification Authority (NQA), 2017 – Occupational Standard for Career Advisor.

⁷⁵ National Employment Strategy of Montenegro 2021–2025, Government of Montenegro.



Strategy 2020–2024 promotes career counseling within vocational schools to help students make informed choices aligned with labor market demand⁷⁶. The Education Strategy 2019–2024 outlines the integration of career guidance within the broader educational reform agenda, aiming to raise educational quality and link learning with employment⁷⁷. Career services are further reinforced through the Law on Employment and Insurance in Case of Unemployment, which mandates career counseling as part of employment support services offered by the Employment Agency⁷⁸. Youth-focused policies, such as the National Youth Strategy 2017–2021, include provisions to strengthen youth employability and career development⁷⁹. In parallel, the Strategy for Social Inclusion 2016–2020 emphasizes career guidance for marginalized populations, including persons with disabilities and long-term unemployed individuals⁸⁰. Lastly, the Law on Secondary Education incorporates career orientation as a key component of student development, ensuring that learners receive support in planning their educational and professional futures.



5.2. Institutional responsibilities and governance structures

In attempting to conform to the Acquis, Albania has developed a number of sectoral strategies, focusing on such key areas as the economy, employment, and education, with many of these referring directly or indirectly to career guidance⁸¹.

- The ministry in charge of education, MAS.

⁷⁶ VET Strategy of Montenegro 2020–2024, Ministry of Education.

⁷⁷ Education Strategy for Montenegro 2019–2024, Ministry of Education.

⁷⁸ Law on Employment and Insurance in Case of Unemployment, Official Gazette of Montenegro.

⁷⁹ National Strategy for Youth 2017–2021, Government of Montenegro.

⁸⁰ Strategy for Social Inclusion 2016–2020, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare.

⁸¹ European Training Foundation. (2022). *Review of National Career Development Support Systems in the Western Balkans*, page 19



- Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-University Education (ASCAP) – its mission is to provide the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth and all educational institutions with the highest professional level of expertise and advice, based on the results of research, studies and educational practice.
- National Agency for Employment and Skills (NAES): NAES is tasked with providing career guidance, assisting individuals in making educational and occupational choices, and managing their careers. The agency focuses on aligning skills supply with market demand, offering guidance on career development, training, and employment opportunities.
- Development Units in VET Institutions: Established within public vocational education and adult education institutions, these units function to provide career guidance to learners, facilitating their transition into the workforce.
- Career /Alumni Offices in HEIs: these offices aim to bridge academic careers with employment opportunities, offering career guidance services to students and alumni.

In Kosovo, the governance of career guidance is shared among several key institutions that operate across central, municipal, and school levels.

The governance of career guidance in Kosovo involves a shared responsibility among national, municipal, and institutional actors. These institutions coordinate policy formulation, service delivery, and professional development:

- Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI)
 - Develops national education strategies and policies related to career guidance.
 - Issues administrative instructions regulating the roles of career advisors and career centers in VET schools.
 - Oversees the integration of CG across curricula and supports its institutionalization in the education sector⁸².
- Municipal Education Directorates (MEDs)
 - Implement national policies at the local level and supervise school-based career advisors.
 - Support the creation and operation of local career centers and promote collaboration between schools and businesses⁸³.
- Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education (AVETAE)
 - Manages vocational institutions such as the Centres of Competence.
 - Supports implementation of CG policies within VET institutions, though its expansion capacity remains limited⁸⁴.
- National Qualification Authority (NQA)
 - Develops and approves the National Occupational Standard for Career Advisors (EQF Level 5).

⁸² MESTI Administrative Instruction on Career Advisors in VET Institutions, 2023

⁸³ Law No. 04/L-138 on Vocational Education and Training, Article 28.

⁸⁴ Kosovo Education Strategy 2022–2026, Ministry of Education.



- o Ensures certification and alignment of CG professionals with European standards⁸⁵.
- Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)
 - o Operate career offices that assist students and graduates with academic and career planning.
 - o Promote linkages with employers through internships and job preparation services

Career guidance in Montenegro is governed through a multi-level structure involving national ministries, public agencies, local municipalities, and educational institutions. These actors work together to ensure that guidance services are aligned with education, employment, and social inclusion policies.

Career guidance in Montenegro is supported by a decentralized governance system that involves national ministries, public employment services, educational institutions, and municipalities:

- Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation
 - o Leads the formulation of national career guidance strategies and updates curricula.
 - o Supports training of CG professionals and promotes services in secondary and higher education institutions.
 - o Oversees integration of CG within the Strategy for Lifelong Career Counselling (2016–2025)⁸⁶.
- Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare
 - o Designs employment policies incorporating career guidance for youth and vulnerable populations.
 - o Coordinates labor market interventions in collaboration with the Employment Agency⁸⁷.
- Employment Agency of Montenegro (EAM)
 - o Delivers career counseling, job-matching, and labor market information through its regional offices.
 - o Implements programs and services targeting unemployed individuals, especially young people⁸⁸.
- Local Governments and Municipalities
 - o Responsible for community-level implementation of career services.

⁸⁵ National Qualification Authority (NQA), Occupational Standards for Career Advisor, 2017.

⁸⁶ Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation of Montenegro, Education Strategy 2019–2025.

⁸⁷ Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, National Employment Strategy 2021–2025

⁸⁸ Employment Agency of Montenegro, Annual Report 2022.

- Support employment offices and facilitate access to CG, particularly in rural areas⁸⁹.
- Vocational Education and Training (VET) Institutions
 - Provide career counseling and guidance as part of the curriculum.
 - Maintain partnerships with local employers to align training with labor market demands.
- Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)
 - Operate university-based career centers offering job support, internships, and career orientation programs.
 - Facilitate transitions from academic programs to employment.

6. Review of Previous Actions: Successes and Challenges

6.1. Identification of effective strategies and models

In **Albania**, the career guidance services are often unstructured and fragmented. A top down approach with defined strategies, tangible goals, clear KPIs and tasks, assigned skilled staff, based on best practices, with information at hand, and interaction between stakeholders can provide a successful model. Already implemented projects, despite their flaws, like Career Counseling Office in Tirana Municipality that provides independent information regarding education, training, and career planning and development like a one stop shop, or the Career and Alumni Centers/Units at HEIs, seem to be effective models. Career and alumni offices in every institution of higher education facilitate the link between academic careers and the employment opportunities of graduate students. Besides being an evaluation criterion in quality, HEIs acknowledge the importance of the role of Career and Alumni Offices.

Kosovo has adopted several effective strategies to improve career guidance, notably the School-Based Career Centre (SBCC) model, which integrates career services within VET institutions and supports students through individualized guidance, labor market information, and employer engagement⁹⁰. Additionally, the use of digital platforms like Busulla.com has expanded access to virtual career counseling and self-assessment tools⁹¹. These models have proven impactful in promoting informed career decisions, improving employability, and fostering stronger links between education and the labor market.

⁸⁹ Montenegro Strategy for Social Inclusion 2016–2020.

⁹⁰ EYE Project Evaluation Report, 2021.

⁹¹ Kosovo Education Strategy 2022–2026.



Montenegro has implemented a range of effective strategies and models to enhance career guidance services across education and employment sectors. One key model is the integration of career education into school curricula, particularly within vocational education and training (VET), to support students in making informed decisions about their futures⁹². The Employment Agency of Montenegro (EAM) plays a central role by offering personalized counseling and job-matching services, helping job seekers align their skills with labor market needs. University career centers also contribute by facilitating career planning and employer connections for students transitioning into the labor force. Furthermore, public-private partnerships have proven successful in strengthening links between employers, training institutions, and employment services. Targeted support is also offered to vulnerable groups, including youth and persons with disabilities, through tailored counseling initiatives. Lastly, donor-funded programs, particularly by the EU and ILO, have supported lifelong career development and institutional capacity building.

6.2. Key challenges and reasons for past inefficiencies

Career guidance is quite a novel concept in Albania, not only for the institutions but as a mindset as well. For many generations and citizens in Albania, CG has not been a common choice, or even now they have no access to guidance and counselling services during their lifetime. There is no specific law or strategy focused only on CG, rather it may be found in different applicable laws. There has been a lack of cooperation between the different stakeholders involved in the CG process.

Career guidance has been often on top of the academic process, requiring extra efforts from the staff involved, with little to no access to information, with little to no time to dedicate to provide tailor made suggestions to each student's peculiar case. Also, lack of or the dedicated and skilled staff has been also a barrier. Training is needed for the career advisers as well.

In 2023 it was noted that: Career counseling offices in secondary schools find it difficult to play an important role for students in the selection of studies. This is because there is a lack of a well-thought-out strategy for pursuing studies early in high school;

- there seems to be a lack of human resources and experts in this field, especially for the educational system in the districts; it turns out that there is little or no interaction between regional development strategies and career counseling in high schools to orient students to specific study programs, which can help the socio-economic development of cities;
- as well as programs or orientations towards multidisciplinary studies are almost not the focus of career development offices in secondary schools;

⁹² Ministry of Education of Montenegro, Education Strategy 2019–2025.



- there is a lack of continuous cooperation between secondary schools and universities in the country, which would help in the selection of study programs by students, trying to include their preferences⁹³.

Kosovo has faced several challenges in implementing effective career guidance systems.

- One major issue has been the limited availability of trained career advisors across schools and municipalities, which has led to inconsistent service delivery and unequal access for students and job seekers⁹⁴.
- Additionally, lack of standardized models for career guidance has resulted in fragmented approaches across VET institutions and public services.
- Another critical inefficiency has been the weak linkage between career guidance and labor market information systems, which hinders the ability of guidance services to offer relevant and timely information on job trends.
- Moreover, insufficient funding, dependence on donor-driven initiatives, and limited employer engagement have affected the long-term sustainability of services⁹⁵.
- The absence of a legal mandate for quality assurance and institutional coordination has also contributed to poor governance and monitoring mechanisms in the career guidance system.

In Montenegro, despite notable progress in developing career guidance services, several challenges continue to hinder their full effectiveness. These inefficiencies stem from systemic gaps, cultural perceptions, and limited institutional capacities.

- **Limited Integration in the Education System-** While career guidance is recognized in national strategies, its practical integration into the education system remains inconsistent. Many schools lack clear frameworks and trained staff to deliver structured career counseling services. The absence of standardized curricula and insufficient training for educators in career guidance further reduces the effectiveness of implementation⁹⁶.
- **Cultural and Societal Attitudes-** Traditional expectations heavily influence student career choices in Montenegro. Professions such as medicine or law are often prioritized, while vocational paths and emerging sectors like digital technology or green industries remain undervalued⁹⁷. This societal bias contributes to a narrow perception of career opportunities and discourages exploration of diverse options.
- **Insufficient Funding and Resources-** Career guidance services often suffer from limited public investment. Many schools and Employment Agency branches operate without

⁹³ <https://www.hashtag.al/index.php/2023/06/06/roli-inekzistent-i-zyrave-te-keshillimit-te-karrieres-ne-gjimnaze/>

⁹⁴ Kosovo Education Strategy 2022–2026.

⁹⁵ National Career Development Support System Review – Kosovo, ETF, 2022.

⁹⁶ Education Strategy of Montenegro (2019–2025)

⁹⁷ National Youth Strategy of Montenegro (2017–2021).



adequate financial support to expand services, employ specialized staff, or modernize infrastructure such as digital platforms and career centers.

7. Recommendations and Proposed Actions

7.1. Policy and regulatory recommendations for each country

In Albania, career counselling and guidance is understood as services that assist individuals to make education, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers. Recent legal changes show a willingness for CG, political support and a changing culture towards CG. In summary, Albania is actively adopting legislation, implementing policies and establishing institutions to enhance career guidance in different levels. While there is progress, it is necessary to **make the career guidance system efficient, exhaustive and transparent** in the information it handles, **to train and upskill the involved staff, to strengthen the collaboration between student/their families and schools** for a better and informed decision, to ensure comprehensive and effective support for all individuals navigating their opportunities in the educational and professional paths. **CG should be a part of a school's strategy to follow up students from the very beginning to their employment paths.**

To strengthen the career guidance system in Kosovo, several policy and regulatory improvements are recommended. First, **career guidance should be fully institutionalized across all levels of education, with a unified legal and policy framework that ensures consistency and sustainability nationwide.** The role of Career Advisors must be further formalized through **structured qualification pathways** and continuous professional development opportunities. It is also essential to expand the network of career centers, particularly in underserved municipalities, and ensure they are adequately staffed and funded. Moreover, the integration of labor market information systems into guidance services should be prioritized to align students' career decisions with market needs. Finally, **fostering multi-sectoral collaboration between education institutions, the private sector, municipalities, and employment agencies** will improve responsiveness to workforce demands and promote more effective transitions from school to work.

To enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of career guidance in Montenegro, several targeted policy and regulatory measures are recommended. First, **developing a unified National Career Guidance Strategy would provide a clear vision and structured framework for implementation across sectors.** This should be complemented by improved coordination between the education system, employment services, and the private sector, ensuring that career guidance is responsive to evolving labor market needs.



Moreover, **strengthening public-private partnerships would enhance work-based learning opportunities and improve alignment between vocational training and real job prospects.** Finally, allocating increased funding and resources for career guidance infrastructure, counselor training, and digital tools is crucial to ensure quality and equitable access to services, especially for youth and vulnerable groups.



7.2. Proposed strategies for strengthening career guidance systems

Career guidance in Albania is still developing, with challenges in integrating structured guidance services across all education levels.

- To adopt and develop a specific national career guidance strategy to tackle every stage and function of Career Guidance, aligned with EU guidance policies and EU best practices; Create a career guidance Advisory Board to oversee policy implementation.
- Establish legal standards for career counseling services across education and employment sectors. adopting standardized guidebooks on career guidance.
- Enhance interactive coordination between stakeholders.
- Strengthen cooperation between the involved stakeholders (i.e government, HEIs, employers, and NGOs. etc). Promote multi-stakeholder engagement.



- Encourage regional/international collaboration and internationalization at HEIs, participate in EU-funded career guidance initiatives to seek sustainable solutions.
- Strengthen partnerships between schools/HEIs and industries to align education with labor market demands.
- Train, upskill and build capacities of assigned staff to act as career mentors and advisors. Increase the number of career advisors in employment offices.
- Develop career coaching programs/dual programs for students in vocational education, both higher education and high education.
- Provide personalized career counseling to students/ job seekers. Promote workforce upskilling and reskilling.

To reinforce the career guidance system in Kosovo, several strategic actions are proposed.

- First, institutionalizing career guidance within all levels of education through legal and curricular frameworks would ensure long-term sustainability and nationwide access. Strengthening training and certification programs for career advisors, as developed by APPK and validated by NQA, will professionalize the field and improve service quality.
- Expanding digital platforms like Busulla.com and complementing them with in-person counseling will broaden access, particularly in underserved areas.
- Furthermore, enhancing partnerships with employers and municipalities can improve work-based learning opportunities and ensure that guidance services reflect labor market realities.
- Lastly, introducing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms will help measure the effectiveness of career services and inform policy development.

Montenegro has introduced a number of strategic initiatives to enhance its career guidance system, aiming to improve labor market alignment, promote youth employability, and foster lifelong career development.

- **National Employment Strategy (2021–2025):** This strategy includes specific measures to strengthen career counseling services, with a focus on better aligning education and training with labor market needs and reducing youth unemployment.
- **Vocational Education and Training (VET) Reform:** Reforms within the VET system emphasize the integration of career guidance into vocational schools and improved collaboration between education providers and employers to support practical career preparation.
- **Youth Employment Strategy (2021–2024):** Targeting vulnerable and unemployed youth, this strategy prioritizes tailored career support to facilitate smoother transitions into the labor market and reduce the risk of social exclusion.
- **Lifelong Learning Strategy Implementation:** This strategy promotes the expansion of career guidance services beyond traditional education, offering support to adults in career transitions, upskilling, and reskilling initiatives.



7.3. Future project ideas and actions for sustainable career guidance reforms

In Albania, the career guidance must be better integrated with labor market trends to reduce skill mismatches in the context of local, regional and international collaboration, thus future projects should focus on capacity building, digitalization, industry collaboration, and international best practices. At the same time, it is important to strengthen Albania's participation in Western Balkans regional employment projects, to encourage private sector involvement in career guidance. With advancements in technology, leveraging digitalization and innovation, training with the required digital and green skills for youth and adults are considered of core importance.

To ensure the sustainability of career guidance in Kosovo, future projects should focus on expanding digital platforms like *Busulla.com*, strengthening the professional development of career advisors, and enhancing collaboration between VET schools and employers. Additional priorities include establishing a national monitoring framework for career services and integrating career education more systematically into school curricula. These actions aim to ensure equitable access, relevance to labor market needs, and long-term institutional ownership of career guidance systems.

To support sustainable career guidance reform in Montenegro, future initiatives should focus on inclusivity, innovation, and alignment with labor market demands. Key proposals include developing a national digital platform offering career tools and counselor access, enhancing collaboration between schools and industry through internships and mentorships, implementing upskilling and reskilling programs for adults and the unemployed, and launching a national awareness campaign to promote the value of early and continuous career planning.

8. Conclusion

8.1. Summary of key findings

Career guidance systems in **Albania, Kosovo, and Montenegro** have evolved significantly in recent years, spurred by socio-economic challenges and the need to align with European Union standards. All three countries have incorporated career guidance into their national education and employment strategies, supported by legislative frameworks, donor-funded projects, and multi-stakeholder cooperation. Effective models such as school-based career centers in Kosovo, digital platforms like *Busulla.com*, and career units within Montenegrin universities have shown positive impacts. However, challenges persist, including uneven implementation, limited funding, insufficient professional training, and weak integration with labor market information systems.



8.2. Final reflections and policy implications

While progress has been made, career guidance in the Western Balkans remains fragmented and largely dependent on donor support. A stronger institutional foundation is needed to ensure sustainability and quality. Policy coherence, inter-ministerial coordination, and greater investment in human and digital infrastructure are essential. There is also a pressing need to overcome cultural barriers and societal expectations that limit career choice diversity, especially in Montenegro. Emphasizing inclusivity, personalized support, and labor market responsiveness will help improve access and relevance of guidance services for all population groups.

8.3. Next steps for advancing career guidance in the Western Balkans

The next phase of career guidance reform in the region should prioritize the development of national strategies with clear implementation frameworks and monitoring systems. Scaling up best practices, such as Kosovo's SBCC model and Montenegro's school-industry partnerships, will be essential. Regional cooperation and knowledge-sharing platforms should be encouraged to harmonize approaches and foster innovation. Investing in digital solutions and professional development of career advisors, along with promoting public-private partnerships, will further enhance the effectiveness, accessibility, and sustainability of career guidance systems across the Western Balkans.





References

1. European Training Foundation. (2022). *Review of National Career Development Support Systems in the Western Balkans*.
2. Administrative Instruction on Career Advisors in VET Institutions, MESTI, 2023.
3. Agjencia e Sigurimit të Cilësisë së Arsimit Parauniversitar. (2024). *Udhëzues për mësuesin koordinator të këshillimit të karrierës në arsimin e mesëm të ulët*.
4. Busulla.com usage data and impact reports (EYE/MESTI)
5. CONTRIBUTION OF PARTNER COUNTRIES TO THE EU YOUTH WIKI, CHAPTER III: ALBANIA, Employment and entrepreneurship, Lutjona Lula, December 2023.
6. Education Strategy for Montenegro 2019–2024, Ministry of Education.
7. Education Strategy of Montenegro (2019–2025)
8. Employment Agency of Montenegro – Annual Report (2023).
9. Employment Agency of Montenegro, Annual Report 2022.
10. Employment Strategy – Kosovo 2024-2028
11. Enhancing Youth Employment (EYE) Project Reports, HELVETAS 2023
12. Enhancing Youth Employment (EYE) Project, HELVETAS & MDA, 2013–2024
13. ETF (2020). *Career Guidance in the Western Balkans – Regional Overview*.
14. ETF (2022). Mapping career guidance and counseling in Montenegro
15. EU Delegation to Montenegro. (2021). *Support to VET Reform Project*.
16. European Commission. *EU Guidelines for Lifelong Guidance and Counseling Policies and Systems* (2015).
17. European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network. (2015). *Guidelines for policies and systems development for lifelong guidance: A reference framework for the EU and for the Commission*. University of Jyväskylä.
18. European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network. *Guidelines for Policies and Systems Development for Lifelong Guidance*, ELGPN Tools No. 6, 2015.
19. European Training Foundation (ETF), *National Career Development Support System Review – Kosovo, 2022*.
20. European Training Foundation. (2022). *National Career Development Support System Review – Albania*.
21. European Training Foundation. (2022). *Review of National Career Development Support Systems in the Western Balkans*.
22. EYE Project Evaluation Report, 2021.
23. Guide for Training Teachers and Career Advisors, GIZ 2024
24. HELVETAS. (2023). *EYE Project Achievements*.
25. ILO Montenegro, *Youth Employment and Skills Development Projects, 2021*
26. ILO. (2020). *Final Report: Youth Employment and Empowerment through Career Guidance in the Western Balkans*.
27. Kosovo Education Strategy 2022–2026. Ministry of Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation (MESTI).
28. Law No. 04/L-138 on Vocational Education and Training, Article 28.
29. Law on Employment and Insurance in Case of Unemployment, Official Gazette of Montenegro.
30. Law on National Vocational Qualifications and Career Guidance Services, Montenegro.



31. Leka, L., Bino, B., Dibra, S., & Papa, A. (2020). *Orientimi për karrierën: Udhëzues për ofruesit e arsimit dhe formimit profesional*. Projekti "Aftësi për Punë" (S4J).
32. Lula, L. (2023). Contribution of Partner Countries to the EU Youth Wiki: Chapter III – Albania: Employment and Entrepreneurship. European Union–Council of Europe Youth Partnership.
33. MESTI Administrative Instruction on Career Advisors in VET Institutions, 2023
34. Ministry of Education (Kosovo), *Annual Report on Donor Support in Education*, 2021.
35. Ministry of Education of Montenegro, *Education Strategy 2019–2025*.
36. Ministry of Education of Montenegro. *Strategy of Lifelong Career Guidance in Montenegro 2016–2025*.
37. Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation of Montenegro – Career Guidance Strategy (2023).
38. Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation of Montenegro, *Education Strategy 2019–2025*.
39. Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare – National Employment and Skills Strategy (2022–2026).
40. Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, *National Employment Strategy 2021–2025*
41. Montenegro Strategy for Social Inclusion 2016–2020.
42. National Career Development Support System Review – Kosovo. European Training Foundation (ETF), 2022.
43. National Employment Strategy of Montenegro 2021–2025, Government of Montenegro.
44. National Occupational Standard for Career Advisor, National Qualifications Authority (NQA), 2017
45. National Strategy for Youth 2017–2021, Government of Montenegro.
46. National Youth Strategy of Montenegro (2017–2021).
47. Navigating labor market through school-based career guidance in vet institutions in Kosovo. Achievements, challenges, and the way forward. 30 August, 2024.
48. Occupational Standard: Career Advisor, Kosovo.
49. OECD. (2004). *Career guidance and public policy: Bridging the gap*. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.
50. RCC (2013). *South East Europe 2020: Jobs and Prosperity in a European Perspective*.
51. Report on the Evaluation of Career Centers in IVET, EYE Project, 2021.
52. School-based Career Centers In Kosovo Are Changing The Future Of Work For Youth, EYE Project,
53. *Strategija celoživotnog profesionalnog usmeravanja i savetovanja u Crnoj Gori 2011–2015* Government of Montenegro, Ministry of Education and Sports, 2011.
54. *Strategija celoživotnog profesionalnog usmeravanja i savetovanja u Crnoj Gori 2016–2025*
55. *Strategija razvoja stručnog obrazovanja u Crnoj Gori 2010–2014*, Government of Montenegro, Ministry of Education and Sports, 2010.
56. *Strategy for Social Inclusion 2016–2020*, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare.
57. Swisscontact. (2024). *Enhancing the Engagement of Private Sector in the Governance of Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Albania*. Skills for Jobs (S4J) Project.
58. UNICEF -
<https://www.unicef.org/montenegro/en/stories/job-training-become-part-all-high-schools-regular-education>



59. VET Strategy of Montenegro 2020–2024, Ministry of Education.
60. World Bank, *Montenegro Education Modernization Project Reports*, 2020.
61. World Bank. (2021). *Project Completion Report: Employment and VET Support in Montenegro*.
62. Zakon o osnovnom obrazovanju. Official Gazette of Montenegro, No. 64/2002; amended by No. 31/2005, 49/2007, 45/2010, 73/2010, and 47/2017.
63. Zakon o stručnom obrazovanju. Official Gazette of Montenegro, No. 64/2001; amended by No. 49/2007, 45/2010, and 39/2013.

