# PROMISING/BEST PRACTICES

# Country: Norway – developing lifelong guidance system

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|  | Description |
| **Overview of the Norwegian Lifelong Guidance System** | Schools - Primary Education: Pupils in lower, secondary, and upper secondary education have an individual right to receive necessary guidance. The school management is responsible for addressing the pupil’s right to guidance.  The right to necessary guidance implies that the pupil has access to information, guidance, follow-up, as well as help to adapt well into the school environment and to make decisions on future vocational and educational choices. The guidance is intended to help decrease social inequality, prevent dropout, and to integrate ethnic minorities. The pupil is entitled to receive the help he or she needs to facilitate personal development and to exploit individual resources, unlimited by traditional gender roles.  Guidance to pupils in lower and upper secondary education is part of the work load for one or more teachers in each school. The teachers are qualified as counsellors through local or regional in-service training courses, and through further educational courses in career guidance delivered by universities and university colleges. Guidance counsellors are obliged to be up to date on educational options and labour market needs. Therefore, and in order to secure the quality of the service, guidelines for guidance counsellors’ educational competences have been established. Regional partnerships for educational and vocational guidance in a lifelong perspective have been established, and most counties have Career Centres organised by these partnerships. Among other tasks, the Career Centres are resources for the school guidance service.  Higher education institutions: Have to some degree established career guidance services for students and graduates, mostly aimed at assisting graduates finding a job after graduation.  Regional Partnerships and Career Centres: Since 2005 the 19 counties in Norway have established regional partnerships for career guidance between local stakeholders. These partnerships are organised in different ways, but they are all aimed at strengthening the cooperation between providers of career guidance services and relevant stakeholders. The goal of a partnership is to strengthen the quality and widen the access to career guidance. Most of the partnerships have established Regional Career Centres where guidance services are offered to adults with regard to both education and work. The centres also play an important part in strengthening the quality and professionalism of the counselling offered in schools and in the Public Employment Services (PES).  Public Employment Services (Nav):  Every citizen applying for services from Nav has the right to have their needs assessed for services to assist them to enter or re-enter the labour market. Focus on social- and work inclusion and increased emphasize on using ordinary working life as training and outplacement arena is currently changing the priorities and tools of active labour market measures.  A strong focus has recently been put on improving staff competence and on new digital solutions for future communication between a user and Nav:  Staff competence: Platforms of leadership development, labour market and guidance have been developed in order to frame basic required competence and designing training arenas. The goal of the *Guidance Platform* is to improve the skills of guidance practitioners and their interactions with users, employers and collaborative actors through regular twinning and colleague training methods.  The Channel Strategy: the goal is to provide extensive differentiated digital solutions, enabling improved communication, automated and self-services. Technical solutions will be developed to enhance and empower the users to influence his/her situation, to identify their needs, and how these can be met by the Nav counsellor. The user will choose how to interact with Nav (in which way/channel). |
| **National coordination of guidance services** | In 2011 Norway established National Unit for Lifelong Guidance as a national hub and developer, a knowledge and resource center and a national co-ordinator in the career guidance field in Norway. The unit is part of Vox – The National Agency for Lifelong Learning.  Major focus points:   * Cooperation and coordination between all the different career guidance provisions and the stakeholders involved * Strengthening and developing the regional partnerships and Career Centres * Evaluation and documentation of systems and practice in the field * Competence development and evidence based research, both to advance career guidance as a  specific professional field and to enhance competence development for professionals * Quality development and quality assurance.   The Unit is chairing a National Coordination Group at directorate level, which is set up to coordinate policy development and implementation in the different sectors.  The Unit is also chairing a National Forum for Career Guidance including all relevant stakeholders. Participation in the National Forum reflects representation from the regional partnerships already established in the regions/counties. |
| **Challenges** | Coordination of career guidance within and between different counties, sectors and levels constitutes a major challenge. As a consequence there is a lack of coherence with regard to a lifelong service provision (OECD Skills Action Report Norway 2014). Equal access and quality assurance are major challenges. There is no shared quality framework. This is reflected in heterogeneous understandings of what career guidance is, and what should be the outcomes of career guidance, undermining the potential for concerted efforts towards shared objectives.    Moreover, weak professionalization constitutes a challenge. There is no strong, cross-sectorial professional organization within careers education and guidance. The provision of professional training has been fragmented and restricted to short courses; however as of 2014 a Master’s degree in career guidance has been established. We expect this to fuel the process of professionalization.  Having a National Unit for Lifelong Guidance with a mission to improve access, coordination and quality, is an asset; however the unit does not have a mandate to instruct and can primarily achieve its objectives through the use of “soft power” and gaining other actors’ consent to making changes. |
| **Some results and outcomes** | Government appointed Expert Group on Lifelong Guidance  In 2014 OECD undertook a major skills review in Norway, involving a number of stakeholders. The review resulted in the report *Skills Strategy Diagnostic Report Norway* and was followed by the *Skills Strategy Action Report Norway*. These reports confirmed the systemic challenges that have been pointed out in various earlier publications: a lack of coordination of career guidance and education provision, unequal access, and a weak professionalization.  As a follow up of the Skills reports, the government in 2015 appointed a national expert group. The group was given the task to investigate and advise on how to develop a more comprehensive lifelong guidance system. In October 2015 the expert group delivered a report on how to develop better digital career guidance services and how these services can be an integrated part of a comprehensive system. The expert group will deliver its green paper on the whole system in April 2016.  Steps towards more professionalization:   * In 2014 the government decided to fund the first master’s degree programme in career guidance in Norway. Two university colleges cooperate in developing and delivering the programme. * Cross sectoral national website for career guidance practitioners. * Yearly conferences, networks and meeting points.   Evidence: There has been an increasing focus on producing reliable evidence for career guidance provision in Norway.  Access:  More Career Centres have been established in the past year, partly due to an increased focus and stimulation from national authorities.  Career education:  In lower secondary school pupils have a subject called “educational choice”. The subject curriculum has recently been revised with a stronger focus on career learning. |
| Presenter name | Tonje Gravås, Senior Advisor, National Unit for Lifelong Guidance, VOX. |