



# CAREER GUIDANCE IN PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

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## Publication information

This paper was developed through a partnership between the World Association of Public Employment Services (WAPES), the International Centre for Career Development and Public Policy (ICCDPP), and the International Centre for Guidance Studies at the University of Derby (iCeGS).

It explored the current provision of career guidance within the public employment services worldwide.

It is published jointly by WAPES and ICCDPP.

**WAPES** is the worldwide platform for the exchange of information and knowledge between Public Employment Services and a partner in the field of employment and labour market issues.

**ICCDPP** brings together policymakers, researchers, and practitioners to create a global conversation around public policies for career development that promote action at national, regional, and local levels.

**iCeGS** is the leading international research centre in the field of career development. Its research addresses how people develop their careers in complex modern societies and what kinds of interventions and approaches can be used to enable people to build successful careers and find their way to the good life.

This paper should be cited as follows.

Lai, K.T., Vahidi, G., Hooley, T., Borbély-Pecze, T.B., Clobes, N., McCarthy, J. & Hopkins, S. (2025). *Career guidance in public employment services*. WAPES & ICCDPP.

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## Executive summary

This study explores the provision of career guidance by public employment services (PES) to service users worldwide. Undertaken by a partnership of WAPES, the ICCDPP and iCeGS, it provides insights into how PES are redesigning and delivering their career guidance services. It shows that career guidance has become an essential tool in addressing issues such as skills mismatches, labour shortages, and ensuring fairer access to employment opportunities.

The study is based on a survey of 48 PES worldwide, drawn from the WAPES membership (this represents 59% of WAPES membership). Key findings are as follows:

- More than half (54%) of respondents reported that their PES was organised as a single national service, with a mix of national and local provision (29%) the next most common model.
- Most PES (62%) are delivered by government employees with a minority being delivered by a mix of government employees and outsourced provision.
- *Supporting national labour market policy (matching labour market supply and demand)* was ranked as the most important policy goal globally. *Promoting employment opportunities* and *Supporting the transition of young people from education to employment* were ranked as the next most important policy goals.
- These policy priorities were then translated into service aims which focused on helping people to find employment as quickly as possible.
- The key service users of PES were young people and unemployed adults.
- Career guidance had a strong footprint in all PES globally. Career guidance activities were strongly focused on increasing job search efficacy and included both group and individual activities.
- Key trends in career guidance provision included the provision of self-help guidance services (75%), the provision of intensive counselling to vulnerable groups (75%), and supporting schools' career guidance provision (58%).
- Finding and training qualified career guidance staff were identified as the biggest challenges in the delivery of career guidance services within PES.
- Effective delivery of career guidance services was reported to be strongly reliant on government support. Career guidance needs to be referenced in policy, and supported and resourced appropriately, if it is going to be successful.

# 1. Introduction

This study explores the provision of career guidance within public employment services (PES) worldwide. Career guidance refers to *'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... The activities may take place on an individual or group basis and may be face-to-face or at a distance (including help lines and web-based services)'* (OECD, 2004). Such activities have an important place in PES as they describe some of the main ways in which such services can support people to develop their skills and find work.

PES are public institutions that are key to the implementation of employment policy. While they are structured differently in every country, they exist to help match supply and demand in the labour market. The 1948 original Employment Service Convention (C88) defined two critical roles for such services; the administration of unemployment insurance and *'other measures for the relief of the unemployed'*; and the participation in governments' *'social and economic planning calculated to ensure a favourable employment situation'* (International Labour Organisation, 1948). These specific and more general aims for PES continue to be evident in services across the world and, as will be seen, career guidance has the potential to contribute to both aims. In the mid-1990s the mission statement of PES was amended by the ILO (ILO, 1997). A networking collaborative organisational model emerged, based on co-operation, co-ordination, and co-creation between private and public actors. The development of career guidance within PES can be traced in ILO documents describing the functioning of PES since the 1970s (ILO, 1975).

This study has been conducted by the World Association of Public Employment Services (WAPES), the International Centre for Career Development and Public Policy (ICCDPP), and the International Centre for Guidance Studies (iCeGS) at the University of Derby with the aim of gaining an overview of the current status of career guidance provision in PES worldwide. The initiative emerges from the recognition of PES' evolving role, with many seeking to transition from a focus on job-matching and benefit administration to a broader service that addresses the complexities of contemporary labour markets, which highlight the need for skills development, skills matching, and for more career-focused conceptions of sustainable employment and decent work. Through an exploration of career guidance practice, this study provides insights into how PES are redesigning and delivering their services. It will show that career guidance has become an essential element in addressing issues such as skills mismatches, labour shortages, and ensuring fairer access to employment opportunities.

## Background

PES play a central role in delivering career guidance to people of all ages, helping everyone from young individuals to older workers worldwide to navigate their career paths effectively. While they are not the sole providers of such services (provision is often

supplemented by contributions from local governments, education institutions, trade unions, employers, private sector entities, and other agencies), PES often form the backbone of guidance services. Their role in coordinating and delivering these services makes them a critical part of the career guidance ecosystem. While the organisation of PES varies across the globe, they typically maintain networks of offices in urban and regional centres, ensuring physical accessibility for jobseekers, employers, and training providers, which enhances their visibility and effectiveness (Kuddo, 2012).

Beyond unemployment support, PES can provide services to other groups. For young people, they can offer career guidance resources, which may be delivered within educational settings. For employed individuals, PES promote access to lifelong learning opportunities and pathways towards '*decent work*', which ensures improved social protection and mobility. Moreover, PES play an active role in addressing labour market demand by collaborating with employers, trade unions and sectoral bodies to align skills and workforce availability with economic needs (Sowa et al., 2015).

Over recent decades, the scope and specialisations of PES have expanded significantly in response to an increasing array of policy objectives. These objectives include supporting workers during crises such as the Covid-19 pandemic, addressing the effects of economic downturns, tackling youth unemployment, and facilitating the integration of migrant workers into labour markets (ILO, 2023). PES have also evolved into multi-modal service providers, offering support through various channels such as face-to-face interactions, telephone services, and online platforms. Service delivery occurs not only within PES offices but also through partnerships with employers, trade unions, and community organisations.

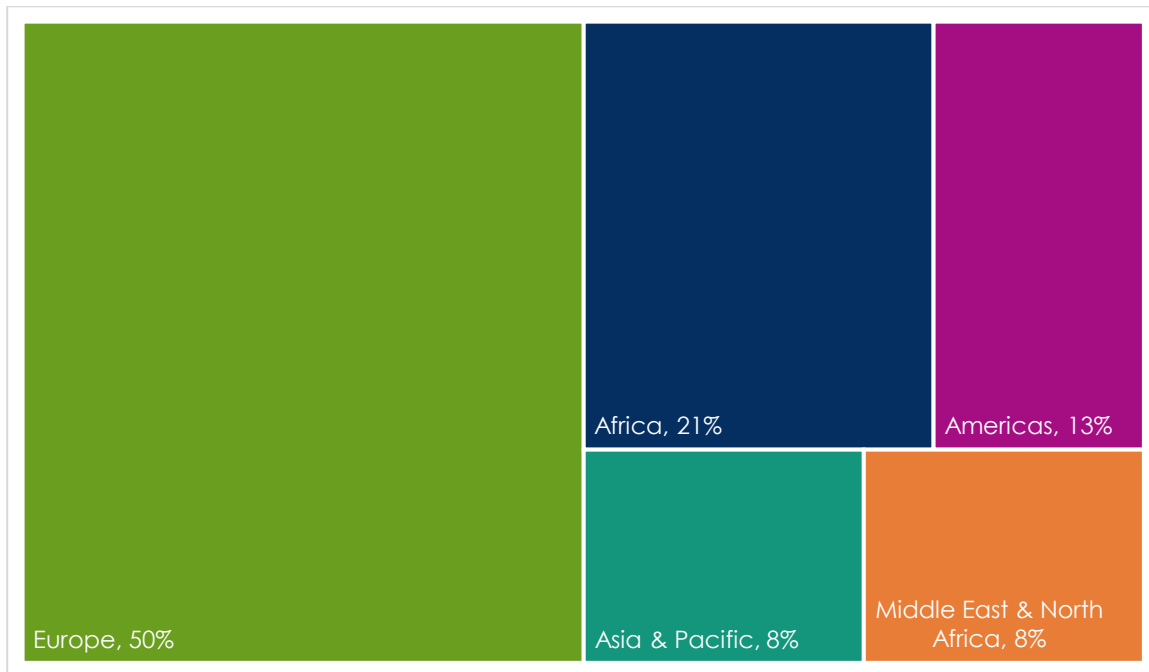
Although career guidance is one part of the extensive range of services offered by PES, many of the other services offered by PES, such as labour market information (LMI) provision, job matching, and various forms of counselling and support, are inherently linked to career guidance and enhance its purpose. In certain cases, career guidance functions as a distinct and highly professionalised service within the PES. In others, its boundaries are less clear, blending with other PES activities to create a more integrated approach to service delivery (Sultana & Watts, 2006).

The interconnectedness of these services shows the need to examine how career guidance is situated within the broader PES framework and how it interacts with other functions. This understanding is crucial for evaluating the capacity of PES to achieve diverse policy objectives and to support individuals in effectively navigating complex and evolving labour markets. This report aims to explore these dimensions, offering insights into the current status and future potential of career guidance provision within PES worldwide.

## About the study

This study is based on a survey of WAPES members. As WAPES members represent PES in countries across the world this provides a unique insight into how career guidance is

organised within PES globally. The survey was conducted from 1<sup>st</sup> October to 21<sup>st</sup> November 2024 and received 48 responses from WAPES members which is a response rate of 59%. To provide a clearer picture of the survey's reach, Figure 1.1 illustrates the regional distribution of the 48 respondents.



**Figure 1.1 Proportion of survey responses by region (48 respondents)**

This study categorized survey respondents into four income groups based on the World Bank's country classification system (The World Bank, 2024). The income groups were defined as follows: high-income, upper-middle-income, lower-middle-income, and low-income economies. These classifications are based on Gross National Income (GNI) per capita, calculated using the World Bank Atlas method. For this study, 46% of respondents were from high-income economies, followed by 25% from upper-middle-income economies, 23% from lower-middle-income economies, and 6% from low-income economies.

The questionnaire content took into consideration PES role documents (ILO 2023) and similar international survey content (Sultana and Watts, 2006). The survey used a range of question types including ranking questions where respondents were asked to rank all the items in order of importance. To analyse responses to these questions, a weighted scoring system was applied. Scores were assigned to each rank (e.g. 10 points for the most important, 9 points for the second most important and so on). These scores were then used to calculate average rankings, allowing for a comprehensive comparison of the relative importance of each item across respondents.

## 2. Delivery of Public Employment Services

In this chapter we will look at the organisation, policy goals, aims, and users of PES. This will provide context for the subsequent discussion of the position of career guidance within these systems.

The organisation of PES varies significantly across countries, reflecting diverse governance structures and labour market policies. Understanding these organisational models is key to analysing how career guidance and other services are delivered. More than half of the respondents (54%) reported that their PES was organised as a single national service, making it the most common model globally. This was followed by a mix of national and local provision (29%), while a series of local or regional services was less prevalent overall (15%). Europe stood out as using a more decentralised approach, with a higher proportion of respondents (25%) indicating that PES in their countries was organised as a series of local or regional services, compared to other regions. Single national services dominated across most income groups (low-income economies: 67%; lower-middle-income economies: 64%; high-income economies: 54%), except in upper-middle-income economies (33%). Upper-middle-income economies showed the most balance between models, particularly favouring a mix of national and local provision (42%).

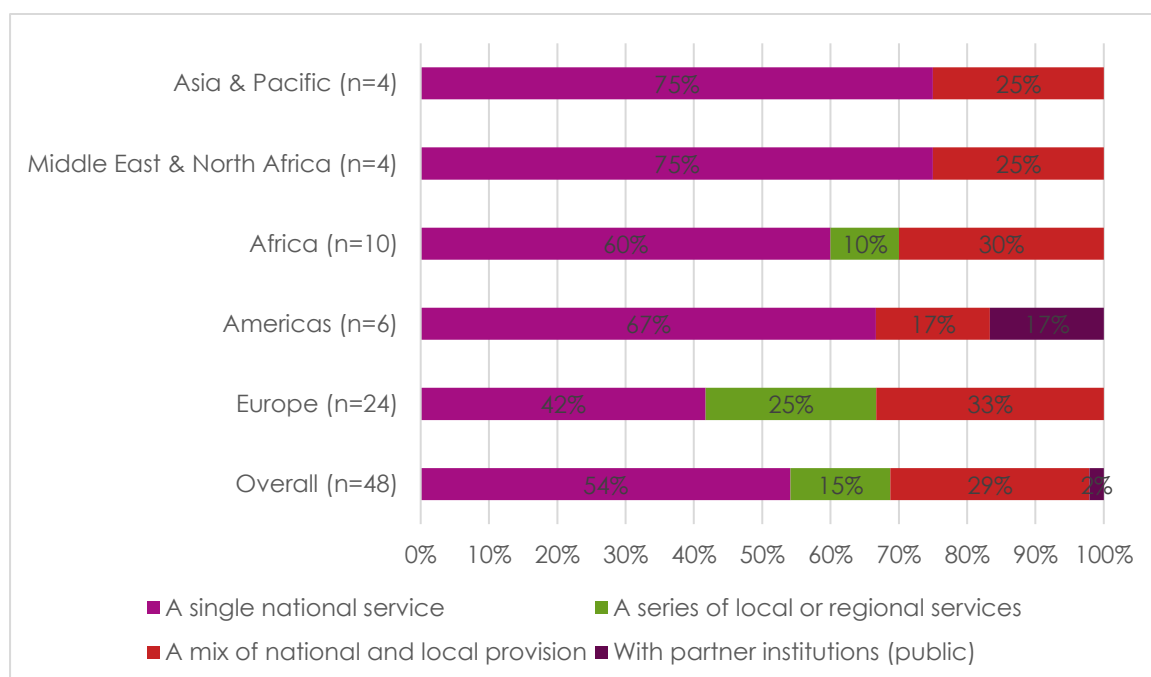


Figure 2.1 Models for the organisation of public employment services

More than half (62%) of respondents reported that all services were delivered by government employees, with the rest (38%) indicating that some services were outsourced to the non-profit or private sector. This varied across regions, with all respondents in Asia & Pacific and the Americas reporting that all services were delivered



by government employees. This finding is somewhat surprising as it is clear that a range of outsourcing models do exist in these regions. The level of outsourcing also varied by countries income, with strong reliance on government-delivered services in upper-middle-income economies (83%), 67% in low-income economies, 55% in lower-middle-income economies, and 52% in high-income economies.

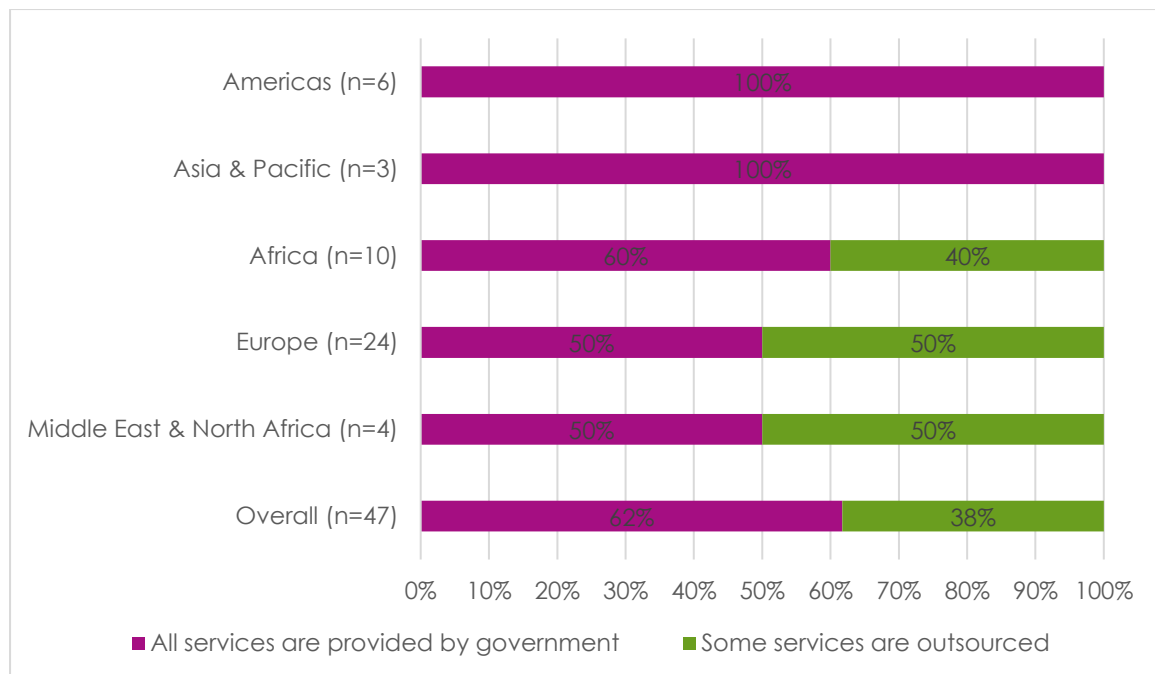


Figure 2.2 Government vs. outsourced provision of public employment services

## Policy goals

PES operate with a variety of policy objectives aimed at improving labour market outcomes and supporting individuals in their employment journeys. These goals often reflect broader national and regional priorities and are shaped by socio-economic contexts and labour market demands. The survey results provided a detailed insight into the hierarchy of these policy goals globally and across different regions, shedding light on the shared concerns and unique challenges faced by PES worldwide. The survey results showed that 'Supporting national labour market policy (matching labour market supply and demand)' was ranked as the most important policy goal globally. This showed the centrality of balancing workforce needs with employment opportunities for PES across the world.

'Promoting employment opportunities' and 'Supporting the transition of young people from education to employment' were ranked as the second and third most important goals. In contrast, 'increasing the formalisation of the labour market' was ranked as the least important goal, suggesting that while formalisation remains relevant, other objectives take precedence in the current global context. This pattern was consistent across all income groups.

Regional variations in priorities were also evident. For example, in the Americas, respondents identified *promoting decent work and freely chosen employment* as a key

priority, ranking it third. This reflected a distinctive focus on employment quality and worker autonomy in this region. Meanwhile, in the Asia-Pacific, *workforce development* ranked relatively higher compared to other regions, highlighting the emphasis on upskilling and training initiatives as critical components of PES strategies in these labour markets. These regional nuances provided valuable insights into the diverse challenges and policy objectives shaping PES operations worldwide.

	Overall (n=45)		Africa (n=10)	Americas (n=6)	Asia & Pacific (n=3)	Europe (n=22)	Middle East & North Africa (n=4)
Policy goals	Overall score	Rank	Rank	Rank	Rank	Rank	Rank
Support national labour market policy (matching labour market supply and demand)	371	1	1	1	1	1	1
Promote employment opportunities	291	2	2	2	2	2	4
Support the transition of young people from education to employment	252	3	3	4	4	3	3
Support businesses in recruiting workers	242	4	4	6	4	4	2
Support the social and economic inclusion of job seekers	218	5	5	5	6	5	5
Secure and maintain full employment	186	6	7	8	4	6	9
Develop the workforce	184	7	8	8	3	7	6
Promote decent work and freely chosen employment	171	8	6	3	5	8	8
Increase the formalisation of the labour market	110	9	9	7	6	9	7

Figure 2.3. Ranking of the policy goals of public employment services

## Service aims

The aims and priorities of PES offer important insights into their approaches to addressing unemployment and workforce development. The survey revealed that the ‘*Work-first approach*’ which prioritises finding employment for individuals as quickly as possible—emerged as the top-ranked programme aim for PES across all income groups and most regions, highlighting a shared global emphasis on immediate job placement. This approach ranked first in all regions except Asia and the Pacific, where it was ranked second.

In contrast, other aims such as administering unemployment insurance, referring individuals to wage subsidy programmes, and supporting long-term career planning consistently ranked lower across regions, reflecting a stronger focus on immediate labour market integration rather than broader, career development strategies. In Middle East &

North Africa, respondents placed a relatively higher emphasis on assessing individuals' job/training preferences and attributes (rank: 2), while placing a lower rank (rank: 7) on helping people to make career, education and employment decisions.

Main aims	Overall (n=45)		Africa (n=10)	Americas (n=6)	Asia & Pacific (n=3)	Europe (n=22)	Middle East & North Africa (n=4)
	Overall score	Rank	Rank	Rank	Rank	Rank	Rank
To find employment for people as quickly as possible (work first approach)	364	1	1	1	2	1	1
To place people in a training programme or other active labour market measure (training first approach)	284	2	5	2	4	2	4
To help people to make career, education and employment decisions	269	3	2	3	1	3	7
To collect, analyse, and disseminate information on job vacancies and applicants (skills demand)	247	4	3	6	3	6	3
To provide information on occupations and learning pathways to these	242	5	4	5	5	5	5
To assess an individuals' job/training preferences and attributes	241	6	6	4	6	4	2
To administer unemployment insurance	136	7	9	7	8	7	8
To refer the unemployed to wage subsidy programs	133	8	7	8	9	8	6
To support long term career planning	109	9	8	9	6	9	9

Figure 2.4 Ranking of the programme aims of public employment services

The findings suggest that PES prioritise work, training and career in that order. This is unsurprising but perhaps suggests some tensions exist within such services where career development aimed at sustainable labour market attachment is subsidiary to more immediate outcomes.

## Users

We sought to understand more about the uses of PES through asking respondents which client groups they served. Globally, *Youth under 25 (92%)* and *Employers (90%)* were identified as the most widely supported groups, reflecting the universal importance of tackling youth unemployment and building effective employer partnerships to strengthen labour market outcomes. *People at risk of losing their jobs* emerged as the least commonly served group across PES, suggesting a potential gap in preventative support for individuals on the verge of unemployment, which could be critical in mitigating the long-term effects of job loss.

Some regional patterns also revealed more specific priorities. High service coverage for refugees and migrants in the Americas may reflect larger numbers of migrants or migration-related challenges that need to be addressed. In Asia & Pacific, workforce development ranked highly with greater support for employed adults seeking career changes, indicating this region focused more on upskilling and training development for their career transitions.

Some income group patterns also revealed more specific priorities. Older adults received more focus in high-income economies (86%) and upper-middle-income economies (83%), compared to low-income economies (67%) and lower-middle-income economies (46%).

Client user group	Overall (n=44)	Africa (n=10)	Americas (n=6)	Asia & Pacific (n=4)	Europe (n=24)	Middle East & North Africa (n=4)
Youth (under age 25)	92%	100%	83%	75%	92%	100%
Employers	90%	90%	83%	75%	92%	100%
Long-term unemployed adults (please refer to the definition of such in your country)	83%	80%	67%	50%	96%	75%
Persons with disabilities	83%	60%	83%	75%	92%	100%
Older adults (older than 50 years)	75%	40%	83%	50%	92%	75%
Short-term unemployed adults (please refer to the definition of such in your country)	73%	80%	67%	75%	71%	75%
Persons of vulnerable groups facing labour market discrimination (e.g. based on race or ethnicity, NEETs etc.)	69%	40%	67%	75%	79%	75%
Refugees and migrants	63%	60%	83%	25%	67%	50%
Employed adults looking to change job/career	48%	30%	33%	75%	58%	25%
Persons at risk of losing their jobs	40%	30%	17%	50%	46%	50%

Figure 2.5 Main client user groups of public employment services

Ranking by the size of the main client user groups, PES globally emphasised services for youth, as their integration into the labour force is a vital economic and social priority. Both long-term and short-term unemployed adults ranked highly, reflecting a balanced focus on addressing immediate unemployment needs and structural labour market issues. Refugees and migrants ranked at the bottom or near the bottom across all regions, indicating that PES globally may lack the resources or policy mandates to adequately support this group. Older adults in Africa ranked at the bottom, showing lower attention to this group compared to other regions. Across income groups, older adults ranked 5th in high-income economies and 4th in upper-middle-income

economies, compared to 10th in lower-middle-income economies and 9th in low-income economies. This indicates that aging populations might be a significant demographic challenge in higher income economies and that PES are being tasked with addressing this.

	Overall (n=44)		Africa (n=10)	Americas (n=6)	Asia & Pacific (n=3)	Europe (n=21)	Middle East & North Africa (n=4)
Client user groups	Overall score	Rank	Rank	Rank	Rank	Rank	Rank
Youth (under age 25)	369	1	1	1	1	2	1
Long-term unemployed adults	341	2	3	3	3	1	3
Short-term unemployed adults	303	3	2	2	3	3	4
Persons with disabilities	266	4	4	4	4	5	5
Employers	262	5	5	7	2	5	2
Older adults (older than 50 years)	224	6	10	5	6	4	7
Persons of vulnerable groups facing labour market discrimination (e.g. based on race or ethnicity, NEETs etc.)	216	7	6	6	7	6	6
Employed adults looking to change job/career	155	8	7	9	5	7	10
Persons at risk of losing their jobs	154	9	8	8	5	8	8
Refugees and migrants	130	10	9	10	8	9	9

Table 2.1 Ranking by size of the main client user groups of Public Employment Service

### 3. Career guidance

In this chapter, we focus in on the ways in which career guidance is delivered in PES. We begin with a question which explores the career guidance activities that are offered by PES. All respondents reported that they provided at least one career guidance activity and around a sixth (17%) reported they provided all of the career guidance activities listed in the survey. These activities were strongly focused on improving users' ability to access work by enhancing their job search efficacy (92%). Activities like job clubs, workshops, and job fairs were the most widely adopted guidance methods globally. Individual support to enhance job search (88%) and self-help information on occupations (88%) were also consistently high priorities across regions. Longer-term career support was generally less common than shorter-term interventions designed to connect people to vacancies. Validation of prior learning and skills assistance was the least common activity (40%).

Career guidance activities	Overall (n=48)	Africa (n=10)	Americas (n=6)	Asia & Pacific (n=4)	Europe (n=24)	Middle East & North Africa (n=4)
Group activities to enhance job search efficacy (e.g. job clubs, workshops, job fairs)	92%	100%	83%	100%	88%	100%
Individual support to enhance job search efficacy	88%	90%	83%	100%	88%	75%
Self-help information on occupations (e.g. PC based, internet-based)	88%	80%	83%	100%	88%	100%
Individual support to enhance career planning	67%	70%	17%	100%	79%	25%
Self-help information on learning pathways to occupations (e.g. PC based, internet-based)	65%	70%	50%	100%	63%	50%
Self-help via self-appraisal tools of interests and skills (e.g. online, hardcopy)	56%	40%	50%	100%	63%	25%
Group activities to enhance career planning	54%	60%	33%	100%	54%	25%
Psychometric assessment (skills, interests, personality etc.)	50%	40%	33%	75%	58%	25%
Validation of prior learning and skills	40%	20%	50%	50%	50%	0%

Figure 3.1 Career guidance assistance

#### Trends in service provision

We then asked respondents about the trends in their provision of career guidance, *Self-help services and intensive counselling for vulnerable groups* emerged as prominent trends in PES across most regions, with each being reported by 75% of respondents. These approaches reflect a dual strategy: empowering individuals to navigate employment services independently while also providing targeted, in-depth support to those facing significant barriers to labour market entry. Such a combination aims to ensure that PES can address diverse client needs, from general jobseekers to those requiring specialised assistance, such as marginalised or disadvantaged populations.

PES in the Americas reported an emphasis on *tiered service delivery*, with 83% of respondents identifying this as the prevailing trend. Tiered services involve tailoring the level of support to the specific needs of individuals, ranging from self-service options for those requiring minimal intervention to brief assisted services and, where necessary, intensive case management for those facing complex challenges. This model reflects a structured and responsive approach, enabling PES to allocate resources efficiently while ensuring equitable access to support. The focus on individualised service levels can indicate the region's commitment to addressing varied labour market needs effectively and equitably.

This trend also varied across income groups. Respondents from lower-middle-income economies identified *intensive counselling* as the top trend (91%), as did those from high-income economies (77%). In contrast, respondents from upper-middle-income economies highlighted '*supporting schools' career guidance programs*' as the leading trend (83%). Meanwhile, all respondents from low-income economies identified *self-help services* as the predominant trend.

Career guidance service	Overall (n=48)	Africa (n=10)	Americas (n=6)	Asia & Pacific (n=4)	Europe (n=24)	Middle East & North Africa (n=4)
Self-help (ICT solutions that provide information on occupations, education and training, labour market)	75%	80%	33%	100%	75%	100%
Providing intensive counselling to vulnerable groups through targeting of services	75%	70%	50%	100%	79%	75%
Supporting schools' career guidance programs	58%	70%	67%	75%	54%	25%
Tiered services (self-service; brief assisted; intensive case management)	56%	40%	83%	75%	50%	75%
Multi-service provision or one-stop-shops (bringing together a range of public services)	50%	40%	67%	75%	46%	50%
Online chat and video conferencing services	38%	10%	33%	25%	46%	75%
Call centre (telephone support services)	35%	30%	33%	100%	25%	50%

Figure 3.2 Trends in the provision of career guidance services

## Challenges

The survey results highlighted key challenges faced by PES in delivering effective career guidance services. The most significant challenges identified were the '*lack of qualified career guidance staff*' ranked as the top concern, and the '*lack of career guidance training for staff*', ranked second. These challenges highlight the critical importance of PES having skilled and well-trained professionals to enhance the quality and reach of career guidance services. The prioritisation of these issues reflects a recognition among respondents that adequately qualified staff are foundational to delivering meaningful guidance, which directly impacts the ability of PES to meet the needs of both the supply and demand sides of the labour market.

'*Lack of qualified career guidance staff*' also ranked as the top concern across most income groups, except for low-income economies, where it was ranked fifth. This

divergence may reflect other PES organisational priorities and/or a greater reliance on self-help service in these economies, potentially reducing the demand for highly qualified personnel.

Challenges	Overall (n=42)		Africa (n=10)	Americas (n=5)	Asia & Pacific (n=3)	Europe (n=20)	Middle East & North Africa (n=4)
	Overall score	Rank	Rank	Rank	Rank	Rank	Rank
Lack of qualified career guidance staff	322	1	2	1	1	1	4
Lack of career guidance training for staff	308	2	3	2	2	2	3
Lack of job opportunities for job seekers	270	3	1	3	6	6	1
Unrealistic staff to client ratios	268	4	5	6	6	4	1
Lack of engagement from job seekers	262	5	6	5	5	3	4
Lack of broadband to support online career guidance services	233	6	4	7	3	8	6
Job seekers' participation in career guidance is tied to social security benefits.	202	7	9	8	4	5	8
Lack of training opportunities for job seekers	200	8	7	4	9	7	7
Shortage of job seekers	162	9	8	9	6	9	9
Conflicts between PES targets and professional ethics in guidance	83	10	10	10	10	10	10

Figure 3.3 Challenges to providing career guidance in public employment services

On the other hand, the challenge ranked as least pressing was 'conflicts between PES targets and professional ethics in guidance' (rank: 10). This finding is consistent with lack of qualified and trained career guidance staff as professional ethics is part of such training. It may suggest that these issues are less visible compared to the more immediate operational challenges of staffing and training, and if ethical tensions exist, they are not perceived as a significant barrier to the effectiveness of career guidance services.

The emphasis on staff qualifications and training shows an important area for policy intervention and investment. Without adequately trained personnel, the implementation of innovative practices, the use of digital tools, and the delivery of tailored support to diverse client groups become significantly constrained. This issue also points to broader systemic challenges, such as limited access to professional development opportunities, resource constraints, and the potential undervaluing of career guidance as a professional discipline within PES frameworks.

## Key components of successful delivery

The survey results provided a nuanced understanding of the factors influencing the successful implementation of career guidance services within PES, highlighting both commonalities and regional differences. Across most regions, 'government labour



*market policy referencing career guidance*’ was consistently identified as the most critical factor, ranked first everywhere except Europe, where it was second. This shows the importance of integrating career guidance in broader labour market policies to ensure its place as a labour market policy implementation tool. Clear policy references not only establish career guidance as a priority but also provide direction for implementation and resource allocation.

	Overall (n=46)		Africa (n=10)	Americas (n=6)	Asia & Pacific (n=3)	Europe (n=23)	Middle East & North Africa (n=4)
Key element	Overall score	Rank	Rank	Rank	Rank	Rank	Rank
Government labour market policy that references career guidance provision	314	1	1	1	1	2	1
Legislation establishing PES that mentions career guidance provision	313	2	1	3	9	1	2
PES policy that references career guidance provision	275	3	4	2	4	3	2
PES programme that references career guidance provision	239	4	5	4	7	4	4
Adequate financial resources for the provision of career guidance	213	5	6	5	7	5	6
PES management knowledge of, and interest in, career guidance	210	6	7	6	5	6	6
Availability of trained staff to provide career guidance	196	7	3	8	2	7	5
Availability of career guidance training for staff	161	8	8	8	3	8	8
User group demand for career guidance	149	9	9	7	6	9	9

Figure 3.4 Key elements for the successful implementation of career guidance services

‘*Legislation establishing PES that mentions career guidance provision*’ was another element ranked highly, typically second or third, reflecting the importance of a formal legal framework that embeds career guidance within PES mandates. Such legislation likely provides a sense of stability and accountability, ensuring the services are prioritised and adequately resourced. However, this trend was less pronounced in the Asia-Pacific region, where it was ranked much lower (ninth). This divergence suggests that in some regions, formal legislative mandates may not be seen as essential, possibly due to differing institutional structures and their terms of reference or levels of legislative oversight.

Instead, the Asia-Pacific region highlighted the ‘*availability of career guidance training for staff*’ as a key implementation component, ranking it third. This contrasts with other regions, where it was not as highly prioritised, and points to a significant challenge in ensuring that PES staff are adequately equipped to deliver career guidance services. This is surprising given the concerns about the challenges of finding sufficiently well-trained staff that were articulated in the previous section. However, it may think the

reason may be that they view these challenges as daily operational issues. The top ranking of "lack of qualified staff" and "lack of career guidance training for staff" as challenges reflects operational difficulties faced by PES. This shows that these are critical pain points affecting the day-to-day delivery of career guidance services. However, it may be that these issues are viewed as being more operational in nature and subordinate to the top-level issues around policy support and funding. The emphasis that is reported on training in Asia and the Pacific perhaps highlights particularly acute skills gaps that exist around the delivery of career guidance in this region.

Interestingly, '*user group demand for career guidance*' consistently ranked low across all regions. This perhaps suggests that need for career guidance alone is insufficient to drive PES to implement it, and that strong support from policy is needed to make this happen. It may also indicate that there is limited spontaneous or organic demand for career guidance. This would be unsurprising as many users are likely to focus on the services that they are offered rather than on articulating a need for new services. This could mean that there is a missed opportunity and that if users were more aware of career guidance then demand might be higher.

Overall, these findings highlight both shared priorities and regional distinctions. While government policy and legislative support emerge as universal enablers, the Asia-Pacific region's focus on staff training reinforces the importance of tailoring approaches to regional contexts. Addressing these differences thoughtfully will be essential to strengthening the role of PES in delivering effective career guidance services globally.

## 4. Conclusions

This report provides an overview of global trends, regional distinctions, and evolving priorities in career guidance provision in PES. Across the world the most common approach to organising PES services is through a single national service model which reflects a preference for centralised governance and standardised delivery. However many countries are also utilising outsourced services as part of their PES.

PES tend to prioritise the matching of labour market supply and demand, although other aims are also important in some regions such the Asia & Pacific region's emphasis on workforce development through upskilling and the Americas' focus on promoting decent work. This suggests that the local political and social contexts shape PES' aims. Youth and employers are the most served groups, highlighting the global urgency in addressing youth unemployment and increasing employer collaboration.

The strong focus on immediate employment outcomes means that career planning and skill development remain under-emphasised, potentially pointing to a missed opportunity for future-proofing the workforce. Methods such as group activities and individual job search support are widely used, reflecting their perceived effectiveness in achieving labour market priorities.

However, persistent challenges, such as shortages of qualified career guidance staff and the need for staff training indicate a pressing need for capacity-building investments. PES are widely facing labour shortages themselves, a critical issue that should not be overlooked. Qualified staff of PES are key to successful service delivery. This is critical to user experience, staff retention, and achievement of policy aims. Staff shortages in PES are influenced by a variety of complex factors. One of the challenges is compensation discrepancies between the public and private sector. This gap has been exacerbated by the rapid inflation and economic changes post-pandemic, making public sector positions less attractive in comparison (ILO, 2023).

Effective implementation of career guidance services depends on strong support from government in which the PES is linked to wider labour market policy and appropriate resources are made available. While the survey highlights global priorities and shared goals, it also emphasises the need for localised solutions, targeted interventions, and greater inclusivity to ensure that PES and career guidance professionals are competent and qualified.

Moving forward, emphasis should be placed on the professional development of PES employees to increase the core PES workforce's capacity to deliver career guidance. Exploring the skills and training needs of the existing PES workforce in relation to career guidance and associated issues is an important area where further research would be useful. If PES are to meet future labour market challenges, their own workforce needs to be able to respond to the changing labour market. Consequently, issues of professional skills development and staffing are likely to remain a critical priority.

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