

## Chapter 4. Strengthening career guidance in Estonia

*In Estonia, career guidance and information services have been extensively reorganised, and the system now has many strengths, but some gaps remain. Some of the elements of career guidance should be made mandatory in basic schools and provision should start early. Mandatory provision helps to ensure that the guidance gets through to some of the students who need it most. This in itself would provide a firmer foundation for decisions about whether to pursue a vocational education and training (VET) or general education track at grade 9. More accessible and understandable labour market information, including data from destinations surveys, would also be very helpful. Students would also benefit from visits to schools by people from different professional background, visits to workplaces by students, and short work placements and work shadowing.*

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The statistical data for Israel are supplied by and under the responsibility of the relevant Israeli authorities. The use of such data by the OECD is without prejudice to the status of the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the terms of international law.

## Introduction

### *The growing importance of career guidance*

In Estonia, as across the OECD, the decisions that young people need to make about their education and training are more difficult. This chapter focuses on career education, information and counselling (shortened to career guidance). The chapter recognises the many strengths of Estonian career guidance provision, while highlighting the importance of greater intervention: career guidance should ensure that all young people have a reasonable opportunity to consider the range of opportunities available to them, including those presented by vocational education and training, at an early stage.

### *Career guidance often works*

Career guidance covers a wide range of activities but comparatively few studies have sought to apply experimental and quasi-experimental methodologies. A literature review undertaken by Hughes et al. in 2016 looked at the results of 73 studies on the impact of career guidance on economic, educational and social outcomes published since 1996. The review found that approximately two-thirds of studies revealed evidence of positive effects in terms of the three outcomes.<sup>1</sup> Very few studies revealed evidence of negative outcomes. Improvements in economic outcomes are better attributed to changes in career thinking and confidence in pathways pursued than in “employability” skills (Hughes et al., 2016<sub>[1]</sub>). While positive outcomes related to career guidance activities cannot be taken for granted, it is very difficult to find a reliable study that suggests interventions were a complete waste of time and had negative consequences for young people (Musset and Mytna Kurekova, 2018<sub>[2]</sub>).

## The main challenges

### *Young Estonians may face difficulties entering the labour market*

In Estonia in 2016, young people experienced unemployment rates twice the level of prime age adults, a ratio similar to many other countries (Figure 4.1). Such figures reflect the character of labour market demand, the limited experience of young people and the weaknesses of their social networks linked to employment.

### *Young people need to have good career management skills*

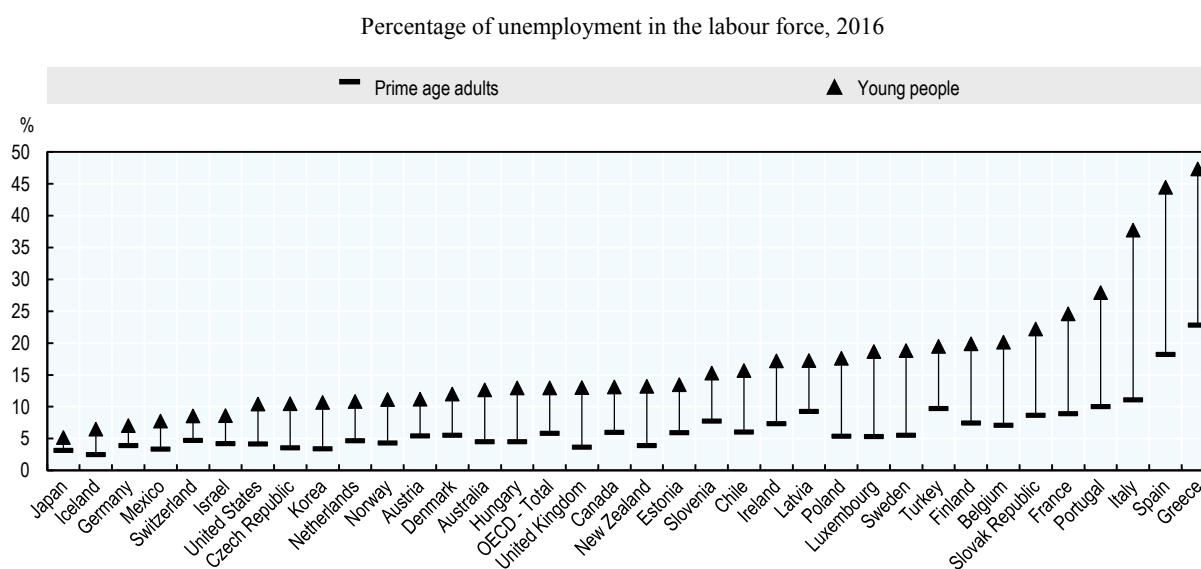
Young people have, of course, long been at such a disadvantage within the labour market, in Estonia and in general in OECD countries. In Estonia as in other countries young people are entering a world of work which is undergoing rapid change. Technology is transforming jobs and the labour market is becoming more polarised by skills level with growth in high and certain low skill employment and a contraction of middle-skilled jobs. Switching between jobs and even economic sectors becomes more usual, and self-employment more commonplace (ILO, 2016<sub>[3]</sub>). The need for career management skills grows (Musset and Mytna Kurekova, 2018<sub>[2]</sub>; Neary, Hooley and Dodd, 2015<sub>[4]</sub>). It is a strength of the Estonian approach to career guidance that this need is recognised within provision (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017<sub>[5]</sub>).

### *Skills mismatch is also a challenge*

Connected to the point made above, evidence gathered at the EU level shows that in Estonia while 33% of men and 27% of women are well matched (in terms of education

and skills) for their job, 34% and 35% are mismatched in terms of education, and 16% and 17% are by skills (Flisi et al., 2016<sup>[6]</sup>). While long-term consequences remain to be seen, such mismatch is associated with lower than expected wages and job satisfaction. In Estonia, like in all countries which were part of this analysis, women are less likely to be matched than their male counterparts.

**Figure 4.1. Young people (15-24) face higher unemployment than prime-age adults (25-54) in Estonia**



Source: OECD (2017<sup>[7]</sup>), “Unemployment rates by age”, *OECD.Stat*, <https://stats.oecd.org>.

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### ***Young people are often uninformed about the labour market and the implications of their educational choices***

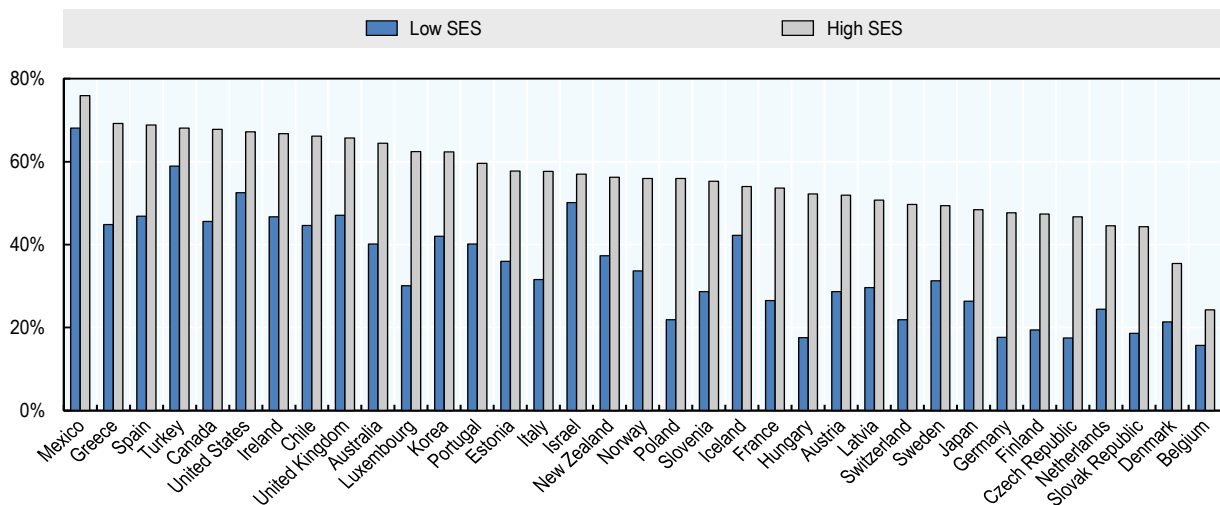
Career choices are closely tied in with educational choices which act as gateways to continuing study and often progression into careers of choice. Studies suggest that improved employment outcomes by career guidance are driven by increased student motivation linked to deeper understanding of the relationship between education and employment (Hughes et al., 2016<sup>[11]</sup>). In Estonia, like in other countries, the labour market outcomes that programme graduates can expect vary according to the type of programme and the field of study (Figure 4.6). Where information about labour market outcomes is not viewed as relevant by young people, young people can have a harder time making well informed decisions. In Estonia, as the point will be development later in this chapter, many people enter VET after having completed university, which shows career indecisions, and perhaps a lack of information about VET options and their outcomes, pointing towards inadequate and/or insufficient career guidance. Some students may not have the pre-requisites required to pursue the study programme that would lead to their preferred career either because they cannot achieve them or because they have closed off their options, for example, by not being able to pass the state entrance examination needed to enter higher education.

### *Some students may need more career guidance than others*

Social and personal circumstances shape career thinking. Analysis from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) data show that in Estonia, 58% of advantaged students, but only 36% of their less advantaged peers, want to work as professionals (Figure 4.2). Importantly, this statistically significant relationship between socio-economic status (SES) and career aspiration applies even when taking account of academic proficiency as measured in performance in the 2015 PISA tests on mathematics (Musset and Mytina Kurekova, 2018<sup>[2]</sup>). This means that some students may not reach their potential and may choose a future occupation within a limited set of options. Similar patterns are found in terms of the aspirations of young people from lower SES to work as technicians or in associated occupations. Consistently, academically high performing students from lower SES backgrounds are less ambitious for their futures than their high SES counterparts. In Estonia, the gap between the two groups is particularly large (Figure 4.3). These patterns are also found within many different national and comparative databases.<sup>2</sup>

**Figure 4.2. Disadvantaged students are less likely to want to work as professionals than their more advantaged peers**

Percentage of 15-year-olds who say they want to be professionals, by socio-economic status (SES)



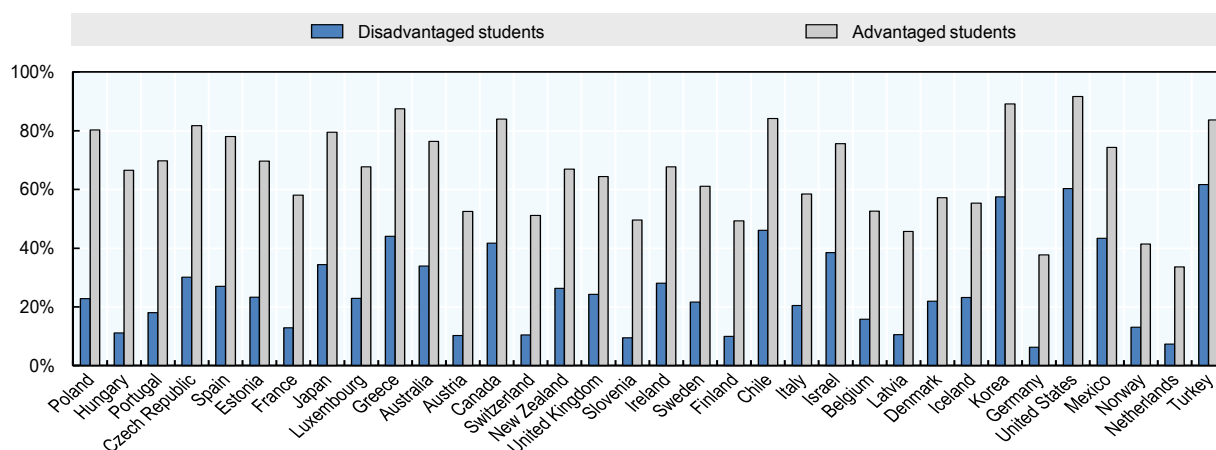
*Note:* No data are available for the Slovak Republic. Occupations classified as professionals include, for example, civil engineers, secondary school teachers, medical practitioners, and computer systems analysts. *Countries are sorted by highest percentage point difference.*

*Source:* Musset, P. and L. Mytina Kurekova (2018<sup>[2]</sup>), “Working it out: Career guidance and employer engagement”, *OECD Education Working Papers*, No. 175, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/51c9d18d-en>.

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**Figure 4.3. Disadvantaged students are less likely to want to go to universities**

Difference in academic expectations between high SES and low SES students



Note. No data are available for the Slovak Republic.

Countries are sorted by highest percentage point difference.

Source: Musset, P. and L. Mytna Kurekova (2018<sub>[2]</sub>), “Working it out: Career guidance and employer engagement”, *OECD Education Working Papers*, No. 175, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/51c9d18d-en>.

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### *Personal circumstances shape education and career thinking*

Such patterns in educational expectation and participation are also found with respect to ethnicity, gender and geographic location. As discussed in earlier chapters, Russian-speakers are over-represented in VET provision, with 60% of Russian-speaking boys in north-eastern Estonia enrolled (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017<sub>[5]</sub>). Russian-speaking students are also under-represented in higher education (Lindemann and Saar, 2012<sub>[8]</sub>). There are diverse reasons why Russian speaking students are over-represented in VET: some argue that VET education is more valued among Russians, because many students are from families in which parents have a VET education themselves.<sup>3</sup> Pärtel and Petti (2013<sub>[9]</sub>) and Mägi and Nestor (2012<sub>[10]</sub>) looked at the factors influencing the choice of upper secondary tracks in Estonia, in differences between girls and boys, and between Russian-speakers and Estonian-speakers, as well as elements such as parental education and socio-economic background.

#### **Box 4.1. Estonian language instruction and Russian language in Estonia**

The views and actions of policy makers in Estonia regarding minority students' education are supported by research on second-language acquisition. The discussion in Estonia does not merely emphasise exposure to the Estonian language. Mother-tongue education until the end of the ninth grade with teaching of Estonian as a second language is the mainstream option for all students. But in upper secondary VET, Russian language teaching has not been phased out yet, contrary to the general education equivalent. In such programmes, 60% of the subjects are taught in Estonian and 40% in Russian.

Plans to phase out Russian language instruction at the secondary level go back to early 2000. The multiple reasons as reported by Kemppainen and Ellis Ferrin (2002) were:

- First, the birth rates are low in Estonia (about 12 000 annually) and even lower among the Russian speakers (about 3 000), which, according to the government, does not support keeping Russian-speaking secondary schools.
- Second, unemployment is higher among Russian speakers, and the lack of language proficiency in Estonian is seen as contributing to this unemployment.
- Third, the discipline emphasis is different in Russian and Estonian schools. Whereas Russian schools emphasise mathematics, their level of foreign-language teaching is low.
- Fourth, higher education in Estonia functions in the Estonian language.

However, some worries were expressed by the authorities regarding the non-Estonian language children who study in Estonian schools because of possible lower academic performance and the need to preserve the cultural identity of Russian speaking children. Other concerns involve the quality of educational attainment of Estonian children in a situation where teachers are not fully trained to deal with multilingual classes and the issues minority language students bring to Estonian-language schools.

Research suggests that exposure to the second language alone does not bring linguistic and academic success and that the process of learning a language at an academically functioning level can take five to seven or eight years.

*Source:* Kemppainen, R. and S. Ferrin Ellis (2002<sub>[11]</sub>), “Parental choice and language-of-instruction policies and practices in Estonia”, *Education and Urban Society*, Vol. 35/1, pp.76-9.

### ***Gender also shapes education and career aspirations***

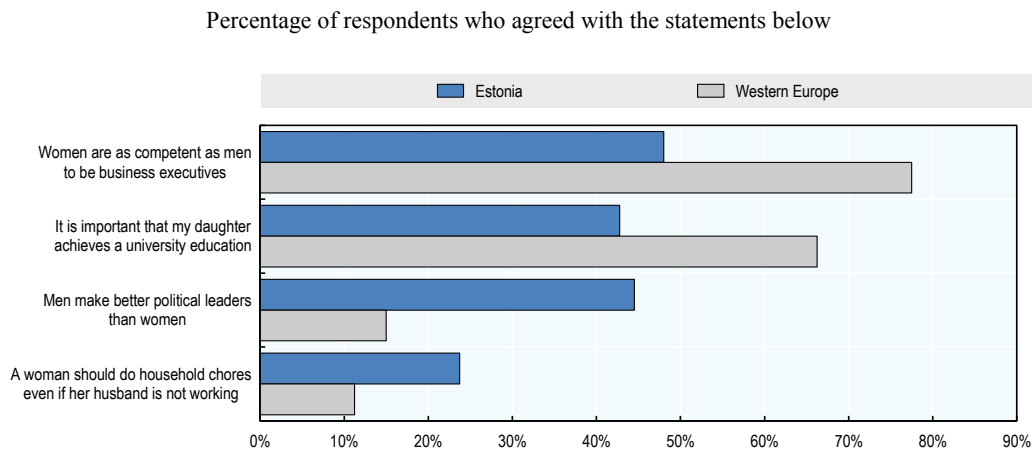
Girls in Estonia tend to have higher aspirations than boys and achieve just as well as boys, but receive lower wages as young women. In part, the gap is explained by the educational choices made by male and female students. Such decisions are likely to be shaped by assumptions about what employment it is reasonable for men and women to undertake in the workplace. Gender stereotypes are more prevalent in Estonia than in the average Western European country (Figure 4.4). It is noteworthy that among boys and girls from the same SES background and the same proficiency levels, it is girls who have the higher career expectations (Figure 4.5).

An important purpose of career guidance, therefore, is to provide young people from all backgrounds with relevant information and experiences in order to broaden and, potentially, to raise aspirations. This could help break intergenerational cycles of disadvantage (Musset and Mytna Kurekova, 2018<sub>[2]</sub>).

**The labour market implications can be profound**

While Estonian girls perform very well in relation to boys in PISA tests, soon after entry to the labour market, as set out in Figure 4.6 the earnings of young women are consistently lower than those enjoyed by young men. This earnings penalty is on average higher when comparing men and women with VET qualifications (41%) than when comparing men and women with higher education (34%). An important aspect of these earnings differentials relate to the programmes of study undertaken by young people prior to labour market entry.

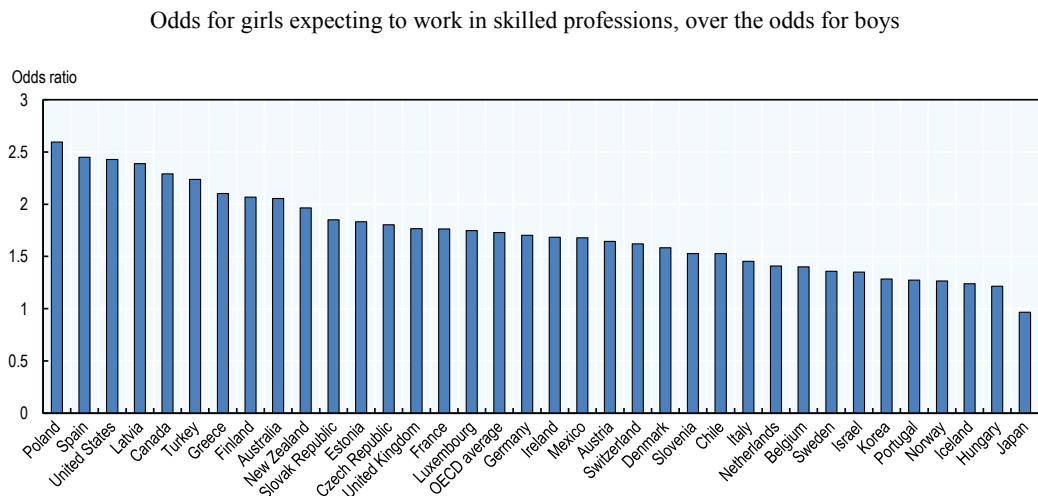
**Figure 4.4. Gender stereotypes are pronounced**



Source: OECD (2017<sup>[12]</sup>), *OECD Economic Surveys: Estonia 2017*, [https://doi.org/10.1787/eco\\_surveys-est-2017-en](https://doi.org/10.1787/eco_surveys-est-2017-en).

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**Figure 4.5. Girls have higher career aspirations than boys**



Note: After accounting for student characteristics and performance in mathematics.  
 Source: Musset, P. and L. Mytina Kurekova (2018<sup>[2]</sup>), “Working it out: Career guidance and employer engagement”, *OECD Education Working Papers*, No. 175, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/51c9d18d-en>.

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**Table 4.1. Labour market outcomes of different higher education and VET tracks, by field of study**

Graduates from higher education and VET in 2005-13, their average income (in EUR) in 2014, by VET fields of study and gender

Field of study	Higher education			VET		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
ICT	1 713	1 777	1 500	881	982	653
Security services	1 530	1 600	1 268	1 130	1 174	989
Transportation services	1 480	1 618	1 274	767	929	590
Engineering specialties	1 451	1 495	1 205	897	913	616
Architecture and construction	1 307	1 442	1 055	773	792	543
Health	1 236	1 641	1 201	653	972	624
Business and management	1 204	1 405	1 133	702	885	676
Veterinary	1 198	1 428	1 154	740	m	740
<b>Average</b>	<b>1 176</b>	<b>1 425</b>	<b>1 060</b>	<b>772</b>	<b>887</b>	<b>622</b>
Agriculture, forestry and fishery	1 064	1 201	896	829	853	695
Manufacturing and processing	1 060	1 296	951	656	778	565
Personal services	974	1 073	937	620	761	574
Environmental protection	974	1 135	906	707	863	647
Social sciences	901	1 153	886	638	1 040	612
Arts	807	922	767	677	811	598

Note: m = data are not available.

Source: Adapted from Ministry of Education and Research (2017<sup>[5]</sup>), *Background Report for OECD on Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Estonia*, [www.hm.ee/sites/default/files/uuringud/oecd\\_vet\\_background.pdf](http://www.hm.ee/sites/default/files/uuringud/oecd_vet_background.pdf).

### *Career guidance in Estonia has improved but some challenges remain*

Career guidance underwent a major and welcome change in 2014-15. Before 2014, guidance services were provided by a range of different institutions from both public and third sectors resulting in a service which was recognised as fragmented and uneven. Career guidance services are now provided by sixteen youth guidance centres (*Rajaleidja*) located in every county. The centres operate within a unified quality assurance system and have adopted common procedures and standards in an attempt to ensure that the quality of provision is consistent. During 2017, student engagement with the *Rajaleidja* centres with regard to career guidance was significant (Table 4.2). *Rajaleidja* centres offer schools a variety of different services:

- Career information
- Career counselling
- Social and pedagogical counselling
- Psychological counselling
- Special education counselling
- Speech therapy.



**Table 4.2. Number of participants in services organised by Rajaleidja centres**

2017

Types of activities	Number
Number of students who have received individual career services	30 710
Number of students who have received individual educational counselling	17 309
Number of teachers and parents who have received individual counselling	3 878
Number of participants in group counselling sessions	150 141

Source: Adapted from Foundation Innove (2018<sub>[13]</sub>), *Lifelong Guidance in Estonia*, [www.innove.ee/en/](http://www.innove.ee/en/).

### ***Consolidation of the Estonian career guidance system has been positive***

The recent consolidation of career guidance delivery is recognition of the importance with which such services are viewed in Estonia, and provides a strong foundation for provision. The profession of guidance counsellor is clearly and appropriately structured (Foundation Innove, 2018<sub>[14]</sub>). Provision acknowledges, and to some extent addresses, the importance of parents as influencers of young people. Employers are also actively engaged in delivery. With guidance located in regional centres, impartiality can be expected to be less of a concern than in countries where it is schools which fully deliver provision.

### ***However, the service also faces a significant challenge***

Following the spirit of school autonomy, it is schools and teachers who are responsible for organising career guidance activities and this has led to large variation in practice. Some schools engage actively in the offer and ensure that students engage in counselling sessions, visit job fairs and other exploratory activities including rich engagement with employers. Others do not or do so in an inconsistent fashion. The Foundation Innove reports that fewer than half of young people in grades 7 to 9 receive individual career services as do fewer than one in ten of students enrolled in vocational schools (Foundation Innove, 2018<sub>[13]</sub>). This partial take-up of the guidance offer raises concerns. Opportunity exists for a clearer statement of what all young Estonians should be able to expect in terms of guidance support. The goal is that in Estonia lifelong learning strategy, by 2020, 100% of basic school graduates have had career guidance (Ministry of Education and Research, 2014<sub>[15]</sub>).

### ***There are concerns that guidance services are uneven***

Whilst in Estonia, the project team heard concerns over the unevenness of career guidance provision, and there is reason to believe that provision requires further improvement: nearly one in five (18%) higher education graduates ultimately end up in VET provision; the average age of graduation for post-secondary VET is 29, much higher than in other OECD countries. Combined with high levels of NEET figures related to VET provision, a picture emerges of school-to-work transitions which are unduly fragmented and inefficient for both the individual and to society.

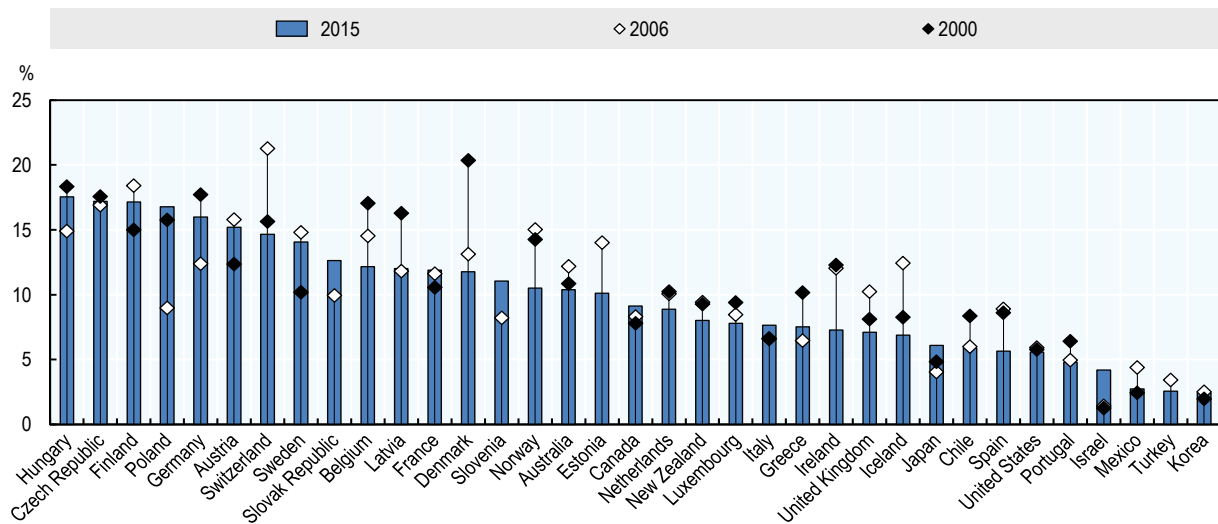
### ***The importance of effective career guidance for VET provision***

In many countries, there is a specific need for career guidance services to ensure that young people have an informed understanding of what VET has to offer. This is particularly the case where VET has a poor historical reputation and where the (often unspoken and often socially conditioned) assumptions of young people and parents have

failed to keep pace with meaningful changes in the quality of actual provision. In Estonia, PISA surveys record, by way of example, a falling interest in professions to which VET is commonly a gateway. In keeping with the pattern of rising aspirations noted earlier, there has been a large fall in the proportion of Estonian teenagers expecting to follow a career in semi-skilled employment (Figure 4.6). Career guidance, particularly where informed by labour market realities, and delivered from an early age in the school lives, can help challenge such assumptions. This is particularly important where students are required to switch schools in order to pursue VET programmes – as is often the case in Estonia. Such students need especially careful counselling as specific VET programmes can effectively place limits on future progression due to a narrowing of the curriculum (Musset and Mytna Kurekova, 2018<sup>[2]</sup>).

**Figure 4.6. In many countries relatively few young people expect to have a manual job**

The jobs that 15-year-olds expect to have by age 30: percentage expecting to have semi-skilled manual jobs (ISCO 6-8 categories)



*Note:* ISCO 6-8 categories include skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers; craft and related trades workers; plant and machine operators, and assemblers.

*Source:* Musset, P. and L. Mytna Kurekova (2018<sup>[2]</sup>), “Working it out: Career guidance and employer engagement”, *OECD Education Working Papers*, No. 175, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/51c9d18d-en>.

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## Recommendations

To address the challenges described, the following recommendations are advanced:

- Recommendation 4.1. Make some of the elements of the career guidance provision mandatory, in particular before grade 9, in all schools and in all classrooms, and monitor student participation to ensure that this goal is reached.
- Recommendation 4.2. Enhance use of data in career guidance, introducing destination surveys.
- Recommendation 4.3. Make sure that students get multiple opportunities to interact with people in work and workplaces.

## Analysis and supporting arguments

### *Make some of the elements of the career guidance provision mandatory*

*Recommendation 4.1. Make some of the elements of the career guidance provision mandatory, in particular before grade 9, in all schools and in all classrooms, and monitor student participation to ensure that this goal is reached.*

### *Career guidance activities should begin young*

Effective career guidance will begin young (in some forms in pre-primary and primary schooling) and intensify in the run up to key transition points. Even before starting school, children already have some awareness of jobs and are beginning to form views about whether particular types of work are likely to be for them or not. Such assumptions are commonly rooted in social contexts and can lead to young students ruling out certain professions (and programmes of study) from an early age with long lasting implications (Archer et al., 2013<sub>[16]</sub>). Consequently, career guidance activities should begin from primary school, and aim at broadening the interests and aspirations of children, allowing them to see the links between what they do in school and who they might ultimately become in the workplace (Watson and McMahon, 2005<sub>[17]</sub>). This can prevent stereotypical thinking from guiding the decision making of students (Howard et al., 2015<sub>[18]</sub>). The new Careers Strategy of the Department for Education in England (United Kingdom), for example, highlights the importance of career-related provision and employer engagement within primary education (Department for Education, 2017<sub>[19]</sub>) and see also Wade et al. (2011<sub>[20]</sub>) for the evaluation of career-related learning aimed at children aged 8 to 11 in England). In England (United Kingdom) and in Denmark, examples exist of national programmes which make it easy for primary schools to connect with people who are well placed to provide insights of value to children (Box 4.3).

Starting career guidance young will explicitly challenge stereotyping about the types of people who are suitable for different occupations and recognise the social contexts from which young people are drawn (CEDEFOP, 2017<sub>[21]</sub>; Musset and Mytna Kurekova, 2018<sub>[2]</sub>).

### *Each student need to receive pro-active and personalised guidance*

Career guidance services need to be adequate and protected against the risk of being continuously squeezed at the margins of an activity such as regular teaching. Every student, whatever his/her personal background, needs to:

- Understand enough about career options to enable them to make informed decisions, whenever these decisions are open to them.
- Understand that choosing certain subjects and/or study programmes opens door to careers that would otherwise be closed.
- Understand enough about the world of work to know what skills, qualifications and attributes they need to succeed in it.

Career guidance services need to inform all young people of VET options alongside the other options available to them, therefore a discussion with career guidance professionals, where these options can be presented, need to be mandatory, and ideally sessions need to be regular (OECD, 2010<sub>[22]</sub>; Musset and Mytna Kurekova, 2018<sub>[2]</sub>).

Countries use diverse types of interventions, such as professional career counselling, assessments and tests, information provision and contacts with the world of education and the world of work. Specific interventions can target groups of students who may need more help in making career choices. These approaches are complementary and in many countries students benefit from a wide combination of them<sup>4</sup> (Musset and Mytna Kurekova, 2018<sub>[2]</sub>). Estonia already has many of these elements in place, but access to these services is uneven, and voluntary. Professional career counselling (one-on-one interviews with counsellors) should be compulsory in the run up of choosing a school and a track in grade 9. Career guidance needs to be more proactive and to target specific groups to overcome the barriers faced by students from under-represented groups. Schools and *Rajaleidja* agencies need to monitor participation.

**Box 4.2. Interesting country practice in career guidance provision:  
Prince Edward Island in Canada**

A comprehensive, all-encompassing multi-programme approach to career guidance has been developed by the Government of Prince Edward Island in Canada. It is based on a co-ordinated, whole school approach organised by career development themes. The key elements include: career development integrated into health education in grades 1-9; compulsory career course in grade 10; experiential learning opportunities through wide range of courses and programmes offered by the communities in school and including hands-on experience out-of-school; partnership with post-secondary institutions, employment specialist and industry sectors; specialised training to career guidance staff and teachers; parent/guardian coaching programme; and student graduation and transition planner based on four step inquiry process linking interests and skill, support networks, labour market information and post-secondary education options.

*Source:* ICCDPP (2015<sub>[23]</sub>), *Promising/Best Practices: Canada*, [www.is2015.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Canada-Promising-Practices-Panel-2-2.pdf](http://www.is2015.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Canada-Promising-Practices-Panel-2-2.pdf).

*Mandatory provision tackles unspoken assumptions*

By making career guidance mandatory, an opportunity will emerge to ensure that the unspoken assumptions that young people have about vocational education can be challenged. Requiring student participation is likely to be of greatest benefit to young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. As teenagers, such young people are more likely to express confusion in career aspirations (Yates et al., 2010<sub>[24]</sub>). While ensuring that all young people receive a minimum level of guidance, schools should ensure that those young people who have most to gain from career guidance receive appropriate levels, even if above any entitlement. Such young people are likely to be from lower SES backgrounds and lacking family-based social networks which commonly enable easy access to reliable information concerning jobs and careers (Musset and Mytna Kurekova, 2018<sub>[2]</sub>; Mann, Rehill and Kashfipakdel, 2018<sub>[25]</sub>). It is essential that all young people are informed of the VET offer, and have the opportunity to visit VET schools and meet with people who work in occupations to which a VET education is a common gateway. Once in a VET programme, it is important that high quality career guidance continues, to ensure that students remain confident in their choice and are supported in thinking about future progression.

**Box 4.3. Connecting the world of work with the schools from an early age****The Route to VET**

In Denmark, VET students act as role models and visit primary and lower secondary schools to raise awareness of vocational education. The Route to VET campaign was initiated and is led by the Danish VET Student Union. At the school visit, the young role models present their own experiences on why they chose VET, their training and the possibilities anticipated in both the labour market and for further education.

Source: EEO, (2017<sub>[26]</sub>), *Kampagnen*, <http://eeo.dk/vejentil/om-kampagnen/>.

**Primary Futures**

In the United Kingdom, a project called Primary Futures, developed with the professional body representing primary school leaders (the National Association of Head Teachers) connects primary schools with the world of work by enabling schools to arrange visits from representatives of a broad range of occupations. Visits are arranged online and are designed to enable children see the relevance of what they learn at school and to challenge stereotypical thinking about jobs and careers. Through such experiences, it is anticipated that the children will become more motivated, better understanding how achievement at school relates to the possibilities that will open up for them later in life.

Source: Education and Employers Taskforce (2018<sub>[27]</sub>) Primary Futures website, <https://primaryfutures.org/>.

***Improve data in career provision and introduce destination surveys***

*Recommendation 4.2. Enhance use of data in career guidance, introducing destination surveys.*

***Labour market information can alter career decisions***

In addition to advice and guidance from well-trained and impartial professionals in advance of grade 9, every student needs to have easy access to trustworthy labour market information. Evidence from Spain suggests that students take labour market information into account when making educational decisions, including the decision to drop out (Aparicio, 2010<sub>[28]</sub>). Evidence from France suggests that students do adjust their preferences in terms of field of study when they receive information about their future prospects (Hestermann and Pistolesi, 2016<sub>[29]</sub>).

***Labour market information is available in Estonia***

Estonia has made significant progress in collating labour market information (LMI) about current and future demand for labour and making that information available to guidance practitioners. Through the OSKA programme, data is gathered on important economic sectors. The *Rajaleidja* online portal includes a database of more than 200 jobs with descriptions outlining the nature of work, working conditions, knowledge, skills, personal qualities and education demanded, training and progression opportunities, salary and other benefits. Information is supplemented by videos (CEDEFOP, 2017<sub>[30]</sub>). While the

availability of such data is important, it is used most effectively in the context of professional counselling. Practitioners, students and their families, moreover, need to be aware of such resources in user-friendly formats (CEDEFOP, 2016<sub>[31]</sub>).

#### Box 4.4. Destination surveys

Good quality data is essential to link educational provision to labour market needs, and it underpins career guidance. A destinations survey administered to those leaving vocational programmes around one year after completion, (or after they drop out) establishes whether graduates are working and in what occupation, whether they are pursuing further study, and if they are unemployed or otherwise not in the labour market. It can be undertaken through mobile phone contacts obtained from students, allowing a follow-up regardless of location. This allows the success or failure of different vocational programmes and institutions to be assessed. A survey can also ask graduates about what they thought of their vocational programme – whether it was well taught and provided them with relevant skills for example. In this way, such surveys also become a tool to monitor and improve quality. There is much international experience of destinations surveys, typically in higher education but also increasingly at secondary school level [as recommended by McCarthy and Musset (2016<sub>[32]</sub>), in the *Skills beyond School Review of Peru*].

In Australia the NCVET Student Outcomes Survey is conducted annually among students who completed some vocational training. Conducted by the National Centre for Vocational Education and Research since 1997, it is funded by the Australian government and provides information on employment and further study outcomes, the relevance and benefits of training, and student satisfaction. The information collected supports the administration, planning and evaluation of the VET system.

In Ireland, the School Leavers Survey is based on a national sample of school leavers, contacted 12 to 18 months after leaving school. Face-to-face interviews, used in this survey since its beginning in 1980, have become more difficult as a result of declining response rates and high costs. Therefore, from 2007 the Survey has used a mix of approaches. The selected individuals are asked to complete an online questionnaire, but could also ask for a paper copy. Participants are offered an incentive to complete the questionnaire, with their names being entered in a draw for prizes. Those who were particularly difficult to reach (e.g. early school leavers) were followed up by telephone initially and then face-to-face.

Source: OECD (2010<sub>[22]</sub>), *Learning for Jobs*, OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264087460-en>; McCarthy, M. and P. Musset (2016<sub>[32]</sub>), *Skills beyond School Review of Peru*, OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264265400-en>.

#### *More use might be made of destination surveys*

For LMI to have its greatest effect, it needs to be a resource which young people can make use of within their own highly personalised decision-making. LMI enriched by

first-hand encounters with the labour market through employer engagement enables young people to make the fullest sense of the available statistics. In this context, it is important that they are given opportunity to understand what happens to students like them following particular programmes of study once they enter the working world. Here, the case for destination surveys (Box 4.4) is strong. Such information and guidance can also be used to fight gender stereotypes as women tend to be under-represented in some areas where labour market outcomes are strong.

***Make sure that students interact with people in work and experience different workplaces***

*Recommendation 4.3. Make sure that students get multiple opportunities to interact with people in work and workplaces.*

***Direct experience of the workplace is essential within effective career guidance***

Research evidence highlights the importance of career guidance being designed in a manner to enable students to gain a realistic insight into the demands of different occupations. This provides experiential information which enables more informed decision-making about education and job paths as students progress through education and training systems (Hughes et al., 2016<sub>[1]</sub>; Mann, Rehill and Kashefpakdel, 2018<sub>[25]</sub>). Direct experience of the workplace, and the engagement of employers, is therefore essential. As noted above, due to the devolved decision-making within Estonian schools, while there is a strong history of employer engagement in Estonia, it is not certain whether enough of these meaningful interactions between schools and work places are provided to young people.

***Engaging people in work within career guidance activities***

A 2018 international literature review provides a checklist for understanding the effective characteristics of employer engagement within career guidance. The study argues that volumes matters, with a number of studies highlighting the importance of at least four encounters with people in work across schooling. These opportunities to interact with people in work also need to be varied, and personalised: evidence suggests that deficit models should be applied and young people entering educational experiences with limited access to relevant work-related networks should be targeted with more intense interventions (Mann, Rehill and Kashefpakdel, 2018<sub>[25]</sub>).

While a wide range of employer engagement activities can enrich career thinking, career talks (as described in Box 4.5), job fairs, workplace visits and episodes of job shadowing are held in particularly high value (Musset and Mytna Kurekova, 2018<sub>[2]</sub>). In the Estonian context, the opportunity exists to systemise the engagement of employers in career guidance.

**Box 4.5. Looking at the impact of career talks using longitudinal data**

Kashefpakdel and Percy (2016<sub>[33]</sub>) analyse the British Cohort Study (1970) longitudinal dataset, designed to survey approximately 17 000 babies born in Great Britain, and use data from 1986 and 1996. At age 16, individuals were asked whether they had school-organised contacts with employers outside of school. Among respondents, receiving a career talk from speakers outside school was the most common, with 66% of students participating in at least one such talk. The survey also indicated how many of these talks from a speaker outside of school the individual has received in year 10 and year 11 (respectively aged 14-15 and 15-16).

The study tests for relationships between school-mediated career talks with speakers from outside of the school at ages 14-16 and full-time earnings at age 26. Extensive controls include family and social background, learning environment, and prior attainment. Looking at net weekly incomes at age 26, the analysis provides a test, therefore, as to whether wage premiums observed by young British adults with higher levels of teenage school-mediated workplace exposure might best be understood through social capital theory: that access to higher volume non-redundant, trusted information and insight about the job market through encounters with working professionals can be seen to provide economic advantages in later job market transitions. The study finds that at age 14-15 participation each career talk is associated with an earning premium, at age 26, of 0.8% (rising to 1.6% where the teenager reported their career talks to have been “very helpful”). The hypothesis they test is that each additional career talk will be associated with an additional change in outcomes, since each outside speaker will convey different insights. The authors also took into account how useful the students reported the talk to be, as an estimate of its quality.

*Source:* Kashefpakdel, E. and C. Percy (2016<sub>[33]</sub>), “Career education that works: An economic analysis using the British Cohort Study”, *Journal of Education and Work*, Vol. 30/3, pp. 217-234, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639080.2016.1177636>.



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The great majority of other studies considered revealed evidence of mixed or negligible outcomes.

<sup>2</sup> Iannelli and Smyth (2008<sub>[34]</sub>) use EU Labour Force Survey data on school-to-work transitions in several European countries (although not in Estonia) and show that in Eastern European countries, in particular socio-economic background, has a significant influence on education decisions.

<sup>3</sup> For example, in Ida-Virumaa (where Russians are mainly located after the Tallinn area) is historically an industrial and mining area. Also three strong VET schools (now united into one) are located in Ida-Virumaa, which also might affect the decisions and attractiveness of VET.

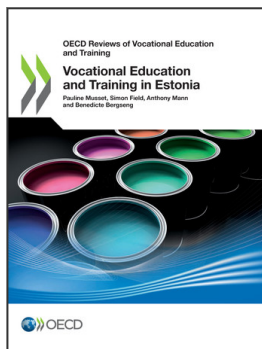
<sup>4</sup> In practice, identity development at pre-primary and primary levels of education can be organised in the form of co-operative activities or extracurricular activities that help children play roles and assume responsibilities. During secondary education, psychometric assessments, interest inventories, portfolios, action planning or personal development planning can also be used as frameworks for reflection.

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