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Career guidance services for school students in Lithuania

The paper presents an overview of career guidance service provision for school students in Lithuania: how it works, what career guidance services are provided in various educational and labour market institutions, plans for future. It also discusses legal basis, which creates preconditions for development of career guidance in schools.

The formation and development of the career guidance policy in Lithuania is under the responsibility of two executive authority institutions of the Republic of Lithuania:

- The Ministry of Education and Science, which is mainly responsible for career education and guidance service development in educational system;
- The Ministry of Social Security and Labour, which is responsible for career guidance service development and improvement in labour market.

These two ministries are responsible for political decisions on quality standards applied to career guidance service provision.

Career guidance system in Lithuania was started to develop in 2003, when a strategy of vocational guidance was approved by those two ministries. It is one of the key documents describing the vision and goals of the national career guidance policy, the roles of various institutions in the development and administration of the national career guidance system.

A huge impulse for development of the whole system was provided by entering European Union and occurrence of opportunity to use the support of structural funds for that.

During 2005–2008 using those funds two interrelated projects of national importance were implemented “Development and Implementation of the Career

Guidance System” and “Development and Elaboration of the Open Information, Counselling and Guidance System (AIKOS)”. Due to these projects, regulatory documents important for career information and counseling as well as various training programs and methodologies for career guidance practitioners were developed. Career guidance is still a priority as regards absorption of the European Union Structural Funds for 2003–2013.

The main career guidance service providers in educational system in Lithuania are:

- *General education schools* – Career guidance at schools takes several directions: extra curricula career information and guidance lessons, various tests for analyzing inclination and purposefulness, integration of career issues into different subjects, the activities of Career Information points in many schools, cooperation with other institutions providing career guidance services. Since 2007, finances for pupils’ career counseling have been allocated in the school budget and used for seminars, lectures, fairs and other events related to the pupils career counseling, purchase of various teaching tools.
- *Career Information Points (CIP)* – Career Information Points provide vocational information services: information on issues of career choices, training and employment opportunities in the country and abroad and the situation within the labour market and vocations. Career Information Points are set up at general education and training schools, youth centers, education centers, non-formal development institutions, etc. They are main actors, working directly with clients (learners, teachers, parents) in Lithuanian career guidance system. In some schools, CIPs have been reorganized into student career centers where services are provided by teams of school specialists.
- *Pedagogical-psychological services* – Pedagogical-psychological services perform psychological and pedagogical assessments of the child, advice parents and teachers on issues related to learning, behaviour, emotions and communication problems of learners with special needs or psychological difficulties, and provide recommendations on their further development. Psychologists of some pedagogical-psychological services also provide learners with the services of vocational information and counseling. The services are provided to students, their parents and teachers.
- *Career planning centre under the Lithuanian Youth Technical Creativity Palace* – The center is established by the Ministry of Education and Science with the purpose to perform the important functions in career education: organize vocational information and career planning activities within educational institutions, prepare and publish methodical and information material, develops and implements qualification improvement programmes for specialists, arranges workshops on career planning vocational information for students and parents.

The center plans, coordinates the development and accreditation of Career Information points.

- *National Open Information, Counselling and Guidance system (AIKOS)* – It is the internet site that introduces learning opportunities in Lithuania, provides information about educational and scientific institutions, qualifications, training licenses, etc., contains information about professions, admission rules, the situation in the labour market, etc. The website provides opportunity to search for information necessary for choosing a profession, training or studies.
- *Euroguidance project in Lithuania.* - Promotes career guidance ideas in Lithuania, delivers information on career planning, studies, mobility opportunities in Europe, creates various products and tools for guidance practitioners, organizes training seminars for career information and counselling professionals, each year publishes the Career Guidebook
- *The Lithuanian Labour Exchange Youth Employment centers* - 11 Youth job centers operate within the Labour Exchange throughout Lithuania, which provide information and counselling for young jobseekers, introduce to young people the world of professions, organize informative events and practical training, assist in preparation for job interviews, provide with profession descriptions and informative movies about occupations, administer professional orientation tests.
- *Career guidance services are also provided by non-governmental institutions.* One of them is Youth Career and Advising center in Kaunas (www.karjeroscentras.eu), which provides career guidance services for young people all over the country, consults on career planning, vocational choices issues pupils and students, administer professional orientation test, organizes seminars/workshops for students, teachers, parents, involves students and teachers in various national and international projects/programs. The center also is focused on developing, introducing new and innovative career guidance tools and materials. At the moment it is involved in Leonardo da Vinci transfer of innovation project “From School to Career: A methodology for a Student-centric career Guidance by using Career path Test (CPT)”. Together with partners from Poland, Turkey, Spain and Finland center’s experts will implement new on line guidance tool to help young people, especially from rural areas to self-diagnose their abilities, skills, personality type and many other elements that will help them to decide about their future career path, evaluate their professional tendencies. It will be also of great value for career counselors and parents as it will be followed by career counselling curriculum material and a manual for implementing the new system.

In conclusion it is important to mention that for the further development of effectively working career guidance system in Lithuania it is important to develop

a set of tools and instruments for provision of quality assurance process. Special attention should be paid to tools and instruments for analysis of the context of career guidance service provision, instruments for assessment of knowledge and skills. The plan for the future is to integrate career education into the general education in all schools, ensure the unity and continuity of the career guidance system in the transition from general education schools to vocational and higher education schools, to improve the areas of management, infrastructure and personnel training in career guidance.

Project From School to Career: A Methodology for a Student-Centric Career Guidance by using Career Path Test (CPT) <http://www.s2cpt.eu/>

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