

NATIONAL REPORT ON CAREER GUIDANCE

ARMENIA 2021

DISCLAIMER

National reports have not necessarily undergone proofreading and language editing.

The current report is informed by ILO's methodology for career development support systems review methodology, but does not follow it, due to its date of commencement.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACTU	Armenian Confederation of Trade Unions
ETF	European Training Foundation
GOA	Government of Armenia
ILO	International Labor Organization
ISCO	International Standard Classification of Occupations
MOLSA	Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs
MOE	Ministry of Economy
MOESCS	Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoTAI	Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure

NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NSS	National Statistical Service
POCD	Professional Orientation and Capacity Development
RA	Republic of Armenia
RUEA	Republican Union of Employers of Armenia
SEA	SEA
SNCO	State Non-Commercial Organization
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training

INTRODUCTION

After Armenia declared independence, big systematic changes took place in the country. It prepared the ground for the development of free market economy, which raised the need for new approaches and requirements in provision of sustainable employment opportunities to the population.

Previously, professional orientation and career choices were considered a simple decision to make by a vast majority of people. To choose a profession, it was only necessary to collect and combine information regarding the opportunities and possible job vacancies. Quite often this choice was made for the whole life. In our time, when the rapidly growing technologies affect the economy bringing new developing sectors, the professional and career choices require consistency, planning, evaluation and sometimes, setting goals is necessary from time to time.

During the last 20 years the structural unemployment and underemployment continues to be a problem in the country. In 2017, the 34.6 % of youth from the age group of 15-29 were NEET. According to the researches that were carried out in the recent years, it's difficult for youth to integrate into the labor market in Armenia. After getting education, the 62 % of youth spend approximately two years for finding permanent job¹. Only 53.7 % work with their professions, 33.6% are overqualified, and there is lack of education and qualification for 12.7%². This is based on the “chronic imbalance” of educational system and labor market, as well as the permanent tendency of youth choosing professions that are not highly demanded in the job market, without considering the future economic developments and forecasts. The supply doesn't match with the labor market needs and this results in the increased number of graduates with prestigious jobs with not so many vacancies and opportunities . The habit of choosing highly respected professions is connected with the stereotypical thinking that comes from the Soviet Union times. If the person chooses the profession of a lawyer or economist for instance, there are more chances of having higher position in society. In such cases the job market demands are not considered. Unfortunately, this way of thinking continues to be spread among people presently. When analyzing the job market demands the picture is different. According to Edu2Work statistics³, the profession of a lawyer is not included in the top ten demanded professions. Meanwhile, according to the recent statistics of MoESCS⁴, The Faculty of Law, YSU has 304 applicants in 2021. These statistics also show that the top faculties of the past few years include Medicine, Informatics and Applied Mathematics, Law, Finances. People mainly chose these professions, as they have been considered to be highly respected for many years (starting from Soviet times). As a result, there is a high number of graduates who encounter difficulties when entering job market.

Youth's current work aspirations are limited to a fairly small spectrum of professions (mainly economics and finance, law, tourism, and information technology (IT)), and their choices often have little basis in labor market demand or the alignment of their personal attributes and interests with the

¹ ILO, 2014, Labor market transition for young women and men in Armenia

² https://armenia.savethechildren.net/sites/armenia.savethechildren.net/files/library/LMR%20Report_arm.pdf

³ https://edu2work.am/#section=overview&sub=overview_1, The platform brings insights from the analysis of thousands of job postings and helps to get a better understanding of the Armenian labour market.

⁴ <https://escs.am/am/news/8699>

requirements of the field. Parents' preferences and the perceived popularity or prestige of the professions are typically the deciding factors ⁵.

According to the statistics of Ministry of High-Tech Industry, in 2020, IT sector was the fastest growing sector in Armenia: 21% growth in industry was recorded and 3400 new specialists with IT specialization entered the labor market. It is expected that approximately 20 000 specialists of the sector will be demanded in the coming five years. Engineering is the most demanded job of IT sector in Armenia. The statistics are based on the information provided by nearly 150 employers of IT sector.⁶

Further, with the market-orientated economy and technological development that we face nowadays, professional orientation and career management choices are not mandatory only for teens, who encounter the need to choose profession for the first time, but for the individuals in their lifelong learning process as well. According to the age group division, teens are included in the group of 12-16 years old. During Soviet union and for a long time after its collapse, in Armenia it was thought that people should decide on their profession during the teenage years while studying at school and the professional choice was thought to be one time process in the life of an individual. Nowadays people may need to make professional choices, reskilling and upskilling regardless the age. Individuals, regardless their age and social status, need career guidance services, lifelong learning opportunities and trainings to meet the requirements of labor market be competitive, and develop career management skills. If the main challenge for students is the professional choice and self-determination, for the youth the main objective is career guidance and management, improvement of employability skills and in case of the unemployed, it's important to find motivation which will result in finding a job.

To sum up, it should be stated that professional orientation and career management is complementary and lifelong process that not only results in the competitiveness of the human resource in the labor market, but also fosters productivity and economic development. Presently, making professional choice has become a big challenge as it has become difficult to make economic forecasts, especially for the medium and long terms. ICT technologies make progress with huge steps and enter every possible professional field, changing social values and the image of new generation.

⁵ Armenia Youth Situational Analysis, USAID's YouthPower Learning, October 2019

⁶ <https://edu.hti.am/>

1.1. The Reforms of Career Guidance system in Armenia

The reforms for the introduction of the Professional Orientation and Career Guidance system in the Republic of Armenia started in 2012, when the “Concept of the Development of Professional Orientation of the Republic of Armenia” and its 2012-2015 action plan was approved by the protocol resolution No. 40 of GOA⁷. The document was developed jointly with the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Science.

In order to achieve the goals and objectives of the professional orientation system, a model of professional orientation was proposed. The provision of opportunities for effective career choices, continuous career development and reskilling throughout life to people in different age groups, considering the personal type of the individual and the changing needs of the labor market was taken as the basis to the model.

The next step towards the introduction of professional orientation and career guidance services was the “Employment Strategy of the Republic of Armenia for 2013-2018” approved by Protocol resolution No. 45 of GOA of November 8, 2012⁸. In the main directions of the employment policy and implementation mechanisms it was clearly stated that “In the context of labour market and education system linkages, as means for the employment of population, long-terms effective balance of labour market, the professional orientation becomes quite important, which has to be based on the completeness of factors formulating professional inclinations of individuals”⁹.

The provision of professional orientation and career guidance services were identified as a priority in the reforms of the vocational education and training system. “2012-2016 Vocational education and Training” Reform Program (RA Government 4th of July 2012 session, N 27 protocol decision) The establishment of career centres in the TVET institutions were included in the main objectives of “Vocational Education and Training reform program of 2012-2016” approved by the government decree of 2012, It was expected that by 2016, 12 regional collages will have career centers working actively and providing consultation services and information to the students.

Based on the results of the research carried out for the development of a new strategy of the state youth policy, “Strategy of State Youth Policy for 2013-2017 years” approved by the Government Decree No 1693-Ն of December 27, 2012¹⁰, activities were chosen for the implementation of professional orientation of youth.

Within the framework of the system reforms, the primary objective was to create and provide lifelong career guidance and consulting opportunities to the individuals, regardless their social status.

According to the concept paper, the joint system of professional orientation includes general education, TVET and higher education institutions, regional employment centers. The trained specialists of these institutions will receive methodology that is needed and will provide professional orientation and career guidance services according to the target groups (pupils, students, job seekers, unemployed, etc.).

Provision of methodology to the structures of the professional orientation and career guidance system, training and supervision of the specialists, awareness rising activities were carried out by “Methodological Centre for Professional Orientation” previously “Youth Professional Orientation Centre” SNCO, RA Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (according to Government Decree N 1549-Ն of December 13, 2012¹¹).

The RA Government’s “Work, Armenia” strategy, approved by Resolution No. 1753-L on December 5, preserves the actions of further institutionalization and development of all components of the national system of professional orientation and career guidance. Particularly:

- Action 1.5 — By 2023, wide implementation of the career guidance institute in general schools;
- Action 3.1— By 2020, start reviewing the principles of career centers operating in higher education institutions;
- Action 3.2— In 2021, creating individual files of graduates in all spheres of professional education and launching a unified database by at least 40%;

⁷ Concept of the Development of Professional Orientation of the Republic of Armenia, <http://www.irtek.am/views/act.aspx?aid=68214>

⁸ Employment Strategy of the Republic of Armenia for 2013-2018, <http://www.irtek.am/views/act.aspx?aid=68183>

⁹ Unofficial translation of the “Employment strategy 2013-2018 of the Republic of Armenia” http://www.gdf.am/images/Employment_Strategy_2013-2018.pdf

¹⁰ Strategy of State Youth Policy for 2013-2017 years, <https://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?DocID=80598>

¹¹ <https://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?docid=80094>

- Activity 3.4— By the end of 2021, establishment of information and consulting sites in various military units as well as providing assistance connected with questions concerning professional orientation and inclusion in the employment agency services after their demobilization, ensuring growth by at least 5%.¹² Taking into account the International Standard Classification of Occupations¹³, the RA Minister of Economy based on the decree N 873-N The “Occupational Classifier of the Republic of Armenia”¹⁴ was approved on September 19, 2012, in which these occupations are built on the principle of four-level classification: main group, subgroup, small group and lower group.



The "Occupational Classifier of the Republic of Armenia" was the basis for the RA professional classification system, which is presented in the "Classification of Occupations, Specializations and Positions of Employees of the Republic of Armenia" (approved by the decree of Minister of Economy of the Republic of Armenia N 872-N¹⁵ of September 19, 2013), which defines the titles of the professions, specializations, positions of the employees in the Republic of Armenia, as well as their requirements with the corresponding codes. The classification is based on the alphabetical order of the workers and employees occupation titles. The classifier is based on the seven-digit codes of professions, specializations and positions, as well as information on each profession, specialization and position.

Based on the "Occupational Classifier of the Republic of Armenia" brief descriptions of professions were developed and provided to the career specialists. Currently, activities are being implemented for creating an online platform that will include information about occupations, qualifications and skills.

1.2. Governance and coordination framework

The effectiveness of the insertion of professional orientation and career guidance system largely depends on all stakeholders: government bodies, local and community organizations, public schools, TVET and higher education institutions, employers employers' unions, social service providers, chambers of commerce and industry, scientific institutions, NGOs, Mass media as well as the active cooperation and involvement of families and society in the process. In this process, the clarification and distribution of functions between the participating parties is important, so that all involved parties cooperate effectively.

According to the Concept of the Development of Professional Orientation of the Republic of Armenia,¹⁶ on the national level, the main bodies responsible for the career guidance system policy are MoLSA and MoESCS, but the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Economy, as well as Ministry of High-Tech Industry have some involvement in the process and within the scope of their competences, provide necessary information for the development of methodology and service provision.

With a view to accomplish the goal and objectives of the vocational orientation system, a model of vocational orientation is inserted which primarily relies on ensuring lifetime opportunities for an efficient selection, change of professions and continuous career development for different age groups and persons in different social and work situations, considering each individual's personal features, as well as the changing situation in the labor market demand.

In the model the main units include the system of general education, primary (trades), technical and higher educational institutions, as well as institutions outside the education system engaged in the delivery of services with regard to selection of professions, career guidance, retraining and requalification.

¹² "Work, Armenia" Strategy <http://www.irtek.am/views/act.aspx?aid=152312>

¹³ International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) is a tool that aims to categorize work into clearly defined groups according to assigned tasks and responsibilities. The latest version of the classification, ISCO-88, was adopted by the ILO in 1988. In ISCO-88, occupations are divided into four groups/ levels, from executives to simple task performers.

¹⁴ Occupational Classifier of the Republic of Armenia. <https://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?DocID=94900>.

¹⁵ Classification of Occupations, Specializations and Positions of Employees of the Republic of Armenia <https://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?DocID=104598>.

¹⁶ Concept of the Development of Professional Orientation of the Republic of Armenia, <http://www.irtek.am/views/act.aspx?aid=68214>

Coordinated and complementary activities of all above mentioned stakeholders and their appropriate structures (general schools, TVET's, public employment services, other social institutions) are key for the implementation and effective functioning of the vocational orientation system.

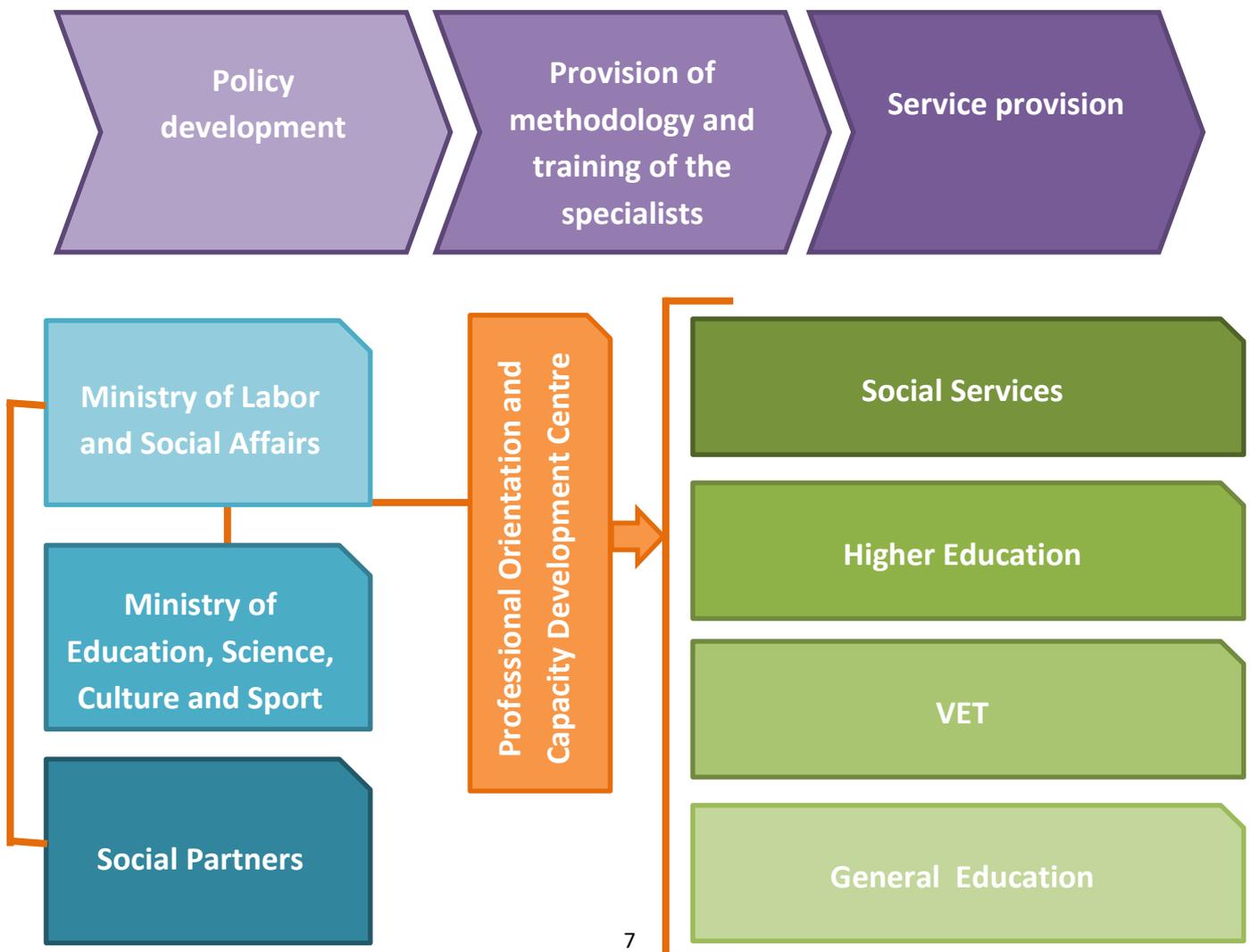
The insertion of the model in each structure and its effectiveness is described below.

The interested participants of the national system of professional orientation are multi-layered and multi-factor. The government, as well as the parties to the social partnership, the Republican Union of Employers of Armenia, Confederation of Trade Unions of Armenia, and non-governmental organizations, play a great role in the the national system of professional orientation..

Deputy Prime Minister's office has constantly paid attention to the professional orientation and career guidance system in the recent three years. In 2019, GOA approved "Work, Armenia" strategy initiated by them. Its main objective of the strategy is to promote employment, to ensure improvement of the life quality of people through institutional reforms and professional self-realization.

Prioritizing the importance of establishment and development of unified lifelong career guidance system for all age groups and sectors in the country as well as methodology development and service provision principles, the coordination of the system is attached to the Methodological Centre for Professional Orientation, MOLSA of RA, presently referred as Professional Orientation and Capacity Development Centre, a branch of National Institute of Labour and Social Research. The POCD Centre covers the coordination, provides professional orientation and career guidance methodology for all structures of the system, implements TOT and supervision of career specialists. The modules and methodology developed by the POCD Centre have been piloted in public schools, TVET institutions, universities, regional employment centres, orphanages, and child care centres. POCD Centre also provides trainings and consultation services to the specialists to ensure the stability and activeness of the professional orientation and career guidance system.

Chart 1: The Roles of the Main Parties



In the field of Career Guidance the main responsible parties for strategy development are MoLSA and MoESCS. Since 2013, in accordance with the State Budget Law, "Provision of professional orientation methodology and staff training" activity is funded annually. Accordingly, the POCD Centre, that is responsible for the implementation of these activities, provides methodological support, trainings and supervision of career guidance specialists of Formal Education Institutions and State Social Services. Thus, on the national level, the joint strategy and role division provided an opportunity to avoid having the same services in different systems, to have one methodology source, to foster the regular provision of services in the formal education system and in social services out of education. The taken steps will be completed in 2023. As the State Budget share is limited, the private and non-governmental organizations operating in this field unite their resources to support the state structures. The cooperation with World Vision Armenia, COAF, Save the Children, SOS Children's Villages Armenia, The Armenian Red Cross Society and others are considered examples of successful cooperation with private organizations. New initiatives, pilot programs are being implemented, assessed, later to be considered and applied in the state policies.

The cooperation between the RA MOLSA and MoESCS continues. The cooperation of the two ministries for the insertion of development of career centres in TVET institutions were highly valued by the EU and ETF monitoring working groups. In particular, in the reports of Turin Process (2016, 2017, 2019 2020) and in "Armenia: Country Strategic Paper 2017-20"¹⁷ published by ETF, it was mentioned that the activities implemented by the Center in the field of TVET education has been recognized as a successful example of cooperation between the MOLSA and MoESCS.

In 2019, during the ETF conference: "Skills and qualifications - benefits for people"¹⁸ of professional orientation and career guidance system development in Armenia was suggested as a success story from partner countries. This model of system differs from other countries' models, as it has common principles in management and the POCD Centre ensures the effective communication between two ministries. While MoSLA provides methodology and training, MoESCS is responsible for the institutionalization and implementation of it.

1.3. Organization of career guidance service delivery

According to concept paper the goal of the professional orientation system is to provide opportunities for free and informed selection of professional activities which is maximally meets the individual's interests, needs and abilities, as well as the labor market demand in qualified and competitive cadres.

The establishment and development of a uniform professional orientation system aims to address comprehensively the following key issues:

- 1) Building the individual's ability to orientate independently in constantly changing situations;
- 2) Ongoing provision of information, advice, as well as other necessary opportunities with regard to selection of professions or occupations;
- 3) Identifying the psychological and physiological peculiarities, inclinations, interests and incentives of individual receiving professional orientation;
- 4) Methodological support to organizations and specialists involved in the delivery of professional orientation services.

The main principles for implementing professional orientation are:

- 1) Ensuring the accessibility and voluntary nature of professional orientation for all social groups;
- 2) Non-discrimination in issues relating to professional orientation;
- 3) Ensuring professional orientation based on the specifics of each stage of the individual's life;
- 4) Ensuring the link between learning, life and work;
- 5) Prioritizing the individual's interests and abilities, and the humanitarian nature of professional orientation;
- 6) Informed choice of a profession;

¹⁷ https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/m/83EAA920435EEEFEC125821F005351CE_CSP%202017-2020%20Armenia_Updates%202018.pdf

¹⁸ https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2019-11/etf_benefits_for_people_agenda_final.pdf

- 7) Professional orientation aimed towards ensuring effective employment;
- 8) Social partnership.

In accordance with the concept, the career guidance system includes:

- 1) general education;
- 2) professional education;
- 3) institutions that support a person in choosing a profession.

The educational programs implemented in the Republic of Armenia are the following: general education (basic and complementary) professional education programs (basic and complementary).

According to Article 6 clauses 2 and 3 of the “RA Law on Education”, the Republic of Armenia, in cooperation with the social partners, ensures the development of the vocational education and training system in accordance with the needs of the labor market, guarantees free general education as well as vocational, secondary, higher, postgraduate professional education.¹⁹

In the inserted model the main units include the system of general education, primary (trades), technical and higher education institutions, as well as institutions outside the education system engaged in the delivery of services with regard to selection of professions, career guidance, retraining and requalification.

LEVELS	SYSTEM AND STRUCTURES	MAIN TARGET	OBJECTIVES
I	Elementary School (grades 1-4)	Students	Discovering oneself, forming ideas about the world of professions, effective communication, understanding the roles of a job in one’s life through different activities.
II	Middle School (I) (grades 5-7)		Identifying personality, interests and abilities of an individual, information on the world of professions and occupations. Working with parents.
III	Middle School (II) (grades 8-9)		Self-analysis of abilities, development of self-knowledge and self-determination skills, career planning, development of entrepreneurial behavior, research on future jobs, full awareness of education and labor market. Working with parents.
IV	High School (grades 10-12)		Development of different aspects of self-determination, discovery of career motivation, rising awareness on working sectors and lifelong learning, personal growth and career planning, development of knowledge and skills through in-depth study of separate subjects in professional streams.
V	Professional and Postgraduate Educational Institutions (TVET, universities)	Student Researcher	Self-determination, getting to know jobs and job roles, development of key competencies in the labor market, support for the transition from education to work.
VI	Systems operating out of education (social centers,	Job seeker, Unemployed (including migrants, young people	Work motivation, professional orientation and self-determination, development of career management skills, development of key competencies in the labor

¹⁹ Law of the Republic of Armenia on education <https://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?DocID=143873>

Coordinated and complementary activities of all abovementioned stakeholders and their appropriate structures (general education schools, technical and higher education institutions, public and non-public employment services, special professional orientation institutions, agencies involved in youth affairs, health and other social institutions) are key for the implementation and effective functioning of the professional orientation system.

Both in terms of its coverage and context, the general education system is the primary and basic professional orientation unit where the orientation activities begin and mainly completed.

In the general education sector the activities are organized based on the existing general schools, gymnasiums, educational complexes. Their activities aim to ensure informed selection of professions by students during the teaching process by taking into account the interests, preferences, psychological and physiological traits and health status of each student, as well as the market requirements.

The main professional orientation activities are carried out by deputy principals of general education institutions responsible for specialized educational support, as well as social teachers and class mentors.

As there is no job title for professional orientation and career guidance specialists in the staff list, the function of coordinating these activities is assigned to them. Professional orientation activities are carried out also during subject classes by the respective teachers. In Cooperation with MoESCS, the development of subject-orientated career guidance TOTs for subject teachers will be designed.

The coordinating specialists possess necessary knowledge in pedagogy, psychology, physiology. They are also skilled in conducting individual and group activities with students. Besides, they are fully informed about the labor market, professions and occupations. In this context they closely work with class mentors, subject teachers and parents.

Professional orientation services at general education institutions are delivered based on the General Education Standard approved by the Government Decree No 136-Ն of February 4, 2021²⁰. A sample of curriculum is provided by the POCD Centre and each school develops its own based on it.

Professional orientation and career guidance is being implemented at the TVET and Higher Education Institutions through career centers While TVET career centers are managed by MoESCS, the career centers of Higher Education Institutions are established and managed by the institution itself, which depends on the peculiarities of institutional legislation.

It should be mentioned that 20 out of 27 Certified Higher Education Institutions implement career guidance activities and support graduates in finding a job. There is at least one position for career guidance specialist in each institution. The provision of career guidance services is based on the regulations of each institution. There are databases of graduates engaged in career guidance activities in 17 institutions. The absence of joint approach for the management of career centers and assessment mechanisms in Higher Education institutions makes difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of career guidance activities and to discover the strengths and weaknesses of the career centers. Regarding the career services of TVET institutions, it should be mentioned that there is a joint approach which is described below.

Public and non-public providers of employment services are regarded as an important structure that provide career guidance services to unemployed, job-seekers, migrants, vulnerable people, NEET as well as those individuals who need retraining and requalification, or are unable to align to the rapidly changing labor market conditions.

These institutions that possess comprehensive information about the Armenian labor market, including vacancies, the list of highly demanded professions and occupations, as well as conduct surveys and in-depth analyses are able to carry out higher quality, balanced and targeted activities.

People with or without an employment record, as well as those seeking to obtain a new profession or to meet the market needs can become the beneficiaries of the institutions of the above unit.

The activities of the above unit are complete as the institutions organize their operations so that they are not limited to citizens applying to them but also cover higher grade students of general schools, and students of primary (trades) and technical educational institutions and universities along with actively collaborating with the units and specialists of these institutions.

²⁰ General Education Standard, <https://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?docid=149788&fbclid=IwAR1PVG3M1RT-Zkfy3Z1NpM57daEStEZ0wJ9y3IAqB6jRWbw2VIOckl6Azg>

Professional orientation services are introduced to the orphanages and child care centers which operate in the system of MOLSA of RA.

The POCD Center provides the methodology of professional orientation and career guidance services in all systems. The training and supervision of specialists are carried out by the POCD Centre's as well.

1.4. Methodological approach of Career Guidance

With the present-day challenges, the rapidly changing economy demands, new methods are needed in the delivery of professional orientation and career guidance process. Armenia was not left out of the process of these reforms. The traditional professional orientation methods used during Soviet times are being replaced by new approaches. In particular, the importance of career management and entrepreneurship skills' development, motivation, upskilling, reskilling is highlighted which results in the labor market competitiveness.

According to the concept, the insertion of professional orientation system in the country was set as an objective, with the main purpose of creating opportunities for conscious career choice which would correspond to the individual's interests, needs, peculiarities and meet the need of qualified and competitive employees.

Different researchs carried out among employes show that, employers, while choosing employees among young people entering job market, mainly give importance to the personal values (responsibility, loyalty) soft skills(ability to learn quickly, knowledge of foreign language, creativity, ICT literacy) while the professional skills are secondary. The development of soft skills has a positive impact on the professional self-determination and competativeness in the job market.

The basis of the proposed methodology developed by the POCD Centre is the requirement of a pro-market economy. If the educational system views career guidance services from a short-term perspective, then from the social security perspective, it is not about choosing the right one-time career, but rather about awareness, the development of key competencies (effective communication, employability and entrepreneurship skills, etc.) and self-determination in different ages and social-working situations. The methodology is based on methods of pedagogy, andragogy, psychology and other sciences. Conscious career choice gives the individual an opportunity for an adequate social status. How much the society will gain or lose and the individual himself, depends on whether the individual will make effective career choice in accordance with his interests, abilities, as well as the economy requirements of the country or community.

On the one hand, planning one's own career development is a personal issue of each person, which demonstrates the high level of responsibility for one's own well-being, the personal need for having professional education and occupation, on the other hand, the person lives in society and his activities should be of concern to the society. The conscious career choice determines an individual's social activity, awareness, and in general, attitudes in life. From the perspective of society, the productivity of labor, the efficiency of the intellectual potential's use, as well as migration depends on the individual's conscious career choices. Therefore, it has a direct impact on the country's economy.

From 2013 to 2017, by the RA MOLSA ministerial decree, methodological council was established to assess the methodology quality of career guidance and educational activities. The council involved representatives from RA MOLSA, RA MoESCS, RA Ministry of Economy, Republican Union of Employers of Armenia and universities. The Council assessed the developed methodology, personnel training programs, approved the publication of the research and methodological works carried out by the POCD Centre, their practical usage, supported the organization of conferences and seminars. In order to maintain the scientific basis of the methodology the cooperation with the professors of scientific institutions continues.

PART 2. CAREER GUIDANCE IN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

2.1. Services in General Education institutions

Based on the Article 18 of the RA Law On Education²¹ the goal of general education is the comprehensive and harmonious development of the mental, spiritual, physical and social qualities of students, the formation of a person as a future citizen, professional orientation, and the preparation for independent life and vocational education.

According to the Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia in the 2019-2020 academic year 1,400 education institutions operated in the country (542 in cities, 858 in villages) with 390.511 students²².

²¹ RA Law On Education <https://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?DocID=143873>

²² https://www.armstat.am/file/article/soc_vich_2019_2.pdf, Page 32.

General educational programs of elementary, primary and middle education are aimed at the all-round development of a child as an individual, the formation of his worldview, as well as the creation of a basis for choosing and comprehending professional programs corresponding to their preferences, inclinations and abilities.

Prior to the adoption of the concept, there was no unified system of career guidance in public general schools. The activities were carried out by individual teachers or the school administration. There was no methodology to guide the teachers as well.

The action plan approved by the concept became the foundation for cooperation of MoLSA and MoESCS. Both in terms of its coverage and context, the general education system is the primary and basic professional orientation unit where the orientation activities begin and mainly completed.

According to the model developed by the POCD Centre and proposed to the MoESCS in 2013, career guidance services should be provided from elementary school (1-4 grades), in secondary school it should be divided into two stages: separately for 5-7 grades, and 8-9 grades, and in high school.(10-12 grades): For each age group a separate objectives and outcomes are described in General Education Standard²³. But, presently, the insertion of career guidance activities are in process in middle school (8-9 grades) and in high school highlighting the importance of professional self-determination of students.

In 2013-2020, the POCD Centre trained more than 900 pedagogues from about 500 schools in the country. Currently, in a number of schools in Yerevan and regions, professional orientation activities are regularly carried out with the proposed model by the POCD Centre. There are schools that have developed a curriculum based on the provided methodology, and introduced a subject or a club of professional orientation.

According to the model provided by the POCD Centre, professional orientation activities at school start for the 7th grade students. At least one hour is provided for professional orientation activities each week (34 hours for the whole educational year). It's preferred that the services are provided by the specialists trained with the methodology of POCD Centre. Before the start of educational year, the pedagogue or pedagogical team, who is responsible for the provision of professional orientation services present educational plan based on the above-

mentioned methodology. Besides the modules, according to the educational plan, visits to employers from different sectors, educational institutions and State Employment agencies are planned. The educational plans also include watching and discussions of films about different professions and other active events (professions' days, job fairs, etc), individual consultations and activities with parents. The topics of modules for 7-11 grade students' professional orientation can be found in appendix.

Public administration bodies are also supported in this initiative by the non-governmental organizations within the frameworks of different programs. In 2019, "Save the Children Armenia" within the framework of "EU4Youth: Better Skills for Better Transition" Programme vocational orientation clubs were introduced in 10 schools in Yerevan and regions with the aim to support THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE, CULTURE AND SPORT, and the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs in the implementation of professional orientation.

See the table suggested below²⁴ (Analysis of the study of vocational guidance clubs in target schools, Yerevan, 2020, was carried out within the framework of the "EU4Youth: Better Skills for Better Transition" Programme, Yerevan, 21.01.2020, page 8).

N	Region	City	Basic School
1.	-	Yerevan	N 80

²³ General Education Standard, <https://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?docid=149788&fbclid=IwAR1PVG3M1RT-Zkfy3Z1NpM57daEStEZ0wJ9y3IAqB6jRWbw2VIOckl6Azg>

²⁴ Analysis of the study of vocational guidance clubs in target schools, Yerevan, 2020, was carried out within the framework of the "EU4Youth: Better Skills for Better Transition" Programme, page 8

2.		Yerevan	N 130
3.	Kotayq	Charentsavan	N 6
4.	Tavush	Ijevan	N 5
5.	Lori	Stepanavan	N 6
6.	Gegharkunik	Sevan	N 4
7.	Gegharkunik	Gavar	N 5
8.	Vayots Dzor	Yeghegnadzor	N 2
9.	Gegharkunik	Dzoragyugh	
10.	Tavush	Nerkin Karmiraghbyur	

In the scope of this project POCD Centre carried out the training of pedagogues from schools that were presented by the MoESCS, provided methodology and supported the specialists providing consultation during the whole educational year. "Save the Children In Armenia" provided technical support:

- Renovation of classrooms for professional orientation clubs;
- Provision of technical equipment (such as computer, projector, printer, speaker, whiteboard);
- Provision of movable furniture and stationery designed to provide an interactive educational process.

During the whole educational year, professional orientation services were provided to the the 8-11 grade students from the chosen schools in their clubs. As a result of the research conducted by an independent expert group at the end of the semester, the methodology and the impact of courses on students' professional self-determination were assessed. "Analysis of quantitative and qualitative data has shown that the format used by professional orientation clubs is quite effective. As a result, students have developed skills of independently searching and finding information about self-knowledge and self-analysis, professions, occupations, professional education, and the labor market. The majority of the target groups stated that the content of the manuals was effective, it was rated considerably high by the teachers who took part in the survey(4.5 out of 5) and students (4.9 out of 5)." Based on the positive results and conclusions of educational institutions, the use of "Manual of Professional Orientation in General Education Schools", was approved by the Minister decree of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of RA, No. 1287-A / 2 of December 18, 2019²⁵.

Currently, actions are taken towards institutionalization of the system. In 2020, National Education Standard for General Education was reviewed and by the suggestion of the POCD Centre, separate indicators were added to the outcomes of the of elementary, middle and high school students, aimed at the conscious career choice.

It is planned to introduce professional orientation services in all 1400 general schools of the country by 2023 in the framework of the "Work, Armenia" strategy.

In general education the professional orientation activities are considered to be an important component of educational process. The work with the students is carried out during extracurricular

MoESCS also discusses the opportunities to start professional orientation activities for elementary school.

The process is based on the identification of personal qualities, preferences, interests, the development of key competencies, the transfer of information, knowledge about professions, the importance of different subjects in for this or that profession and occupation.

²⁵<http://www.mycareer.am/arm/resources/%D5%81%D5%A5%D5%BC%D5%B6%D5%A1%D6%80%D5%AF%D5%B6%D5%A5%D6%80>

2.2. Services in TVET institutions

The introduction of career guidance activities in TVET institutions was considered initially within the framework of professional orientation reforms, in accordance with the Concept, Vocational Education and Training Development Program of 2013-2018 and The Employment Strategy 2013-2018 of RA. According to the “**Better Qualifications for Better Jobs**” budget support programme signed by the Government of Armenia and EU in 2016, the improvement of the labor market services and employability in Armenia with a particular emphasis on agriculture was highlighted. One of the main priorities of the agreement was development of career guidance services in TVET institutions.

The introduction of professional orientation and career guidance services in TVET institutions was launched in 2013. A package of materials related to the institutional and methodological base of the TVET institutions' Career Guidance units developed by POCD Centre was approved by its Board (13th June 2013) and then piloted with support of the ETF project “ETF Activities in Armenia Linked to the Reforms of Vocational, Education and Training”, during the period of 2013-2016. The package includes: Exemplary Regulation on the TVET institutions Career Guidance Unit; Job Profile of the Career Consultant/Coordinator; Exemplary questionnaire for monitoring of the career guidance units. The package was officially transferred from MoLSA to MoESCS in March 2017, and then, in May 2017, MoESCS disseminated it to the TVET institutions.

The content of the guide can be found in appendix 2.

In 2013-2021, the POCD Center, in cooperation with MoESCS, regularly conducted trainings of more than 160 career counselors of all TVET institutions in the country. Methodological support and consultation (educational supervision) services were also provided. A database of the students and alumni, who are provided with career guidance services, has been developed to document career guidance activities. The ongoing process is carried out by the joint efforts of two ministries.

From 2018, by the state budget, a separate position was planned for the professional orientation and career guidance specialist in their staff list. It ensured efficiency and sustainability of the activities implemented previously as a pilot project and became an important background for the institutionalization of career guidance activities in TVET institutions.

Presently, all TVET institutions have a position of professional orientation and career guidance specialist in their staff list and career units were established

The main goal of the Unit is to promote the enhancement of students' and graduates' competitiveness at labour market and the development of their career planning skills by providing career information, advice, career education and guidance services.

The Unit implements the following functions:

- a. provision of career information, advice and guidance services to students in individual modes;
- b. if necessary, the identification of visitor's personal qualities, hobbies, skills by using psychometric methods such as testing, communication, observation (development of an individual programme aimed at the final result);
- c. gathering information on the education and training, priorities of economy, labour market (local, regional, national and international) analyses and forecast and dissemination them among the students in print and online modes;
- d. provision of group (through non-formal training programmes) and individual services directed to the development of skills for the first access to labour market;
- e. creation and maintenance of career resource library (data on students, graduates, educational establishments, partners and employers);
- f. notification about and creation of opportunities for searching of vacancies, voluntary and public works, in self-service mode;
- g. organisation of and notice on such active events as seminars, workshops, round-table discussions, lectures, open classes, non-formal trainings, fairs and exhibitions;
- h. direction of job seeking students to SEA regional and local centres to get involved in state employment programmes;
- i. involvement of the social partners, employers, trade unions in the organisation of students' career counselling activities;
- j. implementation of administrative activities:
 - 1) planning and management of the Unit's activities,

- 2) maintenance of permanent communication with other units, lecturers and other relevant employees of the institution,
- 3) running of the administration, making of reports, data registration etc.,
- 4) provision of internal and external communication, including publication of the Unit's works for wider range of students and the community.

At least twice a year the POCD Center and the TVET department of the MoESCS conduct monitoring to assess the services provided to students, alumni and to identify problems. For the qualitative evaluation, the specialists of the POCD Centre also made visits to institutions for monitoring. During these visits the implemented activities were studied, the problems were discussed, methodological support and consultation services were provided to the trained specialists and the directors as well.

2.3. Monitoring and Evaluation of graduates in TVET institutions

At present, career guidance units are systematically functioning in 96 public TVET institutions and there is at least one trained career specialist. In addition, in all institutions career guidance services are provided according to the methodology developed by the POCD Centre.

POCD Centre provides different types of assistance to the TVET colleges: in establishing Career Guidance Units; in organisation and implementation of vocational orientation and career guidance services to College students and graduates, as well as to general school pupils²⁶. POCD Centre has enjoyed considerable assistance from ETF in terms of staff training, organisation of training for the Colleges' Career Guidance Consultants, development of methodologies, etc.

Monitoring of the TVET institutions' Career Units activities was implemented in February-March 2018 and in November-December 2019, jointly by POCD Centre and MoESCS, and was aimed at identification of both the nature and the content of the services provided by those units to the beneficiaries and the number of students enjoyed the abovementioned services.

In 2018, 83 TVET institutions from 102 participated in the monitoring implementing by POCD Centre. Visits were organized by the POCD Centre specialist. The engagement of students in career guidance services was monitored according to the previously designed questionnaire. The results show that there were 7,693 graduating students, out of which 3,950 received Career Guidance services.

According to the data collected by MoESCS, in two additional institutions, not covered by the POCD Centre monitoring, career guidance was also provided: from 636 graduating students 503 received career guidance services.

In the remaining institutions, where career guidance services were not provided, the number of graduating students is as follows:

Thus, the total number of graduating students of the TVET system during 2017 was equal to 8,833, out of which 4,453 or 50.4% received career guidance services.

A clear manifestation of the Career Guidance units' achievements are data on the TVET institutions' 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 graduates' job placement. 1550 graduates out of 5410 started working with their profession, 909 graduates had chosen other occupations, 1109 students entered universities with other major and 860 students joined armed forces or migrated. During that period only 22.7% of graduates were not economically active.

Another important point to be mentioned is that after successful implementation of the pilot project in the 2018, the salaries of the career consultants from 50 TVET institutions (In total, 102 TVET institutions in Armenia) were paid from the State Budget and in 2020, it was considerably increased for the corresponding position. This will allow to increase their motivation and improve the quality of the services provided by the Career Guidance Units.

²⁶ Until 2013, POCD Centre was providing Career Guidance services directly to the beneficiaries, i.e. general school pupils, VET and university students and graduates, as well as to adults.

In 2019 POCD Centre carried out monitoring in 89 TVET institutions in Yerevan and the regions of Armenia. The monitoring was carried out according to questionnaire which was previously designed in cooperation with MoESCS representatives.. Questions such as the availability of database of employers, the involvement of trainers, the satisfaction level of students, questions concerning the technical equipment were included in it.

During 2019, there were two cohorts of graduating students: the graduates of the 2018-2019 academic year (graduated in June 2019) and the graduates of 2019-2020 academic year (to be graduated in June 2020, and have been considered as graduating students since September 2019). Data analysis is done for both cohorts separately. Of 7,418 graduating students of 2018-2019, 7,218 or 97.3% received career guidance, and of 11,000 graduating students of 2019-2020, 10,711 or 97.4% enjoyed this service. In total, more than 97.3% of graduating students received career guidance services during 2019.

	2018-2019	2019-2020	Total
Number of 2019 Graduating Students	7,418	11,000	18,418
Of them, received Career guidance service in 2019	7,218	10,711	17,929
Percentage	97.30%	97.37%	97.34%

The POCD Centre continues organizing trainings for the skills' development of the specialists provides consultation and methodological support.

PART 3. TRAINING AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT TO SUPPORT SERVICE DELIVERY

3.1. Trainings of career counselors

In parallel with the introduction process of professional orientation and career guidance system, POCD Centre developed training programs for the professional orientation and career guidance service providers that were approved in 2013-2017 by the methodological council of the Centre. The training programs developed by POCD Centre are differentiated according to the activities with beneficiaries (students, youth, unemployed, people with disabilities, etc.) The programs include theories of the field, best international practices, national policy, methodology comprised of modules and tools that differ for the beneficiary groups, as well as the organization of planning, implementing and monitoring processes. The basis of training programs is the international competences for educational and vocational guidance practitioners and qualification system provided by the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance (Repetto, 2008).²⁷

During the trainings organized by the POCD Centre, specialists are divided into two main groups depending to their functions: career coordinator and career consultant/. The career coordinator involves other specialists in the implementation process of the career guidance activities in accordance with the previously developed thematic plan, while career consultant provides individual and group services for career guidance himself. Due to the lack of qualification system for career consultants, there is no clear requirements connected with professional knowledge and skills, thus, practice shows that the mixed version is very common, when the specialist operates functions of both. The Centre provides supervision services after the capacity development training, which aims to provide continuous individual consultation and methodology to the specialist for implementing career guidance activities during the work process.

The requirements for the qualification of career guidance specialists in Armenia are not specified. The functions of professional orientation in general education institutions are attached mainly to the specialists qualified as social pedagogues and psychologists.

Some steps are being taken to prepare future specialists. Armenian State Pedagogical University after Kh. Abovyan included course "Fundamentals of Professional Orientation" in the educational curriculum of "Social pedagogy" faculty and the students have their internships in the POCD Centre.

²⁷

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/227255619_International_competencies_for_educational_and_vocational_guidance_practitioners_An_IAEVG_trans-national_study_Monograph_International_Journal_for_Educational_and_Vocational_Guidance_83

The Bachelor's Degree Program in Social Pedagogy at the Armenian State Pedagogical University teaches the subject "Fundamentals of Professional Orientation", and students undergo their pedagogical-evaluative internships at the Professional Orientation Methodological Center. In the academic year of 2017-2018, International Scientific-Educational Center of the National Academy of Sciences of the RA carried out a pilot program. The Master's Degree educational curriculum included the subject "Professional Orientation, Self-Determination", the methodology of which was provided by the POCD Centre.

3.2. Support Services

Often, students do not know what profession to choose. Teenagers, who generally do not have the opportunity to receive professional assistance in career guidance, are mainly guided by the advice of their parents and peers, as well as social stereotypes, so mostly they choose the professions of economists or lawyers or they select the profession of one parent without clear ideas about them. These professions are considered the most profitable, prestigious and promising occupations in Armenia.

Parents play an important role to guide their children to select a corresponding profession. Parents provide favorable conditions for the comprehensive and harmonious development of the child's personality introduce children to the fields of work activity, develop a positive attitude towards work and employees, respect and support in choosing an educational institution to continue their professional education.

"The Role of Parents as mentors in Professional Orientation" guidebook, designed by POCD Centre instructs the parents on how to discover the child's potential and to explore the world of work together. The guidebook includes questionnaire for each age group of students. By the answers to these questions parents will be sure that their child made a conscious career choice. Besides, each school uses different modules to engage parents in the process. For example, students are introduced to their parents professions, visits are organized to their workplace to show the working environment. Teachers also play a significant role in assisting students to make a career choice, regardless the fact that not all the teachers are trained in professional orientation. Through their own experience and interdisciplinary communication teachers participate in the students' career guidance, including the provision of information on career guidance, vocational education institutions, communication, school education through lectures and parent meetings. Likewise, involvement of parents in the educational-professional guidance activities of students at school, presentation and dissemination of the best traditions is also encouraged. However, it should be noted that in schools where there are no trained pedagogues, career guidance is conducted on the preference of pedagogues or based on the instructions of the certain school administration on a voluntary basis, according to their discretion and ideas, which triggers the need for a separate career guidance specialist. The problem will be solved after the final institutionalization of system in general education and employment services.

Employers can be involved in the fields of general education and vocational education, and take part in implementation of various educational programs. In particular, activities with employers are an integral part of the career guidance system in high schools. The following process is crucial to provide the participation of the high school students in the working environment to correspond to the current market requirements and the peculiarities and demands of the future market.

In the last decade, job fairs in Yerevan and in the regions of Armenia have become traditional. They are organized both by private organizations and by state funds through the SEA. Parallely career fairs and profession days are organized, where employers not only offer job vacancies, but master classes, motivation talks, trainings for students and their parents are being conducted. These trainings, motivation talks and other activities introduce the dynamic changes of the labor market, future trends and the demands of employers to the stakeholders. Such events are also carried out by sectors, when employers invite students to their organizations within their social responsibility. At the moment, the career guidance, in addition to educational, moral, psychological, economic and other components, has a clearly expressed social aspect as well. When choosing a profession, young people are often guided by the profitability of that profession at the particular moment and the prospect of having a certain role in society. As a result, not only a number of important occupations remain required, but also the number of unemployed people who received professional education is increasing. In addition, the issues such as employee rights, healthy and safe working conditions, and payment are also addressed. Therefore, the role of other social partners such as trade unions is very essential. The principles of social partnership is stipulated in the Labor Code of the Republic of Armenia (Chapter 7), according to which the social partnership is the system of relationships between the employees (their representatives), employers (their representatives), and in cases established by this Code the Government of the Republic of Armenia²⁸: The Confederation of Trade Unions of Armenia is a voluntary association (as of January 2021) of 19 trade unions, representing the interests of the latter. The Confederation of Trade Unions of Armenia recognizes the professional, economic, social and labor rights of its employees, their representation, protection of the above-mentioned points in their relations with the Government and

²⁸ Labor Code of the Republic of Armenia <https://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?DocID=146722>:

Republican Union of Employers of Armenia, and recognizes that opportunity of having a decent work is indispensable for the conditions of sustainable development in the country.²⁹

According to the item 3.4 of the National Collective Agreement (between Government, RUEA, CTUA) signed on October 5, 2020, the parties took responsibility to support the development of a sustainable system of professional orientation.³⁰

Participants in the national system of professional orientation are also non-governmental (local and international) organizations, which, at the level of service provision, contribute to the further development of the professional orientation system (sample surveys and consulting services.)

PART 4. SOCIAL COOPERATION IN CAREER GUIDANCE

4.1. Information resources

One of the most important issues of professional orientation is providing information on future trends in the labor market. There is no complete forecasting system in Armenia and professional orientation and career guidance specialists mainly rely on the statistical information provided by different researches and materials provided by the Statistical Committee of RA. However, in 2018, the Edu2Work platform was launched by the Institute for Public Policy and National SDG Innovation Lab within the framework of the "From Education to Work" program. This tool will play an important role in career guidance for both students and parents. It may also be used by the policy makers and educational institutions, for example, MoLSA and MoESCS may follow statistics, and develop vocational training or employment support programs that will be needed in the labor market in the future. The platform analyzes data from all online job websites that offer job vacancies in Armenia. It is a unique tool that contains the biggest data about the labor market of Armenia. The platform analyzes vacancies, their requirements on qualifications, experience, skills and education. It is important that it allows to see the information for the whole year, making it possible to have forecasts for the coming months. The Edu2Work platform provides the broadest data on armenian labor market demands and forecasts.

Vocational learning opportunities are widely distributed in the society as follows: Each year, taking into account the peculiarities of vocational education, the demand for professions and the peculiarities of the labor market, the MoESCS of the RA, in agreement with the stakeholders, who are the members of the National Council for VET Development, submits the list of paid and free places of vocational education for the given year to the discussion of the Government of the RA, both at the primary vocational (handicraft)³¹ and higher education³² levels. The process is coordinated by the MoESCS of the RA through regular consultations with Vocational Institutions. The lists are submitted by the MoESCS, free places of Vocational Institutions are based on the amount submitted by the ministry, paid places (all institutions are required mandatory qualification by the state) are provided in the prescribed quantity as well. Based on the stakeholders' suggestions the list of occupations and the number of places are formulated. Information on the planned places at the above mentioned levels of vocational education, as well as the application procedure, conditions, exams' dates are approved by the decision of the Government of the RA, are posted on the official websites of state bodies, such as the MoESCS of the RA, educational institutions, Evaluation and testing commission of RA and vocational educational institutions, making them accessible to the general public.

At the same time, it is necessary to mention that the concept of "Social Partnership in the field of primary vocational (handicraft) and secondary vocational education"³³ was approved by the Decree of Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of the RA No. 233-A/2 of March 3, 2018, which aims to promote the formation of a trilateral agreement on cooperation between the Government of the RA, employers, including sector-oriented NGOs and trade unions and the institutionalization of social partnership. The aim of the concept is also to take a new approach to the principles of formation and implementation of social partnership, bringing them in line with the

²⁹ CHARTER of the CTUA http://hamk.am/post_view.php?lang=arm&id=151:

³⁰ National Collective Agreement, <https://arhmiutyun.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Erakoxm-verjin.pdf>:

³¹ <https://escs.am/am/static/vocational-education?s=edu>:

³² <https://escs.am/am/static/vocational-education?s=edu>:

³³ <http://escs.am/files/files/2019-07-03/ad99ee56881c22ccd8ac1067c2ac787c.pdf>

current goals and objectives of the development of the system of primary vocational (handicraft) and secondary vocational education in Armenia. Collegial boards (councils) are formulated based on the concept, which includes social partners.

The above-mentioned concept also stipulates that social partnership at the local level is carried out by the collegial governing body formed in the educational institutions, called management Boards of educational institutions (hereinafter referred to as the Board), the functions of which is to provide information on occupations in demand in the local labor market, employers' requirements and job vacancies, as well as active support for the establishment of career centers of an educational institution and advising on improving the activities of those centers.

The individual staffs of the Boards are approved by the MoESCS of the RA, which includes up to 20 members, with the following proportion: lecturers - 5%, students - 10%, founder - 10%, authorized state body - 30%, employers - 35%, trade unions - 10%. The founders may be different, for example The Government, International educational institution, any educational institution or other donor.

It should be noted that the social partnership at the sectoral level is implemented by the sectoral commissions established by the Decree of Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of the RA No. 267-N of April 11, 2012, one of the functions of which is to spread information on the required capacities in the field, current and expected vacancies to educational institutions and employment centers. There are minimum 10 commissions (by the number of regions of Armenia), which may also be by the sectors. Sectoral commissions are guided by the regional development concept. Information on vacancies is regularly submitted to the educational institutions and employment centers the forecast for which is based on the reforms implemented in the regions of Armenia or in any branch of the economy (Investment Programs, sectorial reforms or regional development programs).

It should be mentioned that the data quality the employment center is responsible for the information it publishes, as well as it is responsible for the information received from the cooperating private employment organizations to the extent it is enshrined in the Memorandum of Cooperation.

Information on job vacancies in various sectors of the economy is collected, processed and spread by the SEA of the RA MoLSA by provinces and regions³⁴. The SEA cooperates with employers, as a result of which the employers provide the necessary information.

In addition, the SEA offers job seekers from regional centers the following:

- Consultation and information on services provided (information on vacancies, information on employment programs);
- Vocational orientation consulting;
- Free mediation in employment;
- Participation in employment programs and events;
- Advanced training and retraining³⁵.

Active employment programs are implemented with different groups such as job seekers, the disabled, the unemployed and other vulnerable groups. Each program include the list of beneficiaries and restrictions.

In addition, the SEA has signed a memorandum of cooperation with 6 non-governmental employment organizations³⁶, which are mainly engaged in the job placement process, as well as can implement active employment programs stipulated in the memorandum of cooperation which may be delegated to them. These organizations also collect information on job vacancies and implement employment mediation functions. The above-mentioned 6 non-governmental employment organizations include "Accept" employment center, "International Legal Consulting" LLC, "Work for all" employment agency, "M-M-group" LLC, "Vacant Company" employment agency, "Never give up" LLC.

Vacancy information is also disseminated on the websites of a number of organizations (including specialized ones) and on social networks³⁷.

³⁴ <https://employment.am/am/vacancy.html>:

³⁵ <https://employment.am/am/3/free.html>:

³⁶ <https://employment.am/am/118/free.html>:

³⁷ These organizations are specialized in job finding, for example: www.jobfinder.am, www.careersenter.am.

At the same time, it should be noted that the SEA also provides the following information to employers:

- information on labor market statistics and forecasts;
- information on employment programs and legislation;
- information on qualified labor force which is proposed according to the needs of employers. For example, a requalification program which is implemented based on the needs of the employer.

The SEA carries out labor market research every year of which labor market analysis and forecasting are a mandatory part. It has also developed a guide on “State employment programs and employers’ participation opportunities”, which consists of the following sections:

- I. Rights and obligations of employers within the framework of state employment regulation;
- II. Information on state employment programs and services;
- III. Opportunities and steps for mutually beneficial cooperation of employers with the SEA;
- IV. Data of the regional centers of the SEA;
- V. Statistical overview.

At the same time, it should be noted that the state employment policy is developed by the public administration body authorized by the Government of the RA and implemented through an annual program in cooperation with the public administration system, local self-government bodies, social partners, employers, other stakeholders and entrepreneurs.

The annual employment program³⁸ is approved by the Government of the RA, the purpose of which is to create conditions for ensuring sustainable and effective employment for the population. It should also be mentioned that all employment programs are approved only through the Annual State Program and are implemented in accordance with that program.

4.2. Engagement

The National Council for VET Development was established by the decision of the Prime Minister of the RA No. 1012-A of December 11, 2008³⁹. The main purpose of adopting this decision is making the reforms in the field of primary vocational (handicraft) and secondary vocational education and training more effective in Armenia, as well as ensuring the further development of the system. The National Council for VET Development includes all public and private stakeholders responsible for the development of the sector, whose representatives present the problems and challenges in the sector during the meetings of the National Council for VET Development for overcoming which the steps are needed to be taken.

The chairman of the National Council for VET Development is the Minister of ESCS of the RA, the members are the representatives of the MoLSA, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure, Ministry of Finance as well as representatives from the social partnership organizations RUEA, CTUA.

During the last 3 years issues of submission and approval of teaching-methodological materials and manuals to be developed for certain specialties were discussed in the sessions of the National Council for VET Development. On June 25, 2019, the Concept for Development of Work-Based Learning in Armenia and the list of actions for 2019-2025 were approved at the session of the National Council for VET Development the aim of which is to formulate a policy framework for the development of work-based learning and to define actions for the gradual introduction of new forms of work-based learning⁴⁰. The concept states that in the current rapidly evolving economic and social environment, VET institutions need new opportunities, structures and tools to effectively integrate enterprises in the teaching and learning process and to align the skills of the graduates with the demands of the labor market. Consequently, work-based learning enables VET institutions to implement their educational programs in accordance with the requirements of the enterprises and to take them into account during the development of educational programs, during teaching, evaluation and professional orientation.

According to the Concept of the Development of Professional Orientation of the Republic of Armenia, The National Council for VET Development is responsible for the coordination of professional orientation and career guidance system in the field of TVET, as the later was established within the scope of reforms of vocational education system and operates in Tripartite Principle. During the Council meetings that are organized periodically, activities and results are being presented and discussed.

³⁸ <https://employment.am/am/358/LinkPage.html>

³⁹ <http://www.irtek.am/views/act.aspx?aid=46241>:

⁴⁰ <http://escs.am/files/files/2019-12-01/901c360398db65cd035997d9e41ae789.pdf>:

The concept also enshrines the importance of work-based learning in the training of specialists with the necessary qualifications in the labor market and its benefits for the institutions and employers providing primary and secondary vocational education, as well as for the state.

The document was developed by the working group established by the Order of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Armenia, No.28-A of January 18, 2018, with the support of the European Training Foundation (ETF) and within the framework of the "Skills Connexion Project", which aims to support the development of work-based learning in the Eastern Partnership countries. The working group includes representatives of the main stakeholders of the work-based learning: VET institutions, employers, the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and local and international organizations active in the field.

In defining the conceptual approaches and the priority actions of the development of work-based learning in Armenia, first of all, the development and implementation of structures necessary for the effective involvement of key stakeholders, particularly employers, was highlighted.

PART 5. CHALLENGES FOR CAREER GUIDANCE CAUSED BY COVID 19

5.1. Economic restructuring due to COVID 19

. As a result of Covid-19 pandemic, significant part of the population lost their jobs for temporarily or permanently. By the resolution No. 298- N of March 16, 2020 of the Government of the RA a state of emergency was declared in the republic for one month, which was extended by Resolution No. 543- N of April 13, Resolution No. 729 N - of May 14 to June 13, 12 June No. 933- N Decision until July 13, Decision No. 1161N of July 13 to August 12, and by Decision N 1219-N of August 12 to September 11. All decisions of the Government of the RA on declaring a state of emergency and extending the state of emergency were approved by the National Assembly of the RA. During the state of emergency decisions on restrictions were made by the RA Commandment, including the establishment of safety rules. The Government of the RA implemented a number of social programs to mitigate COVID-19 consequences⁴¹. The Government of the RA by Decision N 354-L of March 26, 2020 approved the Comprehensive Program of Measures to Counter the Economic Consequences of the Coronavirus, which defines objectives of measures to counter the economic consequences, and later the sizes of financial resources was approved. The Government of the RA has allocated 150 billion drams for the implementation of a package of social and economic assistance in the following main areas. Following this decision, the Government of the RA adopted programs to neutralize the socio-economic consequences of the coronavirus. During the state of emergency the RA Government adopted programs to neutralize the social consequences of the coronavirus. 25 social and economic assistance programs have been approved by the relevant legal acts to neutralize the economic consequences of the coronavirus.

The Mid-Term Recovery Plan 2020-2021 (MTRP) constitutes a coordinated and effective intervention of the Government of Armenia in transitioning from the COVID-19 crisis, which is currently managed under the immediate COVID-19 Crisis Management Plan, to a longer-term strategic framework expressed through (the revision of) national policies and strategies, helmed by the Armenia's Transformation Strategy 2050. As such, the MTRP is a tool for continued management out of the current pandemic situation and for effective recovery and building resilience. The Mid-Term Recovery Plan includes the following objectives:

- To ensure job-rich economic recovery through state employment programs and improved labour protections
- Promote gender-responsive flexible work arrangements and telecommuting practices to ensure better work-life balance
- To expand the reach and resilience of the social protection system, including through digital or in other ways COVID-19 adjusted services to ensure accessible, safe and high-quality social service delivery
- To adapt the education system for recurrent crisis, including by bridging the digital divide and exploring new learning tools and models for distance learning
- To bridge the education-labor market mismatch.

⁴¹ "Human social protection and realization of social rights in the conditions of the state of emergency in the Republic of Armenia (March-May 2020), social assistance programs and the effectiveness of mitigation of consequences", research, Yerevan, 2020:

In the field of education, measures aimed at preventing and spreading the pandemic are still going on, in particular, the methods of organizing full-time and part-time (some days of the week) distance work are continued to be implemented in various educational institutions.

In the field of education, there is a close cooperation between the Government and educational institutions, as a result of which effective programs of social assistance and mitigation of the consequences of pandemic are being implemented. For example, the fourteenth measure to neutralize the economic consequences of the coronavirus⁴², the aim of which is to assist the students of the higher educational institutions of the Republic of Armenia implementing higher and postgraduate educational programs.

The support form of this program is as follows:

- 100% reimbursement of tuition fees for graduate students for the second semester of the 2019-2020 academic year,
- 75% reimbursement of tuition fees for students of all courses (except for graduation courses) for the second semester of the 2019-2020 academic year,
- Subsidizing the interest rate of educational loans for the period from May 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020 (by 5 percentage points) by the state.

Among those people who were most affected because of the lack of protection of income guarantees and from the uncertainty of labor relations were also workers in the informal economy, self-employed and temporary workers. Areas such as tourism, transport, as well as civil aviation and construction, trade and hotel business, entertainment industry, manufacturing and processing industry were most affected by the pandemic⁴³. As a result, they had to temporarily suspend their activities. In order to compensate for the lost incomes of the affected sectors of the economy, as well as to encourage job preservation, the Government of the RA implemented programs to neutralize the economic consequences⁴⁴. During the state of emergency the RA Government adopted programs to neutralize the social consequences of the coronavirus. 13 social assistance programs and 11 economic assistance programs have been approved by the relevant legal acts. The Government of the RA has allocated 150 billion drams for the implementation of a package of social and economic assistance in the following main areas:

- 25 billion drams ⁴⁵- programs to support enterprises aimed at solving current liquidity problems;
- 25 billion drams - social assistance programs;
- 80 billion drams - long-term economic development programs aimed at solving the problem of increasing private investment;
- 20 billion drams to reserve funds for the necessary redistribution.

Taking into account the negative impacts of COVID-19 on the macroeconomic environment from March 2020, the Government of the RA, in addition to the social programs implemented to mitigate the consequences of the pandemic, by the decision No. 1599-L of September 29, 2020, approved "Employment Regulation state program for 2021". The program for 2021 envisages the implementation of 13 active programs and measures at the expense of the state budget.

Within the framework of state regulation of employment the SEA, carries out public awareness activities and provides the following basic services:

- 1) Providing the necessary information and consultation to the jobseekers and registration of jobseekers, needs assessment to ensure sustainable employment and development of individual programs;
- 2) Consultation on professional orientation of jobseekers, as well as free mediation during job placement and database management of jobseekers, vacancies and employers cooperating with the agency;
- 3) Providing the necessary information and consultation to employers, as well as receiving and collecting information on vacancies from employers;
- 4) Providing the necessary information and professional consultation, as well as methodological support to non-governmental organizations providing job placement services;
- 5) Involvement unemployed members of beneficiary families in sustainable or temporary employment programs.

As regarding the functions and strategies implemented by the employers, it is necessary to note that the mission of the Republican Union of Employers of Armenia is to promote the continuous improvement of the business environment, to protect the interests of the business community and

⁴² <https://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?DocID=141642>

⁴³ Global Analysis of Behavior Trends of Trade Unions during COVID-19, Summary of Key Findings, <http://hamk.am/images/files/COVID-19-ru.pdf>

⁴⁴ <https://www.gov.am/am/covid19/>

⁴⁵ 1USD=520AMD

<https://rate.am/en/armenian-dram-exchange-rates/banks/non-cash>

employers in order to lead to the economic growth and prosperity. Highlighting the youth employment development issues, the Republican Union of Employers of Armenia constantly contributes to improvement of compliance of demand and supply for professional qualifications. In this context, still in 2008 RUEA implemented and in 2012 published research “The Role of Republican Union of Employers of Armenia in Promoting Youth Employment and Strengthening Professional Education Institutions” which outlines the strategic directions for the development of the sector.

It should be mentioned that RUEA presents its requirements in the labor market according to the professions including the needs of the foreseen professions.

In order to identify the main problems hindering business in Armenia RUEA carried out "Comprehensive SME Situational Survey at Macro-Micro Levels" in 2015 and 2019. According to the results of the survey, 36.4% of the respondents felt a lack of qualified labor force in Armenia what speaks about the fact that there are many problems in the educational system of the RA, one of which is the wrong choice of profession or choice of profession not in demand in the labor market.

In cooperation with the ILO, in 2019 the RUEA conducted Survey of the Legal, Regulatory and Institutional Environment Facilitating the Formalization of Enterprises in Armenia where the existing processes of formalization of enterprises in Armenia are presented, as well as challenges and clear proposals. In this survey, in order to ensure more systemic and visible success in the formalization of the Armenian economy, it is suggested to consider the formalization as a guarantee of labor force development and career planning.

Statistical Committee of the RA published the monthly information reports “Socio-Economic Situation of RA, January 2021”⁴⁶ on 5 March, 2021 and “Socio-Economic Situation of RA, January-December 2020”⁴⁷ on 5 February, 2021. The report presents unemployment indicators for January, 2021 according to the data of the SEA.

The analysis of the data presented in the Table 1 allows to record that in January, 2021 the number of officially registered unemployed decreased by 49 and the supply of labor force increased by 3543.

It should also be mentioned that many unemployed were not officially registered in the regional and local employment offices because of the movement restrictions during the state emergency period.

Table 1. Labor Supply, 2021

As of the end of the month

	Jobseekers		<i>of them, the unemployed</i>	
	Total, individuals	%, 2021/2020	Total, individuals	%, 2021/2020
January, 2021	88 929	104.1	62 193	99.9
January, 2020	85386		62242	

Table 2 presents the labor supply by gender. The analysis of the data presented in the Table 2 allows to record that in January, 2021 the number of female job seekers increased by 1504 and the number of male job seekers increased by 2039. As regarding the registered unemployed, the number of females decreased by 1070 individuals and the number of males increased by 1021 individuals.

Table 2. Labor Supply by sex, 2021

As of the end of the month

	Jobseekers				<i>of them, the unemployed</i>			
	Female		Male		Female		Male	
	Total, persons	%, 2021/2020	Total, persons	%, 2021/2020	Total, person	%, 2021/2020	Total, person	%, 2021/2020

⁴⁶ https://www.armstat.am/file/article/sv_01_21a_141.pdf

⁴⁷ https://www.armstat.am/file/article/sv_12_20a_141.pdf

	Jobseekers				of them, the unemployed			
	Female		Male		Female		Male	
	Total, person	%, 2021/2020	Total, person	%, 2021/2020	Total, person	%, 2021/2020	Total, person	%, 2021/2020
January, 2021	58 120	102.7	30 809	107.1	40 226	97.4	21 967	104.9
January, 2020	566 16		2877 0		4129 6		2094 6	

Table 3 presents the supply of labor force by age group. The analysis of the data presented in the Table 3 allows to record that women aged 25-34 are 4% more than men of the same age, while the opposite is the case for women aged 45-54: men are 4% more than women. In other age groups, the gender-related labor force is almost equal.

Table 3. The Labor Supply by age group and sex, January, 2021

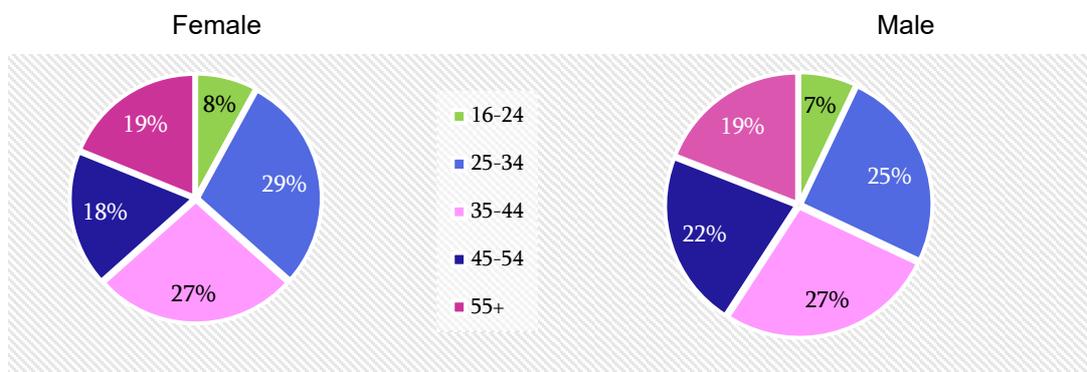


Table 4 presents the labor force supply by regions and Yerevan, where the largest increase of number of job seekers occurred in Aragatsotn region - about 10% and the largest increase of number of officially registered unemployed occurred in Vayots Dzor region - about 7%.

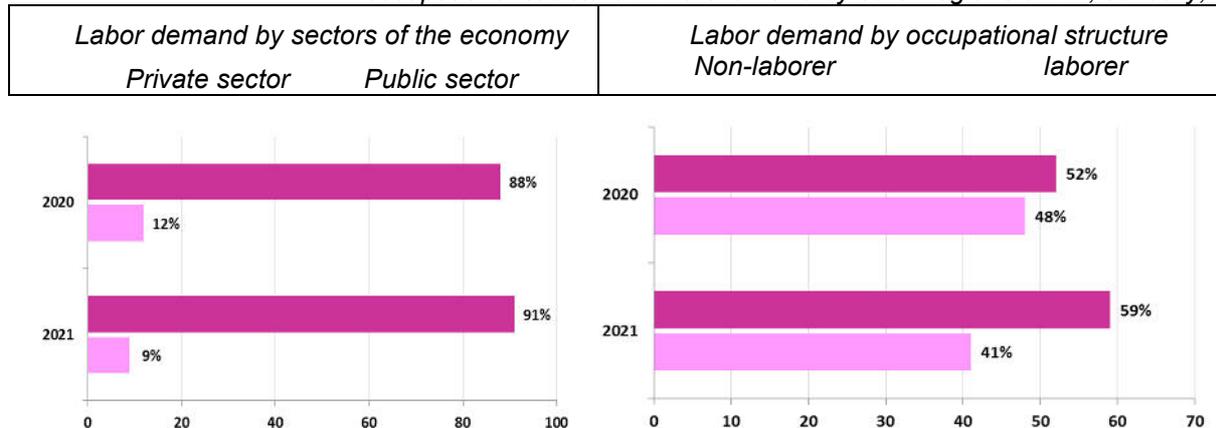
Table 4. The Labor Supply in Yerevan and by other regions of RA, January 2021

As of the end of the month

	Jobseekers		of them, the unemployed		
	Total, person	%, 2021/2020	Total, person	%, 2021/2020	%, of total
Total	88 929	104.1	62 193	99.9	100
Yerevan	12 569	102.6	7 693	98.4	12.4
Aragatsotn	5 099	110.0	3 182	101.8	5.1
Ararat	8 826	109.6	5 365	102.0	8.6
Armavir	8 621	101.9	5 691	98.1	9.2
Gegharqunig	6 164	102.9	4 532	99.1	7.3
Lori	10 063	99.0	9 220	98.8	14.8
Kotayq	9 485	102.5	6 033	97.0	9.7
Shirak	17 441	108.7	12 437	105.3	20.0
Syuniq	3 296	97.7	2 517	92.4	4.0
Vayots Dzor	1 387	100.0	1 122	106.7	1.8
Tavush	5 978	103.3	4 401	97.1	7.1

Table 5 presents the demand for labor force by sectors of the economy and professional composition. The analysis of the data presented in the Table 5 allows to record that the demand for the public sector of the economy decreased by at least 3% in January, 2021, while the professional composition increased by 7% in terms of demand for non-laborer occupations.

Table 5. The labor demand by sectors of the economy and occupational structure in Yerevan and by other regions of RA, January, 2021



The most demanded types of occupations are presented in the Table 6 where 79% of the demanded labor force requires higher education or VET education and 21% of the labor force does not require qualified education. This circumstance allows us to conclude that the demand for qualified specialists remains high in the RA, therefore it is necessary to carry out professional orientation works in that direction and to take appropriate steps to provide high quality education.

Table 6. The demand for labor force, The most demanded types of occupations ⁴⁸, January, 2021 at the end of the month

Code	Indicator (number of individuals)	Total, person
1-9	Total	1 309
1	Heads of legislative, executive bodies, organizations, institutions, political and public associations	6
2	Highly qualified specialists	296
3	Specialists of medium qualification	113
4	Employees of offices	83
5	Employees of service sector, housing and communal services and trade organizations	255
6	Qualified Employees of Agricultural, Forestry, Hunting, Fishery and Fishing Organizations	5
7	Qualified workers of industrial organizations, artistic crafts, construction, transport, communication, geology and subsoil exploration	219
8	Operators, machine operators, machines, locksmith-assemblers of machines and equ	58
9	Non-qualified workers	274

Within the framework of the Social Partnership, every year RUEA provides the MoESCS of the RA with the proposals on the number of required specialties, which are taken into account when drawing up the admission plan of the RA state educational institutions. In order to develop plan for 2021 and taking into account the demand of the labor market, as well expected future developments in the economy and foreseen risks RUEA

⁴⁸ The basis of the classification is the RA Classifier of Occupations, www.armstat.am

presented 160 places for primary vocational (handicraft) and 120 places for secondary vocational education which are presented according to the educational programs.

5.2 Career Guidance services at the start of COVID 19

In order to mitigate the negative consequences of COVID-19, the Government of the RA has implemented a number of economic and social programs, as well as certain restrictions for businesses operating in different sectors of the economy were introduced. In this context, it should be noted that the education sector showed a high level of flexibility, as it responded quickly to the foreseen challenges during pandemic and in the post-pandemic time. In particular, the education sector has almost completely switched to the distance education, which has generally succeeded. It should be noted that certain problems (technical, software, etc.) arose during the transition to distance education, which were gradually resolved.

As regarding the professional orientation system, it can also be considered quite flexible, as specialists in the field have developed and introduced virtual training programs. In Armenia, practitioners developed virtual career education lessons, which were broadcast on public television.

This fact is recorded in the results of the joint international survey "Career guidance policy and practice in the pandemic" (Cedefop; European Commission; ETF; ICCDPP; ILO; OECD; UNESCO, 2020)⁴⁹.

CONCLUSION

Nowadays, in the fast-developing world when the technology has transformed people's life, career guidance and labor market are increasingly affected by ICT. The traditional career guidance services are slowly being replaced with different online platforms, networks, portals, apps and chats where people can find the necessary information on career guidance and labor market. This, in its turn, highlights the importance of career management skills, which empowers individuals to access, understand and use information found in online platforms for making wise career choices themselves. Using ICT gives an opportunity to access information on Career guidance, educational opportunities, as well as labor market information easier

In Armenia there is a huge need to reach citizens effectively also with distance services, especially in regions. The web-based services and platforms in career guidance will be a big step towards the improvements of the system. There are different innovative examples of the ICT use in career guidance system all over the world that can be adapted in Armenia as well. Though, the use of ICT in career guidance system doesn't diminish the value of offline, face-to-face activities and future steps should be taken towards the improvement of the system.

A national strategy of career guidance should be the development in the light of new challenges. It should consider both global and local challenges, COVID impacts on the different aspects of economy and competitiveness of the workforce development.

A key indicator for ensuring the quality of career guidance services is the introduction of training and qualification system for career consultants. Presently, there is a common approach to the training of career counselors in different systems: General Education, TVET Institutions, Higher Education Institutions, Social Services. ToT programs have been developed for students, young people, adults, people who are not competitive in the labor market, NEET, people with disabilities. However, the qualification issue of the specialists is not solved yet and training is not always enough to carry out career consultation services and coaching.

Problems related to availability of information for professional orientation and career guidance should be singled out as well. Currently, the classification of occupations of the RA adopted in 2013 is being reviewed, list of occupations, framework of skills is being developed. It can be created within the edu2work platform, which is a good example of big data on the labor market.

The new strategy should include :

- A description of the varying lifelong career development needs of users, including appropriate theoretical perspectives.

⁴⁹ <http://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2801/318103>

- An explanation of how readiness for decision making influences the type and amount of practitioner assistance that users will need.
- An explanation of how the system will contribute to better matching the skills of citizens with the skill needs of employers.
- The specification of assessment variables and measures (variables could include interests, skills, and employment preferences)
- The specification of occupational, educational, training, and employment information that users will need.
- The specification of how prior learning will be assessed in the system.
- An explanation of how the system promotes current occupational, educational, training, and employment choices, while also promoting ongoing career management skills.
- The specification of career management skills needed to maintain employment either employed or self-employed.
- An explanation of how the conceptual model and the language used in the system appropriately reflects the culture and national context of Armenia.
- A description of the role of the system and the role of the practitioner in promoting lifelong career development.
- A description of how guidance operates on both a self-help and practitioner-supported basis.
- A description of counseling strategies for blending face-to-face and distance practitioner support with various citizen needs for support in effectively using the system.
- A description of how the conceptual model is included in the training resources developed for the system.
- An explanation of how the conceptual model can be used to guide the ongoing evaluation and improvement of the system.
- An identification of explicit links among system elements and guidance policy in Armenia.
- An evaluation of gaps in the career guidance system in Armenia.
- A description of how to foster the cooperation links between the stakeholders and ensure effective coordination.
- An identification of monitoring mechanism and assessment.

RA Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs
METHODOLOGICAL CENTRE FOR PROFESSIONAL ORIENTATION

METHODOLOGICAL MANUAL
On Professional Orientation
for Specialists providing services in General Educational Institutions

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Career guidance games and activities practical methods

GUIDE

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6. Career guidance games and activities practical methods

ANNEXES

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