



Ministry of
Education, Science
and Innovation

CAREER GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING STRATEGY

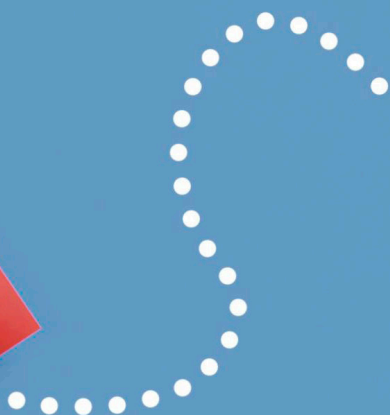
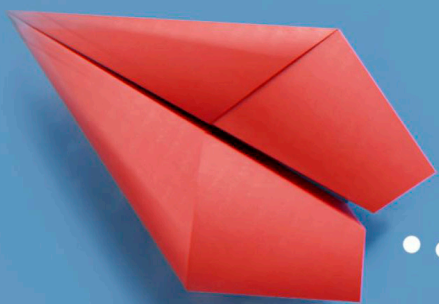
2025-2030





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ABBREVIATIONS

CEEPUS	Central European Exchange Programme for University Studies
IPCC	Information and Professional Counselling Centre
CVE	Centre for Vocational Education
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
GTZ	German Agency for Technical Cooperation
ECM	Examination Centre of Montenegro
IRF	Investment and Development Fund
CGC	Career Guidance and Counselling
MEIS	Montenegrin Education Information System
MSMEs	Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
ILO	International Labour Organization
MESI	Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation
MLESD	Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Dialogue
MSY	Ministry of Sports and Youth
NCE	National Council for Education
NSDS	National Sustainable Development Strategy
CCM	Chamber of Commerce of Montenegro
PAMEU	Programme for the Accession of Montenegro to the European Union
MTGWP	Medium-Term Government Work Programme
UoM	University of Montenegro
UDG	University of Donja Gorica
EUM	Employers' Union of Montenegro
BES	Bureau for Education Services
EAM	Employment Agency of Montenegro



INTRODUCTION

The need for a comprehensive approach to career development across the entire life span has arisen from the profound socioeconomic and technological changes shaping society today, as well as from shifts in educational pathways, employment patterns, and labour-market dynamics. Today's concept of a career differs significantly from the earlier understanding, when a career was traditionally viewed as beginning with one's first job and ending with retirement. A career is now a more dynamic category, encompassing much more than work and income; it includes lifelong learning and leisure time.

A career represents the interaction of an individual's professional and other life roles, including how one establishes a balance between paid and unpaid work and between learning and education. Career guidance and counselling should empower individuals to adapt to increasingly dynamic living conditions and to harmonise the many life roles, not solely those related to employment. Career guidance and counselling have a strong impact on key areas: education, the economy and jobs, and social inclusion.

In order for career guidance and counselling to be accessible to all citizens, from an early age through to later life, an intersectoral approach involving different sectors is required, along with cooperation in this field and the equal involvement of all target groups, including students, teachers, parents, career counsellors within the Employment Agency of Montenegro and educational institutions, as well as adults, youth, and both employed and unemployed persons. This is what the present strategic planning document aims to ensure. The need to further strengthen and enhance this cooperation is also recognised. Detailed data on the implementation of strategic goals and activities from the previous period can be found in the Final Report on the Implementation of the Strategy for Lifelong Career Orientation for 2016–2020. It is important to note a change in terminology in this field. Since the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation has been a member of the European Europass and Euroguidance networks since 2017, which are responsible for promoting career guidance and counselling in Europe, the term orientation has proven to be insufficiently comprehensive within these networks as well. Consequently, the term career guidance and counselling has been adopted as the preferred term, as it more accurately encompasses the full scope of activities within this field. Research conducted at the national and European levels shows that career guidance and counselling have positive effects in terms of preventing unemployment, reducing early school leaving, increasing engagement in and success at school, facilitating successful transitions from lower to higher levels of education, as well as promoting social inclusion. In order for career guidance and counselling to be truly effective, this field must be systematically established and appropriately regulated within the legal and institutional framework.

A brief overview of the development of this public policy shows that, following the period of the former SFR Yugoslavia, during which the foundations of this policy were established, the early 2000s marked the beginning of a comprehensive reform of all services within the Employment Agency of Montenegro, including professional orientation. This process resulted in the establishment of the Information and Professional Counselling Centre (IPCC) in 2007, within the Agency in Podgorica. By 2012, a total of eight centres for information and professional counselling had been established. In addition to Podgorica, IPC centres operated in Pljevlja, Bijelo Polje, Berane, Nikšić, Bar, Mojkovac and Herceg Novi. The International Labour Organisation recommended that IPC centres be established as separate organisational units within the local offices of the Employment Agency in order to increase the visibility of their work. However, the existing legal framework did not allow for such an organisational arrangement. With the adoption of the Law on Employment Mediation and Rights during Unemployment in 2019, the focus of counsellors' work within the

Employment Agency shifted primarily to unemployed persons and other jobseekers, while significantly less attention was devoted to work with primary and secondary school students. In the context of Montenegro's EU accession process, reformed education, employment, economic and social development policies have also identified the need to define priorities, measures and activities that will ensure support for all individuals in recognising and developing the abilities, knowledge and skills necessary for successful education and effective career management.

In the previous period, several projects were implemented to strengthen the quality of career guidance for final-year primary school students and enhance support in the selection of their future occupation and secondary education, as well as to encourage their active contribution to the development of the communities in which they live. The key projects include the following:

- In the 2009/2010 school year, the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), later GIZ, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, implemented the regional project “Facilitating Young People’s Transition into the World of Work” in primary schools in Montenegro. This project introduced a youth career guidance development programme aimed at improving young people’s awareness of the world of work, strengthening and recognising their own capacities, and identifying opportunities available to young people in Montenegro, thereby contributing to improved levels of career-related information. As a result of training local experts in manual development, initial teacher training, and the application of good practice examples from Austria, two career guidance manuals were produced: a Trainer’s Manual and a Teacher’s Manual. The manuals include a wide range of workshop scenarios that serve as valuable practical tools for both future trainers and teachers. The teacher training programme was accredited by the Bureau for Education Services, and a student portfolio was developed and printed, enabling students to record observations and reflections throughout the process of choosing their future occupation. In total, school teams (comprising four to five teachers each) from 29 primary schools were trained. Accreditation of the Teacher training programme was renewed on an annual basis.
- The IPA project “Labour Market Reform and Workforce Development II”, with the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, the Ministry of Education and Sports, and the Employment Agency of Montenegro as beneficiaries, began implementation in February 2010. The overall objective of the project was to enhance policy and institutional readiness for the implementation of EU employment and human resources development policies, as part of the broader preparations for EU accession. This objective was pursued through support for institutional and resource capacity-building of “the labour and education administrations” (the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and the Employment Agency of Montenegro), the development of active labour market measures (in particular through local partnerships), and the establishment of a framework for lifelong career guidance and information services in Montenegro. Within the framework of the project, the National Lifelong Career Guidance Strategy (2011–2015) was developed. One of the project’s tasks was also the establishment of a national Coordination Body, which was formed by the Ministry of Education and Sports in December 2011 and comprised representatives of the Ministry of Education and Sports, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, the Employment Agency of Montenegro, the University of Montenegro, and the Employers’ Union.

As a key outcome of public policy development, two strategic documents on the development of career guidance have been adopted over the past two decades, in which career guidance¹ is defined as:

“...a range of activities that enable individuals, regardless of age or life stage, at any point in their lives, to assess their own abilities, competences and interests, to make decisions regarding their education, training and qualifications, and to manage their own life paths in educational, work-related and other settings in which their capacities and competences are learned and/or

.....
¹ Lifelong Career Orientation Strategy in Montenegro (for the periods 2011–2015 and 2016–2020)

applied.”²

The Career Guidance and Counselling Strategy for the period 2025–2030 represents the third strategic document addressing this public policy area. The strategic document is based on the following principles:

Individuals are responsible for their own career development, but they are not alone in this process; society and the wider environment play a significant role.
Career guidance and counselling (CGC) entails identifying an individual's interests, beliefs, values, skills and competences, as well as linking them to the needs of the labour market.
Understanding available options and making informed choices about one's career and future.
Continuous adaptability and readiness for multiple career transitions.

An increased level of awareness of the importance of career guidance and counselling for both society and the individual in the previous period has been accompanied by legislative changes. As a result, career orientation has been prescribed as one of the objectives of primary education under the **Law on Primary Education of Montenegro**³. Furthermore, the **Law on Vocational Education**⁴ defines the objectives of vocational education as including “the provision of knowledge and skills necessary for life and work, the development of personal interests, professional development of the individual, and preparation for further education.” Institutions⁵ responsible for monitoring and analysing labour market needs, as well as for informing and counselling interested candidates and employers, have also been identified. Professional orientation and career planning counselling are legally recognised as activities⁶ within employment services. Career orientation has been acknowledged as an important factor in the overall development of the individual, and planned activities in this field are therefore introduced from the primary school level. **The Law on the National Qualifications Framework**⁷ further identifies institutions which, within their respective competences, are responsible for monitoring and analysing labour market needs and for informing and counselling interested candidates and employers. This law defines its objectives as enabling holistic learning and ensuring access to the acquisition of qualifications, which is highly relevant to career orientation. Within the employment system, this field is governed by **the Law on Employment Mediation and Rights during Unemployment** and **the Rulebook on Active Job Search**. In accordance with these legal provisions, career orientation is recognised as an employment preparation activity and is defined as a labour market service encompassing a set of professional procedures aimed at identifying the opportunities of unemployed persons in choosing an occupation, changing occupations, and making decisions related to career development, that is, aligning individual needs with the requirements of the labour market.

The systematic introduction of career orientation is important because this field is directly linked to education, employment, and economic and social development policies. The purpose of this strategic document is reflected in increasing employability, improving the efficiency and effectiveness of learning and school-based work, strengthening social inclusion, reducing early school leaving, and ensuring equality for all participants in the education process. In this regard, the strategic document defines a single strategic objective that addresses all key areas of public policy:

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE: By 2030, develop and implement a comprehensive, data-driven framework for career guidance and counselling across all education and employment institutions to reduce early school leaving, strengthen alignment between the education system and the labour market, enhance motivation for learning and educational attainment, and facilitate a smoother school-to-work transition.

² Lifelong Career Orientation Strategy in Montenegro (2016–2020), <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/baff7630-6981-451a-ac1f-011f8a64b4f3>

³ Law on Primary Education of Montenegro, <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/2b95ff7d-5e65-484e-bcd4-0b3bd7ef2fac>

⁴ Law on Vocational Education, <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/6a05cf00-25ca-4f77-89c4-468ceb994eb6>

⁵ Law on National Vocational Qualifications, <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/5df772ac-4de9-4aa2-9ba6-ea7186af55a5>

⁶ Law on Employment Mediation and Rights during Unemployment <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/e4974ce7-2e58-4cce-b8ff-577ab-3350f8e>

⁷ Law on the National Qualifications Framework, <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/a5128d6d-5bd1-460b-94a2-7316961e07a9>

To achieve the stated objective, the development and implementation of public policy requires the involvement of all relevant stakeholders, with primary emphasis placed on the following entities:



The strategic document was prepared by a Working Group established by the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation, with the participation of representatives of all relevant stakeholders involved in career guidance and counselling policy in Montenegro. The Working Group consisted of a total of 22 members, of whom 14 were women, while 8 men participated in the drafting of the strategic document.

The following section of the introductory part presents the alignment of the strategic document with Montenegro's key national and international obligations in the relevant public policy area.





POSITIONING WITHIN MONTENEGRO'S STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

The Career Guidance and Counselling Development Strategy 2025–2030 identifies priority areas, as well as a set of measures and activities aimed at the development of career guidance and counselling from early school age through to later stages of life, across the entire population. Importantly, the Strategy applies to all population groups, regardless of whether individuals are in the education system, the employed, unemployed, or retired. In this regard, the strategic document is aligned with the following national public policies:

Medium-Term Government Work Programme of Montenegro 2024–2027⁸. The Strategy is aligned with the Medium-Term Government Work Programme (MTGWP) 2024–2027 in the areas related to objectives that include elements of career guidance and counselling. The strategic document will contribute to the achievement of MTGWP indicators related to the reduction of unemployment in Montenegro, from 13.95% in 2023 to 11% in 2027. Additional focus is placed on increasing the number of employees to 296,000 by 2027. Furthermore, the Strategy will contribute to the further strengthening of the industrial sector's share in gross value added (GVA), with the current level of EUR 491,807,000 expected to increase by 10% by the end of 2027 compared to the baseline value.

It is particularly important to emphasise the need to link public policy with the implementation of targeted financial support programmes (Investment and Development Fund – IDF). Additional contributions will be achieved through an increase in the number of registered craftsmen within the Chamber of Crafts, as well as through the growth in the number of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs). Montenegro will also work towards increasing the number of implemented initiatives aimed at promoting the country's investment potential and encouraging the export of products and services of Montenegrin companies.

Reform Agenda of Montenegro 2024–2027⁹. The strategic document is aligned with the Reform Agenda of Montenegro 2024–2027, with a focus on the area of human capital development. In order to become part of the European Union's single market for skill and knowledge, Montenegro is implementing a set of key reform measures aimed at strengthening human capital, primarily through improving employment opportunities, supporting activation, reforming social services alongside education and skills development, and enhancing the innovation environment. The focus is placed on the following steps:

- Upskilling and reskilling of the workforce: at least 7% of adults aged 25–64 (approximately 50% of whom are women) participated in this form of education during the previous 12 months.
- Work-based learning within vocational education and training (VET): at least 50% of graduates (approximately 40% women) from three-year secondary vocational education programmes benefit from work-based learning with employers during education (covering at least 25% of programmes).
- Work-based learning in higher education: 20% of higher education graduates (approximately 50% women) benefit significantly from work-based learning with employers during their studies.
- Career management and counselling: a new model of career management and counselling has been adopted within the Career Guidance and Counselling Strategy 2025–2030.
- Capacity-building: 800 career counsellors in primary and secondary schools and universities have been trained in accordance with the new model.

8 Medium-Term Government Work Programme 2024–2027, <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/ee885398-748f-48fd-912a-29bbac334bfb>

9 Reform Agenda of Montenegro, <https://www.eu.me/download/1696/crna-gora-i-eu/31923/reformska-agenda-crne-gore-2024-2027.pdf>

Montenegro's Programme of Accession to the European Union (MPAEU) 2025-2026¹⁰. The Strategy is aligned with the MPAEU for the period 2025–2026, which provides for the adoption of a new strategic document in the field of career guidance and counselling by the end of the third quarter of 2025.

National Employment Strategy (2021-2025)¹¹ includes, through its operational objectives, measures and activities of relevance to career guidance and counselling. These include: achieving employment growth; investment in quality and secure jobs through improvements to the business environment; developing knowledge and competences for the labour market in the digital age; improving the labour market position of unemployed persons through efficient labour market services and active labour market policy measures; strengthening social inclusion and reducing poverty; and ensuring the effective functioning of the labour market. The Strategy recognises that “the acquisition of digital skills through formal education alone is not sufficiently rapid in a constantly changing world. Formal education should provide learners with fundamental knowledge and competences that serve as the basis for lifelong learning and adaptability, enabling them to respond to the often-unpredictable changes in labour market demands. To adequately address future skills needs, education systems, both formal and non-formal, must continuously adapt to the increasingly complex requirements of the labour market.” One of the measures under this Strategy focuses on improving the quality of vocational and higher education through the enhancement of practical training to increase employability. This measure envisages “improving the efficiency and flexibility of the education system through the development of new programmes and the replacement of those that no longer meet labour market needs”. One of the key roles of the education system is to address labour shortages in occupations and skills in demand on the labour market, and to provide individuals with functional knowledge and skills that will enable them to achieve a strong position in the labour market.

Furthermore, the strategic document is aligned with the **Education Reform Strategy 2025–2035¹²** with regard to the following key objectives:

- Operational Objective 1.1: All children are ensured access to education, and learning outcomes meet the Sustainable Development Goals and are aligned with the average performance of EU Member States. The focus is on ensuring full participation in education and preventing early school leaving in primary and secondary education, as well as increasing the participation of vocational school students in work-based learning during their education, including through enhanced engagement of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises in the provision of practical training
- Operational Objective 1.2: Inequalities in access to education and learning outcomes are reduced, including for vulnerable and marginalised groups, with a focus on increasing participation in the education system among members of minority and disadvantaged groups.
- Operational Objective 1.3: Teaching and learning are oriented towards the development of key competences for lifelong learning and life skills, in line with EU policies and standards. Emphasis is placed on aligning and strengthening curricula and learning materials, enhancing the quality of teaching and learning, and supporting innovative teaching practices.
- Operational Objective 2.1: The education system has sufficient qualified and competent preschool educators, teachers, professional associates, headteachers, assistants and other necessary personnel, who are employed based on objective quality and competence criteria.
- Operational Objective 3.4: Financing, management and planning of education serve to ensure quality, equity and the development of the education system.

¹⁰ Montenegro's Programme of Accession to the European Union 2025–2026, <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/abf74c06-91a3-446d-a88f-6c97667ba2da>

¹¹ National Employment Strategy 2021–2025, <https://www.zzzcg.me/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/predlog-nacionalne-strategije-zaposljavanja-2021-2025-s-predlogom-akcionog-plana-zaposljavanja-za-2021-godinu.pdf>

¹² Education Reform Strategy 2025–2035, <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/73f999b6-b879-4868-a72d-e670ce78f77f>

Industrial Policy of Montenegro 2024–2028¹³ recognises the importance of career development and employability primarily through Operational Objective 1.3, which addresses the need for further strengthening education and skills for the technological development of industry. The focus is on addressing issues related to the mismatch between the skills individuals acquire through education and training processes and those demanded by the labour market. This requires continuous, appropriate and flexible alignment of knowledge, skills and competences, thereby addressing structural weaknesses in the education and training system, particularly youth unemployment and long-term unemployment.

The Education System Digitalisation Strategy 2022–2027¹⁴. The digitalisation of the education system aims to encourage greater use of ICT in teaching in order to improve the quality of the teaching and learning process, as well as to contribute to the development of digital competences among students and teachers. In addition, it seeks to improve and modernise all processes within the education system, ranging from electronic pedagogical records to data exchange and the provision of a range of electronic services for citizens and other institutions. In this context, three strategic objectives have been identified: improving the education information system; developing and enhancing the digital ecosystem; and developing and strengthening digital skills and competences. These objectives are highly relevant for career guidance, as without adequate digital competences it is difficult to speak of individuals' competitiveness in the labour market.

The National Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2030 (NSSD)¹⁵ sets ambitious objectives for quality education (SDG 4), inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all (SDG 8), peace, justice and strong institutions (SDG 16), and partnerships for the achievement of the goals (SDG 17). The Career Guidance and Counselling Programme considers the objectives of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the EU Agenda, particularly given that the Government of Montenegro has nationalised the Sustainable Development Goals through the National Sustainable Development Strategy up to 2030. In this context, the following 2030 Agenda goals are particularly highlighted: Goal 4 – Education; Goal 8 – Economic Growth and Employment; and Goal 9 – Innovation and Industry.

Further enhancement of support for entrepreneurs starting businesses in traditional sectors, as well as for women in entrepreneurship, young people and social enterprises, envisages a set of measures aimed at strengthening the institutional framework, providing financial support, improving knowledge and skills, and promoting business creation and development.

The Strategy is also aligned with the **Strategy for the Development of Micro, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises in Montenegro 2023–2026¹⁶**, primarily through the promotion of entrepreneurship and encouragement of start-ups, which represents one of the key points of linkage with career guidance and counselling policy. In addition, further efforts are required to develop an institutional support network for MSMEs and business associations, enhance modern knowledge and skills among young people and within the education system relevant to MSMEs, and foster innovation among young people in MSMEs.

National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021–2025¹⁷, through its Operational objectives, aims to increase the level of participation of women and persons of different gender identities in areas that enable access to resources and benefits derived from the use of those resources. Through a range of measures designed to create enabling conditions for their participation, the Strategy also seeks to empower these social groups to contribute to career development and to strengthen the role of women and persons of different gender identities in planning their own career pathways.

13 Industrial Policy of Montenegro 2024–2028, <https://wapi.gov.me/download-preview/46dc2fa2-6885-482c-8c59-8179a69c68b6?version=1.0>

14 The Education System Digitalisation Strategy 2022–2027, <https://www.skolskipo.gov.me/Strategija%20za%20digitalizaciju%20obrazovnog%20sistema%202022-2027%20sa%20Akcionim%20planom%202022-2023.pdf>

15 The National Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2030, <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/67dc487e-097d-41d2-8fd5-7827a19a1f5a>

16 Strategy for the Development of Micro, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises in Montenegro 2023–2026, <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/3e145aba-089d-40bf-8bbb-6e7a91b3e873>

17 National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021-2025, <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/41e3ee6a-757a-4684-9763-9fee5e933afd>

The measures under this Operational Objective include:

- Empowering women and persons of different gender identities to participate in political decision-making;
- Empowering women and persons of different gender identities, as well as marginalised and vulnerable individuals and groups, to participate in economic life;
- Increasing the level of prevention and protection against gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment, gender-based violence and multiple discrimination in the workplace;
- Organising campaigns to promote a more equitable distribution of unpaid work in the household, childcare and eldercare, and to raise awareness of the participation of women and men in unpaid care and domestic work;
- Encouraging tripartite dialogue on amendments to legislation aimed at enabling greater participation of women in the labour market and achieving a better work-life balance;
- Increasing the proportion of women in STEM fields (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) within education; Assessing impacts and implementing preventive measures to reduce the negative effects of climate change and natural disasters on the health of women, men, persons of different gender identities, as well as marginalised and particularly vulnerable individuals and groups.

Youth Guarantee¹⁸. The Youth Guarantee document highlights the importance of career guidance and counselling, with an emphasis on free group or individual employment counselling. It is necessary to revise the graduate traineeship programme and align it with quality criteria that enable young people's career advancement. Career guidance should be delivered through various communication channels, including remote services such as telephone support, video conferencing and text messaging. The use of email, Skype or Zoom meetings should be enabled in communication with career guidance and counselling practitioners. It is also necessary to assess the quality and competences of career guidance counsellors with a view to implementing their training and ensuring resources for the assessment of their skills. Universities should encourage students to engage in seasonal employment by introducing recognition of this type of engagement within assessment processes. Establishing student cooperatives in line with contemporary practices would enable students to acquire knowledge and skills that are important for the labour market.

It is particularly important to highlight the alignment of public policy with the **Youth Strategy 2023–2027¹⁹**, especially in relation to the need to strengthen young people's access to information on the labour market, as well as the skills and knowledge that need to be developed to support their labour market integration and career development. Emphasis is placed on the need for support programmes and capacity-building initiatives for young people from marginalised groups, aimed at developing additional competences that will enhance their employment prospects.

18 Youth Guarantee, <https://www.gov.me/clanak/garancija-za-mlade>

19 Youth Strategy 2023–2027, <https://www.strategijazamlade.me/2023-2027/>





COMPLIANCE WITH INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS

The European Commission supports and coordinates the **Euroguidance network**²⁰, which serves as a national resource in 34 European countries. The Euroguidance network collects, distributes, and exchanges information on national approaches to career guidance, shares project results, innovative working methods, and examples of good practice in the field of career guidance. The primary target group of the network consists of career guidance practitioners in education and employment sectors who provide information and guidance on international learning mobility to end users seeking opportunities for study and training abroad. In addition, the network supports the development of community competences through the preparation of guidance materials and promotes national and international networking of practitioners by organising seminars, training sessions, and study visits. Since 2017, the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation has been a member of the European Europass and Euroguidance networks, which are responsible for the promotion of career guidance and counselling in Europe.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation cooperates with **the European Training Foundation (ETF)**, which supports European and Central Asian countries in developing career guidance systems. The ETF provides policy advice in the fields of career guidance and education, regularly monitors labour market trends and employment conditions in EU countries and Central Asian countries, and supports them in strengthening skills related to data collection and analysis, to support the development of human capital and improve the responsiveness of (vocational) education and training systems to labour market needs.

The Strategy foresees the further implementation of the European Union acquis in the field of **social policy and employment, covering areas of labour law, occupational safety and health, and equal treatment of men and women with regard to employment, social protection, social inclusion, employment policy, and social dialogue**. The key objectives of the European Union's social policy include ensuring universal and equitable access to basic social services, improving social protection systems, fostering a highly educated workforce, and achieving a high employment rate, with particular attention to underrepresented groups in the labour market.

The European Union highlights entrepreneurship and industry as key priorities for the future of the European economy. It establishes three main pillars defining this area: entrepreneurship policy, industrial policy, and sectoral policies aimed at enhancing market competitiveness. Through numerous financial support programmes for entrepreneurship, innovation, and industry, the European Union seeks to promote initiatives that facilitate the process of starting new businesses and improving the operations of existing ones, as well as creating new employment opportunities, ensuring secure and sustainable incomes, and providing decent working conditions for both women and men.

The Programme is aligned with **Decision (EU) 2018/646 of the European Parliament and of the Council**²¹ of 18 April 2018 on a common framework for the provision of better services for skills and qualifications (Europass), which establishes a European framework to support the transparency and understanding of skills and qualifications acquired in formal, non-formal and informal settings, including, inter alia, through practical experience, mobility and voluntary work ("Europass").

20 Euroguidance network, <https://euroguidance.eu/>

21 Decision (EU) 2018/646 of the European Parliament and of the Council, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/HR/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32018D0646>

Central European Exchange Programme for University Studies (CEEPUS)²²

The objective of the Agreement is to achieve regional academic exchange and long-term academic cooperation through high-quality university networks and the recognition of study periods completed abroad, as well as higher education qualifications among universities, and to encourage the development of the Central European dimension of university curricula and study programmes. The Agreement consists of 13 articles defining the modalities of cooperation between the contracting parties in the field of higher education and related research, with particular emphasis on inter-university cooperation, mobility, and their promotion in accordance with this Agreement. It also defines matters related to scholarships, i.e. grants covering living expenses, laboratory examinations, accommodation, and basic health insurance for scholarship beneficiaries. The conditions under which individuals may obtain these scholarships, as well as eligible beneficiaries, are specified. Study stays are approved for regular semester activities, lasting from 3 to 10 months, as well as for shorter study stays for the purpose of preparing a thesis/dissertation or implementing a joint project, lasting from 1 to 3 months. Within established CEEPUS networks, partner universities may work on the development of joint activities such as joint development projects, the development of joint study programmes, and the organisation of summer schools and excursions. Montenegro participates in the CEEPUS programme with 165 months of exchange.

Studies in Higher Education

The primary and fundamental issue regulated by the Agreement is the provision of equal conditions for students from all signatory countries when enrolling in higher education institutions. This means that students from one country are entitled to apply for admission to public universities and higher education institutions in other signatory countries under the same or equivalent conditions as national applicants. In this way, administrative barriers are reduced and access to higher education in the region is improved. Furthermore, another key issue regulated by the Agreement is the recognition of secondary school qualifications for the purpose of continuing education. Each signatory country undertakes to recognise diplomas and qualifications obtained in other member states, except in cases where significant differences in educational standards exist. This approach facilitates smoother transitions for students between educational institutions, without the need for additional administrative procedures or lengthy diploma recognition processes. Finally, a third important area regulated by this international agreement is the establishment of a Joint Commission for access to higher education and admission to studies. The Commission is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Agreement, harmonising joint lists of recognised educational institutions, and addressing any potential disputes or challenges arising in its application. The Commission is composed of representatives of each signatory country and meets on a regular basis to assess the effectiveness of the Agreement's implementation and to propose potential amendments. In addition to these core areas, the Agreement also addresses other aspects such as the transparency of admission procedures, the obligation of states to provide information on available study programmes, and the possibility of further developing joint study programmes among higher education institutions from different signatory countries.

²² Central European Exchange Programme for University Studies, <https://www.ucg.ac.me/objava/blog/19379/objava/6480-ceepus>





CAREER GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING AND GENDER EQUALITY

Persistent discrimination and the disadvantaged position of women in the labour market compared to men represent one of the recognised problems within a broader set of interconnected public policies. One of the main causes of this inequality is occupational segregation. Compared to men, women tend to be concentrated in a narrow range of occupational fields (such as healthcare, education, the informal economy, care work for families and children, hospitality, retail, and cleaning services etc.). These occupations are often characterised by low wages and, very frequently, insecure working conditions. In addition, women are typically segregated into a limited range of professional roles within the labour market. A particular imbalance exists in leadership positions, with men tending to dominate leadership and managerial roles, while women are primarily concentrated in non-managerial positions. It is evident that gender plays a significant role in shaping individual career choices, experiences, and guidance needs. Social expectations, family influences, gender bias, and discrimination are key factors that may affect career development. Furthermore, gender-specific challenges such as the threat of stereotypes, issues of self-confidence, and concerns related to work-life balance require particular attention within career guidance and counselling interventions.

Gender stereotypes are widely held beliefs or generalisations about the behaviours, characteristics, and roles performed by men and women. Such beliefs can impose constraints on the acceptance of choices and actions of young people and may influence their self-perception, well-being, attitudes, and participation in a broad range of social interactions. From an early age, young people internalise societal stereotypes regarding “appropriate” occupations for men and women. Research shows that more than half of young women believe that their career opportunities are limited by their gender. Career guidance, free from gender bias, represents one way in which schools can begin to address these attitudes and overcome barriers arising from unconscious bias.

In this regard, every school and university should have integrated education and career guidance programmes that are recognised and understood by students, parents, teachers, and employers. In the forthcoming period of public policy implementation, particular emphasis is placed on development.

- Programmes that inform students, parents, and staff (on multiple occasions) about the potential impact of gender bias, outlining appropriate strategies to address this issue, including the development of guidance materials.
- Collection and review of data across the entire education system, with the aim of identifying gender imbalances in different career fields.
- All students and their parents should have access to high-quality information on future study opportunities and labour market prospects. Support from informed counsellors will be needed to help them make the best use of available information tailored to the needs and talents of both women and men.
- Inclusive curricula: Integrating themes of gender equality and diversity into curricula across all subjects, highlighting the contributions of diverse individuals in different fields, with an emphasis on the importance and value of inclusivity for both women and men.
- Role models and mentors: Pupils and students should have opportunities to engage with mentors and role models who can present key competencies. Particular attention should be given to highlighting successful professionals from underrepresented groups, with the aim of inspiring students and pupils.

- Workshops and activities: Organising workshops and activities that promote gender equality and diversity, with a focus on non-traditional career pathways.
- Career guidance and counselling: Ensuring personalised career guidance that encourages pupils and students to pursue their interests and talents regardless of gender. Primary emphasis should be placed on resources that challenge stereotypes and promote a broad range of career options.
- School policies and practices: Implementing school policies and practices that promote gender equality and diversity, including the creation of supportive environments for all students and the addressing of all forms of discrimination or bias.

Career Guidance and Multiple Discrimination – Career guidance plays a key role in identifying and reducing multiple discrimination, which arises when individuals simultaneously or sequentially experience different forms of discrimination on multiple grounds, such as gender, ethnicity, disability, age, sexual orientation, or socio-economic status. In the context of guidance and counselling, it is important to understand that these forms of discrimination do not operate in isolation, but often intersect and compound one another, creating complex barriers to access to education, the labour market, and professional development. For example, a woman with a disability may be simultaneously exposed to discrimination based on both her gender and disability, which reduces her opportunities for employment, career advancement, and equal treatment in the workplace. Effective career guidance must be sensitive to such experiences of multiple marginalisation and adapt its methods to the individual needs of users, while simultaneously strengthening their competencies and self-confidence, facilitating connections with available support networks, and advocating for structural changes that ensure equal access to opportunities for all, regardless of identity or social status. Recommendations for improvement include:

- Continuous professional development of career counsellors on the concepts of intersectionality and anti-discrimination;
- Development of accessible and culturally sensitive tools for assessing users' needs;
- Establishing cooperation with civil society organisations and support services for vulnerable groups;
- Designing inclusive employment policies and career development practices within institutions and companies;
- Introducing systematic monitoring and evaluation of counselling outcomes through an equality lens, in order to ensure that career services genuinely contribute to reducing inequalities in society.





ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

The forthcoming period of social development will be marked by the challenges of the green transition, which will significantly reshape the labour market. These changes represent economic and redistributive challenges, with a particular focus on young people entering the labour market. Education plays a key role in preparing students with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values required for green careers. However, the question remains as to how well educational institutions in Montenegro are preparing students for these career opportunities. Effective career guidance systems are essential in serving as a bridge between students' interests and labour market demands. For the response to climate change to be effective, significant changes in the nature of jobs and the availability of labour market opportunities can be expected. Employers often express concern that they are unable to find workers with the interest, skills, and knowledge required to address environmental challenges, despite the fact that many young people show strong interest in working in green occupations. Career guidance systems play a crucial role in enabling students to understand green jobs and to progress towards them. The role of guidance is particularly important, as the rapid pace of change in the labour market makes it more difficult for young people to access advice and guidance on such professions through their informal networks. Building on a foundation of ecological literacy, educational institutions can help students establish links between academic knowledge and the real world. They can support students in understanding the scope of green jobs, what they offer, and what steps need to be taken within education to prepare for entry into the green labour market. As pupils and students progress through education, institutions can provide resources to support their transition towards desirable employment, building social capital through regular engagement with professionals working in relevant fields, as well as through the sharing and exchange of work-based experiences. In this way, students can be expected to develop self-confidence and a sense of personal agency, while strengthening their understanding of green policies and related career pathways and professions.



SITUATION ANALYSIS

The career guidance and counselling system in Montenegro places its primary focus on unemployed persons, while students from the overall education system have only recently become an integral part of this public policy. An analysis conducted by the European Training Foundation (ETF) in 2022²³ indicates that the career guidance and counselling system in Montenegro is largely limited to the provision of information to users, with less emphasis on comprehensive career guidance and counselling. Given the unfavourable situation in the Montenegrin labour market and the fact that the existing education system often does not meet labour market needs, there is a clear need to further develop the career guidance and counselling system in order to support individuals in making informed decisions about their education and careers. Naturally, this can only be achieved through effective cooperation and coordination among all relevant stakeholders.

It is certainly the most effective approach to educate individuals from an early age about themselves, their careers, and the labour market, and to provide genuine guidance and counselling throughout their schooling, making it considerably easier to continue this support once they enter adult and professional life. Given that we live in an environment characterised by rapid change, it is necessary to use all available innovative technologies to ensure the accessibility of career guidance and counselling services to all interested users. Career guidance and counselling services must be contemporary, modernised, and tailored to the individual needs of users. Montenegro has already established a legal framework and strategic guidelines for career guidance and counselling; however, there appears to be a lack of a shared national vision regarding how the career guidance and counselling system should be structured and developed.

Career guidance and counselling (CGC) is not consistently reflected across all laws and strategies related to education, employment, youth, entrepreneurship, gender equality, and related areas. Quality standards applicable to CGC exist in certain fields; however, there remains considerable scope for improvement. Given that multiple actors are involved in the provision of career guidance and counselling, an adequate level of coordination and cooperation is required for the system to function effectively, yet such coordination is currently not clearly evident. The provision of CGC services appears to be fragmented across the day-to-day activities of individual institutions, without the clear horizontal or vertical communication necessary to generate a synergistic effect.

Nevertheless, there are strong opportunities to establish effective partnerships at the national, regional, and local levels by engaging all relevant stakeholders who could contribute to the delivery of CGC services. At present, CGC services are primarily offered to students within the formal education system and to unemployed persons registered with the Employment Agency, but the quality of these services needs to be significantly enhanced. Formal education does not provide CGC in a systematic manner and typically offers only basic information on further education opportunities. The Employment Agency of Montenegro (EAM) mainly delivers CGC services through traditional approaches and needs to modernise its service provision. Other large target groups, such as the employed, NEETs, women, and other vulnerable groups are only partially covered by CGC services. The provision of CGC services is generally financed from the state budget; however, funds are not specifically earmarked for CGC needs but are allocated to the routine activities of the institutions concerned. Public institutions occasionally provide small grants (usually) to the non-governmental sector or professional associations for the implementation of projects that include CGC components. International organisations, primarily through the implementation of projects in the fields of education, employment, labour markets, and related sectors, also contribute to financing the provision of CGC services.

23 European Training Foundation (ETF), National Career Development Support System Review – Montenegro, March 2022

Employer participation in financing career guidance and counselling (CGC) is very limited. Access to CGC services is formally available to students within the formal education sector and to registered unemployed persons, subject to existing constraints related to staff shortages, lack of premises, limited time, and an insufficient number of qualified professionals in schools, universities, and the offices of the Employment Agency of Montenegro. Access to these services is not easily available to other groups. In addition, it is considered that the wider public is not adequately informed about the full range of CGC services available. The most common mode of CGC service delivery remains the traditional face-to-face approach, either in individual or group settings, which has its advantages. In recent years, the use of technology in the delivery of these services has increased; however, infrastructure-related constraints within public institutions and among citizens, combined with low levels of digital literacy among users, continue to limit the full potential of technological solutions. The profession of career guidance practitioners has not yet received adequate attention, as it is not regulated by law. There are few quality standards related to CGC, both for service providers and practitioners, and these are only beginning to emerge. While initial training programmes for school practitioners exist (and require updating), there are no programmes for the continuous professional development of career guidance practitioners. Labour market information also needs to be updated, modernised, and presented in a user-friendly manner.





SWOT ANALYSIS

The conducted SWOT analysis has identified the following key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats within the career guidance and counselling system:

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<p>School teams for career guidance and counselling have been established in primary and secondary schools</p> <p>All universities have established career centres</p> <p>Each primary and secondary school adopts an annual work plan for the Career guidance and counselling team</p> <p>Many secondary school teachers have participated in training programmes in this field over the past five years</p> <p>Montenegro has established the National Euroguidance Centre that promotes European standards in this field and provides support to career counsellors</p> <p>Accredited professional development programmes in career orientation are available for teachers in primary and secondary education, including both introductory and advanced training modules.</p>	<p>There is no formally established position of career counsellor in primary and secondary schools; instead, career guidance and counselling functions are carried out by psychological and pedagogical support services or by teachers serving as members of school career guidance teams</p> <p>There is no single coordinating body responsible for overseeing the work of all institutions in this field; instead, each institution operates independently within its own remit, without structured support or coordination</p> <p>In previous periods, insufficient budgetary funding was allocated to this field</p> <p>Cooperation between primary and secondary schools, and between secondary schools and universities, is not at a satisfactory level; cooperation policies are implemented sporadically and depend largely on individual schools or universities</p> <p>Student admission policies for secondary schools and higher education institutions are not aligned with labour market needs.</p> <p>Career development support for the employed mainly targets management levels, while other employees have limited opportunities for vertical and horizontal career advancement. Human resource development services within organisations are insufficiently developed, and inter-institutional cooperation is weak</p> <p>Unemployed persons do not have access to adequate career guidance and counselling services.</p>
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<p>There is strong interest among students, parents, and unemployed persons in career guidance and counselling services</p> <p>Infrastructure for the development of this field already exists (school career guidance teams, university career centres, IPC centres within the Employment Agency).</p> <p>There is a growing and clearly identified need among individuals for career guidance and counselling services</p>	<p>Insufficient state-level funding for career guidance and counselling activities</p> <p>A substantial share of young people remain unemployed</p> <p>Rapid changes in labour market trends and occupations, to which the system struggles to adapt (e.g. digital nomads and similar trends)</p> <p>A limited number of non-governmental organisations show interest in this field; insufficient engagement of educational institutions, NGOs, and other organisations in accessing European funds for career guidance and counselling</p> <p>Labour market changes combined with insufficient awareness among young people about labour market needs and trends</p>

Taking into account the above, the new strategic document is based on three key areas and public policy priorities:





PREVIOUS PERIOD OF PUBLIC POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

The Lifelong Career Guidance Strategy for the period 2016–2020 identified five strategic priorities, namely:

- Raising awareness of the need for lifelong learning and career development;
- Strengthening career orientation policies at the system level;
- Strengthening career orientation in Montenegro's education system;
- Enhancing career orientation services for unemployed and employed persons; and
- Ensuring quality in career orientation.

Overall, the percentage of fully implemented activities over the entire duration of the previous strategic document is considered satisfactory (83%), taking into account the circumstances under which the Strategy was implemented, including the COVID-19 pandemic, fundamental structural and staffing changes within the system, limited budgetary resources, and changes in the labour market. Nevertheless, these challenges should not be regarded as justification for discontinuing further planning and strategic activities in this important field.

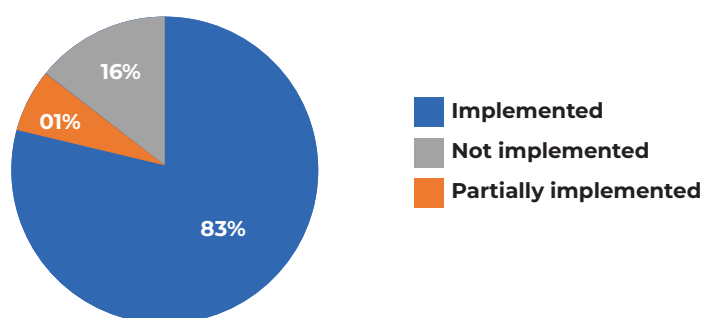


Figure 1: Overall percentage of implemented activities for the period 2016-2020

During the implementation period, the competent institutions carried out activities defined by the strategic document for the period 2016–2020, in line with available capacities and prevailing circumstances. The then Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports, in cooperation with other relevant institutions, the Centre for Vocational Education, the Bureau for Education Services, and the Employment Agency of Montenegro, implemented numerous activities aimed at promoting career guidance and counselling among students, career counsellors in schools and IPCCs, as well as parents. Higher education institutions were responsible for cooperation with students through university career centres. In addition, a significant contribution was made by employers' associations, the Chamber of Commerce, and the The Employers' Union of Montenegro, which, through their councils and other advisory bodies, promoted the concept of career guidance and counselling among employed and adult citizens of Montenegro. However, apart from promotional activities, other segments that are essential for improving the situation in this field did not demonstrate significant progress, as this report will further indicate.

A particular contribution to the development of career guidance and counselling in Montenegro is reflected in intersectoral cooperation in this field and the equal inclusion of all target groups, including students, parents, career counsellors in IPCCs and educational institutions, as well as adults and young people. The previously established National Career Orientation Coordination Body did not function effectively, which affected the quality and effectiveness of intersectoral cooperation.

The highest level of implementation was evident in the achievement of Priority 1: Raising awareness of the need for lifelong learning and career development, primarily through the implementation of measures related to the promotion of lifelong learning and career orientation. Within this priority area, 30 activities were implemented out of a total of 72 activities envisaged by the strategic document.

The greatest contribution to the achievement of this objective was made through the National Euroguidance Centre, operating within the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation. This was followed by the implementation of measures aimed at the development and improvement of programmes for unemployed and employed persons, with the objective of acquiring and enhancing skills relevant to career development, within Priority 4: Strengthening career orientation services for unemployed and employed persons, under which 13 out of 15 activities were implemented (86.7%). The most significant contribution to the implementation of this measure was made by the Chamber of Commerce of Montenegro.

It should be noted that Priority 3: Strengthening career orientation within the education system, was implemented at a rate of 100%, with a total of 14 measures completed. However, despite this high level of implementation, the outcomes of these measures proved to be insufficient, as their impact on students did not yield the desired results. For this reason, it will be particularly important to assign greater significance to this topic in the forthcoming strategic document.

The fully unimplemented measure relates to the expansion of the network of career centres within institutions and organisations (under Priority 4), due to the then prevailing situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as issues related to the status of IPC centres, structural changes within the ministry responsible for labour affairs, and changes in senior management positions. As a result, this area of activity requires significantly greater attention in the new strategic document. The transformation of IPC centres represents an important strategic issue, as it has a substantial impact on the services provided primarily to unemployed persons, as well as to other individuals in the field of career orientation.

The lowest level of implementation (only 40%) was recorded under Priority 2: Strengthening career orientation policy at the system level, which included only one planned measure related to the improvement of the legislative framework and other documents in line with the EU framework. This proved to be an overly ambitious objective given the existing capacities within public policy at the time. The recommendation for the next period is that, when planning activities in this thematic area, realistic opportunities and available capacities for the implementation of the envisaged activities should be carefully assessed.





STRENGTHENING CAREER ORIENTATION IN MONTENEGRO'S EDUCATION SYSTEM

Strengthening career guidance and counselling in the education system is a necessity that, through systematic action, should yield significant effects, especially when the outcomes of this measure are observed in the long term. In Montenegro, there are 163 public institutions-primary schools and 51 secondary schools. Primary education covers children aged 6 to 15, while secondary education covers those aged 15 to 19. In the 2024/2025 school year, classes are attended by 69,000 primary school students and approximately 26,400 secondary school students.

- Of the total number of students enrolled in primary school, 48.2% or 33,665 are girls, while 51.8% or 36,143 are boys.
- Of the total number of students enrolled in secondary school, 48.8% or 13,037 are female, while 51.2% or 13,678 are male.
- In the winter semester of the 2024/2025 academic year, a total of 6,065 students were enrolled in undergraduate and master's studies. The total number of female students was 3,512 (58.5%), while male students accounted for 2,553 (41.5%).
- Approximately 260 primary and secondary school students attend classes in two educational centres.

According to data from the Education Information System (MEIS), career guidance teams have been established in:

- 69 primary schools with 372 members,
- 3 secondary schools with 123 members,
- two educational centres with eight members.

Strengthening school teams for career orientation, providing training for existing teams and new team members (teachers and professional associates), organising workshops, curricular and extracurricular activities, reintroducing elective subjects in primary schools, organising various events, participation in fairs, visits to companies, etc., would significantly improve the situation in this field. What is lacking is cooperation among schools, faculties, employers and employers' associations, as well as the Employment Agency, not only in promoting certain activities, but also in concrete actions aimed at implementing programmes for students. With regard to strengthening career guidance and counselling at universities, it is necessary to reinforce the activities of the Career Centre at the University of Montenegro, as well as cooperation with other universities and the networking of activities that contribute to better outcomes. Strengthening the link between universities and the labour market would significantly contribute to the overall development of the social structure. The Centre for Vocational Education and the Bureau for Education Services, within the framework of external quality assurance of the educational work of primary and secondary schools, monitor specific segments relevant for assessing the quality of the implementation of career orientation services. These include cooperation between schools and institutions and the local community, monitoring enrolment procedures and policies, cooperation with parents, monitoring early school leavers, tracking students who have completed their education, providing support to gifted students, monitoring the implementation of practical training and professional practice, professional orientation, etc. It is concluded that, in order to ensure the quality of career orientation services in schools, in line with common quality standards, it is necessary to adapt criteria and develop descriptors within indicators that are relevant for monitoring the quality of career orientation services, both in school self-evaluation and in external school evaluation. Teachers who participated in the survey believe that, for improving the quality

of career guidance and counselling (CGC), it is most important for students to become familiar with occupations through practical experience, to establish cooperation among all actors in the system, and to ensure professional development for all teachers in the field of CGC (Figure 2). Factors related to possible improvements of the CGC system, presented in Figure 2, were assessed on a scale from 1 to 5, and all recorded very high values, from 3.76 upwards.

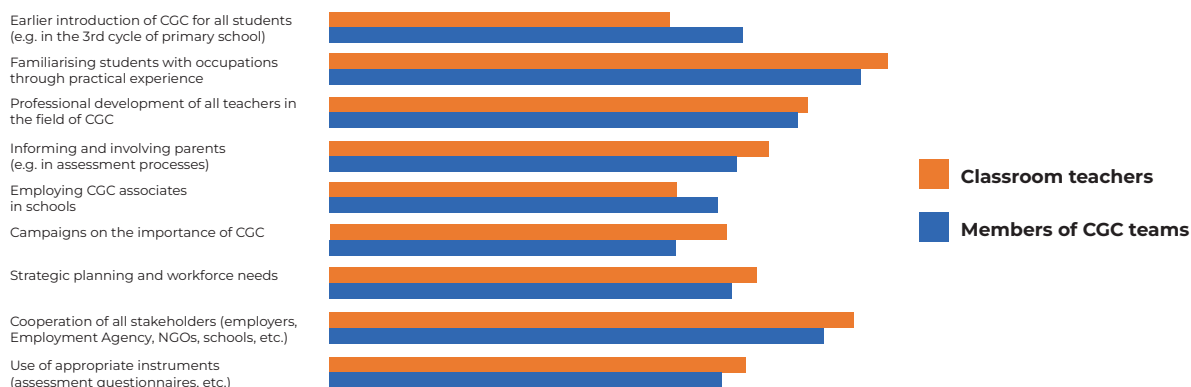


Figure 2: Teachers' views on ways to improve Career Guidance and Counselling (CGC)

When discussing data availability, it is important to highlight eTwinning, which represents a European platform for the professional development of teachers within the Erasmus+ programme, financed by the European Union. In Montenegro, eTwinning was launched on 1 April 2022, and in the first year of implementation, programme implementation units were established. Research on the attitudes of secondary school students showed that the majority of students (60%) are not aware of whether there is a career guidance and counselling team in the secondary school they attend. In contrast, 23% of students have access to a CGC team in their schools, while 17% of students report that no such team exists in the school they attend.

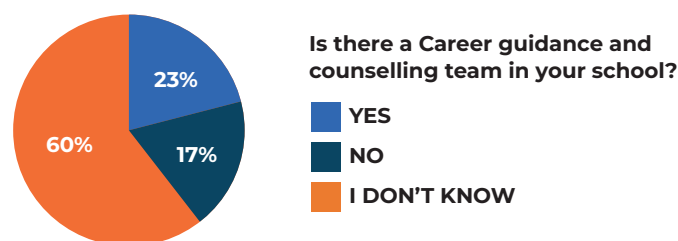


Figure 3: Students' awareness of the existence of a Career guidance and counselling team in the schools they attend

Regarding the level of awareness of career guidance activities in schools among students, 23% of respondents reported being exposed to the listed activities at least twice a year, while 15% reported exposure once a year. It is important to note that nearly 22% of respondents are rarely or never exposed to these activities, indicating an issue that needs to be addressed in the forthcoming period of education policy implementation.

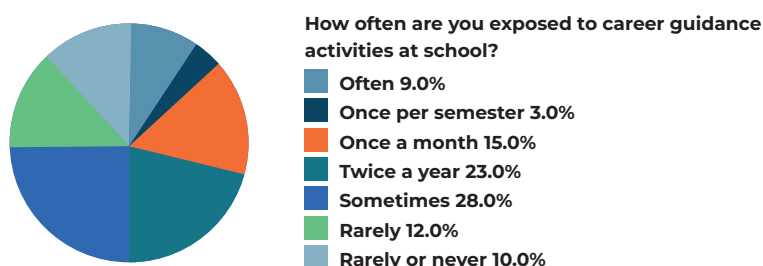


Figure 4: Students' awareness of and exposure to career guidance activities in schools

In December 2020, with the support of the then Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports, the NGO Centre for Creative Skills conducted a survey on the attitudes of secondary school students in northern Montenegro who are preparing for further education or employment, which is important for their careers and success. The research was carried out within the project “Your Talent for a Better Future”, supported by the then Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports and implemented in partnership with NGO Šansa. The survey was conducted in the municipalities of Berane, Bijelo Polje, Plav, Andrijevica and Rožaje. A total of 500 respondents were surveyed, of whom 54% were girls (270) and 46% boys (230). The results provide a relevant insight into the attitudes of future academic citizens and members of the workforce, and to some extent into the achievements of this strategic document.

The survey showed that:

- Students are aware that learning from their own mistakes is one of the paths to success, with this awareness being very high at 92%.
- Around 74% of respondents believe that by taking personal responsibility they can succeed in further education and employment.
- In this way, and through confronting their own limitations, they can gain trust and respect from employers, as confirmed by 50% of respondents.
- Approximately 71% of respondents expect to be successful in their future careers, and an equal share stated that acquiring responsibility is the most important factor for further professional engagement.
- With regard to further education, more than half of respondents (54%) stated that the greatest influence and the provision of a realistic perspective come from parents. Personal attitudes of students rank second (16%), while schools have a somewhat smaller influence (13%).
- When asked where in Montenegro one can typically find employment in the desired field, 40% indicated public institutions, 5% local government, and 19% the private sector. Furthermore, 59% plan to continue further education and professional development, while 25% plan to enter employment immediately after completing secondary school.

Students responded as follows:

When asked when they decided what they would like to become after completing their education, the majority of students (65%) stated that they made this decision during their schooling, while 22% had not yet made a decision about their future after education at the time the survey was conducted.

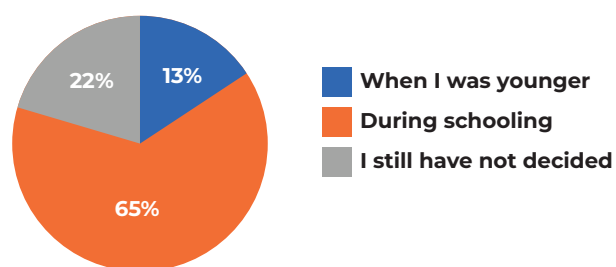


Figure 5: What would you like to become after completing your education?

In response to the question “Who helped you gain a realistic understanding of different occupations?”, the finding that only 16% of students make independent decisions regarding the choice of their future career path indicates the inevitability of implementing programmes for students of primary school age, targeting all students rather than only those who might eventually choose career orientation as an elective subject. The results show that students still lack sufficient systemic support when it comes to decision-making about their educational pathways and career choices.

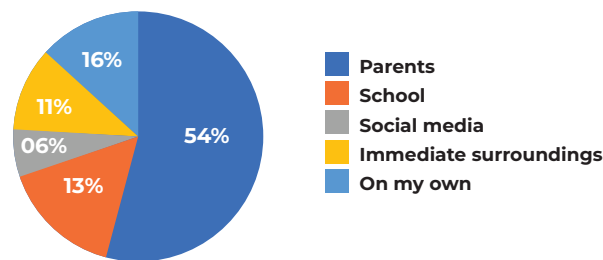


Figure 6: Who helped you gain a realistic understanding of different occupations?

When discussing the capacities of higher education institutions in Montenegro, it is important to note that all universities in Montenegro have established career centres that provide career counselling services to all their students.

The Career Centre of the University of Montenegro, as a support service, is primarily available to students of the University of Montenegro, as well as to academic staff, employers, and prospective students. The Centre's activities represent additional ways of professional development and career growth and are implemented through workshops, training sessions, seminars, and courses. Within its target groups, all students at the University of Montenegro are provided with regular consultations in the form of psychological and pedagogical counselling and support, which are also available to prospective first-year students in preparation for their studies and adaptation to the new academic environment. Secondary school graduates in Montenegro are offered career counselling through the "Open Day" initiative. This project provides secondary school students with the opportunity to obtain comprehensive information before making decisions about the direction of their further education and professional development. Of particular importance for career guidance and counselling is the provision of a career counsellor/coordinator at all units of the University of Montenegro, who would be available to students in addressing potential dilemmas at the early stages of their career development. In addition, the Career Centre plans to develop a dedicated platform for tracking the careers of young people and students.

Recognising the importance of career counselling for the development of the overall education system and for preparing students to meet the challenges of the modern labour market, the course Entrepreneurship and Innovation has been accredited as a compulsory subject in the majority of study programmes at the University of Donja Gorica (UDG), including those programmes not directly related to the field of economics. In this way, students are encouraged to develop creativity, innovative capacity, critical thinking, and readiness to recognise opportunities in their environment and to take risks, while also developing organisational skills, leadership abilities, and so-called "soft skills," which are of invaluable importance in the contemporary labour market.

At the University of Donja Gorica, various events are continuously organised that are, among other things, dedicated to career guidance and counselling. *These include the School of Entrepreneurship and Innovation for Young People, the Entrepreneurial Ideas Exchange, the Knowledge Factory, the National Conference on Entrepreneurial Learning, the "Miločer Development Forum", "Christmas Debates," the "Talent Camp,"* as well as numerous summer schools, round tables, conferences, and forums. Through these activities, both students and secondary school students have the opportunity to become familiar with the latest trends and developments in the contemporary labour market, to obtain relevant information and guidance that can support them in making complex decisions related to further education, professional development, or employment, in line with their talents, abilities, and interests. A particular contribution to the development of career guidance and counselling at UDG is provided by *the Entrepreneurship Nest and the Student Business Centre*. The Entrepreneurship Nest represents a laboratory for nurturing creativity and the entrepreneurial mindset among all UDG students. This modern, well-equipped space, covering more than 400 square metres, serves as a unique hub for the "incubation of start-up ideas," where students develop their ideas within multidisciplinary

teams and bring them to the market. In this process, students have access to experienced mentors from various fields, coming from both the academic community and the business sector. The Entrepreneurship Nest regularly hosts lectures by experts from different areas, significantly supporting students in making decisions related to their future careers. In addition, the Student Business Centre within UDG makes a substantial contribution to promoting the importance of career guidance and counselling, not only at the University of Donja Gorica but also at the local and national levels. Its activities are linked to the organisation of various events and initiatives (round tables, panel discussions, training sessions, seminars, conferences, guest lectures, etc.), as well as to the organisation of student internships, both in Montenegro and abroad, which are of exceptional importance for career guidance and counselling at UDG. The role of the Bureau for Education Services and the Centre for Vocational Education is also significant in creating and continuously expanding training opportunities for teachers, based on the identified needs of different groups within schools (e.g. subject teachers, CGC teams, school management, and professional associates). In parallel, it is necessary to continuously develop educational materials for teachers in these fields. It is particularly important to emphasise to teachers that career guidance and counselling represents a preventive mechanism against student dropout and early school leaving. Teacher training in the field of career guidance and counselling should be planned in at least two directions: first, by increasing coverage to include teachers from primary schools and general secondary schools, not only those teaching final grades; and second, by diversifying training programmes and their content. This includes offering training for the development of career guidance programmes themselves, with a strong focus on monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, as well as introducing new CGC programmes (for example, programmes tailored to students with special educational needs).

Strengthening career centres at universities and increasing their engagement in cooperation with the business sector should be based on practical learning and would contribute to a smoother transition of students from the education system to the labour market. Systematic networking between universities and employers' associations is necessary. Universities should design mechanisms to incentivise students to engage in seasonal or part-time work by recognising and awarding such forms of engagement within assessment and grading processes. Redefining the concept of student cooperatives and adapting them to the contemporary business environment, as well as modernising the existing regulatory framework, is essential, as student cooperatives traditionally play a role not only in supporting household incomes but also in enabling students to acquire market-relevant knowledge and skills.

In light of the above, the key directions for the development of Career Guidance and Counselling (CGC) in the field of education in the forthcoming period include:

- Developing career education and career guidance throughout the education system from early primary education as a mandatory component of curricula and study programmes. This should include modalities of practical work experience that facilitate the first transition from education to the labour market, as well as subsequent transitions throughout life, such as transitions from unemployment to employment, etc.
- Ensuring a whole-school approach to career guidance, which implies close cooperation between those responsible for CGC and all teachers in integrating career learning into their subjects and in creating a school culture that supports career learning across the curriculum. This includes providing easily accessible public spaces for career guidance and resources, as well as facilities for individual, parental and group counselling. A school-level CGC annual plan and CGC teams in primary and secondary schools represent an ideal foundation for this approach.
- Focusing on the development of career management skills from the first grade of primary school onwards, in addition to the traditional provision of information on occupations and opportunities for further learning during transitional periods.

- Replacing marketing-oriented activities aimed at student enrolment with neutral career guidance, based on labour market information, graduate tracking studies, skills forecasting, and related evidence.
- Transforming local secondary schools into local learning centres that offer a diverse range of training programmes (short- and medium-duration) aligned with labour market demand. Schools should be developed into local hubs for education and employment, and consideration should be given to locating local CGC centres within these schools.
- Considering, where appropriate, cost-effective ways of complementing face-to-face career guidance, including through curricula and study programmes, group guidance, and ICT-based services. High-quality online portals should be funded to free up time and staff capacity for those individuals who need personalised support the most.

Operational Objective 1: Strengthen the effectiveness of the career orientation system in Montenegro's education system through the establishment of a sustainable institutional framework

Impact Indicator 1: An established and functional Career Centre within the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation that leads and coordinates career guidance and counselling processes across all educational institutions in Montenegro	Baseline Value (2025) Currently, there is no national-level body in Montenegro that coordinates and manages career guidance and counselling processes	Intermediate Value (2028) By the end of 2028, a body coordinating and managing career guidance and counselling processes will be established in all educational institutions	Target Value (2030) The Career Centre is fully functional and serves as a support service for all stakeholders interested in career guidance and counselling in Montenegro
Impact Indicator 2: Percentage of primary and secondary schools with established career guidance and counselling teams	Baseline Value (2025) 36% of primary schools have established career guidance and counselling teams 45% of secondary schools have established career guidance and counselling teams	Intermediate Value (2028) At least 70% of primary schools have established career guidance and counselling teams At least 70% of secondary schools have established career guidance and counselling teams	Target Value (2030) At least 100% of primary schools have established career guidance and counselling teams At least 100% of secondary schools have established career guidance and counselling teams





STRENGTHENING CAREER ORIENTATION SERVICES FOR UNEMPLOYED AND EMPLOYED PERSONS

In the field of employment and the labour market, the Employment Agency of Montenegro is one of the key actors responsible for the provision of career orientation services. These services are delivered through the work of vocational orientation counsellors, as well as other counsellors within the Employment Agency of Montenegro. Previously, Information and Professional Counselling Centre (IPCC) operated within the regional offices of the Employment Agency, where interested groups (pupils, parents, students, unemployed and employed persons) could obtain information and advice useful for career planning. IPC centres operated at full capacity until the COVID-19 pandemic. The International Labour Organisation recommended that IPC centres be established as separate organisational units within the regional offices of the Employment Agency in order to increase the visibility of their work. However, existing legal frameworks did not allow for such an organisational arrangement. The Law on Employment Mediation and Rights during Unemployment placed an emphasis on working with unemployed persons and other labour market transition groups, identifying them as priority target groups for the Employment Agency of Montenegro.

In accordance with the legal framework, vocational orientation is defined as a labour market service encompassing a range of professional procedures aimed at identifying opportunities for unemployed persons in choosing an occupation, changing occupations, and making decisions related to career development, that is, aligning individual needs with labour market requirements.

Professional vocational orientation procedures include:

- Providing information on career development opportunities;
- Assessment for career planning;
- Counselling aimed at career planning and other activities related to career planning and development.

In terms of working methods, these procedures are divided into individual and group approaches. Individual approaches include the assessment of personal potential and individual counselling (which may also involve psychological testing), while group approaches are based on workshop-type activities, where participants exchange experiences and acquire knowledge and skills through interactive work. Group work involves between 7 and 16 participants, while the duration of service provision depends on the programme structure. In addition, selection procedures are also applied, either at the request of employers for recruitment purposes or to include unemployed persons in active labour market policy measures. All these vocational guidance activities are implemented with the objective of increasing the employability of unemployed persons and other job seekers.

Active labour market policy programmes are implemented in cooperation with adult education providers and employers. These programmes are intended for unemployed persons, particularly those classified as conditionally employable who are at risk in the labour market, as their employment is hindered due to specific reasons or circumstances. The objective is to increase employability and contribute to the employment of these individuals.

Within the implementation of active labour market policy measures, the following are provided:

- Adult education and training;
- Incentives for employment and self-employment;
- Direct job creation.

During 2024, six programmes aimed at creating conditions for the faster integration of unemployed persons into the world of work were implemented, involving a total of 1,355 unemployed individuals. The programmes targeted young unemployed persons, individuals with low or inadequate educational attainment, women, members of the Roma and Egyptian (RE) population, beneficiaries of material assistance, and unemployed persons registered for more than 12 months, to increase employability and employment in the open labour market. The highest participation in these programmes was recorded among women (60.48%), long-term unemployed persons (46.88%), and young people (27.45%). In addition to these groups, programme participants also included persons with disabilities (3.08%), beneficiaries of material assistance (43 individuals, or 4.13%), members of the Roma and Egyptian population (1.78%), and other unemployed persons exposed to labour market risks.

Unemployed persons from municipalities in the Northern region, in line with their share in total unemployment, account for 66.64% (823 persons) of participants in active labour market policy measures. Of the total number of participants in these measures, persons from municipalities in the Central region account for 28.58% (353 persons), while 4.78% (59 persons) come from municipalities in the Coastal region. When analysed by level of education, persons with I and II levels of educational qualification account for 18.38%, those with III and IV levels for 67.77%, while persons with V, VI and VII levels of education account for 13.85%. The structure of programme participants indicates that the programmes include unemployed persons belonging to categories identified as strategic priorities, while taking into account balanced regional development. In order to ensure more effective programme management, the implementation process is continuously monitored and measurable indicators of progress and results are assessed through key documents, including programme implementation contracts concluded between the Employment Agency and programme providers, operational manuals for programme implementation, participation agreements concluded between the Employment Agency and unemployed persons, employment contracts concluded between programme providers and participants, guidelines for monitoring programme implementation, as well as a set of reporting forms, participant satisfaction assessment tools, findings from on-site monitoring visits to programme implementation locations, and other instruments supporting the monitoring of the programme implementation process.

NEET youth represent a significant share of the population in Montenegro. According to data from MONSTAT's Labour Force Survey (LFS)²⁴ at the end of 2023, the number of young people in Montenegro with NEET status amounted to approximately 27,100 individuals, representing 20.3% of the total youth population. In this context, it is important to provide a comparative overview with data at the EU level and in the Western Balkans region:

- Eurofound data indicate that in the 27 Member States of the European Union (EU), the share of NEETs aged 15-29 peaked at 16.1% in 2013. In subsequent years, a decline in the NEET rate was recorded as a result of policy measures such as the Youth Guarantee. By 2019, the NEET rate had fallen to 12.6%, representing the lowest level in the previous ten years. The COVID-19 pandemic and related economic restrictions contributed to an increase in the NEET rate to 13.8% in 2020, as a result of job losses and barriers to education and training for young people. Since 2021, the NEET rate has been steadily declining and reached its lowest level on record, at 11.2% in 2023. Moreover, the share of unemployed youth within the NEET population has also reached its lowest recorded level²⁵. The NEET rate among young women aged 15-29 in the EU stood at 15.5% in 2020 and declined to 12.5% in 2023, which is slightly higher than the NEET unemployment rate of 10.1% among young men. This proportion is higher for young women in almost all EU Member States.

²⁴ Labour Force Survey 2023, MONSTAT, <https://www.monstat.org/cg/page.php?id=2088&pageid=22>

²⁵ Eurofound, NEET, <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/en/topic/neets#text=In%202003%2C%2011.%25%20of%20the%20been%20steadily%20declining%20since%20then>

- According to RCC data from 2021²⁶, the share of young people aged 15-24 who are neither in employment nor in education or training (NEET) in the Western Balkans (WB6) averages 23.7%, ranging from 15.9% in Serbia to 37.4% in Kosovo (K3), compared to only 11.1% in the EU for the same age group. Long-term unemployment affects almost two-thirds of unemployed youth in North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo. It is estimated that the total number of NEETs aged 15-24 in the WB6 region is around 530,000.

According to data from the Labour Force Survey for the fourth quarter of 2024²⁷, Montenegro had an active population of 315.2 thousand persons, of whom 278.7 thousand, or 88.4%, were employed and 36.5 thousand, or 11.6%, were unemployed. Compared to the previous quarter, the number of employed persons decreased by 3.1%, while compared to the same quarter of the previous year it recorded a decline of 0.4%. The number of unemployed persons increased by 2.5% compared to the previous quarter, while compared to the same quarter of the previous year it decreased by 5.9%.

The population outside the labour force (aged 15–89) amounted to 184.4 thousand persons. Compared to the previous quarter, the number of persons outside the labour force increased by 4.3%, and compared to the same quarter of the previous year it increased by 2.3%. For the population aged 15–89 in the fourth quarter of 2024, the activity rate was 63.1%, the employment rate was 55.8%, the unemployment rate was 11.6%, and the inactivity rate was 36.9%.

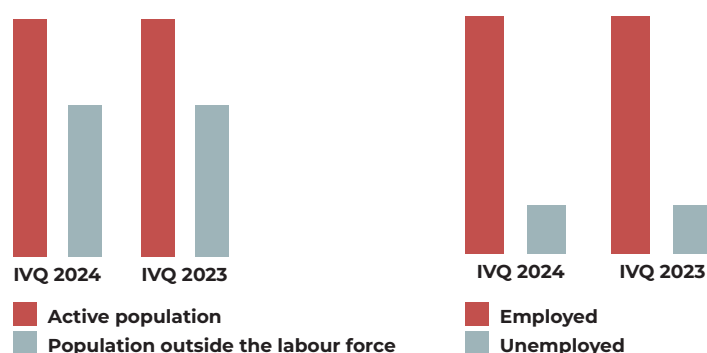


Figure 7: Working-age population by activity status

According to ARS data, out of the total active population of 171.0 thousand, 54.3% are men, and 144.2 thousand or 45.7% are women. The total population outside the labour force consists of 108.1 thousand women or 58.6%, and 76.3 thousand men or 41.4%. Out of the total number of employed persons, 150.1 thousand or 53.9% are men, and 128.6 thousand or 46.1% are women. Out of the total number of unemployed persons, 20.8 thousand or 57.0% are women, and 15.7 thousand or 43.0% are men.

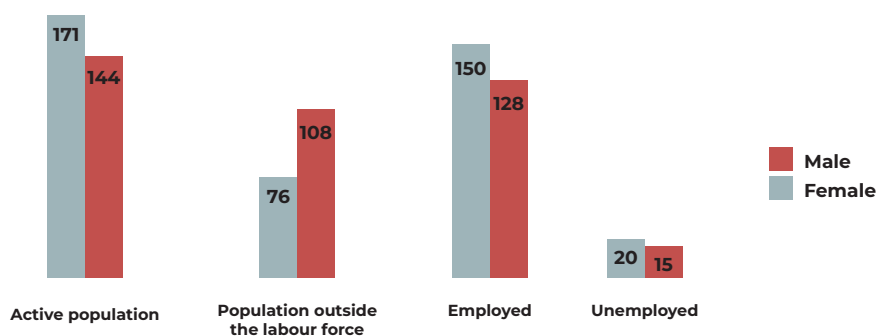


Figure 8: Working-age population by activity status and gender (in thousands)

²⁶ Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), Study on Youth Employment in the Western Balkans, <https://www.rcc.int/download/docs/Study-on-Youth-Employment-in-the%20Western-Balkans-08072021.pdf/7464a4c82ee558440dfbea2e23028483>

²⁷ Labour Force Survey for the fourth quarter of 2024, https://monstat.org/uploads/files/ARS/2024/4/ARS%20saopstenje_2024_Q4.pdf

Women's participation in the labour force is clearly an underutilised driver of growth. Women are underrepresented in employment and are paid less in most sectors of the economy. The gender gap in labour force participation between men and women, although narrowing over time, still exceeds 10 percentage points in 2023 and, if reduced further, could lead to significant macroeconomic gains. Despite higher levels of education among employed women, wage disparities persist, pointing to direct or indirect gender-based discrimination in pay. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) links the identified gap to motherhood or career interruptions, horizontal discrimination, and wage penalties in occupations dominated by women. The largest share of the active population consists of people aged 25 to 49, totalling 198.3 thousand. The age group with the highest number of people outside the labour force is 65 to 89 years, accounting for 63.4 thousand people outside the labour force.

The largest number of employed people is in the age group 25 to 49, accounting for 174.0 thousand employed individuals. Likewise, the highest number of unemployed persons is also recorded in the same age group, amounting to 24.4 thousand unemployed individuals. Labour Force Survey (LFS) data indicate that the largest share in the educational structure of the active population consists of persons with completed secondary education (61.8%), followed by those with completed higher or tertiary education (31.5%), and 6.7% of persons with completed primary education or lower. The largest share in the educational structure of the population outside the labour force also consists of people with completed secondary education (51.7%), followed by those with completed primary education or lower (36.4%), while the remaining 11.9% are people with completed higher or tertiary education. The educational structure of employed persons shows that 61.1% have completed secondary education, followed by employees with completed higher or tertiary education (33.1%), and those with completed primary education or lower (5.8%). The educational structure of unemployed persons indicates that 67.1% have completed secondary education, followed by unemployed persons with completed higher or tertiary education (18.9%), and those with completed primary education or lower (14.0%).

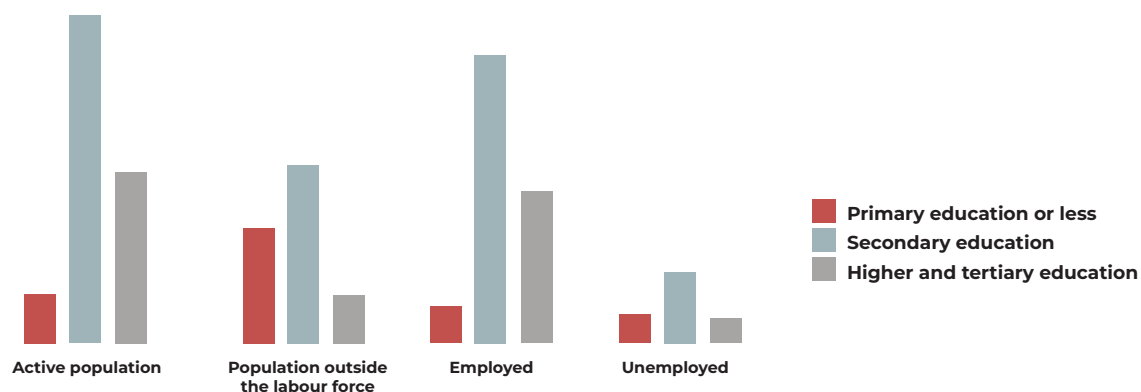


Figure 9: Working-age population by activity status and level of education

The structure of employed persons by sector of activity shows that the largest share of employment is in the services sector (76.1%), followed by non-agricultural sectors (industry and construction) with 19.5%, and the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sector with 4.4%.

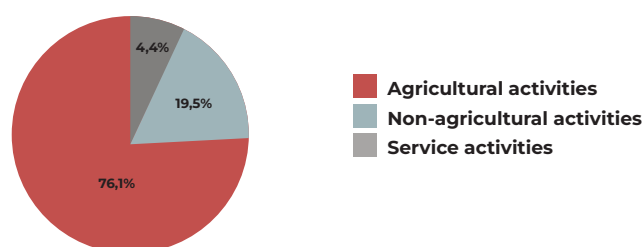


Figure 10: Employed persons by sector of activity

A brief overview of other economic trends:

Available estimates indicate that Montenegro's economy is expected to grow at an average annual rate of 3.7% in the medium term, with year-on-year growth projected at 4.8% in 2025, followed by 3.2% and 3.1% in 2026 and 2027, respectively. According to the Economic Reform Programme for 2025–2027²⁸, in light of easing price pressures at the European level, a gradual slowdown in inflation is expected, with an average inflation rate of 2.9% over the period 2025-2027. Through the Growth Plan for the Western Balkans, Montenegro will have access to EUR 383 million over the period 2024–2027 for the implementation of structural reforms and investments in infrastructure.

According to the 2024 Country Report for Montenegro, the assessment indicates that Montenegro has achieved a certain level of preparedness in the area of social policy and employment policy – Chapter 19. Overall, the labour market continues to face structural shortcomings and, in this context, the Employment Agency needs to be reformed and strengthened in order to enable it to function as a modern public employment service, by designing and implementing active labour market policy measures targeted at young people and women, persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups²⁹.

Existing career guidance and counselling services for unemployed persons (including individual and group information provision, individual counselling, and group counselling delivered through workshops or online seminars) need to be aligned with the current programmes being implemented. For example, there are workshops aimed at enhancing active job-search skills, programmes to motivate participation in seasonal employment, measures supporting inclusion in active labour market policy programmes, and grants for self-employment, among others. These services are available to persons registered as unemployed with the Employment Agency of Montenegro. Career development support for employed persons should not be limited solely to management levels, but should encompass all employees in order to enable successful vertical and horizontal career progression. Career advancement should not be treated merely as a formally regulated legal matter, but rather as a realistic and expected practice and an integral element of the organisational culture of every organisation. Lifelong learning is a reality for employees, and it is important that each employee has an individual career plan and engages in professional development in line with their interests, abilities, knowledge, skills, and needs, aligned with the development goals of the enterprise and planned professional training programmes. Strengthening human resource development services within organisations, as well as their cooperation, can significantly contribute to enhancing career guidance and counselling for employed persons. The Employment Agency, the Chamber of Commerce and the Employers' Union should innovate career orientation programmes intended for unemployed and employed persons seeking a change of job or career. When designing new programmes, it is important to involve stakeholders at the local level and, instead of a uniform and centralised approach, explore locally tailored solutions. Expanding human and spatial capacities to ensure the provision of high-quality vocational orientation services for the labour market is equally important to enable access to these services for all those who need them. To ensure the quality and effectiveness of the programmes implemented, it is necessary to establish a unified national database of users of vocational orientation services. One possible solution would be to interlink data from the Employment Agency, the Tax Administration, and adult education providers, in order to monitor whether individuals have become employed or engaged in education or training based on the outcomes of career guidance and counselling.

Key directions for the development of Career Guidance and Counselling (CGC) in the field of employment:

- Develop tailored services for vulnerable groups, particularly NEETs and women, especially those living in rural areas.

28 Economic Reform Programme 2025–2027

29 <https://www.gov.me/en/documents/943a4aaf-b4a5-42dc-ab3f-298eea539b91>

- Develop dedicated services for workers in the informal sector in order to support their gradual transition to formal employment.
- Provide specialised services for workers in non-standard forms of employment; draw on good practices, including those implemented by civil society organisations.
- Develop a strategy to expand the services of the Employment Agency of Montenegro to the entire population, also taking into account the use of ICT for career guidance.
- Ensure adequate public funding for career guidance systems in line with the social benefits generated. Direct subsidies towards groups that are underrepresented in the labour market and in training participation (low-skilled individuals, older job seekers, women, etc.).
- Encourage employers to invest in the provision of career guidance in order to respond to the career development needs of their employees, with the rationale that this contributes to employers' competitiveness through the continuous development of workers' skills, motivation, and productivity.
- Identify ways to reach disadvantaged groups, including older job seekers and low-skilled individuals. These groups face difficulties in finding quality jobs, are underrepresented in training participation, and could benefit significantly from career guidance services.
- Develop local partnerships among education providers, local offices of the Employment Agency of Montenegro, employers, municipalities, youth clubs, non-governmental organisations, and social workers in order to address the needs of NEETs and other vulnerable groups.
- Implement the modernisation of the digital capacities and services of the Employment Agency to establish a single entry point for online career guidance targeting different groups (students, teachers, CGC practitioners, parents, employers, workers, etc.); and, already in the medium and long term, plan for the integration of results from donor-funded projects, such as occupational information portals supported by the ILO, JISERP (the Unified Information System for Electronic Data Exchange between state bodies and public administration authorities), skills anticipation platforms supported by the ILO, and other digital and online sources.
- Integrate labour market information provided by the Employment Agency and other organisations, adapt it to the needs of different target groups, and make it more user-friendly; consider its integration into ICT-based services.
- Provide information on flexible pathways between occupations, based on skills gap analyses.
- Build the capacity of practitioners to use technology and the most up-to-date available labour market information in order to promote the development of in-demand skills.
- Enhance reporting on the strategies and work of the Employment Agency by moving beyond purely activity-based reporting towards the assessment of inputs in relation to outputs and outcomes.

Operational Objective 2: The national employment system develops and ensures the availability of career guidance and counselling services for employed and unemployed persons registered with the Employment Agency of Montenegro.

Impact Indicator 1: Increase in the number of CGC services provided by EAM to unemployed persons on an annual basis	Baseline Value (2025) Current number of available CGC services provided by EAM: 6 CGC services	Intermediate Value (2028) By the end of 2028, EAM will provide a minimum of 10 CGC services annually	Target Value (2030) By the end of 2030, EAM will provide a minimum of 15 CGC services annually
Impact Indicator 2: Percentage of unemployed persons registered with EAM who used CGC services on an annual basis	Baseline Value (2025) 10% of the total number of unemployed persons registered with EAM used CGC services	Intermediate Value (2028) By the end of 2028, at least 15% of unemployed persons registered with EAM used CGC services	Target Value (2030) By the end of 2030, at least 25% of unemployed persons registered with EAM used CGC services



QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION IN CAREER GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING

Cooperation among institutions whose remits include career guidance and counselling is essential in order to ensure a comprehensive approach and improved quality of programmes and services. Therefore, recommendations for improving the field of career guidance and counselling concern both the functioning of competent institutions and the further development of this area within institutions that work directly with students, unemployed and employed persons. The coordination body for career guidance and counselling should not have only a formal role, but should operate in a genuinely operational manner, ensuring cooperation and coordination among all relevant segments at the national level, which is crucial for successful implementation and for the development of unified CGC standards.

In order to ensure the quality and effectiveness of support provided to individuals, it is necessary to establish a unified national database of users of career guidance and counselling services. One possible solution would be the interconnection of data from the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation, universities, the Employment Agency, the Tax Administration, and adult education providers, in order to track whether individuals have become employed or engaged in education or training as a result of career guidance and counselling. Emphasis should be placed on developing a database that includes sex-disaggregated data, enabling a clear identification of the differing needs and positions of women and men as users of career guidance and counselling services.

The role of the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation, as well as of educational institutions, is significant in the collection and effective monitoring of data. Therefore, it is necessary to agree on and define the following:

- the scope and types of data that will serve as a basis for monitoring and guidance, starting from primary education and onwards;
- the methods of registering and storing such data (e.g. recording during individual counselling sessions between students and professional associates; during group interviews with students);
- who uses these data, how and when (i.e. at which stages of education), for example parents, employers, or other schools;
- how data are exchanged between schools and across different levels of education (e.g. between primary and secondary schools), and similar.

Research studies or annual analyses of data collected through questionnaires (e.g. among specific student populations), conducted at the school level as well as at the national level, can serve as a basis for designing activities and programmes that respond to the expressed needs and interests of students across different occupational fields. This would enable the identification of needs for new elective subjects or the strengthening of existing ones, as well as the development of activities that are of interest to students (e.g. meetings with employers from specific occupational profiles; short workplace placements; analysis and reporting on human resources required for specific jobs, etc.). In addition, the collected data can be shared with other schools at the same or subsequent levels of education (e.g. from primary to secondary school, or from secondary school to higher education institutions). Employers could also use these data for planning opportunities for work-based learning and for future employment. The area of career guidance and counselling (CGC) should be a mandatory component of schools' internal quality self-evaluation reports. Accordingly, within school self-evaluation processes, it is necessary, based on defined CGC indicators, to develop instruments (e.g. questionnaires, rating scales, checklists) for measuring

the quality of CGC in schools. The area of CGC should also be a mandatory component of external quality evaluation reports on the work of educational institutions conducted by the Bureau for Education Services. In line with this, the Methodology for Ensuring and Improving the Quality of Educational Work should include a greater number of indicators through which the Bureau for Education Services will monitor the quality of career guidance and counselling.

These indicators should enable a comprehensive assessment of the accessibility and effectiveness of counselling services, students' satisfaction and success in achieving career goals, as well as the evaluation of the continuous professional development of school teams and counsellors, in order to ensure that they are informed about the latest approaches to career guidance and counselling.

In the forthcoming period, it would be highly appropriate for a body such as the Career Orientation Coordination Body to initiate the development of unified CGC standards. This would imply defining a single quality assurance system for services in all areas of career guidance and counselling. This includes, for example, all forms of CGC services provided within the education system, as well as those delivered in other sectors. Unified standards would apply to all service providers across all sectors.

Through the work of the career guidance body at the national level, improved cooperation among all actors involved in the implementation of future objectives is expected. It is necessary to further improve the legal framework and related documents in line with the EU acquis, harmonise procedures and processes, and align national legislation with EU regulations and requirements. Of particular importance is the development of digital tools, such as online professional orientation tests, in order to save time and increase the efficiency of service delivery. This would also contribute to improved accessibility of career orientation services for all those who need them. The development of new approaches in the field of career guidance and counselling should not be limited solely to the traditional choice of occupations but should focus on building users' capacities and encouraging the creative use of their knowledge, skills and interests in career development, as well as on monitoring labour market trends. Research in the field of CGC should provide data not only on individual segments of the system, but also on indicators and recommendations at the national level (e.g. students' interests). This would serve as a basis for informed decision-making on enrolment policies and CGC policies in Montenegro, for the development of high-quality CGC programmes or the innovation of existing ones, and for informing employers and the labour market about students' interests and needs. The successful implementation of this strategic document requires close cooperation among all relevant stakeholders.

- The Coordination Team should be composed of the following members:
- Two representatives of the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation;
- One representative of the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Dialogue;
- One representative of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Family Care and Demography;
- One representative of the Ministry of Sports and Youth;
- One representative of the Bureau for Education Services;
- One representative of the Centre for Vocational Education;
- One representative of the University of Montenegro;
- A representative of the Chamber of Commerce;
- A representative of the Employers' Union;
- A representative of the Employment Agency;
- A representative of the NGO sector.

Since the designated areas are fully functional within the organisational and governance structure

of educational institutions, the Coordination Team will prepare the principles and operational dynamics of its work. The Team's task is to plan and monitor the implementation of activities by tracking indicators and organising periodic meetings. It will prepare an annual report on the status of activities and submit it to the competent Directorate of the Ministry of Education for consideration, while the final report will be submitted by the Ministry to the Government of Montenegro for adoption. Awareness of the need for career guidance remains insufficiently developed across all segments of society; therefore, one of the key objectives for the forthcoming period is to raise awareness of the importance of lifelong learning and career development. While young people are relatively well informed about education programmes and schools, there is a significant lack of information regarding future labour market needs. This is due to objective factors such as changes in the labour market and insufficient information on labour market demands and trends, which often results in young people enrolling in secondary schools and higher education institutions based on stereotypes and incomplete information. Parental awareness also plays an important role in decisions related to further education and career pathways. Major changes in the labour market affect labour migration, changes in the working environment, challenges related to job adaptation and career progression; without planned career guidance activities and adaptation to these changes, such developments may have significant consequences for quality of life and health. Emerging trends in employability competencies (such as IT skills, foreign language proficiency, etc.) require additional education and greater awareness of the necessity to meet new demands in career guidance and career management.

Taking into account the relatively low level of awareness and information about the opportunities provided by Career Guidance and Counselling (CGC) in the field of adult education, mechanisms for improvement may include campaigns and activities aimed at familiarising different target groups with employers' needs, required knowledge and qualifications, labour market trends, and other relevant labour market information. The uneven regional distribution of adult education providers in Montenegro indicates that, based on needs assessments, the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation should plan more rationally the number and geographical distribution of training providers. Networking adult education providers with other stakeholders within the CGC system would contribute to more efficient use of resources (funding, training programmes, and beneficiaries), greater equity (e.g., through improved access for those in need and through the harmonisation of certificates), and the enrichment of training programme offerings for interested users. Through cooperation among the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation, the Bureau for Education Services, the Centre for Vocational Education, universities, the Employment Agency, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Employers' Union, namely through stronger integration of formal, non-formal, informal, and self-directed learning systems, it would be possible to enable every interested individual (e.g. early school leavers or unemployed persons) to complete interrupted education or acquire the skills necessary for employment and integration into the labour market. Greater emphasis should be placed on promoting the concepts of learning organisations and continuous professional development of employees, through realistic planning of needs and resources, as well as through monitoring the effects of training aimed at acquiring new knowledge and skills. These activities could be coordinated by the National Career Orientation Coordination Body.

Steps in the forthcoming period for the implementation of policies aimed at improving the quality of career guidance and counselling:

- Defining clear roles and responsibilities of the Coordinating Body for Career Guidance and Counselling, with the aim of strengthening its operational capacities and effectiveness.
- Strengthening cooperation and coordination among all relevant stakeholders/segments at the national level, essential for the successful development and implementation of unified CGC standards.

- Developing unified CGC standards, which will serve as the basis for establishing a comprehensive quality assurance system for services across all CGC sectors.
- Establishing a unified and functional national database of users of career guidance and counselling services.
- Increasing young people's awareness of future labour market needs, in order to create better conditions for their integration into the employment system.
- Implementing campaigns and activities through which different target groups will be informed about employers' needs, required knowledge and qualifications, labour market trends, and other relevant labour market information.
- Networking adult education providers with other participants/stakeholders within the CGC system.

Operational Objective 3: The career guidance and counselling system is based on European quality standards and measurable data on users' career pathways

Impact Indicator 1: Established quality standards for the delivery of CGC in all educational institutions	Baseline Value (2025) Quality standards are currently not in place	Intermediate Value (2028) Quality standards established and defined for primary and secondary schools Quality standards established for higher education institutions	Target Value (2030) At least 80% of primary and secondary schools employ certified career counsellors in line with established quality standards At least 80% of higher education institutions employ career counsellors in line with established quality standards
Impact Indicator 1:	Baseline Value (2025)	Intermediate Value (2028) Quality standards established for the Employment Agency of Montenegro	Target Value (2030) At least 80% of certified career counsellors within EAM operate in line with established quality standards
Impact Indicator 2: Established database for monitoring the career pathways of students and adults	Baseline Value (2025) There is currently no database for monitoring the career pathways of students and adults	Intermediate Value (2028) A database for monitoring the career pathways of students and adults has been established	Target Value (2030) By the end of 2030, a functional system of measurable data will be established, showing the number of CGC users who have found employment; collected data will be disaggregated by sex





FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STRATEGIC DOCUMENT

For the entire duration of the strategic document (2025–2030), an indicative estimate of financial resources in the total amount of EUR 4,192,400 is envisaged. The methodology used for calculating financial expenditures/revenues is based on an estimation approach, as well as on the previous experience of activity holders. The required funds are to be secured from the regular budget and donor support.

In the table below, an overview of the financing of the entire strategic document for the full implementation period is presented, with the following identified as the main sources of funding:

- State Budget of Montenegro
- Donor support

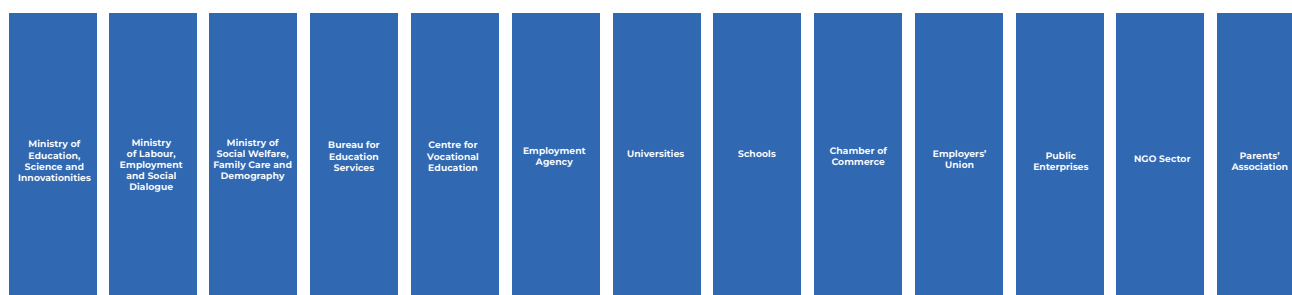
Year	Budgetary Funds	Donor Support	Total
2025	105,000.00	5,000.00	For the period 2025–2026, the planned total amount is EUR 1,044,400.00
2026	810,400.00	124,000.00	
2027	1,150,000.00	50,000.00	For the period 2027–2028, the planned total amount is a minimum of EUR 2,400,000.00
2028	1,150,000.00	50,000.00	
2029	324,000.00	50,000.00	For the period 2029–2030, the planned total amount is a minimum of EUR 748,000.00
2030	324,000.00	50,000.00	
Total	The total planned amount of funds for the implementation of the strategic document for the period 2025–2030 amounts to a minimum of EUR 4,192,400.00		



REPORTING AND EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

The mechanism for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the Career Guidance and Counselling Strategy for the period 2025–2030 is primarily based on the work of the Commission for Monitoring the Implementation of the Strategic Document. The Commission is composed of representatives of institutions responsible for implementing activities outlined in the Action Plan, as well as representatives of all relevant stakeholders whose contribution is essential for the successful implementation of policies in this field during the period 2025–2030.

Composition of the Commission:



The Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation is the institution responsible for coordinating the work of the operational body, as well as for the preparation, implementation and reporting on the implementation of the strategic document. The strategic document is accompanied by an Action Plan to be prepared for two years.

The Career Guidance and Counselling Strategy 2025–2030 is a strategic document whose implementation requires the involvement of all relevant stakeholders, including public administration bodies, educational institutions, civil society organisations and international partners that have a significant impact on policy development in this field. Accordingly, these institutions will be required to submit information on the activities carried out within the Action Plan, in order to ensure the timely and appropriate collection of data for the preparation of annual and final reports, as well as for measuring the level of achieved performance and identifying challenges that may arise during the implementation of planned activities.

The core responsibilities of the operational body include the preparation of two types of reports, as follows:



The Commission shall meet at least twice a year and, in this manner, ensure timely and continuous review of the implementation of the planned activities, as well as the identification of potential obstacles and challenges that institutions may face during the implementation process. The data necessary for the preparation of reports will be collected throughout the year and submitted to the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation, acting as the coordinating authority of the Commission.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation shall be responsible for collecting and consolidating data relevant to the preparation of reports, as well as for coordinating and overseeing the work of the Commission. In order to ensure transparency in the implementation of the Strategy, the annual and final reports shall be published on the website of the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation.



EVALUATION

The evaluation of the strategic document will be conducted in the form of an ex post evaluation. The evaluation will be carried out by external experts in the field of career guidance and counselling, primarily due to the complexity and scope of the document, as well as to ensure a higher level of objectivity. **Funds for the implementation of the evaluation will be provided from the budget of the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation and/or from donor organisations, i.e. potential donor support to be secured in the later phases of the implementation of the strategic document.** The required funding will be defined within the final action plan for the implementation of the strategic document.

It is planned that the ex-post evaluation process will begin in the second half of 2030 and be completed in the first quarter of 2031, in order to ensure the timely availability of evaluation findings, which will be presented in the final report, and to provide an adequate basis for the development of a potential new strategic document. The evaluation findings will provide a clear and precise overview of the effectiveness of the implementation of the relevant public policy through a unified strategic document. In this way, it will be possible to determine whether the planned effects have been achieved through joint action, and whether the implemented activities have contributed to the enhancement of the career guidance and counselling system in Montenegro.



INFORMATION FOR THE PUBLIC ON THE OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTED EFFECTS OF THE STRATEGIC DOCUMENT, IN LINE WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF MONTENEGRO'S COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

During the planning and implementation cycle of the strategic document, communication of reform activities constitutes an integral part of the implementation phase of the planned activities. Informative policy instruments include the implementation of various campaigns and training activities, diverse PR activities, the preparation of informational leaflets and brochures, and the drafting of publications, with the aim of promoting the importance of the given public policy, that is, the solutions proposed by the strategic document. The Strategy also envisages promotional activities aimed at achieving its objectives.

Finally, informing target groups as well as the public is of great importance, through the portals and social media channels of the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation, as well as those of all partner institutions participating in the process of public policy implementation.



ACTION PLAN FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CAREER GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING STRATEGY 2025–2030 FOR THE PERIOD 2025–2026

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE: By 2030, develop and implement a comprehensive, data-driven framework for career guidance and counselling across all education and employment institutions to reduce early school leaving, strengthen alignment between the education system and the labour market, enhance motivation for learning and educational attainment, and facilitate a smoother school-to-work transition.

AREA I: STRENGTHENING CAREER ORIENTATION IN MONTENEGRO'S EDUCATION SYSTEM

Operational Objective 1: Strengthen the effectiveness of the career orientation system in Montenegro's education system through the establishment of a sustainable institutional framework and increased participation of students in career guidance and counselling (CGC)

Impact Indicator 1:	Baseline Value (2025)	Intermediate Value (2028)	Target Value (2030)
An established and functional Career Centre within the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation that leads and coordinates career guidance and counselling processes across all educational institutions in Montenegro	Currently, there is no national-level body in Montenegro that coordinates and manages career guidance and counselling processes	By the end of 2028, a body coordinating and managing career guidance and counselling processes will be established in all educational institutions	The Career Centre is fully functional and serves as a support service for all stakeholders interested in career guidance and counselling in Montenegro
Impact Indicator 2:	Baseline Value (2025)	Intermediate Value (2028)	Target Value (2030)
Percentage of primary and secondary schools with established career guidance and counselling teams	36% of primary schools have established career guidance and counselling teams 45% of secondary schools have established career guidance and counselling teams	At least 70% of primary schools have established career guidance and counselling teams At least 70% of secondary schools have established career guidance and counselling teams	At least 100% of primary schools have established career guidance and counselling teams At least 100% of secondary schools have established career guidance and counselling teams

Activities	Result Indicator	Responsible Institutions and Partners	Start of Implementation	End of Implementation	Required Funds	Source of Financing
1.1 Analysis of the current state – functioning of career teams in primary and secondary schools and at universities	An analysis has been prepared presenting the current mode of operation, as well as the level of training and professional capacity of career teams and all relevant stakeholders in primary and secondary schools and at universities	MESI - Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation CVE - Centre for Vocational Education Bureau for Education Services University Chamber of Commerce Employers' Union	Q4 2025	Q2 2026	EUR 5,000.00 EUR 5,000.00	State Budget Donor support
1.2 Establish career guidance teams in primary and secondary schools and university organisational units	Based on the results of the analysis and the recommendations received, career guidance teams are established in primary and secondary schools, as well as in university organisational units where a need has been identified	MESI Primary schools Secondary schools University organisational units	Q2 2026	Q4 2026	No additional funds required	State Budget
1.3 Develop annual work plans for career guidance teams at the level of each educational institution in Montenegro	Annual work plans are developed by all established career guidance teams operating within educational institutions	MESI Primary schools Secondary schools University organisational units	Q3 2026	Q3 2026	No additional funds required	State Budget
1.4 Develop a training programme for trainers of career counsellors in primary and secondary schools, as well as in higher education institutions	A training programme for career counsellor trainers is developed and accredited in accordance with national standards for career guidance The programme includes a module aimed at enhancing knowledge in the field of gender equality for career counsellors	MESI ETF CVE BES NCE EAM	Q3 2025	Q4 2025	No additional funds required	Budget
1.5 Implementation of the training programme for career counsellor trainers	The programme is attended by 30 participants (the training includes representatives of BES, EAM, universities and CVE).	MESI ETF CVE BES NCE EAM	Q1 2026	Q2 2026	EUR 15,000	Budget
1.6 Develop a training programme for career counsellors in primary and secondary schools, as well as in higher education institutions	A training programme for career counsellors is developed and accredited	MESI ETF CVE BES NCE EAM	Q3 2025	Q4 2025	No additional funds required	Budget
1.7 Implementation of the training programme for career counsellors in primary and secondary schools, as well as in higher education institutions	800 participants took part in the programme	MESI ETF CVE BES NCE EAM	Q2 2026	Q4 2026	EUR 250,000 EUR 50,000	Budget (Growth Plan) Donor support
1.8 Develop a training programme for teachers in career guidance	Training programmes for teachers in career guidance are improved and adopted	MESI BES CVE NCE	Q3 2025	Q4 2025	No additional funds required	Budget
1.9 Implementation of teacher training under the career guidance training programme	The programme was attended by 700 teachers	MESI BES CVE	Q3 2026	Q4 2026	EUR 300,000 EUR 34,000	Budget (Growth Plan) Donor support
1.10 Development/improvement of guides for teachers	New guides are developed and existing guides are improved for primary school teachers New guides are developed and existing guides are improved for secondary school teachers	MESI BES CVE Institute for Textbooks	Q3 2025	Q4 2026	EUR 3,000	Budget
1.11 Development of guides for university professors and career counsellors in higher education institutions	The guide is developed and distributed to all users	MESI Universities	Q3 2025	Q4 2026	EUR 3,000	Budget
1.12 Development and adoption of the cross-curricular CGC theme	A cross-curricular CGC theme is developed and adopted at the level of primary schools and grammar schools The cross-curricular theme includes a segment aimed at developing green and digital skills among students and adults	MESI BES NCE	Q3 2025	Q4 2026	No additional funds required	Budget

Activities	Result Indicator	Responsible Institutions and Partners	Start of Implementation	End of Implementation	Required Funds	Source of Financing
1.13 Organisation of periodic counselling between CGC practitioners in all educational institutions	At least one counselling session is organised annually in each of the three regions	MESI BES CVE EAM Educational institutions	Q1 2026	Q4 2026	No additional funds required	Budget
1.14 Counselling of members of CGC teams by relevant/competent labour market stakeholders	At least two counselling sessions are organised annually Quarterly meetings/dialogues are held with all relevant stakeholders at the national level (Montenegro)	MESI EAM Chamber of Commerce Employers' Union	Q3 2025	Q4 2026	EUR 5,000 EUR 5,000	Budget Donor support
1.15 Development of a needs analysis for introducing a software system for monitoring the career progression of higher education graduates	A needs analysis for the introduction of a software system for monitoring the career progression of higher education graduates is conducted.	MESI Higher education institutions Chamber of Commerce Employers' Union	Q3 2025	Q4 2026	EUR 3,000	Budget
1.16 Development of an analysis on aligning enrolment policy with labour market needs	A labour market needs analysis is conducted The call for enrolment of students in secondary schools is aligned with the findings of the analysis The call for enrolment of students in higher education institutions is aligned with the findings of the analysis	MESI EAM Universities Chamber of Commerce Employers' Union	Q3 2025	Q4 2026	EUR 3,000	Budget
1.17 Development of analysis and improvement of incentive measures for young people to pursue education and training in shortage occupations	An assessment / analysis of current shortage occupations in the labour market is conducted Based on the analysis findings, incentive measures for secondary vocational school students and higher education students are improved	EAM MESI Chamber of Commerce Employers' Union	Q1 2026	Q4 2026	EUR 3,000	Budget
1.18 Organisation of regular sessions with career counsellors by advisers from the Employment Agency on labour market needs	Three sessions are organised (at least one session per year in each region of Montenegro)	EAM MESI Chamber of Commerce Employers' Union	Q3 2025	Q4 2026	No additional funds required	Budget
1.19 Preparation of test batteries that career counsellors and professional associates in educational institutions can use in their work with students	Standardised and adapted tests are prepared to assess students' characteristics, skills and interests. The tests are adapted to the age groups registered in the EAM database.	MESI EAM ECM BES CVE Psychological Chamber of Montenegro	Q3 2025	Q4 2026	EUR 5,000 EUR 5,000	Budget Donor support
1.20 Development of an electronic portfolio for students	A system for monitoring students is established (electronic portfolio)	MESI BES CVE University Career Centre	Q3 2025	Q4 2026	EUR 10,000 EUR 10,000	Budget Donor support
1.21 Strengthening career guidance teams at universities through the establishment of career centres	A career centre is established within each organisational unit of all higher education institutions in Montenegro	MESI BES Universities EAM	Q3 2025	Q4 2026	No additional funds required	Budget
1.22 Establishment of career incubators in vocational schools as centres for professional skills development Organisations of practical workshops, mentoring and networking of students with employers and entrepreneurs Employment and job interview simulations through cooperation with company HR departments	At least five career incubators are established in vocational schools 15 workshops per year are organised in each incubator At least 500 students participate in incubator programmes	CVE MESI Chamber of Commerce Employers' Union	Q3 2025	Q4 2026	EUR 10,000 EUR 10,000	Budget Donor support
1.23 Collection of data on users of career guidance and counselling services in all educational institutions by career centres	A report is prepared containing data on all users of CGC in educational institutions The data are disaggregated by gender.	MESI	Q3 2025	Q4 2026	No additional funds required	Budget

Activities	Result Indicator	Responsible Institutions and Partners	Start of Implementation	End of Implementation	Required Funds	Source of Financing
1.24 Development of gender-responsive career guidance and counselling within curricula	Topics and content related to career guidance and counselling are integrated into school curricula, with a focus on gender equality (This activity is directly linked to Activity 1.12, which addresses the development and adoption of a cross-curricular CGC theme in primary and grammar schools)	MESI EAM	Q3 2025	Q4 2026	No additional funds required	Budget
1.25 Introduction of a series of motivational lectures "Women in STEM" in primary and secondary schools	Female engineers, programmers and scientists are engaged as guest speakers in schools to share their career paths through interactive sessions	MESI	Q3 2025	Q4 2026	No additional funds required	Budget
1.26 Development of a career guidance guide showcasing successful women from Montenegro in STEM fields	Preparation of digital and printed brochures featuring stories of successful women from Montenegro in STEM fields, and distribution through school career guidance services	MESU BES International organisations	Q3 2025	Q4 2026	EUR 2,000	Budget
1.27 Development of a workshop programme to strengthen self-confidence and emotional resilience in primary and secondary schools	Workshops are developed and implemented in primary and secondary schools, focusing on: • overcoming impostor syndrome • recognising and strengthening personal strengths • techniques for coping with stress and pressure	MESI	Q3 2025	Q4 2026	No additional funds required	Budget

AREA II: CAREER ORIENTATION AND EMPLOYMENT SYSTEM

Operational Objective 2: The national employment system develops and ensures the availability of career guidance and counselling services for employed and unemployed persons registered with the Employment Agency of Montenegro.

Impact Indicator 1: Increase in the number of CGC services provided by EAM to unemployed persons on an annual basis	Baseline Value (2025) Current number of available CGC services provided by EAM: 6 CGC services	Intermediate Value (2028) By the end of 2028, EAM will provide a minimum of 10 CGC services annually	Target Value (2030) By the end of 2030, EAM will provide a minimum of 15 CGC services annually
Impact Indicator 2: Percentage of unemployed persons registered with EAM who used CGC services on an annual basis	Baseline Value (2025) 10% of the total number of unemployed persons registered with EAM used CGC services	Intermediate Value (2028) By the end of 2028, at least 15% of unemployed persons registered with EAM used CGC services	Target Value (2030) By the end of 2030, at least 25% of unemployed persons registered with EAM used CGC services

Activities	Result Indicator	Responsible Institutions and Partners	Start of Implementation	End of Implementation	Required Funds	Source of Financing
2.1 Research on career orientation services for unemployed and employed persons (quality of services and assessment of user needs)	Research conducted among unemployed persons Research conducted among employed persons The research is aligned with the standards of the European Labour Force Survey	EAM MESI MLESD Chamber of Commerce Employers' Union International organisations	Q3 2025	Q4 2026	EUR 5,000	Budget
2.2 Empowering women to strengthen employability competences through the development of entrepreneurial skills	Eight workshops for women aimed at promoting entrepreneurship are organised	EAM Chamber of Commerce	Q3 2025	Q4 2026	EUR 4,000	Budget
2.3 Establishment of a mentoring programme linking female students from higher education institutions with successful women entrepreneurs	A mentoring programme is established to facilitate the transfer of knowledge and skills from successful women entrepreneurs to female students in higher education	EAM Chamber of Commerce Employers' Union	Q3 2025	Q4 2026	EUR 10,000	Budget Donor support
2.4 Empowering persons with disabilities to acquire employability competences	Individual and group counselling services are organised on an annual basis	EAM MLESD	Q3 2025	Q4 2026	EUR 15,000	Budget
2.5 Creation of the "Working Weekend" programme to provide students with two-day workplace placements in shortage occupations	30 secondary vocational schools are partnered with business entities 100 mentors from the business sector are engaged At least 15 "Working Weekends" are organised in the first year	CVE (coordination and implementation) Chamber of Commerce Employers' Union	Q3 2025	Q4 2026	No additional funds required	Budget
2.6 Establishment of local career clubs connecting students with employers through regular informal meetings, networking and discussions on employment and education opportunities	Local career clubs are established in five local self-government units	CVE (coordination and implementation) Chamber of Commerce Employers' Union	Q3 2025	Q4 2026	EUR 10,000	Budget Donor support
2.7 "Open Industry" Day – events where companies across Montenegro open their doors to secondary vocational school students, providing opportunities to learn about work processes and occupations	At least 25 events are organised within the framework of the "Open Industry" Day	CVE (coordination and implementation) Chamber of Commerce Employers' Union	Q3 2025	Q4 2026	EUR 10,000	Budget Donor support
2.8 Organisation of the "Experience a day in the life of a working professional" programme in primary and secondary schools – students spend one day in a real working environment in shortage occupations within local companies and craft workshops Creation of a podcast series featuring young people successful in shortage occupations, available on digital platforms and social media	The "Experience day in the life of a working professional" programme is implemented in 50 primary and secondary schools At least 10 podcast episodes featuring young professionals are released	CVE (initiator and coordinator) MESI Chamber of Commerce Employers' Union Local businesses and craft workshops	Q3 2025	Q4 2026	EUR 40,000	Budget Donor support
2.9 Organisation of training for CGC practitioners from the Employment Agency of Montenegro on working with young people	At least five training sessions are organised annually	EAM Chamber of Commerce Employers' Union	Q3 2025	Q4 2026	EUR 5,000	Budget
2.10 Enhancement of knowledge and skills for working with small and large groups – trainer skills for delivering advanced CGC seminar programmes	A training session is delivered with the participation of 30 participants	EAM Chamber of Commerce Employers' Union	Q3 2025	Q4 2026	EUR 5,000	Budget Donor support
2.11 Establishment and equipping of career development clubs for unemployed persons	At least one career development club is established and equipped in each of the three regions of Montenegro	EAM MLESD Local self-government units	Q3 2025	Q4 2026	EUR 40,000	Budget Donor support

Activities	Result Indicator	Responsible Institutions and Partners	Start of Implementation	End of Implementation	Required Funds	Source of Financing
2.12 Organisation of workshops for employees in youth centres implementing the "Youth Guarantee" outreach programme, providing basic career guidance and counselling services to young people from the NEET population	At least one workshop is organised in each youth centre	MESI EAM CVE Employers' Union Youth centres NGOs	Q3 2025	Q4 2026	EUR 10,000	Donor support

AREA III: QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION IN CAREER GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING

Operational Objective 3: The career guidance and counselling system is based on European quality standards and measurable data on users' career pathways

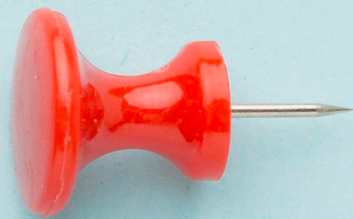
Impact Indicator 1: Established quality standards for the delivery of CGC in all educational institutions	Baseline Value (2025) Quality standards are currently not in place	Intermediate Value (2028) Quality standards established and defined for primary and secondary schools Quality standards established for higher education institutions Quality standards established for the Employment Agency of Montenegro	Target Value (2030) At least 80% of primary and secondary schools employ certified career counsellors in line with established quality standards At least 80% of higher education institutions employ career counsellors in line with established quality standards At least 80% of certified career counsellors within EAM operate in line with established quality standards
Impact Indicator 2: Established database for monitoring the career pathways of students and adults	Baseline Value (2025) There is currently no database for monitoring the career pathways of students and adults	Intermediate Value (2028) A database for monitoring the career pathways of students and adults has been established	Target Value (2030) By the end of 2030, a functional system of measurable data will be established, showing the number of CGC users who have found employment. Collected data will be disaggregated by sex

Activities	Result Indicators	Responsible Institutions and Partners	Start of Implementation	End of Implementation	Required Funds	Source of Funding
3.1 Development of a software system for tracking students	A conceptual solution is defined, a procurement procedure is conducted, and a software system for tracking students is developed The software system is based on EU good practices	MESI CVE BES University Career Centres	Q3 2025	Q4 2026	EUR 10,000 EUR 10,000	Budget Donor support
3.2 Development of a national web platform for career guidance	A national web platform for career guidance is established and fully functional, and connected with all partner institutions A multimedia digital guide is developed, including textual descriptions, images, graphics and infographics on shortage occupations The platform is continuously upgraded with new user-oriented features and integrated with all partner IT systems	MESI BES CVE EAM Educational institutions and other relevant stakeholders	Q3 2025	Q4 2026	EUR 100,000	Budget
3.3 Definition of additional CGC indicators within the Methodology for ensuring and improving the quality of educational work	Additional CGC indicators are defined within the Methodology	BES CVE	Q3 2025	Q4 2025	No additional funds required	Budget
3.4 Organisation of promotional events on career guidance and counselling for young people through Youth services	At least two events are organised annually	MSY	Q3 2025	Q4 2026	EUR 5,000	Budget
3.5 Organisation of career exploration days for female students in secondary schools and higher education institutions	At least one career exploration day per year is organised for female students	MESI CVE BES University EAM MSY MLESD	Q3 2025	Q4 2026	EUR 2,000	Budget
3.6 Organisation of promotional campaigns on available programmes for acquiring vocational qualifications, key competencies and courses	One promotional campaign is organised annually The campaigns promote career pathways in green and digital occupations	MESI CVE	Q1 2026	Q4 2026	EUR 2,000	Budget
3.7 Organisation of promotional campaigns addressing employers' needs for occupations	One promotional campaign is organised annually	Chamber of Commerce EAM Employers' Union	Q1 2025	Q4 2026	EUR 2,000	Budget
3.8 Promotion of vocational education programmes to students and parents in primary education	Open days are organised to promote vocational education programmes	MESI Primary schools Secondary schools CVE	Q1 2026	Q4 2026	EUR 3,000	Budget
3.9 Preparation and broadcasting of a TV spot	A TV spot is broadcast on national and local television channels Online banners are displayed on web portals and disseminated through social media The TV spot is designed as part of a student award competition	MESI CVE Chamber of Commerce	Q3 2025	Q4 2026	EUR 10,000	Donors (prizes for students) Budget: MESI EUR 5,000; CVE EUR 2,000; Chamber of Commerce EUR 3,000
3.10 Organisation of promotional activities aimed at dual education for students of secondary vocational schools	Dual education is promoted among students of secondary vocational schools 20 new employers are engaged in dual education programmes for secondary vocational school students	CVE Chamber of Commerce Employers' Union	Q3 2025	Q2 2026	EUR 400	CVE

The Career Guidance and Counselling Strategy 2025–2030 was developed by the Working Group composed of:

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