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CAREER GUIDANCE AT UNIVERSITY LEVEL – EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE AND SITUATION IN SERBIA

It is a fact that Serbia has only 7% of citizens holding university degrees, a high unemployment rate, that students in average need twice as much time to complete undergraduate studies, that there is a great number of students who give up university studies, that 78% of students wish to leave the country after graduation, stating as the main reason impossibility to find a job or make a professional advancement, that only 13% of students enrolled in 2003 completed the studies within the prescribed term³. In addition to that, students completing their studies face another great challenge – making a decision in which direction their career should go. The world economic crisis and its effects in Serbia may lead to multiplication of problems and even greater hopelessness of the youth.

The fact is that there is no sufficient number of free job posts for university educated staff in Serbia, that there is a grey market with its unwritten laws, prolonged economic dependence on parents, as well as insufficient knowledge of the labour market, lack of knowledge how to seek employment, underdevelopment of entrepreneurship system of values, insufficient mobility and lack of required knowledge and competences.

Some of the above facts may be changed owing to quality services of career guidance. For the purposes of this publication we will make a quick reference to the European perspective of career guidance, a new paradigm, as well as the status of career guidance at the university level in Serbia.

A New Paradigm of Career Guidance

There are numerous international reports on the status and perspective of career guidance in Europe. As of 2002, the actuality of this problem has been reflected in OECD reviews for 14 countries, CEDEFOP reviews for 7 European countries, the World Bank's reviews for 7 countries, ETF reviews for 11 EU candidate countries and 10 Mediterranean countries. All these reviews state that the career guidance is important for individuals, but that it also contributes to the achievement of objectives of public policy in the sphere of education and training, in terms of higher efficiency, higher level and quality of human resources, advancement of skills, and increased percentage of education effectiveness. These reviews also state that career guidance contributes to a higher efficiency at the labour market /employability and mobility/ social inclusion and active role of citizens.

The Council Resolution on better integrating lifelong learning strategies⁴ states that career guidance includes offering information, counselling, assessment of competences, support and training in the sphere of decision making and career management skills. The definition which is accepted by most experts is that career guidance includes the activities of career information, education and counselling aiming at helping persons of any age at any moment to make decisions in relation to education,

³ These data have been provided from different sources, some of them result from researches conducted by the Centre for educational policies, local youth offices, different reviews, designed by the Sector for Scientific Activities of the University of Belgrade

⁴ Council of the European Union, Council Resolution on better integrating lifelong learning strategies, Education, Youth and Culture meeting of 21 November 2008, Brussels, 2008.

professional advancement and professional life and successful career management⁵. The idea of career guidance is to teach individuals how to plan and make decisions relating to learning and employment and future career.

Career guidance assists individuals to recognize their ambitions, interests, qualifications and possibilities to get familiar with the labour market and educational system and to relate all this with their potentials in a certain way.

The objective of career guidance is to provide support to an individual to choose the option within numerous available career opportunities in order to develop and use his/her own potentials optimally and in accordance with his/her own interests and values and in that way get satisfaction in a professional and private life.

A new paradigm of career guidance has been recognized both by numerous Anglo-Saxon countries and by EU member states, bringing the changes which have been reflected in the following:

- career guidance both in policy and in practice must take into account in the **life-long perspective** that occasional interventions in key life moments are not sufficient any more,
- that it is necessary that **the emphasis should be moved from a psychological to a more pedagogical approach** – that the emphasis is not made on psychological testing any more, but on different manners of trial in the world of business,
- that it is **necessary that external expert support should be gradually departed from** and that the **skills of independent career management** should be ensured,
- another step forward which is also necessary is to train an individual for **different types of self-assistance**, as well as a **higher presence of group counselling** compared to individual counselling which used to be a priority in the past.

Also, a new paradigm in career guidance recognizes career guidance as **a life-long process of acquiring skills**. That process ensures that people remain responsible for their own career development, that they stay focused, stable and ready to adapt and respond to changes in the long run. A new paradigm of career development changes the emphasis from career selection in the past to **career building**.

Career Guidance in Serbian Universities

A representative of the European Foundation for Education visited Serbia in March 2011 to assess the **progress of Serbia in the sphere of career guidance in the period between 2004 and 2010** and analyzed the trends and perspectives of career guidance development in terms of a new paradigm. One of the challenges that Serbia faces, in his opinion, is ensuring top quality career guidance programs, the other challenge is the development of the system in accordance with a new paradigm which includes a higher availability of services, a higher emphasis on career guidance skills, increase of effectiveness and quality of services and career guidance activities.

Current modalities of career guidance in Serbia, according to ETF report⁶ include the curriculum mode, model of the centre, specialist, semi-specialist and virtual. The model of a career development centre is the model with the highest representation which may be seen in somewhat adjusted table which is a part of that report, where only the data related to career guidance in the sphere of university education have been included.

⁵ OECD 2002 and 2004, The European Commission Lifelong Guidance Expert Group (in 2012), the Council of the European Union 2004 and the World Bank /2008/

⁶ Helmut Zelloth: Career Guidance Development Trends in Serbia, working paper, ETF, 2011.

MODALITIES	CAREER INFO	CAREER MANAGE-MENT	WORK TASTING	TESTING	INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP GUIDANCE
CAREER CENTRE MODEL	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
CURRICULUM MODEL	☹	☹	☹	☹	☹
VIRTUAL MODEL	✓	✓		✓	
SPECIALIST AND SEMISPECIALIST					

ETF experts recommended a more decisive transfer from traditional activities based on psychological testing to modern and more pedagogical methods applied in view of developing career guidance skills, as well as different programs aiming at introducing candidates with the atmosphere at work and researching the world of work. It has been recommended that skills and capacities of users for self-assistance should be encouraged which include, for example, the introduction of SOS line and information systems for professional orientation, self-assessment, etc. Improvement of quality and efficiency has been indicated as one of the challenges as well. The report states that the main factor of quality improvement is related to practicing staff, people employed in centres and offices engaged in career development. Vocational resources of employees should be developed in order to ensure a further development of their competencies, and the programs for career guidance skills development should be more represented, in cooperation with academic community.

Career guidance in the sphere of university education on Serbia is the sphere which is certainly getting more and more significant. The readiness of the state to become more actively engaged in the system of career guidance in Serbia /adoption of the National Strategy for Career Guidance and Counselling in the Republic of Serbia⁷/ recognition of a strategic significance of existence of centres by universities⁸, as well as the support of the European funds dedicated to university education⁹ certainly ensure a good base for building the system of career guidance and counselling at the university level in Serbia and the development of this sphere in years to come.

⁷ The National Strategy for Career Guidance and Counselling in the Republic of Serbia certainly represents a significant strategic framework and platform for institutionalization, sustainability and further development of career guidance in Serbia

⁸ Only during the period between 2006. – 2012 were career development centres established at state universities (Belgrade, Novi Sad, Niš, Kragujevac, Novi Pazar, Kosovska Mitrovica), as well as on private universities (Singidunum and Megatrend)

⁹ TEMPUS projects: CareerS, ISIS, CONGRAD