

## LIFELONG GUIDANCE AS A TOPICALITY FOR THE PROMOTION OF THE LIFELONG AND LIFEWIDE MULTIDIMENSIONAL CAREER DEVELOPMENT NOWADAYS

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**Abstract.** With the development of society and the liberalisation of the labour market, a new paradigm of lifelong guidance has entered the social sciences. Nowadays public demand for lifelong guidance services outstrips availability. The aim of the study: to substantiate the lifelong guidance nowadays, highlighting the multidimensional meaning of the concept of career, including meaning of lifelong and lifewide career. Research methods: studying, analysing and evaluating scientific literature and various types of documents; reflection on experience. The research findings allow for a conclusion to be made that the paradigm of lifelong guidance is considered a new paradigm that has gained its rapid development, popularity and relevance in the 21st century. The aim of lifelong guidance is to provide career support to people of all ages at all stages of their career development in a lifelong and continuous process. Moreover, career support is necessary on a continuous basis: in moments of career success and in moments of crisis. Provision of lifelong education is the spotlight of lifelong guidance, as it is key to successful career development and a guarantee of employment. Cooperation networks of all kinds, at both interpersonal and inter-institutional level, have an important place in the lifelong guidance system, where different types of organisations and individual support providers play their part in the overarching lifelong guidance system. The wide range of functions of a lifelong guidance system goes beyond the scope of a single career counsellor or career support specialist, emphasising collaboration between different types of professionals and different organisations as providers of career support. Lifelong guidance is a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary process. The offer and provision of lifelong guidance, including lifelong education, take the central place in career management nowadays. In a lifelong guidance system, providers and implementers of education of all kinds are therefore seen as important parts of the system. Today, formal and non-formal education is offered by a variety of providers: different types of educational institutions (pre-schools, schools, universities, adult learning centres), non-governmental organisations, learning organisations with a high level of knowledge management, etc. Within the framework of the new lifelong guidance paradigm, it is important to respect the multidimensional meaning of the concept of career. Drawing parallels with the explanations of lifelong education and lifewide education in the social sciences, including the educational sciences, two main trends can be identified and distinguished in the explanation of the new concepts of career and in the justification of career development in the context of contemporary society: lifelong career development and lifewide career development. There may also be a third path, a combination of the both: a lifelong and lifewide career that develops throughout life.

**Keywords:** lifelong guidance, lifelong career, lifewide career, multifunctional career support, network.

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### Introduction

Nowadays, as our society evolves as an information and knowledge society, increasingly transforming into a *smart* society, there is highlighted need for *lifelong guidance*, including *lifelong education* and *lifewide education*, to be accessible to all and to every individual in society at any stage of their lives, anywhere and at any time (Doyle, 2023).

The new paradigm of lifelong guidance in the 21st century points to the fact that career development is not always linear and upward only. Career development pathways can change over a lifetime, changing occupation spheres, types, professions, ensuring the viability of each individual and the sustainability of society under conditions of continuous changes, which is

why lifelong education and lifewide education are increasingly important in a lifelong career guidance system (Barnes, Bimrose, & Brown, 2020; Jackson, 2014; Vuorinen & Watts, 2012).

Public demand for lifelong guidance services outstrips the availability. Lifelong guidance services are not available to everyone and everywhere for various reasons (physical, geographical, economic, social) and sometimes also due to a lack of awareness of the nature of lifelong guidance and of information about the existence and benefits of such services (ELGPN, 2015). By providing lifelong career guidance services, the emphasis is placed on the recognition that lifelong learning is a great value in contemporary society (Balceraitė, Lubkina, & Usca, 2021).

One of the goals of lifelong career support is to promote career self-management and competitiveness of individuals in society, incl. employability under changing labor market conditions (Aylott, 2018; Soika & Vronska, 2023).

Therefore it is very important within the framework of the lifelong guidance paradigm, to respect the multidimensional meaning of the concept of career.

The publications of many authors (Guo, Restubog, Cui, Zou, & Choi, 2019; Van der Heijden & De Vos, 2015; Hirschi & Koen, 2021; Howell, Beckett, & Villalba, 2017; Karaca-Atik, Meeuwisse, Gorgievski, & Smeets, 2023; Korna & Katane, 2017; Katane & Korna-Opincāne 2019; Michaelides, Anderson, & Vinnicombe, 2023) testify that today the meaning of the concept of career has significantly expanded, gaining a new interpretation in connection with the processes taking place in modern society and its continuous change.

*The aim of the study:* to substantiate the lifelong guidance nowadays, highlighting the multidimensional meaning of the concept of career, including meaning of lifelong and lifewide career.

*Research methods:* studying, analysing and evaluating scientific literature and various types of documents; reflection on experience.

## Theoretical Research Results

### The Topicality of Lifelong Career Guidance Nowadays

The lifelong guidance paradigm is considered a new paradigm in the field of career theories, which has gained its rapid development, popularity and relevance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The aim of lifelong guidance is to provide career support to people of all ages at all stages of their career development in a lifelong and continuous process. Moreover, career support is necessary on a continuous basis: in moments of career success and in moments of crisis. *Provision of lifelong education is the spotlight of lifelong guidance*, as it is key to successful career development and a guarantee of employment. Cooperation networks of all kinds, at both interpersonal and inter-institutional level, have an important place in the lifelong guidance system, where different types of organisations, institutions in general and individually, have their own roles to play in the overarching lifelong guidance system. The wide range of functions of a lifelong guidance system goes beyond the scope of a single career counsellor or career support specialist, emphasising collaboration between different types of professionals and different organisations as providers of career support. Lifelong guidance is a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary process (Barnes et al., 2020; Sultana, 2008; Vuorinen & Watts, 2012).

There are some differences between the understanding of career support in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Sultana, 2008), so it is reasonable to talk about old and new paradigms of career support (Table 1).

**Table 1 Transition from the old paradigm of career support to the new paradigm of lifelong guidance (developed from Sultana, 2008)**

From	To
<b>Criterion 1. The nature of career support:</b>	
Perception of a career support as having a peripheral, secondary nature	Career support is a central and key focus, a key area for action, with responsibilities shared between government, local authorities and other cooperation partners
A set of perceptions that career support is a service industry based on applied and professional psychology	Career support has a multidisciplinary nature
Regional and national context is important in career support	Career support has an important global context in terms of cross-border activities and learner mobility across Europe and even the world
<b>Criterion 2. Target audience for career support:</b>	
Career support should be provided mainly to pupils, especially secondary school pupils	Career support should be provided for all lifelong learners, regardless of age, meeting the learning needs of each and every individual
Career support available for unemployed young people and adults, jobseekers	Career support should be given to all those who need to maintain (continue) their career in their chosen direction (even if successful), as well as to those who need to specify or change career direction
Career support focuses mainly on at-risk target groups in crisis situations	Career support is available to all: to society as a whole, for every individual in the career development process, including the stages of a successful career, through continuous professional development.
<b>Criterion 3. When to provide career support:</b>	
Career support is offered mainly at key decision points	Career support should be continuous throughout a person's life, career support has a lifelong nature
Career support has a 'curative' and compensatory function, addressing problems in career crisis situations	Lifelong learning is an important component of career support and is a prerequisite and a powerful tool for promoting career development, including supporting continuous self-directed and self-managed learning, for supporting, contributing to career self-management competences and employability skills, preparing individuals to make independent decisions throughout their lives, seeking opportunities for self-fulfilment in a changing society and a changing labour market.
<b>Criterion 4. Where to provide career support</b>	
Career support is offered only in institutions providing career specialist services	Career support is available in a wide range of institutions: educational institutions (e.g. schools, universities, adult learning centres), workplaces, non-governmental organisations, including leisure organisations, community and home
Career support is formally limited in time and space.	An all-encompassing, universal career support system is being created, with a wide range of career support providers and maintainers and a wide variety of their career support services, that are also accessible anywhere and anytime.

The differences between the new and old paradigms, as well as the career support available in educational institutions (e.g. adult learning centres, schools), are being explored not only by researchers but also by career support and education management professionals, including education managers and career counsellors (Kalēja & Katane, 2022; Sloka, 2022; Vāvers & Katane, 2021)

The formation and ongoing development of career self-management competences of each individual of society is one of the key objectives of lifelong guidance, so that every individual in society is able to plan and manage his or her career throughout life considering the today's changing circumstances. It is important to note that professional self-determination throughout the working life plays an important role in the self-management of career development, the results of which are as follows: 1) an individual enriches his

experience, further developing his competences in a specific field of activity; 2) or the individual decides to change the direction of his career development through lifelong learning, increasingly broadening his range of competences, which gives better chances for a non-linear, sustainable career in a context of variability (Korna & Katane, 2017; Katane & Katans, 2016; Laškova, 2016).

Several publications recognise that career support is a multifunctional process. According to the classical understanding of career support theories, there are three main core functions of career support: 1) career information, 2) career education, 3) career counselling (Jackson, 2014; Soika, 2015). Today, these three basic functions are complemented by other functions within the lifelong guidance system: 1) research (personality research, labour market research and/or other case study) and diagnostics (client profiling), 2) lifelong learning, including adult education, continuing professional development offer and its management, 3) promotion of the development of career self-directed competences, incl. promotion of the development of employability skills, promotion of the development of independent lifelong learning self-management competences; 6) coordination and 7) evaluation of career support services, 8) promotion of cooperation and supporting all kinds of networking, etc. (Barnes et al., 2020; Jaunzeme, 2013; Katane & Katans, 2016; Katane & Korna-Opincāne, 2020; Sultana, 2008; Vuorinen & Watts, 2012).

In a lifelong guidance system, several parties work in balance, each with their own tasks, goals and benefits in delivering a wide range of services. *Lifelong guidance is therefore a multifunctional system of cooperation between several institutions and individuals*, where cooperation and networking are very important. It is particularly important to see lifelong guidance in the context of the key principles of lifelong education and the resulting challenges, as well as career support for different target groups (CEDEFOP, 2005):

- facilitating people's learning and career planning in line with their life goals, which are related to their competences, interests, *education* and labour market offers;
- supporting educational institutions to develop the skills to motivate and attract pupils, students and trainees who are *able to organise the learning process themselves*, set their own career goals and self-manage themselves to achieve these goals;
- supporting businesses and organisations to ensure a motivated and flexible workforce that can adapt to change and deliver positive results through *active and voluntary participation in the learning process*, both inside and outside *educational institutions and workplaces*;
- providing career support for policy makers, pointing the way and the means to set and achieve broader policy objectives;
- supporting society as a whole and each individual in the context of local, regional, national and European economic development, by promoting employment, career development, tailored to each individual's abilities in a changing economy;
- multifunctionality of career support as a prerequisite for society development, in which individuals actively develop their personal, social, civic and societal competences for sustainable development.

The services of career development support system are preventive, long-term measures aimed at facilitating the choice of development pathways appropriate to an individual's abilities and interests: education, professional activity, other activities to acquire and develop different types of knowledge, skills and competences. Many institutions are working in this system, and the lack of cooperation between them is seen as the major reason for the shortcomings observed in the system functionality.

**The availability of lifelong education occupies the central place in the lifelong guidance system** (Doyle, 2023). Lifelong education is an objective necessity for the development of individuals and society as a whole. Lifelong education is a value and an asset in today's information and knowledge society (Balceraitė et al., 2021).

Given the diversity of education providers today, the range of providers of lifelong guidance could also be quite wide.

At the same time, research findings (Paipare & Stiegele, 2020) show that only 10.9% of adults aged 25-64 were engaged in lifelong learning activities in 2017, according to *Eurostat* survey. Active participation in lifelong learning was much more common for people with higher education than for those with lower levels of education. This is why lifelong guidance must become a framework in which the needs of companies and society for continuous learning and career development are growing and becoming more relevant, moreover, the technologies and methods used in lifelong guidance are also evolving and changing.

It is important to change the focus of career support, emphasising the ability of each individual in society to self-manage their career. People who have developed career self-management competence will be ready to plan, independently implement their goals and evaluate themselves: their knowledge, skills and competences, their performance in a given situation, their decision-making capacity and their ability to take responsibility for their decisions and the consequences of their actions (Katane & Korna-Opincāne, 2019). Career self-management is an important part of the competitiveness structure of the individual as a person and as a professional. In turn, promoting the development of career self-management skills and competences also contributes to the development of competitiveness (Cedere, Jurgena, & Katane, 2020, Īriste, 2018), where promoting employability, being the combination of different capabilities of an individual, plays an important role. Employability is the external manifestation of employment as an internal resource of the individual, therefore employability is a prerequisite and a guarantee of employment. In turn, employment is one of the desired outcomes of a self-managed, flexible and ever-changing career.

Employability is an individual's ability to manage, direct and change his or her career through continuous choices and decisions, as the world of work is changing rapidly: new occupations and new jobs emerge, and the need for new knowledge, skills and competences emerge along with them. These changes are inevitable, but today it is difficult to predict the exact moment when skills and competences will be most in demand on the labour market. This is why today's career self-management and employability self-development emphasise adaptability to change, flexibility, the ability to study the processes around you, the labour market, self-assess your internal resources and draw conclusions. These capacities are now beginning to emerge in the framework of employability, which could contribute to employment. Employability is thus understood as the set of abilities to find and keep a job in constantly changing and often unpredictable circumstances (Aylott, 2018; Soika & Vronska, 2023). This highlights again and again the importance of lifelong learning within a lifelong guidance framework to help each individual to self-develop and self-manage his or her career and, as a result, to promote employability as well as employment.

There are four types of employability as an individual's internal capital: human, social, cultural and psychological, which are related to career self-management and career change in response to changes around us. Psychological capital linked to self-efficacy in job search (Peeters, Nelissen, De Cuyper, Forrier, Verbruggen, & De Witte, 2017; Troshkova & Katane, 2023). In the author's view, it is one of the most important forms of internal capital, expressed in the direction of the individual as a personality and in the professional direction, which includes goals, various motives (intrinsic motivation), interests and needs, will and aspirations (ambition), which together shape employability and reflect an individual's competitiveness. In other words, the individual must want to enter the labour market, be psychologically prepared

to start work and to continuously grow and develop professionally, be psychologically prepared to face and overcome difficulties in order to find and keep a job, be able to adapt to a new environment, etc. Next is social capital: networking, knowledge, skills and competences, including social skills competences, experience of different social roles. In turn, an important component of cultural capital is the culture of work and the personal circumstances attached to the individual. This set of employability indicators becomes the basis for job search, whereas employment is the result of a job search, when a contractual relationship is established between an employer and an employee in the form of an employment contract, with job duties, remuneration, etc.

Since education is a part of a career and lifelong education is a central element of lifelong guidance, it can be concluded that *the provision of formal and non-formal education at any stage of a person's life throughout their life is one of the manifestations of lifelong guidance. Thus, in the new lifelong guidance concept, educational institutions (pre-schools, schools, universities, adult learning centres) are among the most important providers of career support.*

### **The Multidimensional Concept of Career in the Context of Lifelong Guidance Nowadays**

In order to be able to provide lifelong career support services according to the needs of modern society and each individual, it is important for the providers of these services to respect the multidimensional meaning of the concept of career nowadays.

Nowadays the broad, multidimensional meaning of career is linked to the many social and professional roles a person plays throughout his or her career, linking career development to the diversity of a person's life and living environment, where the focus is on career formation and development in interaction with a person's diverse life and work environment (Berlato, 2015; Hall & Chandler, 2005; Iriste, 2018).

Nowadays, the concept of *career* is mainly understood and interpreted in its broad sense. Some examples will follow.

- A career is the interaction between work roles and other life roles over a person's lifetime, including how these roles and related activities balance each other. A career is both paid work and unpaid voluntary work. A career is also about engaging in learning at any stage of acquiring education. (Jackson, 2014).
- A career is a set of life roles, a lifestyle, an occupation (Hansen & Gysbers, 1975; Rivera & Schaefer, 2009).
- A career is the sequence of a person's work experience over time, it is an individual's life path, his or her personal growth and development, a career is a person's individual and professional development over a lifetime. A career is an evolutionary sequence of experiences throughout a person's life (Arthur, Hall & Lawrence, 1989; Patton & McMahon, 2014).

As experience is broadly defined in contemporary definitions of careers, rather than just occupational experience, the definition implies that a career is shaped by a person's diverse experiences in different fields of human endeavour, so that careers can be viewed from different perspectives or aspects of a person's life and activities. Thus, the many dimensions of a career are also considered:

- family, including up-bringing children;
- formal and non-formal education;
- membership of various governmental and non-governmental organisations, unions and associations;
- civic participation in local and national government;

- civilian and military participation in national defence;
- spending free time in meaningful ways, taking part in different types of recreational activities (e.g. tourism, sports, motorbike clubs, artistic groups: choirs, dance groups, amateur theatre, applied arts or visual arts studios, etc.);
- other activities

that contribute to personal development, the acquisition of new social roles, the acquisition and accumulation of new experiences throughout a person's life.

As the concept of career has expanded, the notion of a ***dual career*** has entered career theories, highlighting the importance of two equally important career development lines in a person's life, which are given priority over other human activities. The broad interpretation of the concept of career allows for a wide range of combinations of pairs of human activities in the dual career framework. However, research shows that both in the early days of the dual career concept and now in contemporary interpretations, education is one of the two main strands of dual career development. This is also confirmed by one of the many definitions of a career: *a career is an individual's lifelong progression in learning and work* (Ryan & Hopkins, 2013; Watts, 2000).

Career researchers initially focused on young women raising small children in the family while also studying for their future careers. Over time, dual career research became popular in the context of athletes' ability to combine formal education in an educational institution (usually, universities have been studied) and professional development in high-performance sport, with a focus on the support of educational institutions in the development of this dual career (Amantova & Abele, 2020; Ābeļkalns, 2014; Ābeļkalns & Kravalis, 2020; Morris, Cartigny, Ryba, Wylleman, Henriksen, & Torregrossa, 2020; Wylleman, De Brandt, & Defruyt, 2020).

Experience shows that today's young people and adults try to combine their studies with other activities that are important in their lives and careers: 1) their learning and up-bringing young children in the family; 2) their learning and working; 3) their learning and succeeding in high-performance sport; 4) their learning and developing a career in the fashion industry (as a models); 5) learning and in parallel acquiring knowledge, skills and competences in the field of national defence through practical activities in Jaunsardze (The Young Guards) or Zemessardze (The Latvian National Guard), etc.

Using transfers in dual career justification and research opens up new and broad perspectives in dual career research and the offer of dual career support services.

In relation to the above, it can be said that the broad meaning of the concept of career in contemporary career theories opens up a wide range of possibilities to study not only the dual career development of learners, but also careers in a broader perspective, thanks to new interpretations of the concept of career. In the twenty-first century, new career theories have emerged, and along with them, new career concepts, such as *multiple career, cross-sector career, hybrid career, spiral career, non-linear career, flexible, ever-changing career, etc.* (Arnold, 2011; Greenhaus & Callanan, 2006; Guo et al., 2019; Howell, Beckett, & Villalblanca, 2017; Korna & Katane, 2017; Katane & Korna-Opincāne 2019; Michaelides et al., 2023). Let us take a look at some of these new career concepts that characterise the development of an individual's career in modern society.

- A ***multiple career*** forms when an individual develops several abilities and talents at the same time, expanding the range of competences, studying in several educational institutions or working in several professions at the same time, thus ensuring diversified personal and professional development in several workplaces, in several fields of activity. The multiple career of an individual develops in interaction with a multiple multi-contextual environment. In the context of multiple careers, a narrower interpretation of the concept has emerged, usually

referring to professional activities, i.e. ***cross-sectors career***. A cross-sectors career is more likely to be justified in terms of an individual's career in several organisations, several interrelated sectors or even completely unrelated sectors. The rationale and interpretation of this career type represents a strand of career management theory called organisational career.

- A ***hybrid career*** is also very closely related to the multiple career, where an individual has multiple activities in his or her life and is involved in multiple social groups/environments, thus having multiple social roles and social identities, as well as multiple memberships in a particular field of activity and environment. This type of career includes, for example, an individual's role as a learner in an educational institution, an individual's role as a professional in a workplace in a particular sector, and/or an entrepreneur or a company manager in another sector. In addition to all this, the individual is able to spend his or her free time in a meaningful way, and he/she is an actor performing in amateur theatre, a choir singer singing in a choir, an athlete playing sports and taking part in various amateur sports competitions, etc. It is important to mention here that, for many individuals, it is often the meaningful leisure activities or hobbies that develop their abilities and talents to a level that could already be approaching the professional level, so that their social roles in these activities become increasingly important in their careers in the perspective of a possible professional career.
- A ***flexible, continuously changing career***, which allows for combining the above career perspectives, emphasising the person's ability to be flexible and to change career paths throughout life according to one's interests and needs, thus adapting to the demands of an ever-changing labour market and to the situation in one or more specific sectors, which together ensure inclusion in today's dynamic society. Today, individuals need to be able to continuously change themselves and their careers.

The multiple interpretations of contemporary careers highlight the important insight that the sustainable development of modern societies is largely determined by the ability of individuals to be self-directed and self-managed towards their life and career goals, values and life priorities, to be mobile and flexible (Hirschi & Koen, 2021; Cedere et al., 2020), which, according to the authors, generally ensures an individual's competitiveness in today's changing environment.

Career development is nowadays interpreted and studied as a long-term, multi-stage process of self-direction and self-realisation, which can be seen in two dimensions (Katane & Katans, 2016; Katans, 2019):

- as a *lifelong* process of professional activity in *one field/sector*, with each stage of life or career development *increasing* one's *level of professional competence* through all forms of learning (formal, non-formal and informal), and possibly also increasing the *level of professional qualification* resulting from formal education; this type of professional development is closely linked to *lifelong learning*;
- as the multidimensional development of the individual as a person and as a specialist (professional development), a *multifunctional professional activity* where the individual is able to self-realise and work in *several* different professional *fields/sectors*, acquiring new social and professional roles, broadening their range of competences and acquiring several professional qualifications; this type of career development is closely linked to *lifelong education*.

Thus, two types of career development can be distinguished today: *lifelong careers* and *lifewide careers*. There can also be a third path, a combination of the two, i.e. a *career that is both lifelong and lifewide*.

In support of the above, we can refer to an important insight on the ensuring of *sustainable career*. Sustainable career development is also a new concept in career theories, defined as the sequence of different career experiences of an individual, emphasising the cyclical nature of career development, where cycles change, ensuring continuous career development over a long-time horizon, crossing several social spaces, gaining many different experiences. Only an individual who can make decisions and take action in the face of change, who is equally capable in times of success and in times of decline or career crisis, who can give up something, who can take risks, who can start something new and unknown, can have a sustainable career. In other words, a sustainable career is a continuous process of career development that passes through different stages over time, influenced by social relationships and shaped by both personal and changing environmental conditions (Van der Heijden & De Vos, 2015; Karaca-Atik et al., 2023).

In the author's view, the explanations of sustainable career are very much in line with the notions of flexible, ever-changing careers, as well as with the notion of a *non-linear career* that emerged within *Chaos Theory of Career* with the introduction of the synergistic paradigm in the social sciences. The Chaos Theory of Career seeks and finds answers to today's global challenges. It underpins the search for new approaches to human choices in a chaotic and unpredictable *changing world*. This theory views the individual, including his thoughts and actions, in the light of unpredictable events, unusual situations and uncertainty. (Amundsons, 2016; Katane & Korna-Opincāne, 2019; Paradnike et al., 2017; Pryor, 2010; Pryor & Bright, 2007).

Influenced by the synergistic paradigm and chaos theory, the non-linear career rationale also implies that career development is not a linear process - upwards only, there can be ups and downs in career development, there can be oscillations or fluctuations between multiple career scenarios, the formation of new career branches, called bifurcation, emphasising the individual's determination and ability to find solutions even during difficult or crisis periods in their career, demonstrating the individual's competence in career self-management.

Equally important is a comprehensive career support system that is accessible to everyone, anytime and anywhere throughout a person's life. The increasing frequency of career transitions that people have to face in their lifetime creates a strong demand for lifelong guidance provision with a wide range of services to meet the needs of society. This demand is more relevant today than ever before (Vuorinen & Watts, 2012).

In order for individuals to be able to use (receive) and evaluate lifelong guidance services, as well as for organizations, including educational institutions, to be able to offer lifelong guidance services, it is important to understand the essence and multifunctionality of lifelong guidance, the multidimensional meaning of the concept of career, as well as one's place and role in the comprehensive lifelong guidance system.

## Conclusions

The paradigm of lifelong guidance is considered a new paradigm that has gained its rapid development, popularity and relevance in the 21st century. The aim of lifelong guidance is to provide career support to people of all ages at all stages of their career development in a lifelong and continuous process. Moreover, career support is necessary on a continuous basis: in moments of career success and in moments of crisis. *Provision of lifelong education is the spotlight of lifelong guidance*, as it is key to successful career development and a guarantee of employment. Cooperation networks of all kinds, at both interpersonal and inter-institutional

level, have an important place in the lifelong guidance system, where different types of organisations and individual support providers play their part in the overarching lifelong guidance system. The wide range of functions of a lifelong guidance system goes beyond the scope of a single career counsellor or career support specialist, emphasising collaboration between different types of professionals and different organisations as providers of career support. Lifelong guidance is a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary process.

The career self-management competences of individuals in society, including employability as an internal resource for job search in a constantly changing environment, are one of the key objectives of lifelong guidance, as well as the result of timely offered and accessible to everyone multidimensional career support services. Today, every individual in society must be prepared to live and pursue a career in an ever-changing world, be able to adapt to and change the environment through innovation, think independently and innovatively, make choices and decisions, and be responsible to themselves and society for the consequences of those decisions and actions. Individuals in society who have a high level of different types of competences and a wide range of experience in different social roles are more likely to be successful in today's labour market. Equally important is flexibility in thinking, communication and professional activity, as well as a willingness to continuously improve and develop as a person and as a professional, through lifelong education and lifewide education. All this determines the competitiveness of each member of society, including employability and employment as part of competitiveness, which is both a precondition and an outcome of a successful career.

The offer and provision of lifelong guidance and lifelong education take the central place in lifelong guidance. In a lifelong guidance system, providers and implementers of education of all kinds are therefore seen as important parts of the system. Today, formal and non-formal education is offered by a variety of providers: different types of educational institutions (pre-schools, schools, universities, adult learning centres), non-governmental organisations, learning organisations with a high level of knowledge management, etc.

In order to be able to provide lifelong guidance services according to the needs of modern society and each individual, it is important for the providers of these services to respect the multidimensional meaning of the concept of career nowadays.

Nowadays the meaning of career has broadened considerably. As career management theories have evolved, new career concepts and explanations have emerged that are mutually complementary and closely interlinked, objectively describing the reality of the labour market and contemporary society as a whole. New concepts are emerging in career theories: multiple career, cross-sectors career, hybrid career, flexible, ever-changing career, non-linear career, sustainable career. New career concepts highlight the importance of career self-management in the ever-changing world.

Drawing parallels with the explanations of lifelong education and lifewide education in the social sciences, including the educational sciences, two main trends can be identified and distinguished in the explanation of the new concepts of career and in the justification of career development in the context of contemporary society: lifelong career development and lifewide career development. There may also be a third path, a combination of the both: a lifelong and lifewide career that develops throughout life.

Career self-management is an important part of the competitiveness structure of the individual as a person and as a professional. In turn, promoting the development of career self-management skills and competences also contributes to the development of competitiveness, where promoting *employability*, being the combination of different capabilities of an individual, plays an important role. Employability is the external manifestation of employment as an internal resource of the individual, therefore employability

is a prerequisite and a guarantee of employment. In turn, employment is one of the desired outcomes of a self-managed, flexible and ever-changing career.

In order for individuals to be able to use (receive) and evaluate lifelong guidance services, as well as for organizations, including educational institutions, to be able to offer lifelong guidance services, it is important to understand the essence and multifunctionality of lifelong guidance, the multidimensional meaning of the concept of career, as well as one's place and role in the comprehensive lifelong guidance system.

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