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# Vocational Guidance Education in Full-Time Compulsory Education in Europe

European Commission

# VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE EDUCATION IN FULL-TIME COMPULSORY EDUCATION

# POLAND

## School year 2007/08

Education is compulsory for pupils between the ages of 6 and 16 and then part-time until the age of 18. It begins during the last year of pre-primary education and covers primary education for a duration of 6 years *(szkoła podstawowa)* and lower secondary for 3 years *(gimnazjum)*. The end of lower secondary education is a key moment in terms of guidance. Pupils have the possibility to go on to general upper, general/specialised, technical or vocational secondary education according to the results obtained in lower secondary education and the *gimnazjum* final exam.

## LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND NATIONAL OBJECTIVES

The main objective of the vocational guidance education policy consists in creating vocational information systems and in ensuring permanent and complete services to a wide public throughout their lives. In the document published in 2000 entitled 'National strategy for the growth in employment and the development of human resources', the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy announced its intention to develop vocational guidance in order to meet its objectives. This strategy is aimed at integrating vocational counselling into the global objectives of the school system at all levels of education, at introducing the principle of continuity of services in terms of career planning and development, and at increasing the availability of vocational information for young people and adults. It plans to provide individual vocational counselling services (with harmonised standards for these services) and to continue to improve their methods and information materials.

In education:

Legal basis for the employment of vocational counsellors:

- in psychological and pedagogical centres – Regulation by the Minister of National Education and Sport concerning the operation of public pedagogical and psychological centres (11 December 2002);
- at schools – Regulation by the Minister of National Education and Sport concerning the principles for the provision and organisation of psychological and pedagogical support in public pre-schools, schools and other institutions (7 January 2003);
- in Continuing Education Centres and Practical Education Centres – Regulation by the Minister of National Education and Sport concerning the kinds of public institutions of continuing and practical training and their methods of organisation and operation (13 June 2003).

In the field of work:

- act on employment promotion and labour market institutions (20 April 2004). The Act introduced new instruments serving the improvement of labour market institutions, mainly public employment services. The document sets basic employment standardsfor key public employment services professions including vocational counsellors, and introduces three stages of professional licence;
- regulation by the Minister of Labour and Social Policy concerning the mode of granting the licence of employment officers and vocational counsellors (20 October 2004). Additional employment standards for these two groups of employees have been introduced, including the necessity to obtain the professional licence in order to be employed in the public employment services and continuing education institutions. The idea behind the introduction of the new legislation was to raise the profile of the two professions. The licences have three levels: basic, level 1 and level 2; the regulation establishes formal requirements for each level;
- regulation by the Minister of Labour and Social Policy concerning detailed rules for providing job recruitment services, vocational counselling, training for the unemployed and related activities (20 April 2004);
- regulation by the Minister of Labour and Social Policy concerning the on-the-job qualifying phase and the qualifying skills test in the process of obtaining the qualifications for the professions of recruitment officer and vocational counsellor (3 April 2006).

## RESPONSIBILITIES

The Ministry of National Education and Sports and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs share the responsibility for the implementation of vocational guidance education and vocational guidance services for young people at school and for adults.

Based on an agreement between these two ministries, the National Centre for Vocational Guidance Resources (*Narodowe Centrum Zasobów Poradnictwa Zawodowego* – NCZPZ) was created. It supports mobility within the framework of education and vocational training, and gathers information in the area of guidance at European level.

## VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE EDUCATION IN THE CURRICULUM

Vocational guidance education is part of the basic national curriculum as a cross-cutting subject. Schools must integrate it into their detailed curricula in separate subjects such as citizenship education or social science.

At ISCED level 2, the compulsory subject called *civic education* (3 teaching hours per week in a period of 3 years) comprises elements of vocational guidance and consists of three sub-subjects: *family education, civic education* and *education for active participation in the economic life of the country*. The latter contains elements of vocational guidance. Its objectives are as follows:

*Active participation in economic life*:

- the comprehensive development of students, aimed at preparing them for active participation in the socioeconomic life of a country;
- the understanding of economic phenomena and changes;
- the ability to find one's place in the market economy conditions and the changing job market;
- initial job preparation /work-related instruction: national and local labour market, discovering and developing individual work-related qualifications, types of professions and professional skills, choice of career, examples of job application procedures, qualities of a good employee, professional mobility, the problem of unemployment.

At ISCED level 3, *introduction to entrepreneurship* is the compulsory subject which is most related to vocational guidance (2 teaching hours in a period of 3 years). Its objectives:

- preparation for active participation in economic life;
- shaping of the attitude for reliable work and entrepreneurship;
- developing communicative skills and teamwork;
- developing skills for active job searching and the suitable choice of career;
- mechanisms of market economy;
- basic rules for running various businesses;
- the role of the state and its law in the market economy;
- European and world economies.

## Traineeships within the framework of the curriculum

The legislation regulating the issue of practical vocational training is the 1 July 2002 regulation by the Minister of National Education and Sport. The regulation concerns practical vocational training in school workshops, school laboratories, continuing education centres and practical training centres, with employers and on individual farms; it applies to students of public upper secondary schools offering vocational education as well as young workers/apprentices doing traineeships as part of their job preparation course.

Traineeships are organised by the school. Traineeships for apprentices are organised by their employers.

Practical vocational training has two forms: traineeships and practical training classes.

Practical training classes are organised in order to teach the students and young workers the vocational skills necessary to start work in a given profession. Traineeships are organised for students to enable them to apply and further develop the acquired skills and knowledge in real working conditions.

Traineeships may be organised throughout the whole school year and during summer holidays.

The curriculum for each profession specifies the range of skills and knowledge taught during traineeships.

Students below the age of 16 have a maximum of 6 hours of practical training per day, and students of 18 and over can have up to 8 hours of training a day.

In special cases, the training time for students over 18 may be prolonged but cannot exceed 12 hours a day.

Practical vocational training for students and young workers takes place in groups or individually.

Practical vocational training organised outside school is based on a contract signed by the headmaster of the school and the institution providing the training.

A school delegating its students for practical training is responsible for the supervision of the training, providing insurance for the students undertaking the training, accepting the instructors of the institution or delegating a teacher to run the practical training course, covering travel expenses for the students who need to commute in order to complete the training or providing free accommodation and care if commuting is not possible.

Institutions taking on students for practical vocational training are responsible for ensuring suitable conditions for the training including proper settings and equipment, proper clothing and supplies for personal hygiene and meals and drinks free of charge. They also supervise the training.

Practical vocational training is delivered by teachers of practical vocational training. In the case of training provided by an employer, it is delivered by employees with teaching qualifications who are referred to as instructors of practical vocational training.

Traineeships organised in firms or on farms have supervisors who are employers or nominated employees of the firm or individual farmers. The supervisors of traineeships should have teaching qualifications.

## OTHER TYPES OF ACTIVITY/GUIDANCE SERVICES

### Contacts with the professional world

Seminars and workshops related to vocational guidance education programmes are organised by schools in cooperation with the professional world.

There is no national regulation concerning the issue. However, cooperation is taking place on an individual institution, local business and community basis. Many schools and businesses take part in the European educational programmes such as Leonardo da Vinci or Comenius.

Examples of projects involving schools (Comenius projects):

- Connecting schools with working life (project duration: 01.08.2006-31.07.2009)

  The participating countries are Italy, Poland, Portugal and Romania. The aims of the project are to inform students about how the job market operates in their own countries and other European countries; develop the skills of teamwork, self-presentation and searching for information; and to develop active and committed attitudes. The students from the participant countries have taken part in numerous workshops concerning the above issues, learned how to work in teams, learned how to look for jobs and find other information related to the labour market on the Internet, and have become more confident and better at communicating in English.

- Get ready to work in Europe (project duration: 01.08.2005 – 31.07.2008)

  This project was initiated by a lower secondary school in Katowice, Poland. The partner countries were Ireland, Germany and Slovakia. The students visited companies such as Bosch, Mercedes, Alstom and a school firm run by their German peers. The firm employs students following a job application process requiring them to present their CVs and cover letters and pass job interviews. The firm offers printing services and text editing, sells the school newsletter and distributes woodwork produced by the students. The Polish students, having returned from Germany, started cooperating with the Academy of Economy in the Katowice Career Office.

Examples of other ongoing projects:

- Youth and work in a changing Europe
- Schools and the professional world
- Counteracting discrimination on the labour market through self-employment in a developing Europe based on the examples of France and Poland
- Working life – work in a person's life

## Guidance services at school

Since 2003, School Career Centres (*Szkolne Ośrodki Kariery* – SZOK) have been created in schools at lower *(gimnazjum)* and upper secondary level. Currently, 361 centres are operational. The educational counsellors who work in them are responsible for the implementation of a specific guidance system for each school. Their role is to provide pupils with information on possible educational pathways, the local labour market, labour laws, etc., and to help them acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to make their future career choices. They offer counselling to pupils and parents, individually or in groups. In 2002/03, about 10 000 educational counsellors were employed in these centres.

## Guidance services outside school

The educational assistance and counselling centres under the Ministry of National Education provide a wide range of services, including vocational guidance, to pupils at all levels of education, and counselling in the area of educational psychology to teachers and parents.

Their services are free of charge and are offered on a voluntary basis, individually or in groups. In 2002/03, about 1 000 professional counsellors were employed in these centres.

Furthermore, a new form of vocational guidance – distance guidance – is being developed. A training programme and a manual for guidance practitioners have been created within the framework of the 'Distance Counselling' project.

Apart from the educational assistance and counselling centres under the Ministry of National Education at district level the Information and Career Planning Centres under the Ministry of Labour also offer job counselling services to the unemployed and job seekers as well as school graduates and students. Information and Career Planning Centres are specialised institutions operating within the regional labour offices. They provide information about the labour market and opportunities for acquiring qualifications, and support their clients in making decisions about their professional careers. Currently, 51 such centres are operational in Poland. They employ vocational counsellors, educational counsellors and psychologists.

### In the employment sector

The Public Employment Services of the Ministry of Labour are addressed more specifically to unemployed people and to adults.

## QUALIFICATIONS OF GUIDANCE STAFF

Teachers in charge of guidance teaching do not receive special training in guidance teaching. These teachers are usually academics or specialists in the field.

Guidance practitioners must have a master's degree which does not necessarily need to be related to vocational guidance (most often, they have received a master's degree in psychology, education, sociology, etc.). Specialisation programmes leading to a master's degree in this area have been set up.

Professional counsellors must also have specific social skills (such as the right personality, skills and interests for working with young people). They must improve their professional qualifications through self-training or ongoing training programmes. They must also have knowledge in the area of vocational guidance, psychology, education, social policy, etc.

There are employment standards for this staff in the education and employment sectors, which define in detail the skills they must have to perform their duties.

Employment standards for vocational counsellors:

According to the act on employment promotion and labour market institutions, a person employed as a vocational counsellor is required to possess a university degree and a professional licence issued/awarded (in the process of an administrative decision) by the head of region.

The licensing system was introduced to raise the profile of the job and to stimulate this group of employees to continue their professional development.

Vocational counsellors may obtain the following levels of licence:

- the vocational counsellor licence (basic level) may be awarded to someone who has worked in the profession for at least 12 months in the public employment services;
- the vocational counsellor licence (level 1) may be awarded to a person who has worked as a vocational counsellor in the public employment services for at least 24 months and who has a master's degree or has worked for at least 12 months and has a master's degree in psychology or vocational counselling;
- the vocational counsellor licence (level 2) may be granted to a person with 36 months of professional experience in vocational counselling with a level 1 licence and who has completed a post-graduate university course in vocational counselling.

Most people who work as vocational counsellors for the public employment services in Poland are graduates in education, sociology or psychology.

## COOPERATION BETWEEN SCHOOLS, EMPLOYERS, PARENTS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

See Contacts with the professional world.

## ACCESS TO INFORMATION ON VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE

A multidimensional system of vocational information – Counsellor 2000 – which is aimed at supporting the efforts of users by associating information management and decision-making strategies, has been developed. Information on studies and training as well as career prospects are matched with the profiles of users, who establish their profiles using the self-evaluation tools available with the software. Furthermore, the system was adapted so that it may be used by specific groups, such as disabled people.

Counsellor 2000 was developed as part of the Ministry of Labour project for the promotion of employment and the development of employment services by one of its regional offices – the regional labour office in Białystok.

CD-ROMs, multimedia programs and websites providing information on careers and career possibilities also exist. The centres are usually not well equipped with computers.

Users are invited to express their point of view on the user-friendliness of the information provided to them, in particular the online information.

### Internet references

Narodowe Centrum Zasobów Poradnictwa Zawodowego (National Centre for Vocational Guidance Resources) – NCZPZ: www.psz.praca.gov.pl

Centrum Matodyczne Pomocy Psychologiczno-Pedagogicznej (Educational Assistance and Counselling Centre): www.cmppp.edu.pl

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