

Comparative Analysis of the Career Guidance Needs in the Baltic Countries

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Abstract: In the article are analysed results from the survey on the career guidance and counselling conducted in the framework of Erasmus+ Strategic partnership project “Information and Communication Technology for Romanian Career Counselling (ICT 4 RoCc)”. The problem has been approached by analysing and evaluating career guidance services in project partners’ countries and establishing the pupils’ needs in the area of career counselling as well as available instrument to satisfy those needs. The questionnaire was designed to summarize 7-12 grade pupils’ opinion about counselling and vocational guidance. It consisted of four diagnostic blocks: availability of the career counselling services, students’ needs for the successful counselling and vocational guidance, information suitable for vocational career guidance and information about the respondents. In the study is used self-assessment method, so the results are based on respondents’ views. The analysis of youth unemployment in the Baltic countries is also given in order to underline the need and usefulness of career guidance and counselling. According to the findings in Latvia special attention should be paid to the outcome of the residence: pupils from rural areas more often have access to career counselling services by means of the school counsellor and they more often need counselling from a person specialized in this field; pupils from urban areas more often have plans for personal development or a career plan and they prefer online access to scientific information about vocational guidance. The results show that career guidance and counselling between the Baltic States are more developed in Estonia.

Keywords: employment, career counselling, career guidance, consultations, school career education.

Introduction

The 21st century is characterized by globalization and continuous changes in the work environment and with fewer certainties, openness and flexibility. That is why career guidance and counselling are becoming topical issues.

Careers guidance is a process that aims to provide individuals with a clearer understanding of themselves and their potential for future career development, help people to clarify their goals for the future, assess their career development needs at different stages in their life, understand the actual process of choosing a career and take appropriate measures to implement these objectives (Ali, Graham, 1996).

Career counselling aim is to support people in making and implementing informed career decisions. Career counselling includes all counselling activities related to (Zunker, 2006):

1. career choice on a lifetime. In the career counselling process, all matters regarding the individual needs (including work, family and personal preoccupations), are recognized as an integral part of career decision making and planning;
2. the inadequacy of employment, mental health issues, stress reduction and development programs that improve work skills, interpersonal relations, flexibility, adaptability, and other development programs leading to self-agent.

The potential effects of career guidance can be thought of at the individual, organisational and societal levels. At the individual level, potential benefits could result from people being better able to manage their choices of learning and work, and to maximise their potential. At the organizational level, potential benefits could flow to education and training providers if learners were assisted to identify and enter learning programmes which meet their needs and aspirations. And they could flow to employers if career guidance resulted in a supply of job applicants whose talents and motivations were matched to employers’ requirements. Benefits could result at the societal level if career guidance leads to greater efficiency in the allocation of human resources. Social benefits could also result if career guidance helped to widen access to learning and work opportunities (both helping people to avoid social exclusion and helping the excluded to gain access to learning and work), thus enhancing social equity (Career Guidance..., 2004).

It should be noted that the career guidance and counselling development and implementation has been intensified also in educational institutions. Planned and high-quality career education is needed to help young people and their parents understand the changes in education and employment, the job market in a changing environment. European Council (Council Recommendation ..., 2011) recommends strengthening guidance and counselling support for students' career choices, transitions within education or from education to employment. It reduces poor decision making based on false expectations or insufficient information. It helps young people to make choices which meet their ambitions, personal interests and talents.

European Commission (Reducing early school leaving ..., 2013) is stating that high quality, up-to-date guidance made available at an early stage is essential for providing young people with the information they need to make informed education and career choices. Helping young people understand their own strengths, talents, different study options and employment prospects is essential. Guidance could be provided through interactive methods (mentoring, coaching, one-to-one guidance, work placements) and through online services.

European Commission (Redecker, Leis, 2011) anticipates that, for the future it is important to ensure that skills, interests and preferences are respected and addressed to keep learners motivated and engaged in employment. Targeted and personalised support and guidance is needed to improve employability.

In order to improve ability to manage young people choices of learning and work, as well as enhancing social equity, the survey on career counselling was conducted in Romania, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia in the framework of Erasmus+ Strategic partnership project "Information and Communication Technology for Romanian Career Counselling (ICT 4 RoCc)". In this article it is made comparative analysis of the pupils' responses of the Baltic countries (Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia).

The problem has been approached by analysing and evaluating career guidance services in project partners' countries and establishing the pupils' needs in the area of career counselling as well as available instrument to satisfy those needs. Evaluating the above-mentioned conditions, in the article also is carried out the analysis of youth unemployment in the Baltic countries in order to underline the need and usefulness of career guidance and counselling.

Methodology

The research methodology established based on the circumstances described above. The research consists of two parts: the comparative analysis of the school pupils' (grade VII – XII) survey results and investigation of the youth employment rate (from the EUROSTAT database).

The school pupils' questionnaire included four diagnostic blocks: availability of the career counselling services, students' needs for the successful counselling and vocational guidance, information suitable for vocational career guidance and information about the respondents. Each diagnostic block contains several statements, which were designed based on career guidance systems in partners' countries. In the diagnostic part of the questionnaire form, there were 6 selection type questions and one question of Likert Scale type presented to the respondents.

The survey includes 474 cases: Latvia - 272, Estonia – 101 and Lithuania – 100.

In the study it is used self-assessment method, so the results are based on respondents' views. It shall be noticed that the research is a case study and it highlights only the main directions of career guidance needs for the current situation, however it does not foresee any requirements, which are raised by the rapid development of social area and technologies.

It should be noted that such studies have not been carried out in the Baltic countries. This is the first study regarding career counselling and guidance needs.

Results and discussion

Career services in the Baltic countries are implemented through three kinds of interrelated measures:

- career education – to help young people raise their self-awareness and the understanding of the opportunity structure (learning and work), and acquire skills and attitudes to enter and succeed in the modern world of work;
- career counselling – to support people in making and implementing informed career decisions;
- career information – to provide well-structured information about education, labour market and professions, and links between them.

Career guidance in the Baltic countries is shared between the Education and Labour sectors. From primary through upper-secondary education both general and vocational schools provide career education – measures integrated in the education process in order to ensure the acquisition and development of career management skills of educates, which include being aware of one's interests, abilities and opportunities for selecting the direction of further education and professional career. Education standards determine that one of the main goals of education is to prepare students to make a conscious career choice. Career management skills are integrated into subject standards as learning outcomes. In accordance with Law on Education career management skills provide structured ways to compile, analyse synthesize and organize information related to one's self, education and employment and enabling one to make and implement decisions about the choice of education and/ or occupation, but career development support – an aggregate of measures, which includes access to information, career education and individual consultations for educates for determination and planning of career objectives, making a choice in relation to education and work (Izglītības likums, 1998).

The research shows that in all the Baltic States are used several methodologies for work with young people:

- professional interests' investigation, determination of the professional scope and choice;
- investigation of the thought process of individual peculiarities and individual nonverbal intelligence aspects (imaginative thinking, spatial perception and attention) as well as clarification of the nature of intellect;
- determination of the individual psychological properties of the personality as well as communication strategies;
- motivational clarification with regard to career planning.

Career counselling is the main method that is used in the Baltic States in order to provide support for future career choices (Table 1).

Table 1

Career counselling types

Individual consultations		Group consultations	
Professional	Diagnostic	Career	Career information
<input type="checkbox"/> professional aptitude investigation <input type="checkbox"/> professions alternative search <input type="checkbox"/> individual career plan preparation <input type="checkbox"/> job interview preparation <input type="checkbox"/> assistance in completing CV and cover letter	<input type="checkbox"/> professional tendencies determination <input type="checkbox"/> thinking peculiarities investigation <input type="checkbox"/> working capacity study <input type="checkbox"/> ability to work compliance with professional ambitions	<input type="checkbox"/> career challenges <input type="checkbox"/> career development problem solving <input type="checkbox"/> information on education and career development <input type="checkbox"/> research on the professional competence correlation with the labour market	<input type="checkbox"/> information about the labour market current issues <input type="checkbox"/> profession standards <input type="checkbox"/> educational opportunities (in their own country and in EU)

To analyse career guidance services in the Baltic countries pupils were asked about taking part in a counselling activities for choosing their career. Results (Figure 1) show that almost half of the Baltic

States VII-XII grade pupils have not taken part (or thinks that have not taken) in career counselling activities. Group activities are the most popular in Latvia and Lithuania (accordingly 42% and 48%). Situation is a little different in Estonia where pupils participate not only in group, but also in individual activities (accordingly 32% and 23%).

Analysing research results taking into account gender aspect, boys more often have taken part in a counselling activities for choosing their career than girls. Girls actively participate in group counselling.

Total 38% of pupils in the Baltic countries think that they do not have access to career counselling services. In Latvia 42%, Lithuania 57% and Estonia 36% of the pupils have access to services by means of the school counsellor and accordingly 18%, 8% and 30% by means of a specialized counsellor in vocational guidance.

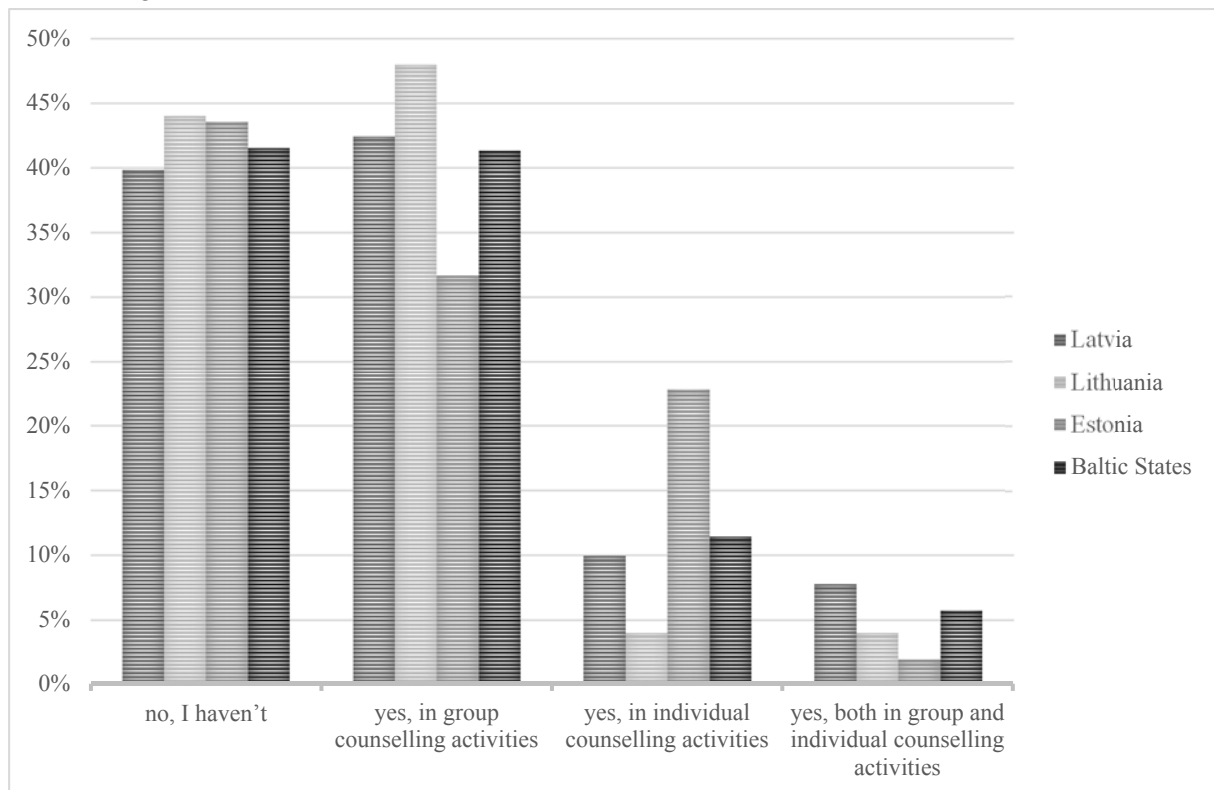


Figure 1. Pupils' participation in a counselling activity for choosing their career.

As mentioned above individual career plan preparation is one of the career guidance services provided in the Baltic States. The current situation is given in Figure 2.

Establishing the Baltic States pupils' needs in the area of career counselling as well as available instrument to satisfy those needs, they were asked to tick one of the given answer about potential career counselling needs identifying needs by the themselves. The pupils were given the opportunity to speak their mind and let know about their needs regarding career counselling and guidance. Answers are collect in Figure 3.

Analysing results by gender aspect it should be noticed that girls need counselling from a person specialized in this field more then boys. Parents and friends' advice is enough for boys. Girls more often prefer online access to scientific information about vocational guidance.

Total 39% of pupils in the Baltic countries (Latvia 34%, Lithuania 43%, Estonia 51%) prefer to have access to scientific information about vocational guidance by means of specialized departments for vocational guidance. Online access is the most popular Latvian – 66%. They would prefer websites with scientific information appropriate to their age.

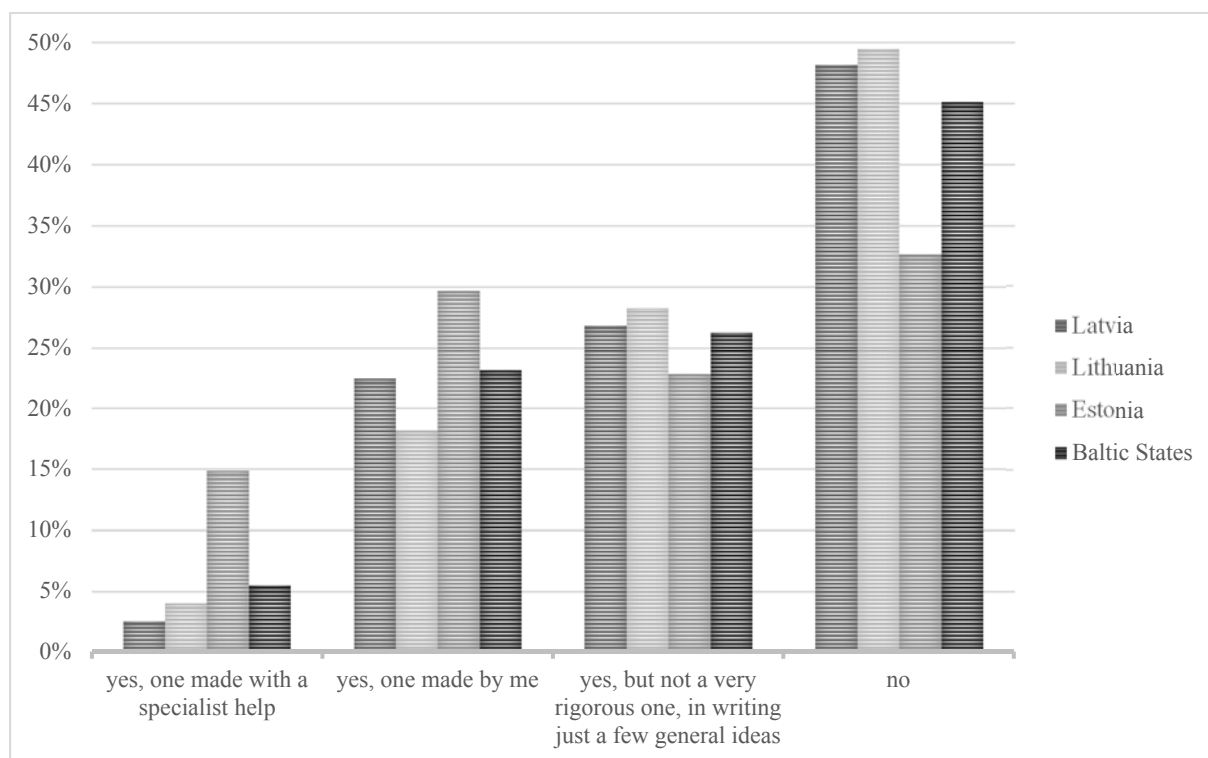


Figure 2. Answers on question “Do you have a plan for personal development/a career plan?”

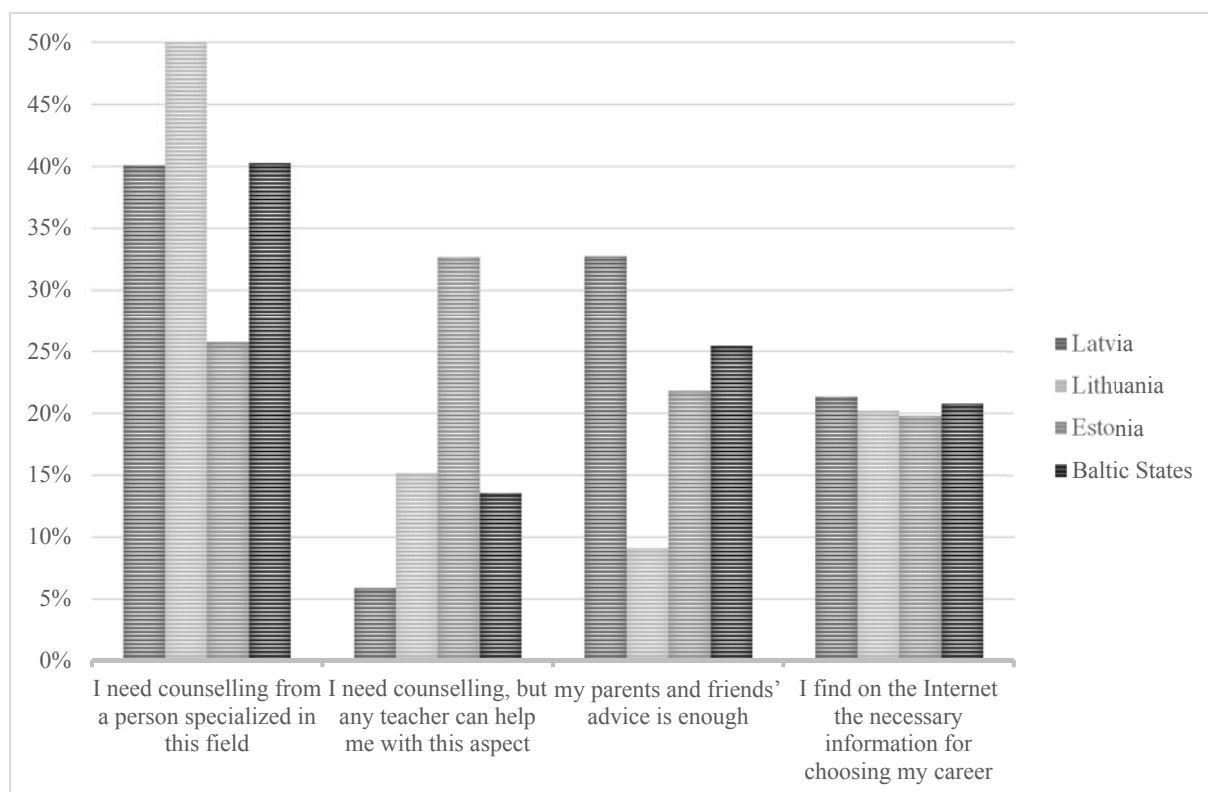


Figure 3. Baltic States pupils' needs by the career counselling way.

Pupils were offered to stick maximum two types of vocational guidance what they need: examples of good practices (e.g., the way a C.V. is filled in), advice, suggestions, practical instruction, support for self-knowledge or support for settling the objectives of the personal development plan/career plan. Answers are summarized in Figure 4.

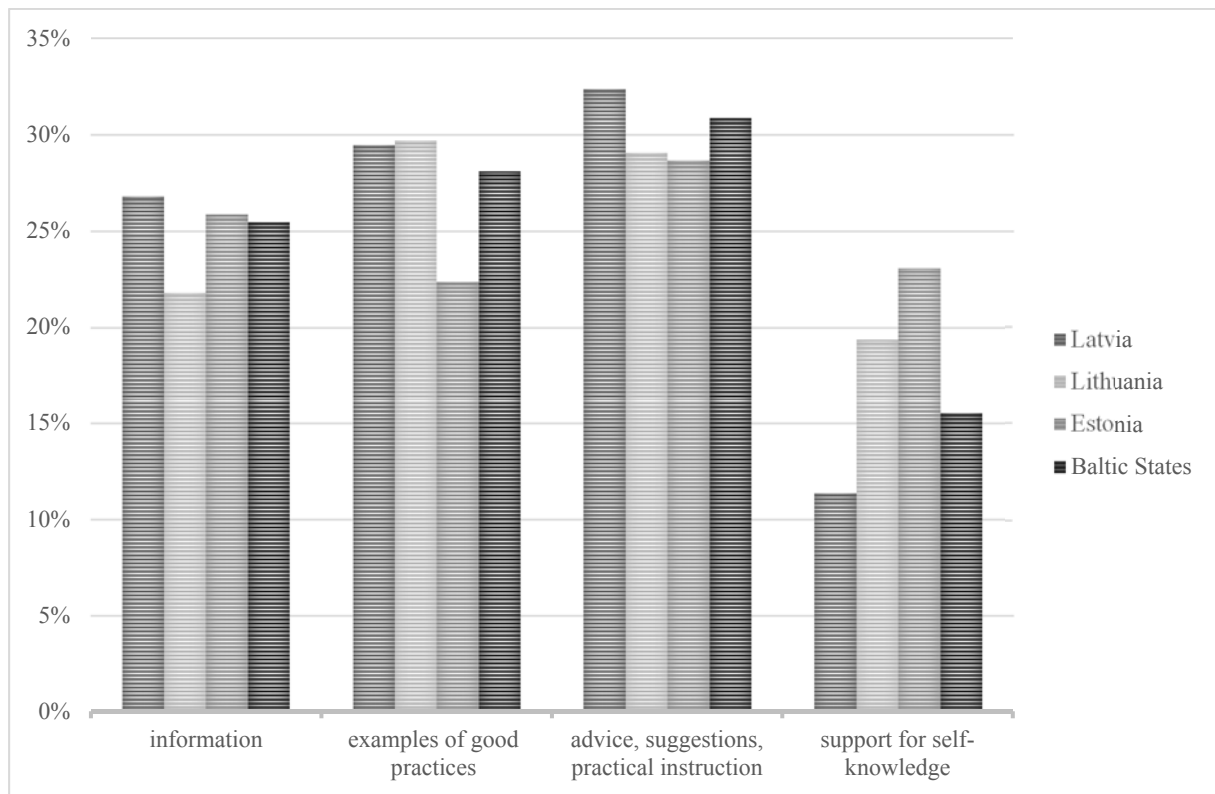


Figure 4. Baltic States pupils' needs by the career counselling kind.

In the questionnaire pupils were asked to specify for each field how necessary the information is suitable for their vocational career guidance by writing the numbers from 1 to 10 where 1,2,3 - unimportant; 4,5,6,7 – important enough and 8,9,10 - very important (Figure 5).

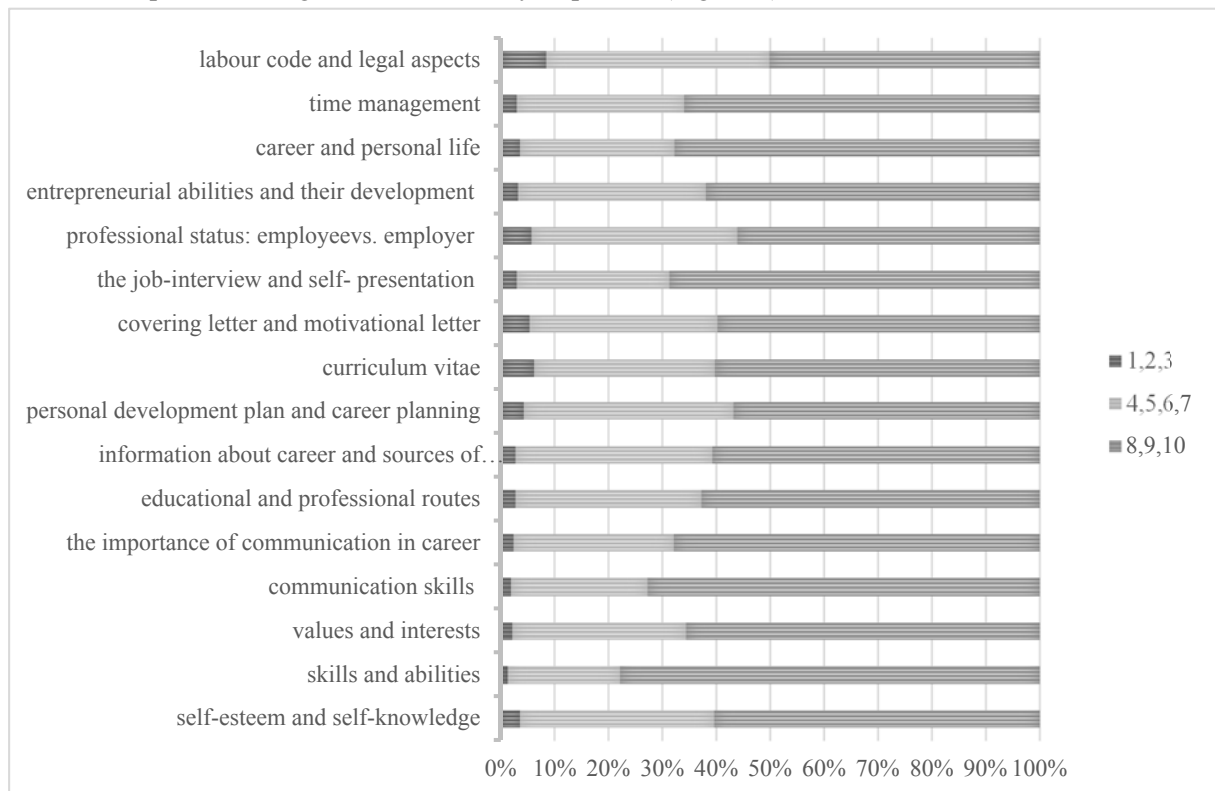


Figure 5. Assessment of the information suitable for pupils' vocational career guidance.

As pointed above it is important to ensure career management skills, interests and preferences to keep learners motivated and engaged in employment. Targeted and personalised support and guidance is needed to improve employability. The need and usefulness of career guidance and counselling could be proved by youth employment/ unemployment rates. Based on information from EUROSTAT database authors have calculated unemployment rate in the Baltic countries (Figure 6).

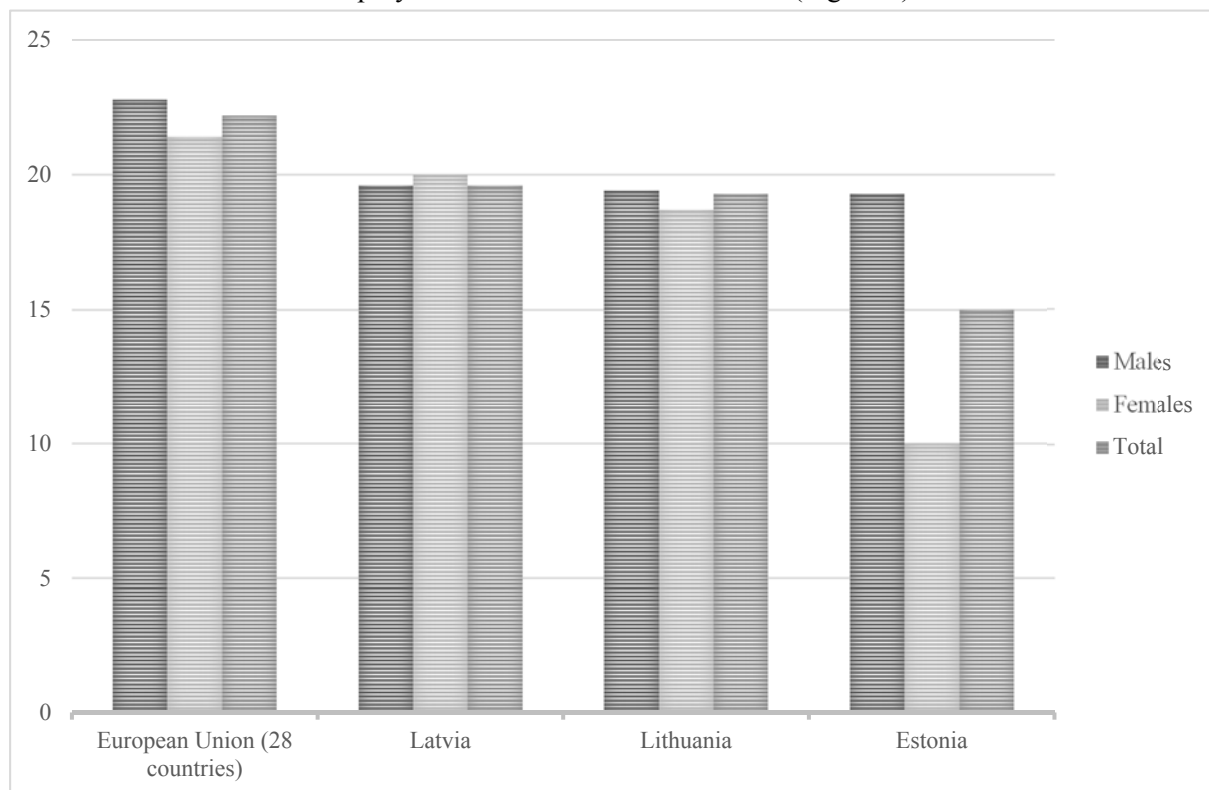


Figure 6. Unemployment rate 2014, % (age group – less than 25 years).

Results show that the unemployment rate in Estonia is 15%. It is the lowest among the Baltic States – in Latvia 19.6% and in Lithuania 19.3%. It should be noted that the unemployment rate in the Baltic countries is lower than as a whole in Europe.

Conclusions

According to the findings in Latvia special attention should be paid to the outcome depending on the pupils' residence:

- pupils from rural area more often have access to career counselling services by means of the school counsellor and they more often need counselling from a person specialized in this field;
- pupils from urban area more often have plans for personal development/a career plan and they prefer online access to scientific information about vocational guidance.

To analyse pupils' career guidance and counselling needs by country, it should be noted, that:

- in Estonia pupils need counselling but there are more confident that any teacher can help me with this aspect (33%), while the Latvian pupils the least rely on the support of teachers (only 6%);
- Lithuanians and Estonians prefer to have access to scientific information about vocational guidance by means of specialized departments for vocational guidance, but in Latvia the most popular is Online access;
- support for self-knowledge is more important for Estonians (23%), less – for Latvians (11%);
- Latvian pupils need more advice, suggestions, practical instruction;
- information about career and sources and skills and abilities as the most appropriate fields associated to vocational guidance are pointed by Lithuanians;

- Latvians think that the most appropriate fields associated to vocational guidance are skills and abilities as well as career and personal life;
- job-interview and self- presentation as well as curriculum vitae are appropriate by Estonians.

The results show that career guidance and counselling between the Baltic States are more developed in Estonia. The results prove that calculations of youth unemployment rate in the Baltic States is also lowest in Estonia.

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