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Connecting Career Counselling and Human Resource Development in  
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# 102

# NATIONAL REPORT

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**Serbia**

*Belgrade Open School*

National survey on the current practices, needs and requirements of  
experts and professionals in the fields of CGC and HRM in Serbia

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of the two surveys sent by Belgrade Open School to professionals in the fields of career support of adults. The surveys aimed to gather information on the current practices, needs and requirements of the project's two main target groups:

- Experts and practitioners in the professional field of career guidance and counselling (CGC)
- Experts and practitioners in the professional field of human resources management (HRM)

Two separate surveys translated in Serbian were distributed to collect data from these professional groups. Recruitment was carried out over three months (June to August 2020), utilizing a professional network of Belgrade Open School.

In the present report, the results of both surveys are presented and discussed. Also, findings from the HRM and CGC professionals are compared and contrasted through an overall synthesis. Overall, 16 HRM and 11 CGC professionals completed the survey.

## 2 CURRENT PRACTICES, NEEDS AND REQUIREMENTS OF CGC PROFESSIONALS

### 2.1 Actors in Career Guidance and Counselling (CGC)

In Serbia, providers of the services related to career development support for employees include career practitioners from the private sector, National Employment Service and career guidance and counselling teams in secondary schools involved in dual education.

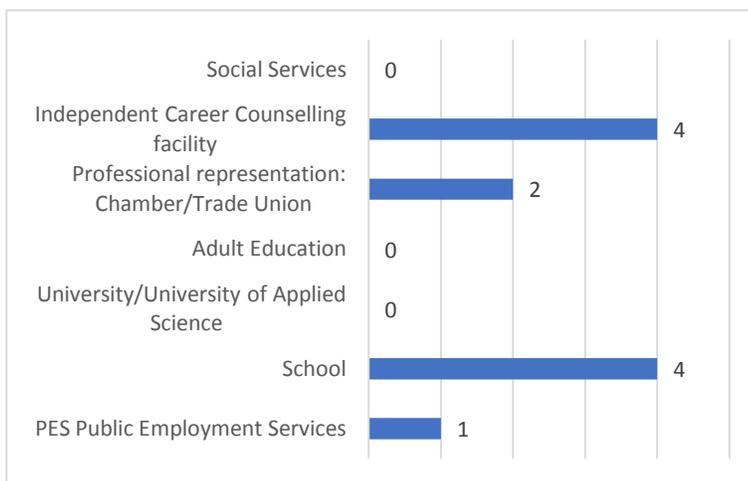


Figure 1 Domains in which participating institutions operate

In this survey, 11 career practitioners took part (Figure 1). Among them, 4 were representatives of independent agencies who offer career guidance and counselling services to companies or directly to employed people, 4 career guidance practitioners from secondary schools and one was representative of the National Employment Service in charge of career guidance and counselling.

Moreover, 1 representative from the Chamber of Commerce of Serbia and 1 representative of the Serbian Association of Employers also took part, as they are also significant

stakeholders in this area. As career practitioners who work in universities, adult education and social sector are

not involved at this moment in providing career development support for employees, they have not been included in the survey.

All respondents who work for agencies said that they work full-time on career guidance and counselling services. The respondents include one director of the agency, HR coordinator, HR consultant and one consultant. Three agencies who participated in the survey have up to 49 employees and one has between 50 and 249 employees. One agency emphasized their involvement in adult education.

Respondents from the National Employment Service and Association of Employers work on career guidance and counselling issues full-time, while respondent from the Chamber of Commerce work on this issues part-time, apart from other responsibilities related to education. Regarding Chamber of Commerce, at this moment they are not involved in career guidance and counselling to a large agree, thus they explained that the majority of the questions were not applicable to their current situation.

The secondary schools who participated in the survey are involved in career guidance and counselling teams in schools either as managers of teams or team members. They work on career guidance and counselling services part-time, apart from their regular teaching and other responsibilities in schools. These schools have between 50 and 249 employees, and they are located in different cities in Serbia.

The comparison between different sectors will be limited as they the number of respondents is small; however, when there are some important differences, they will be mentioned.

## 2.2 Involvement in the Professional Life Cycle & Types of Activities

Career practitioners who participated in this survey considered their role as important in many domains of the professional life cycle in enterprises (Table 1). All of them said that that the role of career counsellors is important in the area of development of professional knowledge and skills, integration of (new) employees and management of changes. The development of personal and social competencies was generally seen as significant. The opinions were divided when it comes to recruitment, dismissal and retirement – some of them see it as important, while others consider the role of career counsellors in these domains as less important or not important at all.

Six respondents (out of 11) said that they play a fixed part in formal onboarding process of enterprises. These respondents include representatives of agencies in the private sector and some of the surveyed career guidance practitioners from schools.

<i>Domains</i>	<b>Very important</b>	<b>Important</b>	<b>Less important</b>	<b>Not important</b>	<b>Not applicable</b>
<i>Recruitment</i>	45.45% 5	27.27% 3	18.18% 2	9.09% 1	0.00% 0
<i>Integration of (new) employees</i>	45.45% 5	54.55% 6	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
<i>Development of professional knowledge and skills</i>	72.73% 8	27.27% 3	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
<i>Development of personal and social competences</i>	54.55% 6	36.36% 4	9.09% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
<i>Management of changes</i>	36.36% 4	63.64% 7	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
<i>Dismissal</i>	9.09% 1	54.55% 6	27.27% 3	9.09% 1	0.00% 0
<i>Retirement</i>	9.09% 1	27.27% 3	45.45% 5	9.09% 1	9.09% 1

Table 1: Responses to the question “How important would you consider your role as career counsellor in the following domains of the professional life cycle in enterprises?”

The majority of surveyed career practitioners are every often involved in counselling and planning career promotion and counselling career decisions (Table 2).

<i>Activity</i>	<b>Very often (every week)</b>	<b>Often (several times in a month)</b>	<b>Sometimes (several times in a year)</b>	<b>Seldom (by occasion)</b>	<b>Not applicable</b>
<i>Providing career information</i>	0.00% 0	36.36% 4	54.55% 6	9.09% 1	0.00% 0
<i>Assessing career skills and competences</i>	0.00% 0	54.55% 6	27.27% 3	9.09% 1	9.09% 1
<i>Counselling career decisions</i>	9.09% 1	54.55% 6	18.18% 2	9.09% 1	9.09% 1
<i>Counselling and planning career promotion</i>	0.00% 0	72.73% 8	18.18% 2	0.00% 0	9.09% 1
<i>Designing &amp; managing programmes for career development &amp; training</i>	9.09% 1	45.45% 5	27.27% 3	9.09% 1	9.09% 1
<i>Executing actions of social responsibility (humanitarian, health, environment)</i>	9.09% 1	18.18% 2	45.45% 5	9.09% 1	18.18% 2
<i>Taking initiatives for quality development &amp; innovation</i>	9.09% 1	18.18% 2	27.27% 3	27.27% 3	18.18% 2

Table 2: Responses on the frequency of performing the listed activities

Assessing career skills and competences and designing and managing programs for career development & training are activities that are conducted often by some career practitioners and sometimes or by occasion by

others. Both of these activities are more present in agencies and schools who provide career guidance and counselling services. Providing career information is less present – some schools and agencies reported that they do this less often, several times in a year or by occasion. Executing actions of social responsibility and taking initiatives for quality development and innovation is in general not done often by career practitioners - only some of them in schools and agencies undertake this responsibility within their duties.

### 2.3 The Role of CGC in Enterprises, Beneficiaries, & Counselling Issues

Among different reasons for providing career counselling in enterprises, arising the commitment to the enterprise, achieving higher learning effects, achieving higher acceptance of the (external) counselling offers and rising the credibility of the counselling because of the professionalism of the counsellor are recognized as important by the majority of questioned career counsellors (Table 3). The opinions were divided regarding achieving consensual decisions, providing independent counselling (without suspicion of company’s interests) and finding individualized solutions as significant reasons – although around half of the respondents did find them relevant.

<i>Reasons</i>	<b>Very important</b>	<b>Important</b>	<b>Less important</b>	<b>Not important</b>	<b>Not applicable</b>
<i>Finding Individualized solutions</i>	36.36% 4	18.18% 2	27.27% 3	9.09% 1	9.09% 1
<i>Achieving consensual decisions</i>	27.27% 3	36.36% 4	27.27% 3	0.00% 0	9.09% 1
<i>Achieving higher learning effects</i>	36.36% 4	45.45% 5	9.09% 1	0.00% 0	9.09% 1
<i>Achieving higher acceptance of the (external) counselling offers</i>	36.36% 4	45.45% 5	9.09% 1	0.00% 0	9.09% 1
<i>Provide independent counselling (without suspicion of company’s interests)</i>	18.18% 2	45.45% 5	27.27% 3	0.00% 0	9.09% 1
<i>Rising the credibility of the counselling because of the professionalism of the counsellor</i>	9.09% 1	63.64% 7	18.18% 2	0.00% 0	9.09% 1
<i>Arising the commitment to the enterprise</i>	45.45% 5	36.36% 4	9.09% 1	0.00% 0	9.09% 1

Table 3: Perception of importance of the reasons for conducting career counselling

The responses regarding beneficiaries of career guidance and counselling services vary significantly between respondents (Table 4). For some groups of beneficiaries services are provided often or several times a year. This is the case with apprentices/trainees, new employees, highly talented persons and future managers as well as employees threatened by dismissal. However, the majority of respondents said that this question is not applicable to their work when it comes to working with migrants, persons with disabilities, employees preparing for retirement or returning from parents’ leave as well as in some cases employees threatened by dismissal and elder employees.

<i>Groups of employees</i>	<b>Very often (every week)</b>	<b>Often (several times in a month)</b>	<b>Sometimes (several times in a year)</b>	<b>Seldom (by occasion)</b>	<b>Not applicable</b>
<i>Apprentices/trainees</i>	18.18% 2	27.27% 3	36.36% 4	0.00% 0	18.18% 2
<i>New employees</i>	9.09% 1	27.27% 3	36.36% 4	9.09% 1	18.18% 2
<i>Migrants</i>	0.00% 0	9.09% 1	0.00% 0	9.09% 1	81.82% 9
<i>Persons with disabilities</i>	0.00% 0	9.09% 1	18.18% 2	9.09% 1	63.64% 7
<i>Highly talented persons</i>	9.09% 1	36.36% 4	27.27% 3	0.00% 0	27.27% 3
<i>Future managers</i>	9.09% 1	27.27% 3	27.27% 3	9.09% 1	27.27% 3
<i>Employees returning from parents' leave</i>	0.00% 0	9.09% 1	18.18% 2	18.18% 2	54.55% 6
<i>Elder employees (50+)</i>	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	27.27% 3	27.27% 3	45.45% 5
<i>Employees threatened by dismissal</i>	0.00% 0	18.18% 2	27.27% 3	9.09% 1	45.45% 5
<i>Employees preparing for retirement</i>	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	18.18% 2	27.27% 3	54.55% 6

Table 4: Frequency of providing career counselling to the following groups in the enterprise

Concerning the issues that are subject of career counselling, the majority of questioned career practitioners state that they often deal with further education and training (Table 5). Career planning and learning and performance problems are also stated as counselling issues that career practitioners deal with often or several times a year.

<i>Counselling issues</i>	<b>Very often (every week)</b>	<b>Often (several times in a month)</b>	<b>Sometimes (several times in a year)</b>	<b>Seldom (by occasion)</b>	<b>Not applicable</b>
<i>Further education &amp; training</i>	27.27% 3	36.36% 4	27.27% 3	0.00% 0	9.09% 1
<i>Career planning</i>	18.18% 2	36.36% 4	36.36% 4	0.00% 0	9.09% 1
<i>Learning &amp; performance problems</i>	18.18% 2	36.36% 4	36.36% 4	0.00% 0	9.09% 1
<i>Team problems</i>	18.18% 2	27.27% 3	27.27% 3	18.18% 2	9.09% 1
<i>Personal problems</i>	27.27% 3	0.00% 0	18.18% 2	36.36% 4	18.18% 2

Table 5: Responses on the frequency of dealing with the listed issues of career counselling

Answers are more varied when it comes to team problems and personal problems – some of them deal with these issues often and some sometimes or only by occasion.

When it comes to modalities of work (Figure 2) – the majority of them provide the services at the clients’ workplace (9 out of 11). Eight of them said that they provide services one on one, in groups and together with (enterprise) internal managers/trainers/coaches. Six out of eleven respondents provide services off the client’s workplace, and five of them self-reliant (without enterprise persons).

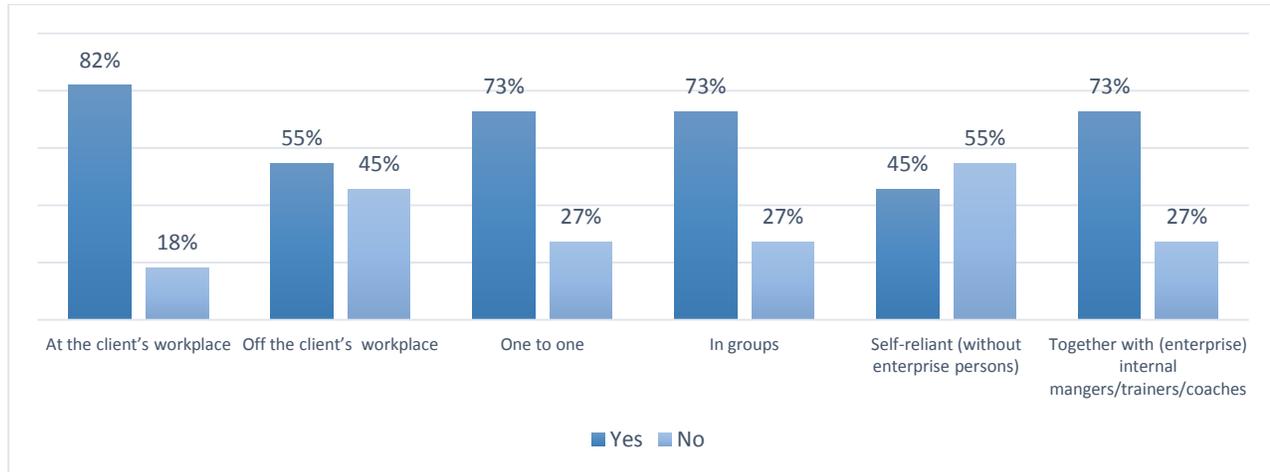


Figure 2 Modalities of career counselling provided to enterprises

## 2.4 Developing the Necessary Knowledge, Skills and Competences

Almost all respondents said that for gaining the necessary knowledge, skills and competences to fulfil their co-operative roles for enterprises self-study and enrolment in continuing education is important (Table 6).

Reasons	Very important	Important	Less important	Not important	Not applicable
<i>I still rely on my former (academic) studies</i>	45.45% 5	36.36% 4	18.18% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
<i>Self-study (internet, MOOCs, books etc.)</i>	54.55% 6	36.36% 4	9.09% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
<i>Enrolment in continuing education (face to face and blended learning)</i>	54.55% 6	36.36% 4	9.09% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
<i>Attending short training courses/workshops/conferences</i>	54.55% 6	27.27% 3	18.18% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
<i>Advice from peers and experts in my institution</i>	27.27% 3	45.45% 5	18.18% 2	0.00% 0	9.09% 1
<i>Advice from external peers and experts</i>	27.27% 3	54.55% 6	18.18% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0

Table 6: Responses to the question “How important are the following sources for you to gain the necessary knowledge, skills and competences to fulfil all your roles?”

Their formal education, attending short training courses/workshops/conferences and advice from external peers and experts and from peers and experts in their institution when applicable were also listed as significant by the majority of them.

## 2.5 Interactions/Networking and Co-Operations, & Perceived Benefits

Already at this moment, the majority of questioned career practitioners said that they often interact with members of enterprises or entrepreneurial representations, as seven of them said that do it every week, and one that they do it several times a month. Three respondents said that they interact with members of enterprises sometimes, several times in a year.

When it comes to active cooperation (concerning special tasks, development projects, challenging problems), the responses are similar, nine of them said that they do it often – four of them every week and five of them several times a month. Representatives of two schools said do it sometimes, or by occasion.

Concerning the list of benefits that are considered as important, all respondents said that it is further information, exchange of experience and learning about the best practice examples. Almost all of them said that cooperation for special purpose, learning from each other and attending joint seminars/workshops/trainings is also important.

<i>Benefits</i>	<b>Very important</b>	<b>Important</b>	<b>Less important</b>	<b>Not important</b>	<b>Not applicable</b>
<i>Further information</i>	63.64% 7	36.36% 4	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
<i>Exchange of experience</i>	63.64% 7	36.36% 4	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
<i>Learn about best practice examples</i>	45.45% 5	54.55% 6	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
<i>Cooperation for special purpose</i>	36.36% 4	54.55% 6	9.09% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
<i>Learning from each other</i>	27.27% 3	63.64% 7	9.09% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
<i>Attending joint seminars/workshops/trainings</i>	27.27% 3	54.55% 6	18.18% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0

Table 7: Ratings of benefits from cooperation with representatives of professional institutions or independent experts from the field of Career guidance and counselling

## 2.6 Challenges: Qualitative Analysis of the Open-Ended Questions

Regarding topics and problems are currently most challenging for career counsellors, one representative of a school said: *“It would be useful to have mentorships and advice from national and international experts in this area. Very often everything is reduced to training or a workshop. Career counsellor needs to always be in contact with foreign companies and their HR managers, representatives of Chamber of commerce, associations, national companies, public employment service, youth organizations and ministries in charge of education and commerce. My suggestion is to develop online consultation and counselling with members of teams for career*

*guidance and counselling. It would be good to attend lectures and meet career counsellors from national and international companies within training and workshops”.*

Another representative of schools listed the following problems: *“Selection of students, the motivation of students and scheduling students’ time in companies with the time they spend in school”*. As one possible solution, it was proposed to introduce *“shared planning by companies and schools with clearly defined goals and activities of both sides”* and that *“the role of career counsellors should be recognized”*.

A representative of the Chamber of Commerce explained the current situation, where *“the Chamber of Commerce is in the phase of development and strengthening of capacities for conducting activities of career guidance and counselling of students who are thinking about enrolling in dual education or are already involved in dual education*. Concerning what is needed, respondent added: *“exchange of experience with experts from chambers of commerce in countries who have developed a system of career guidance and counselling within their chambers, like Austria, Germany or Switzerland”*.

As for the agencies, one representative pointed out that the problem was how to harmonize the requirements of the jobs with competencies of people, as the development of human resources in companies significantly depends from the quality of selections for positions.

The representative from other agency pointed out that the problem was *“career transition of elder employees (50+) and persons with disabilities, application of assessment tools as an integral part of career transition (self-discovery as a developmental and integral part of transition)”*, and that what was needed was *“more educated market and individuals”*.

## 2.7 Conclusions – intersections between CGC and HRM

The results of the survey indicate that career practitioners in different sectors in Serbia do carry out different activities for providing career development support to employees and see this area as significant. The majority of career practitioners involved in this field interact with members of enterprises or entrepreneurial representations and actively cooperate with them.

Similarly, as HR professionals, career guidance practitioners consider their role as important in the domain of integration of (new) employees, but they also found as important the area of development of professional knowledge and skills. Although both samples are small, one difference between these two groups that can be observed is also related to the activities that they perform. Counselling and planning career promotion and counselling career decisions are activities that surveyed career practitioners said that they do often, unlike HR practitioners, who more often said that they deal with quality development and innovation.

The groups that career guidance practitioners involve as beneficiaries of career guidance and counselling services include apprentices/trainees, new employees, highly talented persons and future managers as well as

employees threatened by dismissal, which is mostly similar as in the case of HR professionals involved in the survey.

The majority of respondents said that question regarding migrants, persons with disabilities, employees preparing for retirement or returning from parents' leave as well as elder employees does not apply to their work. This could be because they do not have the opportunity to be in contact with them, or because they do not target them as beneficiaries. Since most of these groups of possible beneficiaries are not recognized by surveyed HR professionals as well, there is a question whether they have access to career guidance services and in which way.

Similarly, as in the case of HR professionals, career practitioners find self-study, enrolment in continuing education and attending short training courses, workshops and conferences as important means for improvement of their knowledge and skills. Ensuring that there is available career development support to all beneficiaries who would need it and that they would have access to adequate services seems significant issue based on this survey. Some career practitioners also expressed the need for deepened cooperation with members of enterprises and access to examples of good practices and resources in the area of providing career development support to employees, both on national and international level.

### 3 CURRENT PRACTICES, NEEDS AND REQUIREMENTS OF HRM PROFESSIONALS

#### 3.1 Actors in Human Resource Management (HRM)

In total there were 16 respondents.

Five respondents come from the companies working in the technology and IT, three in the banking sector and two dealing with agriculture, Also representatives of companies working in handicraft, marketing and advertising, finance, insurance, sales and logistics took part in the survey.

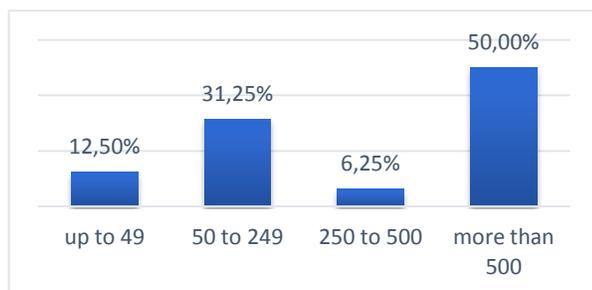


Figure 3: Number of people employed in the enterprise

As for the size of companies, the half of respondents comes from large companies, with more than 500 employees (Figure 1). However, representatives from smaller companies are also included: two respondents work in small companies, with less than 49 employees, 5 in companies that have between 50 and 249 companies and 1 in company from

250 to 500 employees.

The majority of respondents work as human resource managers, HR business partners and HR generalists in large companies working in IT sector, banking, marketing and agriculture. The survey was also completed by one director, two managers of programs for training and devel-

opment in companies, two specialists for recruitment and development and one HR assistant. Almost all of the respondents work full time; only one works part-time on their function in HRM.

In the review of literature, media and resources at the national level, the findings implied that the career development support to employees is more likely to be provided in larger companies and thus the number of respondents from these companies is also higher in this survey. The comparison between companies of different size and different sectors will be limited as they the number of respondents is small; however, if there are some important differences, they will be mentioned.

### 3.2 Involvement in the Professional Life Cycle & Types of Activities

Almost all respondents believe that the role of HR is important in the domain of recruitment and integration of (new) employees (Table 1). This finding can also be seen as connected to the finding that the majority of them, 12 out of 16, state that their enterprise has a formal onboarding process.

Around two thirds of respondents said that they think that the role is also important concerning dismissal and development of personal and social competencies. Opinions were divided when it came to the development of professional knowledge and competencies, management of changes and retirement – where around half of HR professionals involved in this research study stated that the role of HR in these domains was less important or not important at all. One respondent added as a comment to this question that the role of HR is also prominent in the area of measuring employee performance, career management of employees, employer branding and employee experience.

<i>Domains</i>	<b>Very important</b>	<b>Important</b>	<b>Less important</b>	<b>Not important</b>	<b>Not applicable</b>
<i>Recruitment</i>	68.75% 11	25.00% 4	6.25% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
<i>Integration of (new) employees</i>	18.75% 3	75.00% 12	6.25% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
<i>Development of professional knowledge and skills</i>	37.50% 6	6.25% 1	56.25% 9	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
<i>Development of personal and social competences</i>	31.25% 5	37.50% 6	31.25% 5	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
<i>Management of changes</i>	37.50% 6	12.50% 2	43.75% 7	6.25% 1	0.00% 0
<i>Dismissal</i>	43.75% 7	18.75% 3	18.75% 3	12.50% 2	6.25% 1
<i>Retirement</i>	18.75% 3	25.00% 4	18.75% 3	18.75% 3	18.75% 3

Table 1: Responses to the question “How important do you consider your role in the following domains of the professional life cycle?”

The results of the survey further indicate that HR professionals most frequently in their job take initiatives for quality development and innovation, as this is the activity that around half of them said that they do every week or several times in a month (Table 2). Providing career information, assessing career skills and competencies and executing actions of social responsibility were by majority of respondents listed as activities being done several times a year.

The companies are divided concerning counselling career decisions, counselling and planning career promotions and designing and managing programmes for career development & training - in some of them this is done several times in a month, while in others it is being done several times a year or only by occasion.

One respondent mentioned as a comment to this question that they once a month organize formal meetings dedicated to providing feedback, while another respondent stated that they cooperate with external agency which conducts training for managers and contribute to creating individual plans for their development.

<i>Activity</i>	<b>Very often (every week)</b>	<b>Often (several times in a month)</b>	<b>Sometimes (several times in a year)</b>	<b>Seldom (by occa- sion)</b>	<b>Not appli- cable</b>
<i>Providing career information</i>	6.25% 1	12.50% 2	62.50% 10	18.75% 3	0.00% 0
<i>Assessing career skills and competences</i>	6.25% 1	25.00% 4	56.25% 9	12.50% 2	0.00% 0
<i>Counselling career decisions</i>	6.25% 1	12.50% 2	37.50% 6	43.75% 7	0.00% 0
<i>Counselling and planning career promotion</i>	6.25% 1	25.00% 4	25.00% 4	43.75% 7	0.00% 0
<i>Designing &amp; managing programmes for career development &amp; training</i>	0.00% 0	43.75% 7	25.00% 4	31.25% 5	0.00% 0
<i>Executing actions of social responsibility (humanitarian, health, environment)</i>	0.00% 0	25.00% 4	43.75% 7	18.75% 3	12.50% 2
<i>Taking initiatives for quality development &amp; innovation</i>	6.25% 1	50.00% 8	18.75% 3	25.00% 4	0.00% 0

Table 2: Responses on the frequency of performing the listed activities

### 3.3 The Role of CGC in Enterprises, Beneficiaries, & Counselling Issues

Increasing sustainability of learning and arising the commitment to the enterprise are the two reasons that all HR professionals participating in this research found to be important motivators to conduct career counselling (Table 3). The other listed possible reasons were also almost universally recognized as significant, including achieving higher learning effects, which was often recognized as very important, as well as finding individualized solutions and achieving consensual decisions.

<i>Reasons</i>	<b>Very important</b>	<b>Important</b>	<b>Less important</b>	<b>Not important</b>	<b>Not applicable</b>
<i>Finding Individualized solutions</i>	18.75% 3	68.75% 11	12.50% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
<i>Achieving consensual decisions</i>	31.25% 5	56.25% 9	12.50% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
<i>Achieving higher learning effects</i>	56.25% 9	37.50% 6	6.25% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
<i>Increasing sustainability of learning</i>	50.00% 8	50.00% 8	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
<i>Arising the commitment to the enterprise</i>	5.00% 4	75.00% 12	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0

Table 3: Perception of importance of the reasons for conducting career counselling

The beneficiaries of career counselling are varying (Table 4). Around half of HR professionals who participated in the survey reported that they often provide these services to future managers, new employees and highly talented persons.

<i>Groups of employees</i>	<b>Very often (every week)</b>	<b>Often (several times in a month)</b>	<b>Sometimes (several times in a year)</b>	<b>Seldom (by occasion)</b>	<b>Not applicable</b>
<i>Apprentices/trainees</i>	18.75% 3	12.50% 2	25.00% 4	18.75% 3	25.00% 4
<i>New employees</i>	6.25% 1	31.25% 5	43.75% 7	6.25% 1	12.50% 2
<i>Migrants</i>	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	100.00% 16
<i>Persons with disabilities</i>	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	18.75% 3	12.50% 2	68.75% 11
<i>Highly talented persons</i>	6.25% 1	31.25% 5	50.00% 8	6.25% 1	6.25% 1
<i>Future managers</i>	12.50% 2	37.50% 6	37.50% 6	6.25% 1	6.25% 1
<i>Employees returning from parents' leave</i>	6.25% 1	6.25% 1	43.75% 7	18.75% 3	25.00% 4
<i>Elder employees (50+)</i>	6.25% 1	0.00% 0	25.00% 4	25.00% 4	43.75% 7
<i>Employees threatened by dismissal</i>	6.25% 1	6.25% 1	50.00% 8	18.75% 3	18.75% 3
<i>Employees preparing for retirement</i>	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	18.75% 3	18.75% 3	62.50% 10

Table 4: Responses to the question "How often do you provide career counselling to the following groups in your enterprise?"

Providing services to apprentices and trainees seems to vary from company to company. Also, more than half of respondents said that they provided career counselling several times a year to highly talented persons, new employees, employees threatened by dismissal and employees returning from parents' leave.

These services are reported to be provided sometimes or seldom to persons with disabilities, elder employees and employees preparing for retirement, although the majority of HR professionals stated that this question is not applicable in the case of their company. All respondents said that providing services to migrants is not applicable in the case of their company.

One additional insight was provided by HR professional who said that the company has an open doors policy, meaning that all employees could in any time of the day come to talk to HR professionals.

More than a half of HR professionals said that they often deal with team problems. They often or sometimes deal with learning and performance problems, career planning, personal problems and further education and training. However, it should also be noted that around one quarter of respondents said that they deal with the mentioned issues only seldom, by occasion.

<i>Counselling issues</i>	<i>Very often (every week)</i>	<i>Often (several times in a month)</i>	<i>Sometimes (several times in a year)</i>	<i>Seldom (by occa- sion)</i>	<i>Not appli- cable</i>
<i>Further education &amp; training</i>	6.25%	25.00%	37.50%	25.00%	6.25%
	1	4	6	4	1
<i>Career planning</i>	6.25%	18.75%	43.75%	25.00%	6.25%
	1	3	7	4	1
<i>Learning &amp; performance prob- lems</i>	6.25%	37.50%	31.25%	18.75%	6.25%
	1	6	5	3	1
<i>Team problems</i>	6.25%	50.00%	18.75%	18.75%	6.25%
	1	8	3	3	1
<i>Personal problems</i>	12.50%	18.75%	37.50%	25.00%	6.25%
	2	3	6	4	1

*Table 5: Responses on the frequency of dealing with the listed issues of career counselling*

Concerning the type and modalities of career counselling which are provided in the enterprises covered by this survey (Figure 2), the majority of them provide them at the workplace and one to one, 12 of them provide them with counsellors and coaches working within the company, and 11 of them apply working in groups. It is less often the case that these services are provided with external counsellors and coaches; this was reported to happen in half of companies, 8 out of 16. The least present modality is to provide these services off the workplace, as only in 4 companies is this modality of career counselling present.

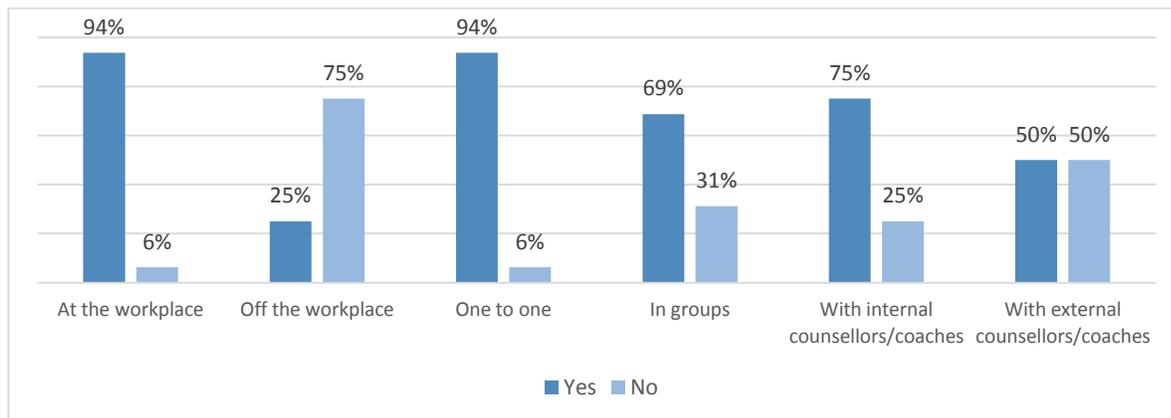


Figure 4 Types and modalities of career counselling which are provided in enterprises

### 3.4 Developing the Necessary Knowledge, Skills and Competence

All HR professionals who participated in this survey stated that they consider self-study (internet, MOOCs, books etc.) and advice from internal peers and experts as important to gain the necessary knowledge, skills and competences to fulfil all of their roles (Table 6). The majority of them find also academic studies, enrolment in continuing education and attending short training courses, workshops and conference as important. Advice from external peers and experts was seen by some of the respondents as important, while some stated that it was less important or not applicable in the case of their company.

Reasons	Very important	Important	Less important	Not important	Not applicable
<i>I still rely on my former (academic) studies</i>	18.75% 3	56.25% 9	18.75% 3	6.25% 1	0.00% 0
<i>Self-study (internet, MOOCs, books etc.)</i>	50.00% 8	50.00% 8	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
<i>Enrolment in continuing education (face to face and blended learning)</i>	18.75% 3	62.50% 10	12.50% 2	0.00% 0	6.25% 1
<i>Attending short training courses/workshops/conferences</i>	25.00% 4	50.00% 8	25.00% 4	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
<i>Advice from internal peers and experts</i>	68.75% 11	31.25% 5	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
<i>Advice from external peers and experts</i>	25.00% 4	37.50% 6	25.00% 4	0.00% 0	12.50% 2

Table 6: Responses to the question "How important are the following sources for you to gain the necessary knowledge, skills and competences to fulfil all your roles?"

### 3.5 Interactions/Networking and Co-Operations, & Perceived Benefits

Human resource professionals stated that interactions with representatives of professional institutions or independent experts from the field of Career Guidance and Counselling are not something that happens often. Only 2 (12.5%) respondents stated that these interactions occur often, several times in a month. Six (37.5%) of them said that it happens sometimes, and 6 of them that it realized seldom. Two of them said that this question is not applicable for the case of their company.

When it comes to active cooperation (concerning special tasks, development projects, challenging problems), situation varies from company to company. In total 4 HR professionals stated that this happens several times in a month (25%), 3 of them (18.8%) that it occurs sometimes and 6 of them (37.5%) that it is something that happens by occasion. Three of them said that this question is not applicable for the case of their company.

Concerning the list of benefits respondents might expect from working together with representatives of professional institutions or independent experts from the field of Career guidance and counselling all of them see as important learning about practice examples. Almost all of them see benefit in cooperation for special purpose, exchange of experience and learning from each other. The majority of them see also benefit in further information and attending joint seminars, workshops or training.

<i>Benefits</i>	<b>Very important</b>	<b>Important</b>	<b>Less important</b>	<b>Not important</b>	<b>Not applicable</b>
<i>Further information</i>	6.25% 1	68.75% 11	25.00% 4	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
<i>Exchange of experience</i>	50.00% 8	37.50% 6	12.50% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
<i>Learn about best practice examples</i>	37.50% 6	62.50% 10	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
<i>Cooperation for special purpose</i>	12.50% 2	81.25% 13	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	6.25% 1
<i>Learning from each other</i>	37.50% 6	50.00% 8	12.50% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
<i>Attending joint seminars/workshops/trainings</i>	18.75% 3	62.50% 10	18.75% 3	0.00% 0	0.00% 0

Table 7: Ratings of benefits from cooperation with representatives of professional institutions or independent experts from the field of Career guidance and counselling

### 3.6 Challenges: Qualitative Analysis of the Open-Ended Questions

There are several topics and problems that HR professionals see as currently the most challenging in human resource development. Some of them are related to the current situation, for instance, one answer was “improving the experience of employees in the time of crises and unpredictability”, and other was “performance management & development of remote work”, for which as possible solutions are listed exchange of experi-

ences and information on tools which can be used. One respondent also mentioned that the issue was *“continuing development of employees and the organization to respond to challenges in new circumstances”*. To alleviate this issue it was mentioned that it is important to ensure *“greater understanding, cooperation and support of management for processes which are conducted by the HR team and which are dedicated to providing support to employees and development of organization”*.

One group of responses were related to the development of employees. One HR professional said that the issue is *“to ensure the continual development of employees at all levels depending on their needs, to systematically deal with the careers of our employees”*. Raising awareness of why it is important to invest additional funds in the development of employees and why it is important to deal with their careers was seen as helpful to cope with this challenge. Some respondents said that the issues they face are related to the development of specific groups of employees: *“further career planning for people who have reached their maximum in the organization”* and *“development of managers”*, and for both of these issues exchange of experiences is seen as helpful. One particular issue which was mentioned is the development of specific knowledge and skills, and limited availability of external counsellors who are experts in this kind of development, for which is seen as helpful to raise awareness of employers why it is important to hire external consultants and experts as well as some type of standardized measures to assess the quality of courses and training which are available at the market.

One group of issues which were noted are related to the motivation of employees, in the particular nonfinancial motivation of employees, employee’ engagement, smart working of employees and adapting the working conditions for each employee. Retention of employees is also seen as something challenging, especially retention of talents and retention of millennials. The other important topic is using analytics to further develop the HR processes and digitalization of HR processes.

One HR professional also mentioned that the issue was *“time for education and implementation of what is learned”* and that what is needed is *“mentor and career counsellor for HR as well”*.

Exchange of experience with sectors and institutions which are facing similar challenges and which have found the way to overcome them, sharing good practices and innovative ideas, a closer examination of needs of employees as well as counselling and courses are seen as something which would be helpful for listed issues.

### 3.7 Conclusions - intersections exist between HRM and CGC

The results of the survey indicate that in some companies in Serbia there is a wide range of activities related to career development support to different groups of beneficiaries. The HR professionals who participated in the survey see the importance of career counselling and benefits from cooperation with representatives of professional institutions or independent experts from the field of Career guidance and counselling. Already at this

moment some of them state that they in certain occasions have interaction and active cooperation with career guidance practitioners, although this is not often present.

From the responses, it can be concluded that they see their role as important in the domain of recruitment and integration of (new) employees. Moreover, several human resource managers listed new employees as beneficiaries of career guidance services. The majority of respondents also state that their enterprise has a formal onboarding process, so it seems that this is an important domain of work for HR professionals. Career guidance and counselling services are also reported to be provided to future managers and highly talented persons. Perhaps the finding that increasing sustainability of learning and arising the commitment to the enterprise are the two reasons almost universally seen as important among HR professionals can be understood in this context, as these reasons could be of special importance for the groups of employees who are often beneficiaries of career guidance services in companies.

However, some groups are less often included, including elder employees and employees preparing for retirement, persons with disabilities and migrants. This could be because there are no such groups of employees in companies or they are not recognized as possible beneficiaries of career guidance and counselling.

HR professionals vary in executing activities such as providing career information, assessing career skills and competencies, counselling career decisions, counselling and planning career promotions and designing and managing programs for career development & training. This could imply that although career development support is present in some companies, the available services could significantly differ in companies. Thus it seems that support to HR professionals to widen the scope of activities for career development support that they provide and beneficiaries of that support could be useful.

It is significant for the project that HR professionals find self-study and enrolment in continuing education as important means for improvement of their knowledge and skills. Some of them also stated that they find issues related to career development support as especially challenging and that exchange of experiences on these topics could be useful.

## **4 SYNTHESIS**

The data synthesis from the HRM and CGC surveys showed several significant similarities and differences. These are presented and discussed in this section.

When comparing the results of surveys of CGC and HR professionals it should be noted that the number of respondents was small and that sample was selected among those companies and CGC practitioners in Serbia who do provide career development support to employees. The situation is different when it comes to the majority of small and medium enterprises, as indicated by the review of literature, media and other resources at the national level. Also, the majority of CGC professionals that cooperate with companies provide support to students who work as apprentices in these companies and do not work with other beneficiaries. This should be taken into account in the discussion of the results.

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#### 4.1 There are various intersections of roles and activities of HRM and CGC professionals in the professional life cycle.

Both HR professionals and career guidance practitioners consider their role as important in the domain of integration of (new) employees and the development of personal and social competencies. However, almost all surveyed HR professionals believe that their role is important in the domain of recruitment, unlike career guidance practitioners. Moreover, management of changes and development of professional knowledge and skills are roles that all career guidance practitioners see as important, whereas this was the case for some of the HR professionals involved in the research study.

Although both samples are small, one difference between these two groups that can be observed is also related to the activities that they perform. Counselling and planning career promotion and counselling career decisions are activities that surveyed career practitioners said that they do often, unlike HR practitioners, who more often said that they deal with quality development and innovation.

#### 4.2 Some groups of people are not recognized as beneficiaries by either HR professionals or career guidance practitioners.

The groups that career guidance practitioners involve as beneficiaries of career guidance and counselling services often or several times a year include apprentices/trainees, new employees, highly talented persons and future managers as well as employees threatened by dismissal. This is mostly similar as in the case of HR professionals involved in the survey, except for providing services to apprentices and trainees, which seems to vary from company to company. Some HR professional also stated that they provide CGC services several times a year to employees returning from parents' leave.

These services are reported to be provided sometimes or seldom to persons with disabilities, elder employees and employees preparing for retirement, although the majority of HR professionals and career practitioners stated that the question cannot be applicable in the case of their company. Almost all respondents said that providing services to migrants is not applicable in the case of their company. This could be because they do not have the opportunity to be in contact with these groups, or because they do not target them as beneficiaries. Since these groups are not recognized as beneficiaries by either HR professionals or career practitioners there is a possibility that they have limited access to career guidance services.

Among different reasons for providing career counselling in enterprises, arising the commitment to the enterprise and achieving higher learning effects are recognized as important motivators to conduct career counselling both by career practitioners and HR professionals. This perhaps can be connected to the groups of beneficiaries that are most often targeted by CGC services, who are in the process of integration in the company or who are to be promoted.

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4.3 There are various ways in which CGC and HR professionals gain the necessary knowledge to fulfil their roles – both self-study and exchange of experience are seen as important.

In general, both groups of practitioners consider self-study (internet, MOOCs, books etc.), enrolment in continuing education, attending short training courses, workshops and conferences and advice from internal peers and experts as important means for improvement of their knowledge and skills. It is also relevant that some representatives of both groups when responding to open questions listed mentoring, consultations and counselling as something they would find useful for professional development. When it comes to cooperation between CGC and HR professionals both groups see the benefit in learning about best practice examples, exchange of experience and learning from each other.

4.4 Some cooperation between CGC and HR professionals does exist, although not to a high degree.

Already at this moment, some HR professionals state that they in certain occasions have interaction and active cooperation with career guidance practitioners, although this is not often present. On the other hand, the majority of career practitioners involved in this field interacts with members of enterprises or entrepreneurial representations and actively cooperate with them. However, it should be noted that the sample of career practitioners included those involved in the Chamber of Commerce and the Association of Employers, as well as representatives of schools who cooperate with employers concerning apprenticeship programs, which could perhaps explain this finding.

Some career practitioners expressed the need for deepened cooperation with members of enterprises and access to examples of good practices and resources in the area of providing career development support to employees, both on the national and international level. Conversely, the HR professionals who participated in the survey also see the importance of career counselling and benefits from cooperation with representatives of professional institutions or independent experts from the field of career guidance and counselling.