

STRATEGY 2025–2027

Council for Career and Professional Guidance
Tetovo, 2025

Introduction

The **Council for Career and Professional Guidance** (hereinafter: the Council) was established on **1 November 2024** by the **Institute for Leadership and Public Policy (ILPP)** in Tetovo. It operates as a **non-formal but structured body**, with a clear objective to coordinate activities, dialogue, and cooperation among local and regional stakeholders in the field of professional development and career guidance for young people.

The establishment of the Council is the result of a project supported by the **Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in North Macedonia**, entitled:
“Improving the Labour Market Environment through Capable and Motivated Professionals.”

Main Objectives of the Council

- Promotion of strategic dialogue among public institutions, non-governmental organizations, schools, universities, and other relevant stakeholders;
- Improvement of coordination of career development activities and strengthening of youth skills;
- Provision of recommendations for local and regional policies related to career guidance, training, and human capital development.

Composition

The Council serves as an inclusive platform composed of:

- representatives of schools and universities,
- non-governmental organizations (NGOs),
- municipalities and chambers of commerce, and
- independent experts with experience in career development and labour-market issues.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The **three-year Strategy (2025–2027)** of the Council for Career and Professional Guidance is the result of an inclusive strategic planning process conducted in **August 2025**. The workshop was organized by the **Institute for Leadership and Public Policy (ILPP)**, as the founding institution of the Council, with the support of the **Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in North Macedonia**.

More than **15 representatives** participated in the process, including Council members, national and local experts, and private-sector stakeholders. Through individual exercises, group work, and plenary discussions, participants identified the key challenges, vision, mission, strategic objectives, and action plan for the period **2025–2027**.

Context

North Macedonia, similarly to other Western Balkan countries, faces significant demographic and economic challenges:

- Declining birth rates, negatively affecting the structure of the labour force;
- Migration of young people and skilled professionals, creating serious labour-market shortages;
- Emigration of senior professionals, deepening the skills gap;
- Dependence on foreign workers (from India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, etc.) to meet domestic labour-market needs.

In this context, vocational and dual education systems have gained particular importance. However, challenges remain:

- Many programs focus primarily on manufacturing, while labour shortages also exist in construction, services, ICT, creative industries, and other sectors;
- There is a persistent mismatch between students' skills and labour-market demands.

As a new and inclusive platform, the Council aims to act as a **bridge between education, the private sector, and policymaking**, addressing these gaps and increasing youth employment opportunities.

Achievements to Date

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Despite being in existence for less than one year, the Council has managed to:

- Establish important partnerships with public, private, academic stakeholders and chambers of commerce;
- Mobilize a group of independent experts from various fields to support its work;
- Position itself as a unique and innovative actor within the local and regional career guidance ecosystem.

Strategic Priorities 2025–2027

The Strategy is built around **three main pillars**:

1. **Establishment and institutional consolidation of the Council** – strengthening its role at local and regional level;
2. **Career guidance and skills development for professionals** – preparing young people and professionals at different career stages for the labour market;
3. **Advocacy for improved education and professional policies** – lobbying for regulations and programs aligned with real labour-market needs.

Expected Outcomes

Through the implementation of this Strategy, the Council will:

- Serve as a reference point for youth career guidance;
- Strengthen networking between public institutions, the private sector, and civil society;
- Contribute to increased employability of the younger generation;
- Provide evidence-based recommendations for local and national policymaking.

1. Framework

The process of developing the **2025–2027 Strategy** took place in **August 2025**, during a workshop organized by the **Institute for Leadership and Public Policy (ILPP)**, as the founder of the Council for Career and Professional Guidance.



Participants included:

- Founding members of the Council (see Annex 1 – List of Participants),
- Career guidance experts,
- Representatives of the private and academic sectors.

Purpose of the Process

The workshop aimed to identify, through a broad expert-based process:

- Key factors influencing professional development and career guidance;
- A shared vision and mission for the Council;
- Strategic objectives and a work plan for the period 2025–2027;
- Internal rules of procedure for the Council's functioning;
- An analysis of internal and external factors through a comprehensive **SWOT analysis**.

Methodology

The process was conducted through:

- Individual exercises,
- Thematic group work,
- Plenary sessions followed by structured debate and constructive discussion.

This inclusive approach enabled the development of a document that:

- Reflects the real needs of young people and professionals;
- Takes into account current demographic and economic challenges;
- Is applicable at both local and regional levels.

Broader Context

North Macedonia is facing:

- Declining birth rates;
- Migration of young people and skilled professionals;
- Shortages of specific profiles in key sectors such as construction, services, ICT, manufacturing, and creative industries.

As a result, the country is increasingly filling labour-market gaps through foreign workers from countries such as India, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka.

Against this background, vocational and dual education has gained increased importance over the past decade. However, challenges remain, as many initiatives have focused primarily on manufacturing companies and technical schools, leaving other high-potential employment sectors underrepresented.

For this reason, the Council for Career and Professional Guidance positions itself as a **new and essential actor**, bridging gaps between the education system, the private sector, and public policymaking.

3. Vision and Mission

3.1 Vision

“To inspire and empower young people for active and successful participation in the labour market.”

3.2 Mission

The mission of the Council is to create a connecting bridge between education, the private sector, and policymaking, enabling young people to benefit from guidance, mentoring, and career development opportunities.

Based on workshop discussions and draft versions, the final mission is formulated as follows:

“To support young people and early-career professionals in building sustainable careers through education, training, practical experience, and mentoring, while actively influencing education and professional policies aligned with labour-market needs.”

This formulation combines elements from the three draft missions prepared and strengthens the Council’s dual role as both an **advocacy-driven and practice-oriented actor**.

3.3 Guiding Principles

In addition to its vision and mission, the Council is guided by the following principles:

- **Inclusiveness** – every young person, regardless of background or education level, has the right to quality career guidance;
- **Partnership** – collaboration between education, the private sector, and institutions is key to success;
- **Transparency and accountability** – all activities are based on open processes and measurable impact;
- **Innovation and flexibility** – adaptability to labour-market challenges and the needs of new generations.

4. Strategic Objectives

Taking into account the context, the needs of young people and professionals, and the potential of local and regional stakeholders, the Council for Career and Professional Guidance defines **three strategic objectives** for the period **2025–2027**:

1. **Establishment and consolidation of the Council for Career and Professional Guidance**
2. **Career guidance and skills development for professionals**
3. **Advocacy for education and professional policies that reflect labour-market needs**

If you want, I can next:

- Produce a **short executive version** (2–3 pages)
- Adapt this for **EU funding language (IPA III / Erasmus+)**
- Harmonize terminology with your **Council statute and website**
- Translate it into **Macedonian** for a trilingual strategy package