PRACTITIONERS' PERSPECTIVES ON GREEN GUIDANCE

An international survey

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Exploring Green Guidance report #2

Green Guidance

About Exploring green guidance

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Abstract

This paper sets out the findings of a survey of 674 career guidance practitioners conducted in late 2023 and early 2024 about green guidance. The survey reports that the clients of career guidance need help with a range of sustainability issues and that a minority raise issues of environmental sustainability during career guidance interventions. Practitioners have a strong belief that the world is currently experiencing a climate crisis and that career guidance can be a small part of addressing this. However, most currently lack the theories, models and resources to deliver green guidance. Implications for the Exploring Green Guidance project and the development of models of green guidance are discussed.

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Executive summary

This paper sets out the findings of a survey on green guidance. The survey aims to provide data and insights that can inform the development of a more general theory on green guidance and the creation of models and resources for practice.

The survey was open from late 2023 to early 2024. In total 674 usable responses were gathered.

Respondents were drawn from a range of practice focused roles across different practice contexts, including education, public employment service and private practice, and 29 different countries.

Clients' need for help

The survey asked respondents which of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, their clients were most likely to seek help with. Respondents anticipated that their clients would be most likely to seek help with *accessing decent work* (58%), *education* (34%) and *living, working and consuming in a sustainable way* (28%). They were much less likely to raise *climate change* (8%), *preserving the natural environment* (5%), or *dealing with the pollution of the seas* (1%).

Respondents were asked how often their clients raise issues relating to the climate. Around a fifth (22%) report that their clients raise the climate *when making career decisions*, 28% say that their clients *are keen to find environmentally sustainable work* and 41% say that their clients are *keen to live environmentally sustainable lifestyles*.

Attitudes to climate change

Respondents overwhelmingly agreed that climate change was real, urgent and important. Using Van Valkengoed et al.'s *climate change perceptions scale* respondents' attitudes to climate change were summarised with a score between -15 (very low level of belief in the importance of climate change) to +15 (very high level of belief in the importance of climate change). The average score from respondents was +10.41.

Respondents were then asked to provide their insights on which actors they believed could make a difference to the likelihood of climate change. Respondents were likely to choose national governments (63%) and international bodies like the EU (36%) and other international bodies (36%) as well as individuals (primarily as consumers (50%) rather than workers (8%)) and companies (45%). They were much less likely to identify educators (18%), educational providers (15%) or career guidance professionals (3%).

Green guidance practice

While the level of direct engagement with green guidance is limited (only a third, 33%, are *already practicing* it and less than two thirds, 61%, are *familiar with the term*), respondents generally find *the idea of green guidance appealing* (85%) and believe that *guidance should be helping people to live sustainable lives* (76%).

However, when asked about wider practice in their countries most felt that their interest in green guidance was not widespread. Only 10% agreed that it was *common for practitioners in their countries to address climate change*, 17% felt that practitioners in their country are *well informed about climate change issues* and 5% felt that practitioners in their country *know how to deliver green guidance*.

When asked about the barriers to practicing green guidance respondents raised several concerns, but a *lack of clarity* about what green guidance was (69%), a lack of *models* for practice (59%) and relevant *resources* (54%) were the most raised issues.

A minority of respondents had some experience of green guidance. These respondents were able to provide some description of what such practice looks like. They noted that it included: helping people to *reflect on the relationship between their career and the environment* (28%); *to learn about sustainability, the world and their career and consider how these all connect* (27%); to *think about how to change themselves and the world* (25%); and to *imagine sustainable possibilities for themselves and the world* (23%). When asked about how they worked with students and clients, 25% said that they worked with *individuals*, 25% with *small groups* and 14% with *larger groups and collectives*.

Qualitative comments surfaced a range of other themes, that are likely to be important to consider in the development of green guidance approaches, including how green guidance relates to existing career guidance, careers education and enterprise learning practices and to existing forms of education for sustainable development.

Respondents also articulated their role as variously being one of raising awareness about sustainability, promoting counter-normative values in career development (such as 'slow careers'), connecting issues of environmental sustainability to wider issues of social justice and promoting sustainability within their own organisation.

The qualitative comments also revealed a level of uncertainty about what green guidance was and how best to deliver it. Key to this were concerns about ethical delivery of the green agenda whilst staying true to ethical values like impartiality and client centredness. For some, these concerns about the challenges of green guidance mean that we should abandon the idea.

Green guidance resources and support

Around a fifth of respondents (22%) reported that they had examples of green guidance relevant resources to share. These will be incorporated into later outputs of the *Exploring green guidance* project.

Respondents were asked to identify what help, support and resources would be useful as they engage with and develop further green guidance approaches. Participants reported (63%) that they had the greatest need for *new career guidance approaches and models* which they could use to deliver green guidance, *training* (60%) and *case studies* (48%) to support them with this. Beyond this they want resources to help them to deliver green guidance approaches including *labour market information* (60%), *career stories and role models* (52%) and *video content* (39%).

Recommendations

Based on these findings we would make a series of recommendations that should be taken into consideration as models for green guidance are developed.

1. The idea of green guidance needs to be promoted and carefully explained.
2. Claims about green guidance need to be made with humility.
3. Models of green guidance need to attend to ethical concerns carefully.
4. Green guidance needs to link to people's material career concerns.
5. Environmental sustainability needs to be embedded within a broader, social justice inspired, conception of sustainability.
6. Theories and models of green guidance need to be developed that recognise a wide variety of delivery contexts.
7. Green guidance needs to be aligned with existing models of practice.
8. There is a need for training resources for green guidance.
9. Resources are a critical element of realising green guidance practice.

1) Introduction

All guidance needs to be green and if these conversations happen early on we can make a difference to how people view their work choices and how it impacts the planet. (Careers practitioner, UK).

I think green guidance is a joke. Even if we assume that climate change is man-made, it is very far-fetched to think that we can affect people in ways that make them lead 'greener' lives. I think it is very much a waste of time and that we have much more important topics to deal with, such as, for example, most adults not benefitting from career guidance and instead living work lives they do not enjoy. (School counsellor, Denmark).

The two quotes above, provided by respondents to our survey, are offered as an initial recognition that green guidance is a potentially contentious area that evokes strong feelings. This report sets outs the findings of this survey and is part of the *Exploring green guidance* project. The survey was designed to explore the opinions of guidance practitioners and related professionals and to begin the process of developing what a green guidance approach might look like by listening to and learning from those in the field.

It would be a lie to say that we created this survey from a neutral position. We went through the process of applying for funding and developing this project because we believe that there is a genuine and substantial environmental crisis unfolding and because we have a notion that career guidance can be a part of the solution to this crisis. Perhaps not a big part, but a part none the less. Some of the respondents who were critical of the idea of green guidance questioned the objectivity of the survey for this reason. We acknowledge our starting assumptions but remain open to a variety of different conclusions and outcomes from this research and from the *Exploring green guidance* project.

Following on from this paper, we will publish a literature review. This will show that there is a long tradition of writing about green guidance and guidance for sustainability. However, we felt that there had been too little attention to the opinions, experiences and ideas of practitioners in this field. We therefore developed a survey to gather input from practice that could be used in our exploration of green guidance. We were interested to gather existing experiences of delivering green guidance and practical resources that can be used in its delivery.

As the subsequent discussion will show, most respondents to this survey were overwhelmingly positive about this task. The idea of green guidance was welcomed and confirmed as important, but for the majority, this was challenging territory. Many people would like to be involved in green guidance

but are unclear about how and have some legitimate questions about how to make it work. Yet, for a minority this is a bad idea, either they believe that climate change is not real, feel that guidance has no chance of making a difference to it or believe that it would be unethical for guidance to back a contentious political issue. We may not agree, with this perspective, but we have tried to make sure that this voice can be heard in the report. Finally, the survey has also thrown up evidence that there are already a substantial minority of career guidance practitioners who are practicing forms of green guidance. We have tried to capture some of their experience and present it in a way that it can inform the development of a more general theory.

2) Survey approach

The survey was designed to capture the existing opinions and practices of career guidance practitioners in relation to green guidance.

Survey questions were developed prior to the workshop meeting in November 2023 in Prague and then iterated based on discussions at that meeting. In total 88 variables were collected organised into the following main sections.

- About you
- Key influences on career
- Attitude to climate change
- Career guidance practice
- Green guidance resources
- Final thoughts

The survey was drafted in English and then translated by local teams and disseminated in Czech, English, French, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese and Slovak. In addition to the use of local networks the survey was also disseminated using social media and European and international networks. This is best understood as an opportunity sample and no claims can be made for its representativeness of the European or global career development profession. However, this does represent the widest survey of careers practitioners on these issues undertaken so far and is therefore of interest for the trends and attitudes that is identifies within the field.

The survey was open from the middle of December 2023 until the end of March 2024. It gathered a total of 693 responses, broken down as set out in Figure 2.1.

Language	Number of responses	After data cleaning
Czech	53	52
English	176	171
French	111	107
Norwegian	57	56
Polish	90	89
Portuguese	105	105
Slovak	101	94
Total	693	674

Figure 2.1. Responses to survey

Data were downloaded from the Nettskjema on 1st April and all surveys closed. Data were then translated using Google Translate and the surveys merged.

Data were cleaned and responses that were empty, test responses and responses where the respondent had not given permission for data to be retained, were removed. A key aspect of data cleaning was the recoding of all data back to an agreed set of standardised codes to remove discrepancies that had emerged due to the translation and re-translation process. Following the data cleaning 674 usable responses remained.

Data were then analysed in Excel. A descriptive quantitative analysis is set out in this report. All qualitative responses were reviewed and coded through a basic thematic analysis. Quantitative and qualitative data are presented alongside each other to enrich the overall analysis.

3) About the respondents

Respondents were drawn from a wide range of different roles, but most had a strong connection to practice.
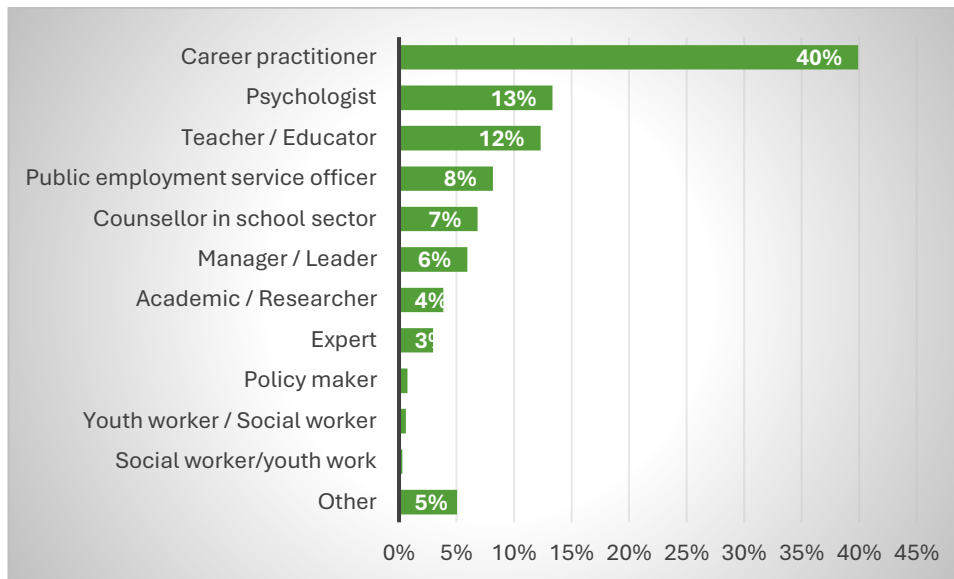
Figure 3.1. Respondents by role

Most were based in educational settings, either schools (30%), higher education (HE) (15%), or vocational education and training (VET) (14%). A smaller proportion were in public employment services (PES) (17%) or private practice (7%).

Respondents were drawn from 28, mainly European, countries. Where at least 20 responses were received these have been coded to allow further analysis, with all other countries placed into an Other category.

Figure 3.2. Proportion of responses from different countries

4) Clients' need for help

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UN General Assembly, 2015) set out a series of issues that are agreed to collectively describe sustainability. They are much broader than 'environmental' or 'climate' issues and include a range of features of economic and social sustainability as well.

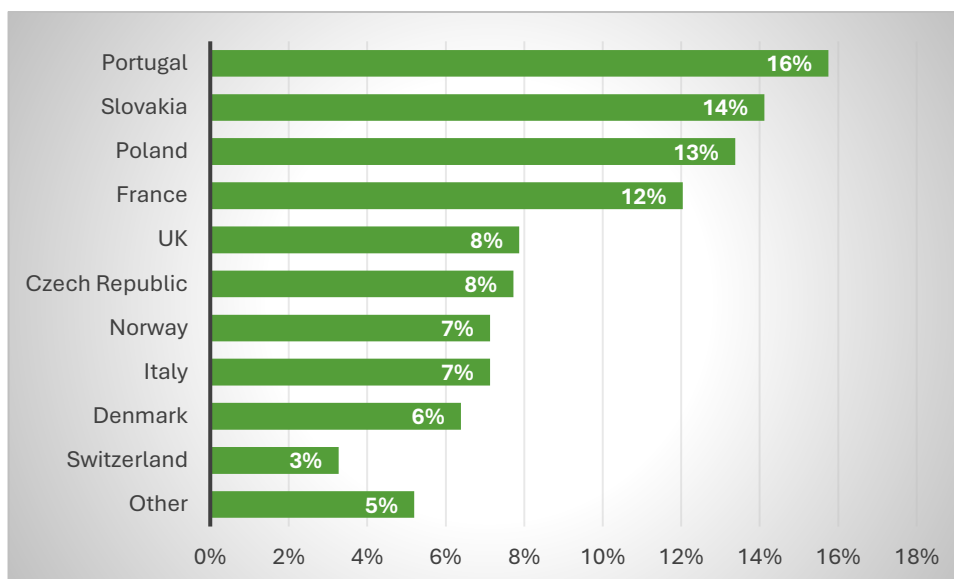In the survey we asked respondents what issues they thought that their students or clients were most likely to seek help with over the next ten years. The options that they were offered were based on the SDGs. The aim of this question was to find out which of the SDG's respondents felt had most salience for their students or clients.
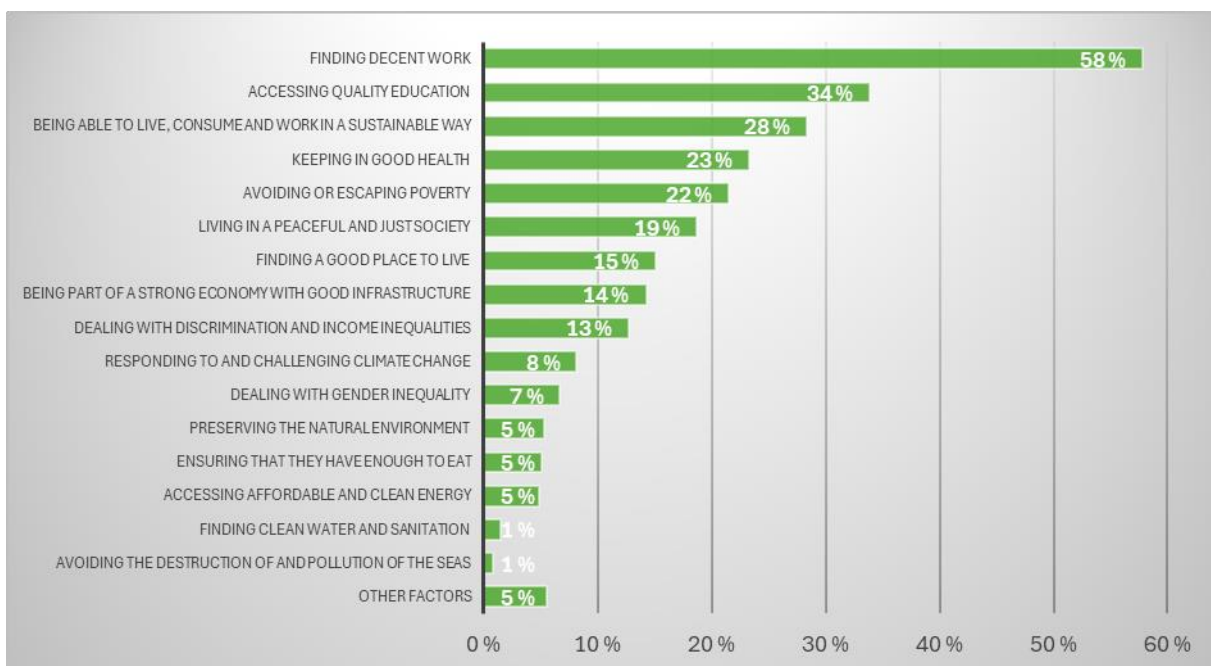
Figure 4.1. Anticipated help seeking with SDGs

The findings set out in Figure 4.1 show that respondents anticipate that their students and clients are most likely to seek help with accessing decent work (58%) and education (34%). However, they are also anticipated to need help to live, work and consume in a sustainable way (28%). They are much less likely to want help dealing with climate change (8%), preserving the natural environment (5%), or dealing with the pollution of the seas (1%). This suggests that respondents anticipate that their clients engage with sustainability primarily through the pursuit of their careers and life choices, rather than in relation to wider civic issues.

Respondents were asked to report on how often their clients raise issues relating to the climate. Around a fifth (22%) report that their clients raise the climate *when making career decisions*, 28% say that their clients *are keen to find environmentally sustainable work* and 41% say that their clients are *keen to live*

environmentally sustainable lifestyles. This shows that there is a substantial minority of clients who are interested in these issues and might be expected to respond positively to green guidance practice. In some cases, this interest from clients was what drove engagement in green guidance.

> *I find that a great many pathfinders are concerned about climate and the environment, and want to promote a sustainable lifestyle. These values are also often reflected in career choices. (Careers practitioner, Norway)*

There is considerable variation in the level of interest that is perceived amongst clients across the different countries and some differences between the sectors. The detailed finding in relation to country is set out in Figure 4.2. Variations in perceived client interest in green guidance by countryFigure 4.2 and in relation to sector is set out in Figure 4.3. Perhaps unsurprisingly there appears to be some relationship between sectors where clients are more likely to be socially and economically advantaged and those where they are more likely to express an interest in greening their career.

Country	My clients raise climate issues	My clients want to work sustainably	My clients want to live sustainably
Denmark	37 %	40 %	56 %
Switzerland	35 %	35 %	30 %
UK	33 %	41 %	38 %
France	25 %	38 %	41 %
Slovakia	21 %	26 %	38 %
Portugal	19 %	30 %	56 %
Poland	17 %	23 %	44 %
Italy	15 %	29 %	42 %
Norway	15 %	21 %	21 %
Czech Republic	12 %	13 %	35 %
Other	26 %	17 %	34 %

Figure 4.2. Variations in perceived client interest in green guidance by country (% agree or strongly agree)

Sector	My clients raise climate issues	My clients want to work sustainably	My clients want to live sustainably
Private practice	40 %	40 %	59 %
Higher education	34 %	45 %	57 %
VET	20 %	23 %	39 %
Schools	18 %	24 %	40 %
PES	15 %	26 %	30 %
Charity / NGO	15 %	29 %	38 %
Other	18 %	21 %	34 %

Figure 4.3. Variations in perceived client interest in green guidance by sector (% agree or strongly agree)

5) Attitudes to climate change

The argument for green guidance begins from an assumption that there is agreement about the reality and urgency of the climate crisis. However, we recognise that it is not possible to make this assumption about all practitioners. To explore this further we measured respondents' perceptions of climate change using Van Valkengoed et al.'s (2021) climate change perceptions scale. This asks respondents five key questions and uses their responses to develop an overall summary of their relative agreement about the importance of climate change.

Respondents' answers to these five questions are presented in Figure 5.1.
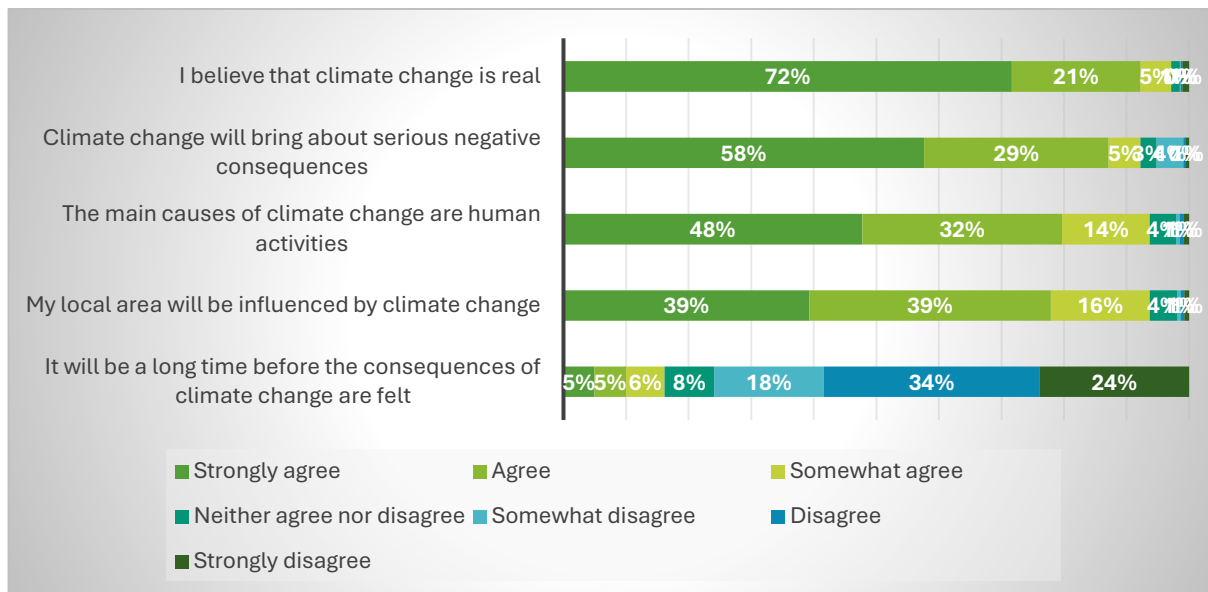

Figure 5.1. Responses to the climate change perceptions scale

As Figure 5.1 shows participants are overwhelmingly in agreement with the first four items of the climate change perceptions scale (that climate change is real, that it will bring about negative consequences, that the main causes of climate change are real and that their local area will be influenced by it). They are then overwhelmingly in disagreement with the idea that it will be a long time before the consequences of climate change are felt.

These five items have then been allocated a score between -3 and 3 (with the final item being coded in the reverse order from the others) and summed. This provides a picture of the distribution of opinions about climate change with scores potentially going from -15 to +15. In fact, the data was strongly skewed towards a more positive attitude about climate change as can be seen in Figure 5.2.
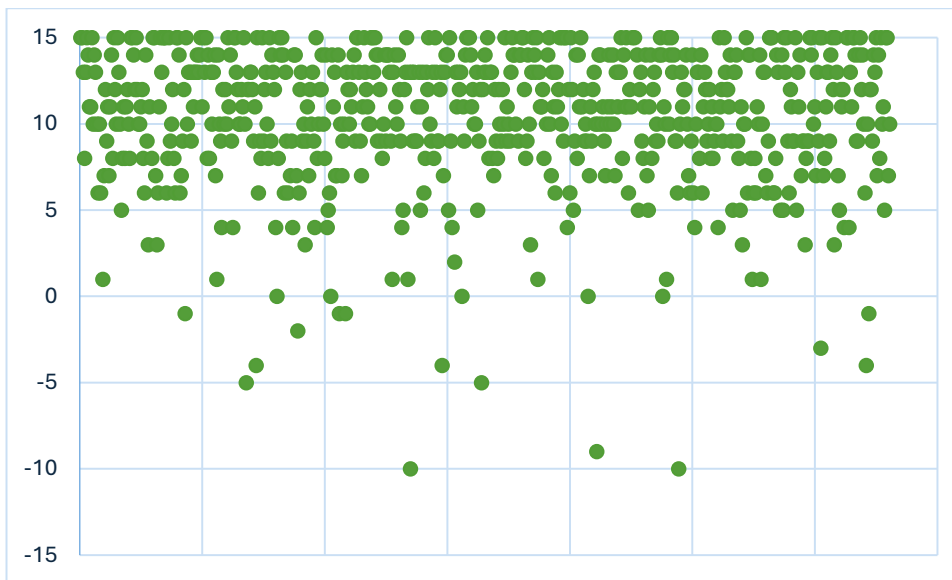
Figure 5.2. Distribution of perceptions on climate change

The least positive people scored -10 but the most positive scored 15. The average (mean) score was +10.41. In terms of role there was a high degree of consistency in these scores although those who described themselves as Public Employment Service Officers (+7.69) and Youth or social workers (+7.25) were on average less positive about the existence and importance of climate change. The difference was not so marked in terms of sector.

There were some differences between the different countries in terms of perceptions of climate change. These are set out in Figure 5.3.

Figure 5.3. Climate perceptions by country

Respondents were then asked to provide their insights on which actors they believed could make a difference to the likelihood of climate change.

Figure 5.4. Which actors can make a difference to the likelihood of climate change

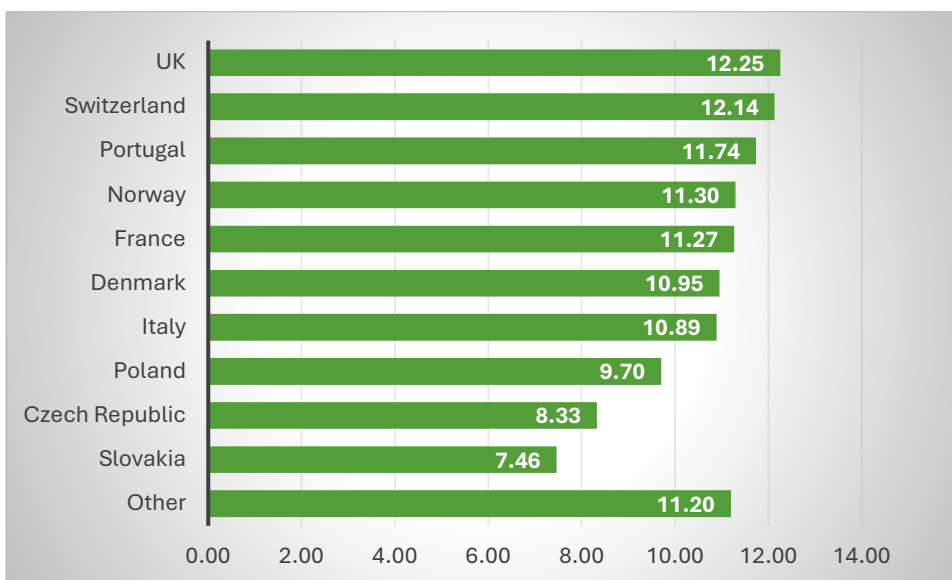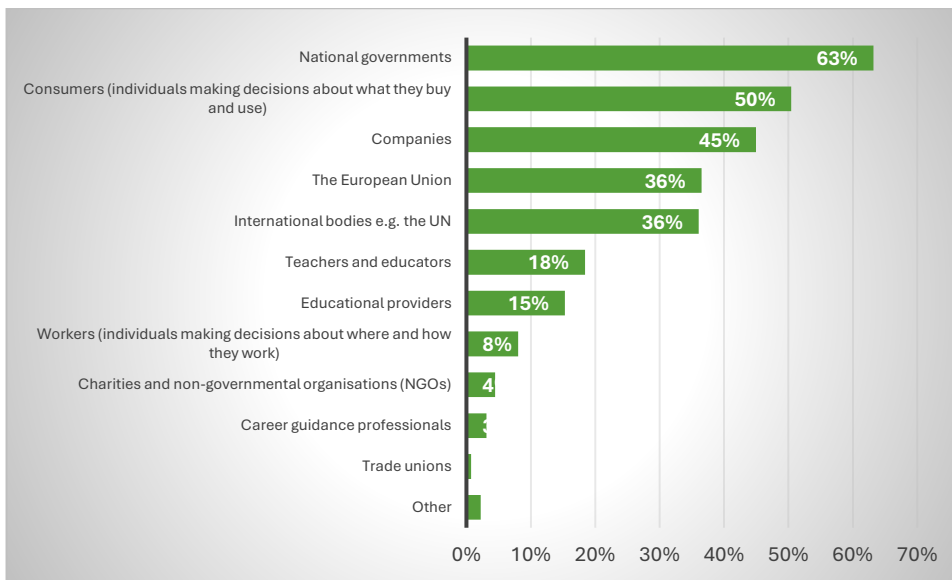Respondents were likely to choose national governments (63%) and international bodies like the EU (36%) and other international bodies (36%) as well as individuals (primarily as consumers (50%) rather than workers (8%)) and companies (45%). They were much less likely to identify educators (18%), educational providers (15%) or career guidance professionals (3%).

The tensions between the relative power of political actors and educational and guidance actors were noted by several participants as a potential problem for a green guidance project. With some respondents articulating concern that the adoption of green guidance should not serve as an excuse for governments to do nothing. In the absence of wider government commitment to sustainability, there is a danger that green guidance serves only to responsibilise people.

> *For me it is not guidance that should be 'green', but society as a whole. I don't see the point in pushing people to move towards green professions when our government is doing quite the opposite. (School counsellor, France).*

For other participants there were concerns about the feasibility of what was being asked of career guidance. In a situation where guidance is under-funded and governments have limited commitment to sustainability, is it realistic to expect guidance practitioners to take on such a major new agenda alone.

> *I have not come across green guidance before, so my reflections are immature. I believe that the environmental challenges are very important, and will rise higher in all fields, including the career guidance field. At the same time, I see that we have extremely limited resources available, and that there is no will in the Ministry of Education to order the HE sector to prioritise guidance in general. Top management in the HE sector have*

many other fields that are important to them, and I (unfortunately) do not think that green career guidance will become a topic in the next ten years.

Given this it is important that green guidance does not seek to over-claim its importance or the capacity that it has to bring about change. Guidance needs to recognise that it is one factor amongst many others and to continue to recognise the primacy of political actions in addressing climate change and environmental destruction.

6) Green guidance practice

In this chapter we focus on the issue of what green guidance looks like in practice. We begin by looking at respondents' own perspectives on green guidance and then ask them about how widespread this interest is in their country. We then look at how they have seen green guidance manifested in practice and what resources are needed to deliver it.

Respondents were asked a range of questions about their own perspective on green guidance-
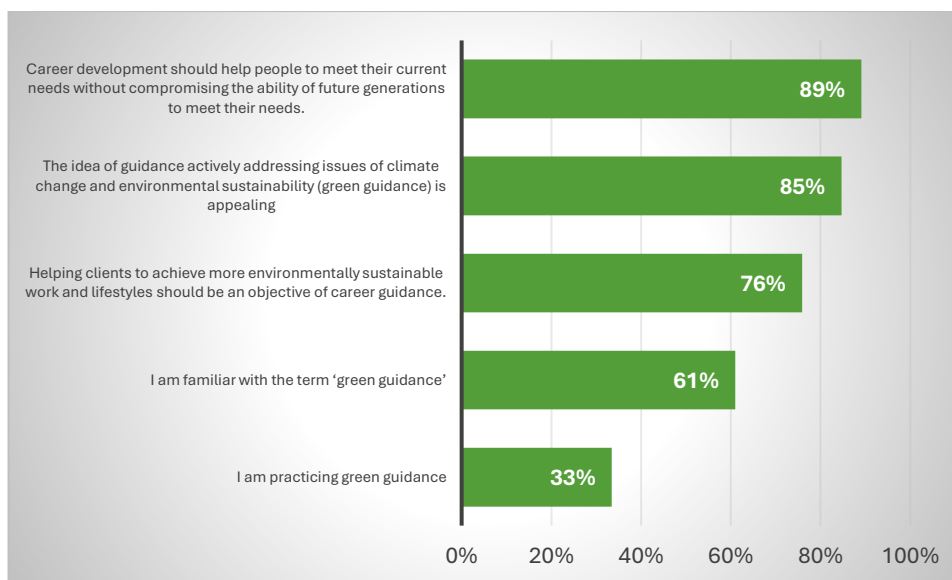
Figure 6.1. Attitudes to green guidance

Figure 6.1 shows that while the level of direct engagement with green guidance is limited (only a third are already practicing it and less than two thirds are familiar with the term), respondents generally find the idea of green guidance appealing and believe that guidance should be helping people to live sustainable lives.

Further analysis looked into how these attitudes to green guidance practice related to respondents' perceptions of climate change (See Figure 5.1). Respondents were coded into four groups based on the inter-quartile ranges (Negative = -15 to -1, Low = 0 to 8, Medium=9 to 13, and High 14 and 15). This demonstrated a fairly consistent relationship between their general attitudes to climate change and their attitudes to green guidance practice. The more concerned respondents were about climate change, the more likely they are to engage with the idea of green guidance.
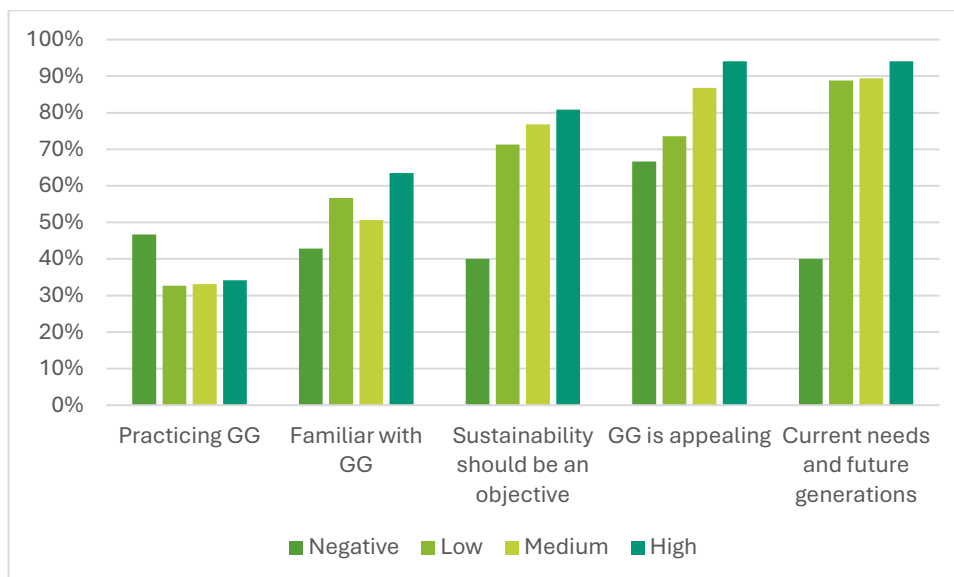
Figure 6.2. Relationship between perceptions of climate change and attitudes to green guidance

There are also some important differences across the countries. Figure 6.3 shows the differences in the proportion of respondents agreeing in each country that they are familiar with and practicing green guidance.
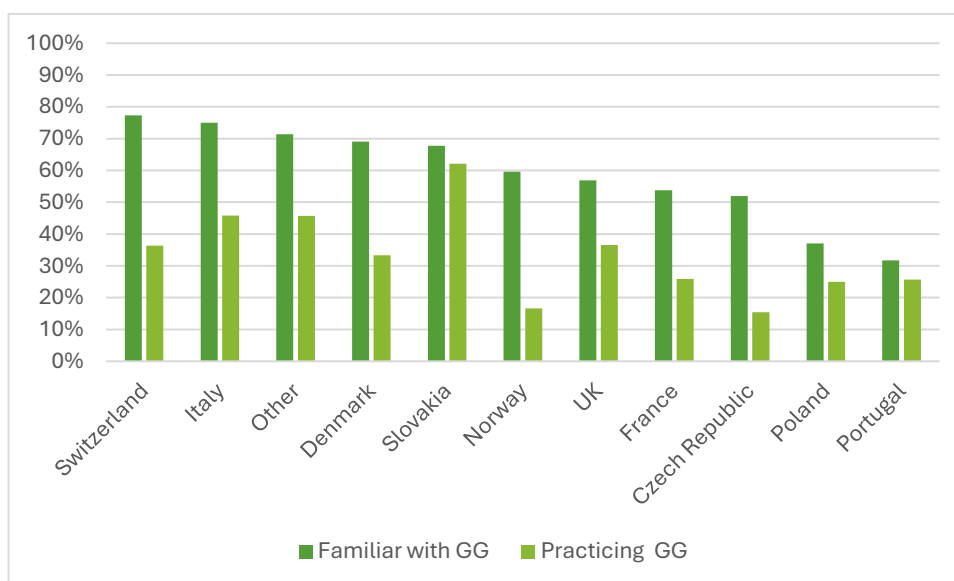
Figure 6.3. Differences in familiarity and practice of green guidance across countries

While Figure 6.4 show that there are also a range of variations across sectors.
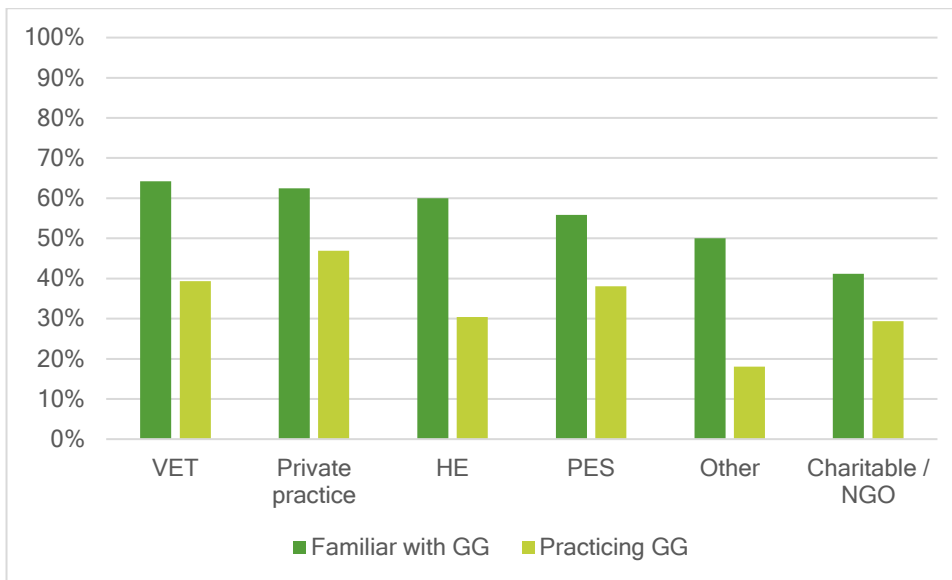
Figure 6.4. Difference in familiarity and practice by sector

The quantitative finding that respondents generally agreed that green guidance was something worth developing was backed up and explained further in the qualitative comments that participants made.

> *I think all of this would be so useful! But once again- we need to start from the basics with climate/sustainability education for career practitioners (ESG). (Careers practitioner, Australia).*

> *I consider it very important to introduce the topic of sustainability in all exploration activities in the world of work! (Careers practitioner, Portugal).*

> *Extremely important topics that are almost completely invisible in Polish schools. I am glad that such an idea was created and I am sincerely interested in implementing it. (Vocational educator, Poland).*

However, when asked about wider practice in their countries most felt that their interest in green guidance was not widespread. Only 10% agreed that it was *common for practitioners in their countries to address climate change*, 17% felt that practitioners in their country are *well informed about climate change issues* and 5% felt that practitioners in their country *know how to deliver green guidance*.

When asked about the barriers to practicing green guidance respondents raised several concerns, but a *lack of clarity* about what green guidance was (69%), a lack of *models* for practice (59%) and relevant *resources* (54%) were the most commonly raised issues.

Figure 6.5. Barriers to practicing green guidance

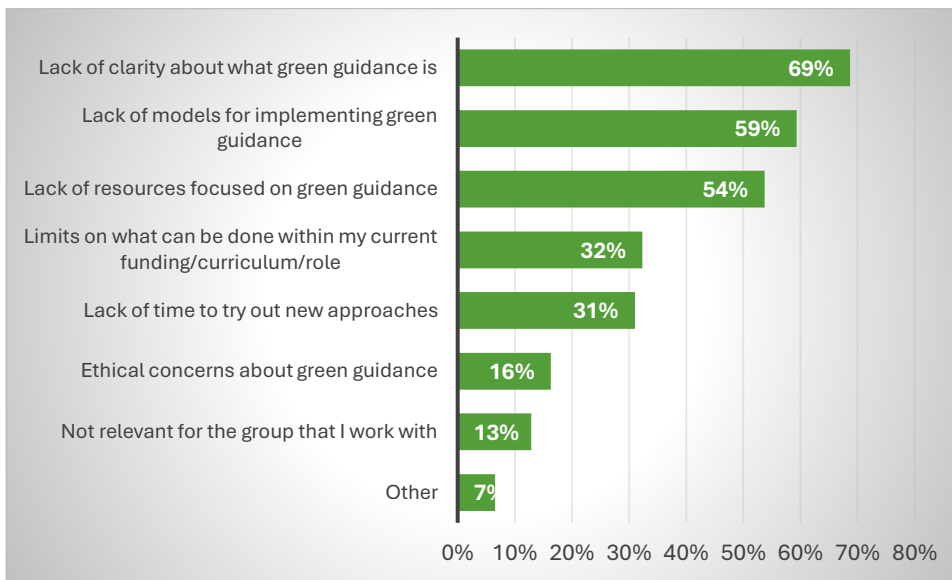There were some substantial differences in perceptions of what the barriers were across countries. Figure 6.6 shows the proportion of respondents from each country who identified each of the barriers.

	Lack of clarity	Lack of models	Lack of resources	Limits of funding etc.	Lack of time	Ethical concerns	Not relevant for group
Poland	80 %	70 %	67 %	22 %	33 %	10 %	16 %
Czech Republic	73 %	54 %	46 %	54 %	21 %	17 %	19 %
Denmark	72 %	53 %	35 %	37 %	35 %	30 %	0 %
UK	72 %	62 %	68 %	45 %	49 %	30 %	2 %
Portugal	71 %	61 %	49 %	25 %	28 %	6 %	8 %
France	67 %	57 %	67 %	37 %	32 %	19 %	10 %
Norway	65 %	60 %	52 %	29 %	27 %	31 %	8 %
Switzerland	64 %	59 %	45 %	55 %	27 %	36 %	14 %
Slovakia	61 %	52 %	40 %	25 %	27 %	11 %	33 %
Italy	56 %	56 %	48 %	19 %	35 %	10 %	10 %
Other	69 %	66 %	71 %	43 %	26 %	9 %	9 %

Figure 6.6. Barriers by country

Some respondents highlighted other issues including the level of competence of professionals to offer guidance on these subjects and the corresponding need for training. Others focused on the level of awareness and interest of the clients. With some raising concerns that addressing this would be overwhelming and counter-productive for students and others noting that it is important to maintain balance and clarify that not all jobs need to be green jobs.

> *Customers do not see these topics as important to the process of decision-making. (Psychologist, Portugal).*

> *I don't have such needs, I won't teach nonsense, young people need support and a sense of psychological security. Ecology is scary, intimidating, it will arouse fear. (Career practitioner, Poland).*

> *Discussed green guidance and sustainability with some primary school students. They had clear opinions that they cannot be forced to work in this field, and that it should rather be for those who are interested. I think perhaps some young people can sense frustration at how the adults handle the climate problem, and that they will not be charged with the responsibility of cleaning up after older generations. At the same time, I meet young people who find this exciting, but perhaps mostly because they see that e.g. offshore wind is an area that is constantly being developed and will therefore ensure jobs and stable income (the "new" oil industry). (School counsellor, Norway)*

Others raised concerns about whether it was possible to get good enough information to support decision making and make clear distinctions between green and brown jobs.

> *Given the complexity of how the inputs and outputs of individual job positions are linked and the overall linkage of the labour market, I perceive it as impossible in the long term to define to what extent it really contributes to "greener" functioning (and is not just a marketing move that tries to simplify that complexity in such a way that in the end simple solutions will prevail, the benefit of which is questionable in the long term - e.g. replacing plastic straws with paper straws, moving the ecological burden to another part of the world, etc.). I also perceive a risk of employers lying to employees about the "greenness" of the company's operation, when the employee is not able (and sometimes cannot) to see into all aspects of the company's operation. (Psychologist, Czechia).*

Several respondents also raised issues about time and resourcing. While they are potentially willing to engage with green guidance, there is a need to think about how it can fit into the paradigms offered by real practice.

And others argued that the green economy is not currently large enough to absorb this level of focus from guidance.

> *Lack of green jobs. A choice is necessary for advice, otherwise it is rather a short lecture on the topic of ecology. (Career practitioner, Slovakia).*

Approaches to practice

Respondents were then asked to reflect on the examples of green guidance that they had seen or been involved in. Two thirds (67%) said that they had not seen or been involved in green guidance, but the rest had experiences to share. In

fact, several of the respondents who claimed not to have seen or been involved in green guidance, were able to provide further information about what examples of green guidance had focused on with one respondent explaining that while they had not seen green guidance, they had read about it.

Roughly equal proportions of respondents reported engaging in four different kinds of green guidance activities: helping people to reflect on the relationship between their career and the environment (28%); helping people to learn about sustainability, the world and their career and consider how these all connect (27%); helping people to think about how to change themselves and the world (25%); and helping people to imagine sustainable possibilities for themselves and the world (23%). A small minority (9%) raised other possibilities. When asked about how they worked with students and clients 25% said that they worked with individuals, 25% with small groups and 14% with larger groups and collectives.

Respondents provided further qualitative comments across several questions in which they were asked to give more information about examples of green guidance that they had been involved in. Some participants viewed green guidance as just an extension of their normal practice and not necessarily something that needed to be addressed separately.

If someone talks about environmental questions, including or excluding talk of climate change, I usually go deeper in to find out in what direction their interest goes. And then we talk about different occupations that maybe can be interesting for them. (School counsellor, Sweden).

Inviting clients to make a list of stressors (which typically has climate change and/or climate related concerns included), then organising them into categories (internal and external focus of control). Then we work through the list of "internal" and come up with goals and break those down into microgoals. Then we move to the external to see if there are any that we might want to devote solution-focused energy to, and it's this step that sometimes unearths solutions or an area of focus in regards to creating a career that is informed by sustainability and a desire to create a greener, healthier world. (Career practitioner, Canada).

It has been addressed in conversations, without me myself having recategorised the guidance as "green" (Career practitioner, Norway).

In some cases, green guidance was being delivered as part of wider education for sustainability development initiatives e.g. eco schools. While for others it was

primarily about raising awareness about '*green jobs*' and the opportunities in the green economy.

> *I help adults interested in moving into careers in conservation and the environment, including options within the industry with their current skills sets, and options for re-skilling/further education. (Career practitioner, Australia)*

> *I use the careerpilot website and talk to students about the labour market and growth sectors, there is a section on this website called Green careers. (Career practitioner, UK)*

> *New types of job positions associated with environmental topics. (Career practitioner, Slovakia)*

> *Working directly with highly skilled trades and technicians currently working in coal fired energy to consider how their current skills might translate to renewable energy generation. Working with VET to consider the training/upskill that tradespeople might need to apply to a climate role. e.g solar, wind, hydrogen. (Career practitioner, Australia)*

> *Green Careers Week Assembly 2023 - delivering labour market information which focuses on careers for a green economy. I'm also delivering projects to students in collaboration with some of the UK's top employers including Lockheed Martin, Rolls Royce, Waterman Aspen, Atkins Realis etc. Students tasked to apply their engineering and cyber theoretical knowledge to creative scenarios which require green solutions. Encouraging students to think about the UN's global SDGs as part of project proposals (Career practitioner, UK).*

Sometimes this was achieved through experiential activities which might include aspects of entrepreneurship and enterprise.

> *Students took part in the competition 'I'm starting a company in the ecological industry'. I helped them come up with and develop competition works. Their task was to identify climate needs and come up with a company that would specifically respond to these needs in order to contribute to positive changes in ecology. (Teacher / Educator, Poland)*

Some respondents viewed their role as being about awareness raising on these issues and encouraging people to become more sensitive to these issues in their careers. This was sometimes achieved by engaging people with the natural

world or with experts in the field. In other cases, it was delivered through bespoke lessons or workshops.

> *I want to careers to include a pro-ecological attitude towards plants and animals and make respect for nature more visible and available. (Teacher/Educator, Poland)*

> *Helping people to open up to questions such as the impact of my activities on living things, because it is not just climate change, but pollution, the artificialization of soils, air pollution, erosion of biodiversity, the health of ecosystems and people which are problems of now. (Academic / Researcher, Switzerland)*

> *I have invited green parties to inform our pupils and students. Think of experts in the field of ecology, enviromental research, animal behaviour, health and food design, healthy living, etc. (Career practitioner, Netherlands)*

In some cases, this was about promoting counter-normative values in career development such as 'slow careers' (related to the wider slow movement which emphasises '*principles of mindfulness, connection and community*' rather that a 'fast' life characterised by efficiency, achievement and busyness (Dunn, 2017).

> *On my Facebook profile, I try to promote the idea of a minimalist business and a non-growth career that fulfills the needs of clients' lives, but does not create large surpluses or consume public or natural resources. (Careers practitioner, Czechia)*

Other respondents viewed engagement with green guidance as part of a bigger project of critical social justice in career guidance.

> *Promote critical reflexivity on the dominant socio-economic paradigm and its links with professional and life paths. Encourage critical reflection on the criteria of "professional success", happiness, career, health, to be able to reclaim these criteria. Inform and train on the complex and interdisciplinary issues of strong sustainability. Find a balance between awareness/mobilization and non-individual responsibility/guilt in the face of these issues (Psychologist, Switzerland)*

There were also some respondents who highlighted actions that they had taken within their own organisations to increase sustainability.

> *Change in the company's mode of transport: the company offered electric bikes rather than cars for employees who have to travel on site (Career practitioner, France).*

Finally, there were some who were struggling with what green guidance really was and how best to deliver it in an effective and ethical way.

I believe that guidance practitioners should dare to talk about careers that contribute to a better, fairer world. A 'sustainable' career. But I neither agree nor disagree as to whether we should strictly define what that entails? Shouldn't it be up to the individual to choose what she understands by e.g. "fair"? (Expert, Denmark)

Career advising must be focused on the students' goals. It is not clear to me, in the event of a collision between student interests and ecological imperatives, how to deal with the issue (e.g. students interested in working in the energy sector... or companies suspected of green-washing?) (School counsellor, Portugal).

For some the idea of green guidance is too problematic and should be abandoned.

Green guidance sounds like a controlling way of guiding, which goes against normal guidance practice. (Careers practitioner, Norway).

"Green guidance" means career guidance practitioners having an opinion about what careers our clients should choose. This goes against one of the fundamental principles of career guidance in my country. (School counsellor, Denmark).

There is almost no such thing as "green jobs" or "green career choices". Teaching youth that they may do a positive contribution by avoiding certain jobs is just harmful virtue signalling. It will accelerate moving these jobs to countries which have other priorities than environmentalism. (Expert, Norway)

It is important to take these ethical and philosophical objections seriously. While they were raised by a minority of participants, those participants felt very strongly about these issues and had serious concerns about what they perceived to be the agenda behind the survey.

Green guidance resources and support

Around a fifth of respondents (22%) reported that they had examples of green guidance relevant resources to share. These will be used to inform future outputs of the *Exploring green guidance* project.

Respondents were asked to identify what help, support and resources would be useful as they engage with and develop further green guidance approaches.
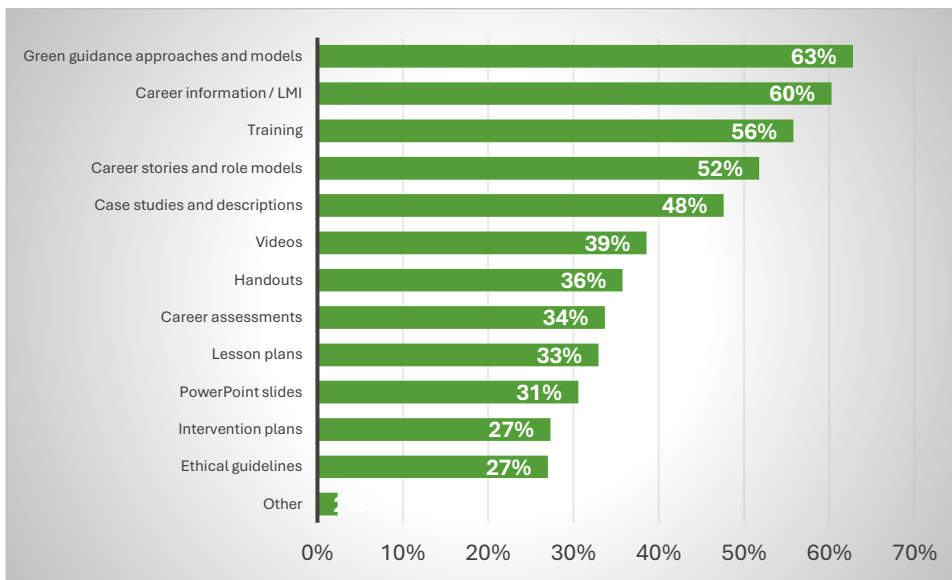
Figure 6.7. Desired help support and resources

Participants reported (63%) that they had the greatest need for new career guidance approaches and models which they could use to deliver green guidance and training (60%) and case studies (48%) to support them with this. An additional source of support that was raised in the qualitative comments was the value that people would see in having a 'green guidance mentor' to help them to engage with this approach. This fits with the earlier finding that the biggest barrier to engaging with green guidance was the lack of clarity as to what it was. Beyond this they want resources to help them to deliver green guidance approaches including labour market information (60%), career stories and role models (52%) and video content (39%).

Figure 6.8 shows how the desire for some of the most popular types of resources varies by country.

	Approaches and models	Career information	Training	Stories and role models	Case studies	Videos	Handouts
Norway	88 %	60 %	56 %	38 %	40 %	35 %	29 %
Portugal	65 %	53 %	63 %	56 %	58 %	37 %	32 %
Italy	65 %	27 %	58 %	35 %	58 %	31 %	17 %
Denmark	63 %	40 %	37 %	53 %	44 %	23 %	16 %
UK	62 %	83 %	45 %	64 %	49 %	43 %	32 %
Czech Republic	62 %	52 %	46 %	67 %	52 %	48 %	56 %
Slovakia	59 %	48 %	63 %	58 %	27 %	45 %	54 %
France	58 %	81 %	49 %	44 %	41 %	28 %	27 %
Switzerland	55 %	68 %	50 %	36 %	41 %	27 %	41 %
Poland	49 %	87 %	62 %	50 %	59 %	49 %	47 %
Other	83 %	40 %	63 %	51 %	54 %	43 %	23 %

Figure 6.8. Resources needed by country

The need to make green guidance more concrete was also evident in much of the qualitative data.

We need direct examples from life, where it works and how it was achieved, as well as tangible results, i.e. measurable indicators, practical examples of positive impacts on nature, people and

their thinking, changing approaches, etc. (Career practitioner, Slovakia)

7) Conclusions and recommendations

The survey demonstrates a high level of interest within the profession in green guidance. Most careers practitioners who responded to the survey recognise the reality of climate change. They also believe that career guidance has a role to play in challenging climate change.

Based on these findings we would make a series of recommendations that should be taken into consideration as models for green guidance are developed.

1. **The idea of green guidance needs to be promoted and carefully explained**. Most respondents are positive about the idea of green guidance, but they report that they need a lot of help to understand what it really is. Only a minority of careers practitioners are already practicing anything that they identify as 'green guidance'. Time needs to be spent popularising the concept and clarifying it (and explaining what it is not).

2. **Claims about green guidance need to be made with humility**. Respondents expressed a range of concerns about the responsibility that was being laid at the door of career guidance. A number argued that these are political issues, to which there need to be political solutions and that career guidance should keep out of it. Others expressed concern about responsibilising both guidance practitioners and their students and clients. While it is possible to believe that green guidance could make a difference and that career decision making and enactment are important, it is important to resist a blame culture. Ultimately green guidance can only be a small part of the societal shifts that need to happen around the green transition. Articulations of green guidance therefore need to exercise care as they balance both the potential to make a difference with the size and complexity of the task ahead and the recognition that while the ethical, political and economic actions of individuals and communities can make a difference, this needs to be accompanied by major shifts in the behaviour of business, government and other stakeholders.

3. **Models of green guidance need to attend to ethical concerns carefully**. A minority of respondents articulated concerns about whether green guidance was ethical. They were concerned that it is directive and politicising and is in tension with traditions around independence, impartiality and client centredness. These issues need to be taken seriously and the ethical issues addressed in depth (see also Hooley, 2023).

4. **Green guidance needs to link to people's material career concerns**. There is overwhelming agreement that environmental change and policy sponsored mitigation efforts will interact with people's careers in a myriad of ways. However, these issues are far more likely to be experienced at the individual level as problems of work, education or access to resources, than they are as issues with the climate, environment or oceans. Green guidance therefore needs to be grounded in these material career

concerns and help people to make the link between these individual troubles and the wider environmental issues faced by society.

5. **Environmental sustainability needs to be embedded within a broader, social justice inspired, conception of sustainability**. The UN SDGs make an explicit link and between issues of environmental sustainability and wider social justice informed policy goals. The importance of connecting career guidance to material issues (discussed in the last point) and its history of contributing to a wide range of public policy goals (see Robertson, 2021) means that green guidance cannot be addressed alone. Rather green guidance needs to offer practitioners a set of tools that can be embedded within wider forms of practice that allow discussion of environmental issues in an embedded way. Some respondents described ways in which they were already working with social justice and how they hoped to align green guidance with these approaches.

6. **Theories and models of green guidance need to be developed that recognise a wide variety of delivery contexts**. While a minority of respondents felt that they were already practicing green guidance, there was little evidence of consistency of practice or an underpinning body of theory or evidence. There is a desperate need to articulate more clearly what the theoretical basis of green guidance is and how it can be actually delivered. However, such prescriptions for practice need to also recognise that guidance practice is very diverse and it can be offered in such a way that they can be implemented flexibly in different contexts.

7. **Green guidance needs to be aligned with existing models of practice**. Many practitioners felt that they were already delivering some elements of green guidance. It is important that green guidance is understood as a refinement to, and development of, existing practice, rather than as a new approach that must be mastered from scratch. Consequently, it is important that existing guidance approaches are respected and utilised as green guidance is developed.

8. **There is a need for training resources for green guidance**. If practitioners are going to adopt green guidance approaches there is a need to mainstream this idea in both initial training and continuing professional development. Such training needs to include training in the basis of climate science, policy and politics as well as in the counselling and pedagogic approaches needed to incorporate it into practice.

9. **Resources are a critical element of realising green guidance practice**. Respondents to this survey have already identified a wide range of green guidance resources. There is a need to systematise these resources, add to them and provide insights on how they can best be used.

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