

## **SELF-ASSESSMENT CHECKLISTS**

### **Introduction**

These Self-Assessment Checklists are designed to help career counsellors and advisers to review the main elements of international career counselling with regard to client mobility. They will help counsellors to assess their own level of competence and initiate improvement and self development as relevant. They are not designed as a teaching tool nor are they prescriptive or didactic, but are designed to prompt self-questioning of the transnational counselling role. They are structured as sets of text boxes to enable counsellors to comment as fully as required to explore their competencies.

The Checklists will be appropriate to counsellors of all abilities in both universities and career guidance centres. Career advisers/counsellors may wish to use them as an aide-memoire to reassess and reaffirm their current skills.

These tools can also be used by counsellors to assess their competencies against a vocational programme of assessment that will be a guide to both themselves and their organisation in identifying future training and experience needs and help the production of a personal development plan. The design can also encourage networking with colleagues and management, both internally and with other organisations.

Those counsellors who have undertaken the Brain Drain Brain Gain (BDBG) workshops and seminars will be able to cross-reference their knowledge gained to the self-assessment competences listed.

Counsellors may benefit from reading the “Katarina” case study in Appendix A of this document (pages 98 to 102 of the BDBG HdBA report), which is an example of international counselling.

The main Elements for international mobility counselling provide a frame of reference as follows:

1. Working with client mobility needs
2. Networking mobility
3. Marketing
4. Working culture in other countries
5. Legislation regarding mobility
6. Continuing Professional Development (CPD)
7. Assessor / Manager (For those who also manage a team of counsellors)

**The list of competences within each Element is not exhaustive and counsellors should feel free to add or delete as they feel appropriate.**

## **Explanation of Checklist Terms**

### **Self Assessment Competence**

This column lists the competences against which you are to evaluate yourself. These are designed to make you think about these aspects of your role as a mobility career counsellor.

### **What do I currently do about this?**

This column is about your current practice. Enter the knowledge you have about the competence and what you presently do to apply that knowledge.

### **What can I improve?**

This is where you compare your answer to “What do I currently do about this?” with the “Self Assessment Competence” and identify anything you do not currently do or that could be improved.

### **How will I make the improvement?**

In this column write down the actions you will be taking to rectify the areas you identified in “What can I improve?” It is useful for each action to include its start and completion date.

### **BDBG Ref.**

This column will enable those having undertaken the Brain Drain Brain Gain (BDBG) workshops and seminars to cross-reference their skills learnt to relevant competencies.

## 1. Working with Client Mobility Needs

This checklist will help you identify the issues of communicating and documenting the international mobility counselling role.

<b>1. Working with Client Mobility Needs</b>				
<b>Self-assessment Competence</b>	<b>What do I currently do about this?</b>	<b>What can be improved?</b>	<b>How will I make the improvement happen?</b>	<b>BDBG Ref.</b>
Communicating the role of the mobility counsellor to the client.				Pages162-164 – C 2
Communicating the limitations of the mobility counsellor's role to the client.				Pages162-164 – C 2
Documenting the mobility interview and referrals.				
Understanding which current online resources can help the mobility counselling role.				Page 11 – C 3

## 2. Networking Mobility

This checklist will help you identify the issues of networking in an international context.

<b>2. Networking Mobility</b>				
<b>Self-assessment Competence</b>	<b>What do I currently do about this?</b>	<b>What can be improved?</b>	<b>How will I make the improvement happen?</b>	<b>BDBG Ref.</b>
Understanding colleagues' roles with regard to international mobility guidance.				Page 16 - C 4.2
Ensuring colleagues' understanding of own role in organisation.				
Using external organisations to meet client international mobility needs.				Pages 36-62 - C 3
Using own external contacts to meet client needs.				Pages 36-62 - C 3
Working with colleagues to expand international networking contacts.				Pages 183-199 – C 1
Presenting client suggestions to team and colleagues, as appropriate.				

### 3. Marketing

This checklist is to do with identifying the needs to be considered regarding marketing international mobility issues to clients, colleagues and external organisations.

<b>3. Marketing</b>				
<b>Self-assessment Competence</b>	<b>What do I currently do about this?</b>	<b>What can be improved?</b>	<b>How will I make the improvement happen?</b>	<b>BDBG Ref.</b>
Communicating and marketing mobility services to clients.				Pages 31-34 – C2
Communicating mobility services to external referral organisations.				Pages 36-54 – C 3
Communicating mobility services to own colleagues.				
Producing clear and informative marketing literature in appropriate languages.				
Analysing client feedback to assess market penetration.				
Accessing relevant international opportunities.				Pages 36-54 – C 3

#### 4. Working Culture in Other Countries

This checklist will help you identify the issues of adapting to the working and living culture in another country.

<b>4. Working Culture in Other Countries</b>				
<b>Self-assessment Competence</b>	<b>What do I currently do about this?</b>	<b>What can be improved?</b>	<b>How will I make the improvement happen?</b>	<b>BDBG Ref.</b>
Discussing with clients the language issues and CEFR <sup>1</sup> levels required for working and living abroad.				
Discussing with clients political and religious differences, as appropriate.				Pages 78-86 – C 3 Pages 159-161 – C 1
Discussing with clients the differences in work and business practices.				
Discussing with clients the differences in qualification demands for jobs abroad.				Page 16-18 – C 4
Ensuring client understanding of the day to day cost of living issues.				

1. CEFR - Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

## 5. Legislation Regarding Mobility

This checklist will help you identify many of the differences in legislation between your country and the countries your client wants to work in. It is not exhaustive but outlines a number of key issues to consider.

<b>5. Legislation Regarding Mobility</b>				
<b>Self-assessment Competence</b>	<b>What do I currently do about this?</b>	<b>What can be improved?</b>	<b>How will I make the improvement happen?</b>	<b>BDBG Ref.</b>
Understanding the differences in employment contracts.				Pages 5-16 – C 3
Being aware of the tax and social security implications in both countries.				Pages 5-16 – C 3
Being aware of the client's health insurance rights.				Pages 5-16 – C 3
Understanding the visa and residency requirements.				Pages 5-16 – C 3
Being aware of the effect on a client's pension arrangements of working abroad.				Pages 5-16 – C 3
Being aware of the legal issues of taking a family abroad.				Pages 5-16 – C 3

**5. Legislation Regarding Mobility**

<b>Self-assessment Competence</b>	<b>What do I currently do about this?</b>	<b>What can be improved?</b>	<b>How will I make the improvement happen?</b>	<b>BDBG Ref.</b>
Being aware of social and lifestyle issues as proscribed or allowed by law.				Pages 5-16 – C 3
Being aware of how going abroad will affect what the client has to do about military service.				
Understanding available legal resources to which clients can be directed.				Pages 5-16 – C 3

## 6. Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

This checklist will help you prepare a personal CPD plan for the international mobility counselling role.

<b>6. Continuing Professional Development (CPD)</b>				
<b>Self-assessment Competence</b>	<b>What do I currently do about this?</b>	<b>What can be improved?</b>	<b>How will I make the improvement happen?</b>	<b>BDBG Ref.</b>
Including international mobility issues in your CPD plan.				Pages 129-130 – C 1
Ensuring your CPD plan is in harmony with the organisation's mobility plan.				
Matching your CPD goals to your client's identified mobility needs.				
Discussing with your team or colleagues how your plan can assist their job role.				
Cascading new mobility and international knowledge learnt to colleagues.				

## **7. Assessor / Manager (For those who manage a team of counsellors)**

This checklist will help you in managing a international mobility counselling team.

<b>7. Assessor / Manager</b>				
<b>Self-assessment Competence</b>	<b>What do I currently do about this?</b>	<b>What can be improved?</b>	<b>How will I make the improvement happen?</b>	<b>BDBG Ref.</b>
Championing mobility counselling to senior managers.				
Communicating the importance of mobility counselling to the team.				Pages 110-112 – C 2
Developing a team action plan for mobility counselling.				
Arranging access to library resources of mobility advice.				Pages 10-14 – C 2

## **Appendix A – “Katarina”**

The following case study is taken from the Brain Drain Brain Gain HdBA Report and is included as a reference tool to assist you in exploring the issues.

### **4.6 Case “Katarina”**

Katarina (Slovak) moved to the UK to join her partner (German) who had been offered a job there and moved to London a couple of months earlier than her. Because they come from different countries, they decided for the UK option to be in a country where they can both speak the language well and are allowed to work.

She has a master’s degree in Psychology and 4 years of working practice after completing the studies in diverse qualified jobs. She has also completed psychotherapy training. She used to work in the vocational counselling field before the move, and would like to find a job in the same professional area. She can speak good English and she was considering counselling jobs targeted at migrant clients where she could use her qualification and experience.

Before the move she was trying to find out whether she could register in Slovakia as unemployed until she finds a job, even if she lives in a different country. This would mean that by the time she finds a new job, she would not have to pay her social and health insurances herself in Slovakia; they would be paid within unemployment benefits. She was checking the possibility on the Internet first, and then she went to the Office in the town of her permanent residence and asked there for advice. She found out it was not possible to practise unless she stayed for at least one month as unemployed in the city of her permanent residence. The officer told her, that she might apply for an exception, but in the Social Insurance Company, not in the Office. When she came to the Social Insurance Company, she was told that this was a matter for the Office. After two more goes she gave up finding out who was the person in charge in the end. She just tried to find out which of the payments she was obliged to pay and which not, this information she found easily on the Internet. However, when she wanted to know what would be later consequences of the possible alternatives, the officers in the insurance company were not able to tell her. She wanted to know how a break in paying the voluntary parts of the insurance payment might influence her benefits for example in the case of maternity leave in the next years. The information she was given was not clear for her. She tried to contact EURES advisors in bigger cities in her country via phone, but they couldn’t answer some of her questions about insurance payments. In the end she decided to pay her health insurances (obligatory) and a part of the social insurance that is related to maternity leave benefits (voluntarily). In the mean time, she decided not to pay some other parts of social insurance that are related to retirement benefits and sick leave compensation. She hoped to quickly find an employer, so at that moment she thought it was a break only for up to a couple of weeks.

One of the new pieces of information she found out was that unless she worked in Slovakia for 15 years at least during her life, she would lose half of her retirement benefits she has saved within the retirement system in the country. She would not lose the money completely, but she would not be able access it, the money would become a subject of her inheritance only. Working in another EU country would not prevent this.

She started her job search approximately two months before moving to London. She tried to collect some tips from people who went there already, mostly from the Internet. She found many links to job agencies and newspaper websites full of advertisements. She studied carefully advice on writing CVs and cover letters, and she had to admit they were slightly different from the forms recommended in her country. However, the difference was not so crucial, mostly it was regarding the style of presenting ones skills: more explicit, straight -forward and self-confident than is traditional in her native language and country.

She was lucky enough to get some opportunities to visit London a few times before she moved there – as her boyfriend was already working there. She used the chance and even arranged an appointment with a EURES advisor in London one of the times she visited the city.

People in the first-contact front desk of the London office were nice and trying to be helpful. They combined their basic questions and instructions with a lot of small jokes that she did not get, so while waiting for the advisor in an armchair, she got a bit stressed about a potential language barrier. Fortunately, her concerns turned out to be wrong; she had no problem understanding the advisor. He provided her with a lot of useful information: that it is definitely not too early to start applying for jobs a few months in advance, that it can take weeks before receiving any calls, and so on. He had prepared very well for the appointment, and because she had sent him her CV in advance, he gave her some basic feedback on it and also provided her with links and contacts on professional institutions in the field of Psychology and career counselling. However, when they started talking about particular job positions, the advisor started showing her several ads for example, on taking care of the elderly. He tried in a very positive way to encourage her just for a slight re-qualification change – to social work. That point she found quite frustrating, knowing that the care of elderly people is one of the worst paid jobs at the bottom of job hierarchy there, but she decided that the man probably did not really comprehend her intentions and ambitions, that was why.

After she came back home from visiting London, she still had a few weeks left before the move there. She went on browsing on websites of different guidance and counselling centres, where she wanted to apply for a job of a counsellor. What she found difficult about that was making a picture about the institutions. Seeing their 100 websites, she could not fully understand the texts and the verbal information there, but she simply did not know what to think about them. She missed the key for reading between the lines. Are they professional or not? Is it a trustful employer? Many websites seemed to be quite esoteric to her, she was not sure about the background and approach of the services offered there. The intercultural difference in the information was quite big to her, in spite of the years of her experience with international work. She felt a bit lost in it. Some help with that would be more than useful.

Another finding was that the ads on career counselling jobs often required a qualification as a career counsellor. In fact, something that did not exist in her country. In Slovakia, most of the counsellors have a professional background in Psychology. In the UK, the jobs for psychologists were mostly clinically oriented. On the top of that, she found out that registering in the British Psychological Association would be a must. You are not counted as a psychologist, if you are not chartered in there. That required recognition of her diploma together with the recognition of some of her further training... and in practise it means some financial investment into translations and the recognition service. These costs are quite a lot for someone with a Slovak income. She decided to start with getting some of the necessary documents in Slovakia and applying in the UK a bit later, to spread the expenses over several months.

She went to the University where she studied and applied for a diploma supplement needed for the purpose of recognition abroad. She was told she could not get one, as she completed her study before the country joined the Bologna contracts, and thus did not study in a credit system yet. She asked about other possibilities, knowing that her University had international accreditation already at the time of her study. She was told that all she could get was a detailed list of all the courses she took and the exams she passed, together with her study results. She applied for that at least. The list was in Slovak, so it would require further official translation. It also lacked a description of the Higher Education system in Slovakia, which was to be an essential part of a Diploma Supplement, but she was told there was a description published officially by the Ministry of Education in Slovakia on their website, and that she could try referring to that when applying for recognition. She was not sure whether the authorities would find it sufficient or not, but she would have to pay already when applying, not knowing the result. That confirmed to her that she should wait a bit longer and find out more about the market requirements in practise first.

After the move, she sent about twenty applications for counselling jobs advertised in newspapers and on the Internet. At the same time she sent almost a hundred other applications for different or lower qualified jobs, reducing the criteria she originally came with.

## **Current situation:**

Three months after the move to London she has not received a single reply from any of the employers where she applied, not even a negative one. She is wondering why and is feeling quite frustrated about the job situation. She does not want to live apart from her partner, but is afraid of staying unemployed for longer – for a whole range of reasons: financial, career, social and psychological.

The trials with up to ten job agencies she walked in ended before seeing her CV. They either asked her immediately about her job experience in the UK, which she does not have yet, or she found out they offered only lowest jobs such as cleaning or social care of elderly.

Occasionally she is offered some small jobs on a contract basis from her country. She needs to find out whether there are any possibilities for her to take them even without having a business licence, because the offers are too small to open own business only because of them, especially if she knows she could not use up the freelance much more from the distance.

She experienced different sides of London: the beautiful places for sightseeing, cultural events, parks. However, at the same time, she can feel also all the differences and difficulties she had read about when trying to get ready for migration. Although it does not surprise her, and she is trying to keep positive to overcome this tough phase, sometimes it just her optimism is tested. She finds the city dirty, very unsafe and incredibly expensive. It is quickly clear that if they wanted to live in any area with the level of accommodation they had before in their countries, they would have to make an elite career there... which at the moment sounds more than unlikely. Her good English does not help her a lot in the suburb urban area where they live, as most of the people speak strong local dialect. Even after some weeks, her stomach still has difficulties with both water and food. She does not know where to find basic ingredients she needs for cooking, she does not know the local ones either. The weather is so far not as bad as its reputation abroad; it is quite nice and often sunny. Getting known new people is for the first time in life really difficult for her. She says hi to all local shop assistants around who recognize her already, but that is pretty far away from making friendship. Through her boyfriend, she occasionally meets some British colleagues of his. They are very nice and polite, great hosts showing places and offering their home made Sunday lunches and cakes. But at the same time their questions, advice and suggestions often give her a feeling that she is a subject of some kind of charity, not an equal person with maybe comparable knowledge, skills and life experience. Their kind advice that she might work as an aupair makes her feel so frustrated when she remembers the tasks in her previous jobs: organizing international events, consulting projects and an active part in policy making. Should she feel guilty towards these people because she does not feel thankful? In fact she feels like shouting at them in her mind. She does not shout and does not cry, but the barrier between her and adaptation to London is growing. On the top of that, the debts on their accounts are mounting fast.

However for most of the things listed she had been expecting. She knew them from stories of other friends who tried that, many community websites are full of them. Just that she hoped she might have been better prepared than many others, that her job experience with an international network might open the door to her to a qualified market... And she has not given up yet. Currently, she still feels determined to overcome this phase and give it more time. She still hopes to find a qualified job. She rationally knows that it would have many advantages for her and her boyfriend to stay there: they can both speak the language (in their countries the partners cannot), they can work there legally (she cannot work in Germany, the market has not been opened yet), they are both migrants there, so they can understand each other's feelings very well (in their countries, the situation would be much more unbalanced), there are good and relatively cheap flight connections from there to the places where their families and friends live. The difficulties have brought them even closer together and strengthened their relationship, so she feels she has the energy to go on, she is just not sure what to do specifically.