

# **Synthesis Report on the Quality Situation in Guidance in Group Settings in selected European Countries**

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## 1 Introduction

Guide me is an innovation transfer project within the framework of the “Leonardo da Vinci Project”, supported by the European Union. The aim is to extend the already developed quality guidelines and a curriculum to improve the quality of guidance measures in the context of the previous project QUINORA to “new” countries. Thus a foundation for common EU quality criteria in guidance will be created and applied in new partner countries (Austria, Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria, Lithuania and Poland).

At the beginning, all Guide me partner countries described the guidance situation in their countries in a report. The aim of this synthesis report is to sum up these country reports and identify similarities and differences as well as future challenges in guidance in all partner countries.

## 2 Executive summary

In the following chapters, an overview of the quality situation in the Guide me partner countries will be provided. Moreover, the most important quality programs concerning guidance measures and guidance staff will be described as well as the ongoing efforts to improve the quality situation in each country. Finally, I will discuss the main challenges and quality problems which are still to be solved.

The participating countries are Austria, Bulgaria, Greece, Lithuania, Poland, and Turkey. The quality situation in these countries is very heterogeneous. This is also true for the existing quality programs and quality standards. Nevertheless, some similarities can be identified:

- There aren't any general quality standards (in terms of countrywide applied standards) for guidance measures and services carried out in group settings. In most countries, quality standards are only set up for public guidance institutions.
- The national public employment services play a very important role as initiators and providers of guidance measures (and of training measures). In Poland, for example, the national employment agency is even the exclusive initiator of guidance. Public employment agencies offer a wide range of services and training for several target groups like the unemployed, specifically young/older unemployed persons, migrants, women, disabled persons etc. in different settings (single and group setting in training and guidance/counselling, virtual guidance). Guidance services are provided at local and regional level through the local centres of the public employment agencies.

Additionally to the professional training measures, many public employment agencies offer motivation and activation courses (as in Bulgaria, Turkey, Poland) as well as orientation courses (e.g. Austria). In several countries, the national employment agencies as well as ministries put training/counselling measures out to tender, subsequently, various public and private institute carry them out.

- As far as the training of trainers and counsellors is concerned, the requested training standards vary in each country, also depending if a trainer/counsellor works for public or for private guidance providers. By all means, most partner countries demand formal qualifications from vocational trainers/counsellors as well as some practical work experience. Additionally to the required specific

knowledge and work experience, key competencies as well as social and psychological skills of trainers/counsellors gain importance.

- More and more countries offer study programs specialized in vocational counselling (and training). Some universities also offer study programs in pedagogics, psychology etc. with a major in vocational counselling and training. Specific study programs at the tertiary level become more and more important in several partner countries like Lithuania, Greece, and Turkey where graduate or even post-graduate programs (Poland) were established.
- Due to the rapid economic change, professional training and vocational orientation have become a main political issue in all partner countries. Today, the adaption to the constant changes on the labor market is a main challenge for training and guidance providers.

As far as the conceptualization and implementation of guidance measures are concerned, several similar problems could be identified in the partner countries:

- Communication problems between guidance initiators and the implementing training organizations pose a common problem, as well communication between training organizations and trainers/counselors and between counselors and clients/participants. Trainers/counselors often face the problem that the participants' needs are not sufficiently incorporated in the training design which is defined by the guidance initiators (often employment agencies). Training concepts should be more flexible so that the participants' needs could be taken into account. Trainings which are adapted to the clients needs (in terms of their conformity to the situation and needs of the clients) will also have a positive impact on their motivation.
- In most partner countries, there is a lack of evaluation in guidance measures carried out. A continuous and goal-oriented evaluation of guidance services has to be facilitated in order to detect the weaknesses and to improve the quality of the services offered. Evaluation should be carried out internally and externally. Besides, quality control also implies the implementation of national – and European – quality standards in the long run. The EU is an important framework for the standardization and implementation of quality standards in all European countries by providing specific quality curricula.
- Guidance services are often insufficiently adapted to the needs of and the trends on the labor market

(The mentioned criticisms will also be discussed in detail in chapter 5.2. "Existing problems on the system and meta level".)

### **3 Offer in scope of guidance in group setting measures**

In most partner countries, guidance is carried out by various organizations (like in Austria, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Greece and Turkey). Public employment agencies play a crucial role in most partner countries and their activities are usually defined and regulated by federal law. Counselling in Poland is even exclusively organized and regulated by national law respectively by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy and the Ministry of Science and Higher Education.

Guidance in Lithuania is organized in two separated professional fields - vocational information which is mainly provided by educators and teachers and vocational consultation, mainly provided by career guides and psychologists.

The main providers of guidance services in Bulgaria are the National Employment Agency through its labor bureaus throughout the country as well as private counseling centers and agencies. Guidance for children and young people is offered by university career centers and by pedagogical advisors who work in secondary and vocational schools. Due to the high unemployment rates, guidance activities in Bulgaria mainly pursue the goal to motivate and stimulate persons so that they can orientate themselves independently on the labor market and are able to choose relevant training measures for their professional development. According to the "law for encouragement of the employment" guidance has to offer three main services: Vocational orientation (mostly for students and their choice of profession and carrier development), vocational training, and vocational education.

In Greece, there are two important guidance institutions namely the "National Resource Centre for Vocational Guidance" serving as a governmental executive agency and the "National System for Linking Vocational Education and Training to Employment" that coordinates all kinds of activities related to guidance. Together with the Ministry of Life Long Learning and Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, these two organizations are in charge of the development, supervision, and control of guidance measures in Greece.

The public employment agency ISKUR is the main organizer of guidance and training measures in Turkey and offers guidance services in its regional offices which are established throughout the country. ISKUR provides job search counselling and information on job placement, job advertisement, labor market analysis, VET services, and vocational counselling. Furthermore, ISKUR offers several active labour market programs to (re)integrate the unemployed in the labor market. ISKUR also offers guidance and training for specific target groups like disabled people, young unemployed persons, and women. Guidance for adolescents and children is exclusively organized and provided by the Ministry of Education.

In Austria, several private and public institutions (e.g. political parties, trade unions, and the chamber of labour) offer guidance and training to a wide range of target groups (unemployed persons of different age levels, migrants, persons with disabilities etc.). The main guidance initiator and promoter is the Austrian Public Employment Service (PES). At federal level, the Ministry for Education, Art and Culture is in charge of the organisation of adult education. At regional level there is a network of responsible governmental institutions, whereby the regional "Vocational Information Centers" - established by the PES - play a very important role.

#### **4 Initiator(s) of guidance measures**

As already mentioned, public employment agencies are the main initiators of guidance measures in all Guide me! partner countries. Usually, they work at federal level as well as at local level through its numerous offices and provide a wide range of guidance service as information on professions, about the labour market, vocational training, activation measures as well as counseling (in face-to-face and group setting). The situation in Poland is quite exceptional – the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Education state agencies are the *exclusive* initiator and regulator of counseling activities.

In Lithuania, we can distinguish between two main guidance services which are initiated and organized by several public institutions like the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, the Lithuanian Labour Market Training Office, the Department of Statistics and the Information Society Development Committee of the Lithuanian Government as well as of the municipalities throughout the country. The two main vocational guidance promoters are the Vocational Advising Stations (VAS) that inform people about their study and work possibilities in the country and abroad. Second, there exist Vocational

Guidance Centres which offer several guidance services. All vocational advising and counselling activities are coordinated by the *Vocational Guidance Council* which consists of the Minister of Education and Science and the Minister of Social Security and Labour.

Similar to Lithuania, guidance activities in Greece are offered in the education sector as well as in the employment sector. In the first case, guidance is organized by the "Career and Counselling Centres" (regulated by law) that work under the supervision of the Ministry of Education. In the employment sector, the "Manpower Employment Organization" is the principal body supplying continuing vocational training programs (and their adaption to the changing labour market needs).

The situation in Bulgaria is quite similar – the main guidance initiator is the national employment agency which also offers guidance and training through its labor bureaus in different regions (at local level, the agency cooperates with the local municipalities). Additionally, several private orientation centres offer training and counselling. The agency mainly plans and provides training and consulting as well as activation measures (for both employed and unemployed persons). All guidance measures are based on the governmental employment policy which is supervised by the national "Councils for Cooperation". Employment and guidance policy in Bulgaria is itself based on the annual national action plan which is developed by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy according to the trends and needs of the Bulgarian labor market. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Science coordinates and controls the implementation of the plan. Another important institution is the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training which licenses activities in the field of the vocational education and training and coordinates the involved institutions.

In Turkey, the Ministry of Education and the Turkish public employment agency ISKUR are the main initiators of guidance activities. ISKUR is affiliated to the Ministry of Labor and Social Security and the Ministry of National Education. ISKUR established offices throughout the country and provides three main services: Placement of job seekers; providing information about the labor market and giving personal advices and informing about insurance benefits for the unemployed; as well as job counseling and vocational training. ISKUR also offers specific services and information for students and adolescents. Other important target groups of ISKUR are people starting their work life or persons who want to change their job, the (long-term) unemployed, persons who want to develop their occupational skills.

Like in Turkey and Bulgaria, the most important provider of guidance service in Austria is the public employment service and its local offices that provide information and counselling services directly and indirectly through a range of profit and non-profit organisations. Another very important measure are the six week "orientation" courses for unemployed persons where they analyse their own interests and competences and develop a future career/training plan. Other public institutions providing guidance are the Chamber of Commerce (especially vocational and educational information and counselling services), the Chamber of Labour that offers information for further education and personal counselling and the industrial unions (they mainly offer further education for their members in the specific field of profession), furthermore churches, political parties, federal states and municipalities and private/public adult education organisations such as the Institute for Economic Development, the Vocational Training Institute.

## **5 Organizations carrying out the training measures**

In most partner countries, the public employment agencies are the main organizer and provider of training measures (like Lithuania, Bulgaria, Poland, Austria). Either, the agencies provide training directly through employed trainers or the put trainings out to tender (e.g. Austria, Bulgaria). As far as target groups are concerned, training providers in all partner countries offer training for various target groups (young people, older unemployed people, persons with disabilities, migrants etc.).

The "Labour Market Training Offices" provide training and counselling through their seven offices in the biggest Lithuanian cities. The offices offer service in guidance and training for several target groups as well as labour market integration programs and career planning and development services. The "Lithuanian Labour Exchange" provides vocational advising and counselling as well as employment counselling and passes people seeking psychological counselling on to the institutions in charge. Other institutions like the "Lithuanian Chamber of Technical Creative Work of Students" provide material for vocational advising and counselling as well as relevant publications about job opportunities in different sectors. Furthermore, psychologists and social pedagogues work in secondary schools and universities throughout Lithuania and support students during their career planning.

In Poland, various institutions offer vocational counselling and training in regional employment offices of the public employment service as well as in public and private job and human resources agencies, vocational guidance agencies and temporary work agencies. Other bodies are the Polish employers' associations and associations of the unemployed and nongovernmental organisation. According to Polish law, these institutions should provide information on job profiles, on the current situation on the labor market and about education and training opportunities. Job-seekers can also test their professional aptitudes and interests in the above mentioned organisations and analyse their suitability to specific jobs or work areas. The institutions also provide group guidance for the unemployed and support employers/companies selecting job candidates.

In Bulgaria, we can distinguish between institutions providing counselling and training on the one hand and institutions only providing information on the other hand. Most of these - governmental and private - institutions provide both counselling and training as the "Centers for information and professional orientation" that carry out professional orientation and vocational training for different target groups. University career centers offer professional orientation services especially for students (including information for vacancies and internship programs, about trends on the labour market etc.). The national public employment bureaus put their trainings out to tender and offer counselling for unemployed people as well as job matching services (matching qualifications with the available job places) Besides, private recruitment institutions- who need a formal legal admission for their activities - also offer information, counseling, and psychological assistance for job-seekers (in groups and individually). University career centers offer guidance services for students (development of employability skills, assessment of aptitudes etc.).

The main provider of vocational counselling and training in Turkey is the public employment agency ISKUR, besides, different private institutions offer training like the private institution KAR-DER ("Career counselling and human resources development association"), trade unions, charitable foundations, and trade chambers respectively chambers of industry. Private non-profit training institutions have an important function as the carry out the trainings put out to tender by the public employment agency.

Similar to Turkey and Bulgaria, the Austrian public employment service as well as the Austrian Ministry for Education, Art and Culture put their training measures out to tender. Several private and public training institutions carry out vocational training in Austria. The PES itself offers counseling for the unemployed. Another provider of training is the Austrian Economic Chamber through its "Institutes for Economic Development" and the Chamber of Labour that offers free career guidance and counselling (in cooperation with the Austrian trade union).

In Greece, vocational training is divided into two big areas: initial vocational training and continuing vocational training. Basically, initial vocational training is supervised by the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs, several (public and private) "Vocational Training Institutes" carry out the trainings within the "National System of Vocational Education and Training". They provide vocational training in various fields (IT,

management etc.). Continuing vocational training in Greece is carried out by different bodies which are supervised by several ministries as, for example, the (public and private) "Vocational Training Centers" accredited by the National Centre for the Accreditation of Vocational Training Structures. The main aim of continuing vocational training is to refresh and upgrade the skills of job-seekers.

Another important institution is the "Pedagogical Institute for People with Special Needs" that offers guidance services especially for disabled persons. At the so-called "Second Chance Schools" young adults (between 18 and 30 years old) who dropped out of school can complete their school education. Finally it should be mentioned that the implementation of guidance services in schools is a main political issue in Greece.

### **5.1 Setting and content of guidance measures**

In all partner countries guidance is provided in single as well as in group setting. Guidance measures also pursue similar aims in all countries: providing information about the labor market, specific work areas and/or professions, helping clients preparing interviews and applications, testing individual aptitudes and skills and proposing further (vocational) training if necessary.

In Lithuania, both single and group coaching are carried out. The most important topics in guidance are career development and career change, job search methods, preparation of interviews and relevant documents, as well as the assessment of personal abilities, dispositions, and skills. Furthermore, psychological activation programs, social-psychological rehabilitation and labour market integration programs are carried out. These programs encourage participants to reflect on their ambitions and goals, to develop methods of emotional self-regulation and improve their social skills (communication etc.).

Like in Lithuania, guidance in Poland is carried out in single and group setting, pursuing similar aims: examination of the clients' vocational interests and predispositions, job matching using local, regional, national and international information resources and providing information about job opportunities in different business sectors. Specific offers exist for people who don't have any experience with job searching, for long-term unemployed (for example the so-called "activation sessions" for people who lost their motivation) and for people who had a long career break.

The national employment agency in Bulgaria provides vocational guidance and information on individual and group level through its labor offices throughout the country. The agency also offers motivation trainings for job seekers (the duration of a motivation course varies between 30 hours as a part of a professional training and 120 hours as a separate training). In Bulgaria, there is little demand for individual counseling.

As already mentioned in the previous chapter, guidance in Greece is provided separately in the education sector and in the employment sector. In each sector, different institutions offer guidance services. The public "Career and Counselling Centres" directly offer guidance services in individual and group setting, moreover, they support school career counselors who themselves work at individual or group level. In the employment sector, the "Centres for Promotion to Employment" provide individual and group guidance, their main target group are the unemployed. Furthermore, the following public institutions provide guidance for individuals and groups: Information Offices for the Unemployed and Businesses who provide information about vocational opportunities, the Information Office for the Unemployed and Businesses of the Greek Workers' Confederation, and the Information Local Government Organizations.

The main guidance initiators in Turkey, the Ministry of National Education as well as the public employment agency ISKUR offer both individual and guidance in group setting for different target groups like the unemployed, women, disabled people, and unemployed young persons. Big companies offer in-house guidance services to their employees.

In Austria, single and group counselling are combined: Persons participating in guidance measures attend plenum sessions, in which trainer work with the group as a whole, and get single coaching in which the trainer works with one participant in a face-to-face setting. The Public Employment Service determines the number of participants in an orientation or activation measures which are carried out in groups of approximately 10-15 people. Besides, "virtual counseling" via internet is used more and more (virtual guidance offers interests and excellences tests and tests which identify individual job profiles).

## 5.2 Requested initial and further training of guidance staff

In the partner countries, the requested qualifications for guidance staff differ a lot. In Bulgaria, Poland, and Greece most trainers/counselors hold an academic degree. Additionally, work experience in training/counseling is always required. In Austria and Lithuania, there are different (non-university) training programs for trainers/counselors: In Austria, the main guidance and training provider, the Austrian Public Employment Service, defined qualifications standards for all trainers/counselors working at the PES. These standards contain requirements for the theoretical and practical formation of the trainers/counselors. Post-graduate study programs specializing in vocational training and guidance were established in several countries in the last years (e.g. Lithuania, Poland, Bulgaria).

The different programs of the Lithuanian „Register of Labor Market Study and Training Programs“ cover all relevant aspects of a trainer's/ counselor's formation. They learn to analyze professional activities in different work sectors, developing emotional and psychological competences as well as competences in group psychology and communication skills. Trainer also learn to analyse the professional history of a person in order to suggest suitable training and/or career planning steps. The study programme of Vytautas Magnus University is another possibility to become a vocational trainer and counsellor (completed with a Master's degree).

In Poland, people who are interested in becoming a trainer/counsellor can choose a university (post graduate) study program (specialised in counselling or another – relevant – area) which is either full time or an extra-occupational program. In general, four different professional levels of trainers/counsellors can be distinguished in Poland: Vocational counsellor- trainee who can only work under the supervision of a certified vocational counsellor, vocational counsellor (holds a master degree, minimum of 12 months work experience in guidance), 1<sup>st</sup> degree vocational counsellor (holds a master degree, minimum of 2 years of working experience), 2<sup>nd</sup> degree vocational counsellor (master degree , minimum of 3 years work experience as a 1<sup>st</sup> degree counsellor).

Most trainers in Bulgaria hold a degree in pedagogy, sociology or the like. Generally, more and more trainers hold academic degrees although it is not formally required. Several universities now offer post-graduate study programs specialized in training/counselling. The national employment agency defines the following requirements for trainers: Their qualification must correspond to the thematic of the course and the trainers need to have at least 600 teaching hours practice in the

indicated training area. Some training institutions developed in-company trainings for the employed trainers.

Similar to Bulgaria and Poland, future trainers/counselors in Greece can either chose to be trained in guidance agencies or complete a postgraduate study program (for example at the University of Athens) which includes practical training as well (between 300-400 hours depending on the program). The postgraduate programs are open to students who already have graduated in humanities, social, economic, or applied sciences at a Greek university or a pedagogical institute. Counselors working in the education sector, as for example at the "Career and Counseling Centers" and in the "Educational Guidance Offices" are basically teachers who then completed a one-year postgraduate diploma course in counseling and vocational guidance. In order to work as an "information and documentation expert", they additionally need a 6-month training (900 hours) that focuses on the collection, dissemination, and documentation of information on vocational guidance. Trainers working in the vocational training sector must have completed studies in pedagogies (or the like) and a two-semester training program in the Higher School of Pedagogical and Technological Education.

In Turkey, trainers/counselors who want to work for the public employment service need to show that they possess relevant knowledge and working experience. The University of Ankara offers the postgraduate program "Human Resources Management and Career Counseling".

The requested qualification standards of counselors and trainers in Austria are very heterogeneous as far as content, duration, and costs are concerned. There are no - countrywide established - accredited job descriptions or quality standards for trainers. The Austrian public employment service requires at least completed secondary school level, furthermore, a federal quality standard defines the trainers' skills and qualifications (for trainers working in PES measures). The quality standards can be modified by each of the regional PES departments, but modifications have to respect the national quality standard. Compulsive subjects are group processes/group dynamics, basics in communication as well as in moderation (techniques), teaching methodology (adapting didactics to different needs/target groups), presentation techniques, conflict management as well as education and training planning (creating concepts and scripts for a particular group, time management etc.). After working five years in PES or similar measures financed by other institutions, a trainer/counselor can be certified "PES Senior Expert".

The PES employees (who are the main providers of guidance) attend an internal 10 weeks training program. Several private organizations offer certification and training for trainers/counselors (for example the certificate of the "Federal Institute for Adult Education" or the ECGC<sup>1</sup> study program at the Donau-Universität Krems).

### **5.3 Requested quality certificates from the guidance institutions**

Basically, we can distinguish between Lithuania which already established general quality certificates and the other partner countries where such certificates are partly established and applied (in Greece and Poland only for public institutions, in Austria for trainers working in measures financed by the PES).

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<sup>1</sup> See also <http://www.ecgc.at/>. The ECGC (European Career Guidance Certificate) is based on the MEVOC competence standards for career guidance counselors and acknowledges formally and non-formally acquired knowledge/skills/competences of trainers/counselors.

The Lithuanian national Evaluation Commission controls the quality of vocational guidance services carried out by several public and private guidance institutions. This implies criteria concerning staff (required knowledge, skills, work experience), infrastructure, information, and material provided for the clients (publications about professions etc.), as well as criteria of the used methods (e.g. for evaluation/self-evaluation of the clients' needs and expectations).

As already described in the last chapter, vocational counselors and trainers working at the public employment institute in Poland must possess at least a vocational counselor certificate in order to carry out training and guidance measures (as already said, vocational counselor trainees can only work under the supervision of a certified vocational counselor).

In Greece, only guidance services provided by the public employment service must meet certain quality requests concerning infrastructure, equipment, and staff.

In the other partner countries (Bulgaria, Turkey, Austria), no countrywide quality certificates exist yet. In Bulgaria, licensing is only obligatory for professional trainers but not for guidance staff. In Turkey and Austria, very general quality standards are applied like the ISO 9000 Quality management system and Total Quality Management but they are insufficiently adapted to guidance. The Turkish Vocational Qualification Authority is currently collecting occupational standards which will serve as a basis for the definition of vocational quality standards. In Austria, two private institutions developed or apply quality standards: First the "Academy for Training" which certifies and graduates trainers working in the field of adult education (the standard includes 7 obligatory competences namely didactic, management, education theory, counseling, information management, and librarianship, social and personnel competencies), second, the already mentioned "European Career Guidance Certification (ECGC)" is applied by several training providers.

## **6 Quality programs in continuous and further group training**

Quality programs exist in most partner countries (Austria, Lithuania, Poland, Greece, Bulgaria). In Poland, Greece, and Bulgaria, trainers/counselors working for public institutions (mainly for the PES) have to meet specific quality criteria. Additionally, Greece and Bulgaria established accreditation centers which certify VET providers and evaluate them on an ongoing basis. In Austria, different quality assurance programs and standards are established.

In Lithuania, quality assurance in group counselling is based on the following three quality programmes: Vocational decision making and career designing programmes (for guidance in group settings), programmes for the development of abilities to compete on the labour market, and programmes for the development of self-confidence and job search.

As already stated above, all trainers/counsellors working for the national employment service in Poland need to be certified as guidance counsellors. Private institutions use different quality assurance procedures. An example of a quality program is the "Assessment Scale in Professional Counselling" which focuses on the evaluation of the a counsellor's self-effectiveness.

In Turkey, the national PES assures quality through the evaluation of the trainers' knowledge, skills, and experiences as well as through criteria of the course infrastructure, but there is no institutionalized specific quality certificate for guidance yet.

Quality assurance in Greece and Bulgaria is quite well established. In Greece, all guidance providers are evaluated and supervised by the National Accreditation Center for Vocational Training (acting under the Ministry of Labor and Social Security). Quality is assured through the accreditation of vocational training centers as well as through staff certification. Additionally, a system for the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the work of the accreditation centers has been established. In Bulgaria, an obligatory quality program has been established for all VET providers. The quality program includes standards for the guidance staff (qualifications, skills etc.) and the trainings' basic conditions.

As already mentioned in the previous two chapters, no countrywide applied quality standards for training and guidance have been established in Austria yet. Several public and private institutions have defined their own standards. One of the most important quality assurance "programs" are the – already mentioned – quality standards of the Austrian PES. Moreover, several other private and public institutions developed quality programs: The Professional Association of Counsellors established quality standards in trainers' qualifications, the Private Employees Union developed a quality programme dealing with criteria for trainers as well as for training materials, the Association of Adult Educations Centers published a criteria handbook, the Austrian career guidance counsellors established a quality assurance program which is applied to its members, the Association of education and career counsellors developed a quality curriculum for trainers, the Austrian Institute for Professional Education Research developed an external quality assurance system for counseling institutions.

### **6.1 Quality situation in guidance in group settings**

Although most countries developed quality programs for training and guidance, specific quality standards for guidance in group settings are still missing. At the same time, there is more and more demand for guidance services in all partner countries.

In Lithuania, the Vytautas Magnus University developed the "Programme for Qualification Improvement of Vocational Counselling Specialists" in order to improve the competences, skills, and knowledge of counsellors. In Poland, national policy makers want to establish national and regional "Integrated Vocational Counselling Centres" in order to standardize the activities and services of all VET institutions which would also have a positive influence on the quality of the provided guidance services. Studies carried out in Austria and Turkey show that the quality of group guidance mainly depends of the following criteria: Size and homogeneity/heterogeneity of the group (the smaller and the more homogeneous, the better), qualifications of counsellors (who should get specific training for group settings), motivation of the clients and the clients' ability to confide in the quality and outcome of the counselling. Furthermore, the placement rate should not be the only criteria of a measure's success.

### **6.2 Existing problems on the system and meta level**

In the following, the main problems of the partner countries will be discussed.

A major problem in several countries is the lack of a coherent national guidance policy. This means that the activities of the main guidance providers are not or insufficiently coordinated, there is insufficient communication between the national PES, the training institutions, trainers, and clients.

Another main problem is the insufficient qualification of career counselors. Working conditions of trainers/ counselors are also an important issue in most partner countries. Counselors usually lack supervision and further training and are underpaid or not paid for the preparation and post-processing of the course/guidance measure (like in Austria).

Other factors are the insufficient quality standards of the information material, the lack of continuous funding (which is linked to the problem of price dumping between VET providers as in Austria) and the lack of standardization of guidance services and materials provided for the clients. Polled trainers/counselors also state that the use of ICT should be encouraged in guidance measures. In Turkey, the lack of trainers in certain new areas of occupation is an essential problem which is due to the fast changes on the labor market. Trainers/counselors in several countries (e.g. Austria, Turkey) claim that guidance services have to be better adapted to the needs of specific groups (older unemployed persons, women after a career break, the disabled). The adaption to specific target groups is especially difficult because many guidance providers mainly focus on the placement rate and don't provide enough funding for a sustainable guidance process.

### **6.3 Suggestions by experts to improve the quality situation**

In order to respond to the above described quality problems in the different partner countries, possible solutions will be presented in this chapter.

As far as the trainers'/counselors' qualifications are concerned, guidance providers should establish specific requirements for counselors working in group guidance measures (like group psychology, group dynamics etc.). Furthermore, systematic supervisions should be provided. Experiences as well as expectations and demands of counsellors should be taken into account during the planning of guidance measures. As far as requirement profiles are concerned, explicit and specific job profiles and job descriptions should be developed for the professions "vocational counselor" and "vocational trainer" in order to determine what kind of skills, competences, and knowledge a person has to possess to perform the tasks. On the long term, these job profiles will have a positive influence on the standardization process in guidance.

With regard to the existing coordination and cooperation problems in various partner countries, the establishment of national coordination centres would be a solution (which will – for example - be established in Poland). These centres would coordinate the guidance activities of schools, universities, public employment services as well as measures carried out by private agencies and institutions providing socio-psychological services. At the same time, the centers would be in charge of the implementation of a national guidance policy (defined by the responsible ministries). Apart from these very concrete quality problems, policy makers should raise awareness for guidance in society and responsible institutions in general (also in schools).

Guidance measures should be conceptualized flexibly in order to facilitate adaptations to the specific target group, to changing conditions and changing labour market situations. The counselors' experiences and the clients' feedback should also be used as a resource for adaption. Clients in long term measures should have the possibility to choose some courses in a self-determined way. This would increase the clients' motivation and would also avoid redundant training.

In order to be able to provide high-quality counseling, continuing and systematic evaluation is necessary. In Poland, the "Vocational Guidance Quality Evaluation Scale" was developed by Augustyn Bańka (Nicolaus Copernicus University) which measures the skills and abilities of counselors/trainers and their deficiencies.

In terms of financing, the sustainable planning of financial resources is a crucial matter. Guidance providers should also allocate a part of the budget to the trainers' supervision and further education. As far as the working conditions of trainers are concerned, training institutions could either employ trainers as employees (not as freelancers) to ensure their safe financial situation or pay them better (another solution could be to consider one hour of teaching as two working hours). This would make preparing and post-processing possible for counsellors/trainers.

## **7 Existing quality standards in guidance in group settings**

As already mentioned in chapter 5.1. Quality situation in guidance in group settings, several quality criteria and standards are used in most partner countries, but in a non-standardized way (Lithuania, Bulgaria, Poland, Austria and Turkey). Although quality standards are already established in these countries, they are not countrywide applied (in most cases only in public institutions, with Greece being an exception). In Greece, all guidance providers have to meet the national quality standard and are continually supervised.

In Lithuania, the Ministry of Education and Science has developed quality standards for vocational information, counselling, and the training of consultants together with the Vytautas Magnus University (including a standard for the use of an information, consultation, and orientation IT system). These standards include methodological recommendations for trainers/counsellors and a training program for counsellors. Moreover, a "work guide" for vocational information and consultation was developed as well (similar to the guide for "Career Information and Counselling Work" created within the project "Creation and Implementation of the System for the Vocational Guidance").

In Poland, different general quality standards for guidance/counselling are established within the "Classification of professions and specialisations" (established by the Institute of Labour and Social Affairs, commissioned by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy). As already mentioned, career counselors employed by state bodies have to meet certain qualifications according to the regulations for labour market services and institutions. The application of these standards to all guidance providers would be a first step towards standardization.

In Bulgaria, several quality standards for guidance measures were developed like the "Scope of activities for vocational orientation", the standards "Licensing of institutions providing training measures" and "Registering of institutions providing vocational orientation" (all standards are part of the national law for vocational education and training). Another applied standard is the "International Global Career Development Facilitator" certificate. As there exist already several standards, the main challenge is their countrywide implementation in the guidance providing institutions. Apart of that, certification should be facilitated for trainers/counselors who acquired their knowledge informally.

In Austria, the situation is quite similar than in Poland and Bulgaria. The Austrian public employment service defined criteria for the call for tender evaluation. These criteria also represent quality standards as the PES is the main guidance provider and initiator in Austria.

Greece already developed a national quality standard which must be applied by public and private institutions (which are also supervised by The National Accreditation Center for Vocational Training).

In Turkey, no specific quality standards for guidance services are developed yet. Therefore, more general quality standards are used like the quality certificates of the Turkish Standards Institution (governmental organization), the Quality Management Systems, and Total Quality Management.

## **8 Quality efforts or individual quality programs by the initiators, training institutions or trainers' organizations**

In general, different institutions in all partner countries collaborate in the guidance sector. Therefore, standardization and cooperation are important challenges in guidance in all participating countries.

Lithuania established the "Guide for the Career Information and Counselling Work" (as mentioned in the previous chapter), which aims at standardizing the qualifications, competences, and skills of vocational counsellors/trainers. The guide also defines requirements for the "Career Information Points" (which are countrywide established in Lithuania).

Similar to Lithuania, Poland established quality programs and methods which either focus on the continuous monitoring and evaluation of the guidance institutions' services (e.g. EFQM- European Foundation for Quality Management) or on the evaluation of the trainers'/counsellors' self-reception, self-evaluation, and self-supervision (for example the "multi-rater feedback" where clients, managers, and colleagues give feedback to counselors/trainers). Greece also chose to carry out a broad evaluation study of guidance institutions and providers throughout the country (the study was commissioned by Ministry of Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs). Another important quality facilitator is the Hellenic Society of Counselling and Guidance which carries out scientific research in the guidance sector.

In Turkey, standardization in guidance started recently. In order to standardize guidance measures as well as the trainers' competences and formation, occupational standards and job profiles need to be determined within the guidance institutions.

In Bulgaria, training institutions are developing their internal quality standards recently. They contain standards for the content of the training, the qualification of the trainers and the equipment of the training premises. EU wide projects and activities play an important role in Bulgaria (and Turkey) and facilitate the establishment of quality standards in guidance.

In Austria, several public and private institutions established quality programs and standards in the last years. One important initiative is the certificate of the "Academy for Training" (already mentioned in chapter 4.3. Requested quality certificates from the guidance institutions) which certifies and graduates trainers working in the field of adult education based on seven defined quality domains (didactic, management, education theory, counseling, information management and librarianship, social and personnel competencies) or the already mentioned European Career Guidance Certification (ECGC) which developed "a standardised and internationally transferable certification system ("ECGC-certificate") to acknowledge formally or non-formally acquired knowledge/skills/competences of career guidance counselling. Furthermore, the Professional Association of Counsellors established quality standards in trainers' qualifications (exist since 2001), as well as the Association of Adult Educations

Centers that published a handbook for quality criteria in guidance (quality criteria itself, measures on quality development and assurance, and instruments on quality assurance and development) and the Austrian career guidance counsellors established a quality assurance program which is applied to all its members. Quite similar is the quality curriculum for trainers of the association of education and career counsellors.

The Austrian Institute for Professional Education Research developed an external quality assurance system for institutions that offer vocational counseling. Another important public institution is the Private Employees Union that developed a quality programme which deals with the establishment of definitions and quality criteria for trainers as well as for products used in training.