
Reader

Summary of:
**LIFELONG GUIDANCE
POLICIES:**
Work in progress

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Career Learning as a Success Factor for Lifelong Learning

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“LIFELONG GUIDANCE POLICIES: Work in progress”

A REPORT ON THE WORK OF THE EUROPEAN LIFELONG GUIDANCE POLICY NETWORK 2008-2010

Research of literature

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1. Structure, processes and activities of the ELGPN.

Origins

The origins of the Network can be traced to the historically significant meeting of the European Council held at Lisbon in March 2000 as a part of the aspiration to become “the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based society in the world”

An Expert Group operated from 2002 to 2007 and provided a focal point for a number of significant developments. The Expert Group also played an important role in fostering a Resolution of the EU Council of Education Ministers passed under the Irish Presidency in 2004.³ This invited Member States to “seek to ensure effective co-operation and co-ordination between providers of guidance at national, regional and local levels in the provision of guidance services”.

Evolution

The workshop conclusions from the Jyväskylä conference (2006) stressed the fragility of lifelong guidance policies at national level, and called for a strong and stable mechanism at European level to encourage more sustainable development at national level and to support both policy development and implementation.

An inaugural meeting to establish the network took place on 7–8 May 2007 in Helsinki. Delegations from the Member States were invited to clarify their expectations and intentions regarding the network. A total of 23 countries attended the meeting, together with representatives from the Commission, the European Forum for Student Guidance (FEDORA), the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance (IAEVG), the International Centre for Career Development and Public Policy (ICCDPP) and the European Social Partners.

Rationale and implementation of the 2009–10 work programme

The ultimate aim of the ELGPN is to provide added value to the participating countries for the development and implementation of their lifelong guidance policies, systems and services. This added value might include:

- Sharing of ideas on common problems.
- Opportunity to test ideas and showcase good practice.
- When introducing new programmes and services, learning from relevant practice elsewhere, with the cost-benefits this may involve.

Both the ELGPN Steering Group and the whole-network Plenary Meeting agreed that the work programme for 2009–10 should be built around the four themes identified in the 2008 Resolution. These were framed as four thematic activities:

- Career management skills.
- Access, including accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL).
- Co-operation and co-ordination mechanisms in guidance policy and systems development.
- Quality assurance and evidence base for policy and systems development.

These four thematic activities have been implemented through a consistent process. Each has had a maximum of 10–12 participating countries, plus a lead country and a contracted expert to co-ordinate and support the activity in co-operation with the ELGPN Co-ordinator. In each case, the programme included two separate thematic field visits and a third synthesis meeting.



In addition, the ELGPN 2009–10 work programme included two thematic Task Groups. Task Group 1 examined European education & training and employment policies from a lifelong guidance perspective and produced Policy Briefings related to the four Work Package themes as identified in the 2008 Resolution, as well a commentary on the role of lifelong guidance in relation to the current economic crisis. Task Group 2 examined the synergy between EU-funded projects and their links with lifelong guidance policies. Both of the Task Groups were supported by contracted experts.

Key policy drivers

The ELGPN 2009–10 work programme was strongly based on the 2008 Council Resolution on better integrating lifelong guidance into lifelong learning strategies.

Evaluation strategy

The goal of the evaluation of the ELGPN in 2009–10 was to support the quality and effectiveness of the Network by providing formative feedback about the work that was done and summative information on the results that were produced.

The evaluation covered the following aspects:

- Communication (Process).
- Organisational aspects and leadership/co-ordination (Process).
- Networking/co-operation (Process).
- General outcomes (Output).
- Outcomes and impact at national level (Output)

Key outcomes

The main aim during the initial phase (2008) was to establish the network infrastructure and through peer learning activities to identify in more detail the areas of guidance where national developments could be enhanced through the ELGPN. During the second phase (2009–10), most ELGPN members agreed that the goals for establishing the infrastructure and communication procedures within the network had been met to a large extent and that the ELGPN had been able to identify relevant national contact points in most of the eligible countries.

The ELGPN website (<http://elgpn.eu>) acts as a document repository, including links to the main background documents.

A general outcome among the ELGPN members appears to be a better understanding of their own national guidance system, as well as of guidance practices and systems in other European countries. This has provided valuable ideas and inspiration for further development of national guidance systems.

1. In relation to the definition and promotion of career management skills (CMS) (Work Package 1), despite awareness of the varied cultural contexts and curricular traditions, the participants were able to agree a common definition of lifelong CMS.
2. Work Package 2 on access examined different models of service delivery and the balance between differentiated service delivery and social equity. The participants examined the potential of new technology in delivering guidance services through various channels.
3. Most ELGPN members indicated that the co-operation between different ministries responsible for guidance services was supported by their involvement in the work of the ELGPN. The work of existing national forums was enhanced by their role in relation to the network. In several countries, involvement in Work Package 3, and the access this provided to the experiences of other countries, helped to inspire the establishment of new national forums or other co-ordination mechanisms.
4. The fourth ELGPN thematic activity (WP4) on quality assurance and evidence in guidance proved to be a challenging task. Participation in the ELGPN increased understanding of the significance of quality indicators, and indicated possible strategies for developing and



implementing them, alongside ways of developing improved evidence on the impact of guidance services.

Implications for future ELGPN work

- Broadening the base of involvement of all Member States in the four priority areas.
- Increasing national awareness of ELGPN knowledge and experience based on these four priorities.
- Deepening the work on the four priorities through additional peer learning, particularly with national and EU outcomes for each in mind.
- Strengthening the policy links/interface between the work of ELGPN and EU policy development for schools, VET, higher education, adult education, employment and social inclusion.
- Providing national policy-makers, developers and stakeholders with concrete supports to assist them in their national and EU policy development.
- Extending the dissemination of the ELGPN's work.
- Strengthening the ELGPN's links with relevant international organisations

Conclusions

The establishment of the ELGPN was an initiative by the EU Member-States through the Open Method of Co-ordination. It is seen as a mechanism to promote co-operation at member-country level on lifelong guidance and to support the establishment of national/regional co-ordination structures covering the education and employment sectors. The ELGPN has also created an interface with parallel international collaborative projects on policy issues of mutual interest, notably the biennial International Symposia on Career Development and Public Policy, thereby facilitating and promoting worldwide exchange of knowledge, experience and expertise in the field of policy and systems development.

The added value of the Network is related to the fact that in the European Union the Member States face broadly similar challenges and problems. The ELGPN is a tool for policy-makers, practitioners and researchers to work together and share examples of good practice. It can thereby help to enhance national solutions to national problems. The goal is to help the Member States and other participating countries to develop better-informed and more effective policies related to lifelong guidance.

From a wider EU policy perspective, the creation of the ELGPN helps policy-makers to meet the challenges they face in enhancing national reforms through implementing the Lisbon strategy and the EU 2020 strategy, as well as the tools supporting the strategy (including the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET)). The added value of the ELGPN is not directly visible to citizens, but benefits them through its impact on how national lifelong guidance systems are developed.

The ELGPN promotes placing the citizen/user at the centre for lifelong guidance policies, including the articulation of the user voice and the guidance practitioner voice, and the role of civil society in policy development. This reflects an approach to guidance policies and guidance practices that aims to build on the resources of the users of guidance; to engage them actively in the guidance process; and to facilitate their inputs to the planning of guidance activities and methods, so that they are viewed as co-owners and co-designers of guidance provision. In these respects, it is an agenda of empowerment and democratisation.

The key strength of the ELGPN is the strong ownership of its activities expressed by the national delegations. There has been good progress in developing a common understanding of how to contribute to both national and EU-level lifelong guidance policy development. In future, there could be scope for more "vision-building" about a European perspective on guidance, with more explicit specifications of policy objectives.



2. Career management skills (WP1)

Context and rationale

The career guidance reviews carried out by the OECD, the World Bank, and a range of EU agencies (i.e. the European Training Foundation, Cedefop, and the DG Employment, Social Affairs, and Equal Opportunities), have all underlined the need for citizens to be well equipped with skills to manage the complex and non-linear transitions that mark contemporary education, training and working pathways.

A common thread in all the reviews is the conviction that today, individuals are likely to face a certain degree of insecurity as they navigate occupational options, opportunities and setbacks throughout their life, and can expect to change or lose employment with a greater degree of frequency than before. Because of this, their engagement with formal learning, training and re-training is likely to last well into adulthood, in response to rapid changes in technology, markets, and related employment opportunities.

There are clear signs that the notion of 'career' as a one-time 'choice' and a lifelong channel for one's economic pursuits is being supplanted by the notion that individuals need to actively construct 'portfolio', 'boundaryless' careers as well as career identities (in employment or self-employment) in ways that are open-ended and flexible, in response to the changing vicissitudes of life. Such representations of 'self' and 'career' may be more applicable to the knowledge-rich sectors of the economy, given the fast pace of change there.

- There is a greater awareness of the need to introduce or strengthen CMS in response to the need for skills in managing one's non-linear career pathways.
- There is a conviction that such skills increase employability, thus promoting social equity and inclusion.

CMS content and modalities of programme delivery

The term 'CMS' is now widely employed, at Member State levels other terms are used to refer to a similar set of skills. These include 'lifeskills', 'personal and social education', 'transition skills', 'school-to-work curricula', 'career education', 'career learning', 'career development learning', and so on.

One definition which seems to capture the agenda behind CMS is the following: ***“Career management skills refer to a whole range of competences which provide structured ways for individuals and groups to gather, analyse, synthesise and organise self, educational and occupational information, as well as the skills to make and implement decisions and transitions.”***

While there is a broad agreement on what themes should/could feature in CMS programmes, there are a number of issues that deserve to be highlighted. Some of these issues signal a number of tensions that also need to be addressed:

- There is a core of themes that is broadly applicable to – and useful for – all citizens, irrespective of their age or circumstance. However, there are arguments to be made regarding the level at which these different themes are addressed, depending on the age and educational level of the persons to whom the programmes are addressed.
- Another set of arguments can be made in terms of identifying specific CMS that are more appropriate or more necessary for a range of target groups, including those who, in policy terms, are defined as 'vulnerable' or 'at risk'



- There are, however, some dangers in adopting a CMS curriculum that is too broad and inclusive. Career-related issues can, over time, be given less importance and are even elbowed out of the PSE curriculum in schools
- While the emphasis on CMS appears to be somewhat new, one must not assume that the novelty of the term for some countries is equated with novelty in curricular practice.
- The current emphasis on CMS should not lead to the assumption that young people and adults do not already have a range of career management skills, which they may have learned through socialisation in family contexts, and through their contribution to community-based activities such as youth clubs, sports associations, and through participation in the labour market through part-time or full-time employment, holiday and seasonal work, and entrepreneurial initiatives.
- All this also raises issues as to how to integrate CMS in an educational context, i.e. whether to have it as a separate, timetabled 'subject', to have CMS (or at least aspects of it) infused throughout the curriculum, to offer CMS as a extra-curricular activity, or through a judicious mixture of two or more of these strategies. Decisions about which of these options to choose depends on a number of factors, such as curricular traditions within a country, concerns about an overloaded curriculum, trends in cross-curricular collaboration among teachers, and so on.
- Within the context of Public Employment Services (PES), CMS programmes are often delivered as a set of activities within 'job clubs', for instance, where the unemployed learn a range of skills that increase their employability, such as job-hunting strategies, self-presentation skills, c.v. writing, and so on. Most of these programmes are limited in duration, offered in-house or out-sourced to private providers, and are short-term in orientation, seeking to place individuals into jobs as quickly as possible rather than supporting more long-term goals such as career development.

Curricular principles underpinning CMS

All curricula are fundamentally selections that are made from a wide body of knowledge that is available. These selections tell us a lot about what a particular society values, and what it gives priority to. They also tell us a lot about which groups wield enough power to negotiate and include what they consider to be valuable, worthwhile knowledge, and whether access to such knowledge should be open or restricted, and if so, to which groups.

Despite the context-specific nature of curricula, many curriculum projects are inspired by a very similar set of principles, which reflect political orientations and values, as well as to specific understandings of what it means to teach and to learn

- CMS curricula should empower citizens.
- A truly empowering approach to curriculum development does not assume a 'deficit' perspective in relation to minority or at risk groups, and does not think of such groups as being made up of persons with problems, but rather as persons with resource
- CMS curricula should connect with learners' frameworks of relevance.
- CMS curricula should be co-constructed with learners, not only to ensure relevance, but also to democratise both knowledge and the pedagogical relationship.
- CMS curricula should strive for 'centralised decentralisation'.

Pedagogy and assessment

CMS teachers have tended to enjoy more freedom in employing experiential and innovative pedagogies, and to use not only instruction, but also counselling, a range of experiential learning strategies (e.g. role play, work shadowing and work experience, case studies), career games, computer-based resources, and so on. Indeed, some see in CMS an opportunity to bring about a paradigm shift in the way learning is organised in schools as well as in higher education, with a greater degree of emphasis on supporting student self-directed learning, active learning methods, and constructivist approaches to meaning-making.



If CMS are considered to be ‘worthwhile knowledge’ (in terms not only of know-that, but also know-why, and know-how), then the principle of assessment comes into play, with ‘assessment’ or ‘evaluation’ being understood as a set of practices that signal whether ‘learning objectives’ have been transformed into ‘learning outcomes’.

Four main reasons might come into play when developing assessment strategies in relation to CMS, none of which are mutually exclusive:

- One can assess in order to provide feedback to learners as to their progress in mastering knowledge, values or skills in relation to a particular learning objective.
- That assessment can be used to signal to external parties – such as parents, institutions, and employers – that a particular individual has indeed mastered a given learning objective.
- The outcome of such an assessment can be codified through the issuing of certificates and formal qualifications, which some consider to be ‘symbolic capital’ that can be translated into financial and social capital in the labour market and wider society. An important principle here is that any investment in formal learning should be formally acknowledged and rendered visible in ways that give learners something to show for their pains.
- Assessment strategies can be used in order to motivate learners to remain engaged and to do their best to succeed in reaching the learning objectives.

Conclusions

- The development of national frameworks that broadly set out CMS entitlements for citizens, while leaving enough flexibility to service providers to remain responsive to the needs of the clientele they serve.
- The articulation of a clear policy regarding the place of CMS in the curriculum, irrespective of whether the modality in which such skills feature, i.e. whether they are allocated their own discrete curricular space, whether they are infused throughout the curriculum, whether they are taught through extra-curricular activities, or a combination of two or more of these strategies.
- The promotion of a clear training strategy for those delivering CMS, whether in the education or PES sector. In schools, additional training is required when CMS is delivered through a curriculum infusion model, since this requires all or most teachers to be aware of their role in teaching CMS.
- The development of adequate resources that support educators in school and PES settings to generate powerful learning environments where CMS can be learnt experientially.
- The identification of areas in CMS programmes that are of particular relevance to target groups, especially those that can be considered to be, in one way or another, at-risk.
- The promotion of strategies that use assessment for CMS learning, than merely of learning.
- Further exploration of the possibility of developing a European CMS framework, which serves not as much as a common ‘blueprint’ but rather to facilitate further collaboration and dialogue on a range of shared issues between the various Member States of the EU.

3. Widening access (WP2)

Context

Widening access has been on the agenda of many countries, with particular reference to how to expand services for different target groups, usage of ICT tools, and how these are managed and funded.



- The needs of a wide range of particular groups of citizens – including employed adults, VET and tertiary students, mothers with young children, women returning to work, older adults, people with disabilities, those in remote communities and disadvantaged groups – are not adequately met.
- Guidance services are still being delivered in a limited range of locations and media, at limited times of the day or week, and at limited points in the life cycle, thus restricting lifelong and lifewide access.

The 2008 EU Council Resolution states that: “Guidance services, as services of general interest, should be accessible to everyone, irrespective of their knowledge base or their initial skills, and should be readily understandable and relevant.” To make progress in this priority area, Member States should, consider:

- Actively promoting guidance services with the public and raising their profile, using the full range of information and communication media.
- Offering a clear range of easily accessible services, based on an evaluation of people's aspirations and needs, and taking account of their living and working environments.
- Enabling people to benefit from support in obtaining validation and recognition on the labour market of their formal, non-formal and informal learning outcomes
- Promoting open access to documentary resources, the provision of support in information searches, individual counselling and institutional provision.

Key messages

Access is an issue of social justice and social inclusion policy and justice.

Career guidance has an important role in helping people make informed and careful choices about their opportunities; therefore, equity in access to career guidance is also a social justice issue. A key issue is whether career practitioners are responsible only for the users who come through their doors, or are responsible for all the citizens in our society who need help with career choices. A satisfactory balance of access and quality requires a better understanding of the effectiveness of different forms of career guidance in relation to their costs. The costs of delivering the interventions have a strong influence on citizens' access to the services they need. •

The complementary nature of the delivery channels is an important issue in guidance

While ICT has been identified by most countries as highly important in the development and dissemination of careers information and services, it is also widely recognised that face-to-face services in the form of individual and/or group work are an essential part of guidance delivery. The new ICT tools have great potential for making access both more feasible and cheaper, creating innovative and flexible service delivery linked to self-access and self-help modes. On the other hand, the use of ICT should be seen as complementing rather than replacing the traditional forms of guidance. For those member countries intending to develop integrated services for people of all ages, this represents a new challenge, demanding a rethinking of institutional contexts and professional competences, and requiring a new mentality and culture based on co-ordination and co-operation to make efficient use of scarce resources. •

APEL (accreditation of prior and experiential learning) as a effective methodology for the development of employability

The assessment of prior experiential learning (APEL) is an effective methodology for the development of employability. It is a process which enables people of all ages and backgrounds to receive recognition and formal credit for learning acquired in the past through non-formal and informal learning, and through work and other life experiences. Access to adequate guidance and support is necessary to help citizens, especially those with low skills or without employment, to make use of APEL and thereby to value their prior learning.

Technology is enabling countries throughout the world to provide a cohesive and co-ordinated approach to delivering integrated services.



In the Reflection Note, it was indicated that the new technologies have great potential for making access both more feasible and cheaper, creating innovative and flexible service delivery linked to self-access and self-help modes. On the other hand, face-to-face services always have a critical role in service delivery, and the use of ICT has been indicated as complementing rather than replacing the traditional forms of guidance.

Different levels of services are needed to meet individual needs

Using differentiated career guidance interventions to improve access is a key issue. Numerous studies have shown that people vary in their readiness for career choice, and it is very likely that the relative effectiveness of career interventions would be improved if the amount and nature of assistance provided by practitioners were congruent with the individual's readiness for decision making. Furthermore, differentiated service delivery can maximize the cost-effectiveness of career guidance interventions by limiting the provision of individualised interventions over many sessions to people with low readiness levels and who could benefit from brief or self-help interventions.

Ethical issues concerning us of ICT in guidance

Several potential ethical issues need to be taken into consideration when using services, mainly related to the quality of assessments available on the Internet. These issues include:

- *Inadequate guidance support for individuals using e-guidance resources. Some individuals may need assistance from a guidance practitioner to benefit from using a website, like the ones with reading disabilities, limited verbal ability, etc•*
- *Problems with distance guidance. When using web services, individuals need to have a full understanding about the nature of the services they receive, including what the service entails and how it is delivered (informed consent). Moreover, some individuals or groups may not have access to Internet-based resources and services.•*
- *Validity of career assessments and information available on websites. In most cases, information on how the resource was developed, and the extent of bias towards various interest groups, has been limited.*

Developing integrated services

To develop integrated services for people of all ages is a new challenge for most Member States, demanding a new institutional context, and a new mentality and culture.

The information must be appropriate to the users' needs and intentions.

Standards in provision

Standards, like validity, reliability, accuracy, objectivity, comprehensiveness, relevance to target groups and timeliness, need to be considered for ICT-based or other career materials for individuals with different needs

Monitoring, evaluation and impact mechanisms are a vital dimension for effective integrated all-age services, to be able to evaluate the trends and changing balance of usages etc.

Widening access as a transversal theme

Ensuring wider use of self-help techniques" is closely interwoven with the systems that develop self-management skills and career information. The development of delivery systems that match a wide range of personal needs and circumstances also requires qualified practitioners and quality assurance of the systems, as well as close communication, co-ordination and collaboration between all the relevant stakeholders. Continuing education of practitioners should be considered as of utmost importance in keeping them aware of the latest needs of different client groups.

The path ahead



Seven features of access seem to set the stage for developments for the future:

- *Coherence and consistency* in the service design and delivery by setting standards.
- *Channelling*, representing the medium for the service delivery.
- *Differentiation* of the services according to the specific needs of the individuals via practitioners or advisers qualified to do so.
- *Penetration* to all target groups. To be able to design and provide services both for adults and young people with different needs and backgrounds is a challenge in all countries.
- *Targeting* specific attention to the needs of a number of specific target groups, as in the case of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET), and prioritising the services. There is a tension between targeting and universal access to services. Expanding and reinforcing access to guidance to different categories of users is a challenge.
- *Marketing* the services. This has a crucial importance in managing the relationship between supply and demand. Marketing was encouraged by the Resolution of the Council of the European Union on guidance which recommends that: "Such services need to be viewed as an active tool, and individuals should be positively encouraged to use them."
- *Co-creating* – participation of users in shaping the services. This is related to penetration but is also a separate issue.

Key challenges for the future include:•

- A reflection on the present understanding of the guidance systems and the role of practitioners within them.
- How to develop practitioners' competences to use ICT tools.
- How to make effective use of the potential of Web social media and mobile technologies.
- How to evaluate the national resources and service delivery according to the new lifelong guidance paradigm.
- Ethical aspects.
- Ensure the evaluation of different service delivery modes.
- Role of co-operation partners.
- How to allocate funding between different delivery channels in meeting the needs of different priority groups.
- How the legislation defines the citizen entitlements to guidance or the service delivery perspective.
- How to better promote the existence of guidance structures and possibilities to people.

4. Co-operation and co-ordination mechanisms in guidance practice and policy development (WP3)

Context

The reviews highlighted the limitations of a fragmented approach to career guidance provision, and noted in particular the lack of co-ordination in service and resource developments across the education and labour market sectors. They proposed a partnership approach between government ministries and other key stakeholders.

Member States should, depending on their specific situations, consider

- developing effective, long-term national and regional mechanisms for co-ordination and co-operation among the key stakeholders in lifelong guidance provision;
- facilitating such co-ordination and co-operation by developing a guidance dimension within national lifelong learning and labour market strategies, in keeping with the concept which each Member State has adopted;



- supporting a partnership policy and the local networking of lifelong guidance services, including by pooling services wherever this proves effective, in the interests of streamlining user access;
- developing a common culture, including by means of quality assurance, among the various services responsible at local, regional and national levels.”

Rationale

Lifelong guidance is inherently ‘transversal’, in the sense that it crosses different sectors, in two main respects:

- In all countries, guidance provision is distributed across many different sectors, under different ministries and other jurisdictions (schools, tertiary education, adult education, public employment services, social partners, the voluntary sector, the private sector).
- One of the key roles of such services is to help individuals to move effectively across sectors in the course of their personal and career development.

A lifelong guidance forum or similar mechanism could operate at one or more of three levels:

- *Communication*. This might include exchanging information, and exploring possibilities for co-operation and co-ordination.
- *Co-operation* between partners, within existing structures. This might be largely informal in nature, and based on a co-operation agreement, with decision-making powers being retained by each partner.
- *Co-ordination*. This is likely to require a co-ordinating structure, with operational powers and funding (and possibly a contract or legal mandate)

Progress

Tasks addressed by the forums and other mechanisms established to date include:

- Establishing common definitions of guidance.
- Mapping services and identifying gaps in provision.
- Developing quality standards and quality-assurance systems.
- Developing competence frameworks and accreditation schemes for guidance practitioners.
- Promoting lifelong guidance as an integral part of lifelong learning and other strategies.
- Using EU-funded projects strategically to support system development.

Key messages

These relate to the need:

1. To make a clear connection to lifelong learning, employment and social inclusion strategies, and to articulate the role of lifelong guidance as a public good in relation to these strategies.
2. To establish shared definitions and terminology.
3. To be selective in determining those invited to participate.
4. To have clearly identified goals, tasks and roles.
5. To have clear leadership, strong champions, and strong commitment from key parties.
6. To define clearly the relationship with the government (including, where appropriate, regional and local government).
7. To have a secretariat which is independent or at least ring-fenced.
8. To encourage evolution, but remain true to the core mission.
9. To be aware of the risks of role conflict.
10. To strive to work from the viewpoint of the individual citizen, recognising the public benefits of doing so.



Structures, processes and challenges

1 Top-down or bottom-up

In principle, the potential advantages of a 'top-down' approach include:

- That it provides a funding base.
- That it provides a direct link with government policy.
- That it makes it easier to secure selective participation

On the other hand, the potential advantages of a 'bottom-up' approach include:

- That it may be more readily sustainable, especially when there are changes of government (what one government sets up, another can pull down³⁰).
- That it has more independence of action.
- That it may produce a greater sense of ownership, and more motivated participation.

Decisions on such matters are likely to be influenced by the traditions of policy-making processes within the country concerned, and in particular, whether there is a tradition of involving the social partners and other stakeholder bodies in these processes.

1 Regional and local forums

The dynamics of the relationship between national and regional/local processes vary. In some cases, national policies may include attention to securing co-operation and co-ordination at regional/local level. In others, the initiative may be taken at regional/local level, leading to demands for supportive and complementary action at national level.

Co-operation and co-ordination at regional/local levels may be complicated by the different structures of devolution operating across education and employment respectively.

1 The integrative potential of ICT

An important issue is the integrative potential of bringing together career information and guidance providers from different sectors to develop a common web portal, built around a password-protected personal portfolio. The merits of such an approach include:

- That it shares costs.
- That it places the needs of the user at the centre of service design, and is therefore more likely to attract users.
- That in both of these respects, each partner gains added value from the involvement of the others

The potential implications can be intensified in different steps. If such steps are taken, ICT is acting not just as a tool but also as a powerful agent of change in the development of a more integrated lifelong guidance system. It can thus be the means through which service providers can transform their separate, sector-based and provider-centred provision into a user-centred lifelong guidance system, with the web portal (including the user's e-portfolio) conceptually at the centre, supported by co-ordinated sectoral provision of face-to-face and other services.

5. Quality assurance and evidence base for policy and system developments

Context

WP4 deals with links between guidance policies, research and practice, in two respects:



- The role of and development of quality assurance (QA) approaches in guidance.
- The evidence which is or could be produced to underpin, explain, and legitimise the investment of resources in guidance activities.

Rationale

Effective evaluation requires "...large-scale research with complex experimental designs and statistical controls", as noted by OECD.

Evaluations can measure what have been labelled "hard" and "soft" outcomes.

Evaluations of evidence can also distinguish between immediate, intermediate and longer-term outcomes (for the individual, economy and society).

Most research to date on the effectiveness of interventions has been short-term and focused on immediate effects, or on attitudinal change. The single most common finding is that career guidance interventions have a positive effect on participant satisfaction.

There are many challenges for research into the effectiveness of career guidance interventions, including:

- The lack of agreed common outcome measures in the field of career development or common methods used to collect data.
- The range of factors that can influence individual career choices, including the number of people potentially involved in helping the individual make decisions.

Findings

1 Quality insurance

An important focal point in relation to quality in guidance provision is the centrality of the users in guidance, not only as consumers (through, for example, client satisfaction surveys), but as actively involved European citizens, who have a say in the way in which guidance is offered and evaluated. Such citizen-focused issues at these levels, however, seem to be largely neglected in the current examples of QA systems.

2 Evidence

It became clear in the WP4 discussions that a lot of data that has potential for the development of indicators of evidence is already being collected in member countries, but that in many cases such data are not readily accessible, are collected at regional or institutional level but not consolidated at national level, and not used for guidance purposes. Such key words as "outputs" and "outcomes" (not to mention the distinctions between "information", "advice" and "guidance") have different meanings in different national contexts.

Issues and challenges

1 Indicators and benchmarks

Indicators are statistics that allow for value judgements to be made about key aspects of the functioning of systems".

With a view to comparing such indicators across organisations and different types of service delivery, and ultimately across national borders, *benchmarks* emphasise the comparative application of standards and indicators.

Control-group-based research, would be impossible, as there are many sources of career guidance, and secondly, it would not be societally justified to deprive a group of this service. Thus, evidence in guidance, be it "hard" or "soft", is always part of wider societal issues and activities. It is never monocausal.



2 Outcome and impact

Looking at evidence and designing indicators for measurement, it is essential to distinguish between “outcome” and “impact”. This can be seen in the Scottish results reported below, on the impact of career guidance in learning, economic and social policy terms. Both outcomes and impacts can be observed on an individual level, organisational level, and on a societal/economic level.

3 Evidence based on longitudinal studies

Based on longitudinal studies in the UK, Bimrose et al. found evidence of career resilience.

A fourfold typology of career decision-making was tested and found to be stable over a two-year period. These styles were: strategic, evaluative, aspirational and opportunistic. Results showed evidence of:

- Greater access to education and training.
- Greater participation in education and training.
- Increased confidence.
- Improved motivation and hence attainment in education and training.
- Improvements in the employability of individuals.

Official reports, however, are often highly critical of guidance outcomes and evidence. Swedish governmental reports have seen guidance as ill co-ordinated, with no quality-assurance systems and poor evidence. A similar Danish example depicts a system which spends one billion Danish kroner a year on activities which are poorly documented, and dealing with the wrong type of clients.

4 Learning outcomes and user involvement

One possible approach was the development of a common learning outcomes framework in guidance on a pan-European level: a European Blueprint for Life/Work.

5 Levels of evidence and methodological approaches

Creating evidence in guidance does not represent one single approach. It can be established at a number of different levels:

- Level 1 – Opinion studies, where users of guidance services provide feedback on the perceived effects of the services they have received.
- Level 2 – Outcome measurement studies with no counterfactuals. ‘Counterfactuals’ are indications of what would have happened in the absence of the guidance intervention. If no evidence on counterfactuals is available, there is no basis on which to attribute causality.
- Level 3 – Outcome measurement studies with weak counterfactuals. These are more robust than Level 2, but still subject to reservations
- Level 4 – Outcome measurement studies with control by calculation. Here multivariate statistical techniques are used to control retrospectively for those who have and have not been exposed to guidance interventions.
- Level 5 – Experimental studies with a control group. Classically, this involves random assignment to guidance and non-guidance (placebo) groups; alternatively, it may be carried out by constructing a control group.

Results

7 countries have indicated that they have established a nationwide QA system in career guidance which covers all sectors (education, employment, all-age services, compulsory schools and higher education, groups with special needs, public and private services, etc.).

WP4 decided to draw a suggestion for elements to be included in a QA Framework.



The five common reference points for quality-assurance systems for guidance provision, developed by the EC Expert Group on Lifelong Guidance (see European Common Reference Tools), comprised:

- Citizen and user involvement.
- Practitioner competence.
- Service improvement.
- Coherence.
- Coverage of sectors.

However, the five reference points do not refer explicitly to potential outcomes and the impact of career guidance, and how these are linked to quality of guidance provision and guidance delivery. The group accordingly decided to add two further dimensions:

- Outcomes.
- Impact.

The draft framework consists of both qualitative and quantitative indicators, depending on the nature of the indicator, and of the guidance sector in question.

The aim of the draft QA framework is not to impose it on member countries but to initiate and encourage a discussion on how to agree the elements to be included in a QA approach to career guidance – thus following similar European work that has been done already, e.g. the European QA framework in VET and in higher education.

Conclusions

The recommendations are that the ELGPN should work along these lines:

- Get more countries involved in the discussion on the QA framework in order to gain a broader ownership and engagement for this issue, e.g. by establishing links to the WP1 and WP2 in particular or by “twinning exercises”.
- Use the proposed elements of a QA framework based on:
 - A small number of agreed quality criteria.
 - Agreed standards for these criteria.
 - A small number of indicators for measurement.
- Draw conclusions for the updating and further development of the Common Reference Tools and making them more concrete and operational

Thus, the next step would be for the ELGPN to:

- Continue and finalise the QA framework with regard to reducing the number of indicators, work on further operationalisation of indicators, and decide on required data collection
- Launch a pilot study in several countries which are interested in testing the proposed indicators and the QA framework.

6. EU policy monitoring from a lifelong guidance perspective

Introduction

The European Union faces new challenges both within and outside its borders. The economic situation in the European Union has significantly worsened as a result of the global and EU financial crisis, the effects of which include increasing unemployment and social inequality. In addition, demographic change, especially the ageing population, rapid technological progress, the development of the knowledge economy and society, and the challenges posed by the need for sustainable development, all



require relevant EU and national policies to address these challenges and the anticipation of skills needs.

In this context, lifelong guidance has a key role to play in European education & training, employment and social cohesion policies. One of the key roles of the ELGPN is to ensure that lifelong guidance is fully reflected in relevant EU policy processes and policy documents, and to monitor how the role of guidance is taken into account as a key strategic component of lifelong learning.

Rationale

The tasks of TG1 were defined as being:

- To support the knowledge base of ELGPN members on relevant EU policy developments in education, training, employment and social inclusion.
- To support the work programme activities of ELGPN members:
- To assist ELGPN members in influencing European and national policy-makers and processes on the key role of lifelong guidance for their policy fields

EU policy development

Public policies relating to social issues – employment, education, equality, healthcare, human services – are areas of national competence. EU has adopted the Open Method of Co-ordination (OMC) which is respectful of the principle of subsidiarity: it is non-binding and relies mainly on the reforming will of Member States, while allowing measurement of efficiency and effectiveness.

The components of the adopted framework include:

- Definition of common objectives to be achieved (adopted by the Council).
- Guidelines adopted by the Council.
- Timetable.
- Measuring instruments (statistics, indicators).
- Benchmarking, i.e. comparison of the Member States' performance and exchange of best practices

ELGPN operates within this framework.

In principle, EU policy is developed in the fields of education, training, employment and social inclusion through co-operation that occurs at three levels:

- Level 1 includes the European Commission initiatives in policy development by proposing policy changes to Member States through Communications (staff working papers) often preceded by EU-wide consultation of stakeholders, and also through Green and White Papers, Council of Ministers' Resolutions and Conclusions, Recommendations of the European Parliament, and Opinions of the EU Committee of the Regions.
- Level 2 involves the establishment of action programmes and instruments, through decisions and recommendations of the Council (and, after 1997, of the European Parliament); it also includes Expert Groups established to inform the decisions of policy makers.
- Level 3 refers to pilot projects, exchanges and placements, study visits and studies/surveys, usually part-funded by EU programmes.

Level 1 gives political direction; Level 2 consists of an agreed programme of activities aimed at making Level 1 decisions operational with financial support and/or to inform policy development, and Level 3 are practitioner-, researcher- and manager-level activities that may or may not be related to Levels 1 and 2, though ideally contributing to them.

ELGPN is situated at Level 2, as an operational instrument of Level 1

Level 1 Council decisions are preceded by discussions and prior agreement at committee meetings of the representatives of the Member States. In the field of education and training, the most important committees are:



- The Education Committee.
- The Advisory Committee on Vocational Training (ACVT).
- The Directors General for Vocational Training (DGVTV).
- The Directors General for Higher Education.
- The High Level Group meetings.

The broader policy context

1 The Lisbon Strategy 2000-10

The Lisbon Strategy forms the broad policy context in which the ELGPN was established. Focusing on the knowledge society and economy, social cohesiveness, and global competitiveness, the Lisbon Strategy has led the first decade of this millennium in terms of European-wide reflections on and reforms of national policies for education, training, employment and social inclusion. As the reform strategy has unfolded, reference to lifelong guidance provision has become more explicit, as indeed have agreements for a reform agenda for lifelong guidance policies and systems themselves.

The end of 2008–10 cycle of the Lisbon Strategy has coincided with the economic downturn. Since then, financial crisis has focused attention on reducing its economic and social impact. Two future goals were defined:

- Better combining flexibility with security, through the new concept of “flexicurity”. Flexicurity policies are intended to support citizen work transitions, and highlight the role of the national Public Employment Services and the social partners in such support and in skills needs identification and anticipation.
- Better anticipating skill needs through the New Skills for New Jobs initiative. The awareness of the need for better anticipation and matching of labour market skills appears in most of the documents pertaining to education and employment proposed by the Commission and adopted by the Council since 2007 (Council Resolution on “New Skills for New Jobs” of 15 November 2007 and Conclusions of the European Council of March 2008). The role of guidance is clearly underlined: to support jobseekers to identify the competences required to move where there are skills gaps

2 Europe 2020: the post Lisbon strategy

The Communication of the Commission (2010) sets down three strategic policy directions/priority areas to re-invigorate economic growth:

- *Smart* growth – developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation.
 - Innovation Union
 - Youth on the Move
 - A digital agenda for Europe
- *Sustainable* growth – promoting a more resource efficient, greener and more competitive economy.
 - Resource Efficient Europe
 - An Industrial Policy for Globalisation Era
- *Inclusive* growth – fostering a high-employment economy delivering economic, social and territorial cohesion.
 - Agenda for New Skills for New Jobs
 - European Platform against Poverty



While lifelong guidance is not explicitly referenced in either of those initiatives, the Skills Agenda clearly implies easy access to a range of guidance services, quality assurance in lifelong guidance provision, the co-ordination of the various services, and the active role of citizens through the acquisition of career management skills.

3 The Strategic Framework for European Co-operation in Education and Training

The Council Conclusions of 12 May 2009 set down a strategic framework for European co-operation in education and training intended to address four strategic objectives for the period up to 2020 corresponding to the long-term goals of the Lisbon Strategy:

- Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality.
- Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training.
- Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship.
- Enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship at all levels of education and training.

Guidance is explicitly included in the first strategic objective and implicitly referred in the three others through the “acquisition of key competences by everyone”

During this first cycle 2009-2011, it is proposed to work on:

- Lifelong learning strategies paying particular attention to guidance (Objective 1).
- European Qualifications Framework (Objective 1).
- Professional development of teachers and trainers (focus on the quality of initial education and early career support for new teachers and on raising the quality of continuing professional development opportunities for teachers, trainers and other educational staff, e.g. those involved in leadership or guidance activities) (Objective 2).
- “Governance and funding”, including “modernisation of higher education (curricula), develop the quality of provision, including staffing, in the adult learning sector (Objective 2).
- Early leavers: strengthening preventive approaches (Objective 3).
- Transversal key competences in curricula, assessment and qualifications (Objective 4).

It is further proposed to develop co-operation on:

- Expanding learning mobility (Objective 1).
- “New skills for new jobs”, “learners with special needs” (Objective 2).
- “Promoting creativity and innovation” by developing specific teaching and learning methods including teacher training.

4 Sector approaches

In **adult learning**, the Commission launched Action Plans through two Communications: *It is Never too Late to Learn* (October 2006)⁴¹ and *It is Always a Good Time to Learn* (September 2007) which highlight the importance of adult learning and call on member states to remove barriers to participation, to increase overall quality and efficiency in adult learning.

In the **vocational education and training (VET)** sector, two important tools, ECVET and the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQARF), were launched in November 2009.

- The European Qualification Framework (EQF)⁴³ is a common European reference system, which enables different national qualification systems to be linked.
- The European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET)⁴⁴ is a technical framework for the transfer, recognition and accumulation of individuals’ learning outcomes with a view to achieving a qualification.



In the **higher education (HE)** sector, a new roadmap, the Communiqué *The Bologna Process 2020 – The European Higher Education Area in the New Decade*⁴⁵ was adopted by the Ministers of Education in April 2009. It established the following priorities:

- Quality assurance.
- Equitable access and completion.
- Lifelong learning and development of European Qualification Framework.
- Employability.
- Student-centred learning and the teaching mission of Higher Education.
- Mobility.
- Data collection.

Integrating the work of ELGPN into EU policy developments

1 Education and training policies

Particular attention should be paid to:

- The youth sector: to additionally support early school leavers; to ensure a sufficient supply of science, maths and engineering graduates; and to focus school curricula on creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship.
- The adult learning sector, and in the Initiative “An agenda for new skills and jobs”:
- There should be a stronger focus on the role of guidance and counselling in APEL and validation of qualifications acquired through informal and non-formal learning.
- In the VET sector, the new EU mobility tools, the European Qualifications Framework and ECVET should be taken into account regarding the specific nature of guidance/counselling support required in partnership with the Commission’s ECVET Working Group.
- The issue of guidance in higher education (HE) should be attended to, through the angle of continuity of career management skills development between secondary education and HE, transition between VET and higher education, access (specific information), co-ordination, quality, and counsellors’ initial and continuing training.

The ELGPN outcomes should be of particular interest for the ET 2020 groups on:

- Professional development of teachers and trainers.
- Quality of provision in adult learning sector including staffing.
- Early leavers, learners with special needs.
- Transversal key competences in curricula, assessment and qualifications.
- Promote creativity and innovation by developing specific teaching and learning methods including teacher training.

2 Employment and social inclusion policies

The role of the PES, of the employers and of trade union/worker representatives as well as the overarching frameworks such as the Integrated Guidelines, the flexicurity policy, and the New Skills and New Jobs initiative, are the key policy targets related to lifelong guidance.

At European level, the ELGPN should make connections in a co-ordinated way with employment and social policy developments,

Conclusions

ELGPN members need to be cognisant of the EU policy context of which their reflections form a part, to help to shape those policies in the future, and to make relevant contributions to support such policies. The ELGPN work on lifelong guidance policies in the next phase should be clearly situated in the context of EU 2020 and the EU policy in education, training, employment, in order to make the outcomes of the network valued within the European policies.



7. Synergies between EU-funded projects and their links to policy

Context

Many of the projects in the field of education and training are being undertaken within the Lifelong Learning Programme (2007–13). This comprises:

- Four sectoral programmes, focusing on school education (Comenius), higher education (Erasmus), vocational training (Leonardo da Vinci) and adult learning (Grundtvig).
- A transversal programme targeted on cross-sectoral areas (policy co-operation and innovation in lifelong learning, languages, development of innovative ICT, dissemination and exploitation of results).
- A programme to support teaching, research and reflection on European integration and key European institutions and associations (Jean Monnet Programme).

Other guidance-related projects are funded by the European Social Fund. These are usually national projects which include EU co-funding. Most are related to employment and social inclusion.

Projects can be divided in terms of their level of transnationality, in terms of their main focus, in terms of their relationship to guidance.

Rationale

There is a strong and widely-shared belief that the benefits and impact of EU-funded projects could be greatly enhanced by:

- Minimising overlap between projects.
- Strengthening links with policy.
- Encouraging the longer-term impact of projects, after the funding ends.

Growing importance to achieving enhanced value in projects, may be reached:

- By establishing synergies with other related projects.
- By giving increased attention to 'exploitation': i.e. seeking changes in policies and practices based on the project's work

In terms of *synergies* with other EU-funded projects, a distinction can be drawn between three possible levels of such links:

- Cross-referencing – where each project demonstrates awareness of the other and refers to it where appropriate.
- Co-operation – where the project agree to take account of each other's outputs.
- Cross-fertilisation – where the projects seek to influence each other's conceptual thinking and to reach a common position on key conceptual issues.

'*Exploitation*' in principle addresses two distinct issues:

- Sustainability: ensuring that the work of the project can be sustained in the partner countries beyond the project's life.
- Transferability: ensuring that the benefits of the project can be transferred to other European countries.



Relationship with EU 2008 Resolution priorities

Members analysed eighteen guidance projects and linked them with the four priorities.

Career management skills

Access

Quality and evidence base

C-operation and co-ordination

Case studies

In this section, we present three case studies in relation to some of the principles outlined in Section 2 above.

The first (Box 1) is an example of a project which established strong synergies with four related projects.

The second (Box 2) is a strong example of dissemination and 'exploitation'.

The third example (Box 3) relates to the strategic use of projects for system development.

Recommendations

The first set of recommendations is addressed to project commissioners, both at EU level (the Commission and its executive agencies) and at national level:

- Project commissioners should strive to prevent "reinventing of wheels" by developing effective procedures to avoid overlapping between projects.
- Project co-ordinators (promoters) should be required to demonstrate that they are familiar with previous similar projects and to indicate the ways in which they are building on the experience of these projects.
- They should be encouraged to demonstrate how links to relevant policies are built in to the methodology of the projects.
- These policy links should, where possible, be explicitly linked to the four priorities of the 2008 Resolution.
- Priority should be given to projects that meet these criteria.
- Supports should be provided to assist potential project promoters, including access to examples of good practice (e.g. through a database or manual).

The second set of recommendations is addressed to national guidance forums (where these exist):

- National forums should adopt a proactive role in linking projects to national policies and priorities.
- Where appropriate, this should include encouraging relevant ministries to provide co-funding for the national contribution to projects which meet national priorities.
- They should also adopt a proactive role in encouraging synergies between projects.

The third set of recommendations is addressed to the network of Euroguidance centres. It is recognised that the structures and roles of these centres vary across countries. However, it is suggested that Euroguidance centres should work closely with the ELGPN to:



- Maintain a database of national guidance projects (including EU-funded projects) and of transnational guidance projects including partners from their country. This should be part of a common database on policy and practice related to lifelong guidance.
- Promote successful projects (good practices) to policy-makers, stakeholders and other relevant audiences through national guidance forums where they exist and through the existing Euroguidance communication channels (websites, conferences, publications) or additional ones.
- Engage in a broadly based reflection process to suggest ways in which the impact of completed projects can be supported after they have ended.

The final set of recommendations is addressed to those responsible for managing relevant projects:

- Project co-ordinators should involve relevant stakeholders not just when bidding for the project but in its implementation.
- Attention to synergies with other projects should be given not just at the application stage, but throughout the project's life. This should include attention to the possibility of working in clusters of projects, i.e. formal co-operation between projects on similar topics.
- Similarly, issues related to the dissemination and exploitation of the project's outcomes should be addressed not just at the end of the project, but throughout the project's life, involving all relevant stakeholders in this process.

8 Towards Common European Reference Tools for Lifelong Guidance

Policy context

Within the context the European Education and Training programmes (2010, 2020) for the reform of education and training systems in Europe to support the achievement of the Lisbon goals, Member States and the Commission agreed to develop common European reference tools, benchmarks and indicators.

European peer learning as evidenced through the ELGPN activities consists of comparing and contrasting diverse approaches to specific aspects of policy and systems development. The intention is not to judge national or regional approaches with a view to pronouncing one better than another. Peer learning aims to stimulate national and European reflection and enable participants to draw inspiration from the experiences of other countries which may have found interesting solutions to similar problems, and to plan further learning. Common European Reference Tools are one means of supporting peer learning and reflection by making national policies and systems more transparent and understandable across countries and within the countries themselves.

Common European Reference Tools take many shapes and forms. The European Qualifications Framework, the Quality Assurance Framework for VET, ECVET, ECTS, Europass, and the European Framework for Lifelong Learning Competences, are well-known examples from the fields of education and training.

ELGPN approach to Common Reference Tools for Lifelong Guidance

The existing Common Reference Tools have been used for policy and systems development by Member States, mainly for national review and strategy development. Suggested revisions focus on



quality, and on measurement and evaluation issues. Member States also proposed a simplified presentation of the existing tools including with case studies and guidance on how to use them.

A prototype of a new reference tool was drafted by the Co-ordinator with the help of experts to take into account the new political realities of the 2004 and 2008 Council Resolutions and the need for meta-indicators identified by WP4, endorsed by the Steering Committee. The prototype was structured in four sections.

In Section 1 (national co-ordination and co-operation mechanisms) the following themes were selected:

- Policy partnership.
- Policy support resources.
- Policy elaboration process.
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Exchange of good practice.

Section 2 concerned career management skills acquisition. The following themes were selected:

- Organisation/delivery.
- Learning environment.
- Monitoring and evaluation.

Widening access was covered in Section 3 according to the following themes:

- Access analysis.
- Promoting access.
- Extending access through diversified delivery.

Quality assurance and evidence base were covered in Section 4, to cover:

- Quality assurance policy.
- Quality assurance practice.
- Evidence base.

Choices for the next phase of ELPGN's work programme

So choices have to be made.

Either:

- Undertake serious revision of the existing tools to bring them to a policy level of meta-indicators.
- Present them in a simplified, more user-friendly way.
- Test these revisions in peer review.

Or:

- Further develop a policy meta-indicator approach (as in the prototype) in the WPs, building on their work to date, to be used as a tool to measure progress in the implementation of the Council Resolution 2008.
- Present it in a simplified, user-friendly way.
- Test it in peer learning reviews.
- Obtain political visibility and endorsement for it.

