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HOPE: Giving hope to victims of abuse through vocational guidance and counselling

Final Report

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Executive Summary

Victims of abuse can access a number of specialist agencies, but vocational guidance sensitive to their situations is rare; most helping organisations support only women; and vocational guidance counsellors do not receive training in dealing with victims of abuse. Such specialists are needed to support career guidance and related networks (see CEDEFOP, 'Professionalising career guidance', 2009, p. 11).

One innovative character of this project lies in making the link between victims of abuse, vocational guidance and other helping organisations. Although members of this consortium have produced training and recommendations for vocational guidance in the areas of age, low paid work, refugees and migrants, and people at risk of social exclusion from other causes, our prior research discovered a gap in the training market for this particular difficulty for guidance-seekers.

Both men and women suffer abuse (physical, emotional, sexual, exploited work), and it is necessary to understand the effects of abuse in order to give the best possible support to guidance-seekers wishing to "return to life" or even start a life they never had before. Victims of abuse have been also involved in the project, particularly in the research and testing phase.

The partners found organisations that support this target group, but not vocational guidance services, even though counsellors often come across clients who cannot complete the guidance process to become self-activating. They are aware of the need to raise confidence and self-esteem; but the "learned helplessness" of many victims of abuse raises particular barriers.

The aims of the project are to develop training, supported by a wide range of materials, for new or existing vocational guidance counsellors so that they know how to recognise and deal with the problems of adult clients with a history of abuse that hinders them from becoming self-activated, and understand the importance of networks of practitioners from different fields. The training course, which is freely available online until at least 2019, see www.hope-guidance.eu, has been written by experts and its development supported and validated by strategic groups in each country consisting of experts in both guidance and related fields, such as health, social work, police, education and victim support groups. The course is being widely disseminated through strategic networks, locally, nationally and throughout Europe. It will be incorporated into the practice of partners who carry out vocational training and guidance.

The innovation, therefore, is three-fold: the provision of new training materials in a new area; the inclusion of both men and women as victims of abuse, in the labour market as well as in private; and networking between guidance and other helping services.

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1. Project Objectives

In educational parlance, aims are the intentions and plans of the curriculum writer and objectives are the intended effects on the learning of the students.

The aims of the project are to develop training, supported by a wide range of materials, for new or existing vocational guidance counsellors so that they know how to recognise and deal with the problems of adult clients with a history of abuse that hinders them from becoming self-activated, and understand the importance of networks of practitioners from different fields. The training course, which is freely available online until at least 2019 (see www.hope-guidance.eu), has been written by experts and its development supported and validated by strategic groups in each country consisting of experts in both guidance and related fields, such as health, social work, police, education and victim support groups. The course is being widely disseminated through strategic networks, locally, nationally and throughout Europe. It will be incorporated into the practice of partners who carry out vocational training and guidance.

One objective is that students of the course will be able to recognise that clients who present with obvious handicaps in terms of gender, age, ethnicity and so on may also carry invisible handicaps engendered by former abuse – and that clients who present with no obvious handicaps but are very difficult to counsel and to support in becoming self-activated may well be victims of abuse. They will learn to recognise the symptoms and to use appropriate methods to mitigate their effect so that such clients are able to become self-activating and make appropriate career decisions concerning vocational learning and employment. They will also recognise and put into practice the importance of networks of practitioners from different areas who encounter victims of abuse, in order to share expertise.

Another objective, essential to the achievement of the former, is to disseminate the course widely among guidance practitioners; to achieve sustainability through the strategic groups and dissemination to the strategic networks; and to incorporate the project results into the practice of partners and multipliers who carry out vocational guidance and training (See the dissemination section in the project website: http://www.hope-guidance.eu/index_C_EN.htm)

The situation previously described will be changed in that we have developed a training resource for guidance counsellors faced with victims of abuse to help them to recognise the symptoms and use appropriate counselling methods. This will not change the fact of abuse but will enable its victims to receive an appropriate service in order to access vocational training and employment, and to become self-activated in making important career decisions. A small number of abuse victims have already benefited from our approach in the research and testing phase but it must be recognised that their rehabilitation is a long process that we in this project cannot attempt.

2. Project Approach

Research by partners has found statistics, articles and organisations concerning victims of abuse. It is widespread, affects both men and women and links to labour market failure in countries both in and outside the current consortium. There are, however, three striking omissions from the practice discovered: victims of abuse can access a number of specialist agencies, but vocational guidance sensitive to their situations is rare; most helping organisations support only women; and vocational guidance counsellors do not receive training in dealing with victims of abuse. Such specialists are needed to support career guidance and related networks (see CEDEFOP, 'Professionalising career guidance', 2009, p. 11).

One innovative character of this project lies in making the link between victims of abuse, vocational guidance and other helping organisations. Although members of this consortium have produced training and recommendations for vocational guidance in the areas of age, low paid work, refugees and migrants, and people at risk of social exclusion from other causes, our prior research discovered a gap in the training market for this particular difficulty for guidance-seekers.

Both men and women suffer abuse (physical, emotional, sexual, exploited work), and it is necessary to understand the effects of abuse in order to give the best possible support to guidance-seekers wishing to "return to life" or even start a life they never had before. It must be said that some victims of abuse have been already involved in the project, particularly in the research and testing phase.

The partners have already found organisations that support this target group (see for instance Mandecentre in Copenhagen at http://www.hope-guidance.eu/index_C_04_EN.htm) but not vocational guidance services, even though counsellors often come across clients who cannot complete the guidance process to become self-activating. They are aware of the need to raise confidence and self-esteem; but the "learned helplessness" of many victims of abuse raises particular barriers.

Thus the action provides a new learning opportunity, aimed at skills development for vocational guidance counsellors. The aim was to find a solution to the problem presented by victims of abuse, even if they are now survivors, of abuse, who wish to access the labour market or vocational education and training, but still face great barriers arising from their previous experiences.

The course includes a toolkit with new guidance tools and methods, drawn from a range of disciplines and developed specially for this project, supported by other materials of use to guidance counsellors, such as web sites, articles, case studies and research studies.

The innovation, therefore, is three-fold: the provision of new training materials in a new area; the inclusion of both men and women as victims of abuse, in the labour market as well as in private; and networking between guidance and other helping services.

3. Project Outcomes & Results

These are the outcomes, products and results:

1. **HOPE Final Report** (This report is part of it, together with a Confidential Report)

2. **HOPE National Reports: Synthesis**

This is a synthesis of all the national reports, to show similarities and differences between the countries of the partnership. It includes statistics, prevalent types of abuse, types of services for victims, case studies and good practice in assistance to victims. It is in all the project languages (English, Danish, German, Slovenian, Spanish and Swedish) and published on the web site for free download as well as reading. The separate national reports are also available, on the web site.

This report gives a picture about the situation of victims of abuse across some European countries and the provision of guidance for people suffering abuse. We found that guidance for this collective is provided but with many differences across countries. Most of the countries focus in helping women suffering domestic and gender violence.

See http://www.hope-guidance.eu/index_D_01_EN.htm and http://www.hope-guidance.eu/index_D_02_EN.htm

In the project meeting held in Copenhagen during February 2013, we had the opportunity to visit a Men Shelter for men facing a difficult situation of abuse after a divorce for instance. It was a very good opportunity for partners to understand how some countries are doing much more efforts than others specially in the South of Europe. (See the news section of the project website: http://www.hope-guidance.eu/index_I_EN.htm)

3. **HOPE Theoretical Report**

The report focus on the economic, social and psychological consequences and effects of abuse. Available in all project languages.

By looking at the results of consequences of abuse in these three perspectives it is shown in a very clear way, how convenient for all countries would be to invest a higher amount of money in preventing programmes through education and guidance.

As an example, the negative economic consequences for the economy when for instance the victims of abuse cannot attend their job properly and therefore they might lose their jobs, are so high that investing in preventing programmes is finally the best and cheapest solution.

See: http://www.hope-guidance.eu/index_D_04_EN.htm

4. **HOPE Tools and Methods of guidance for victims of abuse**

A collection of tools (including exercises) and methods for vocational guidance counsellors seeking to help victims of abuse to enter VET or employment and to become future-oriented and self-activated. This toolkit contains 11 tools addressed to careers advisors, in order to improve their capabilities and knowledge and 30 tools to be used with the clients, the victims of abuse.

It forms an important resource for the course for vocational guidance counsellors. It is available in all project languages.

See: http://www.hope-guidance.eu/index_E_01_EN.htm

5. HOPE course in vocational guidance for victims of abuse

The electronic version of the course consists of a curriculum in modular form, with instructions and guidelines for activities and links to the supporting materials on the web site. It has been designed to be studied in an average of 60 hours, either with a tutor or as self-directed learning. It is available in all the languages of the partnership and freely available for download.

See: http://www.hope-guidance.eu/index_E_02_EN.htm

6. HOPE: vocational guidance for victims of abuse (Good Practice Guide)

These are short printed booklets in all the partner languages, containing the curriculum and a sample of the activities and supporting materials. It is also available for free download from the web site in PDF. The idea is to attract people to have a look at the electronic version of the course and supporting materials available on the web site.

See: http://www.hope-guidance.eu/index_E_04_EN.htm

Before having the final version, the course was tested by several partners. See:

http://www.hope-guidance.eu/diss_files/diss_om_Careers_Europe_Hope_testing.pdf

http://www.hope-guidance.eu/diss_files/diss_om_HOPE_Pilot_UA.pdf

7. HOPE: Final Evaluation Report (Confidential)

It includes the Quality Management Plan, the results of questionnaires to partners and an evaluation of the progress of each work package, the partnership and all the products. It also contains appendices consisting of questionnaires and templates used by the partnership, such as guidelines for collecting information and questionnaires to people testing the products.

8. HOPE: Vocational Guidance for victims of abuse leaflet. In all project languages

See: http://www.hope-guidance.eu/index_E_03_EN.htm

9. HOPE: Vocational Guidance for victims of abuse website. In all project languages

See: www.hope-guidance.es

10. Conference: HOPE. Giving hope to victims of abuse through vocational guidance.

The Final plenary meeting was celebrated in Vienna (Austria) the 12th of November, 2013. It included a conference for multipliers in the guidance field from several countries outside the consortium.

See: http://www.hope-guidance.eu/index_F_EN.htm;

and http://www.hope-guidance.eu/diss_files/Vienna_photos.pdf

Partnerships

P1: Universidad Miguel Hernández de Elche (Spain)

P2: Folkuniversitetet kursverksamheten Lunds universitet (Sweden)

P3: Anniesland Research Consultancy Limited (United Kingdom)

P4: BEST Institut für berufsbezogene Weiterbildung und Personaltraining GmbH (Austria)

P5: Universidad de Alicante (Spain)

P6: PP/Peter Plant (Denmark)

P7: Careers Europe (United Kingdom)

P8: University of Primorska (Slovenia)

P9: Ideen-Management (Germany)

This is a very high quality, multidisciplinary and committed consortium which worked together over many months to put together this project: everyone contributed preliminary research and dissemination and exploitation plans. All members are highly qualified, six to doctoral level, and five work full- or part-time or are affiliated to a university. Their academic disciplines include economics, sociology, social anthropology, psychology, organisation, pedagogy, adult education and vocational guidance. All are involved in extensive networks and have good contacts with relevant persons and organisations.

The following have extensive experience in the field of vocational guidance and personnel development, as practitioners and researchers: P2, P3, P4, P6, P7, P8 and P9. These have sound research experience, including in the field of vocational guidance: P1, P3, P6, P8 and P9. These have direct experience of the ultimate beneficiaries, victims of abuse, through previous or ongoing research or as members of voluntary groups: P1, P2, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8 and P9.

All have worked before on European projects and most of us have worked together in the past or are working together now. All team members have proved their quality and reliability.

4. Plans for the Future

Each partner has made an exploitation plan, aimed at creating and sustaining interest and the wish for others, as well as some of us, to adopt our results. We are confident that, with the same dedication to dissemination and ongoing contact with networks that has been shown in previous guidance projects, this project, will also have a long-term impact on the vocational guidance sector. In this sector, there is a great need for training, particularly in countries where the concept of vocational guidance is relatively new or undeveloped.

This will be enhanced by the presence in the partnership of practising guidance counsellors and academics in vocational guidance, who will use the products in their practice and teaching and spread it in their institutions thus developing good practice which also includes adaptation possibilities for other interested parties. The dissemination will be both horizontal and vertical, the products both practical and theoretical and well connected to this particular subject.

Depending on the structure and activity field of each partner organisation, the deployment will be put into practice in different ways:

Educational providers and training institutions (BEST, Folk, ...):

- P2 Folk (Sweden) will use the products for counsellors and coaches who work in Folk with disadvantaged groups and rehabilitation. Within these groups they encounter victims of abuse but do not currently have the proper knowledge and tools to work with them. It is also helping Folk to plan joint actions with the public employment service, the social office and the social insurance office.
- P4 BEST (Austria) is incorporating the tools and methods into the guidance they give in their centre for abused women

Partners representing the tertiary education system (i.e. University of Elche and Alicante or Primorska), intend to do the following:

- P1 University of Elche UMH (Spain) will incorporate the findings into the Health Psychology Department; the annual International Congress on Gender, Work and Informal Economy's Observatory for Equal Opportunities, based at UMH; and the research group SIEG at UMH.

P1 has already participated in one Congress on Social European projects organised by the Provincial Institute of the Family in Alicante, where the HOPE coordinator had the opportunity to explain and disseminate HOPE project.

P1 has also written two papers about HOPE for an International Congress called INTED 2013 and one more for INTED 2014 and has incorporated some of the project findings in the thesis written by Dr. María José López on guidance for older workers in December 2013.

See: http://www.hope-guidance.eu/diss_files/copenhagen_Hope_project_inted2013.pdf

P1 has also disseminated the projects results in different press conferences, t.v. and radio stations.

- P5 University of Alicante (Spain) will incorporate HOPE products into Social Work course at the university; run a course in its senior programme; and incorporate it into training for volunteers through the Student Support Centre.

- P8 UP FHS (Slovenia) will offer training courses to different target groups (counsellors and those who provide vocational guidance). UP FHS will integrate all relevant materials into courses of anthropology and humanities and will offer training courses and presentations of the Training course, and handbooks to their students of humanities at the graduate and postgraduate levels. They will apply to the Ministry of Education for credit points and provide a programme within the Centre for Lifelong Education.

Consulting organisation (i.e. Careers Europe) plan to include HOPE materials in their consulting services:

- P3 ARC will not be able to exploit the project within its own organisation due to its structure and its activity field (research and evaluation).

- P6 PP/Peter Plant (Denmark) is already using the project findings in the Master of Guidance programme of the University of Aarhus.

-P7 Careers Europe (UK) is offering training to local guidance groups so that they can continue to deliver the course to guidance services in the area.

Careers Europe have uploaded a summary of the project to their website and included this summary in our promotional literature. Exploitation opportunities will include national events, and EU conferences and seminars as well as other EU project meetings. They will also demonstrate and discuss the results at the Careers Europe Annual Conference. They will continue to update and demonstrate the outcomes of the project to our working groups and strategic network via email and face to face meetings.

They hope that Aspire-i (Careers Europe's umbrella organisation) will continue to use the resources with their clients following the lifetime of the project. They also aim to promote the resources with their Euroguidance networks (centres across 33 countries in EU/EEA) where we hope that the resources will continue to be used after the lifetime of the project.

P9 WIP (Germany) will offer training, in cooperation with umbrella organisations, in the methods to relevant organisations. They will also integrate all relevant methods and tools developed in the project into their own consulting work, which includes social workers and consultants who may spread the methods.

Moreover, some partners such as P1 and P5 have worked together in disseminating the results and to find out new possibilities in the future. In doing so, both universities had a meeting with the General Secretary of Social Services in Valencia Region (Spain) in order to prepare an agreement to be signed by both universities and the

Regional Government with the objective to provide training on how to help victims of abuse addressed to guidance practitioners, social services, local police, hospitals, schools, etc.

See:http://www.hope-guidance.eu/diss_files/News_31-University%20of%20Alicante%20Regional%20Secretary.pdf

See the news section of the HOPE website for more information: http://www.hope-guidance.eu/index_1_EN.htm)

As a conclusion, we can say that during the project life, a range of different key-stakeholders were involved by the HOPE partnership and in order to contribute to a successful implementation of the HOPE project and incorporation of its results. In this sense, a range of more than 100 different types of organisations were identified by the HOPE partnership, representing both public and private sector. All the HOPE partners will continue making an effort in order to keep in contact with all these national strategic working members and national strategic networks in the future.

5. Contribution to EU policies

Overall, Two LLP Horizontal policies area addressed in this project:

- Making provision for learners with special needs: The ultimate beneficiaries are people with special needs that are often disregarded: victims of abuse who are thereby, through adaptive psychological processes, handicapped from participation in vocational learning and the labour market.

- Promoting equality between men and woman and contributing to combating all forms of discrimination: Men as victims of abuse are often overlooked, partly because they feel even more shame than women and find it hard to admit. This project addresses the issues of both male and female victims of abuse. And thus contributes to combating discrimination against difficult male as well as female guidance seekers.

During the project meeting held in Copenhagen in February 2013, partners had the opportunity to visit a Men shelter. It was very interesting because one of the persons running the place has been a victim of abuse in the past. Especially for some partners it was very useful to learn about these initiatives addressed to men because they were inexistent in their countries due to a certain extent by the cultural barriers.

See: http://www.hope-guidance.eu/index_1_EN.htm

and http://www.hope-guidance.eu/diss_files/copenhagen_Mandecentret.pdf

Thirdly, this project shows complementarity with other policy such as, Education and Training 2020 Work programme by improving the quality and efficiency of education and training for vocational guidance counsellors; by promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship (regarding victims of abuse); by enhancing partnerships between education and training institutions and the broader society (since we are making connections with other organisations such as the police, hospitals and social work as well as guidance services)

In the context of Lisbon, the importance of the role of vocational guidance in general is clear and the CEDEFOP study quoted above notes that 'most contributors reported increased policy attention to career guidance and, in many cases, went on to detail legislation or strategic actions following from this attention'.

However, despite recent widespread publicity on a particular group of victims of abuse, those abused by priests and nuns, and the recognition that abuse has the capacity to wreck lives, there is still no official recognition that we can find that they require specialist help to enter vocational learning and employment. It is not, therefore, seen as a priority. At the same time it is often estimated that large numbers of people in Europe have been subjected to abuse of different kinds (RO National Agency Against Trafficking in Persons 2007; ES Ministerio de Igualdad 2009; LU Project de Loi No 5908; DK Helweg-Larsen, Larsen 2002 Unges trivsel år; Statistics Finland 2006; IS Ministry of Social Affairs 2008; UK Domestic Violence Statistics 2009, Women's Aid UK; Swedish Crime Barometer 2009; DE PKS Berichtsjahr 2008).

The issues addressed by this project exist all over Europe, as we have discovered through our research. There have already been European projects dealing with related issues:

“Promoting awareness for cooperation and training in the field of domestic violence” (2009) and “Long distance training in the treatment of sexual and physical abuse” (2000), which reinforce the pan-European nature of the problem.

Finally, there are also particular benefits in a European-level approach for the following reasons, all deduced from long experience of European projects:

- different national education systems produce different approaches to knowledge acquisition, ranging from theoretical to pragmatic, and in past projects we have found great value in drawing on a range of approaches;
- although we have much in common, we will find useful types of organisation and practice in one country that are not found in another, and there will be a fruitful exchange of knowledge;
- the results of the project are exploitable in all the partner countries as there are materials in all the national languages and will be exploitable in most non-partner countries too where there are speakers of one of our 6 languages;
- dissemination through the Euroguidance network will ensure that we reach large numbers of practitioners throughout Europe and well beyond the partnership;
- we invited multipliers from ten non-partner countries (The Czech Republic, Italy, Norway, Lithuania, Latvia, Bulgaria, Finland, Ireland, Greece and Slovakia) to the final conference that was celebrated in November 2013 in Vienna, which will spread the results to the majority of EU/EEC related countries;
- all the partners have good English so communication within the partnership did not present any difficulty, and we are all accustomed to intercultural communication;
- our commitment to the target of the project overrides any cultural differences and no cultural conflicts emerged.

Any customisation for national cultural differences of the materials we produce was supposed to be informed through the testing phase and in particular by the strategic working groups throughout, but we ended up with a homogeneous product for all participating countries.

6. Background

A group of us working at European level has been discussing for some time gaps in the expertise and training of vocational guidance practitioners. There have been several projects on vocational guidance, many of them involving members of this consortium (Leonardo da Vinci projects Access to Vocational Guidance [1996 and 1998, www.gla.ac.uk/avg]; Workplace Guidance [2000 and 2002, www.gla.ac.uk/wg]; Refugee Guidance [2005, www.gla.ac.uk/rg]; and Third Age Guidance [2007, www.gla.ac.uk/tag]. All individual members of the consortium have been involved in at least one of these projects. One area still missing, however, is a focus on a section of society that cross-cuts social groups: victims of abuse.

We conducted some literature research in preparation for this project and found work on abuse in the context of health services, social services, the police and support groups such as Women's Aid, but not in the vocational guidance context. A recent publication, CEDEFOP, Professionalising career guidance, 2009, lent more weight to our ideas. It points out that "all clients have diverse needs, some of which may result in disadvantage or discrimination. Some needs are apparent to others, and may be the subject of legislation and codes of practice. Other needs may be hidden, and may include complex issues such as self-stereotyping ... The requirement for the career guidance practitioner is to extend their knowledge and understanding to the fullest reasonable extent in their work situation and to strive constantly for the highest degree of reflection on their own practice" (p 77). It is notable that this document refers to specialised guidance for unemployed and disabled people, women, older people and refugees but makes no direct reference to our target group.

The term "abuse" here covers a wide range of situations, including but not limited to domestic abuse, sexual degradation and severe exploitation in the labour market. Many victims, after leaving the abusive situation, have difficulty moving into education or the mainstream labour market, and so present a problem for vocational guidance. One explanation is that of "learned helplessness" (Miller, Seligman 1975, *JnlAbPsy* 84), which affects most victims. In order to mitigate the effects of the abuse, people learn to behave helplessly.

As a result they feel they have no control, are depressed, fatalistic and passive, lack self-esteem, confidence and motivation. This affects their cognitive abilities, including problem-solving, acquiring knowledge and learning to change. The effects outlive the abusive situation. This problem has been selected over others because the partnership has already tackled other areas of difficulty and young and unemployed people have long been target areas for guidance. We know from our own and others' experience, both as counsellors and as teachers, that some people seem unable to learn, to move on, to make plans, even though there are no apparent impediments in their life circumstances or intellectual capacity.

This project, therefore, aims to support the training of vocational guidance counsellors in supporting victims of abuse; to link guidance with other helping agencies, such as health services, social work, education, psychologists, the police and special needs support groups; and to incorporate men as well as women into consideration of the labour market effects of abuse. It will thus engage with the

CEDEFOP recommendation to enhance “cooperation between a range of agencies and individuals” (p. 19) through the formation of strategic working groups drawn from different types of agency to inform and comment on the progress of our work.

