



GOOD GUIDANCE Stories

PRACTICAL

RECOMMENDATION

HANDBOOK

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ABSTRACT

This practical recommendation handbook is aimed to policy makers working in the field of lifelong guidance. It summarizes the findings of the research phase.

This practical recommendation handbook is concise and relevant to all partner countries. It contains practical and concrete recommendations for policy makers.

THE PROJECT GOOD GUIDANCE STORIES

GOOD GUIDANCE STORIES – case studies as an innovative cross-cultural training material for guidance practitioners – GUIDE.

GUIDE was funded under the LLP – Leonardo da Vinci from 1st December 2012 to 30th November 2013. GUIDE was carried out in a consortium of 8 partners from 7 countries (Austria, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, and Spain).

The guidance practitioners' perspective is at the center of the project. Guidance practitioners have ideas about and experiences with relevant work situations which trainees must first learn to master. Therefore, one important step in the project was to ask practitioners to describe the most important needs and relevant competences for a successful guidance process. To answer this question a questionnaire was developed and completed by 144 guidance practitioners. The results identified the 6 competences that the case studies would focus on: (1) Ethical practice, (2) Recognise & respond to client's diverse needs, (3) Develop ones' own capabilities and understand any limitations, (4) Communication facilitation skills, (5) Enable access to information, (6) Update own skills and knowledge.

In a next step every partner wrote the first draft of their case study (dealing with one of the above competences) and the first draft of the corresponding teaching note. Aside from the questionnaire results, interviews and focus groups were also used to collect information for the development of the case studies. The case study method was chosen because case studies can be used in different settings and they can be used with wide range of guidance practitioners.

All the case studies were tested to show if they are useful in the training of guidance practitioners. In order to determine the transferability of the case studies, they were not tested by the case study author organization, but by another partner organisation.

The case studies form the basis of the development of this methodological guideline. The information collected during the development process of the case studies and teaching notes as well as from the survey was used to derive the following recommendations for policy makers.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS

1. Listen to guidance practitioners!

Guidance practitioners are in close contact with many groups that participate in the process of lifelong learning and vocational education: the clients, the providers of vocational education, policy makers and social partners. Guidance practitioners are like an interface between all these groups and know their needs and interests. Therefore it is very important to take guidance practitioners' perspectives into account when new services are planned or when new

methods of guidance are proposed. Guidance practitioners can also have good ideas for the improvement of existing services as they know what methods are useful with which clients and how guidance services must be designed to reach and empower the client. They can also take into account the specific conditions regarding their city or region. Therefore it is important for the policy makers to engage and communicate with guidance practitioners.

2. Invest in the continuous professional development of guidance practitioners!

There are many different ways to become a guidance practitioner in Europe. As our survey shows some countries have Bachelor and Master Degrees in guidance. In other European countries half of guidance practitioners come from various fields and only half of them from a guidance related subject.

It is therefore very important to provide guidance practitioners with continuous professional development. This also ensures that the guidance practitioners are aware of/trained in the newest theories and methods.

While in some countries, the terms "counsellor" and "guidance counsellor" can only be used with a certain qualification or degree they are not protected in other countries. Therefore it is not easy to compare the qualifications of guidance practitioners across Europe. To professionalise guidance practitioners therefore there must be a discussion of minimum standards of skills and competences (and perhaps qualifications?) that guidance practitioners have to fulfill. These minimum standards could be different for different kinds of guidance and vary according to the setting and depth of the counselling. These minimum standards would then be the goal of guidance counselling courses. Moreover these minimum standards could be included in the EQF and the national frameworks and lead to a comparability of degrees across Europe.

3. Get an overview about the services for the clients in your region!

For policy makers and people that make decisions about the services provided it is very important to know what services are already available in a city or region. There might be different guidance services provided by state institutions, by private enterprises and services funded through different means (national, European, private). There also might be services for specific target groups or at different transition points (see also

recommendation 6). Moreover, many guidance services are provided through projects which have a limited lifetime.

Therefore it would be useful to have a platform that is regularly updated, i.e. like the lifelong guidance platform in Berlin (www.bildungsberatung-berlin.de). On this platform, all the institutions providing guidance are listed (such as the

national employment service, regional projects, guidance services for women or migrants, etc.). In order to have such an up to date platform, it is very important to have a coordination office to manage the platform. With this kind of overview it is easier to identify the gaps in the guidance services in a region, for example if there is no services for certain target groups in need of guidance. Such an

overview also makes it possible to utilize service-chains or interagency-approaches, i.e. to counsel one person through different counselors/services (see also recommendation 4).

Moreover such a webpage is a good way to promote lifelong guidance and to inform people about the services available in their region.

4. Provide independent guidance!

Guidance services should be client centered and empower clients. This means that the client and his or her skills, wishes and ideas are the center of the guidance session. Moreover clients should receive tailor-made solutions. To provide this kind of service guidance practitioners must meet their clients more than once. This can also mean that some clients need an inter-agency approach and have to go to different guidance services. This process must be seamless and clients

should be monitored to ensure that they do not get “lost” between the services. An interagency approach prevents clients having to tell his or her story over and over again. Such a tailor-made service costs money. People who benefit from career guidance are often people who could not pay for these services. Therefore such guidance services have to be paid publicly and must be free of charge for the clients.

5. Make sure that guidance takes place voluntarily!

It is important that clients are not forced to engage with a guidance service as they fear sanctions if they do not use the service (e.g. by the employment service). Guidance has to take place on a voluntary basis to have an impact on the client and to lead to the desired empowerment. One possible

solution could be that clients are asked to visit the guidance service to hear about the services of the organization but can then decide voluntarily if he or she will use the services offered.

6. Provide services for lifelong guidance especially at known transition points!

Lifelong guidance is needed for lifelong learning. Guidance should take place at special transition points throughout one's life (e.g. from kindergarten to primary school, from primary school to secondary school, from secondary school to work or to university, from work to work, from work to unemployment and from unemployment to work, back to

work after a family period or illness, from work to pension) but also in the time between such transition points. One way to see if there are guidance services for all target groups and for all transition points would be an overview of all guidance services in a city or region (see recommendation 3).

7. Support guidance services that cooperate with employers!

Many guidance services are offered to people who would like to improve their qualification for work or who would like to get a new qualification to enter the labour market (again). To provide high-quality guidance for such clients, it is very important to be in contact with employers. They know best what skills and competences they need.

Often people who are working do not think about vocational education or do not have option to avail of it. Therefore guidance services should cooperate with enterprises regarding the career guidance of their staff. SMEs rarely

have a HR department and this is particularly the case in micro-companies with 1-10 employees. Guidance services should inform enterprises and their staff of the importance of vocational education and help them to find the right providers and funding (if available) for vocational education.

The enterprises are often not focused on guidance and guidance services. This is also evident in the results of the survey undertaken as part of the GUIDE project which found that methods that have to be used in cooperation with enterprises like on-job training are not widely used.

8. Give guidance practitioners time for collegial advice!

Guidance practitioners are confronted with different types of clients with a variety of questions and problems. As mentioned previously they need to find tailor-made solutions for their clients. To be able to offer the best possible service for their clients, guidance practitioners need enough time to prepare their counselling sessions as well as follow-up time to review them. Furthermore, they can learn a lot from each other and therefore they need time not only for formal vocational education but also for collegial advice. Moreover guidance practitioners are often confronted with their client's problems and they need a place where they themselves can reflect on the guidance session as well as find new energy for their work.

Therefore it is important to plan time and money for collegial advice and supervision when planning guidance services. A good overview of the guidance services in a region (see recommendation 3) would help guidance practitioners to make contact with each other and find colleagues who work in similar fields, with similar target groups or on comparable subjects.

Of course collegial advice takes place even if it is not planned. But then it is incidentally and its potential is not used.

One of the most important points in general is realistic planning of the workload for a provider of lifelong guidance and the guidance practitioners working there. If the aim is to provide a high-quality guidance service, then only a defined number of people can be counselled in a given time frame.

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