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European Centre for the Development
of Vocational Training

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access to **success**



LIFELONG GUIDANCE
FOR BETTER LEARNING
AND WORKING IN EUROPE

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is available on the Internet.
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Cataloguing data can be found at the end of this publication.

Luxembourg:
Publications Office of the European Union, 2010

ISBN 978-92-896-0638-7

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Designed by Rooster Design – Greece
Printed in the European Union

The **European Centre for the Development
of Vocational Training** (Cedefop) is the European Union's
reference centre for vocational education and training.

We provide information on and analyses of vocational
education and training systems, policies, research and practice.

Cedefop was established in 1975
by Council Regulation (EEC) No 337/75.

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Access to success

Lifelong guidance for better learning and working in Europe

This leaflet highlights the most recent achievements in developing guidance policies, systems and practices in the EU Member States. The key issues presented are largely based on the guidance policy review that Cedefop is jointly producing with the European lifelong guidance policy network (ELGPN).

The policy review (to be published in 2011) will be a state-of-play analysis pinpointing areas where further development of national and European lifelong guidance will be required. The review will also detail implications for future work to support the European strategic framework for cooperation in education and training (ET 2020) as well as the *European strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth* (European Commission, 2010).

EU economy gradual recovery: policy measures to combat the crisis

Economic conditions improving

Since 2008, the EU economy has experienced the deepest, longest and most extensive recession in European history since the 1930s. At the beginning of 2010, the outlook for global growth and trade has already strengthened, with the economic situation and financial conditions improving. Aiming to overcome the crisis and stimulate the economy, the EU budget 2010 provides funds to speed up the recovery, to improve labour market activity and to increase overall EU competitiveness. A gradual stabilisation in employment is expected towards the end of 2010.

Support for European citizens

These circumstances have created increased demand for information, advice and career guidance and counselling in Member States. The global economic crisis has challenged many European citizens: those who have experienced job

losses are now forced to cope with unemployment and transitions between jobs, careers and industries as well as, eventually, with the return to education and training for additional learning and skills upgrading. Proper skills are believed to improve individual employability, to ease employment transitions and to support return to the labour market.

Education, employment, economy

In the current economic and social environment, policy-makers regard guidance as an important tool in securing the wider European goals of full employment, high educational attainment and economic growth. Parallel to boosting the economy (e.g. through the European economic recovery plan), measures are targeted at developing education and training, putting integrated flexicurity approaches in place and ensuring better skills matching and upgrading.

New EU benchmarks for learning

To measure progress on participation in learning during the period 2010-20, EU Member States have agreed on a set of five European benchmarks to support future evidence-based policy-making in education and training. To reach these benchmarks, more open and flexible lifelong learning systems will have to be established. These will aim to engage all citizens in formal, non-formal and informal settings, at all levels from early childhood education and schools through to higher education, vocational education and training, and adult learning.



Progress in lifelong guidance strategies: the highlights

Lifelong guidance a policy priority

The Council of the European Union adopted a *Resolution on better integrating lifelong guidance into lifelong learning strategies* in 2008. The resolution reinforces the mandate that lifelong guidance currently has in European education, training and employment policies. It also reflects the key role that high quality guidance and counselling services play in supporting individual lifelong learning, career management and achievement of personal goals. The resolution identifies four politically significant priority areas:



Priority area 1

Encourage the lifelong acquisition
of career management skills



Priority area 2

Facilitate access for all citizens to guidance services



Priority area 3

Develop quality assurance in guidance provision



Priority area 4

Encourage coordination and cooperation among
the various national, regional and local stakeholders

European cooperation in lifelong guidance

The resolution calls for the further strengthening of European cooperation on lifelong guidance provision, in particular, through the European lifelong guidance policy network (ELGPN) and in liaison with Cedefop. The progress made in Member States in the four priority areas will be highlighted.

PRIORITY AREA 1:

Career management skills (CMS)**What we understand by CMS**

In 2009-10, Member States have been working on the theme of career management skills through the European lifelong guidance policy network. CMS can be regarded as a competence which helps individuals to identify their existing skills and necessary learning goals, to improve employability and social inclusion. As a wide range of definitions of CMS is used across Member States, efforts have been made to develop a shared understanding of the concept itself. A definition proposed by Member States says:

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.

How CMS can be acquired

In broad terms, measures enhancing CMS give the individual an opportunity to explore career-related issues (self-knowledge, career planning, etc.) with a professional guidance counsellor, mentor, teacher or trainer. Differing approaches, or a mixture of them, to promote the acquisition of CMS can be found in Member States. In education, CMS are usually an integral part of the curriculum: subject-based (e.g. France, Malta, Austria); cross-thematic (e.g. the Czech Republic, Estonia, Sweden); and extra-curricular (e.g. France). Labour market approaches use diverse programmes including guidance support with traditional and online tools (for personal action and/or career plans, interactive assessments, occupational interest tests).

Designing a CMS framework

Most Member States have also been exploring new ways to support the career management and skills development of people with special needs who require tailor-made services and resources. One of the main policy and strategy challenges identified by Member States for the future is the conceptualisation, design and delivery of a CMS framework that would be easily applicable to different target groups in different contexts throughout life.

PRIORITY AREA 2:

Access to guidance services**Increasing access to guidance**

There have been positive policy, strategy and systemic developments (including legislative reforms, financial initiatives, large-scale development projects) to improve access to information, advice and guidance services in Europe. There is evidence that coordination across sectors, administrations and institutions is increasing in most countries at national, regional and local levels. However, there is still space to strengthen cross-sectoral and multi-professional cooperation to identify gaps and avoid overlaps in service provision.

Main-streaming and individualisation

Parallel to mainstreaming the service provision, there seems to be a growing trend towards individualisation of services, especially to cater for the information, counselling and learning needs of more hard-to-reach groups: young people at risk, the long-term unemployed, older workers (50+), early school leavers, disabled and/or disadvantaged people, employees/workers in restructuring industries/companies, and ethnic and cultural minorities. Countries have also started offering guidance support to validate and recognise formal, non-formal and informal learning outcomes, to upgrade and recognise employee skills, and to adults for career development at work.

The German ProfilPASS is a good example of a development instrument based on self-assessment supported by guidance professionals. The system aims to review, document and assess informally acquired competences, regardless of where they were acquired, and record them in a competence portfolio. ProfilPASS also seeks to identify the individual's educational, professional and life goals and to encourage their realisation. It was initially offered as a validation tool for adults. In May 2007, the ProfilPASS for young people was introduced nationally in Germany (see: <http://www.profilpass-online.de>).

School-to-work transitions

Large-scale guidance measures and initiatives have been applied across Europe to support school completion and education-to-work transitions of at-risk youth who have dropped out of mainstream education and training. Successful labour market integration programmes for youth at risk can be found in several countries (Belgium, the Czech Republic, Germany, France, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Finland, Sweden, the UK). Coordinated approaches are to be combined with outreach work to identify and reach young people in most urgent need of support. Parental involvement, together with competent teachers, guidance practitioners, youth and social workers and labour-market actors, is the backbone of support in a young person's transition.

ICT in guidance service provision

Technology helps service provision as a combination of media (e-guidance, helplines, Internet) can be applied to meeting the needs of the users. Many countries consider a web and phone combination important in enabling people to access services at a time, place and method most appropriate to their needs. Alongside the more traditional face-to-face guidance services offered in education and employment, the development of Internet-based information, advice and guidance provision is increasing in Europe. Web-based services with information on learning opportunities (education and training at various levels in different settings and for diverse target groups) seem to outnumber essentially labour-market and purely guidance-oriented online services.

In 2009, an upgraded version of the Lithuanian open information, counselling and guidance system AIKOS was launched (www.aikos.smm.lt). It contains information on: education and training in Lithuania; qualifications, licences, occupations, admission rules for vocational and higher education institutions; the labour market; and Europass certificate supplements. Customised pages cater for specific target groups, including early school leavers. User groups include parents, career information (guidance) counsellors, policy-makers, employers, the disabled, immigrants, and (ex)inmates. Various tools are used for guidance: manuals and other printed materials, career tests, career fairs, and specialised portals and databases.

Promoting guidance services

Various ICT-based services are open to all citizens, regardless of their educational attainment, labour market position, skills base or overall life situation. Most countries have also realised that services (both traditional and online) supporting occupational and educational decisions are in high demand across Europe. To make overall service provision as visible as possible to the service users, many countries have launched targeted promotion and communication measures (e.g. Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, the Netherlands, Romania).

PRIORITY AREA 3:

Quality assurance (QA)

Common quality approaches

It is widely acknowledged that high quality guidance and counselling services play a key role in supporting lifelong learning, employability, career management and achievement of personal goals. Member States have already identified a need for holistic, EU-wide approaches to quality assurance: common European guidelines would help them monitor, evaluate, develop and benchmark their own guidance policies and practices.

National quality developments

In 2009-10, the Member States have been discussing quality assurance and evidence-based guidance policy and system development. The aim has been to disseminate existing national/regional/sectoral models and frameworks and to share the experiences that different countries have in applying quality standards and mechanisms across education and employment sectors. Measuring and assessing the performance of guidance services with the help of clearly defined indicators against quality standards requires further development in most national, regional and local contexts.

Towards integrated evidence base

Country reports (e.g. Germany, Hungary, Sweden) indicate that Member States have conducted or are considering conducting qualitative, longitudinal evaluations and analyses in a more target-oriented manner. This serves the purpose of finding out what are the concrete outcomes and added value

of guidance, as well as how the current, mostly supply-driven, QA systems could be transformed to more demand-driven systems. Some Member States (e.g. Slovenia, Finland, the UK) have also introduced measures to involve citizens more systematically (through feedback mechanisms) in the design, development, evaluation and management of guidance services.

Guidance counsellor competence

Countries also report that policy and strategy decisions should encourage an operational environment allowing systematic development and improvement of quality assurance mechanisms for guidance. Guidance counsellor competence is a core element in ensuring the quality of guidance service delivery and development. The current training provision for guidance staff varies significantly between Member States and sectors, although there is a clear trend towards offering more specialised training.

PRIORITY AREA 4:

Stakeholder coordination and cooperation

Coherent lifelong guidance system

The policy aim in Member States is to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of guidance services. There is a clear vision for success through establishing a holistic and coherent lifelong guidance system instead of having two parallel and fragmented systems (education and employment) as usually is the case. Such a single system is expected to provide adequate, accurate and easily accessible information, guidance and counselling, to support the capacity to make proper education, training and career choices, as well as to aid cooperation across sectors and administrations in service delivery.

Involving different actors

The Member States have continued their work on removing multiple barriers – legislative, administrative, financial or sector specific – to smooth lifelong guidance policy cooperation and to improve service delivery. As the national reports show, most governments have already started to introduce changes to

institutional coordination structures to enable more systematic consideration of lifelong guidance. Often the cooperation between relevant authorities (mostly education and labour) has been formalised in national guidance policy forums and/or similar coordination mechanisms.

Improving guidance policy coordination

It seems that new forms of dialogue, as well as network and partnership-based cooperation (e.g. learning regions), are being developed to promote better integration of national, regional and local administrations in education, training and employment. Also the social partners and other relevant key actors (e.g. associations of guidance counsellors, student unions, NGOs) are becoming more involved in guidance policy- and decision-making processes.

Cedefop – the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training – is a European agency that promotes vocational education and training in the European Union. Cedefop contributes to developing a European area of lifelong learning by providing information on, and analyses of, vocational education and training systems, policies, research and practice (see: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu>).

European lifelong guidance policy network (ELGPN) – with which Cedefop closely cooperates – promotes policy action at Member State level on lifelong guidance and supports the establishment of national/regional guidance delivery structures. ELGPN assists the European Commission and Member States with the priorities of the lifelong guidance resolutions (2004, 2008) by involving the national education and employment authorities in EU-level cooperation (see: <http://elgpn.eu>).

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Lifelong guidance
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Luxembourg:

Publications Office of the European Union

2010 – 16 pp. – 17 x 24 cm

ISBN 978-92-896-0638-7

Cat. No: TI-30-10-331-EN-C

Free of charge – On request from Cedefop

No of publication: 4092 EN



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TI-30-10-331-EN-C



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4092 EN

Free of Charge – On request from Cedefop



Publications Office

ISBN 978-92-896-0638-7



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