

Establishment of a European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network

Conclusions and Statement of principles of the meeting in
Helsinki, 7-8 May 2007

The countries participating in this meeting agreed to the establishment of a European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network and will participate in the network as members or observers, subject to written confirmation. The European and international bodies present expressed their willingness to continue their support for and involvement in the process.

Context

In recent years, a strong degree of political momentum has been reached in the field of guidance. The Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the Member States meeting within the Council on Strengthening Policies, Systems and Practices in the field of Guidance throughout life in Europe (May 2004)¹ invites 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."* The resolution invites *"to build on and adapt existing structures and activities (networks, work groups, programmes) related to the implementation of the resolution priorities"*.

The implementation of the Resolution on Lifelong Guidance was examined by Member States' representatives at the Finnish EU Presidency Conference on "Lifelong Guidance Policies and Systems: Building the stepping stones" (November 2006). The reports from the country teams indicated, that much has been achieved in the Member-States in improving access to guidance and the quality of guidance systems. Still, much needs to be done. The emergence of a knowledge-based society requires a paradigm shift in guidance and calls for strengthening the role, quality and coordination of career guidance services to support learning at all ages and in a range of settings. It is important that the momentum of development within Member States be sustained².

The Finnish EU Presidency Conference workshop conclusions stressed that the fragility of lifelong guidance policies at national level called for a strong and stable mechanism at European level to encourage more sustainable development at national level and support both policy development and implementation. The participating Member States came to the conclusion that the most effective way to take the work forward would be to set up a network of countries interested in working together to develop lifelong guidance systems.

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/resolution2004_en.pdf

² National Guidance Fora or national co-ordination steering groups have been established in a number of Member States. These structures enable a broad range of stakeholders to develop consensus on strategic objectives, to co-operate on strategic tasks, and to monitor and support policy development.

Objectives and functions of the network

The European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network aims to assist the Member States and the Commission in moving European cooperation on lifelong guidance forward in both the education and the employment sectors. The purpose is to promote cooperation at Member State level on lifelong guidance and to propose appropriate structures and support mechanisms in implementing the priorities identified in the Resolution on Lifelong Guidance (2004).

The ultimate aim of the network is to provide added value to the participating countries for the development and implementation of their lifelong guidance policies, systems and services. This should benefit stakeholders, providers and users.

Membership

Membership of the network is open to each of the countries eligible for assistance under the Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-2013. The participating countries designate their representatives in the network. Where national co-ordination bodies or fora exist, these provide a suitable basis for the composition of national delegations.

Co-operation arrangements

The Commission has declared its intention to provide financial support for the network in accordance with its budgetary and programme procedures. It engages in continuing dialogue with the network, taking part in its meetings and activities, and noting its conclusions. Cedefop participates in the network's activities as an adviser, as part of its task of assisting the Commission's work in this area, in accordance with its own mandate and the terms agreed in its annual work programme. The ETF participates in the network's activities as part of its work in supporting candidate countries and neighbouring regions.

Through appropriate liaison arrangements, the network ensures regular contact with other relevant bodies or networks at national, European or international level. The network may invite representatives of these bodies or networks, individual experts and relevant stakeholders to take part in its activities. The European Social Partners may participate in the network as observers.

Working arrangements are defined by the Network members, including the number of thematic working groups and the frequency of peer learning activities, subject to budget and human resources availability.

The Network is co-ordinated and chaired by a co-ordinating unit which will convene the network and support the implementation of its initiatives. Members appoint a steering group with 6 members to ensure effective management of its work and support for the chair in defining the priorities and budget allocation within the work programme. Members act as the network's driving force, providing expertise, chairing sub-group meetings, and hosting activities such as peer learning activities and EU-level conferences.

Principles for co-operation

The network promotes lifelong guidance particularly through the open method of coordination. Member States are responsible for their own lifelong guidance policies and systems. The

network members jointly identify and define the objectives to be achieved with the Council Resolution 2004 as a basis. They use jointly agreed indicators to measure the progress of the lifelong guidance policy development. The members stimulate innovation and convergence through peer learning and exchange of best practises

The network will be developed on a step-by-step approach. The long term goal is to promote co-operation in the development of policies and systems for lifelong guidance provision at national level through European co-operation. This includes policy sharing, promotion and support for development of the broader EU policy framework for lifelong guidance.

Financing

Financial support from the Commission takes the form of a subsidy of up to 75% of network costs from the transversal programme of the Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-2013.

Costs eligible for support could include the costs of network activities foreseen in the work programme, relevant expenses incurred by the network co-ordinator, and travel expenses for representatives of each participating country, for one representative of any of the bodies or networks, and individual experts invited by the steering group.

National contributions of the network members may take the form of either

- Direct payment to the co-ordinator, or
- A deduction from reimbursements to which they would otherwise be entitled for organising or participating in activities within the work programme.

Observers and partner organisations pay their own costs and do not receive any reimbursement. Experts on specific invitation are reimbursed.

Countries participating in the meeting

Austria, Belgium (fr), Cyprus, Czech Republic, Germany, Denmark, Estonia, Greece, Spain, Finland, France, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Latvia, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Sweden, Slovakia and United Kingdom

Poland, Slovenia and Iceland were not present, but have indicated their interest in the network.

European and international bodies and networks participating in the meeting

European Commission DG EAC,

FEDORA, International Association for Vocational and Educational Guidance (IAEVG), International Centre for Career Development and Public Policies (ICCDPP), Business Europe, Euroguidance network, The European PES network