

Joint Project

„Process of open coordination for quality development and professionalization in educational, vocational and career guidance in Germany“ – *Summary*

- **Origin and Background of the project**

Lifelong learning requires support through a lifelong supply of guidance¹ which should be offered in all areas of education, to citizen of all ages and in all phases of life. Educational and career guidance marked by quality is able to make a crucial contribution to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the educational systems and the labour market, to exhaust educational reserves, to promote the individual employability and to secure the future need for qualified employees as well as to improve the equality of opportunity and social integration.

For guidance to be able to fulfil this function, guidance services need to be organized in such a way that they can deliver their services along the lines of assured quality which follows the needs of the user as well as generally accepted professional standards. The prerequisite for this are guidelines and standards for quality and professionalism which are accepted and put into practice by all actors involved in the field. So far, such common guidelines and standards do not exist in Germany. The National Guidance Forum *nfb* has committed itself to initiate this process of quality development with all actors involved and to coordinate this project.

- **Objectives**

The joint project aims to develop and implement guidelines for quality and professionalism in guidance in education, career and employment in Germany which, if possible, should be supported by all relevant actors. Furthermore, the project will develop and test tools for lasting quality assurance. For this purpose active cooperation of the many different stakeholders from the distinct areas of guidance is necessary. The willingness to cooperate in such a process of open coordination has been expressed by many experts and organisations at two preparatory workshops in November 2008 and May 2009. The stakeholders participate through their collaboration in the planned working groups in which - some parallel, some successive – the following preliminary products should be accomplished:

- ✚ A catalogue of common quality criteria, guidelines and standards for guidance in education, career and employment on the basis of a common understanding of guidance,
- ✚ A competence framework for practitioners in the different fields of guidance based on the previously defined quality criteria and standards serving as a basis for job profiles and for the design of training and further education programmes for guidance professionals,

¹ Following Schiersmann and Weber, the terms counselling and guidance are used synonymously in this summary. In the context of education, career and employment the definition of guidance follows the EU Council Resolutions from 2004 and 2008.

- ✚ A quality development frame (QDF) which includes a set of instruments and tools for the implementation of quality assurance measures together with a pilot test in selected guidance institutions,
- ✚ Strategic recommendations for a sustainable realisation and stabilization of the guidelines for quality and professionalism as well as of quality assurance measures.

- ***Joint project partners – Job-sharing***

In order to carry out the project, the National Guidance Forum *nfb* cooperates with the Institute for Education and Research (ibw) of the Ruprecht-Karls University of Heidelberg as joint project partners. In 2007/2008 this institute conducted a study commissioned by the Federal Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF) and chaired by Professor Dr. Christiane Schiersmann which laid the work basis for the planned project (Schiersmann et al. "Qualität und Professionalität in Bildungs- und Berufsberatung." Bielefeld, 2008).

The National Guidance Forum *nfb* takes care of the general management and coordination of the project: the cooperation with the advisory council, external communications and publications as well as the organization of workshops in the context of the project. The Institute for Education and Research (ibw) is responsible for the scientific foundation and assistance in regards to the work in the working groups for quality development, for the elaboration of tools for quality assurance and for piloting the developed tools and instruments in about 10 selected guidance institutions.

The joint project will be supported by government grants from the Federal Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF) during the time of 27 month (1.09.2009 – 31.11.2011).

- ***Cooperation with relevant actors in science and practice***

Representatives of public and private guidance providers (i.e. the Federal Labour Agency, the chambers, the municipalities, the German Association of Adult Education Centres, schools and universities, independent agencies), associations of practitioners (i.e. German Society for Career Guidance, German Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance, German Society for Supervision), representatives of guidance sciences, training providers for practitioners are among others involved in a process of open coordination insofar as they are interested in collaborating. The cooperation takes place in two parallel working groups:

- ✚ Working group 1: Standards und Competences
- ✚ Working group 2: Quality Development Frame (QDF) and Piloting

- ***Realisation and plan of work***

Initially, Working group 1 reaches a consensus about a catalogue of quality standards and criteria on the basis of existing national and international quality catalogues and standards. The agreed standards and criteria also take – in the appropriate differentiation - the special characteristics of the different areas and settings of guidance into account. Based on these results the next phase of work includes the definition of the requirements for guidance practitioners and the production of one or more competence profiles. Both consider already existing competence profiles or job definitions for counsellors as well as the diverse qualification programmes. Here the special characteristics of the different areas and settings of guidance are also considered in an appropriate way. The results are also used as input for the work in group 2.

Working Group 2 deals with the definition and establishment of the quality development frame (QDF) that has been worked out in the Heidelberg study mentioned before. In this process the working group 2 also considers the special characteristics of the different areas and settings of guidance as well as already implemented quality management systems. It prepares and assists the testing of the QDF in about 10 counselling institutions and analyses the piloting results.

- ***Advisory council of coordination***

The joint project is accompanied by an advisory council of coordination, which is constituted by about 12 representatives from politics, administration, guidance providers and guidance science and practice. The advisory council members stimulate the project work and support the implementation of the outcomes in their respective fields of politics and practice.

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