

**Finnish EU Presidency Conference on Lifelong Guidance Policies and Systems:
Building the Stepping Stones
Jyväskylä, 6-7 November 2006**

REPORT FROM THE CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS¹

Preamble

1. Since the Communication on Lifelong Learning (2001) and the Resolution on Lifelong Guidance of the EU Council of Education Ministers (2004), much has been achieved in the member-states² in improving access to guidance and the quality of guidance systems.
2. But much remains to be done. Many countries still have significant gaps in provision and deficits in quality.
3. It is important that the momentum of development within member-states be sustained. The pace and quality of such development can be significantly enhanced by continued collaboration at EU level.
4. The structures for such collaboration need to be reframed to build upon past experience and to include more active engagement of all member-states.

Action within member-states

5. Action within member-states needs to:
 - Be based upon supporting the individual's ownership of the career development process.
 - Include strong links between policy, research and practice.
 - Include 'bottom-up' as well as 'top-down' processes (e.g. regarding quality assurance).
 - Integrate lifelong guidance strategies into national lifelong learning strategies.
6. National guidance fora can play an important role in supporting policy development within member-states. Such fora need to embrace all dimensions and sectors of guidance provision (including schools, VET, tertiary education, public employment services, community-based services). They accordingly need to include some or all of the following:
 - Policy-makers within key ministries (at least education and employment, but ideally others too).
 - The social partners and other key stakeholders.
 - Associations of guidance professionals.
 - Relevant research and development organisations.
 - Representatives of users of guidance services.

¹ Drafted by Professor Tony Watts.

² I.e. countries taking part in the Education and Training 2010 work programme.

The nature, tasks and structures of the fora should be related to the needs within each country, and are accordingly likely to vary considerably. But the active involvement of policy-makers is essential.

7. Tasks which might be performed by national guidance fora include:
 - Identifying gaps in guidance provision and developing strategies for filling them.
 - Identifying common goals and principles to which all guidance services (including public employment services as well as education-based services) can subscribe.
 - Developing appropriate quality-assurance systems, preferably on a cross-sectoral basis.
 - Developing closer links between policy, research and practice.
 - Utilising the EU common principles and reference tools to review the national guidance system, and to identify needs that should be addressed.
8. In some countries, the national guidance fora will need to take account of regional or other sub-national structures. This could entail regional guidance fora.

Action at EU level

9. The work of national guidance fora could be significantly strengthened by the establishment of a European Guidance Network. The aim of the Network should be to improve guidance provision for all European citizens. Its objectives might include:
 - Enabling national guidance fora to learn from each other's experience.
 - Promoting the use of the common principles and reference tools within member-states (including active engagement of practitioners) and reviewing their use in practice.
 - Developing proposals for new tools, e.g. an EU framework of career management skills, plus common principles for the development of such skills.
 - Identifying trends and issues which merit collaborative action at EU level (through peer-learning clusters, research activities, etc.).
 - Disseminating the lessons from collaborative projects, including the Leonardo Joint Actions and projects under the new Lifelong Learning Programme.
 - Supporting policy development at EU level, ensuring that the role of guidance is addressed within relevant European policies and instruments, across relevant Directorates-General.

The Network should build upon, and in due course replace, the work of the Expert Group on Lifelong Guidance.

10. Full membership of the Network should be open to all member-states which have representative structures such as national guidance fora. Criteria should be established for membership (e.g. active involvement of key ministries), with the expectation that any country joining the Network should meet the criteria within a set period, and that participating countries would help others wishing to establish national guidance fora or other national representative structures.

11. The Network should identify themes for peer-learning clusters. These clusters should be open to all member-states (i.e. not confined to members of the Network). Possible themes include:
 - Young people at risk.
 - Migrants.
 - Use of ICT in guidance.
 - Training provision and qualifications for guidance practitioners.
 - Piloting quality initiatives.
 - Active involvement of users in the design of services.

12. The European Guidance Network should be supported by a co-ordination unit, located in one of the member-states for a set period. This unit should convene the Network and support the implementation of its initiatives. It should liaise closely with the European Commission and with Cedefop and the European Training Foundation. It should also liaise with the International Centre for Career Development and Public Policy and other international organisations (e.g. OECD), to ensure that European experience informs, and is informed by, experience elsewhere.

13. The Network and the national fora should be linked, through appropriate membership or co-operation arrangements, to other relevant networks and initiatives at European level. These include:
 - The Euroguidance network.
 - The Public Employment Services (PES) network. The strong dialogue with the PES established at this conference should be sustained, both within member-states and at EU level.
 - Professional networks, e.g. IAEVG, FEDORA.
 - Other relevant stakeholder networks (e.g. social partners, parents).

14. A biennial conference should be held to bring together all guidance-related networks and initiatives within the EU, and to review progress in the development of lifelong guidance within the member-states. This should follow the model of the present conference, but with improved representation of key bodies within country teams, and improved procedures for preparing country reports in advance of the conference. The reporting procedures should be linked to the formal reporting processes under the Education and Training 2010 work programme.