

## European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network

# Aims, Principles and Structures of Governance Work Programme 2011–12

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### About this document

This document describes the aims, principles and governance of the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN) in its Work Programme for 2011–12. This final version was endorsed by the 9<sup>th</sup> ELGPN Plenary Meeting 13-14 September 2011 in Warsaw, Poland.

**European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network**  
**Aims, Principles and Structures of Governance**  
**Work Programme 2011-12**

**1. Context and Mandate**

Over the last decade, a strong political momentum has been established in the field of lifelong 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)<sup>1</sup> invited 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 also invited Member-States “*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 had been achieved in the Member-States in improving access to guidance and the quality of guidance systems, but that much still needed to be done. The emergence of a knowledge-based society required a paradigm shift in guidance, strengthening the role, quality and co-ordination of career guidance services to support learning at all ages and in a range of settings. It was important that the momentum of development within Member-States be sustained.

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 to 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.

In March 2007 the Commission invited representatives of the countries eligible for assistance under the Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-13 for a preparatory meeting to explore the potential for the Network. The need was expressed to move from analysis to a more active phase of assisting those Member-States which were interested in developing the lifelong dimension of their respective guidance systems in the context of the 2004 Council Resolution on lifelong guidance. The Commission indicated its willingness to continue to assist this process, with the help of Cedefop

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<sup>1</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/resolution2004\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/resolution2004_en.pdf)

(European Centre for the Development of Vocational Education and Training), and also to offer financial support.

An inception meeting was held in Helsinki, Finland, on 7-8 May 2007. The participating countries agreed to the establishment of a European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network. Invited countries would participate in the Network as members or observers, subject to written confirmation. The European and international bodies present at the meeting expressed their willingness to continue their support for and involvement in the process. The ELGPN was formally established by a contract between the Network Co-ordinator and the Commission's DG EAC in December 2007.

The role of the ELGPN was strengthened and described in more detail in the EU Council Resolution on 'Better Integrating Lifelong Guidance into Lifelong Learning Strategies' passed in 2008 under the French EU Presidency.<sup>2</sup> The Resolution invited the Member-States and the Commission, with their respective competences, *"to strengthen European co-operation on lifelong guidance provision, in particular through the ELGPN, with the support of the Lifelong Learning Programme, and in liaison with CEDEFOP"*. In particular, four tasks were specified:

- *"enable Member-States to share information on their policies and practices, and on their evaluation of both, so that each may benefit from the successes of others;*
- *monitor national and European implementation of activities in the four priority areas under this Resolution, using surveys, studies, reports, and peer learning activities including case studies and conferences at European level;*
- *endeavour to ensure that lifelong guidance is more consistent and more tightly dovetailed with the various European policy areas and in particular with those of employment and social inclusion;*
- *consider whether more evidence-based policy on guidance should be developed at European level."*

The Annex to the Resolution specified four priority areas:

- *"encourage the lifelong acquisition of career management skills;*
- *facilitate access by all citizens to guidance services;*
- *develop quality assurance in guidance provision;*
- *encourage co-ordination and co-operation among the various national, regional and local stakeholders."*

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<sup>2</sup> <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/08/st15/st15030.en08.pdf>

EU2020 is the successor to the Lisbon Strategy and represents the EU's response to the fall-out from the global economic and financial crisis. The Communication of the Commission (2010) sets down three strategic policy directions/priority areas to re-invigorate economic growth:

- Smart growth – developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation.
- Sustainable growth – promoting a more resource-efficient, greener and more competitive economy.
- Inclusive growth – fostering a high-employment economy delivering economic, social and territorial cohesion.

These three priorities constitute the policy framework for European co-operation in the fields of the economy, employment, education and training, research and social inclusion until 2020. They will also be the political basis for the EU financial programmes from 2013 to 2020, with effects on the Lifelong Learning Programme and the cohesion policies (including the Structural Funds and, particularly, the European Social Fund). Each priority area has several Flagship Initiatives which include references to lifelong guidance.

The ELGPN 2011-12 Work Programme will examine how guidance as an integral element contributes to EU guidance policy development in at least six areas: schools, VET, higher education, adult education, employment and social inclusion. The aim is to deepen the interfaces between the policy areas and to shift the ELGPN activities from conceptual work to policy implementation, with more structured co-operation with particular sectors.

## 2. Objectives and Functions

The European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network aims to assist the Member-States and the Commission in moving forward European co-operation on lifelong guidance in the education, training employment and related sectors. The purpose is to promote co-operation at Member-State level on lifelong guidance and to propose appropriate structures and support mechanisms in implementing the priorities identified in the Resolutions on Lifelong Guidance (2004 and 2008) (see Section 1 above).

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 added value might include:

- Sharing of ideas on common problems.
- Opportunity to test ideas and showcase good practice.
- When introducing new programmes and services, learning from relevant practice elsewhere, with the cost-benefits this may involve.

- Develop where appropriate a common view of lifelong guidance (e.g. glossary) between the sectors and among the member countries.

This should benefit users, providers and stakeholders.

### 3. Membership

Membership of the Network is open to each of the countries eligible for assistance under the Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-13. The participating countries designate their representatives in the Network. Where national co-ordination bodies or mechanisms exist<sup>3</sup>, these can provide a suitable basis for the composition of national delegations and for supportive communication and consultation processes.

Each member country can appoint a maximum of three members of the Network. The composition of the team, and the nature of supportive communication and consultation processes, are for the member country to decide. The benefits of the Network to the country and to other Network members are however likely to be greater if these arrangements are designed, as far as possible:

- to represent a lifelong learning perspective (covering education, training and employment for both young people and adults);
- to be clearly linked to relevant policy-making processes within the country concerned;
- to have the capacity both to contribute to the activities of the Network and to involve the relevant stakeholders in the education, training and employment sectors, including the Social Partners and guidance practitioners.

The members can nominate different people to attend other ELGPN meetings, if they consider that this will provide relevant expertise to support the Thematic Activities. If the member country has a national lifelong guidance forum or other co-ordination mechanism, the attendance at meetings can be rotated. Continuity is important, and those attending ELGPN meetings are encouraged to report the outcomes of these meetings to their national team members and other stakeholders.

In addition, representatives of the European Commission, Cedefop and the European Training Foundation (ETF), members of partner organisations and Social Partners, and designated external experts, will participate in the ELGPN Plenary Meetings (see Section 5 below).

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<sup>3</sup> National Guidance Fora or other national co-ordination mechanisms have now been established in most member countries. 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.

#### **4. Principles for Co-operation**

The Network promotes lifelong guidance, particularly through the Open Method of Co-ordination. 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 Resolutions of 2004 and 2008 as a basis. They may use jointly agreed indicators to measure the progress of lifelong guidance policy development. The members stimulate innovation and convergence through peer learning and exchange of best practices.

The Network is being 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 and regional level through European co-operation. This includes policy sharing, promotion and support for development of the broader EU policy framework for lifelong guidance.

#### **5. Co-operation Arrangements and Governance**

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 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 European Training Foundation (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 and international levels. The Network may invite representatives of these bodies or networks, individual experts and relevant stakeholders to take part in its activities. It also invites European Social Partners to attend the Plenary Meetings as observers.

Working arrangements are defined by the Network members in Plenary Meetings, 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 convenes the network and supports the implementation of its initiatives.

### *ELGPN Plenary Meetings*

The roles of the ELGPN Plenary Meeting include:

- Agree the ELGPN Work Programme and the allocation of the budget.
- Endorse and review the progress of the Work Programme.
- Discuss and agree the outcomes of the Work Programme.
- Maximise outputs and results.
- Inform members on relevant policy developments at national and EU levels.
- Review the Network's governance and processes where appropriate.
- Appoint the members of the Steering Group from among its members, according to the EU Presidency sequence.

ELGPN Plenary Meetings are held twice a year. The representative of the host member country chairs these meetings. Standard items on the agenda include:

- Discussions on the outcomes of the ELGPN Work Programme.
- Information on the ongoing activities of the Work Packages and Task Group.
- Information on policy-related developments at European level (Commission).
- Progress report on thematic groups and peer learning outcomes.
- Discussion of one or more specific topics, usually based on the results of a prior activity, e.g. initiatives taken by participant countries and Social Partners.
- Discussion of Network-management issues.

A draft note outlining the main conclusions of the meeting is distributed to all ELGPN members not later than three weeks after the meeting.

### *Communication channels*

The Steering Group and the ELGPN Co-ordinator administer a flow of information to the Network on the progress of the Work Programme.

The ELGPN website <http://elgpn.eu> provides to Network members a specific communication platform for exchange of information and other work activities. The ELGPN Co-ordinator maintains a separate plan for internal and external communications.

### *The ELGPN Steering Group*

The ELGPN members appoint a Steering Group with six members following the EU Presidency sequence, in order to ensure effective management and co-ordination of its work and support for the chair in defining the priorities and budget allocation within the Work Programme. In this perspective, the Steering Group will:

- Propose/review the long-term strategies and detailed Work Programme.
- Support the Co-ordinator on the implementation of the Work Programme.
- Clarify/identify the respective roles of all parties involved to be agreed by the Plenary Meeting.
- Clarify appropriate funding arrangements.
- Prepare for the Network meetings.
- Encourage Network initiatives to foster systematic co-operation on lifelong guidance across ELGPN member countries.
- Link with international organisations active in the field.
- Administer the flow of information to the Network on the progress of the Work Programme.
- Act as the Network's driving force by providing expertise, and chairing sub-group meetings.
- Act as designated ELGPN representatives in meetings of parallel organisations, as appropriate.

The Steering Group will comprise:

- Representatives from the preceding, current and forthcoming EU Presidency countries. During the ELGPN third phase 2011-12 the Steering Group members are: ES, HU, PL, DK and CY.
- The Commission (DG EAC and DG EMPL).
- The governmental representative of the ELGPN Co-ordinator's country, who acts as a chair in the Steering Group meetings.

In addition, Task Group members, the representatives of partner organisations, the contracted consultants and any other person or country representative can be invited by the Steering Group when this is considered desirable in order to progress thematic activities outlined in the Work Programme.

The Steering Group meets up to four times a year, as appropriate. Two out of the four meetings should take place on the occasion of the ELGPN Plenary Meetings. The governance arrangements are



reviewed at the beginning of each contractual period of the ELGPN. Changes require a qualified vote (two-thirds majority) of the Plenary Meeting.

### *The ELGPN Task Group 2011-12*

In addition, the ELGPN 2011-12 Work Programme includes a Task Group comprising representatives of the Work Package Lead Countries and contact persons for sectoral policy areas nominated by the Plenary Meeting plus the representatives of partner organisations, agencies and networks. This Task Group has two sub-groups with separate tasks: (a) European education & training and employment policy analysis from a lifelong guidance perspective; and (b) revision of the European common reference tools for lifelong guidance and developing a manual for policy-makers. In addition to meeting alongside ELGPN plenary meetings, the Task Group will meet twice a year. On each occasion, time will be allocated for both tasks and also for general discussions on transversal elements of the Work Programme. The group will be managed by the ELGPN Co-ordinator, supported by two contracted consultants. The Task Group will report to the ELGPN Plenary Meetings and to the ELGPN Steering Group. The representatives of partner organisations, agencies and networks will be invited to the Task Group meetings.

The tasks and activities of the Task Group and Work Packages are described in more detail in the ELGPN 2011-12 Work Programme.

### *The Co-ordinator*

Overall project management focuses on effective co-ordination of the Network and co-operation arrangements with the Commission, Cedefop, ETF and other relevant bodies or networks at national, European and international levels. It promotes the achievement of Network objectives and outputs that add value to existing EU lifelong guidance policies and practices.

The Co-ordinator maintains an infrastructure for communication between the national reference points which form the consultative mechanism between the Network and national structures. The communication includes on-line and face-to-face communication between Network members, supported by Network meetings, written action plans with deadlines, and periodic reviews. The tasks of the Co-ordinator include:

- Preparing the annual Work Programme and the Grant Application for the Commission.
- Assisting the Chairs of ELGPN plenary meetings in preparing for these meetings.
- Convening and chairing the ELGPN Steering Group meetings.
- Producing and circulating the minutes of ELGPN Plenary Meetings and Steering Group meetings.

- Establishing communication protocols and liaising with members of the Network on an ongoing basis.
- Providing a platform for the ELGPN's thematic activities.
- Co-ordinating the implementation of the thematic activities.
- Providing an overview of the overall project finances.
- Ensuring regular contact with other relevant bodies or networks at national, European or international levels.
- Establishing a framework for the evaluation of the Network's progress, including any necessary data collection.
- Liaising with the Commission, and producing and submitting management reports and cost statements at regular intervals.

## 6. Charter of Relationships for ELGPN Members

The following sets of expectations are designed to enhance members' role as an ELGPN participant representing their country. The amount of time that members spend in preparation for, participation in, and follow up to the Network's European-level activities is very small in comparison to their national role and function. Yet the strength and success of the ELGPN at European level depend a great deal on its capacity to impact at national level. Members are the link to their country and from their country to the Network. The following are a set of proposals to ensure that the Network and its various national and EU linkages become strong:

### **A. Relationships with national stakeholders (education, employment and other relevant ministries, regional authorities, national social partners, national guidance delivery agencies, national organisations of guidance practitioners, national civil society organisations e.g. parents, youth):**

- Inform them about the aims of the network.
- Discuss with them their present policy concerns and how the work programme of the Network could be used to address those concerns.
- Involve them in the preparation for the Network meetings and activities through consultation on Network papers circulated to [ELGPN national representative](#) in advance; bring their views to Network meetings.
- Set up a consultation group that is stakeholder representative if such does not exist yet in your country.
- Inform them of the outputs and outcomes of the meetings of the Network and ask for reactions.

- Ask them to keep **ELGPN national representatives** informed of policy developments, reports and studies relevant to lifelong guidance provision.
- Draw their attention to the Network website.
- Place Network documents and outputs on relevant national websites.
- Keep up-to-date on what is happening at national level regarding policies for lifelong guidance, lifelong learning, employability and employment, equality and social inclusion, and actively network with persons responsible for developing such policies at national level (who also usually have EU policy development responsibilities in those fields).

### **B. Relationship with the ELGPN Co-ordinator**

- Provide him/her with the contact information for the national contact points, to be uploaded on to the Network website.
- Inform him/her of policy developments that are occurring in their country.
- Upload relevant policy documents to the Network website.
- Inform him/her of national priorities and unmet needs that may not yet be part of the Network's Work Programme but which he/she should be aware of.
- Keep him/her up-to-date on administrative or personnel changes that may impact on their country's participation in the Network.
- Respect reporting and comment deadlines.

### **C. Relationships with other national ELGPN representatives**

- Respect the huge diversity of lifelong guidance provision and different stages of development of Network member countries.
- Respect the different national priorities that countries have on lifelong guidance provision.
- Work towards convergence of views to develop EU policy instruments and approaches that will provide comparability of lifelong guidance provision for all EU citizens in the future.
- Add value to the work of other countries through policy and other knowledge sharing.

## 7. Work Programme

The Network has a Work Programme which is included in the Grant Application submitted to the Commission. This programme is prepared by the Co-ordinator and agreed by the ELGPN plenary meeting, following a proposal from the Steering Group and taking into account the possible funding arrangements.

Based on the priorities and activities outlined in the Work Programme, an Operational Plan is prepared by the Steering Group and the Lead Countries of the Thematic Activities. The Operational Plan is updated regularly in line with the Work Programme. The most up-to-date version of the Operational Plan is made available on the ELGPN website in order to keep the Network members informed regarding new developments.

Cedefop assists the ELGPN's work in this area, by giving its technical and scientific support to the Network's activities, according to the terms agreed in Cedefop's Work Programmes. ETF will, as far as possible, liaise with EU candidate countries on relevant aspects of the ELGPN Work Programme.

## 8. 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 2007-13. According to the underlying principles for the Network agreed in Helsinki on 7-8 May 2007, the total amount of the 25% national contribution needed in the budget is annually shared by ELGPN member countries in accordance with the ISCO rates in the Lifelong Learning Programme.

Costs eligible for support 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 for 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 pay their own costs and do not receive any reimbursement. Invited experts and partner organisations are reimbursed.

## 9. Reporting

The Network draws up an annual activity report to the European Commission. At European level, ELGPN will make connections in a co-ordinated way with the education and training sectors, especially through the formal channels such as the EU Committees and ET 2020 Working Groups that exist or will be set up for each sector, the Heads of Unit for each sector area at DG EAC, and relevant European platforms and associations. The new joint initiative on New Skills for New Jobs being carried out by DG EAC and DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities provides a framework for structured co-operation with DG Employment and other formal channels, such as the Employment Committee, DGVET, the HoPES Network and/or Expert Groups that exist for the employment sector, the Heads of relevant Policy Units at DG EMPL, representatives of the European Social Partners, and relevant European platforms/associations.

The national representatives are encouraged to report on the ELGPN activities to relevant national bodies and stakeholders.