

Gérer les transitions: l'orientation tout au long de la vie dans l'espace européen Career Transitions and Lifelong Guidance: Building a European Response

17-18 September 2008, Lyon, France

Rationale and added value of the ELGPN

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Director, Mr Nembrini ,
Mrs Quintin,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I want to thank for the opportunity to bring greetings on from the previous similar Lifelong Guidance Policy Conference, which took place in Jyväskylä, November 2006 during the Finnish EU Presidency. The conference report suggested that 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. It is my great pleasure to congratulate the French ministries of responding to this proposal and organising this European Lifelong Guidance Policy Conference “Career Transitions and Lifelong Guidance: Building a European Response” as part of the French 2008 EU Presidency. This conference is also very important from the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network, perspective. The discussions around the conference themes give valuable guidance for the ELGPN, in setting the priorities of the forthcoming work programme. Thus, in this presentation I will reflect the conference themes from three perspectives: interface between the conference themes and the ELGPN, secondly the evolution of the ELGPN, and thirdly, challenges for the future ELGPN work programmes.

1. Interface between the ELGPN and the French 2008 EU Presidency Conference

The French presidency of the European Union in the second half of 2008 has suggested establishing guidance as a priority issue in conferences organised in the field of education and training as well as in key policy documents which have been prepared during their Presidency. This conference is addressing specially the importance of Lifelong Guidance on equal opportunities in training and education and on transitions. The conference agenda challenges also the organisation of the services, and how to guarantee access and quality? The aim is to explore models for regional and local coordination of the services. The chosen themes reflect well the challenges

in implementing the Education and Training 2010 programme in Europe. As a whole the programme is focused and describes well the situation of European citizens. The programme aims to reflect the concerns of both the citizens and the policy makers.

What are the main concerns for citizens? One of the conference themes is dealing with access to guidance services. We have evidence that European citizens have difficulties in equal access for guidance. European citizens have not sufficient training to manage their individual learning paths. Are their voice been heard when developing the services? They are confused if they cannot see co-operation and consistency between different services available. There are varieties among the competences of the professionals and non-professionals in charge of the services.

For example, the 2008 joint progress report¹ of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the 'Education & Training 2010' work programme "Delivering lifelong learning for knowledge, creativity and innovation" have indications that early school leavers, upper secondary attainment and key competences continue to be major problem areas. There has not been enough progress since 2000 to reach the EU benchmarks by 2010. Europe has far too many young people leaving education without the skills they need to participate in the knowledge society and to move smoothly into employment. They face the risk of social exclusion, not least because they are effectively shut out of lifelong learning early in their lives.

In his speech earlier today Mr. Lettmayer showed that guidance has been a major concern among policy makers in recent years. There is a political consensus that role of guidance has been a key component of implementing the lifelong and labour market strategies. Next I want to highlight some concerns of policy makers?

Very often we hear questions what is the investment in guidance? What are the expected outcomes of guidance? What are the impacts of different service delivery modes? What is the data we are collecting to identify the evidence for certain outcomes?

Another concern for policy makers is the use of existing funding available in a cost effective manner. Different ministries are aiming towards similar goals but using different terminology, such as active citizenship, social inclusion, retention, preventing social exclusion and drop outism, smooth transition to the labour market etc. Often the programmes designed to meet the challenges by different ministries are in silos and overlapping.

We have already evidence that guidance has much to offer in meeting the previously mentioned concerns and challenges, for example in supporting transitions, and in helping citizens find and keep employment. Guidance, as both a private and a public good, is therefore increasingly seen as an important service that needs to be offered in lifelong and life wide perspectives. We have to explore guidance from a wider paradigm.

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/education/pdf/doc66_en.pdf

A wider paradigm of the Lifelong Guidance can be promoted by means of a systemic framework which takes into account both the services visible for the users and the mechanism which is behind the planning and managing the services. The goal of this model is to promote congruence between the strategic planning and the implementation of guidance services. The focus is on both guidance practice and policy. The aim is to illustrate the transparency of services both for decision makers and the various service providers. In this model guidance can be seen as a chain of services and the responsibility of multiple providers. In Figure 1 the different levels and the contents are described.

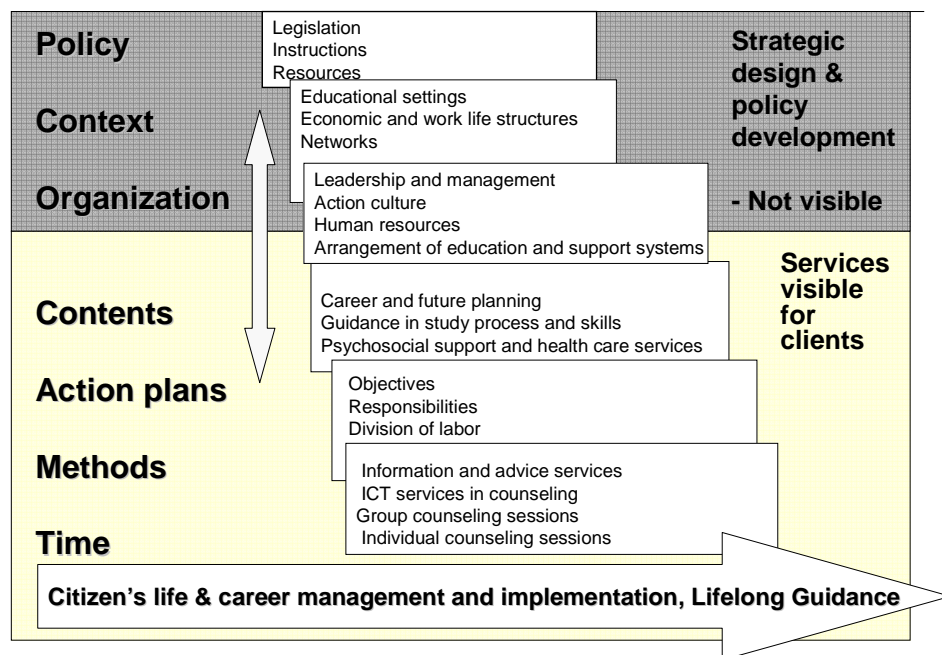


Figure 1. Strategic design of guidance practise & policy ²

The planning, development and realisation of Lifelong Guidance provision can be described in different layers. This approach provides a platform to generate common language and concepts for different stake holders, as well as providing a framework to make the best use of existing resources to meet the needs of different client groups during the different phases of an individual lifecourse. When planning or reforming lifelong guidance strategies it is crucial that all the dimensions above are examined at the same time. The policy makers, service providers and key stake holders should be

² Vuorinen, R., Kasurinen, H. & Sampson, J. (2006). Implementation strategies for guidance policy and practise in higher education. *Career guidance in higher education. Strategies, design and implementation* 77-88.

engaged within the process. While designing the services it is necessary to define the context of the services and the needs of different audiences served. By means of the parallel use of all the dimensions it is possible to set goals which can be achieved by reorganising existing funding mechanisms, facilities and staff competencies.

We have heard today that Member States have reported positive progress on lifelong guidance policy development. The follow-up on the implementation of the 2004 Resolution shows that most of the progress has been achieved in developing the services which are visible for the citizens, for example new information portals, help lines and staff development programmes for the practitioners. These are very valuable features of lifelong guidance provision. However, the progress can be enhanced if governments invest in the systems that support consistent and coherent lifelong guidance policy development. As I mentioned before, these features are not visible to citizens, but have major implications on the quality and cost-effectiveness of the services. This approach requires close co-operation between different ministries in charge of guidance related policies as well as a solid evidence base. When developing a framework for the training of guidance practitioner we have to take also into account these competences which are needed within the non-visible part of the guidance services and policy development.

The conference background paper identifies these same concerns and challenges in more details. However, France is not alone with these challenges. We have now some tools available which we can share through more systematic European co-operation in lifelong guidance practice and policy development. Next I will describe the rationale and evolution of one of those; the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN) which was established about one year ago.

2. Context of the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network

Ladies and Gentlemen, We all can agree on the importance of the 2004 Resolution on Lifelong Guidance³ during the Irish EU Presidency. It was the first major EU level policy document explicitly on guidance and 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 invites "to build on and adapt existing structures and activities (networks, work groups, programmes) related to the implementation of the resolution priorities".

What does this actually mean, what was the ultimate aim of that statement in that resolution? Shortly, the aim was provide better guidance services for citizen in Europe and also provide comparative data to support the policy development.

³ The Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the European Union Member States meeting within the Council on Strengthening Policies, Systems and Practices in the field of Guidance throughout life in Europe (May 2004)

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

At the end of 2005, about one year after adopting the Resolution, the Commission initiated a discussion with its Expert Group for Lifelong Guidance⁴ on what would constitute a suitable mechanism to support the European Union lifelong guidance policy implementation at national level involving relevant ministries and other bodies responsible for education and labour-force issues.

A first exchange of views on the future mandate and activities of a possible European Guidance network took place among Member States' representatives at the Finnish EU Presidency Conference on "Lifelong Guidance Policies and Systems: Building the stepping stones" (November 2006). The 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. However, it was clear that it could only be effective if a sufficient number of Member States were committed to making a success of it. In his presentation on that conference, Commissioner FigéL also informed, that the Commission was willing to support European level co-operation in Lifelong Guidance Policy Development.

In March 2007 the Commission invited representatives of the countries eligible for assistance under the Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-2013 for a preparatory meeting in Brussels to explore the potentials for the network. In that meeting there was a perceived need to move forward 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. The Commission was willing to continue to assist the process, in particular with the help of Cedefop (European Centre for the development of vocational education and training), and could also offer financial support.

3. Establishment and evolution of the ELGPN

An inaugural meeting in establishing the network took place May 7-8, 2007 in Helsinki, Finland. Delegations from the Member States were invited to clarify their expectations and intentions on the network. Altogether 23 countries attended the meeting with representatives from the Commission, FEDORA, the IAEVG, the ICCDPP and the European Social Partners. The following description of the ELGPN is based on the aims and principles agreed in this inaugural meeting.

The countries participating in this meeting agreed to the establishment of a European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network, ELGPN and agreed to 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. Later both the CEDEFOP and ETF have indicated their willingness for co-operation with this new network. The ELGPN was finally

⁴ To support policy development in guidance, in December 2002 the Commission created an Expert Group on lifelong guidance, including officials from education and labour ministries, representatives from the European social partners, as well as European and international bodies.

established by a contract between the network coordinator and the Commission DG EAC in December 2007. During the initial phase there are 28 member countries and one observer in the network.

The first meeting of the ELGPN was organized in December 2007 in Amsterdam. The meeting agreed that the main task in 2008 is to establish the ELGPN infrastructure and the communication procedures. Another task was to create an interface with the ELGPN activities and the French EU Presidency lifelong guidance policy conference which today takes place here in Lyon.

4. Objectives and functions of the ELGPN

The ultimate aim of the ELGPN 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. Another added value is improved cooperation in lifelong guidance policy development between the Member States, European Commission and relevant bodies or networks at national, European or international level. At the national level the ELGPN promotes sharing of good practice in the development of national coordination mechanisms.

Functions

In the course of a series of consultations with relevant stakeholders and Member States' representatives, the functions set out below have been identified. It is emphasised that all of these do not necessarily have to be implemented from the onset of the network; they will be launched gradually, and expanded over the next few years.

1. **Support for policy development:** a key role of the network is supporting lifelong guidance policy development at national level. The network will also contribute to EU lifelong guidance policy development by reporting on the progress of implementation of the lifelong guidance resolution priorities and by issuing informed opinions and views regarding EU policy developments.
2. **Policy sharing:** the network provides an exchange platform for national policy and decision makers, practitioners and other relevant stakeholders (e.g. through peer learning activities, exchange visits, and thematic working groups comprising clusters of countries working on issues of common interest).
3. **Information gathering:** the network supports policy development by providing a comprehensive and updated overview of trends and patterns in guidance, and assessing progress achieved in implementing relevant Council Resolutions. The network seeks mechanisms to promote synergy among, and develop an overview of, EU funded projects on lifelong guidance and parallel initiatives. This will enable the network to make evidence-based recommendations on policy developments and implementation.

4. **Policy analysis and research:** the network identifies new research areas on topics relevant for policy development. The network will launch thematic research and studies, on its own initiative, through subcontracting, and will share the outcomes of studies launched by Cedefop. The purpose is not to undertake new research for purely scientific reasons, but to concentrate on issues which have strong policy relevance.
5. **Use of reference tools:** the network supports the application of existing common EU reference tools and the development of new tools where appropriate.
6. **Exploiting project outcomes:** the network disseminates and exploits the results of guidance projects and studies, in particular those funded by the EU, feeding into policy development at both national and EU levels (this includes disseminating the policy lessons of projects supported by Leonardo, Grundtvig, Joint Actions, the new Lifelong Learning Programme, and the European Social Fund).
7. **Strengthening representative structures:** the network also assists the development of National Guidance Fora⁵ or other national representative structures, both in participating countries where they already exist and in those where they do not.

5. The added value of the ELGPN

Yesterday 16 September 2008, the ELGPN had its third network meeting here in Lyon. After this one year experience many of the members had faced the question; WHAT IS THE ADDED VALUE OF THE ELGPN?

First added value of the network is related to the fact that in the European Union the Member States have similar challenges and problems. At the moment we have a tool for European co-operation. The ELGPN is tool for policy makers and practitioners and researchers to work together and share examples of good practice like here in this conference.

Secondly, the ELGPN was established in order to enhance national solutions to national problems. The goal is to help the Member States to develop better policies in guidance. The ELGPN can enrich national solutions to national challenges.

From wider policy perspective the creation of the ELGPN is a conclusion to meet the challenges the policy makers meet in implementing the Lisbon strategies and the tools supporting the strategy (EQF and ECVET)

⁵ 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.

At the moment the European context for these kind of tools is good. For example The European Qualifications Framework (EQF)⁶ and ECVET⁷ are tools to enhance national reforms. A third added value of ELGPN is to support policy makers who are looking for tools to support these national reforms

I would like to add that creation of these new tools is supplementary argument for the discussions of the added value of the ELGPN. The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) will make it easier for Member States to compare the knowledge and competencies produced by their education systems. The Framework is built on learning outcomes and knowledge. Individual career management skills are not explicitly described in this framework, but the EQF has been referred as a context where guidance is embedded. This means that the enhancement of the EQF should be included not only in the development of educational policies, but also in labour market and social policies. EQF should not be based only on knowledge – it should also be for citizens to check their competences. One of the future challenges is to explore the interface between Lifelong Guidance and EQF and also the flexicurity models from this wider perspective⁸.

The overall added value of the ELGPN can be illustrated also by the previously introduced systemic model of lifelong guidance practice and policy development (Figure 1). Some of the existing European networks like Euroguidance and the Europass are functioning within the area which is visible for the citizens. The ultimate added value of the ELGPN is related to the themes which are not directly visible for the citizens, but have implications how the national lifelong guidance systems are developed.

6. ELGPN working methods and co-ordination arrangements

During the initial phase 2007-2009 the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network is co-ordinated and chaired by a team from Finland; subsequent arrangement will be agreed by the network. The Finnish Ministry of Education and the Finnish Ministry of Employment and the Economy have designated the co-ordination task to the Institute

⁶ Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council (April 2008) on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning. See: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2008:111:0001:0007:EN:PDF>

⁷ European Commission Proposal for a Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on ECVET. See: http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/ecvet/com180_en.pdf

⁸ The discourse around the flexicurity has emerged recently in the EU Member States. For example, see:
Schmid, G. (2007) Transitional Labour Markets: Managing Social Risks over the Lifecourse. Conference paper, “Employment in Europe: Prospects and Priorities“ under the Portuguese Presidency in Lisbon, 8th and 9th October.

Volanen, M. V. (2008). Challenging Unemployment – work, learning, adult education and the new position of guidance (in Finnish) Ammatikasvatuksen aikakauskirja 3/2008 (in print).

for Educational Research, University of Jyväskylä. This unit convenes the network and supports the implementation of its initiatives. It liaises closely with the European Commission and with Cedefop and European Training Foundation (ETF). It may also call upon the support of individual experts.

Membership

Membership of the network is open to each of the countries eligible for assistance under the European Union Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-2013. The participating countries have designated their representatives in the network as delegations. Where national co-ordination bodies or fora exist, these provide a suitable basis for the composition of national delegations. In order to fulfil the objectives of the network, representatives should:

- be able to represent a lifelong learning perspective (preferably covering education, training and employment for both young people and adults).
- be clearly linked to relevant policy-making processes within their country.
- have the capacity both to contribute to the activities of the network and to involve the relevant national stakeholders in the education, training and employment sectors, including the social partners and guidance practitioners.

The working assumptions are that each national delegation will include both governmental and non-governmental representatives.

Co-operation arrangements

The European Commission has declared its intention to provide financial support for the network in accordance with its budgetary and programme procedures. 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. The Commission engages in continuing dialogue with the network, taking part in its meetings and activities, and noting its conclusions.

Through appropriate liaison arrangements, the network ensures regular contact with other relevant bodies or networks at national, European or international level.

Principles for co-operation

Because EU Member States are responsible for their own lifelong guidance policies and systems, the ELGPN promotes lifelong guidance particularly through the open method of coordination. The network members jointly identify and define the objectives to be achieved with the Council Resolution 2004 and other EU policy documents as a basis. The members stimulate innovation and convergence through peer learning and exchange of best practices.

The network will be developed through a step-by-step approach. In the initial phase the work programme is broken down into thematic activities which will follow the logical phases of the implementation of the pilot phase of the network. In addition to

the whole-network meetings the ELGPN has arranged two peer learning activities earlier this spring.

At the beginning of April a peer learning meeting was held in Vienna: the goal was to assist the emergence or further development of National Guidance Fora or other national co-ordination mechanisms. This event was a fruitful example of the co-operation with Cedefop and gave the participants an opportunity to reflect some of the themes which are discussed in the Cedefop Handbook⁹ introduced by Mr. Lettmayer earlier today.

The second thematic meeting was hosted by our Czech partner at the end of April. The structure of this peer learning activity was constructed according to one of the EU common lifelong guidance reference tools: “Key features of a lifelong guidance system”. According to the reflection note of that meeting by Prof. Ronald Sultana this PLA helped the ELGPN to develop an improved understanding of the challenges that need to be faced in order to develop LLG systems and policies, and of a variety of responses that can be made in attempt to meet these challenges. Given the range of issues that need to be addressed, it became clear that this thematic activity was very useful in setting the priorities for the next phase of the ELGPN work programme. The suggested priorities are in line with the themes of this Conference as well.

7. Some highlights in the ELGPN work programme 2009

A wider guidance policy development can be enhanced by more systematic co-operation between the Members States. The common principles, guidelines and recommendations agreed at the European level offer reference points for the design of national lifelong guidance strategies according to a wider paradigm identified in the 2004 Resolution. I want to add that the network will also support implementation of any Resolution or other policy document that the Council may approve following this conference.

As I mentioned earlier, the ELGPN had its third meeting yesterday 16 September 2008 here in Lyon. The main item on the agenda was to define the priorities for the forthcoming work programme. The ELGPN has agreed to focus on the following thematic activities:

- Career management skills
- Access, including APEL
- Co-operation and co-ordination mechanisms in guidance policy and systems development
- Quality assurance/Evidence-base for policy and systems development

⁹ Cedefop (2008) Establishing and developing national lifelong guidance policy forums - A manual for policy-makers and stakeholders. See: http://www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/Upload/Information_resources/Bookshop/508/5188_en.pdf

This conference gives valuable guidance in clarifying the goals of the work programme together with ELGPN national partners. For example, the aim of the first Thematic Action is to define career management skills within a broader framework, by drawing, for instance, on the EU Key Competences for Lifelong Learning, and on OECD and UNESCO reports on key competences. It aims to identify existing competence frameworks at national level which are already available, and which reflect the key competences needed in life. Secondly, the activity will identify ways in which guidance provision can support career management skills development, for both young people and adults, and from a lifelong perspective. The long-term objective is to examine the interface between career management skills and key lifelong learning competencies

With the thematic cluster on access the aim is to explore ways in which to improve equality of access to career guidance for all sections of the population, including the scope for clarifying citizens' rights to career guidance, linked to the social contract between the state and the citizen, and the interface between lifelong guidance and the flexicurity models in ELGPN member countries.

Thirdly the ELGPN will continue co-operation with CEDEFOP in supporting ELGPN member countries in implementing the recommendation of the Council Resolution 2004 on the establishment of national coordination mechanisms for lifelong guidance policy and systems development.

A fourth Thematic Action addresses the recommendations of the Council 2004 Resolution on the development of quality-assurance systems for guidance services and products from a user perspective and on the need for an evidence base for developing policies for guidance provision and resources. It builds on the previous Cedefop studies of indicators and benchmarks in career guidance at European level and of quality-assurance systems for guidance, on the Cedefop peer learning activity in the fields of QA systems and indicators held in 2004/05, on the EU common reference points for such systems, and on the recommendations based on these studies produced by the European Commission's Lifelong Guidance Expert Group. It builds also on the existing national initiatives on quality-assurance systems, as well as on evidence-based practice and policy development in ELGPN member countries.

A long-term objective for this Thematic Action is to further elaborate the meta-criteria for quality assurance included in the EU common reference tools on lifelong guidance. The aim is to develop a common EU framework for quality assurance from a lifelong guidance perspective. The activity aims to identify the existing evidence of guidance outcomes as a part of the quality-assurance discussion. A long-term goal is to establish a link between indicators for lifelong guidance provision and the EU indicators on education and training systems.

8. Conclusions

Ladies and Gentlemen, as a conclusion I want to stress that the establishment of the ELGPN was an initiative by the EU Member States through the open method of coordination. The European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN) consisting of individual national guidance forums is to be seen as a mechanism to promote cooperation at Member State level on lifelong guidance and to support establishment of national/regional structures in education and employment sectors. The ELGPN has also an interface with the parallel international collaborative projects on policy issues of mutual interest or in facilitating and promoting worldwide exchange of knowledge, experience and expertise in the field of policy and systems development.

I can also inform that with the designation of the Finnish Ministry of Education and the Finnish Ministry of Employment and the Economy the Finnish Institute for Educational Research at the Jyväskylä University is committed to continue the coordination of ELGPN during this initial phase 2009-2010. During this first year the main immediate task was to establish the ELGPN infrastructure and the communication procedures. At this point we have designated national representatives, and during the coming couple of years the goal is to shift the emphasis for thematic activities in accordance of the long term objectives agreed in Jyväskylä conference two years ago. The ELGPN will support the implementation of any Resolution or other policy document that the Council may approve following this conference.

The ELGPN wants to thank the French EU Presidency for co-operation in having their meeting in conjunction with this conference and wants to continue this work with the organizers of the next biennial European Lifelong Guidance Policy Conference in 2010.

I wish you all a very successful and productive conference! Thank you for your attention!

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