REFLECTION NOTE

Work Package 2: Support for Development of National Lifelong Guidance Policies and Systems

Ronald G. Sultana

1. Context

1.1. This Reflection Note is based on a two-day peer-learning event (PLE) held in Prague on 28-29 April. The event was attended by 39 people, with representatives coming from 22 countries that are members of the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN). The programme included plenary and working-group sessions facilitating peer learning about the development of lifelong guidance (LLG) systems and policies, particularly through the presentation of country cases where elements or features of a LLG system had been put into place.

1.2. The network meeting held in Amsterdam on 3-4 December 2007 had explored how the ELGPN could address the issue of the development of national lifelong guidance systems, (possibly leading to a set of descriptive indicators for such systems which could be the subject of subsequent EU political endorsement). Network members recommended that the Prague PLE should focus on a prioritised set of features of LLG systems, as identified in the European Common Reference Tools. However, discussions at the steering group meeting in Vienna had concluded that it would be best for WP2 to first address the notion of LLG more broadly in order to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the rationale, principles and features of a LLG system. Deeper familiarity with the LLG European Reference Tools would then help WP2 members decide on which priorities to focus on. The Prague meeting followed this agenda, with the first part of the programme considering LLG issues generally, leading to discussions as to which of the features should be prioritised. The final part of the programme explored how such priorities could be pursued at European level (through the French Presidency Conference, a new Council Resolution, and further activities of the ELGPN), and at national level (through dissemination of the Common Reference Tools, and benchmarking of progress in establishing LLG features). A Background Paper synthesising key points about LLG was prepared by Ronald Sultana and distributed to all participants two weeks before the meeting.

1.3. As preparation for the Prague meeting, a short questionnaire prepared by John McCarthy was also sent to all participants. The questionnaire asked participants to indicate whether particular features of a LLG system were present in their country, whether they were a priority, how such features and priorities were expressed in policy terms, if new features other than those proposed in the Common Reference Tools could be added, and whether any aspect of their system had relevance for the French Presidency Conference to be held in Lyon in September 2008. Ronald Sultana carried out an analysis of these responses,[1] and presented this analysis at the Prague meeting. Given the tentative nature of this mapping exercise, use was also made of the outcomes of the study of the progress

---

[1] There were 25 responses from 24 countries, including from countries which are not formally members of WP2. The full list of respondents included Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany (2 responses), Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Turkey, and UK-Scotland.

in implementing the 2004 Council Resolution on Guidance, which had been commissioned by CEDEFOP and which had been presented at the Finnish Presidency Conference in Jyväskylä in 6-7 November 2006.[2] The two data sources supported WP2 members in their attempts to both identify gaps in developing national LLG policies and systems, and to propose priorities for addressing these gaps. This Reflection Note incorporates an analysis of the questionnaire responses, insights developed at the PLE, as well as supplementary material made available by some WP2 members in the form of summary country reports identifying key strengths and weaknesses in relation to LLG features.

2. The need for LLG policies and systems

2.1. Lifelong guidance represents a paradigmatic shift from more traditional ways of providing guidance services. This shift is linked to new or emergent social, educational and economic realities. Education systems are becoming less segmented and more modularised and linked, enabling students to change courses and tracks. This increased flexibility is positive, but many students will need information and advice in order to make the best use of these opportunities. Transitions from school to work, and back into education and training, have become less linear and more complex, in response to a fast-changing economy and demands for re-skilling and up-skilling. Guidance has much to offer in supporting these transitions, and in helping citizens find and keep employment. More frequent job changes in some sectors of the economy, as well as the propensity for—and pressure on—older citizens to remain in employment means that guidance services can be of use to adults, supporting career changes and well as active ageing. Guidance, as an individual and public good, is therefore increasingly seen as an important service that needs to be offered in a lifelong perspective.

2.2. Most countries in Europe, however, have not yet developed guidance policies and systems that take these broader realities into account. The present systems and sub-systems are 'historical accidents', which reflect service structures developed in response to situations and demands whose nature have now changed, or are changing rapidly. However, there is an increasing realisation that the way guidance is delivered needs to change, in order to ensure greater access, in order to address a more differentiated clientele, and in order to follow the citizen throughout the various stages and vicissitudes of life. Such awareness of the need for change is partly driven by the demands of citizens, partly by national policy entrepreneurs (including national guidance associations), and partly by supra-national bodies such as the OECD and the EU. It is important to note that the LLG agenda is a contested one: while some value its enabling and supportive functions, others are concerned about the notion of surveillance that it is sometimes seen as entailing, and about the shifting of responsibilities of a challenged economy on to individuals. There are also broader questions concerned with the financing of LLG systems: in most contexts, it is the state that provides guidance services, either in the education sector, or through its Public Employment Services. States need evidence that guidance serves the public good (e.g. through reduction of unemployment; through more efficient use of human resources; through attending to the needs of vulnerable groups, thus increasing social cohesion) if they are to channel increasingly scarce public funds towards this area. Hard evidence of this

---

[2] The paper can be accessed at http://ktl.jyu.fi/img/portal/6506/Jyvaskyla_address-Sultana-FINAL-3.doc

kind is limited and needs to be consolidated if the LLG concept is to take root in policy terms.

2.3. While there is no example of a fully-fledged LLG system that has been implemented in any EU country, there are several member states that are increasingly realising the need for revisiting their guidance services to take into account new realities. Some have put into place features of a LLG system, either as a result of political commitment, or as initiatives funded through EU programmes. In both cases, the issue of continuity arises, with systemic changes failing to survive due to turn-over in political leadership, and to lack of follow-through once project funds dry up. While some of these challenges are common to most member states, others are specific to particular groups of countries. New member states, for instance, have tended to quickly adopt the policy recommendations proposed at EU level, introducing new legislation, protocols and national strategy documents aiming to deliver guidance lifelong. They have however often encountered difficulties when it comes to transforming policy design into policy action.[3] Transition states are encountering other challenges when it comes to adopting and adapting a lifelong guidance approach: in many cases, the old mind-set common in the ex-communist countries is projected on to newly-developed guidance services, even when these purport to follow the lifelong paradigm; as a result, the function of schools to select, stratify and create a social élite is so deeply embedded that the notion of guidance as a tool to enable and empower individuals to consider and implement wider options is overwhelmed by the system's logic of early selection and channelling. In the older member states, where guidance services sometimes have a longer tradition, that same tradition can serve to block new initiatives rather than to support transformation and change.

2.4. Participants have different experiences in making sense of and facing up to the challenges of implementing various aspects of a LLG system. These experiences are represented in the sections below, with each focusing on one particular set of LLG features, synthesising the presentations and group discussions that took place during the PLE, as well as the results of the mapping exercise carried out in preparation for the event.[4] Each section also tries to capture the key points made by the 'discussants' and 'learning mentors' whose role it was to broaden the debate, introduce new themes, suggest analyses, and present experiences from countries where particular features had already been implemented. Finally, each section concludes with the proposed list of priorities that will be considered at the next meeting of the ELGPN in Bled, Slovenia, between 19 and 20 May. This list will help the network draw up its work programme for the coming years.

3. Implementing a LLG system:
   ## Key messages related to Citizen-Centred features

3.1. A key characteristic of a LLG system is that it puts citizens at the centre of its concerns. This means that guidance is formally recognised as a right that all

---

[3] Policy implementation is an important area of research in several domains, but there have been few if any studies in the career guidance field that focus both on the challenges of developing policies in ways that plan for implementation from the start, but also on the issues that arise during the implementation process itself.
[4] The PLE did not focus on the sixth set of features of a LLG system identified in the Common Reference Tools, i.e. International Features. In many ways the ELGPN is an example of such international collaboration through its facilitation of peer learning, information exchange, and research.

citizens have.[5] This entitlement is translated into specific policy initiatives which organise services in ways that facilitate access (e.g. by having convenient opening hours; by being located close to where citizens spend much of their time at work, at home, and at leisure; and by being offered through a variety of communication channels, including telephone, email, videoconferencing and face-to-face). It also means that citizens are provided with opportunities to learn the skills needed to manage their learning and work decisions and transitions; to identify, through the provision of adequate guidance, the competences they have acquired through non-formal and informal learning (APEL); and to play a key role in the quality assurance of career services, tools and products. Since life does not come in neatly-packaged fragments, and career guidance issues are often enmeshed with other aspects of life challenges, guidance services that put the citizen at the centre are also concerned about making adequate referrals to other agencies and services when this is appropriate.

3.2. Both the mapping exercise and the Guidance Resolution study clearly indicate that there are many gaps across Europe in relation to the implementation of a citizen-centred approach to LLG services. Group discussions at the PLE reinforced this concern, and provided further insights into different aspects of this feature:

3.2.1. Many citizens still do not have access to information and advice. This is true not just in relation to some vulnerable groups (such as immigrants, or students who have disengaged early from school), but also more broadly (such as adults who wish to change jobs, or gifted students). There seems in fact to be little research on the extent to which groups who need guidance are not receiving it. Neither are there European-level indicators which help systems benchmark their practices in relation to set, mutually accepted service goals. Most countries have major gaps in provision: workplace guidance, for instance, is underdeveloped in most systems, with PES catering largely if not exclusively for the unemployed. Even when the supply of services is strong, the demand for such services may be weak or remain 'latent'. Some citizens may not be aware of the needs they have, or that such needs can be addressed by freely-available services. This signals the need for better marketing or advertising of services.

Despite these many gaps, there are some interesting examples of promising practice, illustrating how the challenge of improved access can be met:
- Denmark, for instance, reports changing service hours to fit citizen needs better, and implanting services closer to citizens' flow of daily life, such as in train stations or youth centres.
- Several countries have put ICT to good use in broadening access, though it is increasingly being recognised that research should be carried out to assess which modalities of communication are most effective with which groups.[6]

---

[5] Here, the French notion of *'droit opposable'* is useful: this signals the fact that citizens have the right to redress if an entitlement to a specific service is not respected.

[6] Experience has also shown that some modalities do not travel readily between countries and cultures: when the Netherlands tried to adopt the UK's *learndirect* approach, and attempted to facilitate access by offering 'click' (internet), 'call' (phone) and 'face-to-face' services, they found that many Dutch citizens had lost the habit of using the phone and that this aspect of the service was consequently underutilised.

- Norway is trying to make sure that services are readily recognised by giving a recognisable 'face' to core guidance functions offered through different modalities. Users can more easily identify the offer, and see services that they make use of in different moments of their life as being linked.

3.2.2. APEL services are still underdeveloped, with some of the more advanced examples of good practice coming through from France, Germany, Portugal and Sweden. In most cases, however, efforts are fragmented and do not cater holistically for the needs of citizens.

3.2.3. Schools offer limited opportunities to support the development of career management skills. Schools, in particular, have a great potential in this regard, given that they have a 'captive audience' whose opportunity to learn career management skills can be guaranteed through appropriate curricula. Ireland's national LLG framework, as well as Finland's national curriculum, provide useful examples of how guidance competences can be embedded in formal education. In such contexts, the notion of 'guidance for guidance' is becoming increasingly important: all school staff—and not just guidance personnel—need to become more aware of the value of career information and advice, how this can be offered both in and across the curriculum, and how this offer can be shaped in ways that ensure that services reach *all* students. While some countries (such as Denmark, Sweden, Germany and Austria) have exported career guidance services to an agency or centres outside of the school in order to strengthen the 'world-of-work relevance' of the service, others (such as Norway and Hungary) have found that to do so would run the risk of reducing access (for some students) and coverage (of issues that educators would want to deal with in relation to employment). There is a strong argument that the most robust model encourages a partnership which brings together within school and out-of-school provision.

3.2.4. Citizen input in quality assuring guidance services is very limited, not least because many citizens are unaware of the standards of service they have a right to aspire to. In Finland, for instance, there is an effort to inform young people and adults about the criteria that they should keep in mind when evaluating the quality of an internet-based career information and guidance package. In Austria an attempt is being made to define standards for guidance information, and to make sure that users are aware of these standards.

3.3. Noting the various gaps related to this aspect of a LLG system, the participants of WP2 proposed that the following aspects be considered as priorities, and that the future activities of the network, and particularly of WP2, should focus on:

[a] *Career management skills:* there seems to be little data on strategies that are being used across Europe in order to promote such skills. Furthermore, users' skills need to be complemented by the competences of guidance staff to promote career management among citizens groups. There is also a need to make sure that citizens know how to use existing services—hence the importance of 'guidance for guidance'.

[b] *Improving access:* this is a very broad area indeed, and the various activities that can fall under this concern need to be discussed and decided upon collectively at future network meetings.

[c] *APEL:* The accreditation of prior experiential learning has not been given much attention at all in the career guidance field, and an attempt should be made to collect prevailing practices, to review them, to identify critical success and failure factors, and to abstract key principles and key issues.[7]

4. Implementing a LLG system:
Key messages related to Policy Development Features

4.1. A LLG system is, by definition, a 'system'. In other words, it considers the citizen from a lifelong perspective, and strives to service his or her needs as these change throughout the course of life. In order to achieve this, one important precondition is for citizens to recognise the continuity between the service they receive, and to see it as seamless. This requires guidance service providers to work together, whether they are based in the education or the labour market sector, and whether they are public, private, or community-based. When guidance services are seen in systemic ways, there is every effort to ensure that career guidance policies are an integral and clearly stated part of policies for lifelong learning and employability strategies: in other words, one cannot attain lifelong learning and employment goals without ensuring that citizens have access to guidance, when and where needed. Policies for career guidance need to be developed in coordinated ways across education, training, employment and community sectors, with roles and responsibilities being clearly defined. Given the broad purview of such policies, it is essential that they are developed through the input of a wide range of stakeholders (such as different ministries, social partners, employment offices, educational groups, practitioners, parents, youths, and so on). It is equally essential that there is joint monitoring of the implementation process.

4.2. Both the mapping exercise and the Guidance Resolution study clearly indicate that there are many gaps in relation to the implementation of a coordinated policy that bridges the different services offered to citizens at different stages of their life. Group discussions at the PLE reinforced this concern, and provided further insights into different aspects of this feature:

4.2.1. Few LLL and employability strategies have formally recognised the potential role of career guidance. Indeed, both LLL and the integrated guidelines for employment can only be delivered if guidance is present, and some countries—including Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Ireland, Scotland and Slovenia—have attempted to acknowledge this fact in their LLL strategy.

4.2.2. Cross-sectoral collaboration remains a major challenge for most countries. Even those countries which, like Latvia and Lithuania, have developed a cross-sectoral strategy, there are challenges—financial and otherwise—in order to implement it. Efforts to get different sectors to work together to come up with a more holistic, linked and comprehensive service offer are

---

[7] It was noted that the OECD is about to launch a study of APEL, and that fruitful links might be established with this project.

stymied by contrasting understanding of what guidance entails, with the education sector emphasising the long-term developmental aspects, and the labour market sector looking at short-term goals and outcomes, especially placement.[8] Such diverse approaches regarding the nature and function of guidance can challenge the ability of the two sectors to come together in policy-effective ways. Even where, as in Denmark, National Guidance Forums have been established, their impact on the policy-making process has been limited, partly as a result of contrasting views regarding the nature and purposes of guidance.

4.2.3. Stakeholder involvement in policy development is limited, and often sector-bound. It is very rare that the users of the services make an input in shaping the delivery of those same services, and at best are involved only in giving feedback through 'client satisfaction' surveys. A rare exception is the process by means of which Ireland's Lifelong Guidance Framework was developed.[9] The strategy involved representations and submissions by providers, policy makers, practitioners and citizens, and is based on consultations with and research into public perceptions and experiences of guidance. Finland too has tried to be inclusive in its policy development process by setting up stakeholder thematic working groups.

4.3. Noting the various gaps related to this aspect of a LLG system, the participants of WP2 proposed that the following aspects be considered as priorities, and that the future activities of the network, and particularly of WP2, should focus on:

[a] *The integration of LLG in national LLL and employment strategies*. It would be important to carry out an analysis of all LLL national strategies that have been developed to see the extent to which guidance features in the documents. Such research would need to discern whether a LLG strategy is integrated organically in a LLL strategy, or whether it is just an add-on element, thrown in 'after the soup was ready'. It would also need to explore the extent to which the LLG strategy element was developed by one Ministry or in a cross-sectoral manner and thus subject to co-ownership and co-responsibility when it comes to the implementation stage.[10]

[b] *The development of integrated policies*. Here it may be useful to examine other areas of public policy where different ministries have successfully worked together to develop policy strategies in an integrated manner. There may be much to learn from experiences such as those which saw health, education and youth ministries develop integrated policies about sexual and reproductive health, for instance. An analysis of such case studies could generate insights as to what conditions are required to facilitate successful intra- and inter-ministerial—as well as cross-sectoral—policy collaboration.

---

[8] The issue of the way the meaning of a word changes as it travels across national contexts, as well as between sectors within the same national context, is of major importance. There is a need to have a shared and clear understanding of what we mean by the word 'guidance', and what we do *not* mean. In some contexts, the same term is used for both 'guidance' and 'counselling'. In some sectors, 'guidance' is valued only inasmuch as it refers to 'placement'. In yet other contexts—particularly in the ex-communist countries—old mind-sets are projected on to terms that have quite different meanings for other countries in Europe. Furthermore, there are several activities which have elements of guidance embedded in them, but which are not 'recognised' given the fixity of meaning given to terms within a 'closed' profession.

[9] National Guidance Forum Report (2007) *Guidance for Life: An Integrated Framework for Lifelong Guidance in Ireland*. Dublin: National Guidance Forum.

[10] It may be possible to apply for Leonardo funding for such a study.

5. Implementing a LLG system:
   Key messages related to System Coordination Features

5.1. It has already been noted that if the lifelong dimension is to be taken seriously, the guidance system has to work in an integrated and coordinated manner, offering the citizen a seamless and recognisable service from childhood through to youth and adulthood. A service that takes the lifelong element seriously, and which also recognises the complex and non-linear transitions between education, training and employment, is careful to ensure that networks and partnerships of guidance services exist at local level, and that workplace guidance is delivered through partnerships of education, employment services, enterprise and worker interests. In a coordinated guidance system, the management of guidance services includes representation from social partners and other stakeholders. Moreover, and particularly in the case of countries with federal or regional governments, central arrangements (such as national standards or guidelines) have to be put into place in order to ensure consistency of quality of service to citizens, regardless of which region they live in.

5.2. Both the mapping exercise and the Guidance Resolution study clearly indicate that there are many gaps in system co-ordination, whether this refers to co-ordination between sectors, or between service providers operating at the local level in education, PES, workplace or community contexts. There are also few good examples of management structures that include representation from a wide spectrum of stakeholders, or where standards of service are assured nation-wide, despite the autonomy enjoyed by different regions. Group discussions at the PLE reinforced these concerns, and provided further insights into different aspects of this feature:

   5.2.1. As noted earlier, there are important distinctive rationales and contrasting interpretations of career guidance between sectors. These differences can hamper attempts to find structures and mechanisms to ensure collaboration and co-ordination in service delivery. Countries have developed diverse responses to this problem, with many setting up national or regional guidance forums to encourage and manage co-ordination. Other mechanisms include the establishment of an overarching authority charged with the development of a unified strategy (as with EKEP in Greece), or less ambitious endeavours which set the foundation for closer collaboration between sectors (as with the consolidation of labour market information on one website in Denmark, Lithuania and Sweden). Italy has introduced the concept of local networks in order to support the transition of upper secondary students to the university, with collaboration between guidance staff in both institutions coming together in order to offer a more integrated service to young people.

   5.2.2. While several countries have reported the setting up of National Guidance Forums and other collaborative structures, it is clear that most are at an early stage of development and still somewhat fragile—not least because often the focus is still on the amelioration of existing organizational arrangements rather than on systemic restructuring. Reference was made to the outcomes of the PLE for WP3, which identified key messages and propositions that support the process of establishing and developing

national forums.[11] Among these key messages and criteria were the need to involve at least the education and labour market sectors; to focus on both youths and adults; to enhance co-operation between the state and non-state providers; and to strive to involve all relevant actors. There are several examples of good use being made of ESF in order to implement National Guidance Forums, and participants at the PLE were keen to develop deeper insights into how such funding can be accessed and utilised for this purpose.

5.2.3. The attempt to have system coordination features was especially challenging in decentralised and federal systems, where the goal seems to be to support guidance without having national steering systems that are considered to be too strong and intrusive. Finland's effort to establish national guidelines and to keep its different regions in line with these guidelines is especially pertinent. Funds are made available to each municipality on condition that the national standards are respected, with trained regional consultants taking on both supportive and evaluative roles.

5.3. The participants of WP2 noted the various gaps related to this aspect of a LLG system, but also pointed out that the focus of WP3 was precisely on system co-ordination, with special attention being dedicated to national guidance forums. They highlighted the fact that it was important for WP3 to also take into account other aspects of system co-ordination, such as the need for countries to establish national standards to ensure quality provision for all citizens, irrespective of where they lived, or the need to ensure that there was effective networking between different services, even when these were located in the same sector. Participants also emphasised the importance of regular contact and exchange of views between members of the different work packages.

6. Implementing a LLG system:
Key messages related to Universal Provision and Targeting

6.1. If guidance is truly both a private and a public good, then every effort has to be made to ensure that it is provided to all citizens, regardless of age and socio-economic circumstances. Most systems in Europe have opted to offer guidance services free of charge (especially for students, youths, and members of vulnerable groups and minorities). A few offer guidance at a highly subsidised rate, incorporating elements of fee-charging (for some adults, especially those already in employment). As educational, economic and social realities increase the demand for guidance, states are hard-pressed to provide the increased funding to ensure that services are truly available for all. Such pressures raise issues as to the balance that is to be maintained between delivering services to all who need them, while ensuring that adequate funding is also available to cater for those most in need. There is a shared consensus as to the profile of the latter. These include immigrants, persons with disabilities, elderly citizens, one-parent families, women returnees, ex-convicts, early school-leavers, persons who live in remote communities, and so on. It also seems clear that several member states have opted

---

[11] See Reflection Note by Tony Watts, available at the ELGPN website http://ktl.jyu.fi/ktl/elgpn/ Detailed consideration of the issues can be found in the CEDEFOP-commissioned manual, titled *Coming Together: Establishing and Developing Lifelong Guidance Policy Forums*, co-authored by Søren Kristensen, John McCarthy and Tony Watts.

to channel funding and resources towards this group, in order to facilitate social cohesion.

6.2. Both the mapping exercise and the Guidance Resolution study clearly indicate that several states are encountering difficulties in finding the right balance between universal provision and the targeting of special and vulnerable sectors of the population. Group discussions at the PLE reinforced this concern, and provided further insights into different aspects of this feature:

6.2.1. It is clear, for instance, that much of the responsibility for service provision still lies exclusively with the state, leading to important gaps in service provision. Some member states have managed to plug these gaps by drawing on ESF, which supports efforts to address these priority groups. Issues arise, however, in relation to sustainability of projects and initiatives once the project cycle is over.

6.2.2. ICT clearly offers great advantages in facilitating self-help approaches to guidance services. While this is a positive development, it does not substitute for face-to-face encounters, and as in the area of distance education, 'blended services' seem to be the most promising. Outreach services can be successfully offered in other ways too: Italy, like Poland, uses buses resourced with trained staff and multimedia access in order to offer mobile services to dispersed communities.

6.2.3. Provision for adults is often limited to the unemployed. Some countries (such as Denmark and Iceland) have made inroads in offering guidance at the workplace, with new roles being adopted by trade union representatives, for instance. Such initiatives have training implications. One of at least two approaches can be adopted in this regard, i.e. either training guidance staff to have a very broad range of competences, or to build up competences among individuals from the target group itself. The latter strategy has been used to good effect in a number of countries, including Luxembourg (with women who have been victims of domestic violence) and Spain (with persons from the Roma community).

6.2.4. Little attention is given to the marketing of career guidance, with many citizens still unaware of the support that is available to them. Advertising of services is therefore important—with some countries (notably Scotland) paying particular attention to the branding of its services (Careers Scotland). As the Common Reference Tools point out, however, such marketing has to respect the principle of impartiality. A university whose funding depends on its ability to attract large numbers of students may, for instance, put pressure on its guidance services to paint too rosy a picture of course offers and outcomes in order to ensure market capture in a competitive environment. Multiple funding sources for guidance services can therefore be important as an antidote to the dangers of agencies that focus too narrowly on their own interests. Another issue here is that both the supply of services and the link between them needs to be clear to the user: in other words, services—especially when they overlap—need to be transparent so that citizens know who they need to go to for what purpose, and are also aware of the logic behind the referral system.

6.3. Noting the various gaps related to this aspect of a LLG system, the participants of WP2 proposed that the following aspects be considered as priorities, and that the future activities of the network, and particularly of WP2, should focus on:

[a] *The needs of early, unqualified school-leavers*: Many of the WP2 members felt that this was indeed an area that deserved to be prioritised, with guidance having a double role to play, the first being preventive, the second curative.

[b] *The needs of persons with disabilities*: This too seems to be an under-researched area, with pioneering projects in some EU member states (e.g. Germany, Italy, Poland) holding a lot of promise for a future PLE.

7. Implementing a LLG system:
Key messages related to Review Features

7.1. The need for regular reviews of guidance services is of critical importance not only to ensure quality of services, but to provide the evidence base that is needed to mobilise public resources and to guide policy and systems development. Research can target a whole range of objectives, including the evaluation of the internal efficiency and external effectiveness of individual components of LLG delivery systems, the determination of direct and indirect costs and benefits of alternative approaches to LLG provision, the improvement of careers information materials and tools, the improvement of occupational forecasting, the improvement of guidance assessment tools, and the determination of priorities and strategies for guidance for specific economic sectors and for particular groups of the population.

7.2. Both the mapping exercise and the Guidance Resolution study clearly indicate that several states have major gaps when it comes to reviewing and quality auditing their guidance services, and to generate the research and evidence base that is needed to strengthen provision. Group discussions at the PLE reinforced this concern, and provided further insights into different aspects of this feature:

7.2.1. The evidence base in most countries remains rather weak. In most cases, reviews are organised on an *ad hoc* basis, and are therefore not systematic, and fail to make a sustainable impact on the policy development process. This stands in contrast to the impact that the OECD reviews of guidance have had on policy, though there is need to follow up on those reviews by gauging the extent to which the recommendations that had been made were in fact followed up. Those countries which, like Denmark, Finland and the UK, have established specialised research centres that focus on guidance issues, are more likely to carry out high quality reviews on a regular basis.

7.2.2. In most countries in the EU, quality-assurance reviews are limited in several ways. They are often not part of an on-going evaluation procedure; they tend to be confined to a single or small range of sectors; they do not comprehensively target the whole range of clients; and they do not focus on career guidance and information, but only consider these as part of a range of services. Furthermore, most quality-assurance reviews of career guidance are voluntary, with few monitoring and accountability measures. In cases where there is monitoring, the focus is on quantitative indicators,

which tends to be both reductionist in scope and, in contrast to qualitative ones, of limited usefulness for the purpose of service improvement. This raises other issues as well, particularly about the value of measuring an activity around which there is a lack of consensual understanding of what it involves.

7.2.3. In several cases (as in Greece), quality is presumed to be assured through training of guidance staff, and through the establishment of registers and standards which accredit practitioners and service providers.[12] Where quality benchmarks have been adopted—as in Finland—there is no sustainable monitoring to gauge the extent of their implementation.

7.3. Noting the various gaps related to this aspect of a LLG system, the participants of WP2 proposed that the following aspects be considered as priorities, and that the future activities of the network, and particularly of WP2, should focus on:

[a] *The need for regular reviews* at both national and regional level, a task which could greatly benefit from European co-operation, especially in terms of mapping the way QA is carried out across the EU.

[b] *The need for research* to establish a strong evidence base.

[c] *The need to evaluate the internal efficiency and external effectiveness* of individual components of LLG delivery systems.

[d] *The need to review the training of career guidance staff*, gathering information about courses offered across Europe, and learning from best practices.[13]

8. Implications for the ELGPN

8.1. The PLE for WP2 has helped 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 priorities should be established, respecting a division of labour between the different but linked work packages. Thus, the issue of *access* seems to fall within the remit of WP2, the issue of *co-ordination* within that of WP3, and the issue of *quality* within that of WP5. Given the inter-related nature of these LLG system building blocks, it is nevertheless important that the different Work Packages work closely together, share the outcomes of their respective activities, and collaborate in ways which ensure that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. One possible way of linking these building blocks in a systemic way is to develop a set of descriptive indicators for each block which combined together could be the

---

[12] The restriction of access to the profession through formal qualifications is contested by some. There are those who argue that there should be a more practice-based route into the profession, particularly through the accreditation of competences acquired on the job. Others try to displace this argument by contending that the starting point should not be qualifications as such, but rather the needs of the citizens. Training programmes would then be organised in relation to those needs, and in modalities that best suit the context and demands. The design of service delivery, and whether staffing should be tiered or not, would similarly be based on the principle of serving client needs rather than in response to the logic of 'occupational closure' which restricts entry into the profession—often for reasons that have to do with power, status, and the maintenance of scarcity that guarantees higher earnings.

[13] It was noted that WP5 is dedicated to review outcome-focused evidence-based practice and policy development. It was also noted that CEDEFOP has commissioned NICEC to carry out a study of the competences required by career guidance staff, and the various modalities that are used across Europe to ensure that practitioners are well prepared for their roles. The report of the study should become available later this year.

subject of subsequent EU political endorsement, as mentioned at the Amsterdam meeting of the network. It seems abundantly clear that the agenda for all the work packages—including WP2—is quite challenging and that the activities should continue well into the future.

8.2. Participants noted that the identification of needs as well as the decision about priorities should take into account the fact that the EU is not a homogenous space, and that while there are some concerns that are shared by all, there are others that are specific to some groups of countries (e.g. transition states), and/or to some regions. This should be taken into account in the planning of the future work programme of the network.

8.3. Members of WP2 noted the importance of having robust data on which to base their conclusions. They therefore encouraged the network steering group and the work package co-ordinators to ensure that data-collection exercises should be well planned, and carried out in a manner that meets stringent research standards.