

ELGPN Policy Briefing 3

ACCESS in the context of other EU initiatives

Françoise Divisia

Introduction

The crisis which is impacting on the whole economy has dramatic consequences, in particular, in terms of unemployment in Europe.

Young people are particularly affected by the downturn.

The shrinking labour market has consequences for social inclusion, poverty and living conditions across the EU and may seriously jeopardize social cohesion

At the same time, positive employment prospects can be seen in some new sectors such as renewable energy sources and green jobs.

In this context, the theme of Widening Access constitutes a key element of the European Employment and inclusion policies linking it to the theme of citizens' rights and state responsibility.

It explores the issue of equality of access to career guidance, in three fields of particular interest:

- Access to services for all citizens and especially for groups at risk of exclusion
- Use of technology in widening access
- Links between APEL processes and career guidance.

This Policy Briefing aims at providing background information on EU employment, social inclusion policies and lifelong learning strategies policies related to these issues and to situate the thematic work in a broader context.

The second part proposes future steps for ELGPN actions related to this theme within the current developments of EU policies: in the context of the Crisis Recovery Plan, EU2020 and E&T 2020 Programme.

1. BACKGROUND: THE THEME OF ACCESS TO CAREER GUIDANCE IN EU EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL INCLUSION AND LIFELONG LEARNING POLICIES

1.1 The European Employment Strategy until 2006 has been essentially focused on guidance in terms of its *counselling function* and targeting individuals, notably adults and young unemployed people. In this respect, the Employment Guidelines firmly invited Member States each year to pursue “the modernisation of their Public Employment Services” so as to make the prevention of unemployment more effective.

The need **for better access to career guidance** was never mentioned.

1.2 On the education and training area, the Report on the Concrete Future Objectives of Education and Training Systems endorsed by the Stockholm European Council in 2001 has identified *access* to guidance services, quality assurance of services, the role of

guidance in human resource development, and guidance to facilitate mobility for learning and employment in Europe as priority areas for development in the implementation of the Education and Training 2010 work programme. In this respect, the Member States are invited to design “flexible guidance and information systems adapted to local conditions within a lifelong learning perspective” (Objective 2).

The roadmap is given in the Commission’s Communication on lifelong learning (November 2001), Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality¹:

“Guidance services should promote equal opportunities by being accessible to all citizens, especially those at risk of exclusion, and tailored to their needs through systems that are coherent, cohesive, transparent, impartial and of high quality. ICT based services, in partnership with other local level services, may serve as access points”.

The individuals, on their side, should be able to seek advice, information and support when appropriate, which is part of the key competence “learning to learn” within the Framework of Key competences for lifelong learning².

In the same Communication, the Commission proposes, as first priority, a reflection on **how to value learning in formal, non-formal and informal settings** which implies a comprehensive new approach to build bridges between different learning contexts and learning forms, and **to facilitate access** to individual pathways of learning.

1.3 For the European social partners from 2002³, who assert the principle of **shared responsibility**, information as well as support and guidance is a condition of the development of competencies.

Three aspects are noticeable in their propositions: first, they **target enterprises as well as employees** while recommending to provide them with necessary information and advice. Secondly, they call for a “one-stop-shop facility in Member States including a database on lifelong learning possibilities and opportunities for career evaluation”. Thirdly, they consider that **both trade union and employer organizations** have a key role to play in informing, supporting and advising their members and need to develop expertise to perform this role.

Among the priorities, the European social partners regard also the recognition and validation of competencies as essential.

IMPLICATION FOR FUTURE ELGPN WORK ON ACCESS

It would be interesting:

¹ Communication of the Commission on lifelong learning:, Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality, November 2001

² Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning (December 2006), http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc42_en.htm

³ The Framework of actions for the lifelong development of competencies and qualifications- February 28 - 2002

European Trade Union Confederation, Union of Industrial and Employers’ Confederations of Europe; European Centre of Enterprises with Public Participation and of Enterprises of General Economic Interest; UNICE/UEAPME

European Trade Union Confederation, Union of Industrial and Employers’ Confederations of Europe; European Centre of Enterprises with Public Participation and of Enterprises of General Economic Interest; UNICE/UEAPME

- to investigate the needs of the enterprises and employers in terms of information and guidance.
- To examine the role of trade unions and employer organizations in informing and advising their members and within the enterprises.

1.4. In the framework of the Process of Enhanced Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training, (Copenhagen Process⁴), two relevant tools have been adopted by the Member States:

- the Resolution on development of lifelong guidance:
 1. the 2004 Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the Member States “*on Strengthening Policies, Systems and Practices in the field of Guidance throughout life in Europe*” which stresses that all European citizens should have access to guidance services at all life stages, with particular attention being paid to individuals and groups at risk;
 2. the topic of Access becomes one of the four priorities of the 2008 Resolution on “*Better integrating lifelong guidance into lifelong learning strategies*”.
- the “Common European principles for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning”(2004) which establish that “validation systems should contain **mechanism for guidance and counselling of individuals**”. Guidance and counselling include access to information.

2. FUTURE STEPS FOR ELGPN ACTIONS RELATED TO THE THEME OF ACCESS WITHIN THE CURRENT EU POLICIES

2.1. The future steps will take place in the context of ongoing economic downturn. The financial crisis has focused attention on reducing its economic and social impact. **From 2010 to 2020, the EU policies will be implemented in the framework of “EU2020, a European Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth”⁵** which aims at helping Europe to face the transformation with three priorities:

- 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.

From the seven Flagship Initiatives related to the three priorities, the work of ELGPN on “Widening access” should be concerned by the three following Initiatives: "Youth on the move", "A Digital Agenda for Europe"(Priority 1:developing an economy based on knowledge and

⁴ Council Resolution of 19 December 2002 on the promotion of enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training (2003/C 13/02)

“Copenhagen Declaration”, Declaration of the European Ministers of Vocational Education and Training and the European Commission on enhanced cooperation in vocational education and training (30 November 2002); “Maastricht Communiqué on the future priorities of enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training (14 December 2004); “Helsinki Communiqué on enhanced cooperation in vocational education and training”(5 December 2006).

⁵ E U R O P E 2 0 2 0 – COM(2010) 2020 – 3-3-2010
A European strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth

innovation) and “An Agenda for new skills and jobs ”(Priority 3: “Fostering a high-employment economy delivering economic, social and territorial cohesion”)

Youth on the move (YoM) : This initiative puts young people at the centre of the agenda based on knowledge-based growth with four broad objectives: modernisation of higher education, building a strong basis for lifelong learning systems on the basis of key competences and recognition of non-formal and informal learning, improving mobility and young people’s entry into labour market.

A Digital Agenda for Europe: aims at promoting internet access and take-up by all European citizens, especially through actions in support of digital literacy and accessibility; at promoting deployment and usage of modern accessible online services

An Agenda for new skills and jobs: The aim is to create conditions for modernising labour markets with a view to raising employment levels and ensuring the sustainability of our social models. This means empowering people through **the acquisition of new skills**.

Three main actions :

- Implementation of the second phase of **the flexicurity agenda**,
- implementation of the Strategic Framework for cooperation in education and training involving all stakeholders,
- Development of a common language and operational tool for education/training and work: a European Skills, Competences and Occupations framework (ESCO).

2.2. Initiative “New skills for new jobs”

The EU 2020 Flagship Initiative has been prepared by a series of documents, surveys and experts working groups since 2007.

.A group of expert, set up in March 2009 has provided independent advice and key recommendations: “Upgrading, adapting, and widening the skills portfolio of individuals”, “make people shift from job seekers to job shapers” . They conclude with 4 priorities which are detailed in 34 specific recommendations:

- *Provide the right incentives to upgrade and better use skills for individuals and employers*
- *Bring the worlds of education, training and work together*
- *Develop the right mix of skills*
- *Better anticipate future skills needs.*

The fourth priority relates to access and quality of guidance provision.

The report strongly focuses on :

- The role of guidance and counselling in validation of competencies acquired through informal and non-formal learning should be a main topic of WP2.
- Sharing information on surplus and shortages of skills across EU countries require access at broader information and advice. It could be a subject to deepen by WP2.

2.3. Flexicurity agenda

Flexicurity is the cornerstone of the employment policies since 2007.

The concept of flexicurity combines flexibility and security. The Commission and the Member states have reached a consensus about an integrated approach comprising four elements:

- more flexible and secure contractual arrangements, from the point of view of both employer and worker;
- lifelong learning strategies in order to ensure workers' ongoing capacity to adapt, and increase their employability
- effective active labour market policies in order **to facilitate transitions** to new jobs: flexicurity encompasses equipping people with the skills that enable them to progress in their working lives, and helping them find new employment;
- modern social security systems providing adequate income support during **transitions**.

The implementation of flexicurity principles requires at least two conditions:

- involvement of the Public Employment Services as the European Social partners in their 2007 Joint analysis strongly highlight ⁶.
- anticipation of future skills and jobs.

2.4. The Strategic Framework for European cooperation in education and training (“ET 2020”)

ET 2020 constitutes the roadmap of the education & training policies within EU 2020 Strategy. Four strategic objectives should be addressed for the period up to 2020 :

- Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality
- Improving the quality and efficiency of education & training
- Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship
- Enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship at all levels of education and training.

2.5. VET policies

The EU 2020 Strategy underlines the necessity of reinforcing the attractiveness of vocational education and training as well as the mobility.

Two important tools, ECVET and European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQARF) aim at increasing transparency, mobility and at promoting mutual trust between the European VET systems.

They complete the role of the European Qualification Framework (EQF)⁷, a common European reference system, which enables different national qualification systems to be linked. To this end, it uses 8 reference levels based **on learning outcomes, defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competences**.

The European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET)⁸ is a technical framework for the transfer, recognition and accumulation of **“individuals” learning outcomes**

⁶ « Key challenges facing European labour markets : a joint analysis of European Social Partners” – ETUC; BusinessEurope; UEAPME; CEEP – 18 October 2007

⁷ Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (2008/C 111/01)

⁸ Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009 on the establishment of a European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) – (2009/C 155/02)

with a view to achieving a qualification, uses the same basis as EQF: learning outcomes defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence.

The European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQARF)⁹ which comprises a quality assurance and improvement cycle (planning, implementation, evaluation/ assessment and review/revision) based on a selection of quality criteria, descriptors and indicators applicable to quality management at both VET-system and VET-provider levels.

The ELGPN work on “Widening access” in the next phase should be more than currently situated in the context of EU2020 and the EU policy in Education, Training, Employment, in order to make the outcomes of the network valued within the European policies.

IMPLICATION FOR FURTHER WORK ON “WIDENING ACCESS”

The ELGPN work on Widening access could, inter alia, examine the following subjects in the light of the WP2 current outcomes and EU strategies:

- **Access to higher education**, in particular the issues of transitions between VET and Higher Education, the information of the students, the quality of guidance services within Universities;
- **promotion of entrepreneurship** through mobility programmes for young professionals: is there a need for specific service ? which kind of services?
- **the role of guidance and access services in the recognition of non-formal and informal learning linked to the capacity of workers to increase their employability through lifelong learning strategies**
- **There should be a particular focus on flexicurity policies, particularly the role of Public Employment services in helping adults to source and interpret information about themselves and about learning and work**
- **Widening access at workplace:** to investigate the needs of the enterprises and employers in terms of information and guidance; To examine the role of trade unions and employer organizations in informing and advising their members and within the enterprises.
- **Information and counselling on EQF and ECVET systems :** Implementing EQF ECVET implies that a strong guidance/counselling support to individuals is established. ELGPN WP2 should take into account these new tools, and undertake a reflection on the specific nature of this support in partnership with the Commission ECVET Working group.
- **Value the outcomes of WP2 into the Initiative “A Digital Agenda for Europe”:** assert the importance for guidance of :
 - promoting internet access and take-up by all European citizens, especially through actions in support of digital literacy and accessibility;
 - promoting deployment and usage of modern accessible online services

⁹ Recommendation 2009/C 155/01 of 18 June 2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council

Annex

ELGPN Policy Briefing 3 (ACCESS)

Potential implications for the work of ELGPN (DRAFT)

Françoise Divisia

INTRODUCTION

The future of ELGPN work on the development of lifelong guidance policies should be part of the reflection and actions undertaken in the context of Europe 2020 Strategy and of the EU policy in Education, Training, Employment, in order to make the outcomes of the network valued within the European policies.

This annex to the PB3 aims at providing some suggestions for the future work of ELGPN in the new context of the Europe 2020 and the “Education & Training 2020” Agendas.

The following subjects could be deepened in relation with the implementation of the EU policies by sectors.

EDUCATION SECTOR

Early school leaving

The Europe Strategy 2020 proposes as target for 2020 that **the share of early school leavers should be under 10%**. A Council Recommendation on reducing early school leaving is planned for adoption by Council in the first half of 2011. This issue is a component of the “*Youth on the move Initiative*”. The share of 10% is mentioned in the Employment guidelines as the basis of which Member States will set their national targets.

Reflection to be deepened by ELGPN/WP1 in this context:

- Means of spotting young people at risk of early school leaving, means of preventing drop-out
- How to widen access to information, guidance services and counselling on training opportunities for young people who are at risk?
- How to motivate young people for learning? What kind of counselling?
- Need for specific training for teachers and practitioners? Need for multidisciplinary teams including public employment services?

VALIDATION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING / LIFELONG LEARNING STRATEGIES

Europe 2020 through the flagship Initiative “Youth on the move”, the Strategic framework for European cooperation in education & training (ET2020) emphasize the necessity of

promoting the recognition of non-formal and informal learning as a core element of Lifelong learning strategies.

A Recommendation to support the identification/validation of non-formal & informal learning is planned for 2011.

Reflection to be deepened by ELGPN/WP2 in this context:

- the role of guidance and access to adequate services and counselling in the recognition of non-formal and informal learning linked to the capacity of workers to increase their employability through lifelong learning strategies
- Is there a need for specific competences and training of the practitioners supporting individuals in the process of validation of informal/non formal learning ?
- The role of public employment services in the process of validation of informal/non formal learning?

VET SECTOR

The role of VET for better skills development in Europe is particularly highlighted in the Europe strategy, in particular in two Flagship Initiatives:

- ✓ An Agenda for new skills and jobs
- ✓ Youth on the move

“A new impetus for VET” will help to promote “smart, sustainable and inclusive growth” through the re-launch of Copenhagen Process.

The Copenhagen Process¹⁰ on Enhanced European Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training launched in 2002 has supported the development of common reference tools: Europass, European Qualifications Framework, European Credit Transfer System for VET (ECVET) and European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET).

The priorities under the Copenhagen Process will be reviewed in December 2010 (Bruges Review).

In order to prepare the Bruges Review, two documents propose a vision for the future of VET:

1. A Communication of the Commission “A new impetus for European cooperation in VET to support the Europe 2020 strategy”, adopted on 9th June 2010¹¹, is focused on:

¹⁰ Copenhagen Declaration”, Declaration of the European Ministers of Vocational Education and Training and the European Commission on enhanced cooperation in vocational education and training (30 November 2002); “Maastricht Communiqué on the future priorities of enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training (14 December 2004); “Helsinki Communiqué on enhanced cooperation in vocational education and training”(5 December 2006); Bordeaux Communiqué (26 November 2008).

¹¹ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the Europe economic and social Committee and the Committee of the regions : “A new impetus for European cooperation in VET to support the Europe 2020 strategy”- 9-6-2010- COM(2010) 296 final

- The key role of VET in lifelong learning and mobility
 - Quality and efficiency of VET
 - Equity and citizenship – Inclusive VET
 - Innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship
2. Draft conclusions of the Council on the priorities for enhanced European cooperation in VET for the period 2011-2020 which are in discussion within the Committee of education for adoption at the 19 November Council of education.

Both texts greatly underline the key role of guidance and counselling services; they call for

- Lifelong learning opportunities in both initial and continuing VET must be coupled with guidance and counselling services to facilitate transitions
- “a close cooperation” between PES and E&T guidance systems,
- integrated guidance and counselling services
- Career management skills development
- a “tasting approach” of guidance providing young people with an opportunity to get acquainted with different vocational trades and career possibilities
- **accessible and targeted guidance services providing additional support at key transitions points for learners at risk of underachievement.**

The 2 documents stress the development of the learning outcomes approach which is the base of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the European Credit Transfer System for VET (ECVET), the value of learning mobility and the use of EQF & ECVET.

Work-based learning should facilitate the acquisition of key competences and the promotion of risk-taking culture should foster entrepreneurship.

They call for the development of forward planning tools to match skill and jobs, in particular in specific professions with skills shortages.

Reflection to be deepened by ELGPN/WP2 in this context:

- Access to learning mobility: information, counselling, accompaniement
- **Information and counselling on EQF and ECVET systems** : Implementing EQF ECVET implies that a strong guidance/counselling support to individuals is established. ELGPN WP2 should take into account these new tools, and undertake a reflection on the specific nature of this support in partnership with the Commission ECVET Working group.
- Sharing information on surplus and shortages of skills across EU countries
- **promotion of entrepreneurship** for young professionals: is there a need for specific service ? which kind of services

HIGHER EDUCATION

The Europe Strategy 2020 proposes as target for 2020 that **at least 40% of the younger generation should have a tertiary degree.**

This implies, inter alia, relationship between VET and higher education and “open pathways have to be ensured as well as tertiary VET” (Communication of the Commission “A new impetus for VET”).

The Flagship Initiative “Youth on the move” asks the Commission to step up the **modernisation agenda of higher education**. The Flagship Initiative: "Innovation Union" urges Member States to ensure a sufficient supply of science, maths and engineering graduates...

Reflection to be deepened by ELGPN/WP2 in this context:

- **Access to higher education**, in particular the issue of transitions between VET and Higher Education, the information of the students, the quality of guidance services within Universities.

EMPLOYMENT SECTOR

1- The “Europe 2020 Integrated Guidelines” set out the framework for the Europe 2020 strategy and reforms at Member State level. On this basis, Member States will draw up National Reform Programmes setting out in detail the actions they will take under the new strategy.

The 4 guidelines for the employment policies, “Increasing labour market participation and reducing structural unemployment”, “Developing a skilled workforce responding to labour market needs, promoting job quality and lifelong learning”, “Increasing the performance of education and training systems at all levels and increasing participation in tertiary education”, “Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty” stress the following points:

- The EU headline target is of aiming to bring by **2020 to 75% the employment rate for women and men aged 20-64** including through the greater participation of youth, older workers and low skilled workers and the better integration of legal migrants
- Enhance flexibility and security, **integrate the flexicurity principles** into labour market policies
- Improve access to Career guidance, acquisition of the key competencies, learning mobility of young people and teachers,
- recognition of acquired competencies taking in account learning in informal and non-formal contexts...

2- Flagship Initiative : “An Agenda for new skills and jobs”

The EU 2020 Flagship Initiative has been prepared by a series of documents, surveys and experts working groups since 2007, in particular the experts’ report¹² which underlines that “ “make people shift from job seekers to job shapers” should be the ambition.

(cf. the draft PB1).

¹² “New skills for new jobs : Action now” – A report by the Expert Group on new skills for new jobs prepared for the European Commission – January 2010

The Flagship Initiative proposes inter alia:

- To define and implement the second phase of the **flexicurity agenda**
- to develop a common language and operational tool for education/training and work: a European Skills, Competences and Occupations framework (ESCO).

FLEXICURITY

Flexibility combined with security has led to the new concept of **flexicurity** which is the cornerstone of the employment policies since 2007. The Communication from the Commission of June 2007 ("*Towards Common Principles of Flexicurity: more and better jobs through flexibility and security*"¹³) defines flexicurity as an integrated approach including:

- more flexible and secure contractual arrangements, from the point of view of both employer and worker: flexicurity focuses on "employment security" instead of "job security".
- lifelong learning strategies in order to ensure workers' **ongoing capacity to adapt**, and increase their employability
- effective active labour market policies in order **to facilitate transitions** to new jobs: Flexicurity encompasses **equipping people with the skills that enable them to progress in their working lives, and helping them find new employment.**

ESCO

- Aims at better skills and jobs matching, occupational and geographical mobility.
- The purpose is to create a multi-lingual taxonomy to complement and link national taxonomies in order to promote Europe-wide interoperability.
- ESCO will be built in a bottom-up approach, in partnership with **education and labour market stakeholders, in coherence with learning outcomes work.**

Reflection to be deepened by ELGPN/WP2 in this context:

Globally, how lifelong guidance can contribute to the implementation of the 4 Employment guidelines and to the attainment of 75% employment rate ?

- **There should be a particular focus on flexicurity policies, particularly the role of Public Employment services in helping adults to source and interpret information about themselves and about learning and work**
- What kind of competences behind a job? Potential job profiles. Use of ESCO by the practitioners.
- **Widening access at workplace:** to investigate the needs of the enterprises and employers in terms of information and guidance; To examine the role of trade unions and employer organizations in informing and advising their members and within the enterprises.

Those are some and not exhaustive draft suggestions to be discussed in Lisbon.

¹³ Communication of the European Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, adopted on 27 June 2007: "Towards Common Principles of Flexicurity: More and better jobs through flexibility and security" - COM(2007) 359 final