

Presidency Conference

Lifelong Guidance 2020

4th European Conference on Lifelong Guidance Policy

24 October 2012, Larnaca, Cyprus

Conference Conclusions

Approved by Conference Delegates

The 4th European Conference on Lifelong Guidance Policy – Lifelong Guidance 2020 – was attended by 121 representatives from 29 countries. The main objective of this Cyprus 2012 EU Presidency Conference was to examine the transversal role of lifelong guidance in meeting the Europe 2020 priorities. The agenda covered selected national examples and European-level syntheses of lifelong guidance policies, structures and services.

These conference conclusions identify key areas for further action at EU and national levels to take forward lifelong guidance issues and the respective role and contribution of key stakeholders (ministries of education and employment, social partners, etc.). The conclusions have been extracted from discussions within the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network Plenary Meetings and Peer Learning Activities 2011-12, and were synthesised by a working group with representatives of ELGPN Steering Group in April 2012. The conference participants were invited to amend and approve these conclusions in table discussions, and also to present supplementary conclusions and action points. The conclusions accordingly represent a summary of the collective conclusions of those present at the event. They do not bind any of the institutions which were represented. They are addressed primarily to policy-makers.

1. Preamble

Over the last decade lifelong guidance has been recognised as a crucial dimension of lifelong learning, promoting both social and economic goals: in particular, improving the efficiency and effectiveness of education, training and the labour market through its

contribution to reducing drop-out, preventing skill mismatches and boosting productivity. Two EU Resolutions of the Education Council (2004; 2008) have highlighted the need for strong guidance services throughout the lifespan to equip citizens with the skills to manage their learning and careers and the transitions between and within education/training and work.

The objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy and the supporting Flagship initiatives reinforce and extend the transversal role of lifelong guidance between the key EU sectoral policy fields and the need for a more comprehensive strategy for lifelong guidance policy development in the EU and the Member States. This could include mobilising the European Semester (for implementing recommendations at both EU and national levels) to achieve these common European goals.

Lifelong guidance can be examined as a policy, as an activity of individual organisations or networked services (sometimes in collaborative contracts between the public administration and the private and voluntary sectors), as well as an individual process. Lifelong guidance provision may be directed by official documents such as laws and decrees, or by other structures and processes. As citizens progress in their life or career, they may look for services from several professional groups or service providers. There is accordingly a need to develop consistent networked lifelong guidance services to guarantee access and social equity in accordance with local cultural, economic and social contexts. Lifelong guidance should be understood as a right which implies a social contract with citizens, as part of the European social model.

2. Actions required within the Member States

The Conference invites the EU Member States to:

(a) Strengthen the transversal role of lifelong guidance in the areas of education and training, VET, higher education, employment and social inclusion, in order to reach the EU headline targets of the Europe 2020 Strategy, within the Flagship Initiatives (in particular, New Skills for Jobs, and Youth on the Move) and other initiatives (e.g. Youth Guarantee), and to attain the ET 2020 benchmarks.

(b) Speed up the implementation of a more comprehensive strategy for lifelong guidance policy development in their country and close co-operation between the worlds of education and work, both at political and operational levels, in order to address skills mismatches.

(c) Encourage learning and work mobility through the use of European tools and networks, such as EURES, Euroguidance, EUROPASS, the (future) European Skills Passport, ECVET, ECTS and EQF.

(d) Promote and support entrepreneurship, self-employment, social enterprises and business start-ups through adequate information, guidance and counselling.

(e) Encourage guidance services to use the EU instruments to forecast and anticipate skills needs: the European Vacancy Monitor which provides labour market information on short-term vacancies; Cedefop's long-term forecasts; and the (future) EU Skills Panorama, which will help to identify emerging skills shortages in specific occupations across or within sectors.

(f) Make use of the European Social Fund to enhance the quality of lifelong guidance systems, ensuring the development of career management skills throughout life and guaranteeing access to information, counselling and guidance services for all citizens, in accordance with national priorities.

(g) Depending on their specific situations and legislation, to set up quality-assurance and evidence-base systems and mechanisms to improve efficiency in service provision, to increase institutional financial accountability and to create transparency from the perspective of the citizen (including utilising the voice of users). The development of quality assurance in career development services should not be an isolated process: instead, it is an integral cross-cutting theme in a national lifelong guidance system that encompasses education and training, employment and social inclusion.

(h) Make use of the ELGPN resources, in particular the European Resource Kit, for reviewing, where appropriate, lifelong guidance policies, systems and practices at national level, in accordance with national contexts and legislation, and with a view to helping citizens to prepare for and manage the multiple transitions they will have to face throughout their life-span.

3. Actions required at European Union level

The Conference invites the European Commission to:

(a) Consider lifelong guidance as a cross-cutting policy area within the existing key policy documents and processes.

(b) Step up close co-operation between the worlds of education and employment, both at political and operational levels (including promotion of horizontal and sectoral social dialogue), to ensure fruitful policy-making.

- (c) Check that in each relevant European process (Copenhagen, Bologna and the European Employment Strategy), and in each flagship initiative activity, lifelong guidance is taken into account.

- (d) Include lifelong guidance as a transversal priority in the four thematic objectives that are proposed within the draft ESF Regulation for 2014-20: promoting employment and labour mobility; investing in education, skills and lifelong learning; promoting social inclusion; and combating poverty.

- (e) Pursuing and intensifying co-operation and extending the benefits with relevant international organisations such as the OECD (in particular, by exploiting the results of PISA, and of the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competences – PIAAC), as well as other relevant regional or worldwide initiatives such as ETF’s work in neighbouring countries.

- (f) Reinforce European co-operation on lifelong guidance, in both the education and the employment sectors, through the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN) with the support of the Lifelong Learning Programme or other European financial instruments and in liaison with CEDEFOP, ETF and Euroguidance, in order to assist Member States and in implementing the priorities identified in the Europe 2020 strategies.