

European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network

Work Package 2: Widening Access

Peer learning Review Event held in Copenhagen, October 10-12, 2011

Reflection Note

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1. Introduction

This Reflection Note is an overview and synthesis of the peer learning review event held in Copenhagen on 10-12 October, 2011. The event was attended by representatives from 16 countries (Austria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and Turkey). The Copenhagen study visit was organized around the theme of *widening access to information, guidance and counselling services for all citizens, particularly for young people at-risk of early school leaving, for adults (employed, unemployed and at transition), for active ageing, as well as to review the case study of Denmark*. For the briefing note before the visit, we had a brief data collection prepared by the members of the WP2 on guidance provisions, specifically the use of ICT tools and integrated services for different target groups. Members were asked to describe the process of guidance for at-risk youth, adults (employed, unemployed) and 50+ and specify the services provided (face-to-face, ICT tools etc.), describe the type of practitioners who provide the service and their qualifications and training, as well as to describe 1-2 interesting practices.

One of the target groups for this note is young people at-risk of early school leaving. The Europe 2020 strategy includes the headline target to reduce early school leaving to less than 10% by 2020, from 14.4% in 2009. Preventing early school leaving is particularly important both in order to combat the negative consequences of poverty and social exclusion on the child's development and to empower children and break the intergenerational inheritance of disadvantage. Moreover, the ageing population is another group of interest. According to the World Health Organisation (2002)¹ active ageing is “the process of optimisation of the opportunities for health, participation and security with the aim of improving people's quality of life as they age” (p. 12). Furthermore, guidance has a role to play in helping older workers

¹ Plant,P.;Sanchez-Lopez, J (2011). Guidance for older workers in Denmark and Spain. International Journal of Vocational Guidance, 11:3-15.

to lead meaningful and fruitful lives and is considered as an active ageing strategy for keeping older workers active in the labour market. Information, guidance and counselling services should be open to all citizens, regardless of their educational attainment, labour market position, skills base or overall life situation. The European Union² aims to remove entry barriers to services as well as to provide support for the individual lifelong learning and career management processes. From an individual service user's perspective, systematic rigidity in guidance provision can be considered as something that prevents his/her flexible movement across sectors, systems, service structures, institutions and/or support programmes when looking for information, guidance and counselling on learning and career opportunities. While the more traditional face-to-face services are widely used in all Member States for almost all target groups, online tools have been developed or are in the process of being developed in almost all States. A good balance and a meaningful combination between more traditional and online methods (following the principle: log in, walk in, phone in and look in) should be found so as to make the overall guidance service delivery as attractive and useful as possible for the clients. Nevertheless, developing integrated all-age information and guidance services is a tremendous task for Member States, and calls for renewed institutional structures, cooperative culture and mentality of working.

The Reflection Note will elaborate on this theme and moreover, will also have reflections and suggestions on the Work Programme implementation 2011-2012.

1.1 The aims of the meeting were:

- To learn from the Denmark experience and the feedback provided by the participants.
- To review and discuss the existing common reference tools, reference points for lifelong guidance policy and systems development (the proposed new tool) and discuss the possible content of the chapter on WP2 of the manual including the case studies.

1.2. In relation to the first of these aims, i.e. to learn from the Denmark experience and the feeding provided by the participants, several presentations were made in relation to the theme of the visit, specifically on the Danish guidance policy, the portal (www.ug.dk), e-guidance system, the youth data base and the Danish folk high schools.

² Proposal for a Council Recommendation on policies to reduce early school leaving.31.01.2011:Brussels.

The Danish act on guidance aims to develop a system with easy access to high quality services with ICT tools. The act is primarily targeted at young people up to the age of 25 years, also addressing adults wishing to enter a higher education programme. The responsibility of guidance was moved from schools to a set of new independent and professional institutions. There are two types of centres, local Youth Guidance Centres and Regional Guidance Centres. Youth Guidance Centres provide guidance in relation to the transition from compulsory to youth education (secondary and vocational education and training programmes, age 16-19) whereas Regional Guidance Centres provisions are targeted at the transition from youth education to higher education. The use of ICT and database to track target groups in the Youth Guidance Centres, an initiative in the guidance field, the youth database, is a new development in Denmark. This database contains information on activities of young people up to 30 years of age. The database is a useful tool for both the Ministry of children and education and the guidance practitioners. The National Guidance Portal and the e-guidance (E-mail, SMS, telephone and chat) are the ICT tools that have been supporting the services, specifically for youth and youth-at-risk. The National Guidance Portal provides information about education programmes, jobs and links to universities, schools with information to guidance practitioners. The portal includes guidance-information and interactive tools. The municipalities play a significant role and personal education plans are designed for each student and youth. The municipality can withhold the family allowance for 15-17 years old youth if they do not comply with the obligation to be in education, employment or another agreed activity and if the family is not willing to cooperate. Furthermore, the system has quality assurance and monitoring systems to ensure the effectiveness of the system.

1.2. Danish folk high schools are residential non-formal educational institutes mostly in rural areas or smaller towns with a philosophy of “education for all”. These schools have a lifelong learning approach serving mostly to youth, a small percentage to adults. Teachers serve as mentors in long, short or summer time courses and cooperation with VET centres and Youth Guidance Centres are encouraged.

1.3 In relation to the third aim, i.e. the existing common reference tools, reference points for lifelong guidance policy and systems development (the proposed new

tool) were discussed. The WP2 members made recommendations and had a discussion on the possible content of the chapter on WP2 for the manual/toolkit.

2. Providing Access to the youth at-risk

2.1 The Council Resolution of 15 November 2007 on 'New skills for new jobs' stresses the need to raise overall skill levels and to give priority to the education and training of those at risk of economic and social exclusion, particularly early school leavers. Member States have been introducing many strategies on skills and competences not just to help people get into jobs, but to help break the cycle of low skills, short-term jobs and low wages. Information, guidance and counselling is usually a core component and integral element of such strategies.

2.2 *The employment guideline 8: Developing a skilled workforce responding to labour market needs and promoting lifelong learning* encourages Member States to strengthen educational and careers guidance services in cooperation with social partners and companies, and to enact schemes to help young people to find initial employment.³

2.3 The evidence on the English system shows that educational attainment continues to be strongly associated with socio-economic background. Stereotypical information and guidance can limit young people's options and aspirations at an early age. Careers advice often reinforces traditional choices and young people have limited information on the pay advantages of nontraditional routes. Nearly one in four young people say that they have not had enough information to make choices for their future. This rises to just under a quarter of disabled young people.⁴

2.4 In Denmark, the Youth Guidance Centres are obliged to make contact with young people under the age of 25 who are outside the education system or the labour market. Together with the individual young person, the guidance counsellors

³ European Commission (2010). Youth on the Move - An initiative to unleash the potential of young people to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in the European Union. Luxembourg: Publications Office. Available from Internet:http://ec.europa.eu/education/yom/com_en.pdf

⁴ Hutchinson, Rolfe, Moore, Bysshe & Kieran Bentley (2011). All things being equal? Equality and diversity in careers education, information, advice and guidance. Equality and Human Rights Commission Research report 71.

discuss different opportunities and schemes that may help them get back into education, training or employment.

- 2.5** Team Young part of the youth guidance for the age group between 15 and 25 years old) contacts a young person if he/she is in an unsatisfactory educational- or employment situation. They provide outreach guidance and it was mentioned that young people appreciate the outreach contact and guidance without pressure.
- 2.6** It is important to see the integrated approach to guidance in Denmark. Face-to-face services are well integrated with the National Guidance Portal, e-guidance, youth database and Virtual Resource ,Centre.
- 2.7** E-guidance is provided via e-mail, SMS, telephone and chat and is accessible for everyone (who wants counselling about education and training, specifically, students in the lower secondary school choosing higher secondary school or vocational education It is also their parents and young people choosing further education (diplomas, university etc.) with the focus on formal education. Moreover, it is an ICT tool for career guidance for adults and provides information on the job possibilities when you have got the education or the diploma.
- 2.8** The Youth database is part of the reform "Ungepakke II" with the purpose of providing Youth Guidance Centres and Job centres (PES) with data on the educational and employment status of their target group. It enables to take measures according to the needs of the specific age groups, i.e. to place 15-17-year-olds in education or employment, to refer the 18-24 year olds to Youth Guidance Centres so that they make contacts and motivate these young people for education. For 25-29-years-olds, job centres make contact with the unemployed and take measures for employment. Moreover, they provide up-to-date overview and statistics for the educational and employment status for people at the age of 15-29 years.
- 2.9** Research with disabled young people has found that, while their aspirations are higher than among disabled young people in the past, they may experience disappointment and frustration in trying to achieve their career aspirations. Other research, among young people aged 14-18, report that disabled young people are less likely than others to feel able to achieve their potential and more likely to have considered dropping out of learning and to worry that they will fail.⁵

⁵ Ibid

3. Qualifications and competences of practitioners:

3.1 The demands placed on counsellors are constantly increasing due to changes in society and reforms in education and employment policies. Furthermore, the working environments and client groups of guidance counsellors are getting more diverse all over Europe. This creates the need for continuing professional development as well as continuous demonstration of adequate competences from individual guidance practitioners and teachers.⁶

3.2 When competences of the guidance practitioners are considered in the context of Denmark, the skilled counsellor refers to a practitioner with further education, a diploma or master degree in counselling, as well as several years of practical training.

4. Transitions:

4.1 The guidelines for Member States employment policies 2005–2008 stated that the objectives of full employment is to attract more people to join and stay in the labour market, to improve the adaptability of workers and companies, and to increase investment in human capital by improving education and qualifications. It explicitly mentioned the need to promote support for active ageing, for example, with adequate working conditions, improved health at work and appropriate measures that provide incentives at work and dissuade people from early retirement.

4.2 The term career adaptability describes the conscious and continuous exploration of both the self and the environment, where the eventual aim is to achieve synergy between the individual, their identity and an occupational environment. Developing career adaptability has a focus on supporting and encouraging individuals to be autonomous, by taking responsibility for their own career development. The operational definition of career adaptability used for this study was: ‘The capability of an individual to make a series of successful transitions

⁶ Lifelong guidance across Europe: Reviewing policy progress and future prospects. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2011.

where the labour market, organisation of work and underlying occupational and organisational knowledge bases may all be subject to considerable change'⁷.

- 4.3** In Regional Guidance Centres, young people and adults call or visit the centres to get information about higher education opportunities or make an appointment about a guidance session. The possibility of meeting the counsellors from the centres at different localities across the regions, e.g at a public library ensures that geographical distance does not prevent people from getting access to relevant services and this is an effective way to widen access. Students are administered a survey of 15 questions and the ones who need either individual guidance or group work are screened out. The ones screened are firstly invited through e-mail and if there is no response they receive an SMS and everything is handled in a booking system.
- 4.4** According to a recent report on active ageing (Council of the European Union, 2007), one of the main policy areas, learning and training, specifically includes counselling adapted to the needs of older workers. In other words, the European Council considers older workers guidance as a valid instrument in promoting active ageing. Another question that arises is whether sufficient progress in being made in this direction. Our data collection before the visit indicated that in many of the countries that responded, there are services being developed for adults and in some in the process of developing services specifically targeted at the age group over 50+. The Retirement Campus of Germany as a web-based system is specifically designed for adults in transition from work to retirement. In Spain, courses of cultural activation/motivation for people over 50 year of age are available with a more flexible concept of university than the traditional one and promotes more skill upgrading of the aging population.
- 4.5** Currently, the unemployment rate is high. Guidance is one of the tools which enable us to deal with these both on a societal level (workforce balance, social inclusion policies) and on an individual level, as some workers may want to leave work as they get older or may want to stay longer whereas others may want to stay on for much longer. This also calls for extended older workers guidance provision for retention or gradual retirement.

⁷ Bimrose, J., Brown, A., Barnes, S-A. and Hughes, D. (2011). The role of career adaptability in skills supply. Evidence report 35. Main report. London: UK Commission for Employment and Skills.

5. Gaps and future goals

- 5.1** More targeted measures will still have to be introduced in the Member States to achieve the shared objective of guaranteeing open access for all citizens to a seamless information, advice and guidance system to support them in making choices and managing transitions as learners and workers.
- 5.2** Nevertheless, developing integrated all-age information and guidance services is a tremendous task for Member States, and calls for renewed institutional structures, cooperative culture and mentality of working.⁸ People – whether young or old, in education or employment – are not always aware of the existing information and guidance services, nor how to access them and how to make use of them. Therefore, the sometimes neglected active promotion of both the traditional and online services that support citizens' educational and occupational decisions should be improved. Marketing measures are needed for creating visibility of services and specifically the guidance provisions that are either new or not that well known by the target audience.
- 5.3** Joint synergies with the other Work Packages would facilitate and promote the process of guidance and support widening access. Specifically, as initiated in the previous work and meetings, the development of the career management skills would facilitate the exploration of oneself and the educational and labour market opportunities, thus facilitating the process of widening access.
- 5.4** An important challenge and future vision across Europe is to manage how to apply successfully modern information and communications technology to guidance delivery, and how best to assess its impact on guidance services on the citizens and service providers. An additional dimension concerns how the improved access to guidance services support the achievement of national education, training and labour market goals.⁹
- 5.5.** Experimental use of the social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) for guidance provision on learning and working is growing and such platforms will probably gain an even stronger foothold in information and guidance delivery in the future.

⁸ Reflection note European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network Work package 2: Widening access. Manchester, 1-3 February 2010. Available from internet: <http://ktl.jyu.fi/img/portal/16803/WP2> Manchester Reflection Note Füsün Akkök.

⁹ Lifelong guidance across Europe: Reviewing policy progress and future prospects. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2011.

- 5.6** In Denmark, the National Centre of Expertise for Guidance creates a good opportunity to support and disseminate information on the interesting practices, knowledge within the field of guidance, quality development, and coordination among different types of guidance services, as well as initiating analyses, surveys, cross-sectoral experimental and developmental activities. A virtual resource centre has been established specifically for the guidance practitioners. This provides a good opportunity for continuous training of the professionals as well as dissemination of the data.
- 5.7** Databases, like the Youth data base, have various data sources. The database will enable up-to-date statistics for the educational and employment status of people at the age of 15-29 years. These kinds of databases create the medium for evidence-based learning and evidence-based policies. However, the important question here is to what extent the database is used for policy making. Moreover, these databases as ICT tools, could be effective means for targeting different user groups.
- 5.8** Finally, all the provisions and databases need to have a lifelong and life-wide perspective. More robust policy frameworks to motivate and inspire individuals to take action at different ages and stages in the life course are needed.