

European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network

Work Package 3:

Co-operation and co-ordination mechanisms in guidance policy and systems development

Peer Learning Activity, Oslo, Norway, November 10-11, 2011

Reflection Note

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1. Context

- 1.1. This reflection note brings together elements of the second peer learning activity of WP3 during the second phase of ELGPN, 2011-2012.
- 1.2. Attending members represented AT, EL, HR, NO & PL. Additional countries included FI, FR, RO, SE.
- 1.3. The meeting was twinned with representatives from the Nordic countries (DK, FIN, IS, NO & SE), in particular members of the Pan-Nordic guidance research group of the *Voice of Users* (2011), funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers through the Nordic Network of Adult Learning (NVL), the leader of which was also present. This created synergy and networking between Nordic and EU/ELGPN guidance activities.
- 1.4. Thus, the note is based on the two days of discussions in Oslo, and on the earlier Briefing Note data collection on co-operation and co-ordination in guidance, which focused on regional aspects, as well as the links between regional and national co-operation and co-ordination. A further regional and cross-national example (AT, DE, CH) of co-operation and co-ordination in guidance and learning was subsequently provided from the Bodenseeland region. (Annex 2)
- 1.5. A number of issues were raised (see Section 2 below), and a number of reflections were tabled by the WP3 members during the process.
- 1.6. The CRT (Common Reference Tool) draft of 1 OCT 2011 by the consultant was discussed and refined, with a final version as one of the products of the meeting. All members of WP3 agreed to contribute with various examples in the KSLLL format of regional and/or national co-operation and co-ordination from their respective regions or countries. Deadline by the end of 2011, sent to the lead partner.
- 1.7. On this basis, the overarching reflections were that:
 - national fora need to link with similar regional structures in a two-way process
 - highly different conditions prevail in the various countries in terms of forming and maintaining national (and regional) guidance fora. Decisive factors include: centralisation/decentralisation; top-down/bottom-up approaches; level of professionalism; policy interests
 - some basic difficulties still exist in convincing different ministries with different portfolios to co-operate, let alone co-ordinate their efforts.

- 1.8.** A policy-making taxonomy may be helpful in distinguishing between:
- (1) a reactive approach with mirrors and supports national/regional guidance policies;
 - (2) a critical approach which questions national/regional guidance policies;
 - (3) a proactive approach which formulates national/regional guidance policies.

2. Discussions and presentations

- 2.1.** With this backdrop, Norway presented the newly established National Unit for Lifelong Guidance under VOX, which is part of the Ministry for Education. It is still early days for this national unit, but the brief is to deal with, inter alia, quality in guidance, ethics of guidance, professional guidance competence levels, along with establishing firmer links in terms of national and regional co-operation and co-ordination approaches.
- 2.2.** Further, the emphasis was on the presentation and discussion of Norwegian regional co-operation and co-ordination, partnerships, known as *Regionale Partnerskap*. Two examples were presented, in addition to the one provided in the Briefing Note, Annex 1, from Østfold County: one from Nordland County, and one from Telemark County. Both pointed to the importance of commitment, involvement, and leadership. It seems fair to observe that linking services across sectoral silos is still a challenge. Also, with more refined tracking and follow-up systems, based on personal identification numbers, a dark side to, for example, outreach guidance can be a pronounced social control aspect.
- 2.3.** An additional Norwegian input, focused on the usefulness of ELGPN tools and policy documents in relation to Norwegian career guidance policy development. It was striking how the new National Unit for Lifelong Guidance had been able to benefit on the previous work by ELGPN in a number of respects related to formulating future Norwegian guidance policies.
- 2.4.** With a view to including broader Nordic guidance policy perspectives, Danish and Finnish co-operation and co-ordination approaches were presented. The experiences are mixed, in particular in Denmark, which has a very long history of co-operation and co-ordination in guidance, dating back to the 1960s, in various forms. Current Danish experiences include a missed opportunity (2008-2009) when a National Adult Guidance Council came and went, without being able to issue a final statement in agreement.
- 2.5.** Moreover, an example of current Pan-Nordic guidance research was presented: the *Voice of Users* (2011; see <http://www.nordvux.net/page/1143/vagledning.htm>), funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers through the Nordic Network of Adult Learning, NVL. Using both qualitative and quantitative research methods among adult learners, the findings reveal that the one-to-one guidance interview is the dominant mode; that IT in guidance is an add-on, rather than an integrated part of guidance; that evaluation of guidance is mostly oral and patchy; that little follow-up is provided; and that the users would like to be more involved in planning the nature and methods of guidance services. With this research backdrop, more developmental work needs to be undertaken, both with a view to the democratisation and inclusion aspects of the voice of users, and with a focus on the untapped resources that the users can provide as part of developing guidance services. This, too, could enhance co-operation and co-ordination in and among guidance services.

3. Transversal elements: Common Reference Tools

- 3.1.** With a view to revise the Common Reference Tools, WP3 had been asked to produce an input for the common ELGPN document. See Annex 1.

4. Key Messages

- 4.1.** Information, advice and guidance services need to be co-coordinated and to co-operate to be effective and efficient. At present, too much energy is wasted on overlapping guidance activities which are carried out in institutional silos with little cross-sectoral communication. This situation needs to be improved in terms of creating synergies between and among the different guidance actors, both on a national, regional, and local level.
- 4.1** Thus co-operation and co-ordination of guidance goes beyond the breaking down of the present silos. It aims at creating a seamless life-long guidance approach, without losing the expertise of the different actors in the guidance process. In this process, innovative guidance projects need to find ways to a more sustainable footing in mainstream policies. Regional partnerships, linked to each other and to a national co-operation and co-ordination unit/council in guidance can be seen as important steps in this direction.
- 4.2** Links to other ELGPN WPs are pivotal, both in relation to validation of prior learning, to access, to career management skills, to the integral use of ICT, and to the overall lifelong guidance policies of the EU.