

COMMUNIQUE

CONCLUSIONS OF THE EU PRESIDENCY CONFERENCE, ESTONIA, ON LIFELONG GUIDANCE POLICY AND PRACTICE

INTRODUCTION

The 7th Biennial EU Presidency Conference on Lifelong Guidance Policy and Practice took place in Tallinn, Estonia, 27-28th September, 2017, under the Estonian Presidency of the EU. Organised by Innove, it was supported by the EU ERASMUS+ programme, the Ministry of Education and Research, Estonia, and CEDEFOP, an agency of the European Commission. It was attended by XXX participants from YY countries, officials of the European Commission, EUPARL, and the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP), the European Training Foundation(ETF), the Euroguidance network, CareersNet, and representatives of international organisations ICCDPP, IAEVG, and European Network of Public Employment Services.

The changing role of lifelong guidance in a context of accelerated technological and socioeconomic was the main theme of the conference. The subthemes included:

- Developing integrated services to support lifelong guidance
- The provision of guidance support to client groups with specific needs e.g. NEETs, ESLs, low qualified and long term unemployed
- Supporting individuals to better navigate the labour markets and supporting enterprises to find persons with the right skills
- Improving the competences, attitudes and knowledge of career practitioners in complex labour markets and in rapid technological and media development
- Engaging with publics and developing innovation through peer learning
- Improving accountability and the evidence base for policy and practice.

In advance of the conference, country representatives were requested by the Estonian Presidency to prepare a national response to the 6 subthemes above. They were asked to describe the national developments with respect to each subtheme and to consider what how cooperation at EU level could support and assure complementarity and coherence across policies and sectors in progressing each of the subthemes. 27 EU Member States responded as well as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia, and Turkey. A synthesis of the responses was provided to the conference participants, as well as background information on current EU policies for education, VET, adult learning, employment, and skills development. The synthesis of the country responses (can be accessed at www.innove.ee/guidanceweek2017) provide an evidence base for the participating countries, for the European Commission, EUPARL, and for CEDEFOP.



Participants at the conference were asked to identify starting points and priorities at national level for each of the subthemes and to propose forms of EU cooperation and support that are necessary for them to advance those themes at national level.

Lifelong guidance helps individuals, families and communities to learn about education and work, make successful transitions and build their careers (Council Resolutions 2004, 2008 on lifelong guidance). It can be provided in the education and training system, in employment services and in workplaces. By 2020, only three years from now, it is expected that the whole human population will be able to connect to the Internet. For the first time in human history every person will have access to the greatest source of content ever developed. The consequences of such new reality won't leave anything out.

The European Union has been setting up its own Skills Policy¹ to address inter-alia, the challenges set by the digital revolution in societies, labour market, education system and different other policy fields. “Skills, competences, and qualifications that people need change over time. To deal with these changes people need to be equipped with a variety of basic skills” ... including career management skills and access to updated and validated labour market intelligence through the lifespan. Career management skills need to be introduced as a key competence in the EU framework of key competences for lifelong learning. The role of lifelong guidance as a service, system and policy is essential to prepare European societies, families and individuals for challenges of a risk society, transitional labour markets, and changing technology and media.

Theme 1: Developing integrated services to support lifelong guidance

The past ten years have seen the development of national lifelong guidance forums or other cross sector representative structures that bring together all relevant partners in the fields of education, training, employment, youth and social inclusion, including relevant ministries, agencies and experts, and social partners. Despite these beginnings, there is still fragmented service delivery within and across sectors, and sometimes the absence of a jointly agreed national cross-sector vision of guidance services.

Recommendations:

National: Revisit the goals and roles of national guidance forums/representative structures with the aim of improving and widening citizen access to services through greater service integration.

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/skills-development_en



EU: Establish a working group/policy advisory body at EU level to monitor national progress in the development and implementation of a national, cross-sectoral, lifelong guidance strategy, to support bench learning, and to stimulate progress in concrete elements of national guidance systems.

Theme 2: The provision of guidance support to clients with specific needs e.g. early school leavers, NEETs, low qualified and long term unemployed

The Youth Guarantee and early school leaving initiatives have shown in several countries how cross sectoral cooperation in lifelong guidance provision can work. But many cross sectoral initiatives such as these are time-bound by EU project funding and are not necessarily connected with other mainstream lifelong guidance services, or are not subsequently mainstreamed. In addition, 40% of the EU labour force are working in fixed term and temporary employment. Lifelong guidance is a shared policy responsibility across education, training, youth, adult learning, validation, employment and social affairs, and individuals may traverse a range of administrative jurisdictions in order to become active citizens and to engage in learning and work.

Recommendations:

National: Make lifelong guidance a function and task of temporary work agencies and other intermediary employment services.

EU: Support Member States at different levels of administration to provide services to users who are not covered by or who do not have access to standard provision and to engage stakeholders at local level.

Theme 3: Supporting individuals to better navigate the labour markets and supporting enterprises to find persons with the right skills

Reliable, objective, user friendly labour market intelligence (LMI) is essential for citizens to navigate the complexities of the current labour market and for career practitioners to provide relevant information and advice. Some LMI tools have been developed in the employment sector but are not readily shared with career practitioners in the education and training sectors. LMI can be considered one of the weak features of national guidance systems. Employers are key sources of labour market data which can be used to develop career information materials.



Recommendations:

National: Development of a national mechanism to collect, maintain, and disseminate reliable LMI of supply and demand in the labour market, using an individual portfolio approach in education, training and employment.

EU: Encourage the use of a portfolio strategy with a standardized approach to support the geographical, social, learning and work mobility of citizens.

Theme 4: Improving the competences, attitudes and knowledge of career practitioners in complex labour markets and in rapid technological and media development

There are significant variations between and within Member States in the competences and training of career practitioners. These variations can be a function of type and content of training provided by initial training institutions themselves, of the lifelong guidance organization requirements for qualifications, of the extent to which lifelong guidance forms the main part of a role (e.g. guidance counsellor) or a minor part of a role (e.g. subject teacher, placement officer). Even within existing initial and continuing training, insufficient attention is paid to LMI and to competences in the use of social media for guidance purposes. Employers and other relevant stakeholders are rarely consulted in the design and evaluation of career practitioner programmes.

Recommendations:

National: Make ICT, LMI, outreach, and multicultural competences an integral part of the initial and the continuing training of career practitioners.

EU: Update the European competence profiles of career practitioners based on research on new roles and tasks across sectors and support co-development of learning activities in line with revised profiles.

Theme 5: Supporting innovation through structured cooperation and peer learning

The last decade has seen the progressive digitalization of careers services and the improvement of available labour market data. The integration of ICT has nevertheless been in many instances not fully paired with an adaptation of methodologies and activities. Innovation is frequently weakly planned, insufficiently managed and can result in multiple disconnected platforms. Despite the profusion of available data, relevant innovative practices, such as the One Stop Shop services,



struggle to have access to the necessary labour market intelligence for their operation. At the same time there is still a moderate development of public services in what concerns cooperation with employers, intercultural competence and the development of outreach and community based services.

Recommendation:

National: Develop a national platform to enable the knowledge and innovation gained at national and international levels to be diffused to and to be accessible at local level.

EU: EU financed structured cooperation should be sustained and upgraded to a level in which countries can have access to detailed information on policy initiatives and practices, as well as technical support in assessing and enabling transferability.

Theme 6: Improving accountability and the evidence base for policy and practice

Few countries have systematic data collection for accountability and evidence, and where it exists, it is mostly in the PES sector. This data blackhole is the weakest part of lifelong guidance systems and provision in most countries and has significant consequences for policy and programme development, for shaping client centred services, and for organizational efficiency. It also inhibits the development of evidence based policies.

Recommendations:

National: Develop national monitoring systems that respect local needs; introduce them gradually to give time for all stakeholders to get used to a new system

EU: Undertake an EU mapping exercise to discover existing data collection systems and tools for lifelong guidance and to share the results with all countries.

EU: Request the Commission to support and stimulate the development of national reporting and monitoring of lifelong guidance provision through structured EU cooperation, leading to the development of a European monitoring system.

CONCLUSION

The reality of establishing and maintaining lifelong guidance provision with universal access for citizens is very challenging for national administrations in policy and systems terms, given the



diversity of settings for such provision across education, training employment, and the community sectors. However, widening access to such services for all citizens in an effective and efficient manner necessitates policy coherence, partnerships, careers and LMI sharing, service professionalization, service integration. Development of ICT in guidance and e-Governance provides an opportunity for the Member States and the EU to provide better access and coherence of the services all citizens.

Lifelong guidance needs to be repositioned across the policy fields at national and EU levels, in particular taking into account the future of work and in preparing citizens for scenarios of employment, underemployment or no employment in a segmented labour market.

Given its key position and policy development role in and across those fields, the European Commission should take the lead in such repositioning and in developing an implementation strategy, taking into account the six Recommendations of this Estonian Presidency conference, and using the EU Guidelines for Policies and Systems Development for Lifelong Guidance.

