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**Lifelong guidance across  
Europe:  
reviewing policy  
progress and future  
prospects**

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# Lifelong guidance across Europe: reviewing policy progress and future prospects

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## Foreword

It is reasonable to assume that the most significant challenges in this decade for Europe are to combat the worldwide economic crisis and to contribute to a greener economy. As the European Union aims to become the most competitive knowledge-based economic area in the world, this means unleashing the potential for progressive political and economic integration as well as continuing investing in human capital. This calls for fostering participation in lifelong learning, creating inclusive labour markets and promoting active citizenship; these are regarded as necessary measures to reduce unemployment and social exclusion and to increase productivity and economic growth. In this context, lifelong information, advice and guidance play a prominent role in supporting individual citizens on their learning and career paths.

This guidance policy review – carried out during the current economic downturn - outlines the progress made across Europe in working towards more coherent and holistic lifelong guidance provision. It reviews the action taken during 2007-10 in the four priority areas of the Council resolution on better integrating lifelong guidance into lifelong learning strategies (Council of the European Union, 2008b). The review addresses the benefits of successfully integrating lifelong guidance into national lifelong learning and employment strategies and aims at bringing foresight into decision-making processes concerning the medium- and long-term challenges and opportunities in lifelong guidance. Further, this review has been produced with a focus on the needs of those involved in policy and strategy development as well as in forward planning at national, regional, local and sectoral levels.

Throughout the Member States, the progress made is evident in promoting systemic sustainability, new reforms, improved coordination mechanisms and more cohesive and cooperative guidance communities to ensure solid and high quality lifelong guidance provision to all citizens. But the review also identifies areas where further development is needed. One key dimension in the future work is to find innovative and synergetic ways to reinforce policy-strategy planning and implementation between national, regional and local levels, and to mobilise greater collective strategic action between the relevant sectors (education, training and employment) and key players (including social partners, employers, guidance practitioners, guidance service users, and NGOs). Finally, enhancing the evidence-base on the outcomes and impacts of guidance service delivery is needed to support a more fine-tuned policymaking in Europe.

We hope that this guidance policy review can help policymaking be better informed, more targeted and more proactive in the Member States, and that it results in continuous and successful guidance cooperation across countries, sectors and guidance communities for the benefit of the European citizens.

Christian F. Lettmayr  
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## Executive summary

### Lifelong guidance within the European policy and strategy framework

The current European Union policy and strategy framework for lifelong learning (general education, vocational education and training, higher education, adult learning) and employment sets favourable conditions for establishing holistic and coherent lifelong guidance systems in the Member States to cater fully for the information, advice and guidance needs of diverse target audiences in their learning and career pathways. Many recent EU documents (see Chapters 1.3. and 1.4.) address the importance of guidance in aiding lifelong learning in formal, informal and non-formal settings as well as in improving the employability and active labour market participation of all citizen groups. In this context, the main aim of lifelong guidance is to support individuals' acquisition and continuous development of knowledge, skills and competences.

Starting from this overall EU-level framework, the aim of this review is to monitor the achievements of the Member States in developing guidance policies, systems and practices against the priorities identified in the Council resolution on better integrating lifelong guidance into lifelong learning strategies (Council of the European Union, 2008b). There are four priority areas: encouraging policy coordination and cooperation; establishing quality assurance mechanisms; widening access to guidance services for all citizens; and developing career management skills. As the review is placed in the context of the current economic crisis, special attention has been given to the empowerment of at-risk groups and to targeted guidance measures launched for them.

### Key findings

Priority area 4 of the resolution (Council of the European Union, 2008b) deals with encouraging guidance policy coordination and cooperation among various national, regional and local stakeholders (Chapter 2). The Member States have made progress in strengthening the role of guidance in their national lifelong learning and employment strategies and policies. Also, many of their legal reforms emphasise cooperation between key players as well as user-

centeredness in guidance service design, delivery and development. With the support of the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network ELGPN (a platform for guidance policy cooperation in education and employment sectors between the Member States) many countries have established, or are in the process of establishing, national guidance policy forums or similar coordination mechanisms (currently to be found in 33 countries) to enhance cross-sectoral and multi-professional network-based cooperation, increase policy and strategy dialogue and build stronger partnerships among all key players and stakeholders. Further, the national/regional/local authorities have set up guidance partnerships as to promote more regionally-based cooperation across sectors and administrations and working groups to deal with specific guidance issues (such as reports, proposals and evaluations) and to bring guidance-related initiatives forward in the policy- and decision-making processes.

Priority area 3 of the resolution (Council of the European Union, 2008b) focuses on developing quality assurance in guidance provision (Chapter 3). Member States have been debating the concept of quality in guidance, seen as the key for supporting lifelong learning and career management. To date there is no jointly agreed single definition of quality in guidance at EU-level, but cross-country cooperation initiated on developing new European reference tools for quality guidance will most likely result in defining the concept. Although there are positive developments across Europe in setting quality standards for guidance delivery, the overall impression is that systematic evaluation of the quality of guidance is still insufficient in most cases, and that holistic quality assurance mechanisms are not yet in place. In addition, Member States have been improving their evidence-base to verify the contribution that guidance makes at individual, economic and societal levels. A broader evidence-base on the outcomes and impacts of different service delivery modes serves national policy-makers in targeting measures for improving the quality of guidance and fine-tuning future service provision. In many countries the professional development of guidance practitioners in education and employment has been at the centre of policy action: they play a vital role in the delivery and development of high quality guidance and counselling.

Priority area 2 of the resolution (Council of the European Union, 2008b) touches on supporting access to lifelong guidance for all citizens (Chapter 4). The review shows that the delivery of guidance services varies across countries, sectors, administrations and institutions, and that the current service provision is still often fragmented and uneven in terms of accessibility. However, countries have made a clear commitment to reducing inequalities between groups by improving guidance provision to at-risk groups to ensure that they have a fair

chance to participate in learning and working. Recently, governments have been widening access to guidance through more diverse service delivery. This has resulted in designing cost-efficient online services and tools to ensure that information and guidance are effectively disseminated to end-users. Cross-sectoral cooperation in designing web-based services has taken a step forward to avoid overlaps in online service provision between education and employment. The review highlights the importance of not replacing the traditional ways and methods of providing guidance (face-to-face, visits to information and guidance centres, etc.) by online services, but using multiple delivery channels together. There seems to be a trend towards offering more individualised guidance services as to cope with the multiplicity of challenges that citizens are facing in their learning and careers. There is also evidence suggesting that at-risk groups are in constant need of a more long-term tailor-made support, which often is a combination of different services, measures and expertise.

Priority area 1 of the Council guidance resolution (Council of the European Union, 2008b) addresses the development of career management skills (Chapter 5). From a European perspective, the concept of career management skills (CMS) is not yet unanimously understood across countries, sectors, environments and organisations. Concrete cross-country cooperation has been initiated (including the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network ELGPN) to work towards a more widely shared comprehension, consensus and construction of the characteristics of the concept at EU level. The review shows that the Member States regard the development of career management skills as a lifelong and mostly self-monitored process, which should be supported by information, advice and guidance. It is also to be acknowledged that, in many countries, career management skills have become more visible in the curriculum and in extra-curricular activities within general education as well as in vocational education and training. Adults in working life and career management, including development of related skills, still require more attention from employers, public employment services and social partners throughout Europe. With the unemployed, there is a huge variation across countries in how public employment services support their labour market integration, ranging from pure job placements to advanced (psychological) counselling support and to special support for redundancy and outplacement. Increased labour market transparency through easily accessible and well comprehensible labour market information is also important.

## Main conclusions

The summarising observation from the reporting period (2007-10) is a generally positive development across the Member States in the four priority areas of the Council resolution on lifelong guidance (Council of the European Union, 2008b). According to the review, the overall EU policy framework and the changed economic conditions are bringing national governments and authorities (policy level), guidance communities (practice) and academic bodies (research) closer together. The results include building collaboration, consensus and partnerships, locating assets and resources, identifying and engaging stakeholders, defining and completing joint goals and objectives, and balancing a diverse range of interests to achieve success.

Increasing cooperation among the key players can be seen which aims at creating better synergies between the different sectors (education, training, employment), levels (European, national, regional, local) and guidance service providers (educational institutions, public employment services, guidance centres, etc.). In the spirit of this cooperation, proposed future action in the four priority areas of the lifelong guidance resolution (Council of the European Union, 2008b) is derived from the good progress made to date and can be synthesised as follows:

**Guidance coordination and cooperation:** the movement from traditionally reactive sector-based policy-making towards a solid proactive cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder guidance policy collaboration will have to be further strengthened. Strategic planning and priority setting across the whole policy spectrum, supported by appropriate coordination between government departments, are necessary to integrate lifelong guidance fully into national lifelong learning and employment strategies and related legislation. In the context of the economic crisis, national authorities should pay more attention to the role of guidance especially in addressing the needs of at-risk groups and in reinforcing links to related policy areas (such as youth, social and health care, immigration). Such a coherent and well-coordinated guidance policy development calls for an improved evidence-base to be used in future scenarios for the society and economy.

**Quality:** the development of quality in guidance is not an isolated process that takes place in a vacuum, but ideally an integral crosscutting element in a comprehensive national quality system that encompasses education and training and employment sectors. The current challenge for Member States is to manage

quality in its totality and to define an integrated cross-sectoral/cross-administrative approach to the design, development and implementation of a comprehensive quality assurance mechanism with clearly defined quality standards and indicators. To this end, strong policy-strategy level coordination, multiprofessional and interdisciplinary cooperation, as well as a common language across education, training and employment sectors in developing and running quality assurance mechanisms for lifelong guidance, will be required. Further, the involvement of (guidance) service users is necessary to verify and validate that the quality system is effective in terms of identifying, meeting and exceeding the requirements of the diverse users.

**Access:** 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. Only in goal-oriented, cross-sectoral coordination and cooperation can services be made more easily accessible for all individuals at a time, place and method most appropriate to their needs. A tremendous challenge across Europe is to manage how to apply modern information and communications technology to guidance delivery successfully, and how best to assess its impact on guidance services, their providers and clients. An additional issue is how does improved access to guidance services support the achievement of national education-training and labour market goals.

**Career management skills:** the Member States have been working towards establishing an infrastructure that supports all citizens' lifelong acquisition, application and further development of career management skills. However, substantial differences can be found in the extent to which education and employment sectors address the development of such skills. Ideally the acquisition of CMS should be well integrated into the individual's learning process and have concrete links to the knowledge and skills needed at work and in life in general. Future work in this area across Europe should focus on defining and operationalising the concept of career management skills in such a manner that it empowers all citizens – at all ages and in a variety of settings - to formulate and put in practice personal action plans for further learning, career management and other life goals. Over time this can be expected to generate economic and social benefits to the Member States, such as higher educational attainment, increased employability, and more active civic engagement.



The progress made until now in developing guidance policy coordination, quality assurance mechanisms, access to services and career management skills must be considered as necessary steps along the way to an integrated and holistically organised lifelong guidance system. A future challenge for Europe will be to define the characteristics of a lifelong guidance system and to agree on what needs to be done next to make such a system a reality, fully supporting lifelong learning, sustainable employment, and greater social inclusion.

## CHAPTER 1

# Introduction

Since the Commission Communication on Lifelong Learning (European Commission, 2001) and the two Council resolutions on lifelong guidance (Council of the European Union, 2004; 2008b) much has been achieved throughout Europe in terms of improving guidance policy, practice and research. The positive developments are due to the contributions of the European Commission, Cedefop, European Training Foundation (ETF), the European Lifelong Guidance Expert group (2002-07), the Joint action programme (2004-06) with two country clusters initiating the work on establishing national guidance coordination mechanisms, and the productive cooperation between the Member States and international organisations within the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network ELGPN (from 2007 onwards).

However, despite systematic progress made, gaps and deficits in guidance service provision have still been identified in many countries. All these developmental issues have been addressed and debated at the EU Presidency Conferences held in Jyväskylä, Finland (November 2006), in Lyon, France (September 2008) and in Zaragoza, Spain (May 2010) as well as in various other events organised across the European Union during 2006-10. To support future guidance policy- and decision-making in the Member States and beyond, this review was initiated and carried out as a follow-up measure to Cedefop's previous reports on monitoring progress in lifelong guidance in Europe (Cedefop, Sultana, 2004, 2008). This review captures the developments from 2006/07 to 2010.

### 1.1. **Aim and objectives of the review**

In 2010-11, Cedefop in cooperation with the Member States through the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN) has been reviewing their achievements in developing guidance policies, systems and practices against the four priority areas identified in the Council resolution on better integrating lifelong guidance into lifelong learning strategies Council of the European Union, 2008b). In this review, the priority areas of the resolution are presented by starting with

the more holistic policy and strategy level and moving towards more specific issues including quality, access and career management skills. The review covers the EU-27, Norway and the four EU candidate countries Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), Iceland and Turkey.

Within the overall European Union policy framework of education, training and employment (see Chapters 1.3. and 1.4.), the purpose of the review has been to identify and examine guidance-related policy and strategy action, guidance practice development and efforts made to improve the evidence-base on lifelong guidance in the Member States. As the review context is the current economic crisis, special attention has been given to at-risk groups and guidance service developments to cater better for their needs.

Although the main focus of the review is on summarising the key developments across Europe in the four priority areas, it also highlights more concrete country-specific guidance policy measures, programmes and development projects and their results. When appropriate, initiatives from national, regional and local levels are presented. The review reflects the principle of lifelong learning in the sense that guidance is to be seen embedded in all general education, vocational education and training, higher education, adult education, and non-formal and informal learning undertaken throughout life.

## 1.2. Review method

This guidance policy review has been carried out in four stages: background research and literature review; consultation of the national data from the Member States generated through Cedefop questionnaires to DGVTs (Cedefop, 2010d), the ReferNet network representatives (Cedefop 2008b, 2009d, 2010b), and social partners (Cedefop, 2010c); interim report validated by the Member States; and final analysis with valuable input from the European Commission (DG EAC and DG EMPL). The first stage considered the EU policy framework and the relevant country-specific reports. The second involved a thorough analysis of the Cedefop questionnaires. The third phase included presentation of the interim findings at the Spanish EU-presidency conference (Zaragoza, May 2010) to have them validated by the Member States. Parallel to this, the interim report was disseminated to the Member States through the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network to collect their feedback. The final stage of the review analysed the findings of the previous stages in consultation with the European Commission and the European Training Foundation, and now presents the results and conclusions for future action.

The results of the literature review (first stage) based on selected national and European studies (2007 onwards) enrich the overall picture of progress. The results of activities carried out by the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network in its thematic work packages have also been included in this review. Key European policy developments are presented in Chapters 1.3. and 1.4. and throughout the chapters as relevant to the thematic focus in question. The brief country cases throughout the whole review are selected examples highlighting the concrete steps taken in specific countries.

### 1.3. European economy in crisis

Since 2008, the EU economy has experienced the deepest, longest and most broad-based recession in its history since the 1930s (European Commission, 2009d). 2010 was a rough year for the European economy with increasing taxes, sharply rising unemployment, peaking inflation and out of control economic deficit in several countries. Measures introduced by governments and banking institutions during 2009-10 have not yet managed fully to stabilise the economy, nor raise household confidence in it, but they have contributed to the gradual recovery (European Commission, 2011c). To overcome the crisis and stimulate the economy, substantial EU funding has been allocated to speeding up the recovery, to improving labour market activity and to increasing overall EU competitiveness (European Commission, 2009b).

Financial experts estimate that the EU economy will start to come out of the recession during 2011, but that there will still be major challenges. Despite the slight recovery of the economy, public finances and the labour markets have been largely affected (European Commission, 2011c). Further, the crisis is expected to change profoundly the European labour markets which need the means to adjust successfully to the changing realities: to retain sound jobs, raise skill levels, get people back to work and set the conditions for job creation. So-called *green jobs* with a high growth potential are a key segment of future EU labour markets. Already more than 20 million EU jobs can be regarded as 'green', though the dividing line between green and not green jobs is becoming increasingly blurred (European Commission, 2009a; Cedefop, 2010f).

Unemployment is likely to rise in many countries in 2011 as economies seek to readjust to the new reality and as employers are not hiring as actively as they used to. Many European companies have made their employees assume part time work instead of completely terminating employment. There seems to be less stability and security for an individual jobholder in working life as large groups of

people, especially in times of economic crisis, are confronted by redundancy. In 2008, the unemployed represented 7% of the workforce in the EU-27; two years later they accounted for almost 10%. Unemployment is particularly high (above 12%) in Estonia, Ireland, Greece, Slovakia, Latvia, Lithuania and Spain. Long-term unemployment has increased drastically and at the end of 2010 was around 40% of total unemployment in the EU. The unemployment rate is particularly high among the low-skilled, migrants and the young. Youth unemployment exceeds 20% in more than half of the EU Member States and reaches 42% in Spain (European Commission, 2011c).

The crisis prevented the European Union from reaching the target of having 70% of the working age population in employment by 2010 <sup>(1)</sup> (European Commission, 2011b). Now the ambitious goal is to achieve a rate of 75% <sup>(2)</sup> for all people between 20 and 64 by 2020. Current estimates suggest, however, that the EU will lag behind this target by 2-2.4%. This is a shortfall that can be made up by adopting measures to create new jobs and to increase labour participation (i.e. engaging women, young and older workers to a much greater degree than currently). But structural reforms will be necessary to achieve 75%; addressing skill needs through more and better education and training; promoting a lifecycle approach to active ageing; creating more inclusive labour markets; and tackling labour market segmentation and segregation (European Commission, 2011a). Labour market realities and related challenges are specific to each country and there is no single solution across the EU-27 to improving employment rates in a harmonised way.

As incentives to work will have to be created, the agenda for new skills and jobs aims to make labour markets more flexible, give workers the skills they need, and improve working conditions (European Commission, 2010a). Parallel to making efforts to boost the economy in Europe, e.g. through the European Economic Recovery Plan (European Commission 2008a), measures across the European Union are targeted at developing education and training, implementing integrated flexicurity approaches, ensuring better skills matching and upgrading, and widening cooperation on the development of curricula involving social partners and public employment services (European Commission, 2010h). Also, entrepreneurship is often seen as a tremendous force in supporting growth, job creation and societal progress by fuelling employment and social empowerment. Therefore, in the current downturn economy, favourable (labour market) conditions should be established as well as sufficient guidance support provided

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<sup>(1)</sup> In 2010, the employment rate of workers aged 20 to 64 also stood at 68.8%.

<sup>(2)</sup> It is one of the five key elements of the EU's growth and jobs strategy, Europe 2020.

to foster entrepreneurial activity, innovation and self-employment across Europe (Cedefop, 2011). A well-functioning culture of managing restructuring processes with the involvement of companies, workers, social partners and public authorities can secure career paths for workers while preserving local economies and communities (Cedefop, 2010h).

Current training systems are not always sufficiently able to respond to the challenge of equipping workers and job seekers with basic skills and transversal key competences. Inadequate training and education quality is seen as an obstacle to job and career transitions on the labour market as a large proportion of citizens of all ages and qualification levels do not necessarily have the right combination of skills and competences (European Commission, 2011b). Further, learning opportunities for skills development available in formal, non-formal and informal settings might not always be transparent and easily accessible for all citizens.

Together these circumstances have created increased demand for information, advice and career guidance and counselling in Member States. From the perspective of the European citizens, the global economic crisis has challenged many as they have experienced job losses and are now forced to cope with unemployment and transitions between jobs, careers, sectors and industries as well as eventually with the return to education and training for additional learning and skills upgrading. Proper skills are considered to improve individuals' employability, ease employment transitions and support return to the labour market (Cedefop, 2010a). In response to all these challenges, the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance has addressed the role of careers guidance in times of economic turbulence to promote and strengthen the long-term societal and economic benefits of guidance (IAEVG, 2009).

For Europe to remain competitive in the global economy, it is vital to raise citizens' skill levels and to monitor progress on participation in learning. For the period 2010-20 the Member States have agreed on applying a set of five European benchmarks <sup>(3)</sup> to support future evidence-based policy-making in education and training (Council of the European Union, 2009a). To reach these benchmarks, more open and flexible lifelong learning systems will have to be established to engage all citizens in formal, non-formal and informal settings at all

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<sup>(3)</sup> The benchmarks to be achieved by 2020 are (ET 2020): participation in early childhood education (at least 95%); insufficient abilities of 15-year olds in literacy, mathematics and science (less than 15%); early leavers from education and training (less than 10%); 30-34 year olds with tertiary educational attainment (at least 40%); and 25-64 year old adults participating in lifelong learning (at least 15%).

levels from early childhood education and schools through to higher education, vocational education and training and adult learning. To support these developments, lifelong guidance should always be embedded in national lifelong learning and employment strategies and policies.

#### 1.4. EU policy developments linked to guidance in education, training and employment sectors

Recent EU level policy and strategy initiatives have addressed the need to improve lifelong learning and career management opportunities by simultaneously developing lifelong guidance provision: this is to help learners make well-informed choices and decisions on their participation in education, training and working. An important goal for lifelong guidance services is to promote equality of access to, participation in, and outcomes of lifelong learning, as well as active labour market engagement. Considerable limitations still remain in terms of how to ensure availability, accessibility, and effectiveness of lifelong guidance to support lifelong learning and career management by individual citizens.

The fourth joint report on progress towards agreed education and training objectives during the period 2007-09 (Council of European Union, 2010a) indicates that measures have been taken to develop lifelong guidance systems (especially for adults), but that better coordination between the parallel guidance systems is still needed to help young people complete their education and training and make the transition to the labour market. One of the current challenges in the labour market is to know how to optimise the match between quantity and quality of labour supply and demand.

Guidance providers need to have a good overview of the learning needs of citizens as well as a thorough knowledge of local/regional/national labour markets and education and training possibilities. Improved methods and tools for skills forecasting and up-to-date national/sectoral forecasts are in high demand. Lifelong guidance services, as a connective interface between education, training and employment, should make use of such forecasts while addressing skill shortages and identifying inappropriate skills and qualifications. The prerequisite is that coherent lifelong learning and lifelong guidance systems, and a qualifications framework, are in place to support progression and participation in learning as well as in the world of work.

The following selected examples of EU-level policy action demonstrate how lifelong guidance is embedded in initiatives on education, training and

employment. They also show how they aim to contribute to Europe achieving the long-term strategic objectives of the framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020), including flagship initiatives, such as Youth on the move, with a strong guidance element (Council of the European Union, 2009a).

#### **1.4.1. Lifelong guidance resolutions**

EU countries have not yet managed to establish a coherent and holistic lifelong guidance system that would fully cater for the information, advisory and guidance needs of all citizens. The main limitations are lack of coordination between different sectors and authorities, the existence of multiple providers and diverse practices, issues concerning optimal levels of resource allocation and expertise/professionalism, and lack of an evidence-base for assessing the quality of services provided.

Against this background, the Council of the European Union has adopted two guidance resolutions: in 2004, a resolution on strengthening policies, systems and practices in guidance throughout life in Europe; and in 2008 a resolution on better integrating lifelong guidance <sup>(4)</sup> into lifelong learning strategies. These resolutions reinforce the mandate that lifelong guidance currently has in European education, training and employment policies as well as the key role that high quality guidance and counselling services play in supporting citizens' lifelong learning, career management and achievement of personal goals. The resolution of 2008 identifies four politically significant priority areas:

- priority area 1: encourage the lifelong acquisition of career management skills;
- priority area 2: support access for all citizens to guidance services;
- priority area 3: develop quality assurance in guidance provision;
- Priority area 4: encourage coordination and cooperation among the various national, regional and local stakeholders.

The resolution (Council of the European Union, 2008b) calls for the further strengthening of European cooperation on lifelong guidance provision, in

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<sup>(4)</sup> Definition of guidance as referring to a continuous process that enables citizens at any age and at any point in their lives to identify their capacities, competences and interests, to make educational, training and occupational decisions and to manage their individual life paths in learning, work and other settings in which those capacities and competences are learned and/or used. Guidance covers a range of individual and collective activities relating to information-giving, counselling, competence assessment, support, and the teaching of decision-making and career management skills.



particular, through the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN) and in liaison with Cedefop.

#### **1.4.2. VET policy initiatives**

The Copenhagen process (established in 2002) lays out the foundation for cooperation in vocational education and training (VET) with 33 European countries involved. The Communication *A new impetus for European cooperation in vocational education and training to support the Europe 2020 strategy* (European Commission, 2010b) launched a long-term vision for the future of vocational education and training. Lifelong guidance is an integral element in this Communication as learning opportunities in initial and continuing VET are to be coupled with guidance and counselling to aid transitions from training to employment and between jobs.

The Communication specifically mentions the development of career management skills to empower the young and adults to master transitions. Further, it suggests that guidance should be redirected from a ‘testing’ to a ‘tasting’ approach, providing young people with an opportunity to become familiar with different vocational trades and career options. Also the Council conclusions (Council of the European Union, 2009b) mention high quality lifelong guidance, information and support as crucial at the time when educational or professional career choices are made. It is especially necessary for the inclusion and labour market integration of special needs students (Council of the European Union, 2010c).

In addition to the above Communication, the Maastricht (European Commission, 2004), Helsinki (European Commission, 2006b), Bordeaux (The Bordeaux Communiqué, 2008) and Bruges Communiqué (2010), within the Copenhagen process, touch on the role of guidance in supporting learning and working. The Bruges Communiqué (2010) stresses easily accessible and high-quality lifelong information, guidance and counselling services for equipping citizens to take decisions and to manage their learning and professional careers beyond traditional gender profiles. It also lists several national action points for developing VET- and labour market related guidance provision in 2011-14.

To increase participation in lifelong learning and to ensure smooth mobility of learners and workers in the European labour market, instruments and cooperation mechanisms are needed to support transparency of qualifications between institutions, systems and countries. The European Commission, supported by Cedefop, has been developing the European qualifications

framework (EQF) <sup>(5)</sup> for lifelong learning (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2008) and the European credit system for vocational education and training (ECVET) (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2009). One of the current challenges for the Member States is to make lifelong guidance an integral element in supporting the implementation of European tools such as EQF and respective NQFs and ECVET. Guidance and information are vital to make (national) qualifications frameworks (e.g. Scottish credit and qualifications framework is used by national career guidance services) and credit systems realise their added value of creating permeability in education and training systems: individuals will have to be informed about the options for building up their individual learning paths and having their informal/non-formal learning validated (Launikari et al., 2009).

#### **1.4.3. Policy initiatives in higher education**

The Bologna process (initiated in 1999) establishes the framework for cooperation with 46 countries to create a European higher education area (EHEA) that ensures more comparable, compatible and coherent systems of higher education in Europe. In March 2010, with the Budapest-Vienna Ministerial Declaration, EHEA finally became a reality. This Declaration, while supporting the consolidation of the EHEA during 2011-20, aims at implementing guidance-related objectives in tertiary education to:

- accomplish the reforms already underway to enable students and staff to be mobile, to improve teaching and learning in higher education, to enhance graduate employability, and to provide quality higher education for all;
- acknowledge the key role of the academic community (e.g. institutional leaders, teachers, researchers, administrative staff and students) in providing the learners with the opportunity to acquire knowledge, skills and competences furthering their careers;
- support an inspiring working and learning environment and to foster student-centred learning as a way of empowering the learner in all forms of

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<sup>(5)</sup> One of the aims of the establishment of the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning (EQF) is to create synergies between the Copenhagen process (VET) and the Bologna process (HE). The EQF is linked to and supported by other initiatives in the fields of transparency of qualifications (Europass), credit transfer (the European credit transfer and accumulation system for higher education – ECTS - and the European credit system for vocational education and training - ECVET) and quality assurance (European association for quality assurance in higher education - ENQA - and the European Network for Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training - ENQA-VET).

education, providing the best solution for sustainable and flexible learning paths.

The ministers responsible for higher education in the countries participating in the Bologna process meet every two years <sup>(6)</sup> to measure progress and to set priorities for action. Their Leuven Communiqué (2009) identified several priorities such as employability and student-centred learning and teaching. Concerning employability, higher education institutions together with governments, government agencies and employers, shall improve the provision, accessibility and quality of their guidance services to students and alumni for exploring career and employment opportunities. For student-centred learning, new approaches to teaching and learning, effective support and guidance structures and a curriculum focusing on the learner will be required. Continuing reform in higher education is expected to result in high quality, flexible and more individually tailored education paths.

Parallel to the above, the Council conclusions (Council of European Union, 2010c) emphasise measures targeted at providing individualised support (incl. guidance, mentoring and skills training) particularly during the early stages of a university course to improve graduation rates for students, specifically for disadvantaged learners. Also the FEDORA (7) Charter on guidance and counselling within the European higher education area (Fedora, 2007) highlights the value of guidance provision and seeks the support of policy-makers, higher education institutions and international organisations to have high quality service provision put in place in the context of lifelong learning.

#### **1.4.4. Labour market related policy initiatives**

Guidance services play a major role in labour market policies by acting as an interface between the supply and demand for skills. National labour markets are not well-balanced as there are shortages of adequate skills in some regions, sectors and occupations coinciding with relatively high levels of unemployment across the EU (European Commission, 2010i). Within the New skills for new jobs initiative, the Council (Council of the European Commission, 2009c) aims at improving the monitoring of trends in the European labour markets, developing

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<sup>(6)</sup> Bologna (1999), Prague (2001), Berlin (2003), Bergen (2005), London (2007) and Leuven/Louvain-La-Neuve, Belgium (April 2009).

<sup>(7)</sup> FEDORA is a European Association whose members work as guidance practitioners in a variety of roles in higher education institutions. It has a promotional and important lobby role at European level with respect to guidance provision in higher education; a professional development role for its members through training, networking; and a statement of ethical principles to support the practice of its members. [www.fedora.eu.org](http://www.fedora.eu.org) [cited 2.6.2011]

tools and services to promote job-related guidance and mobility and to address skills mismatches. A mechanism for regular assessment of long-term supply and skills needs will be established with Cedefop, Eurofound and European Training Foundation expertise.

To improve the quality and transparency of job vacancy information and matching of supply and demand of skills and competences in EU labour markets, a standard multilingual dictionary of occupations and skills will be developed (European Commission, 2008b). This European skills, competences and occupations taxonomy (ESCO) is a joint policy initiative <sup>(8)</sup> that will be carried out in cooperation between the European Commission and the EU Member States to support skills development and employability. It still remains fully open to what extent guidance will be embedded in ESCO as, by giving detailed descriptions of job profiles, it has the potential to bring benefits to both jobseekers and employers.

Despite progress, there are still areas where guidance service delivery should be further developed. The recent OECD synthesis report *Learning for jobs* (OECD, 2010b) identified several gaps in labour market information and guidance service provision. According to the report, relevant labour market information is not always available or readily digestible and comprehensible. Guidance practitioners, who provide careers guidance services, are sometimes insufficiently prepared for dealing with labour market issues. Their advice can lack objectivity, because they are based in education institutions with a pro-academic bias. Also, guidance services are often not holistically organised but fragmented, under-resourced and reactive, with the result that those who need guidance most may fail to obtain it.

The Agenda for new skills and jobs emphasises that careers guidance should be available for all employees to extend their access to lifelong learning and to validation of non-formal and informal learning. Public employment services should provide careers guidance and well-targeted training and work experience programmes, as well as introducing special guidance, counselling, education and training support to groups such as the Roma and the self-employed (European Commission, 2010a). The EU social partners' joint work on restructuring aims to ensure that workers, and specifically older workers, who are made redundant get

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<sup>(8)</sup> ESCO is aimed at institutions and stakeholders in the labour market and education sector, and it will be progressively developed over the coming years to include as many occupations as possible. To ensure that ESCO meets the needs of its users and interested parties (including employment services, social partners, companies, education and training institutions or developers of job search web tools), they are invited to take part in its development.

the support they need to find new employment including training (European Commission, 2009a).

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 (Council of the European Union, 2010d). The Commission (European Commission, 2009a) draws attention to the decreasing number of job openings in the current economic recession. Those graduating from education and training risk facing unemployment and inactivity spells, which may have a negative impact on their future employability and labour market entry. Supporting measures (job placements, practical job-linked training, or access to further studies) should be available to young people making the transition from learning to working, especially if they fail to enter the labour market after finishing their studies.

## 1.5. Lifelong guidance legislation

Across Europe many legislative reforms and improvements in lifelong guidance have been seen during 2007-10. Many of these legislative developments at national levels are partly 'pushed' by EU policy and the strategy framework and partly linked to national reform. There seems to be a gradual movement towards establishing more coherent legislative frameworks that consist of sector-specific laws and decrees (education, training, employment), that support guidance provision from a lifelong learning perspective, and that cover a wide range of developments in which guidance support has a key role in the future (e.g. implementation of national qualification frameworks).

New legislation (acts, decrees, ordinances, regulations) largely reflect current socioeconomic reality, in which citizens are living, learning and working and in which they make choices and decisions about education, training and employment. The legal frameworks generally address the diverse information and guidance needs of citizens and take into account the human lifecycle and different life situations. They also emphasise the need for user-centeredness and individualisation in guidance service design, delivery and development. Diverse risk groups and their special needs are relatively well covered by the recent legislative reforms.

Many laws also highlight the importance of better guidance coordination and cooperation through the involvement of relevant national, regional and local

authorities and stakeholders. Member States have recently been launching guidance policy measures, action programmes and concluding inter-ministerial agreements to support the implementation of legislative reforms and the achievement of strategic goals. In the following, selected examples of new laws that countries have passed in the domains of lifelong learning and employment, with guidance as an integral element, will be briefly outlined.

#### **1.5.1. Legislation on guidance for education**

The new legislation on guidance in the education sector has focused on improving access to and quality of service provision, as well as aiding transitions from education to work and between different levels of education. Also, the competences and qualifications of guidance counsellors are addressed as a crucial dimension in ensuring high quality guidance provision. The country examples from the Nordic, Central European and Southern European countries highlight these developments.

The Danish Act on Guidance (2007, amendment <sup>(9)</sup> to the Act of 2003), the Icelandic Compulsory School Act (91/2008) and Upper Secondary School Act (92/2008) and the Norwegian Education Act (2009) share some features in that they aim at guaranteeing guidance service provision for young people in education and training. The legislation emphasises the individual right of the student to receive educational and vocational guidance for his/her learning and career paths (incl. support for transitions) provided by a qualified guidance counsellor (Cedefop, 2008b, 2009d). The qualifications of guidance counsellors have been recently addressed in Iceland and Norway: the Icelandic Parliament passed a law (2009) on certifying the title of educational and vocational counsellor to ensure a certain quality of service for the benefit of clients (IAEVG, 2010). In Norway the formal qualifications of career and social pedagogical counsellors have been discussed in the Ministry of Education and Research (Cedefop, 2009d). Also the Danish amendment imposes new requirements on youth education institutions, guidance practitioners, and municipal youth guidance centres.

In newer Member States, for example in Poland, recent education acts regulate the guidance service provision that different types of schools are

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<sup>(9)</sup> They include targeting guidance efforts towards young people considered unlikely to start or complete a youth education programme; providing guidance at an earlier stage in compulsory schooling; introducing bridge-building schemes; new qualification requirements for guidance practitioners; and municipalities obliged to extend outreach services to all young people under 25 not currently enrolled in or yet to complete a youth education programme.

expected to offer and how to cooperate between parents, teachers and other school staff, psychological-pedagogical centres, other schools, organisations and institutions working for the family, children and youth (Cedefop, 2010d). The Slovak Act on Education (2008) addresses explicitly the actors in education and training with the responsibility for offering guidance and counselling services with preventative measures (Cedefop, 2009d). Hungary is on its way towards deeper inter-ministerial policy arrangements: a group of legal experts has been assigned to map out the existing legislative framework of career guidance in the country, concluding that the legal regulations on career orientation between sectors and the coordination between the competent ministries should be improved (Hungarian LLG Council, 2009).

By launching an Organic Law on Education (2006) Spain has more systematically targeted educational institutions responsible for providing students with personal tutoring and counselling in compulsory secondary education (Cedefop, 2009d). In France, the higher education sector has been charged with the obligation to offer guidance and to establish a career service (law 2007-1199) to support students in improving their employability, including skill portfolios (French ELGPN summary policy note, 2 March 2010).

### **1.5.2. Legislation on guidance for VET and labour market**

The selected legislative examples below reflect an apparent need to strengthen guidance provision in vocational education and training. Many of them are oriented towards supporting labour market entry for young people and ensuring smooth transitions between jobs and careers for adults. The bodies responsible for providing guidance services and the delivery mechanisms are more explicit and the lifelong learning dimension is more visible in laws recently launched. The selected country cases below highlight these aspects.

In France a new law on lifelong guidance and vocational training was passed in 2009. It establishes a public lifelong guidance service to guarantee all persons access to free, full and objective information on occupations, training, certification, job opportunities and remuneration levels as well as access to high quality, networked and personalised guidance services. The law requires those involved to offer a range of services in a single location for everyone. An e-guidance service to provide users with information or advice for guidance and training, and to refer them to professional guidance bodies, is foreseen by the law. A special feature of the law is that a delegate <sup>(10)</sup> for information and

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<sup>(10)</sup> The delegate will succeed to the 'interministerial delegate' created three years ago for youth information and guidance that drew up in 2007 '*schema national de*

guidance placed next to the Prime Minister will have the authority for coordinating the e-guidance service and for providing quality standards for services, evaluating national and regional policies, and supporting coordination of information and guidance policies at regional and local level (French ELGPN summary policy note, 2 March 2010).

The Spanish Royal Decree (1538/2006) on vocational education and training states that all study programmes must provide students with information about opportunities for learning, employment and self-employment to support labour market entry (Cedefop, 2009d). Further, the Spanish Royal Decree (395/2007) establishes an integrated information and guidance system to ensure access for unemployed and employed people to guidance on training and employment opportunities and on recognition of qualifications (Cedefop, 2008b).

The newer Member States have taken action to set up, redesign and restructure their legal frameworks to support a more holistic development of VET and labour market systems with guidance as an integral element. For example, the Bulgarian Law on the encouragement of employment (2008) stimulates future development of guidance through licensing information centres for career guidance (Cedefop, 2008b), whereas the Slovak Act on vocational education and training (2009) stresses the necessity of cooperation among all stakeholders and social partners on national and regional levels to harmonise VET with labour market needs (Cedefop, 2009d). In Lithuania, the Law on vocational education and training (2007) stipulates that vocational guidance is a constituent part of the national VET system and the Ministry of Education and Science together with the Ministry of Social Security and Labour establish principles for the provision of vocational guidance services. The Lithuanian Law on handicapped social integration (2008) addresses vocational guidance, counselling and assessment of skills as a part of professional rehabilitation services (Cedefop, 2009d; 2010b).

Further, within an EU funded project candidate country Croatia has started developing a coherent legislative framework for lifelong career guidance and intends to pilot lifelong career guidance centres in partnership with relevant business support services. The aim is also to establish a training facility within the Croatian public employment services for key skills for employment and lifelong career counsellors, to strengthen the analytical capacity of public employment services and to introduce links with the academic community to develop policy oriented research (Zelloth, 2009).

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*l'orientation et de l'insertion professionnelle des jeunes* ('National guideline for youth guidance and employability').



New legislation is contributing to removing multiple barriers – administrative, financial, structural, legal, and sectoral – and to creating a new ethos of collective responsibility and a shared sense of purpose among key stakeholders in areas where joint action is required. However, the area where more efforts still will be required in the future is the implementation of the new legislation in intensified cooperation at cross-ministerial, cross-sectoral and multiprofessional levels. Targeted action with sufficient human and financial resources as well as active engagement of all related actors will play a crucially important role in achieving longer-term improvements in promoting lifelong guidance across Europe.

## CHAPTER 2

# Promoting guidance policy cooperation and coordination

The long-term aim in Member States is to increase policy cooperation and coordination to support the establishment of a well-integrated lifelong guidance system. This should replace having two separate and often fragmented systems (education and employment) as usually is the case (Cedefop, 2009b). A more coherent system is expected to improve the effectiveness of guidance delivery and to provide citizens with adequate, accurate and easily accessible information, guidance and counselling. This will support their capacity to make proper education, training and career choices, and aid multiprofessional cooperation across sectors and administrations in service provision.

This review shows that there is growing demand for guidance provision across different target groups in Europe. This tends to create challenges for the establishment and management of a holistic lifelong guidance system in Member States. Without significant national support and systematic development of lifelong guidance, service provision inevitably suffers, for example, in terms of accessibility, quality and accountability. The Member States have already made progress in improving the mechanisms to increase synergies between sectors in planning and developing guidance policy cooperation and coordination.

### 2.1. **Guidance in lifelong learning strategies**

The Commission has continued monitoring the development and implementation of the lifelong learning strategies of the individual countries; it has also supported national measures aimed at raising awareness of such strategies and of European cooperation <sup>(1)</sup>. In the coming years, development work on implementing lifelong learning strategies and policies under the strategic

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<sup>(1)</sup> At a European level, for example, the following progress has been made: launching the concept of lifelong learning; adopting eight key competences for lifelong learning; establishing the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning (EQF) and the European credit system for vocational education and training (ECVET); publishing the European guidelines on the validation of informal and non-formal learning (Cedefop, 2009a); acknowledging the value of learning outcomes.

framework ET 2020 will continue in Member States, aiming to increase the impact and direct benefits for individuals (Council of European Union, 2009a). The ET 2020 specifically addresses the creation of flexible learning pathways/transitions, validation of non formal/informal learning, and the establishment of national qualification frameworks (European Commission, 2009e).

The two Council resolutions (Council of the European Union, 2004, 2008b) reinforce the status of lifelong guidance in lifelong learning as countries are invited to examine their guidance provision and to ensure effective cross-sectoral cooperation and coordination of guidance policies. Strengthening information, guidance and counselling service provision in European, national, regional, local and sectoral contexts is expected to improve the efficiency of investment in education and vocational training, lifelong learning and human capital and workforce development.

The examples below highlight the approaches that some new Member States have taken to incorporate guidance in their lifelong learning strategies and policies. Thematic key areas, such as policy level coordination and cooperation, professionalisation of guidance experts, quality and infrastructure of service provision, and guidance methodologies, have been addressed in these strategies.

Both the Bulgarian National strategy on lifelong learning (2008-13) and the Czech lifelong learning strategy emphasise lifelong career guidance as a key element in supporting lifelong learning by individuals, widening access to quality education and training, improving information, guidance and counselling services, and targeting information and guidance services on education and employment for adults (Cedefop, 2008b). The Slovak lifelong learning and lifelong guidance strategy <sup>(12)</sup> (April 2007) is a government policy document up to 2011 based on detailed analysis of the prevailing situation. It stresses the interrelations between lifelong learning and lifelong guidance and views career guidance as an instrument helping people to improve quality of their professional lives (Cedefop, 2009d).

The three Baltic States – Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania - have introduced lifelong guidance measures in their strategies. These aim to clarify and define the related concepts and to create greater coherence between different education and training providers. In 2008, a policy agreement was signed between the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Research in Estonia

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<sup>(12)</sup> The Slovak Strategy of Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance. Available from Internet:  
[http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/upload/Slovakia/Slovakia\\_LLL\\_Strategy\\_2007.pdf](http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/upload/Slovakia/Slovakia_LLL_Strategy_2007.pdf)  
[cited 2.6.2011]

to decide on the areas of responsibility in providing high quality guidance for all citizens, to set up an integrated guidance system, to promote a unified qualification and training system for career practitioners, and to assess the impact and quality of guidance. Estonia has integrated lifelong guidance into its national adult education strategy and in the Operational programme for human resource development (ESF) (Cedefop, 2009d; 2010d).

The Latvian White Paper on enlargement of guidance and counselling services, nationally and regionally, is part of the national education/training/employment/social policy strategy (implemented since 2007 <sup>(13)</sup>). The aims are to achieve common understanding of the complexity of the lifelong guidance system; to agree on a common terminology; to identify the existing gaps in guidance provision for specific target groups; and to improve guidance cooperation and coordination between key players to avoid overlapping and fragmentation in service provision (Cedefop, 2008b). In Lithuania, provisions for lifelong guidance are embedded in the national strategy for assuring lifelong learning (2008), which describes the role of guidance services in empowering individuals to make decisions regarding education, training and professional career. The strategy's action plan involves measures for raising awareness of adults about learning opportunities and the development of their career management competences (Cedefop, 2009d).

Turkey has launched a national lifelong learning strategy with an action plan for 2009-13, in which the priority is given to strengthening the career guidance services for all individuals. The strategy has been prepared with communication, coordination and collaboration of all the public and private stakeholders and social partners. A Career Guidance Unit was established in the Turkish Ministry of Education (in the DG for Special Education, Guidance and Counselling) as policy incubator in 2007. Further, Turkey has introduced an integrated curriculum for guidance in primary, general secondary and vocational education. The second phase of the curriculum reform started in 2007 and programmes for guidance integration in career and education development have been developed (Akkök and Zelloth, 2009). Cyprus has put a high policy priority on improving guidance and counselling services to all groups of citizens as outlined in the Lifelong Learning Strategy (Cedefop, 2009d).

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<sup>(13)</sup> The main actors engaged are ministries of education, welfare (Labour Department) and economics, employment and education development state agencies, and social partners.

## 2.2. Guidance in strategies promoting VET and labour market participation

The challenges identified in the New skills for new jobs initiative call for national VET systems that will respond effectively to evolving labour market skill needs (European Commission, 2010i). Positive developments can be seen across the Member States as they have made efforts to improve the labour market relevance of their VET provision. For instance, thanks to the continuing decentralisation of VET, education and training providers have been able to use curriculum reforms to adapt VET provision to local labour market needs. Further, modularisation is increasingly applied as an efficient way of making VET provision more flexible and responsive to the specific needs of learners and businesses (e.g. through new or improved pathways). Also, countries with no work-based training tradition have been setting up new apprenticeship schemes in cooperation with social partners (European Commission, 2009e; Bruges Communiqué, 2010).

A way to ensure that vocational training programmes meet labour market needs is to provide easy access for VET-students to high quality lifelong information, guidance and counselling so that they can take sound decisions and manage their learning and professional careers beyond traditional gender profiles (Bruges Communiqué, 2010). The national strategy initiatives highlighted below focus on improving the overall provision of guidance services on labour-market issues as well as on supporting action related to transition phases (especially from VET to labour market). One key issue that needs to be improved is the quality of labour market information, as it might not always be easily available or fully comprehensible to users. Further, the strategies give proof that cooperation between the education system and the labour market has become a key element in guidance and counselling. Still challenges remain with efficiency of information, guidance and counselling provision, cooperation between different actors, and reducing the drop-out rates.

Italy launched an integrated strategy for vocational education and training as well as guidance in 2009 (*Italy 2020 - Action plan for supporting youth employability by integrating learning and working*). A special focus was on supporting school-to-work transitions of young people and rethinking of the role of university education. In 2010, the Italian government, the regions and social partners agreed on guidelines for vocational education and training to create a framework of learning and guidance methods for assessing and developing the occupational potential of learners to improve their employability (Cedefop, 2010d). In Portugal, within the scope of vocational training reform, the Ministry of

Education and the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity adopted a development strategy for guidance and counselling that will involve multidisciplinary teams ensuring a more integrated approach to the various issues, such as defining young people's academic, training and career pathways (Cedefop, 2009d; 2010c).

In Germany, although there are links between education and labour policies with respect to guidance and counselling, there is not yet a cross-sectoral lifelong guidance strategy. Guidance and counselling provision is embedded both in the overall employment strategy and the lifelong learning strategy. There is a long tradition of guidance and counselling in German labour market policy and practice as part of the legal responsibility of the public employment service, whereas lifelong learning and lifelong and lifewide guidance has only recently become a high level topic on the political agenda (Cedefop, 2009d). The German national expert group for innovations in further training (set up by the Federal Minister of Education and Research) and the Government's conception for lifelong learning (2008) identified the following development needs: improving guidance provision; promoting quality; strengthening coordination and cooperation within the guidance system; increasing transparency of services and supporting professional development of guidance practitioners (Nationales Forum Beratung in Bildung, Beruf und Beschäftigung; Jenschke et al, 2011).

The Lithuanian Vocational guidance strategy and its Action plan (2004<sup>(14)</sup>) for the period of 2004-09 have been the central documents providing a vision for a coherent guidance system and guidelines for its development. Many improvements can be seen, such as a network of career information points in general education schools, vocational schools and other institutions; training for specialists providing guidance to help people with learning options and career choices; and job placement services with related counselling (Cedefop, 2009d; 2010b, 2010d). The Slovak Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family initiated a policy paper on the employment strategy and forecasting labour market needs and skills. The strategy addresses improving career guidance provision as well as setting up a more transparent information system on labour market trends and required skills in the European labour market (Cedefop, 2009d). The Bulgarian Employment strategy for 2008-15 aims at developing specialised guidance services for disadvantaged groups and widening access to electronic information and guidance. The Bulgarian National strategy on continuing vocational

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<sup>(14)</sup> The Action plan is the basis for the creation of a legal framework, development of infrastructure, a vocational guidance specialists training system, development of methodology for vocational guidance, and improvement of funding of the system.

education (2005-10) has been focusing on career guidance as one of its main objectives (Cedefop, 2008b).

### 2.3. National guidance forums

The European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN) is working on removing barriers to lifelong learning and creating suitable institutional environments, as well as adequate systemic devices for converging strategies towards building lifelong guidance systems across sectors, with high levels of equity, efficiency and quality. This strategic development work is carried out by national guidance forums or similar policy coordination mechanisms that participate in the ELGPN.

The national lifelong guidance policy forums have been set up to improve policy- and decision-making, to build leadership capacity, to manage reform and innovation processes and to rethink demanding cross-sectoral cooperation arrangements. The Cedefop handbook (Cedefop, 2008c) identified national guidance coordination mechanisms and structures in at least 24 Member States<sup>(15)</sup>. The state-of-play (January 2011) in terms of formally established national guidance policy forums or other representative structures in the process of being established shows that all ELGPN member countries (33) have reached this stage of development.

These forums support lifelong guidance policy development within Member States by involving relevant stakeholders (ministries of education and employment) and sectors of guidance provision (including schools, VET, tertiary education, public employment services, and community-based services, civil-society groups, as well as employer-based and private-sector services). The long-term goal of this cooperation and coordination is to establish a holistic and coherent lifelong guidance system that provides all citizens with information, guidance and counselling that support their capacity to make proper education and career choices and to acquire the right skills for a successful adjustment to their learning and working environments.

The nature, tasks and structures of these national forums reflect the national policy and strategy targets in each country. The following country cases highlight the diverse policy actions that Member States have initiated as well as their main

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<sup>(15)</sup> AT, BG, CZ, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HU, IE, IT, LV, LT, LU, MT, NO, PL, RO, SE, SI, SK, UK.

goals and composition of members. Some countries have an explicit aim of using their national forum for designing a strategy for lifelong guidance.

In Austria a nationwide platform <sup>(16)</sup> has been elaborating objectives for a lifelong guidance strategy to support transversal coordination and cooperation in information, counselling and guidance for education and careers at regional and federal levels (Cedefop, 2009d; 2010d). In Luxembourg a national guidance forum has been drafting a national strategy for lifelong guidance and has submitted its recommendations to the two ministries concerned (Ministry of National Education and Vocational Training, Ministry of Labour and Employment) (Cedefop, 2010b). In Slovenia, an expert group on lifelong guidance has been assigned to prepare a proposal for a systemic and holistic approach to lifelong guidance that will incorporate the relevant actors in career orientation (Cedefop, 2010d). In 2011, the Finnish national guidance policy forum designed a strategy with the specific objectives of further developing lifelong guidance (Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, 2011). The Slovak national guidance forum has defined the aims, priorities and specific goals of lifelong guidance at national level in relation to specific target groups in its policy paper on the concept of lifelong guidance that proposes several measures implemented since 2009 (Cedefop, 2009d).

In some cases, the guidance policy forums serve as professional discussion arenas. In 2008, the Polish Ministry of Labour and Social Policy established a lifelong vocational counselling discussion forum <sup>(17)</sup> where the essential challenges of guidance development are discussed. Further, so-called regional partnerships have been established in several Polish voivodeships. They take initiatives related to coordination and development of actions in vocational counselling at regional level (Cedefop, 2009d). In 2007, the Czech Republic established the National Guidance Policy Forum as a platform for meetings of professionals in the area of lifelong guidance (Cedefop, 2010b), whereas the Danish Ministry of Education set up a National Dialogue Forum on Guidance to enable a close dialogue between the Ministry and relevant organisations,

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<sup>(16)</sup> <http://www.lifelongguidance.at> [cited 2.6.2011]

<sup>(17)</sup> The forum is supported by the Ministry of National Education, the Ministry of National Defence, the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, and many other institutions interested in career guidance development, such as the Association of Educational and Vocational Counsellors, Headquarters of Voluntary Labour Corps, Polish Career Services Network, National Centre for Supporting Vocational and Lifelong Education, Forum of Directors of Poviats Labour Offices, Convent of Directors of Voivodeship Labour Offices, The Board of Vocational Training Institutions.



institutions, guidance counsellor associations, end-users, and experts with a leading position in the guidance field (Cedefop, 2010d).

The representation of members in the national forums varies greatly according to the tasks and goals set for the forum. The Estonian National Career Guidance Forum (est. 2009) unites stakeholders from many different levels and sectors including policy-makers from relevant ministries, practitioners, target groups, etc. (Cedefop, 2009d; 2010d). In 2008, the Slovak National Forum on Lifelong Guidance, a consulting body of the Minister of Education, was set up with 26 members representing a wide range of institutions, both from government and non-government sectors (Cedefop, 2009d). The Latvian National Forum on guidance and counselling (est. 2007) involves policy-makers from relevant ministries, guidance providers, social partners and clients, while in Hungary the Employment and Social Office holds the secretariat duties of the new National Lifelong Guidance Policy Council<sup>(18)</sup>, based on a decision of the National VET and LLL Council in 2007 (Cedefop, 2009d).

The German national forum has a special status as it was established as a legal association in 2006. It does not receive any direct funding from the government, but the federal and *Länder* bodies are represented in a linked advisory council. The Federal Ministry of Education provides financial support through separate contracts for special tasks (Watts, 2010). Also the Latvian guidance forum has been given special assignments: to act as an advisor on necessary improvements of guidance and counselling policy and system including capacity of service providers; institutional infrastructure; improved accessibility and quality of careers information; study and further training programmes for guidance practitioners (Cedefop, 2009d). In Portugal, both ministries (labour and education) have joined the focal working group that acts as the permanent coordinating unit of the national guidance forum. The forum will survey the quality assurance system, aid sectoral coordination and ensure permanent innovation and academic-to-policy reflection on guidance issues.

In Greece, the National Centre for Vocational Orientation (EKEP) is the executive authority in charge of planning and monitoring the work of the Greek National Guidance Forum<sup>(19)</sup>. In the context of the national forum, EKEP cooperates closely with other competent bodies and organisations in lifelong

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<sup>(18)</sup> [http://internet.afsz.hu/engine.aspx?page=full\\_kulfoldi\\_palyaor\\_eu\\_magyar\\_llg\\_tanacs](http://internet.afsz.hu/engine.aspx?page=full_kulfoldi_palyaor_eu_magyar_llg_tanacs) [cited 2.6.2011]

<sup>(19)</sup> The Greek National Guidance Forum has been introduced as a distinctive action to be implemented under the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) ESF Program 2007-2013, and it is based on the Law 3191/2003 concerning the National System for Linking Vocational Education and Training with Employment (ESSEEKA).

guidance and coordinates actions such as creating a National Network of Counsellors and Counselling Structures and developing a Model system for quality assurance of guidance services, and criteria for the qualifications of career guidance practitioners for education and employment sectors (Cedefop, 2010b).

Turkey has made considerable progress towards establishing a national guidance forum. A memorandum of understanding was signed in 2009 with the participation of all related stakeholders (public authorities, social partners, NGOs) to update the tasks and roles defined in the protocol (2004) and specify the responsibilities for the National career information system. The memorandum has been a significant effort and outcome to enhance the communication, coordination and collaboration of all relevant stakeholders. In Croatia the public employment services - in partnership with other stakeholders - have proposed establishing a national forum for lifelong guidance (Zelloth, 2009).

## 2.4. Guidance-related groups

In addition to establishing national guidance policy forums for improving policy coordination, a number of countries have also set up guidance-related working groups. They are usually task-specific and therefore more short-lived as once they have fulfilled their obligation and delivered their final product, they are normally disbanded; national guidance policy forums in most cases are of a more permanent nature. The following cases highlight in concrete terms some of the themes and tasks with which the individual working groups have been charged.

For example, the Austrian interministerial working group (called the Expansion of career guidance and educational counselling task force) set up by the Ministry of Education is focusing on gender-sensitive career guidance for girls and technology and for boys and non-traditional male professions (Cedefop, 2010b). The Belgian Task Force has been developing an integrated approach to educational and career guidance in compulsory education as well as defining the roles and responsibilities of all relevant stakeholders including guidance cooperation between the CLB and VDAB <sup>(20)</sup> (Cedefop, 2010d).

Norway, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia have been using working and expert groups to initiate debate on, and to launch measures for, developing career guidance services in a holistic and systematic manner. In Norway, a

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<sup>(20)</sup> CLB, Centrum voor leerlingenbegeleiding (pupil guidance centres); VDAB, Flemish Employment Services and Vocational Training Agency

national team for counselling has been set up in the Directorate of education and training, covering all school counselling services. One of the tasks of this team is to create a national career portfolio to improve the quality of service provision. Regional guidance coordinators have been appointed in all counties to bridge between the national guidance team and guidance practitioners. Another task of the team is to revise the regulation on counselling. A proposal for an amendment to the existing regulation has been made, giving outlines for the minimum competences for guidance personnel in secondary education, proposing a minimum standard for basic education and a minimum specialist education (Cedefop, 2008b).

In the Slovak Republic, on the initiative of the Research Institute of Child Psychology and Pathopsychology, three expert groups started their work in 2009: one group on general aspects of career guidance in educational sector; another on career guidance practitioners in primary and secondary education; and the third group on guidance and counselling in higher education institutions. All these groups provide expertise and submit concrete results to the National Guidance Forum (Cedefop, 2009d). In 2007, the Slovenian Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs installed a working group to prepare a systemic approach to lifelong learning and career guidance. This work was supporting the establishment of a national authority responsible for the development of lifelong learning and career guidance policies and practices. In addition, a working group for lifelong career guidance <sup>(21)</sup> was set up in 2009 under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Sport (Cedefop, 2009d).

## 2.5. Regional and local guidance cooperation

Across Europe, there is a general ambition to achieving better integration among national, regional and local administrations in education, training and employment for developing guidance systems. The findings in the Cedefop handbook (Cedefop, 2008c) and the ELGPN work package papers (Watts, 2009a, 2009b, 2010) suggest that the Member States are in favour of introducing new forms of a network- and partnership-based cooperation, also at regional/local level. Member States emphasise in their responses that partnerships – whether national, regional or local - must be grounded in the real

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<sup>(21)</sup> The members are from the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology, the Ministry of Economy, the Government Office for Development and EU affairs and social partners.

world and goal-oriented to have a meaning for all partners and to make them remain committed to short- and long-term cooperation. Many countries also mention that social partners and other relevant actors (e.g. associations of guidance counsellors, student unions, NGOs) are more frequently becoming involved in guidance policy- and decision-making processes (Cedefop, 2010b, 2010c, 2010d).

The following highlights current developments in Member States aiming to strengthen networking and partnerships at regional/local levels between authorities and administrations responsible for guidance service provision (2.5.1.) plus brief discussion of the limitations to network- and partnership-based cooperation in the Chapter 2.5.2.

### **2.5.1. Regional networks and partnerships**

Regional partnerships can be valuable forums for knowledge-sharing, innovation and change management as many of the Member States indicate (Cedefop 2008c, 2009d, 2010b, 2010c, 2010d). However, without clear objectives, strong leadership and active participation of all parties, the initial momentum can be lost and such partnerships become ineffective and useless. Building up and strengthening strategic alliances and partnerships between key stakeholders and making them sustainable is paramount for developing guidance and counselling in a systematic manner in the regions and municipalities. Once in place, the positive aspects of such established cooperation models are that they aid exchange of experience, best practices and lessons learned, and allow better planning and implementation of joint actions across sectors, administrations and organisations.

According to many European Union countries, regional networks and partnerships that demonstrate solid governance, organisational stability and professional capacity in terms of bringing well-informed expertise to discussions, may have an effective influence on guidance policy and practice development. Most countries believe that as long as such networks and partnerships manage to remain focused and avoid dealing with multiple issues, it is more likely that the connectivity between different actors and sectors can be strengthened. The main benefit of working together is achieving outcomes and developing tailored interventions that would not be possible, if each sector/administration/organisation were to focus on its own outputs only. Further, well-organised cooperation is seen to contribute to more efficient use of resources and to avoiding overlaps in service provision (Cedefop 2008c, 2009d, 2010b, 2010c, 2010d).

Although issues are mostly being tackled from a policy perspective, countries are putting increased emphasis on including a user-centred approach in guidance system and practice development. For example, in 2010 the Finnish Government announced that better information and guidance support to young people will have to be provided after primary education. In practical terms, each municipality should have a network of representatives from the education and employment administrations, social, youth and health care services. These networks should ensure that services and communication regarding young people at the transition phase function properly (Cedefop, 2010b). Also France has paid special attention to coordinating local guidance-related services. Reform of public employment services was initiated in 2007 and the relevant Act was ratified in February 2008: it merged the two existing networks into one, namely the *Agence nationale pour l'emploi* (a public statutory establishment) and the *ASSEDIC* (unemployment benefits provider managed by the social partners). This new structure called *Maison de l'emploi* aims at widening access for citizens to locally-based services (Cedefop, 2008b).

There are also good examples of countries that have initiated network-based cooperation models to develop regional guidance service delivery as part of national strategy implementation (e.g. Austria, Germany, Norway). In Norway, regional partnerships have been established with the aim of uniting the main stakeholders in lifelong career guidance and to face the common challenge of developing career guidance between education and labour sectors. These partnerships consist of institutions for secondary and higher education, public employment services and employers in three counties (Telemark, Akershus, Nordland<sup>(22)</sup>). The main objectives have been to offer better and more coherent lifelong career guidance, to improve the countywide coordination of career guidance across all ages, to find solutions to different groups' interests locally and regionally, to define the roles of the different actors in career guidance, to improve career guidance quality in lower and upper secondary education and to increase career guidance cooperation as an instrument for labour market policies and working life (Cedefop, 2009d).

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<sup>(22)</sup> The pilot projects had different starting points and targets. The partnership in Akershus was set up as a measure to increase coherence in the school system, whereas the partnership in Nordland was jointly set up by the PES and the county governor to create an overarching system for career guidance in the county, to obtain funding through cooperation, and to establish local career guidance centres. The Telemark partnership aimed at creating a coherent system for career guidance, to be accessible by the entire population of the county, and improving the competences of career guidance practitioners.

Austria has introduced a national lifelong guidance strategy and, as part of it, a nationwide and provider-independent educational guidance system for adults was set up during 2007-10. This system is based on a supra-regional network consisting of regionally active stakeholders. This participatory approach of relevant stakeholders is expected to be beneficial in developing models of quality assurance, and for strengthening knowledge management and the use of statistics to improve guidance service provision for adults (Cedefop, 2008b, 2010d). In Germany, a government programme Learning regions network<sup>(23)</sup> has been completed. With funding of the Federal Ministry, local and regional networks were established to initiate a local lifelong learning and employment strategy including guidance and counselling provision. Training providers, employment agencies, chambers of commerce, enterprises, local schools and municipalities, trade unions and other local actors and stakeholders participated in the networks and guidance services were in most cases an integral part of these networks (Cedefop, 2009d, 2010d). As a follow-up measure, a new Local learning programme has been launched in Germany to improve cooperation and coordination for seamless local management of education provision, including guidance services as a central action point (Nationales Forum Beratung in Bildung, Beruf und Beschäftigung; Jenschke et al, 2011).

### **2.5.2. Challenges to network- and partnership-based cooperation**

Although countries see much potential in increasing network- and partnership-based coordination and cooperation across sectors, administrations and organisations, they also see limitations and challenges. Mostly these critical aspects are linked to differences in the operating cultures between the sectors (education and employment). Sectors also have different structures (e.g. delivery systems) and specific mandates based on regulations defining their funding, processes, and responsibilities. Occasionally the sectors and administrations may also find themselves in competition over the same limited resources. Moreover, sectoral protectionism may result in lack of synergies as well as a lack of continuity as retaining relationships between organisations becomes too complicated; in the worst case this might only strengthen sector-to-sector stereotypes. The following country cases give some additional insight into these critical issues.

The lack of coordination between advisory bodies under the relevant ministries remains a challenge in the Czech Republic. Improved coordination

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<sup>(23)</sup> Learning region networks have been established in several countries across Europe (BE, IE, ES, IT, CY, LV, LT, HU, MT, AT, RO, SI, FI, UK). Available from Internet: <http://www.ub.es/includ-ed> [cited 2.6.2011]

between entities providing career counselling in education and employment will be needed to eliminate duplication and inefficient use of resources in the development of lifelong guidance provision (Cedefop, 2010d). At the same time, the main weakness is that different elements of counselling aimed at risk groups are not sufficiently interconnected. Guidance services targeted at continuing education are not built up in a systemic manner with adequate capacity (Cedefop, 2010b). Therefore, the future plans of the Czech Republic include the development of a lifelong guidance system that allows greater individualisation in service provision to meet the information and learning needs of the users. Parallel to this, stronger support for competent counsellors in terms of effective instruments, innovative procedures and new forms of cooperation with clients, firms, organisations and regional authorities will be provided (Cedefop, 2010d).

Italy sees the need to connect independent actors to an integrated network to improve the functioning of the national guidance system. Currently there are many projects, experiments and different practices, but they do not form an organic national or regional system. Therefore ISFOL, on behalf of the Ministry of Labour, is setting up a number of guidance initiatives to promote development of a national guidance system considering regional disparities but, at the same time, ensuring effectiveness and efficiency of services across the country (Cedefop, 2009c). Extensive analysis carried out in Slovenia (2005-06) concerning the past developments in information and counselling service provision revealed that synergy between different service providers and activities needs to be improved. Further development concerns the counselling work in child day care centres, schools and homes, career orientation within employment offices and other organisations giving information and counselling for dropouts, general provision of information and counselling for young people, tutoring and career counselling for students and counselling in adult education (Cedefop, 2008b).

## 2.6. Key messages

Priority area 4 of the Council guidance resolution (Council of the European Union, 2008b) deals with encouraging coordination and cooperation among various national, regional and local stakeholders. Within the EU-level framework of developing lifelong learning (ET 2020), the Member States have taken concrete steps towards strengthening the role of guidance in their national lifelong learning and employment strategies and policies. The current trend in most countries is towards enhanced cross-sectoral and multi-professional network-based cooperation, increased policy and strategy dialogue and stronger

partnerships among all key players and stakeholders. The good work in this area will have to continue.

The European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network has proven to be a relevant platform for supporting guidance policy cooperation in education and employment sectors between the Member States. This EU-wide collaboration has resulted in national guidance policy forums or similar coordination mechanisms which aim to smoothen horizontal and vertical policy coordination and implementation to harmonise diverse national, regional, local and even sectoral interests. This national cooperation has contributed, for example, to legislative and strategic initiatives, to measures broadening the evidence-base on guidance, and to developing guidance models, structures and qualifications. Working groups are quite widely used in many countries to deal with specific guidance issues, to generate tailor-made reports, proposals and evaluations and to bring guidance-related initiatives forward in the policy- and decision-making processes.

In many cases, national/regional/local authorities have been in favour of establishing guidance partnerships and alliances as to promote more regionally-based cooperation across sectors and administrations (e.g. education, training, employment, youth, social and health care). There is evidence that, by applying this multi-stakeholder approach in a local/regional context, all relevant actors and institutional bodies can be brought together to agree on how jointly to develop guidance services as well as how best to meet local challenges and demands. Such local level action has sometimes also given citizens a more active and participatory role in discussions on how guidance services could better meet their learning, career and self-development needs as well as widening their access to services.



## CHAPTER 3

# Improving quality in guidance

Quality in guidance and counselling has been actively debated at a European and Member State level over recent years. It is widely acknowledged that high quality guidance and counselling services play a key role in supporting citizens' lifelong learning, employability, career management and achievement of their personal goals. Both European and national policy- and decision-makers require more evidence on the expected outcomes as well as on the impacts of different service delivery modes to improve guidance service quality.

Currently, there are great differences in the quality of guidance services in the Member States as well as in the strategies that the countries have chosen to improve their quality. Against this background, Member States have identified a growing need for more holistic EU-wide approaches to quality assurance as common European guidelines would help them in monitoring, evaluating, developing and benchmarking their own guidance policies and practices. The fundamental benefits of European cooperation on developing guidance lie in bringing together diverse experiences, practices and frames of reference to ensure the improved quality of European-wide lifelong guidance services.

### 3.1. Towards quality performance

The European Commission's Expert group on lifelong guidance (2002-07) reflected on the quality of guidance provision and contributed to common guidelines and quality criteria for accreditation of guidance services and products, from a citizen perspective and taking into account different policy contexts. This cooperation in the expert group resulted in several reports and guidebooks on the quality of guidance provision, such as the study on *Quality guidelines and criteria in guidance* (NICEC and Guidance Council, 2004) that revealed that there are hardly any comprehensive quality assurance systems in guidance service delivery in Europe.

The Cedefop study (Cedefop, 2005b) on Indicators and benchmarks for lifelong guidance, and the Guide on improving lifelong guidance policies and systems – using the common European reference tools (Cedefop, 2005a) were published to promote developments on quality of guidance in Europe and to

provide useful tools for self-evaluation by Member States. As helpful as these existing tools have been for developing quality in guidance across Europe, further action is needed to reflect better the existing EU-policy framework of education, training and employment, and national reforms. Against this background, an initiative has been taken to revise the existing common European reference tool for lifelong guidance (ELGPN, 2009). The main aim is to make guidance more concrete and more operational for supporting the development of quality in a variety of contexts and environments in which guidance services are delivered. This development work will be carried out in 2011-12 as part of the ELGPN activities and Cedefop will be contributing to it.

### **3.1.1. Quality assurance mechanisms**

The aims of quality assurance mechanisms are to improve efficiency in service provision, to increase institutional financial accountability and to create transparency from the perspective of the citizen (Plant, 2009a). While setting up such mechanisms, there are at least three models (or a combination of them) that the countries could apply: administrative-, practitioner- and user-centred approaches, each with their strengths and weaknesses. As the examples below show, the administrative-centred approach is the most widely applied method across countries. It relies on a top-down and usually centralised way of assuring service quality within national policy frameworks. The practitioner-centred approach can be seen as a bottom-up quality assurance mechanism which is usually supported, for example, by professional guidance associations. Systems based on a user-centred approach aim at engaging service users to improve the quality of the guidance provision (Cedefop, Sultana, 2008).

In 2009-10, the Member States have been discussing quality assurance and evidence-based guidance policy and system development through the cooperation within the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network. The aim has been to disseminate national/regional/sectoral models and frameworks that have been created and to share the experiences that different countries have in applying quality standards and mechanisms across education and employment sectors (Plant, 2009a, 2009b). Some countries have already established or are in the process of establishing such an operational environment, which allows systematic development and improvement of quality assurance mechanisms for guidance.

In Greece a study on *International systems for quality assurance in guidance services* has been conducted to map out the most important international quality management systems and to describe the most well-known quality assurance

systems for career guidance <sup>(24)</sup>. The study also detailed systems developed for quality assurance in various public sector services in Greece. Based on the study, EKEP, the Greek guidance authority, has created a model system for quality assurance in guidance services. It consists of six groups of benchmarks (compared with the British matrix, see footnote 26), and it will be applied to initial and continuous evaluation <sup>(25)</sup> of public and private guidance services in education and employment. The ultimate aim of the system is to set common quality standards for guidance provision in public and private sectors, to raise the quality of guidance provision for the benefit of citizens and to protect them from the low quality of uncertified guidance services (Cedefop, 2009d).

In Ireland, implementation of the national lifelong guidance framework is supported by a quality assurance framework for guidance that will enable policy-makers and providers to ensure that clients receive high-quality services throughout the life cycle. Further, the quality assurance framework proposes structures for evaluating services and measures for quality improvement (National Guidance Forum, 2007). In Estonia, the aim of the new system of quality assurance is to ensure good and even standard in service provision. This is an important step towards establishing a coherent and common culture of quality in guidance: earlier the challenge with the two separately functioning career counselling systems - one for adults and one for the young – was that they followed different operating principles (Cedefop, 2008b). Austria has been paying special attention to developing the quality of information, guidance and counselling to address the needs of the users. Professionalism, quality assurance and occupational self-control are considered essential requirements for the objectivity and neutrality of guidance services. A guide for self-evaluation has been produced for all guidance institutions in Austria to help them develop the quality of their services, to improve the efficient use of their resources and to maintain high a motivational level among their staff (Schlögl and Neubauer, 2007).

As a summary observation made by Professor Plant (2009a), there is a need to develop more robust national quality assurance systems that rely on multiple

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<sup>(24)</sup> For example, the British Matrix quality standard for information advice and guidance services and the Canadian Blueprint for Life/Work Designs. Benchmarks in the British matrix standard are: 1. Leadership; 2. Organising – planning; 3. Guidance practitioners – human resources; 4. Client satisfaction; 5. Delivery of services; and 6. Premises and equipment.

<sup>(25)</sup> A pilot application of the system in public guidance services in Greece has taken place (including a university career office, a counseling and guidance center (KESYP) and a centre for promotion to employment (KPA)]. The aim of pilot was to inform the services about the characteristics of the system for quality assurance and to get their feedback concerning the values and quality indicators of the system.

scientific approaches, such as qualitative and narrative methods complementing the currently used quantitative approaches. Also, UK researchers (Bimrose et al., 2006) have raised some interesting viewpoints while discussing the need to make the terminology used to describe quality assurance more explicit and more consistent within and across organisations/sectors/countries. Having jointly agreed terms, and a common understanding of their meaning, would make all data collected and analysed more easily manageable and comparable. This would result in more concrete conclusions as the data would reveal which particular delivery strategies are effective, and whether certain strategies are only effective for some individuals or target groups. The same researchers suggest that guidance counsellors delivering services may not be adequately equipped for data gathering and analysis to explain the impact of their work from a quality assurance perspective. Assuring quality in guidance calls for designing a national data management system that has both meaning and relevant application to policy-makers and practitioners alike.

### **3.1.2. Quality standards for guidance**

Throughout Europe, guidance and counselling systems have evolved and, with them, the quality standards, which the services must fulfil. Quality standards for guidance are an issue being actively debated in different sectors, various operational contexts and at national, regional and local levels. The discussions on such standards are linked to guaranteeing the best possible service quality to clients in terms of fulfilling their needs and ensuring that the quality of guidance services can be measured in concrete terms.

Quality standards for guidance can be seen as tools for creating and sustaining relationships between customers and service providers as well as for allowing a more systematic approach to quality management in general. Gathering evidence on service delivery through multiple sources and assessing it against established standards provides valuable insight into identifying the strengths and weaknesses of actual service provision. However, measuring and assessing the performance of guidance service provision with the help of clearly defined indicators against quality standards requires much development work in most national, regional and local, and also organisational and sectoral, contexts. Good models and frameworks (e.g. Department for Children, Schools and Families 2008, 2009) have been created, but the experiences that different countries have in applying such quality standards should be more extensively disseminated. The following outlines successful initiatives that individual countries have taken to develop standards/indicators for assuring quality in guidance service provision.

In Denmark, the National Knowledge Centre for Education and Job Guidance contributes to the further development of high quality guidance and to improving coherence between guidance policies, education, and training of guidance professionals. It also helps to strengthen the links between guidance research and practice <sup>(26)</sup>. Recently, an indicator-based system to monitor quality has been implemented, with regular user assessments (Cedefop, 2010d). In 2010, Estonia produced three quality manuals with different focuses: management; provision of career information and career counselling and career education. They will be piloted in youth centres (career information provision and career counselling) and partner schools (career education) during 2011. Estonia aims to introduce these quality principles in the labour offices and career centres of higher education institutions in 2012-13.

In Germany a consultation among guidance providers, practitioners, users, scientists, politicians, social partners and other stakeholders has been launched to define quality standards for guidance and counselling in learning, career and employment and to establish a quality framework for guidance delivery. This process was initiated by the German National Guidance Forum and it is supported by the Federal Ministry of Education as part of its policy to ensure the provision of high quality career guidance and counselling (Nationales Forum Beratung in Bildung, Beruf und Beschäftigung; Jenschke et al., 2011). Moreover, the German Association for Educational and Careers Guidance has created a career guidance register <sup>(27)</sup> to assure the transparency of the guidance sector and the quality of services provided. Career advisers and institutions with proper qualifications and proven experience in the field can be included in this register (Cedefop, 2009d).

Poland has been systematically developing the quality of vocational counselling services and related procedures provided by public employment services. In 2007, the Minister of Labour and Social Policy prepared two regulations, on the standards of labour market services and on detailed rules for providing labour market services by public employment services. As a follow-up measure, new web- and telephone-based services were established to improve remote access to services. Vocational counsellors from the information and career planning centres of the voivodeship labour offices are responsible for providing these services (Cedefop, 2010d).

Since 2009 - on the initiative of the public employment service - Portugal has been developing a comprehensive set of tools to monitor better the guidance

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<sup>(26)</sup> <http://www.vejledning.net/> [cited 2.6.2011]

<sup>(27)</sup> <http://www.bbregister.de/praeambel.htm> [cited 2.6.2011]

system with three main targets: transparent and clear standards; measures and practices to increase user autonomy and access; and sponsoring systemic innovation in the national guidance system. Inputs of guidance, administrative and technical processes and impact variables are now defined and will shortly be implemented through such tools as internal enquiries of staff and follow-up surveys to users. The system is supported by a set of quantitative indicators and by the active involvement of the national guidance forum that includes all of the relevant stakeholders (Cedefop, 2010d).

### 3.2. Evidence on guidance service delivery

The question of how extensively the findings, recommendations and conclusions of guidance-related reports, studies and evaluations are being used to steer policy at regional and national levels in the Member States remains open. However, Bimrose and Barnes (2008) mention that most policy-makers rely on a very limited evidence-base when evaluating the inputs, processes and outputs of career guidance services. As the national DGVT (Cedefop, 2010d) and ReferNet self-assessment reports (Cedefop 2008b; 2010b) show, this is mostly due to the fact that actually the evidence base on guidance provision still is quite fragmented, and that there seems to be too little comprehensive data available in the countries apart from individual thematic evaluations and/or studies (Plant, 2009a, 2009b).

Some Member States have been conducting, or are considering, qualitative, longitudinal evaluations and analyses in a more target-oriented manner. This serves the purpose of finding out what are the concrete outcomes and added value of guidance, as well as how the currently mostly supply driven quality assurances systems could be transformed to more demand-driven systems. A good example of a recent qualitative, longitudinal study focusing on effective guidance was conducted in England over the period 2002-08. The main purpose of the research was to evaluate the effectiveness of guidance and its role in career development and progression by tracking the career trajectories of research participants over a five year period. The study concluded that the evaluation of effective guidance is multifaceted and complex due to the lack of clarity that currently surrounds the study of impact, as well as due to a high number of factors potentially influencing individual career choice and decision-making. To 'quality assure' the efficacy of guidance, it is crucial to know what is to be measured; for what purpose; who is the target group; what mechanisms or processes are in place for collecting relevant data; and what quality assurance

arrangements exist to ensure that data will be used for effecting change (Bimrose and Barnes, 2008).

The following country cases highlight both specific and thematic studies that have been carried out to improve the knowledge- and evidence-base on effectiveness of national guidance. For example, the Hungarian study on cost efficiency was investigating what is measured and/or can be measured in the performance and impact of career guidance. The comparison with international experiences showed that the examination and measurement of real impacts is also not easy in other countries, as the impact of career guidance is not unambiguously visible and measurable. Verification of the link between interventions and impacts is difficult, which calls for proof and evidence-based surveys. The efficiency of guidance and the returns on investment have a huge importance in public policy but research, where it exists, is sporadic and ad hoc, the conclusions are uncertain, and there is little feedback to the original mission and politics (Hungarian LLG Council, 2009).

In some countries, Ministry level initiatives have been taken to broaden the evidence-base on guidance service delivery, as in Iceland, where a report on improving educational and vocational guidance in compulsory and upper secondary schools to deter drop-out was published by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture in 2007. The following year, the Icelandic Parliament used the report as part of the background material for a new law on educational and vocational counsellors. The report stated that good counselling increases the likelihood of a successful choice of studies and careers and may prevent drop-out from schools (Cedefop, 2009d). A study was initiated by the Finnish Ministry of Education to find out how teachers, working life representatives and students perceived the sufficiency of teaching and guidance received in VET institutions. The results showed that the volume of teaching and guidance varied to a certain extent between different training providers, study fields and degree programmes, which could result in an individual student not necessarily receiving the services s/he is entitled to have for pursuing his/her studies. This applies especially to students with special needs (Salmio and Mäkelä, 2009).

An extensive study of educational, vocational and career guidance in Germany was commissioned on the initiative of the German Ministry of Education and Research (Niedlich et al., 2007). It describes the range of guidance provision, which has become increasingly fragmented and uncoordinated after the abolition of the Federal Employment Agency's monopoly on guidance in 1998. The research dealt with quality and quality assurance in educational, vocational and career guidance. The report concludes that a common understanding of quality, quality criteria and minimum standards for public

educational and vocational guidance services will be needed (Cedefop, 2008b). The external evaluation of Career Counselling and Education Service (CCES) launched by the Cypriot Minister of Education and Culture serves the goal of improving service quality, providing counselling more effectively to groups with special needs, and offering high quality in-service training to the staff of the service (Cedefop, 2009d). In addition, four thematic studies have been initiated in Cyprus. They focus on actions for promoting active ageing, modernising public employment services available to employers, integrating private employment agencies into the national employment model, and developing programmes to promote the employment of young persons (Cedefop, 2010b).

A recent study by the Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket, 2007) <sup>(28)</sup> on the quality of educational and vocational guidance in compulsory education revealed that guidance is unevenly available at municipality level as well as in schools. The municipalities give low priority to guidance and they do not work in a systematic manner on evaluating and monitoring their guidance services. However, many of them have identified this as a problem and initiated measures to improve the service organisation. As a response, the Swedish National Agency for Education developed general guidelines and comments on career education and guidance (Skolverket, 2009a) give school providers a foundation for their work planning, organising and implementing career education and guidance for students in different types of schools. The guidelines also support municipalities and schools in assessing the quality of their own career education and guidance. Parallel to the above, a report (Skolverket, 2009b) on 36 learning examples in developing educational and vocational guidance in Sweden in 2007-08 stresses the importance of taking responsibility and being jointly creative in the development process at school and municipality levels.

### 3.3. Professional profile of guidance practitioners

High quality educational and vocational guidance and counselling supports the personal development and career opportunities of every individual and contributes to wider social, economic and sustainable development as a whole (IAEVG, 2001). In this context, guidance practitioners have a key role to play in order to make high quality lifelong guidance a reality in the Member States.

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<sup>(28)</sup> A total of 13 comprehensive schools in six municipalities participated in the study. The study was based on interviews with pupils, teachers, school principals, guidance counsellors and managers in administration. All these groups considered guidance and counselling as useful.



However, the professions of guidance and counselling, as well as teaching, are becoming more complex, as the demands placed on guidance counsellors and teachers are constantly increasing due to changes in the society and reforms in the education and employment policies. Further, working environments and client groups of guidance counsellors and teachers are becoming more diverse. The current Europeanisation of education, training and working life necessitates continuing professional development and continuous demonstration of adequate competences from individual guidance practitioners and teachers (Launikari et.al., 2009).

### **3.3.1. Developing qualifications**

Professional qualifications and occupational standards for guidance counsellors are not sufficiently developed in many countries (OECD, 2004; Cedefop, Sultana, 2004, 2008). There is a great variation across the Member States, for example, in the initial training provision for guidance practitioners, the qualifications required on recruitment, and the opportunities available for continuous professional development. Along with this, guidance counsellors are a very heterogeneous group in terms of their tasks, professional status, educational background, working environment and client groups, as guidance services are offered in a wide range of settings (education, training, non-formal/informal learning, adult learning, employment, workplaces, etc.). Additionally, actors whose primary occupation is not within guidance and counselling often offer career guidance related services. These facts and trends above are outlined also in the Cedefop study on Professionalising career guidance (Cedefop, 2009c).

The international guidance reviews above have recommended that comprehensive career guidance competence-based frameworks should be developed, as a basis for reforming guidance provision, supporting professional development of guidance staff and achieving the lifelong guidance paradigm shift. Such frameworks may give impetus to modernising training programmes, updating and establishing qualification standards and to certification procedures. Further, competence-based frameworks might prove useful for policy-makers to get more insight into professional development of guidance practitioners, and accordingly to support their decision-making processes. The competence framework - as drafted in the Cedefop study (Cedefop, 2009c) - aims to be an instrument to deal with the challenges indicated above.

Despite positive developments in the Member States, educational, vocational and psychological guidance and counselling still seem to remain fragmented and not always evenly available from one region to another. Also, the professional backgrounds and educational levels of guidance professionals vary

(Cedefop, 2009c), and in many cases there is a shortage of support specialists (special education teachers, psychologists, social and youth workers) as well as too few outreach workers to contribute to supporting guidance specialists in schools and public employment offices (Cedefop, 2010e). Against this reality, many countries such as Estonia, Lithuania, Poland and Turkey, have introduced qualification frameworks for guidance practitioners to raise professional standards and develop the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery.

Estonia has launched a career practitioner qualification system based on three professional standards: career counsellor, career information specialist and career coordinator at school and VET institutions (Cedefop, 2009d). In 2008, Lithuania developed a standard for vocational counselling specialists training, a programme for qualification development of vocational counselling specialists and methodology for identification of qualification development needs <sup>(29)</sup>. As defined by the standard, vocational counselling specialists need to finalise a higher education study programme leading to specified competences or to complete a higher education study programme and in-service training programme for career advisors (Cedefop, 2009d).

To ensure the quality of guidance and counselling, the Polish Ministry of National Education defined the detailed qualifications of teachers and teacher-counsellors in 2009. Requirements depend on the type of school or institution: either graduate studies of the first (bachelor) or second (MA) degree in counselling, or graduate studies of the first (bachelor) or second (MA) degree in any faculty, and after that postgraduate diploma in vocational guidance and pedagogical training (Cedefop, 2010d). In Turkey, studies by the ministries have been initiated to define the professional competences and qualifications of guidance teachers in the education sector and guidance practitioners in the employment sector.

By certifying the title of educational- and vocational counsellor by law (Act 35/2009<sup>30</sup>), Iceland aims to ensure that the services provided by an educational and vocational counsellor are of high professional standard and to guarantee professionalism among counsellors (IAEVG, 2010). According to this law, only people with a relevant university education are allowed to use the title educational and vocational counsellor. The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture is responsible for evaluating whether the education of each guidance practitioner applying for this status/title is relevant and sufficient. Guidance

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<sup>(29)</sup> These developments took place within the Lithuanian national level ESF-project *Development and Implementation of Vocational Guidance System*.

<sup>(30)</sup> Available in Icelandic at <http://www.althingi.is/altext/136/s/pdf/0715.pdf> [cited 2.6.2011]

professionals who were working as counsellors at the time of passing the law will be able to apply for an exemption from this law and each such application will be evaluated by the same Ministry (Cedefop, 2009d).

### **3.3.2. Training guidance practitioners and teachers**

As the Cedefop report (Cedefop, 2009c) reveals, there is huge variation across Europe in professional training available to guidance practitioners, and in competences and qualifications acquired through such training. Nevertheless, there is a clear trend towards offering more specialised training for guidance practitioners in the EU countries. Many European countries have recently taken initiatives to build up the competences of guidance counsellors to ensure that learning and career choices by learners will be dealt with in a professionally sufficient and qualitatively appropriate manner. The set of competences that guidance practitioners should possess depend on the sectoral and institutional contexts in which they work and the professional role they have in these settings, the target groups to whom they provide services, multi-professional and cross-sectoral cooperation arrangements and the knowledge of society and economy they have. These factors together have an influence on the quality of guidance services (Cedefop, 2009c; Launikari et.al., 2009).

The following examples demonstrate the improvement of initial, continuing, further and in-service training of counsellors – and in some cases teachers – in some Member States and show how the training offer has been developed in terms of providing competences and qualifications that are needed for high quality guidance service provision in the education and employment sectors. Training programmes generally aim at delivering theoretical frameworks and practical methods; by doing so they strengthen the ability of guidance counsellors to understand better the aspirations of their clients as well as to be more responsive in terms of shaping their guidance interventions in relation to the client needs.

Denmark and Austria have introduced new legislation to regulate the training provision of guidance counsellors. In Denmark, with an amendment in 2007 of the 2003 Act on guidance, guidance practitioners are required to complete a diploma programme <sup>(31)</sup> in educational and vocational guidance or document equivalent competences through prior learning. A professional bachelor degree in education and vocational guidance has been established as well (Cedefop,

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<sup>(31)</sup> Six university colleges in Denmark offer a one-year modular common training programme at diploma level for guidance practitioners across sectors. In addition, the Danish University of Education offers a one-year Master of Education programme in guidance counselling.

2008b; 2009d; 2010d). Also in Austria, the pre- and in-service training of guidance counsellors under the Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture and the Federal Ministry of Science and Research is regulated by ordinances or decrees (Cedefop, 2009d; 2010b). In Ireland, a framework of competences for guidance practitioners has been developed. It will influence the future professional education and training of practitioners providing guidance across the life cycle and in a range of different contexts. A national lifelong guidance framework of the knowledge, skills and competences that guidance aims to develop among individuals at different times of their lives has also been outlined in Ireland. Both frameworks together support the dissemination of quality education and careers information (National Guidance Forum, 2007).

Specifically tailored in-service training for guidance experts and teachers has been available, for instance, in Bulgaria and Greece. In Bulgaria, professional development of career guidance staff in the education system was addressed by organising training of career guidance trainers in 2006. It was followed by training of 1000 pedagogic counsellors and school teachers in 2007, and another 1000 guidance workers in 2008 (Cedefop, 2008b). In 2007-08, the Panteion University<sup>(32)</sup> in Greece organised a training programme for information and documentation specialists as well as to experienced and newly appointed guidance counsellors. A total of 740 participants had 200 hours of training including theoretical studies on methodologies relevant to their professional practices (Cedefop, 2009c).

Romania and Norway have introduced systematic training measures to improve teacher guidance and counselling capacities. The Romanian National Centre for Training of Teachers in School Education has been improving the training of teachers through a credit system. This training covers a wide variety of topics: vocational guidance and counselling, students with special learning needs, quality assurance, development of school action plans, transition from school to work, training standards and curriculum development, and school-based curriculum development (Cedefop, 2010e). Several Norwegian tertiary education institutions offer training courses on guidance and counselling as an option within the regular training programme structure. Further, following White Paper No 31 (2007-08) on the quality of education in Norway, universities and university colleges have been charged with the task of developing supplementary education in high priority fields, including lifelong guidance. From autumn 2009, career guidance and social pedagogical counselling has been part of the permanent system for further training for teachers (Cedefop, 2009d).

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<sup>(32)</sup> A training activity within the project *Counselling horizons for school guidance – SOS orientation* as a follow-up of the previous training offered to counsellors in 1999.

### **3.3.3. Certification of competences**

The assessment and certification of competences that guidance practitioners have acquired at work, and through non-formal and informal learning in the context of the occupation they are pursuing, have been receiving more attention in discussions across Europe in the past couple of years. However, only a few initial steps have been taken so far towards creating a mechanism for certifying these competences in the Member States, though there have been some successful initiatives to promote the certification of competences of guidance counsellors at international and European level.

The International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance (IAEVG) has launched an international certification programme for educational and vocational guidance practitioners (EVGP). The certification is based on a set of international competences that practitioners should have for providing a high quality service. EVGP competences - closely aligned with the Canadian Standards and guidelines for career development practitioners - have been validated with a pool of 700 practitioners working in a variety of different guidance positions across 38 countries. They comprise core competences (i.e. knowledge, skills and attributes needed by all practitioners) and specialised competences (required for some practitioners depending on the nature of their work).

In a European project (ECGC, European Careers Guidance Certificate, 2007-09), a standardised and internationally transferable certification system ('ECG certificate') has been developed to acknowledge formally or non-formally acquired knowledge/skills/competences of career guidance counsellors. The ECG certificate relies on 35 explicitly defined competence standards; it does not replace current national certification systems but is a complementary qualification for professionals who wish to specialise further. It is considered particularly useful for countries that do not have formal career guidance qualifications and also to practitioners who want to include a European dimension in their professional portfolio (Cedefop, 2009d; 2010b).

For example, there is no certification scheme for guidance counsellors in the education and employment sectors in the Slovak Republic, since career guidance practitioner/counsellor does not exist as an official, certified occupation. Consequently, there are only non-qualified practitioners providing careers information, guidance and counselling services. Currently it is not possible to study career guidance and counselling as a comprehensive study course in any accredited pre-graduate or postgraduate programme at the university or any other tertiary level educational institution (Cedefop, 2009d).

The situation looks much better in Greece, where EKEP (based on presidential decree 4/9-2-2004) is the responsible body for evaluating the competence of guidance practitioners in public and private sectors. Following a study on the certification of qualifications of guidance practitioners and on defining the prerequisites for the operation of guidance services, EKEP drafted a proposal for evaluation and for a register of certified guidance counsellors. As a result of a large-scale consultation on the above proposal with relevant stakeholders, a legal framework will be developed for the evaluation of all guidance counsellors working in the public and private sectors (Cedefop, 2009d).

The Netherlands aim to ensure the best possible quality in guidance and the best available professional support for those seeking a job in the labour market or looking for information on education, vocational training, lifelong learning and employment. Educational career advisors have the opportunity to apply for a personal certificate to demonstrate that they possess the required competences. The certifying body is Certiforce C.i. <sup>(33)</sup> (accredited for this purpose by the Accreditation Council <sup>(34)</sup>) and it complies with the accreditation criteria laid down in the standard ISO/IEC 17024:2003 (van Deursen and Jansen, 2007).

#### **3.3.4. New guidance-oriented tasks**

The new tasks and changing functions of guidance counsellors are mainly to be seen against the current economic reality and the policy level emphasis placed on social inclusion of risk groups across Europe. The economic uncertainties and the ensuing challenges (e.g. high unemployment rate, more difficult school-to-work transitions, non-linear careers) influence the way guidance and counselling can best support individuals who have been affected by the crisis and who may feel that their future is bleak. The guidance counsellor is in a central position to assist individuals in exploring opportunities, in choosing wisely and in developing the confidence to face the challenges that the economic downturn brings to life.

The role of the guidance practitioner is constantly being newly defined to reflect better the changes and development trends in education, training and employment as well as in wider society: increasing multiculturalism, ageing population, international mobility, booming use of social media, and technological development. Career choices and career guidance are becoming more important and more complex as careers diversify. This calls for career guidance professionals who are well acquainted with education, training and the labour

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<sup>(33)</sup> <http://www.certiforceci.nl/> [cited 2.6.2011]

<sup>(34)</sup> The Accreditation Council has been recognised by the Dutch government as the sole designated body which in the Netherlands assesses whether a certifying body meets the requirements for accreditation.

market and who have well-established cooperation and partnerships between schools and local/regional employers (OECD, 2010b).

The concrete examples below illustrate guidance roles and functions that are emerging in the Member States as a response to the changing and more diverse needs of learners. Moreover, they show that guidance is not only a separate input, but commonly embedded in various contexts, such as education and training provision, and schooling-business life relationships).

A completely new guidance-related function has been created in the Flemish-speaking community of Belgium. The so-called learning path counsellor arranges information and guidance to support the learning path of the apprentices (Cedefop, 2009d). Also, within the Dutch upper secondary vocational education (MBO) sector, a new development took place in 2006-07 due to the increasing number of students with disabilities in normal education. A job coach's position was established to provide intensive guidance to students with an occupational disability and to support teachers who do not necessarily have sufficient time resources to cope with all the needs of these students (van Deursen and Jansen, 2007). In England, some schools have recently started appointing people from other professional backgrounds <sup>(35)</sup> to the role of careers coordinator to strengthen the link between learning and working. A careers coordinator should ideally have an accredited professional qualification in managing careers education and guidance for young people, but this is not yet mandatory (Cedefop, 2009d).

Intercultural mediators have been introduced in schools in Luxembourg in response to the arrival of a large number of asylum seekers. The demand for intercultural mediation has increased continuously and now covers a wide selection of languages. All the feedback from teachers, school principals and parents confirms the effectiveness of mediation in informing parents, supporting the educational integration of children, and resolving misunderstandings between migrant parents and schools (Cedefop, 2010b). As a measure to prevent immigrant children and young people from dropping out of education and training, the Norwegian Directorate of integration and diversity started a 3-year project *Minority counsellors* in 2007 for 30 guidance practitioners who will be dedicated to students from non-western minority groups in secondary education (Cedefop, 2008b).

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<sup>(35)</sup> Including those with a qualification in careers guidance and personnel from industrial, business or commercial backgrounds.

### 3.4. Key messages

Priority area 3 of the Council guidance resolution (Council of the European Union, 2008b) deals with developing quality assurance in guidance provision. In recent years, the Member States have been actively debating the concept of quality in guidance as high quality guidance is seen to have a vital role in supporting citizens' lifelong learning, career management and labour market participation. However, at EU level there is to date no jointly agreed single definition of what quality in guidance is or means, but with the future cross-country cooperation on developing new European reference tools for quality guidance this problem should disappear and a definition be available. Further, quality in guidance should be developed not separately from, but well integrated into national overall quality assurance mechanisms in education, training and employment.

Although progress in developing quality in guidance has been made across Europe, the overall impression is that systematic evaluation of the quality of guidance is still insufficient in most cases. Holistic quality assurance mechanisms are not that widely in place and quality standards with clear indicators do not necessarily exist across sectors and administrations; feedback to evaluate the service provided is not gathered from the users on a regular basis. In addition, the evidence-base on which national/regional/local decision-making is based can often be considered inadequate and limited as it mostly gives a narrow and sometimes too specifically focused view of guidance-related developments and outcomes. Countries are mostly well aware of their shortcomings in this area and have already initiated action to improve the mechanisms for quality assurance and their evidence-base of key research, policy and delivery relevant to guidance roles and infrastructure.

Further, many have raised the issue of the importance of deepening and broadening their evidence-base to verify the contribution that guidance makes at individual, economic and societal levels. It is obvious that both European and national policy-makers require more proof on the outcomes as well as on the impacts of different service delivery modes in order to improve the quality of guidance and to target and fine-tune future guidance measures with greater accuracy. Allocation of funding to developing guidance provision depends on how well the decision-makers are informed about the current state of play.

Most countries have highlighted the fact that guidance practitioners are the key in the delivery and development of high quality guidance and counselling. Without proper skills, competences and qualifications they are not fully capable of supporting citizens in harnessing their potential. Consequently, in many countries



the professional development of guidance practitioners in education and employment sectors has been at the centre of policy action. For example, legal instruments to regulate the training of guidance counsellors have been launched; professional qualifications and occupational standards have been established; initial and in-service training programmes have been developed, and systems for certification of guidance competences have been set up; and new professional profiles with specific tasks have emerged following the changing demands of society. For the future, guidance practitioner qualifications should be placed in national qualification frameworks and be based on learning outcomes to improve the transparency of qualifications across countries. However, it will still take time until all these improvements become effective in terms of shifting common guidance practice across Europe towards the modern lifelong guidance paradigm.

## CHAPTER 4

# Widening access to guidance services

The Council resolution (Council of the European Union, 2008b) stresses the need for more easily accessible lifelong guidance services and draws the attention to improving access to services for the most disadvantaged groups. Further, the Member States are invited to develop and offer internet-based information and guidance services parallel to more traditional guidance service provision. The objective is to improve and restructure national and regional guidance service delivery so that it supports an integrated approach to social inclusion, active citizenship, lifelong learning, full employment, future skills and qualifications.

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 Union aims to remove barriers to services and to provide support for individual lifelong learning and career management processes. From an individual service user's perspective, systemic rigidity in guidance provision can be considered as something that prevents his/her smooth movement across sectors, systems, service structures, institutions and/or support programmes when looking for information, guidance and counselling on learning and career opportunities.

In the past couple of years, policy, strategy and systemic developments (including legislative reforms, financial initiatives, large-scale development projects) for widening access to traditional and online information, advice and guidance services have taken place in Europe. There is evidence that coordination across sectors, administrations and institutions is increasing in most countries at national, regional and local levels. A positive example comes from Hungary where a national career guidance system was put in place (2009), which comprises the development of online and traditional tools and links them to labour market information systems and European initiatives (EQF, EUROPASS, EURES, etc.). A national lifelong guidance network has been established to further support these systemic developments (Cedefop, 2009d).

#### 4.1. Online information and guidance services

In Europe guidance services are mainly provided through the education and training system as well as by the labour market actors (public employment services). There are, though, a number of other operators such as social partners, private companies, chambers of commerce, student unions, youth organisations, and often also the social and health care sector. All these are actively involved in developing virtual environments to provide information and guidance services, and new forms of virtual tutoring and support, distribution of working life information, career planning and management are emerging (Vuorinen, 2006).

Alongside the traditional face-to-face guidance services offered in education and employment, the development of Internet-based information, advice and guidance provision is gaining ground in Europe. Technology aids service provision as a combination of media (e-guidance, helplines, Internet, etc.) can be applied to meeting the user needs. However, technology is not supposed to replace, but to complement the traditional forms of guidance. It also makes access to services more feasible and cheaper, and allows innovative, flexible and more cost-effective service delivery linked to self-access and self-help modes. Many countries consider the web and telephone together as key drivers in enabling people to access services at a time, place and method most appropriate to their needs (Akkök, 2010).

But despite easy access and a plethora of information, clients occasionally need professional assistance to understand and interpret information correctly. Guidance counsellors<sup>(36)</sup> and users need to deepen their understanding of how and when to use such online tools, and when to recognise that the given tools might be limited in addressing client needs. Self-help in learning and career development is not necessarily an option for everyone as these issues from time to time call for a more structured face-to-face approach between the client and the guidance practitioner. In this context, the role and competences of guidance practitioners become crucial. A good balance and a meaningful combination

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<sup>(36)</sup> Guidance delivery primarily involves a relationship between the guidance practitioner and the user, where the former places his/her expertise and skills at the disposal of the user, in order to help him/her in deciding his/her career management. This 'help', generically defined, may consist of general information about training pathways, labour market information, professional opportunities - local, regional, national or international level - all chosen according to user needs. The user may need more in-depth help with career management and so the guidance and counselling relationship can vary in duration and intensity. Available from Internet: <http://www.ariadneproject.org/index.php?id=64> [cited 2.6.2011]

between more traditional and online methods (following the principle: log in, walk in, phone in and look in) (Akkök, 2010) should be found 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 (Akkök, 2010). 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. Many countries, though, have launched well targeted marketing and communication measures (Bulgaria, Spain, Cyprus, Hungary, the Netherlands, Romania) to make provision as visible as possible to the service users (Cedefop 2008b, 2009d; 2010b).

In the Member States the aim has been to satisfy client needs by offering appropriate online tools to connect to resources, for example, in jobs, work and recruiting; learning, education and training; occupations and careers; self-employment; workplace issues and support and financial help and issues. Such tools can also assess their interests and experiences, create e-portfolios, video-resumes and digital video profiles. In the following some examples of online services will be briefly introduced, categorised into three groups: education and training, labour market, and more strictly guidance oriented services. This categorisation is slightly artificial in the sense that often the services do not only cover one type of information but also contain elements of others.

#### **4.1.1. Online services on education and training**

Across Europe, there are several online services that allow citizens to explore learning opportunities and participate in e-learning programmes. These web portals and databases give easy access to information and supporting materials. However, as Akkök (2010) in her ELGPN work package paper stresses, no matter through which medium the information is provided it must be adequate to the user's needs and intentions, and it must fulfil several criteria for information provision: validity, reliability, accuracy, objectivity, comprehensiveness, relevance and timeliness). The following examples highlight some recent online service developments in education and training from different perspectives and levels (institutional network, portals, programmes and national strategies).

In Greece, the regional educational and career counselling centre (KESYP) of the Pedagogical Institute maintains the online Nestor Network, which provides users with information on opportunities in secondary/upper secondary education

and VET; job descriptions, educational and career counselling textbooks, and links to other related websites. In 2008 the Greek National Resource Center for Vocational Guidance (EKEP) developed a national database Ploigos <sup>(37)</sup> with information that helps students and graduates with their education and career decisions and with labour market related issues (Cedefop, 2009d).

The Norwegian e-learning strategy emphasises providing career guidance information electronically, using a variety of recently developed web-based databases . Two portals partly financed by national or regional authorities ([www.vilbli.no](http://www.vilbli.no) and [www.utdanning.no](http://www.utdanning.no) [cited 2.6.2011]) are important entry points to all relevant information on the education system as well as on training providers, training courses and programmes, and entry requirements. (Cedefop, 2009d). In Poland, the National Centre for Supporting Vocational and Continuing Education is developing a vocational guidance model for upper secondary level students, their parents, teachers and career counsellors, and an internet portal on learning opportunities, labour market and skill needs forecasts at central, regional and local levels (2009-12). As part of the project, supporting materials for the teacher-career counsellors will also be developed (Cedefop, 2010d).

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. Young people especially favour these platforms for communication, interaction and collaboration with others in order to share, learn and work together, and even to explore learning and career opportunities with likeminded others as well as with the help of a professional career adviser and/or teacher. Designing and piloting guidelines and principles for learners and guidance counsellors on how to use social media purposefully and to integrate it successfully into learning and career management processes could be the next step to take at European level.

#### **4.1.2. Online services with labour market focus**

Public employment services offer citizen-centred services with easy access to labour market information for a broad range of client groups. They also provide an array of integrated labour market services (placement and active support service) responsive to the changing needs of the local, regional, national and European labour markets. Web-based services for jobseekers and employers

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<sup>(37)</sup> Ploigos was assigned to EKEP by the Greek Ministry of Education Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs, and is linked to Ploteus II (Portal on Learning Opportunities throughout the European Space). Ploigos is accessible through the website of EKEP ([www.ekep.gr](http://www.ekep.gr)) [cited 2.6.2011] and through the portal of Ploteus II (<http://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/> [cited 2.6.2011])

alike are a crucial part of the service provision from public employment services across Europe. The aim of such services is to reflect labour market reality and address the skill needs of the clients in order to meet existing labour market demands (Eures – European job mobility portal).

Labour market-oriented online services more frequently seem to address career development and lifelong learning. Reliable, timely, useful and accurate career support and customised labour market interventions are vital for entering higher level jobs and desired industry sectors, as well as for completing training programmes as part of an overall career strategy. Online services for career orientation, planning, development and management are being developed in several countries to improve labour market prospects for the individual citizens, whether young or adult, or a person with special needs (see examples below).

The Portuguese PES enables jobseekers and employers to register their profiles online ([www.netemprego.gov.pt](http://www.netemprego.gov.pt)) [cited 2.6.2011]. Candidates can upload their CV and personal details and employers can specify a number of characteristics of posted vacancies. The system then assists the matching process with varying levels of service involvement. The system will be integrated with the e-guidance tool under development (Vi@s) in the near future (Cedefop, 2009d). In Ireland the National Training and Employment Authority (FÁS) is responsible for the provision of guidance, advice and information on employment and career choices. FÁS has established a national internet-based job vacancy contact centre and developed a multimedia careers package *Career Directions* <sup>(38)</sup>. This nationwide online interactive programme allows users to perform self-assessments and access information on over 720 careers. Career Directions has links to all vacancies and training courses on the FÁS website (Cedefop, 2008b).

The Dutch knowledge centres for education and the world of work launched an *Apprenticeships and work based learning offensive 2009-11* to strengthen the link between VET-students and companies with more advanced communication tools (e.g. website [www.stagemarkt.nl](http://www.stagemarkt.nl) [cited 2.6.2011] with information about existing job opportunities) and to raise awareness of career planning and development among young people (Cedefop, 2010e). The website [www.werk.nl](http://www.werk.nl) [cited 2.6.2011] developed by the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment contains labour-market forecasts for some 2500 occupations; it also presents education and training routes linked to these occupations (van Deursen and Jansen, 2006).

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<sup>(38)</sup> Career Directions has links to all current vacancies and training courses on the FÁS website. and is available online at [www.careerdirections.ie](http://www.careerdirections.ie). [cited 2.6.2011]

The Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration has developed web-based self-help tools, such as the career choice programme (*Veivalg*)<sup>(39)</sup> which offers self-assessment of interests, work values and skills as well as an occupation matching facility and job-seeking assistance for students in lower and upper secondary education. A digital career plan has been developed in Norway to assist students to reflect on their choices of education and training (Cedefop, 2009d). In the Czech Republic, the VIP Kariera information system ([www.infoabsolvent.cz](http://www.infoabsolvent.cz)) [cited 2.6.2011] has been available to students and adults since 2007 to support their career decision-making. As part of it, continuing education of teachers has been developed to improve their skills to deal with career management related issues at school. Another online service (ISA)<sup>(40)</sup> offers information on career choices, presents educational routes in a user-friendly way, and addresses the information needs of risk groups (Cedefop, 2010d).

#### 4.1.3. Guidance-oriented online services

Web-based guidance is a gateway to careers, learning and employment information, advice and counselling that are offered at a general level (e.g. adults broadly seen) and customised (e.g. individual users and/or specific groups). As a rule, general services are designed for users to access independently without requiring any specific interactions between the user and the guidance practitioner, whereas customised services are likely to include a more or less articulated and lengthy interaction between the user and the guidance counsellor (including issues such as confidentiality and data protection). Inevitably, the more individualised the service for a single user is in a virtual environment, the higher the required knowledge and skills level of a guidance counsellor providing the service (Ariadne, 2004).

There has been extensive development of web-based guidance and counselling services in most European countries since 2006-07. Examples are thematic mailing lists, customised mailboxes, reserved web areas (e.g. social media platform), databases, audio-visual tools (chat-lines, video-conferencing). The examples of online guidance services presented below are based on national strategies; some are initiatives taken by national authorities or leading institutions.

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<sup>(39)</sup> <http://www.nav.no/VeiledningWeb/veivalg.do?testType=yrikesinteressert> (in Norwegian) [cited 2.6.2011]

<sup>(40)</sup> Key actors involved in the development of this system are Ministry of Education, NÚOV and Institut pedagogicko-psychologického poradenství ČR (Institute for the pedagogical-psychological counselling of the Czech Republic).

In 2009, the British government published a new careers education strategy for the up to 18 age group, proposing a radical change in careers information, advice and guidance to keep pace with the rapidly changing economy. The aim is to provide universal online access to careers advice through social media (Facebook, Youtube) and a mentoring scheme that allows access for individuals to online mentors (Cedefop, 2010b). The German Federal Ministry of Education and Research has introduced several measures to strengthen the role of guidance in lifelong learning and aid access to guidance for continuing education. The Ministry, together with some federal states, has commissioned a consortium for drafting a proposal for a nationwide Educational Guidance Service Telephone and Internet Portal (Nationales Forum Beratung in Bildung, Beruf und Beschäftigung; Jenschke et al., 2011). In 2007, Finland launched an electronic system for application and admission to VET and general upper secondary education to replace the old-fashioned paper-based system. The electronic system provides applicants with extensive information on education and training opportunities, entry requirements, information on application and admission process, and up-to-date information on applicants, admitted and rejected students. The goal is to make information, guidance and counselling provision more effective, to increase cooperation between different actors, to speed up entry into education and training, to reduce drop-out rates, and to speed up graduation (Cedefop, 2010d).

In 2009, the Lithuanian Ministry of Education and Science launched an upgraded version of the Open information, counselling and guidance system AIKOS ([www.aikos.smm.lt](http://www.aikos.smm.lt)) [cited 2.6.2011]. This contains information on education and training in Lithuania; study programmes, qualifications, licences, occupations, admission rules of vocational and higher education institutions; education and labour market statistics; and Europass certificate supplements. Customised pages cater for specific target groups, including early school leavers, parents, guidance counsellors, policy-makers, employers, the disabled, immigrants, (ex)inmates (Cedefop 2009d, 2010d). Also Austria has recently established comprehensive educational databases (<http://www.erwachsenenbildung.at>, <http://www.eduvista.com>) [cited 2.6.2011] that provide a nationwide platform for independent and supra-institutional education information, guidance and counselling services (Cedefop, 2009d).

The web forum IRIDA, developed by EKEP in Greece, is an electronic communication platform for vocational guidance specialists from secondary and higher education, professional training and employment. IRIDA constitutes a 'hub' for exchanging information on vocational guidance. This platform promotes networking between institutions, professionals and EKEP, and so contributes to



the professional development and support of their work (Cedefop, 2009d). In 2010, the Portuguese public employment service released its new e-guidance service that allows users to access contents connected to skills development, professional information, labour market trends, and entrepreneurship (Cedefop, 2010d). In Turkey, the web-based National career information system was launched in 2010 to serve all target groups within a lifelong guidance perspective: the young, adults, the employed, unemployed, women, retired, and disadvantaged groups. The system consists of a self-assessment part, databases on education-training programmes and labour market information.

## 4.2. Developing guidance services for users with special needs

People with special needs (e.g. early school leavers, people with physical disabilities, learning difficulties, migrant or ethnic background, low skill levels) often encounter more severe obstacles while at school, in their transition from school to work and at work. In many cases such obstructions may lead to not completing one's studies, not finding any employment or having to accept a job below one's competences and capacities. Therefore, it is worth exploring new ways to improve the chances of people with special needs as they require services and resources that are specifically tailor-made for them to assist their career management and skills development.

Parallel to mainstreaming service provision, there seems to be a growing trend towards greater individualisation of services, especially to cater for the information, counselling and learning needs of more hard-to-reach groups, such as young people at risk (e.g. early school leavers), the long-term unemployed, older workers (50+), disabled and/or disadvantaged people, employees/workers in restructuring industries/companies and ethnic and cultural minorities. Also, the most disadvantaged groups can be reached provided that the services are well promoted at local, regional and national levels and easily accessible to them.

The following chapters mainly focus on introducing guidance measures and initiatives launched in the Member States to address user groups at risk and with special needs.

### 4.2.1. Youth at risk

The EU strategy Youth – investing and empowering (European Commission, 2009b) acknowledges young people as a precious resource and as one of the most vulnerable groups in society, especially in the current global crisis. This new

strategy is cross-sectoral and multiprofessional, with short-, medium- and long-term actions, and it involves key policy areas that have an impact on Europe's young people. The strategy specifically addresses youth education, employment, creativity and entrepreneurship, social inclusion, health and sport, civic participation, and volunteering. The same strategy also emphasises the importance of youth work and defines reinforced measures for better implementation of youth policies at EU level.

Among EU Member States, people with completed lower secondary education are nearly three times more at risk of unemployment than people with higher education. Young people in unemployment, especially those in long-term unemployment and early school leavers without school leaving certificates, are at risk of social exclusion (European Commission, 2009b). The Cedefop study (2010e) draws attention to guidance measures and initiatives applied across Europe to support school completion and education-to-work transitions of young people at the risk of dropping out of mainstream education and training. One of the core messages of the report is that developing more open and flexible lifelong learning systems that engage all youngsters in formal, non-formal and informal settings should be encouraged to remove obstacles to their employment and employability during the economic crisis. It is also of paramount importance to promote careers guidance and parental involvement, together with competent teachers, guidance practitioners, labour market actors, youth and social workers and health care providers as the backbone of support in the young person's life.

Across the Member States, there seems to be an emphasis on practical and activity-based forms of learning and guidance rather than classroom-based approaches with paperwork only; this is to increase young people's engagement with education and training and to preventing at-risk youth from dropping out of schooling. An attempt is made to offer young people a good balance of knowledge, skills, understanding, attitudes, engagement and participation. Young people seem to acknowledge the active participatory component and the skills that such experience fosters. The following cases from Denmark and the UK highlight how young people's active engagement with learning and schooling has been improved.

Danish guidance strategy targets those with special educational needs to prevent dropping out and to ensure that as many as possible complete some form of upper secondary education. Guidance is provided at an earlier stage of compulsory schooling than before to reach young people struggling with learning (Cedefop, 2008b). The Danish Youth package 2 gives the municipalities increased guidance responsibilities to keep young people in either employment or education and training and to ensure they complete an upper secondary

qualification. Further, Danish colleges must offer mentoring to students at risk of dropping out and needing special adult contact, as well as offer students social and psychological counselling, if personal problems threaten their education. Improved guidance in the basic year has empowered the students and reduced absenteeism and dropouts: 40% of the schools report positive results (Cedefop, 2010d).

In the UK, the Education and Skills Bill (2007) makes provision for transferring Connexions<sup>(41)</sup> services to the 150 new local authorities. Since April 2010 these local authorities have been responsible for planning, commissioning and funding the information, advice and guidance (IAG) provision for 16-19 year-olds, as well as young people up to age 25 with learning difficulties and/or disabilities assessment in place, and young offenders in youth custody. The main aim is to raise the participation age in learning by ensuring that the IAG on offer in their areas is of consistently high quality<sup>(42)</sup> across all settings (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2009).

In Wales, several obstacles have been identified to young people's participation in making decisions, planning and reviewing an action that might affect them as part of schooling. Often these are related to resource and capacity constraints as well as staff attitudes which were seen as the biggest hurdles to widening participation in schools. Access to participatory opportunities for young disabled people, and engaging under-represented young people, was identified as a barrier by staff and young people alike. Also prior negative experiences and the lack of impact of their participation seem to reduce active involvement in schooling and youth issues in general (Welsh Assembly Government, 2010).

Labour market actors, especially public employment services, have a key role to play in providing guidance and supporting at-risk youth participation in learning. For example, Götz and Schlögl (2007) in their study focusing on Austria and its eight neighbouring countries (Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Switzerland) found that public employment offices are central service providers of different support measures to young people at risk. PES provision varies across the countries from information, counselling and

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<sup>(41)</sup> The End to End Review of Careers Education and Guidance for young people (Department for Education and Skills, UK, 2005) confirmed that not enough young people were able to benefit from careers advice, largely because of under-funding and confusion over the respective roles and responsibilities of schools and Connexions partnerships.

<sup>(42)</sup> The UK government has published quality standards for IAG for young people to support the development of consistently high quality and impartial information, advice and guidance services across the country (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008).

training to activation programmes and job brokerage. The findings also suggest that for reaching sustainable results, a more long-term approach with professional support and supervision is recommended for PES, to engage young people at risk better in developing themselves and exploring their interests and aspirations. Individual one-time activation and action plans are less likely to be successful and they tend to have a more short-term impact in the case of at-risk youth.

The country cases from Belgium, France, and the Netherlands illustrate in more concrete terms the kind of measures that have been taken to support at-risk youth's access to the labour market. The Belgian French-speaking community has launched a Job Tonic service for young people with three priority areas: more frequent follow-up, instant action, and speedy contact with the labour market. Once registered, the young person will be invited to the employment office (Le Forem/French community) for a personal interview with a specialised counsellor followed by joining a group on job-finding techniques. Finally, they will participate in a jobs club on a fortnightly basis to receive job offers, fine tune their search procedure, and draw up and polish their individual action plan (Cedefop, 2009d).

In France, the social insertion contract is a system to help at-risk youth to move towards employment. This initiative has proved successful: between 2005-07, more than 400 000 young people signed a contract <sup>(43)</sup>, of which 54% were young women and 43% unqualified young people (Cedefop, 2008b). The Dutch WorkSkills is a short training course promoting vocation-oriented thinking and action, addressing early school leavers from VET. The programme includes an information, selection and assignment stage followed by brief intensive group training. Further, guidance and coaching is provided to support youngsters lacking a basic qualification and to prepare and motivate them for a return to education, labour market or a combination of the two. The results show that one month after completing the course, the participants had oriented more strongly towards a course or job, with 22% of the participants returning to training (van Deursen and Jansen, 2007).

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<sup>(43)</sup> *Contrat d'Insertion dans la Vie Sociale*, CIVIS. The CIVIS contracts resulting in lasting employment show that 60 100 out of the 142 000 young people finishing the programme in June 2007 entered open- or fixed-term jobs (more than nine months), and 8 700 either fixed-term contracts (less than six months) or other types of contracts, while some 8 100 continued the training.

#### 4.2.2. Disadvantaged and disabled groups

There is recognition at EU level (e.g. European Commission, 2010d) that disabled <sup>(44)</sup> people should have equal opportunities to improve the quality of their lives and be fully included as members in society through participation in education, training, employment and civic activities. Public authorities are expected to continue their efforts to make their policies and services fairer for disabled people, accepting that different types of impairment can often mean differential levels of access to services.

An analysis of 10 EU Member States revealed that there is a wide diversity of approaches to the design and elements of employment guidance and counselling services for people who have become disability claimants in the course of their working lives. The analysis focused on three issues in relation to these services: their existence, effectiveness and accessibility. The report concludes that there is an overall a lack of awareness of the specific needs of people on long-term disability benefits and a need for a wider range of initiatives specially targeted at this group (Eurofound, 2006).

Measures for developing guidance services for the disability claimants should address at least the following features identified by the study (Eurofound, 2006). An effective system of response should be able to deliver guidance and counselling services at an early stage in the unemployment process, closely linked to active support at the workplace. The guidance process should go beyond strictly occupational issues to include the social context within which guidance services are provided, and be sensitive to the personal characteristics of the beneficiary. There is a strong need for interagency working, networking and partnerships (including employer partnerships) to support the labour market entry of people with disabilities.

Improving the conditions for education and employment of the disabled and disadvantaged groups is a long-term process that requires cooperation of many stakeholders (authorities, schools, employers) as is shown in the country cases below. Some countries (the Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic, the Netherlands, Turkey) have adopted strategies, policies and funding schemes to target the disabled and disadvantaged groups in society, whereas others

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<sup>(44)</sup> There is no EU-wide definition of disability. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD or UN Convention) uses an open definition which says that (Article 1) 'Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.'

(Croatia, Germany, the UK (England)) have introduced concrete development projects.

The Czech National plan for the support and integration of persons with disabilities 2006-09 defined particular measures and set targets to be achieved. Actions at different levels of education were directed to developing curricula and professional counselling, education conditions for special groups of pupils, and supportive pedagogy. Further, the Czech National action plan of inclusive education aims at ensuring equal access to education for special needs pupils (Cedefop, 2010b, 2010d). In the Slovak Republic, young people with disabilities at school are given detailed descriptions of medical, psychological and labour market aspects that may influence their career choice of any of the 13 identified types of health problems <sup>(45)</sup> (Cedefop, 2009d).

In 2006, the Dutch Ministry of Education Culture and Science introduced student-bound financing for the VET-sector. Since then, students in vocational education having a handicap, psychological illness or chronic disease are entitled to extra guidance and support. The financial aid consists of an amount meant for support and guidance and an amount for ambulatory guidance delivered by a school for special education. A precondition is that an individual treatment plan is drawn up for each indicated student (Cedefop, 2010d). In 2007-08, with an EU grant, the Turkish employment services designed and implemented new employment strategies and vocational rehabilitation measures for people with disabilities, which include guidance elements (Akkök and Zelloth, 2009).

The German competence agencies (a total of 400) for disadvantaged youngsters work in conjunction with stakeholders from education, labour market, youth welfare services and with peripatetic youth workers. Fixed and long-term local partners are in place to support, encourage and assist these young people in learning and working. The competence agencies take responsibility for the youngsters and monitor the effectiveness of the assistance provided to them. Another example comes from England, where skills accounts (launched in 2008) offer a personalised service that aims to help the individual to take control of learning and working. A skills account allows easy access to a range of online information and advice about improving skills and investing in learning for entry and progression into work. Skills accounts are available to all adults in England aged 19 years and over. Specific target groups include offenders, learners with

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<sup>(45)</sup> The students can access the on-line programme Guide to the world of occupations with the title *Have you got a health problem?* The web-based module *Analysis of individual potential* allows the students to identify their health problem and be offered specific information on their prospects in the labour market.

limiting illnesses or disabilities, low income families, carers and Train to Gain learners (Cedefop, 2010b).

The Croatian project *Fostering effective inclusion of the persons with disabilities into the labour market (2009-)* promotes social inclusion of persons with disabilities and their integration into the labour market. The aim is to strengthen the capacities of local stakeholders in addressing the problems of people with disabilities, and the capacities of labour market agents in supporting the employment of the disabled. A one-stop-shop national web portal for provision of information and other services to the unemployed with disabilities will be established (Cedefop, 2010c). *We don't end at the age of fifty (2009-12)* is a Czech regional project (in Ústí) that addresses 50+ job seekers, and specifically the age group of 55+, characterised by accumulated problems and with less positive outlook in the labour market. The aim is to improve their access to employment by active labour market measures, specific care for each individual, and better quality information, counselling, education and job matching services (e.g. work practice and subsidised employment) (Cedefop, 2010b).

#### **4.2.3. Immigrants and ethnic minorities**

Increasing cultural diversity is a reality in practically all education systems and labour markets in Europe. Integrating migrant and ethnic minorities and improving their knowledge and skills-base to support their active labour market participation is high up on the European Union policy agenda. Immigrants generally suffer higher unemployment across the EU than the host population, whereas Roma people are the most excluded group in European societies, frequently subject to segregation, limited access to basic services, lack of education and discrimination in employment (European Commission, 2007b).

For a long time education has been seen as the key to successful labour market and societal integration<sup>(46)</sup> of immigrants and ethnic minorities (such as the Roma). However, immigrants are not evenly distributed geographically in most countries, which is reflected in the varying proportions of immigrant students in the school populations and of migrant workers in local labour markets. Such variations present both opportunities and challenges to authorities in terms of resources management and capacity building when providing high

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<sup>(46)</sup> Resolution 1437 (2005), I.4 of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe: The concept of integration aims at ensuring social cohesion through accommodation of diversity understood as a two-way process. Immigrants have to accept the laws and basic values of European societies and, on the other hand, host societies have to respect immigrants' dignity and distinct identity and to take them into account when elaborating domestic policies.

quality education, employment and guidance related services (OECD, 2010a). Further, special provision to enable migrants and their families to learn the language of the host country is central to integration as difficulties in the language of instruction could severely hamper children's success at school and hinder parental involvement, preventing efficient communication between school and families (Eurydice, 2009).

In cross-sectoral policy and strategy cooperation between national authorities (education, labour, youth, social and health care) and between local and regional immigration services, barriers to learning and working for newly-arrived, second and third generation immigrants can be identified and removed. Such strategic development work should explicitly address guidance policies and implementation measures targeting both immigrants and ethnic minorities. Developing a coordinated service process where the individual immigrant is at the centre is a challenge facing the whole guidance system. Teachers and guidance practitioners should be equipped with proper tools to adjust their services to catering for the needs of learners with migrant or ethnic background. To achieve this, multicultural competences, language skills and expertise on guidance and counselling methods and techniques are required (NVL and Norden, 2008).

#### 4.2.3.1. *Young immigrants*

Young migrants frequently require special attention to fulfil their potential in the new home country. The Council conclusions (Council of the European Union, 2009d) on how young migrants can be better integrated in education state that additional educational support (e.g. in the form of mentoring and tutoring) and increased guidance to both pupils/students and their parents on the opportunities available to them within the education system, should be provided. A recent research study from Austria (Wieser et al., 2008<sup>(47)</sup>) suggests that education and career guidance for young people with a migration background should ideally be offered where (almost) all young people can be reached: at school. Often migrant

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<sup>(47)</sup> The study recommends a series of measures to improve education counselling and career guidance for young people with a migration background: general extension of career guidance, education and career counselling provisions at school (career guidance as a separate school subject; encouragement of one-on-one counselling, etc.); extension of gender-specific and gender-sensitive counselling centres; encouragement of vocational guidance passports (*Berufsorientierungspässe*); promotion of language skills in the first and second language; parent-related activities; use of role models, peer coaching and mentoring programmes; promotion of the PES adviser and trainer intercultural skills; use of PES advisers and trainers with a migration background; promotion of apprenticeship training schemes for immigrants.



youngsters are not sufficiently reached by school counselling, although their need for counselling is higher than among their non-migrant peers. Also, guidance provision outside of the school environment does not manage to reach young migrants, nor their parents, overly well.

School completion, transitions between different educational levels and from learning to work are more critical for young immigrants than for the representatives of the majority group. For example, immigrant students may fall behind in terms of developing their academic skills in time for the selection into different secondary school types and may be assigned to less demanding schools with lower academic expectations that do not sufficiently develop their inherent abilities (e.g. Germany, Netherlands, Austria) (OECD, 2010a). In Austria, a disproportionately high share of young people with a migration background drops out from education after completion of compulsory schooling (Wieser et al., 2008). Against this reality, parental support becomes decisive in the young people's education and career choice process. However, as a rule migrant parents have more limited capacity to provide such a support function as they have a more restricted knowledge about the possibilities offered by the education system themselves and have less comprehensive knowledge about institutions and counselling provisions. Therefore, educational and career guidance services at school should try - at least partly - to compensate for eventual family-related deficits in providing support.

In Germany, a variety of specialised services for young people at risk have been established by the Federal Ministry of Youth or local authorities, such as youth migrant services (*Jugendmigrationsdienste*). Young migrants receive professional support from youth migration services in the form of individual assistance plans and advisory services to ensure that they are effectively helped along their route to integration. Programmes are aligned towards the specific needs of various target groups. A total of around 243 million euro from the ESF and an additional 41 million euro per year of national funding will be spent on youth migration services between 2010 and 2012 (Cedefop, 2009d, 2010b).

#### 4.2.3.2. *Adult immigrants*

The extension of employment opportunities for at-risk groups, including migrant and ethnic minorities, is an essential aspect of Member State strategies to prevent poverty and to promote full participation in society and the economy. The updated European Employment Strategy (EES) draws an increased attention to significantly reducing the unemployment gaps between non-EU and EU nationals that currently exist in the Member States. The EES guideline 10 on promoting social inclusion addresses the empowerment and employment of immigrants and

ethnic minorities by supporting their lifelong learning and labour market participation (Council of European Union, 2010d).

Along with supporting the development of language skills, the need to equip migrant adults with skills suited to the labour market has progressively emerged as a major concern in many European countries. The Communication on adult learning (European Commission, 2006a) and the Action Plan on Adult learning (European Commission, 2007a) identify migrants as a key target group and consider adult learning as particularly meaningful for them. National governments are recommended to encourage recognition of non-formal and informal learning for migrants. Evidence shows that the competences of migrant adults are often undervalued and under-recognised and their skills may remain under-used in the labour market.

The currently high unemployment figures for immigrants are, no doubt, partly due to a generally difficult labour market situation in the European Union. Many countries have taken targeted measures to increase immigrant participation in adult learning to build up their linguistic and professional competences, so supporting their entry/return to the labour market (European Commission, 2010e). These measures often include personalised professional guidance based on a thorough analysis of the needs of adult immigrant learners. Other forms of learning support are available to adult immigrants as highlighted by some selected country cases below.

Ireland considers the development of intercultural guidelines in adult further education as a positive step in terms of supporting access for migrants to adult learning. The guidelines are also expected to improve the completion rates of these adult further education programmes among migrant learners (Cedefop, 2010d). The Finnish General reform of adult education (AKKU) includes immigrants. One of the objectives is to take immigrants' skills and competences into active use in the labour market with the help of competence tests and preparatory training, skills demonstrations and complementary studies. Sufficient guidance and counselling for immigrants is considered of central importance in this respect (Cedefop, 2010b).

The Belgian (Flanders) preliminary training *Social profit for foreigners* helps adult migrants find a job or training in the social profit sector in a step-by-step programme. This training consists of learning vocational Flemish, choosing a profession or training linked to one's career aspiration, preparing oneself for vocational social profit training programmes (care provider, nurse, tutor, child care assistant), determining the suitability of the chosen profession or education in relation to personality and learning capacities; and establishing a personal action plan within the career orientation (Cedefop, 2010d). In Portugal, the

UNIVA Immigrant Initiative Network (<sup>48</sup>) is an attempt to promote the placement of immigrant citizens into active life in their new home country. UNIVA deals with immigrant issues in employment and vocational training, and provides guidance and counselling services for apprenticeship learning, vocational training and the labour market. The UNIVA network (25 centres), is spread around the country, sharing a common database through which information is exchanged, providing greater capacity for immigrant citizens who seek work and training (Cedefop, 2008b).

#### 4.2.3.3. *The Roma*

There are 10 to 12 million Roma spread across practically all the European Union Member States. A significant proportion of them experience extreme poverty, discrimination and exclusion, which also entails, among other things, low education levels and lack of access to employment. The urgency to ensure protection against discrimination increased radically in the autumn 2010 after some Member States had taken a critical stand against the Roma population residing in their territory.

Both the Council of the European Union (2010b) and the European Parliament (2010) have now invited their member countries to combat any form of discrimination against the Roma people and to support active inclusion of Roma by ensuring access to education, housing, health, employment, social services, justice, sports and culture. The European Parliament in its recent resolution (2010) specifically considers that the EU and all the Member States share a responsibility to promote the inclusion of Roma and that this requires a comprehensive approach at EU level in the form of an EU Roma strategy. The key in this is the mainstreaming of Roma issues in European and national policies on fundamental rights and protection against racism, poverty and social exclusion, as well as supporting more efficient monitoring and use of European and national funds in improving the social integration of the Roma.

The provision of guidance and educational support for Roma still encompasses significant weaknesses in many cases in Europe. This is mainly due to the fact that Roma people often do not regularly participate in learning or working, and therefore the guidance services offered in education and employment do not manage to reach them. In addition, the Roma people are not necessarily well aware of the guidance offer, nor that they have the right to

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<sup>(48)</sup> Estabelecimento de Unidades de Inserção na Vida Activa (Establishment of Placement of Individuals in Active Life – UNIVAS) in the Centros Nacionais de Apoio ao Imigrante (National Immigrant Support Centres – CNAI). Created by the Joint Dispatch No 228/2004, 13 April.

access public guidance services. However, across Europe there are several nationwide policy level initiatives as well as concrete projects (some with ESF funding) at local/regional level addressing education and employment of Roma. Moreover, there is also evidence implying that local and target-group specific NGOs can play a very important role in identifying, reaching and supporting those in greatest need. This has been apparent, for example, from the Roma mentoring projects in Hungary and other Eastern European and Balkan countries (Cedefop, 2010e).

The following examples highlight concrete activities targeting the Roma people in the newer EU Member States where they are a substantial minority. In the Czech Republic, the revised Roma integration concept 2010-13 was approved by the Government in December 2009. It defines educational tasks mainly in primary care (pre-school education) and basic education. The objective is to improve the preparedness of Roma children for entry to school, to support their inclusion in mainstream education and to increase their successfulness in basic education and so support their entry to upper secondary education (Cedefop, 2010d). In Lithuania, the most recent SIP terminal (self information search) was opened early in 2010 in the Vilnius Roma community centre with a view to reducing the social exclusion of the Roma national minority and supporting their independent search for information about jobs and professions (Cedefop, 2010b). In Romania, career guidance services are provided by a wealth of NGOs operate in the market since the early 1990's and spread across the country. Some of them specialise in disadvantaged groups, such as the Roma population, providing career guidance and counselling for children and youngsters from disadvantaged communities or for children at risk of economic exploitation (Cedefop, 2009d).

#### **4.2.4. International labour mobility**

Workforce mobility - whether across countries or regions, or between occupations - can make a substantial contribution to balancing supply and demand in local labour markets. This is exactly the starting point of the Europe 2020 integrated guidelines, stating that workforce mobility improves responsiveness and efficiency in labour markets, the adaptability of workers, and employment rates: flexicurity can also increase competitiveness significantly (Council of the European Union, 2010d). However, removing obstacles to the free movement of workers in the EU is an arduous task. It calls for improved coordination between different policy areas and labour market institutions, notably public employment services and social security systems. More transparent information on labour market trends and skills requirements is

needed to promote occupational, sector-specific and geographic mobility and to allow a better match between people's skills and job opportunities (European Commission, 2008b).

To date, geographic mobility in the European Union remains modest. Analysis by the German Institute for the Study of Labour (Zaiceva and Zimmermann, 2008) suggests that potential migrants from both EU-10 (new members since 2004) and EU-15 (pre-2004 members) continue to be young and well-educated. The same study also concludes that, due to several barriers to mobility, it is unlikely that actual intra-EU labour mobility will increase significantly in the coming years. The main reasons for this are the differences between the national labour markets, social situations and circumstances of the individual Member States, problems having skills and qualifications of workers mutually recognised, insufficient language skills, and citizens' lack of information on career-related mobility opportunities (European Commission, 2010e).

Guidance and counselling can help balance the needs of citizens with those of employers and the wider economy. However, guidance and counselling can only add value, if it is of high quality and has competent practitioners and professionals at the heart of the services being delivered. The newer Member States, in particular, have set up appropriate structures supporting labour mobility in Europe and they participate as full members in the European Employment Services EURES network<sup>(49)</sup>. Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania and Poland have launched full-scale national EURES operations, including training of EURES advisers, setting up EURES services as part of the public employment offices, and promoting these services to the citizens (Cedefop, 2009d, 2010b). Estonia stresses that the need for mobility-related career counselling is likely to increase as there is a constantly growing number of people keen on studying and working abroad (Cedefop, 2009d). Cyprus regards the EURES network as having a key role in supporting international labour market mobility (Cedefop, 2010b).

Authorities in Poland and Romania are reporting that Poles and Romanians have been driven out by the recession from the countries where they have been working (e.g. the UK, Iceland, Italy, Spain), and have started returning to their home countries with urgent need for information, advice and guidance. The Polish Ministry of Labour and Social Policy has created a special internet portal

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<sup>(49)</sup> EURES job mobility portal <http://ec.europa.eu/eures/home.jsp?lang=en> [cited 2.6.2011]. The EURES counsellors function as part of a transnational network and provide information, advice, individual counselling and tailor-made services to internationally oriented jobseekers as well as cooperating with employers for finding candidates for their open vacancies.

entitled 'Returner' to aid the return to Poland for Poles working abroad. This provides practical guidance for persons returning home, including the formalities to be arranged, indications of how to take advantage of experience gained abroad in job seeking in Poland, how to establish one's own business and how to supplement vocational qualifications or education level (Cedefop, 2010d). Starting from 2007, the Romanian Government initiated measures to encourage the return and integration of Romanian migrant workers. These efforts targeted both reinsertion into the Romanian labour market, and the educational, cultural and social life. In accordance with the Plan of measures for returning the Romanian citizens working abroad (GD no 187/2008), the national authorities organised and implemented specific actions in the main countries (Spain and Italy) where large communities of Romanians are living and working (Cedefop, 2010b).

### 4.3. Key messages

The priority area 2 of the Council guidance resolution (Council of the European Union, 2008b) deals with supporting access to lifelong guidance for all citizens. Although this is an ambitious target for the Member States, it has encouraged education and employment sectors, key stakeholders and main service providers to work towards this common goal as the numerous measures and initiatives in this review show. A key challenge that the countries have been facing is how to widen access to lifelong guidance through a more diverse service delivery that successfully manages to address the needs of different target groups, each with its specificities. A tremendous challenge across Europe is to manage how to apply modern information and communications technology to guidance services successfully and how best to reach citizens with this constantly evolving medium.

Practically all countries have been involved in designing online services and tools to ensure that guidance is effectively disseminated to end users. However, many times the challenge in developing web-based services is that, instead of cooperating across sectors and administrations (as would be appropriate from a lifelong learning perspective) each sector, administration or even individual institutions have their own guidance portals. This occasionally leads either to overlaps in service provision or to gaps as no single body necessarily has an overview of the services that all different target groups would need. However, there is a positive indication across the countries that cross-sectoral cooperation in developing online service provision is in increase.

The benefits of Internet-based information and guidance services to the users and the service providers are many; for example, access to online services is not limited to office hours). However, information and guidance provision should not only rely on digital services. The strength of a multichannel delivery mechanism is that a combination of different types of services (e.g. online and face-to-face) can complement each other to enable the needs of a diverse clientele to be met. Countries and service providers have also realised that web-based information, advice and guidance services require not only regular maintaining, but continuous development. The challenge is to provide up-to-date services in a user-friendly way, and perhaps in the near future to consider more extensively exploring the possibilities of applying social media to providing information and guidance on learning and working opportunities.

European Union Member States have introduced many policy and strategy level measures to enhance access to guidance, learning and working for user groups with special needs. This action - both in education and employment - has improved service delivery and developed guidance practices specifically targeting at-risk groups such as the socially disadvantaged, disabled, older workers, school dropouts, young and adult immigrants and people with ethnic backgrounds. However, the fact that these target groups are in a constant need of longer-term individualised guidance supports calls for multiple measures and special expertise to facilitate their learning and career paths and labour market integration. This matter needs further policy attention.

## CHAPTER 5

# Developing skills for better career management

The main idea of lifelong guidance and counselling is to provide support to individuals to help reach their potential and adequately respond to challenges along their learning and career paths. Careers information, guidance and education aim at equipping citizens with the capacity to maintain and develop their professional competences and to adapt to changing conditions in the labour market.

To explore the concept of career management skills (CMS) in depth, it is useful first to understand what is meant by the so-called key competences that all individuals need for personal fulfilment and development, active citizenship, social inclusion and employment. The European reference framework of key competences <sup>(50)</sup> for lifelong learning (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2006) brings forward the idea that each citizen needs a wide range of key competences for adapting flexibly to a rapidly changing world. Education plays an important role in ensuring that citizens acquire these key competences which enable them for further learning and working throughout their life. One of the eight key competences ‘learning to learn’ specifically outlines the importance of guidance in gaining, processing and assimilating new knowledge and skills as well as seeking support for pursuing one’s learning and career goals. In particular, at-risk groups should be supported in the acquisition of these key competences, including people with low basic and low literacy skills, early school leavers, the long-term unemployed and those returning to work after a period of extended leave, older people, migrants, and people with disabilities.

During 2009-10, having the framework of key competences as a starting point, Member States have been working on the theme of career management

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<sup>(50)</sup> The Reference Framework sets out eight key competences: 1) Communication in the mother tongue; 2) Communication in foreign languages; 3) Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology; 4) Digital competence; 5) Learning to learn; 6) Social and civic competences; 7) Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship; and 8) Cultural awareness and expression. The eight key competences are defined as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the context, and they contain several themes such as critical thinking, creativity, initiative, problem-solving, risk assessment, decision taking, and constructive management of feelings. (European Parliament, 2006)



skills through the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network. CMS can be regarded as a competence which helps individuals to identify their existing skills and necessary learning goals to improve their employability and social inclusion. As there is a wide range of definitions of CMS used across Member States, efforts have been made to develop a shared understanding of the concept itself (Sultana, 2009a). A definition proposed by Member States says:

‘Career management skills refer to a whole range of competences which provide structured ways for individuals and groups to gather, analyse, synthesise and organise self, educational and occupational information as well as the skills to make and implement decisions and transitions.’

Measures enhancing CMS give the individual an opportunity to explore career-related issues (self-knowledge, career planning) with a professional guidance counsellor, mentor, teacher or trainer. The Cedefop report (Cedefop, 2010b) emphasises that teachers and trainers should have the necessary skills to support young people to develop CMS and apply them in both the transition into work and throughout their working lives. An understanding of career management needs to be embedded in mainstream education and training, with the acquisition of these skills a key output from the education process.

Most Member States have also been exploring new ways to assist people with special needs to support their career management and skills development as they require services and resources that are specifically tailor-made for them (Sultana, 2009b). Ideally CMS should also be embedded in IVET and any alternative curricula for young people at risk, to increase their capacities for a smooth labour market return and integration (Cedefop, 2010e).

Various approaches or a mixture of them to promote the acquisition of CMS can be found in Member States. In education, CMS are usually an integral part of the curriculum and are subject-based (e.g. Austria, France, Malta, Turkey), cross-thematic (e.g. Czech Republic, Estonia, Sweden), or extra-curricular (e.g. France). In the labour market they are mostly implemented through diverse programmes including guidance support and traditional and online tools (for personal action and/or career plans, interactive assessments, occupational interest tests). The public employment services have mostly focused on assisting the unemployed with immediate job decisions; their CMS programmes often seem to have a more short-term orientation, customised to target groups, and not necessarily linked to the CMS learnt at school (Sultana, 2009a).

It is worth considering whether national frameworks for CMS are appropriate and required. One of the main policy and strategy challenges identified by Member States for the future is the conceptualisation, design and delivery of a CMS framework that would be easily applicable to different target groups in different contexts throughout the human lifespan (Sultana, 2009b).

## 5.1. Curriculum developments around career management skills

Many countries have introduced curriculum developments to strengthen the relationship between learning and careers. They aim to make the learners better informed about a diverse range of education, training and employment options, improve their self-knowledge and their capacity to engage confidently and effectively in education and career decision making. They support learning inside and outside the classroom as well as access to supportive networks and services to help individuals pursue chosen/preferred learning and career directions and aspirations.

Putting new career management oriented curricula into practice calls for improved teacher competences, application of appropriate teaching and learning methods, use of innovative tools and up-to-date materials, as well as integrating on-line services to the learning process. Guidance counsellors and teachers alike have a key role in supporting the acquisition of career management skills by individuals. Such skills are required to find and secure employment and to develop one's own career, to become aware of one's interests, abilities, attitudes, values and constraints, to know what career opportunities exist and what is expected to pursue them, especially to transform skills acquired through learning into career management and development.

### 5.1.1. CMS in general education

Students in general education are faced with a daunting array of educational and career choices. This results in high demand for accurate and up-to-date information and for guidance and counselling support. Most Member States are placing increasing emphasis on developing their school-based guidance services to help students acquire skills that are necessary for taking decisions on their future learning and vocational orientation (e.g. Austria: Cedefop 2010b; Cyprus and Finland: Cedefop, 2008b). In this context, guidance support is considered to serve the purpose of exploring one's personal interests, abilities and needs; becoming informed about learning paths on different educational levels; familiarising oneself with different occupations/professions and qualifications needed for exercising them, and receiving information and experience of working life and entrepreneurship.

A current trend supporting the development of CMS among young people is that all school staff participates in guiding students, but the main responsibility

rests with guidance counsellors. Teachers hold a key role in bringing real life into schools and taking lessons beyond the classroom, as well as in helping to make sure that all students receive the educational and vocational information and advice they need for learning, life and work. Both guidance counsellors and teachers should be knowledgeable about current trends and future skill needs in the labour market to support students in identifying and developing their learning and career goals.

A number of new curriculum initiatives in general education (including CMS-related items) are in place across Europe; in many cases these developments are relatively recent and their impact is not yet evident in students' achievements. Most share the same goal, which is to empower the learners to become creators of their own lives. Further, special attention is often given to risk groups to cater for their special needs in learning and development of career management skills. In some instances schools have also started making intensified efforts to improve the communication between teachers, guidance counsellors and parents to engage parents more in their children's learning and participation in daily school life.

In 2007, a draft curriculum framework for guidance in post-primary education was published by the Irish National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). The main purpose of the framework is to provide support for schools in developing student access to appropriate guidance across all the years of post-primary education (Cedefop, 2008b). The report (NCCA, 2008), which sought to determine the potential impact of the curriculum framework on guidance provision in the schools, highlighted that the third year and Leaving certificate students prioritised information about careers and further education and they asserted the centrality of the guidance counsellor to the processes of information gathering and decision-making. One-to-one counselling sessions in personal, education and career contexts were clearly preferred by the students.

Countries are putting greater emphasis on the process nature of guidance and creating services that more systematically support the acquisition of skills that young people will need in their life for managing their learning and careers. In Northern Ireland (the UK), Learning for life and work is a statutory part of the revised curriculum (2007-10), which aims to ensure that all young people develop the personal qualities, skills, knowledge, understanding and attitudes which will give them a strong foundation for life and work (Cedefop, 2009d). In Norway, a new subject *Educational Choices* (2008), which is an important ingredient in the guidance process in lower secondary school, was made compulsory. It aims at giving pupils experience in terms of contents, exercises and working methods in

upper secondary education level programmes and VET programmes (Cedefop, 2009d).

Germany and Finland have introduced curriculum reforms especially addressing those young people who may have difficulties in making the transition from compulsory to upper secondary general or vocational education. The Finnish pilot scheme of preparatory instruction and guidance for vocational upper secondary education and training (2006-10) has been targeted at young people completing their basic education, but who do not have a clear idea of their future career, or who do not possess the skills and knowledge needed for entering vocational education or for coping with vocational studies. The goal has been to aid the transition from basic education to vocational upper secondary education and training, and to reduce drop-out rates at the initial stage of vocational training (Cedefop, 2010d). In 2010 Germany started introducing career orientation in all general and special schools as a mandatory subject. Specific programmes range from systematic skills profiling of young people prior to their school leaving to testing training modules for previously unsuccessful training place applicants and modular return-to-learn programmes for young adults without vocational qualifications (Cedefop, 2010b).

#### **5.1.2. CMS in VET-related contexts**

Education is acknowledged as a means of transforming and empowering young learners with skills, knowledge and attitudes to enable them to become productive members of society. In addition to professional skills, employers are increasingly looking for personal qualities and competences, such as the ability to work in teams, to show an aptitude for problem-solving, apply information and communications to their daily tasks, and being able to deploy effective interpersonal skills. The role of guidance in preparing VET-students for the labour market and providing them with necessary skills is addressed by most countries across Europe.

The aim of guidance-related activities in vocational education and training is to help young people learn about themselves and how to manage their labour market integration and life transitions to come, as well as making them responsible for their learning and career paths. Further, guidance aims to equip young people with skills that are adaptable and transferable to different contexts and that can be easily upgraded to meet higher and constantly evolving professional requirements, standards and performance specifications. The following examples of curricular and other related developments demonstrate how CMS are integrated in the individual learning process.

Revised IVET curricula in Finland (2010) stress the acquisition of transferable skills that can be used in different fields and professions, and that simultaneously serve labour market needs and promote lifelong learning. They take immigrants and students with disabilities into account, and are relevant for adults in terms of competence-based qualifications (Cedefop, 2010b). In Hungary, a competence-based curriculum with career guidance and innovative learning materials was introduced within the VSDP I to tackle school failure experiences and the high number of drop-outs among VET students<sup>(51)</sup>. In 2006, this guidance curriculum was integrated into the national vocational school framework curriculum. Since then guidance has been further developed as part of Development of general and pre-vocational education (9th-10th grades) (Cedefop, 2008b, 2009d).

Several countries have introduced policy measures. In the Netherlands the government has launched an incentive plan (including financial resources) with relevant stakeholders to promote better career guidance in vocational schools. The aim is to strengthen the connection between education and the labour market in the competence-based qualification system (National Reform Programme report Netherlands 2009). Estonia has taken targeted action to promote VET as an attractive study and career option: the new national development plan (2009-13) makes guidance and counselling a priority area in VET institutions. The Estonian Operational programme for human resource development aims at establishing a unified career guidance system in all vocational education institutions (including social and career counselling, and specialised counselling for students with disabilities) (Cedefop, 2009d, 2010b). In Portugal, a set of interventions for improving career management skills in several age/professional groups has been developed by the PES and its network of VET entities. All interventions are based on individual skill needs diagnosis and they address easily transferable skills linked to decision-making, communication, time management. Developing entrepreneurial skills is an important transversal element in the programmes (Cedefop, 2009d).

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<sup>(51)</sup> Vocational School Development Programme VSDP I+II (Szakiskolai Fejlesztési Program, SZFP, 2003-06, 2006-09)

## 5.2. Young people and careers

Today's young Europeans are a generation living in a rapidly evolving social, demographic, economic and technological environment. Transition<sup>(52)</sup> to adulthood has become increasingly multifaceted, individualised and is often characterised by diverse challenges, including the completion of education, transition from school to work, transitions to financial and residential independence, partnership and parenthood. Information, guidance and counselling, flexible learning environments and tailor-made assistance are essential elements for young people as preparation for their labour market entry. There is also research evidence suggesting that young people highly value the experience they can obtain about jobs and careers in a real workplace and through contacts with companies (OECD, 2010b).

### 5.2.1. Labour market reality for young people

National labour markets do not seem to be that easily accessible for young people/youth at risk. A recent report (European Commission, 2010i) underlines how young people have borne the brunt of the crisis, with unemployment disproportionately hitting 15-24 year olds and reaching over 30% in some countries. Since the first quarter of 2008 unemployment - especially for young people - has increased sharply in the EU. In February 2011 (Eurostat, 2011), the youth unemployment rate (under-25s) was 20.4% in the EU-27 compared to 16.6% in November 2008 when the economic crisis had started (Eurostat 2009b). At the same time, the level of early school leavers remains high in EU-27 (14.4% in 2009) (Eurostat, 2009a).

In response to the current crisis situation, policy-makers have launched targeted interventions that provide support for young people to complete their education and training and to become easily integrated into the labour market.

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<sup>(52)</sup> Transition is a long-term process, and not a single event. Change is the event, while transition is the journey a person takes during the process which can actually take place over several years and during which several changes may occur. Transition is a process that forces us to look beyond the present (including reflecting on the past and dreaming of the future). A transition can be exciting and invigorating, and at the same time stressful and scary. It can be something wanted and hoped for, or sometimes something that just happens without us having much control over it. But usually a transition means us intentionally designing a future that we prefer to have. Setting a goal and moving towards it. Different types of support should be within easy reach for an individual in the middle of a transition process. In a work-related context, transitions usually call for activating our individual learning-to-learn as well as career management skills. (The concept of transition was defined for internal cooperation purposes at Cedefop by M. Launikari.)

Work towards developing more open and flexible lifelong learning systems that engage all young people in formal, non-formal and informal settings should be encouraged, to remove obstacles to their employment and employability. For this, it is necessary to promote careers guidance and better cooperation between education providers, labour market institutions, social partners, service users and national authorities (Cedefop, 2010e).

### **5.2.2. School-to-work transitions**

Many important transitions occur throughout each person's life, and many of them are associated with predictable life events (such as beginning and leaving comprehensive education), but the most critical transition period for a young person is probably the transition from school to adulthood, including labour market entry. However, the current labour market situation, where underemployment and precarious employment continue to proliferate, is greatly challenging young people's transition from learning to work. As evidence shows, typical school-to-work transition patterns vary across European countries and the duration of these transitions in 19 out of 27 EU countries is generally very long and ranges from 28 months in the Netherlands to 103 months in Romania (ISFOL, 2008).

Only a small proportion of young people experience relatively stable employment during their first few years in the labour market; for many these years are characterised by unemployment or unstable employment, including a series of moves between education, unemployment, inactivity, youth programmes, military service and part-time, temporary or permanent jobs. Young people with low educational attainment tend to be much more affected by unemployment, inactivity or difficult education-to-work transitions than their better educated peers. Another relevant group at risk of labour market and social exclusion are those who experience longer periods of being neither in education/training, nor employment ('NEET') (ISFOL, 2008).

Against this reality, greater attention across the European Union has been addressed to fostering young people's transition from education to work as the factors affecting educational choices and labour market careers have become more complex. The social and labour market integration of young people has gained more significance in the agenda of European youth policy framework in the past few years (European Commission 2001, 2005, 2007c). The new European Commission flagship initiative, Youth on the move, aims at increasing young people's employability and access to the labour market by helping them gain the knowledge, skills and experience they need to make their first job a reality (European Commission, 2010d).

All European countries give high policy priority to supporting young people's school completion and entry to the labour market. To date large-scale guidance measures and initiatives have been applied across Europe to support school completion and education-to-work transitions of at-risk youth who have dropped out of mainstream education and training. Successful labour market integration programmes for youth at risk can be found in several countries: Belgium, Czech Republic, Germany, France, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Finland, Sweden, and the UK. In this setting, guidance counsellors and teachers play a vital role in creating positive expectations and realistic career perspectives for young people. The process of reintegrating a young, disengaged person into learning or working begins with an assessment of their needs, interests and aspirations (Cedefop, 2010e).

In the following, efforts taken across Europe to improve career information, guidance and counselling for young people are described (including setting up services, launching action programmes, broadening the evidence-base). The aim has been to make the educational offer, different learning opportunities and training routes visible to aid both entry and return to the labour market after successful completion of studies. Focus has also been on giving information about academic qualifications as well as counselling about acquiring such.

Since 2008-09 in Flanders (Belgium)(Stolb, 2008), a school-career guidance support team has been put in place with at least one career guidance expert in all the 73 pupil guidance centres (CLB, Centrum voor leerlingenbegeleiding). Every school is supposed to conclude a policy contract with a CLB, which pupils, parents, teachers and school management can call upon for information, assistance and guidance. CLBs cooperate with the Flemish Employment Services and Vocational Training Agency VDAB on providing information and guidance about professional competences and qualifications in the world of work to young people for their education and vocational choices (Cedefop, 2010d). The example from Luxembourg shows that guidance professionals increasingly have to address school dropouts. The Local action for young people ALJ <sup>(53)</sup> in Luxembourg supports young people of 15-25 years in their transition into working life. It gives special attention to school dropouts also on issues that are not only

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<sup>(53)</sup> See the Law of 18 December 2008 on the reform of vocational training, article 51, point 4 'to initiate measures to support the transition to working life of young people and young adults. To that end, an organisation called "Local Action for Young People" (ALJ) has been set up'. ALJ operates in the framework of the 2nd 'Transition from school to working life' programme of the European Community and is attached to the Vocational Training Service of the Ministry of National Education and Vocational Training.



related to learning and working, but to accommodation, health, leisure activities, family, etc (Cedefop, 2010b).

Germany (Cedefop, 2010b), Malta (Ministry of Finance, the Economy and Investment, 2009) and Romania (Cedefop, 2010d) have launched programmes<sup>(54)</sup> that focus on aiding the transition from school to work. Their main aim is to allow the target group to be better informed on career options and how to achieve them with proper qualifications for the labour market. The Romanian intervention supports apprentices, pupils, students, and young graduates with their labour market entry; in the German programme young people spend two weeks in a training centre to gain practical work experience in three occupation-specific workshops supervised by a trainer. This vocational orientation experience extends pupils' career choices and helps convince potential trainers to offer them an apprenticeship.

Interesting developments can also be found in the EU candidate countries. In Croatia, an annual survey on the vocational aspirations of students finishing their basic and secondary education gives an overview of professional intentions of young people. The survey findings highlight the barriers youngsters face when accessing education, training and employment. The results inform relevant education and labour market actors planning future measures. The survey helps to identify those who require guidance support for their future education/training. During 2005-09, more than 260 000 pupils participated in the survey (Cedefop, 2010c). In the past few years, career centres have been established in all VET schools in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. They support work-based learning approaches and give access to career guidance provided by school psychologists. These career centres are located in schools and equipped with materials that students can use for career guidance orientation. A school teacher acts as the career service coordinator. In parallel, a career fair called Educational rendezvous is organised annually and, in several VET schools, real student-run companies are founded which serve the local market while giving students work experience and skills development (Zelloth, 2009).

### **5.2.3. Gender-sensitive guidance approaches**

The promotion of equality between genders is one of the most important tasks of education as it prepares the individual learner for the world of work through his/her choices of school subjects, fields of studies and occupations. Recognising

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<sup>(54)</sup> Improving Career Orientation programme in Germany (2008-10); Youth employment programme in Malta (2008-); Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources Development in Romania (2007-13)

the gender perspective at all levels and in all activities of society is needed to establish real equality between the genders. Guidance plays a key role in informing and advising the learner about his/her preferred career orientation, supports individual decision-making process concerning choices that can be considered atypical for the gender and empowers the person to pursue his/her career goals (Ståhlberg, 2007).

Gender-sensitive guidance and counselling practice has recently been established in half of European countries. As the Eurydice report (2010) reveals, gender-sensitive guidance is addressing boys to a lesser extent than girls. Usually girls are encouraged to pursue careers in the fields of technology and natural sciences. Despite interesting individual initiatives and projects, holistic national strategies to combat gender stereotypes in career choices and measures aimed at boys are mostly lacking. Currently, young male and female students – whether in general or vocational education - still mostly opt for career choices reflecting traditional gender roles.

An issue regularly discussed is how to challenge gender stereotyped thinking and not to present female and male characteristics and the duties of the two genders in society as something rigidly established and permanent. Teachers and guidance personnel should be able to demonstrate sensitivity to the particular needs of men and women who are planning to make an atypical career choice. Guidance needs to allow potential learners to broaden their aspirations and achievements within their social and economic context, and to pursue their true interests in life (CHOICES-partnership, 2007). In summary, guidance counsellors and teachers need to become more gender aware (e.g. through in-service training) to be able to challenge career-related stereotypes and that way provide gender-sensitive guidance. A gender-sensitive guidance counsellor and/or teacher is expected to possess theoretical knowledge of gender socialisation, gender system and legislation concerning equality between the genders (Ståhlberg, 2007).

The following gender-sensitive guidance initiatives from Germany and Austria demonstrate guidance for women and girls. The main objective of the Austrian initiative 'mut! – girls and technology' was to establish a contact point in every province for gender-sensitive career guidance with a focus on girls and technology in the school context. The operational goals were to increase gender sensitivity among teachers, to integrate the theme in training and continuing training institutions and to create a network of relevant actors. With additional funding from the Department of Gender Mainstreaming/Gender and School of the Austrian Ministry of Education, the 'mut!' initiative promoted activities in pre- and in-service education and training for teaching staff and in-service training at the

university colleges of education at the provincial level in 2009-10 (Cedefop, 2010b, 2010d). In Germany a nationwide Girls' day <sup>(55)</sup>takes place each year with numerous events to encourage young women to find out about areas of work that they rarely consider when making career choices. Scientific and technical occupations are the main focus (Cedefop, 2008b). In the past few years, the Girls' day has also taken place on a cross-border basis between Germany and its neighbouring countries (Austria, the Czech Republic, Switzerland) (Cedefop, 2010b).

### 5.3. Adults and careers

In an ideal world, most adults wish to have a well-paid and interesting job, which uses fully their skills and which provides opportunities for professional and career development; all within a flexible time regime without the need for overlong hours (Holmes et al., 2007). However, the real and rapidly changing world does not usually provide such ideal working conditions, nor perfect opportunities for learning at work. It challenges the individual to revise and upgrade constantly his/her knowledge, skills and competences to remain employable through active participation in lifelong learning. Therefore, two things are vital: first, adults should understand that they are responsible for their own lifelong learning; and, second, there is need for careers guidance support and new types of learning and career pathways for adults that match their skills and work situation at all lifecycle stages.

A study carried out by the Nordic Network for Adult Learning (NVL and Norden, 2008) found out that guidance counsellors (in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden) often lack concrete knowledge and competences in several areas that can be considered relevant maintaining quality service provision for adults in education, training and employment. The study suggests that guidance practitioners who work with adults should have:

- a better overview of the general development of the economy and evolution within different sectors from a local, national and global perspective, as well as general knowledge of future skill needs;
- more insight into the process of becoming employed the jobseeker's and the employer's perspective, and a thorough knowledge of labour market legislation;

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<sup>(55)</sup> Girls' Day in Germany <http://www.girls-day.de/> [cited 2.6.2011]

- a more profound understanding of career-building strategies and of the relationship between education and work including diverse transitions;
- more know-how in recognition, certification and validation of skills and competences obtained through non-formal and informal learning;
- capacity to provide learners and new/aspiring entrepreneurs with entrepreneurship related support;
- increased ability in networking: cooperating effectively with education and training providers, employment offices, employers, trade unions and the third sector.

### **5.3.1. Public employment services and career management of adults**

Some research studies have discussed the main goals of service provision in public employment services (PES): is it 'only' job placement or is it ideally also about developing jobseeker career management skills? Wright and Bertram (2007) in their comparative study of five countries (Germany, Spain, France, Slovenia, and the UK) found that labour market and vocational information, advice and guidance services and programmes are primarily directed at mediating transitions into work and that education and/or training is mainly seen as a step towards a particular type of employment or career. It seems that the goal of empowering citizens, in terms of developing their career management skills, is often totally subordinated to the objective of a rapid return of the client to (any) employment available.

Personnaz et al. (2007) concluded that programmes for the unemployed usually aim at placing them in 'suitable jobs' which do not necessarily correspond to the aspirations of the persons concerned. Guidance in such a case mostly consists of giving the client an overview of labour market trends and of making their job- and career-related expectations more realistic. Further, the study by Wright and Bertram (2007) discovered that some guidance counsellors regarded a final placement in employment or training as a positive outcome for the service user, in contrast to others, who considered their role as more focused, supporting people to get closer to the labour market through promoting change in their attitudes, expectations and behaviour.

However, in the current labour market context of economic crisis, several challenges are influencing the position of PES in the Member States. The recent increase in unemployment invites PES to redefining their mission in relation to the Europe 2020 strategy (European Commission, 2010g) and in implementing the initiative New Skills for New Jobs (European Commission, 2010i), which is an essential tool of the European Employment Strategy for expanding investment in workers' skills and for creating more and better jobs throughout the EU. While

tackling the increasing number of unemployed people, PES is taking on a more dynamic role as an active labour market manager with priorities such as new support processes and career management.

Improving labour market transparency as a producer, user and interpreter of labour market information is a key task of PES, as well as modernising service delivery by combining online and face-to-face services that also address special cases such as guidance support for redundancy and outplacement (European Commission, 2009c; Cedefop, 2010h). PES is in a strong position to create synergies between employment, education, training and guidance, and to develop mechanisms for better anticipation of future skill needs and demographic trends in the labour market. In many countries PES has been successfully cooperating with employers, trade unions and educational institutions to serve the labour market better. This cooperation can be characterised as proactive and responsive as the services made available include a wide variety of aspects, also linked to career development and management of adults.

In the context of flexicurity<sup>(56)</sup>, globalisation and technological progress are constantly changing the needs of workers and enterprises and directly influencing the role of public employment services. Rather than protecting a job, the flexicurity approach assumes that it is the worker who needs to be protected and assisted in either making a transition successfully in his/her current job or in moving to a new job (European Commission, 2010h). This growing labour market flexibility confronts public employment services with the challenge of providing services to an even more diverse group of jobseekers and adult learners. They may be long-term unemployed, jobseekers with frequent short intervals of unemployment, or people looking for new career opportunities. With the global economic crisis, it has become evident that a well-functioning labour market calls for a deeper individualisation and a further diversified job-broking as to provide more intensive, personalised services (such as in-depth career guidance) (European Commission, 2009f).

Practically all countries have introduced new services aimed at different groups of jobseekers. The Irish labour market authority FÁS (in the Dublin region) has been targeting groups who are not currently accessing its services and who require intensive career guidance to enable them to make realistic decisions about the next progression steps into training, education and employment. The

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<sup>(56)</sup> Flexicurity can be defined as a policy strategy to enhance, at the same time and in a deliberate way, the flexibility of labour markets, work organisations and labour relations on the one hand, and security – employment security and income security – on the other. <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=116&langId=en> [cited 2.6.2011]

customer-focused programme instils confidence and provides detailed information about a wide range of progression options as well as online resources to enable clients to achieve goals defined in their personal progression plan (Cedefop, 2010d).

Another example is the Polish labour offices <sup>(57)</sup> that since 2008 have been obliged to develop individual action plans (IAP) for all unemployed registered in the labour offices for 180 days. IAP includes labour market services such as vocational guidance and counselling, job brokerage, assistance in active job seeking and organisation of training. In the preparatory stage of IAP, the role of the vocational counsellor, who is assessing the type and scope of assistance required on the basis of information gathered at the consultation, is of particular importance. In addition, Cyprus has been developing the national network of public employment services with ESF funding. Eight new Local Labour Offices have been developed and six existing upgraded. As part of this measure, 18 new staff members have been recruited and trained as counsellors to provide high-quality services to adult jobseekers (Cedefop, 2009d).

### **5.3.2. Career development at work and skills upgrading**

It is evident that people are more vulnerable to labour market changes if they lack the right skills or cannot make use of them. The Cedefop report on *Future skill needs in Europe* (Cedefop, 2008d) concluded that demand for skills and qualifications is driven upwards in most occupations (including so-called elementary jobs) by the continuing rise of the service sector and sweeping technological and organisational changes. As jobs are generally becoming more knowledge- and skills-intensive, continued investment in education and training will be needed to foster innovation and people's development (Cedefop, 2010g). This calls on employers to utilise the talents of their staff better as well as fully recognising the skills they acquire at work.

Forecasting and anticipating future skill needs, as well as linking guidance to this context, has gained increasing attention in European countries. The Cedefop report on *Career development at work - a review of career guidance to support people in employment* (Cedefop, 2008a) explored the range of career guidance provision that supports workforce development across the EU-25 Member States. The main conclusions emerging from the research were demands to create an effective strategy for providing career development support directed to adults and the employed; to increase the role of intermediary organisations in providing such

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<sup>(57)</sup> Polish Act on employment promotion and labour market institutions (Dz. U. of 2008, No 69, item 415)

support; and to empower individuals in successful career management. Bimrose and Barnes (2008), in their 5-year longitudinal study, conclude that greater know-how will be needed of the role of guidance in the career progression and advancement of adults, the ways in which adults engage with career decision-making, and what they expect and find useful from guidance services.

There is a wide range of intermediary organisations offering some forms of career guidance alongside other activities. Among these, trade unions have become important actors. In many cases trade unions rely on volunteers for successful delivery of face-to-face information, guidance and advisory services. The Cedefop report (2008a) highlights that advice and guidance is critical prior to the engagement of trade union members in learning or career development. The credibility of trade union members and the trust of their colleagues, who provide these services, is an important success factor. For example, in the United Kingdom, the number of union learning representatives<sup>(58)</sup> (ULRs) is constantly expanding (currently 23-24 000). The ULRs, who are prevalent across all occupations and provide support for all skill levels, help some 150 000 employees into learning each year. They carry out an important role in supporting union members in identifying needs, mentoring, coaching, making choices about learning and taking up learning opportunities that are right for them (Cedefop, 2008b).

The objective of providing better information and guidance to low-skilled workers and other jobseekers is pursued by different means in the different countries; it is mostly public employment services that carry out these activities and related programmes. In Belgium, the Flemish Employment Services and Vocational Training Agency VDAB has started to address new target groups in the labour market: employed people suffering from ADHD, single parents, the working poor and people returning to the labour market. Together with the career supervisor, the employed client goes through an intense process that results in a personal development plan (PDP) with a clearly defined time frame (Cedefop, 2010d). Further, the Polish Public Employment Services have launched an online vocational interest questionnaire for assessing vocational interests and for providing career planning support for adults and the young alike. Some 900 vocational counsellors have been trained on the use of this tool. The Portuguese employment services run two new programmes, Skills portfolio and Skills balance, which encourage awareness of one's skills and of skills recognition

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<sup>(58)</sup> [www.unionlearn.org.uk](http://www.unionlearn.org.uk) [cited 2.6.2011]

processes (RVCC <sup>(59)</sup>). The programmes are directed to all publics, but specifically to risk groups (Cedefop, 2009d).

Several countries, like the Netherlands, have realised that workers and employers are often not well aware of training opportunities for adults, and that the concept of lifelong learning is not that well established among adults. The Dutch project directorate Learning&Working <sup>(60)</sup> started making the training opportunities for adults more transparent. Significant investment was made in the Click, Call & Face concept. Individual adult learners can easily access learning- and working-related information at [www.lerenenwerken.nl](http://www.lerenenwerken.nl) [cited 2.6.2011] (click), on a free telephone (call) with help desk; employers and prospective workers can make a personal appointment with the learning and working desks (face) (Ministry of Education, Culture and Science; Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, 2008). The UK initiative, Train to gain <sup>(61)</sup>, encourages employers to undertake training for employees with low skills in order to meet business needs. Evaluations have shown that take up and the quality of training provided were good, and that employers and trainees were positive about the benefits. However, need for better advice and guidance was expressed by the learners (Cedefop, 2010b).

### **5.3.3. Assessing and recognising skills**

Governments have been introducing skills and competence strategies not just to help people into jobs, but to help break the cycle of low skills, short-term jobs and low wages. Information, guidance and counselling are usually a core component and integral element of such strategies. Within these strategies many countries have taken active measures to improve the assessment and recognition of skills acquired through various means throughout all aspects of life: work, home, school, sports, hobbies, and more.

Competences gained through work experience and through non-formal and informal learning are being assessed and recognised more and more frequently across Europe. However, adults are often not aware of the qualification opportunities available to them, and they may have a restricted view of their own skills and know-how. For adults to choose an appropriate and realistic qualification path, it is necessary to clarify their expectations and deepen their

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<sup>(59)</sup> In 2001, a national system of Recognition, validation and certification of competences (RVCC) was created for adults in Portugal.

<sup>(60)</sup> The Dutch project directorate Learning&Working is positioned between the Ministries of Education, Culture and Science and Social Affairs and Employment.

<sup>(61)</sup> The scheme was jointly developed by the Learning and Skills Council, the Department for Education and Skills and HM Treasury.



self-knowledge, and to map out the alternatives to reach the preferred qualification. Depending on the competence, the client may get access to an education programme, exemption from parts of the programme itself or even a competence certificate or diploma to recognise either a completed programme or completed modules of the programme.

European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning (Cedefop, 2009a) suggest that the potential candidates and those already in the process of receiving validation should have access to impartial information, advice and guidance. A validation system should be responsive to the needs of the individual who seeks validation and work towards tailor-made solutions. Candidates need to be advised, for example, about the standards to be met and the form of evidence required for demonstrating learning outcomes. When completing the validation procedure, candidates should also be given information about potential routes to further qualification. Finally, a clear distinction should be made between guidance linked to assessment issues and guidance related to the validation process itself. These two dimensions in guidance provision call for different professional skills from practitioners delivering the service.

The selected examples below illustrate some recently developed assessment tools across Europe and how and where they can be accessed. The German ProfilPASS<sup>(62)</sup> self-assessment instrument is used by guidance services to review, document and assess informally acquired competences, regardless of where they were acquired, and record them in a competence portfolio. It was initially offered as a validation tool for adults, but in 2007, the ProfilPASS for young people was introduced. ProfilPASS seeks to identify an individual's educational, professional and life goals (Cedefop, 2008b, 2010d, 2010e). In Iceland two training centres owned and operated by social partners offer guidance on how to get 'real competences' evaluated and certified. The Education and Training Service Centre provides guidance at the workplace<sup>(63)</sup> and the Vocational Education and Training Centre puts more emphasis on assisting those who have partly completed education for regulated professions, but need additional (most often general) education to get their journeyman's exam (Cedefop, 2009d).

Building up the skills of guidance experts in competence assessment has been an issue in some countries, such as Bulgaria, where staff of the Employment agency participated in a related training programme in 2007. The Bulgarian competence assessment tool helps to determine the knowledge, skills, motivation, professional experience, personal interests and values of an

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<sup>(62)</sup> Profilpass <http://www.profilpass-online.de> [cited 2.6.2011]

<sup>(63)</sup> This service evolved from a Leonardo da Vinci project called Workplace guidance for lower-paid workers (ISL/03/B/F/PP/164001).

individual client, and allows people to consider their continuing vocational training and future job options (Cedefop, 2008b). The Slovenian system of craftsman exam <sup>(64)</sup> is a solid example of validation of non-formal learning within the formal system for acquiring higher levels of education; it is also an example of how to interweave education and the labour market. It offers the candidates an opportunity to attain an education title different from their original field of study. The success of this measure is demonstrated by high number of individuals who have successfully passed the exam to date and who are currently preparing for the exam. All candidates are adult learners in full time employment who are given information and guidance support for the validation process (Cedefop, 2008b).

Promotional measures are needed to create visibility of services that are either new or not that well known by the target audience. In 2009, the project directorate for Learning&Working in the Netherlands launched a campaign on national television, encouraging people to obtain their 'experience certificate'. The resultant interest identified problems in how to ensure that the Accreditation of prior learning quality code is applied by various institutions <sup>(65)</sup> in a uniform way (Cedefop, 2010d).

#### 5.4. Key messages

Priority area 1 of the Council guidance resolution (Council of the European Union, 2008b) deals with the development of career management skills of citizens in the contexts of lifelong learning and employment. From a European perspective, the concept of career management skills (CMS) is not self-evident and it is not yet understood unanimously across countries, sectors, environments and organisations. Therefore, to reach a more widely shared comprehension, consensus and construction of the characteristics of the concept at EU level, a more intense and critical exchange of meanings of CMS is required, involving cross-country collaboration and communication. One forum where the Member States will take this work forward during 2011-12 is the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network's work package specifically focusing on career management skills.

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<sup>(64)</sup> The conditions to enter the craftsman exam are the diploma of the three year vocational education programme and two years of practical experiences from the field in which the candidate wishes to pass the exam.

<sup>(65)</sup> In the Netherlands, the government has laid down the rules concerning APL (Quality Code, supervision by the Inspectorate or the Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organisation), but the implementation is a non-subsidised activity by schools, universities or other applicable institutions.

A summary observation is that in general education and vocational education and training, career management skills are becoming more visible in the curriculum and in extra-curricular activities. Schools seem to be applying a broad range of methods to develop the individual capacity and awareness in young people during their study time for managing their learning, future occupation and related transitions confidently and effectively. The critical question is whether the skills and competences of teachers and guidance practitioners to promote career management skills among young learners are sufficient, for example in providing gender-sensitive guidance for choosing occupations and careers atypical for the gender. Most likely these groups of experts working with young people will need further training to be better equipped for supporting the individual acquisition of career management skills.

The role of employers, public employment services and social partners is pivotal to discussing adults in working life and the development of their career management skills. It is not always obvious for employed adults how they could access training courses/programmes that support their career development, upgrading of their vocational skills or validation of non-formal and informal learning. In some countries the social partners have taken a leading role in promoting learning and professional development opportunities for workers/employees and the results have been encouragingly positive. For unemployed people, the main support for learning and career-related issues usually comes from the employment offices. However, there is a huge variation across countries in the operating principles and service provision of the public employment services, ranging from pure job placements to advanced (psychological) counselling.

Several risk groups – especially school dropouts, immigrants and older workers with low skill levels – have been badly hit by the economic crisis. Therefore, many countries have been more systematically investing resources in measures to engage (or re-engage) these groups with learning and skills development to improve their employability and labour market entry. Also many of those who belong to at-risk groups might not perceive careers as something long-term and continuous: with the (limited) work experience they may have, they might be more used to broken, interrupted and discontinuing periods and patterns of work. To increase at-risk group participation in working life (and for the EU to achieve an employment rate of 75% for all people between 20 and 64 by 2020), it is strongly recommended that the more vulnerable groups should have easy access to personalised support in the area of career development and management.

## CHAPTER 6

# Conclusions

The summarising observation from the reporting period (2007-10) is an overall steady progress across the Member States in the four priority areas of the Council resolution on lifelong guidance (Council of the European Union, 2008b). However, it should be kept in mind that countries are at different developmental stages and pursue their own specific policy priorities. In most cases it is evident that governments have started providing stronger strategic leadership as well as more commitment to developing lifelong guidance at a national level. This has become visible as governments have introduced new policy, strategy and legislative initiatives, increased cross-sectoral cooperation, and new funding schemes as a response to support the work in the four priority areas concerning gaps and deficits that have been identified in guidance service provision.

With their recent initiatives the Member States have successfully addressed the public policy goals set for lifelong guidance provision: learning, labour market and social equity goals. As regards learning goals, progress has been made in improving the overall framework of lifelong learning to aid the individual citizen in his/her learning process and professional orientation. In the area of labour market goals, the measures introduced promote inclusive labour markets and a stronger involvement of social partners and public employment services. For social equity goals, the Member States are in the process of strengthening equal opportunities for participation (including learning, working, civic dialogue, etc.) and promoting social inclusion for all groups of citizens, specifically for the more disadvantaged groups in society.

### 6.1. Deepening cross-sectoral guidance policy collaboration

Policy action on reforming guidance provision is largely based on an understanding of each country's current situation (economy, labour market, education system, demography) and is usually focused on key areas such as delivery systems (both demand and supply sides), quality of services, human and financial resources, coordination and cooperation, and different target groups. Most countries are looking quite favourably at lifelong guidance and there seems

to be a political will to strengthen it further. But the currently prevailing harsh economic realities may have an impact on how effectively policy programmes can be put into practice. Policy-makers face pressing problems under conditions of severe resource constraints and competitive political settings; in such a policy environment, guidance may lose out in the worst case.

More positively, there have been intensified efforts across Europe to create policy coordination mechanisms and improve cooperation across education and employment to establish a guidance delivery system that is coherent, holistically organised and easily accessible for service users. More transparent and informed dialogue between the governments and related stakeholders has been initiated in several cases to reach a shared understanding of the potential contribution of guidance to public and private interests. In this setting, the involvement of relevant stakeholders (such as education and training providers, employers, trade unions, NGOs, youth organisations, parents, and guidance practitioners) has also gained more importance and their role in guidance development has become more visible and concrete.

Formalised structures – such as national guidance policy forums – are helpful in supporting the implementation of national lifelong learning and employment strategies in which lifelong guidance is mostly embedded. The review also suggests that innovative solutions and inspiration from other countries and contexts may be useful for national policy and strategy developments. European cooperation – already seen in the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network - seems beneficial for the participating countries in terms of providing them with a platform for mutual learning, exchange of experiences and know-how as well as for benchmarking their policies, practices, processes and performance against those of other countries.

## 6.2. **Assuring quality and broadening the evidence base**

Given the range of choices offered by an ever-globalising education and labour market, citizens need high quality guidance to find their personal pathway through the matrix of learning and career opportunities available to them. The Member States agree that guidance should be learner/user-centred, confidential, impartial, equitable and easily accessible. These guiding principles for quality will be valid for the future as well, because - as this review reveals - the quality of guidance still remains variable throughout Europe. A positive observation made by this review is that quality has been widely discussed across countries, sectors,

administrations and institutions, and that there are good examples of defining quality standards and criteria for guidance services across Europe.

As the review shows, designing, testing, setting up and further developing quality assurance systems (including quality standards and criteria) is a time-consuming exercise; it involves numerous stakeholders and requires a high level of resources. This is probably the reason holding the Member States back from putting a sole mechanism in place as, to date, few European countries have succeeded in establishing a holistic quality assurance mechanism for lifelong guidance. Further, the different actors (may) have differing needs and understanding of what is quality, as the quality of guidance might not always be so easy to define and measure. It is evident that these aspects complicate the cross-sectoral and cross-administrative cooperation in quality guidance.

Guidance practitioners work at the intersection between education, training and the labour market, which makes them the main contributors to the dissemination of quality information on available learning and careers opportunities. Improving qualifications and raising the professional standards of guidance practitioners is seen as a way to raise and guarantee the quality of guidance provision. Many countries have introduced improvements in their offer of initial and in-service training programmes and, in some cases, have established competence frameworks for guidance and counselling. Further, the aspect that will require future attention is the creation of mechanisms for certifying and validating counsellor competences that have not been acquired through formal education.

A shared key challenge to the Member States is to determine common guidelines and principles for improving, assessing and measuring the efficiency of guidance systems and the institutions responsible for actual service provision. Further, there is a need to develop a more sustainable and transparent evidence base to support the policy design, especially from the perspectives of quality assurance, outcomes and cost-effectiveness of guidance service delivery. The Member States also wish to use their human and financial resources more effectively; however, more systematic research-based evidence (evaluations, analyses, studies) to guide such resource optimisation will be required in the coming years. Finally, the issues of involving citizens to a greater degree in the design, development, evaluation and management of guidance services, and of incorporating their quality perspective into guidance delivery, have not yet been systematically addressed.

### 6.3. Open access for all to guidance services

The diversity and heterogeneity of the information, advisory and guidance needs of different target audiences have been largely acknowledged by Member States. The review shows that the delivery of guidance services varies across countries, sectors, administrations and institutions, and that current service provision is still often fragmented and uneven in terms of accessibility. However, countries have made a clear commitment to reducing inequalities between groups by improving guidance provision to at-risk groups to ensure that they have the opportunity to participate in learning and working, to reach their potential and utilise their individual capacities, as well as to receive responsive and appropriate education and training.

Concrete measures have been taken by the Member States to improve access to information and guidance services that follow the principle of a multichannel delivery mechanism. A combination of different types of service (e.g. online and face-to-face) complement each other and better meet the needs of a diverse clientele. Countries have been developing more cost-efficient service delivery systems based on new information technology; this offers opportunities to meeting increased demand at a reasonable cost. However, more attention should still be paid to making sure that the overall service provision also manages to cater for the needs of people who do not necessarily have the skills or tools to access web-based services, and to eliminating unnecessary duplication of online services provided by different sectors and actors. The review highlights the importance of not replacing the traditional ways and methods of providing guidance by online tools and webportals, but using both delivery channels in parallel.

Another interesting feature across Europe is that there seems to be greater focus on a more case-specific and individualised service provision that takes into consideration the actual contexts and life situations of individual service-users. This approach places specific demands on guidance professionals who are expected to deal with a mixture of factors and dimensions interacting in a person's life (educational, professional, familial, local, institutional, economic), and be capable of deciding the course of action as well as the means and methods by which individual needs can be addressed. To sum up, this more individually tailored service delivery model – which is quite resource intensive – will require new capabilities from the guidance providers as well as new ways of organising the service pallet.

## 6.4. Operationalising career management skills

People today - probably more than ever before - need an efficient way to cope with all kinds of changes linked to their learning and careers. The acquisition and application of career management skills has become vital for the individual to be ready at a short notice to react successfully to any unforeseen changes in his/her chosen learning or career path. The review shows that the Member States regard the development of career management skills as something that is a lifelong and mostly self-monitored process. It involves choosing and setting personal learning and career goals as well as formulating strategies for achieving them. The idea is to establish a capacity which allows the individual to manage change in a constructive manner and to navigate through difficulties with appropriate tools and external support, including information, advice and guidance provided by professional experts.

Recently the Member States have been debating the concept of career management skills and how these skills can be acquired in a more systematic manner in different contexts (education, training, working, hobbies and leisure activities). Although they have different understandings of the concept, they mostly seem to agree that these skills can be characterised as something leading to and supporting improved motivation/confidence, enhanced self-esteem, increased sense of responsibility for self and future career, as well as higher personal and career aspirations. However, they are still some way off reaching a shared European understanding of the core essence of career management skills and meeting the challenges underpinning them.

There seems to be consensus about the importance of teaching career management skills throughout schooling, education and training. Curriculum developments in general education and in vocational education and training have been addressing career management related aspects in a more concise and structured manner in many countries. A wealth of guidance tools, materials and methods has been developed across Europe to support the acquisition of career management skills. At the same time, concern has been expressed about whether guidance counsellors and teachers currently possess the required competences and skills to help their clients with career management related matters.

For most countries a greater challenge is how to help people in working life become (more) aware of the need for career management skills and to support their acquisition. Across Europe there are examples of government initiatives in competence development for supporting jobseekers' skills upgrading as well as increasing their employability. Often guidance is quite well integrated in such



competence enhancing measures and gives the jobseeker an opportunity to explore career-related issues with a professional guidance counsellor. Public employment services have a key role to play in this context. Employers and social partners should also become more active and further support low-skilled workers' engagement in lifelong learning.

## 6.5. Synthesising conclusion

As important as the positive developments in the four priority areas of the Council resolution on lifelong guidance are (Council of the European Union, 2008b), countries should realise that the priority areas are 'only bits and pieces' of a coherent lifelong guidance system and on their own they do not create seamless all-age guidance service provision. The progress made until now in developing guidance policy coordination, quality assurance mechanisms, access to services and career management skills must be considered as necessary steps along the way to an integrated and holistically organised lifelong guidance system.

The results achieved to date can mostly be derived from bringing national governments and authorities (policy level), guidance communities (practice) and academic bodies (research) closer together and building collaboration, consensus and partnerships, locating assets and resources, identifying and engaging stakeholders, defining and completing joint goals and objectives, as well as balancing a diverse range of interests to achieve success. Increasing cooperation among the key players can be seen which aims at creating better synergies between the different sectors (education, training, employment), levels (European, national, regional, local) and guidance service providers (educational institutions, public employment services, guidance centres). In the spirit of this cooperation, the proposed future action in the four priority areas of the lifelong guidance resolution (Council of the European Union, 2008b) is derived from the good progress made to date and can be synthesised as follows.

### **(a) Guidance coordination and cooperation - being stronger together**

The movement from the traditionally reactive sector-based policy-making towards solid proactive cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder guidance policy collaboration will have to be further strengthened. Strategic planning and priority setting across the whole policy spectrum, supported by appropriate coordination between government departments, are necessary to integrate lifelong guidance fully in national lifelong learning and employment strategies as well as related legislation. In the context of the economic crisis, national authorities should pay

more attention to the role of guidance, especially in addressing the needs of at-risk groups and reinforcing links to related policy areas (such as youth, social and health care, immigration). Coherent and well-coordinated guidance policy development calls for an improved evidence-base to be used against future scenarios for the society and economy.

There is evidence to suggest that further improvement can come about only from joint policy action on a broad front and from a profound understanding of the complexities influencing guidance policy design, development, implementation and analysis. Member States should continue monitoring, assessing and verifying the wider range of attainments that can be attributed to guidance in the context of lifelong learning and active labour market policies. The primary aim should not necessarily be how to improve comparability between countries (as it is difficult to determine), but how new relevant evidence can be generated to support guidance policy action in national, regional, local and cross-sectoral contexts.

**(b) Quality – performing better together**

The development of quality in guidance is not an isolated process but, ideally, an integral crosscutting element in a comprehensive national quality system that encompasses both education and training as well as employment. The current challenge for the Member States is to manage quality in its totality and to define an integrated cross-sectoral/cross-administrative approach to the design, development and implementation of a comprehensive quality assurance mechanism with clearly defined quality standards and indicators. Strong policy-strategy level coordination, multiprofessional and interdisciplinary cooperation and a common language across education, training and employment sectors in developing and running quality assurance mechanisms for lifelong guidance will be required.

There seems to be an uneasy relationship between policy, practice and research. The findings of research studies are not always pertinent to the problems of guidance practitioners or of much practical value in policy-making. However, some studies have had considerable relevance to guidance service development and yet have not fully been taken up in the policy debate. Against the pressing need for better communication and a closer understanding across policy, practice and research, and before initiating further guidance research (in a field that has been widely studied), it might make more sense first to achieve good top-down and bottom-up cooperation and coordination in the countries.

**(c) Access – providing guidance services together through multiple channels**

There is nothing to equal in importance to easy access to high-quality guidance services for citizens. More targeted measures still have to be introduced in the Member States to achieve the shared objective of guaranteeing open access for all citizens to seamless information, advice and guidance to support them in making choices and managing transitions as learners and workers. Only in goal-oriented cross-sectoral coordination and cooperation can services be made more easily accessible for all individuals at a time, place and method most appropriate to their needs. A tremendous challenge across Europe is to manage how to apply modern information and communications technology to guidance delivery successfully and how best to assess its impact on guidance services, their providers and clients. An additional issue to be further examined is how does improved access to guidance services support the achievement of national education-training and labour market goals. Finally, the involvement of service users is necessary as to verify and validate that the quality system is effective in identifying, meeting and exceeding the requirements that the diverse users have.

**(d) Career management skills – involving, enabling and empowering together**

The Member States have been working towards establishing an infrastructure that supports all citizens' lifelong acquisition, application and further development of career management skills. However, substantial differences can be found in the extent to which education and employment sectors address the development of such skills. Ideally the acquisition of CMS should be well integrated into the individual's learning process and have concrete links to the knowledge and skills needed at work and in life in general. Future work in this area across Europe should focus on defining and operationalising the concept of career management skills in such a manner that it empowers all citizens – at all ages and in a variety of settings - to formulate and put in practice personal action plans for further learning, career management and other life goals. This can ultimately be expected to generate economic and social benefits to the Member States, such as higher educational attainment, increased employability, and more active civic engagement.

In final consideration, a future challenge for Europe will be to define the genuine characteristics of a lifelong guidance system and to agree on what needs to be done next to make such a system a reality to support fully all individuals' lifelong learning, sustainable employment, and greater social inclusion.

## List of abbreviations

ADHD	Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
AIKOS	Open information counselling and guidance system (Lithuania)
AKKU	Vocationally oriented adult education (Finland)
ALJ	Local action for young people (Luxembourg)
CMS	Career management skills
CLB	Pupil Guidance Centre (Belgium, Flemish Community)
DGVT	Directors General for Vocational Training
ECGC	European Career Guidance Counsellor
ECVET	European credit system for vocational education and training
EHEA	European higher education area
EKEP	National Centre for Vocational Orientation (Greece)
ELGPN	European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network
EQF	European qualification framework
ESCO	European skills, competences and occupations taxonomy
ESF	European Social Fund
EU	European Union
EURES	European Employment Service
EVGP	Educational and vocational guidance practitioner
FÁS	National Training and Employment Authority (Ireland)
FEDORA	European Forum for Student Guidance
FYROM	The former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia
IAEVG	International Association for Vocational and Educational Guidance
IAP	Individual action plan
IRIDA	Electronic Communication Platform for Vocational Guidance Specialists (Greece)
IVET	Initial vocational education and training
KESYP	Regional educational and career counselling centre (Greece)
NEET	Not in employment, education or training
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NQF	National qualifications framework
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PDP	Personal development plan
PES	Public employment services
RVCC	Recognition, validation and certification of competences (Portugal)

ULR	Union Learning Representative (UK)
UNIVA	Units for the Integration into an Active Life (Portugal)
VDAB	Flemish Employment Services and Vocational Training Agency (Belgium)
VET	Vocational education and training
VSDP	Vocational School Development Programme (Hungary)

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## Lifelong guidance across Europe: reviewing policy progress and future prospects

This Cedefop report reviews progress made across Europe during 2007-10 in developing guidance policy coordination, quality assurance mechanisms, access to services and career management skills. According to the review, the overall EU policy framework and changed economic conditions are bringing national governments and authorities (policy level), guidance communities (practice) and academic bodies (research) closer and building collaboration, consensus and partnerships. Together they are locating assets and resources, identifying and engaging stakeholders, defining and completing joint goals and objectives, and balancing a diverse range of interests in order to achieve success.

Increasing cooperation among guidance stakeholders aims at creating better synergies between the different sectors (education, training, employment), levels (European, national, regional, local) and guidance service providers (educational institutions, public employment services, guidance centres). A synthesising observation is that a future challenge for Europe will be to define the characteristics of a lifelong guidance system and to agree on what needs to be done next to make such a system a reality to support lifelong learning, better employability, sustainable employment, social inclusion and active citizenship for all.

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