



# PANORAMA

## From policy to practice

A systemic change to lifelong guidance  
in Europe





Cedefop

**From policy to practice**  
A systemic change to lifelong guidance in Europe

Ronald G. Sultana

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# Foreword

In recent years, there has been strong political momentum in guidance. Career information, guidance and counselling are increasingly seen as key strategic tools for implementing lifelong learning policies, more efficient investments in education and training, as well as employment strategies at regional and national levels.

Still, emergence of a knowledge-based society requires that guidance provision is conceived to encourage individuals to continue to develop their skills and competences throughout their lives, linked to changing needs in the labour market. In May 2004, the European Union Council Resolution on lifelong guidance called for reforming guidance policies and practices to support learning at all ages and in a broad range of settings. Special attention is to be paid to broadening access to guidance provision, improving quality assurance mechanisms, empowering citizens to manage their own career and learning, strengthening the coordination of guidance services and setting up structures for policy development involving key guidance stakeholders at national and regional levels.

This report sets out to document how much progress is being achieved in reforming guidance provision, since Cedefop launched its first review on the state of development (Cedefop; Sultana, 2004). The study is part of Cedefop's efforts to support evidence-based policy-making and steering reforms in career guidance, through progress monitoring and thematic reviews, analysis of good practices and mutual learning. All European Union Member States plus Norway have reported on the extent to which they have addressed the priority areas identified in the Council Resolution. The report outlines significant developments and trends of career guidance systems and policies. It also highlights interesting practice from which policy-makers and practitioners can draw inspiration. The study also identifies key challenges that need to be addressed if Member States are to move towards providing quality lifelong guidance.

Guidance provision and systems in Europe are at very different stages of development. This study shows that although Member States have made important progress, much commitment is still needed to implement fully the lifelong guidance Council Resolution and build up consistent and accessible guidance systems, which will truly accompany citizens in key transition points of their lives. We hope this report will stimulate debate among policy-makers, practitioners and researchers on how to make lifelong guidance a reality.

Aviana Bulgarelli  
Director of Cedefop



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- the National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling (NICEC), professor Tony Watts who provided critical feedback on the report;

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## Executive summary

This report documents the progress of European countries in implementing the priorities identified by the May 2004 Education Council Resolution on guidance throughout life (Council of the European Union, 2004). Based on reviews carried out by two EU agencies (Cedefop and the European Training Foundation (ETF)), the OECD and World Bank, the ‘guidance resolution’ highlights five key areas for special attention. Member States were invited to develop strategic responses to realise the potential of career guidance to fulfil four public-policy goals - namely lifelong learning, social inclusion, labour market efficiency and economic development.

The five key areas are:

- (a) implementing lifelong guidance systems, a system of linked service provision catering for citizens’ needs for educational and occupational guidance throughout life;
- (b) broadening access to guidance by making delivery and use easier for citizens whenever and wherever needed;
- (c) strengthening quality assurance mechanisms on all aspects of guidance service provision, including information and products;
- (d) refocusing guidance provision to strengthen citizens’ competences to manage learning and career developments;
- (e) strengthening structures for policy and systems development at national and regional levels.

At the heart of the resolution is a commitment to the citizen as the pivotal reference point for all guidance services. The resolution strives to encourage development of service provision – in both education and employment sectors – to empower citizens, through personal competence building and other community support, to construct and implement a life plan. The resolution signposts some of the means through which Member States can provide for their citizens. Among the more important are: involving stakeholders (ministries, social partners, NGOs, practitioners, civil society) in policy and systems development; developing structures to ensure cooperation and coordination between services at national, regional and local levels; and shaping services to meet high-quality criteria through, for instance, improved initial and continuing training of guidance practitioners, as well as through Europe-wide and international cooperation. Such cooperation helps to ensure maximum returns in impact on policies, systems and practices at EU and national levels.

This report documents the extent to which European countries have succeeded in addressing these central issues.

The first chapter outlines the context that led to the Council Resolution, putting at centre stage several overlapping guidance reviews carried out from 2000 onwards, which helped place career guidance high on the EU and international policy agenda. It then gives an account of the methodology used to collect the data that are the basis of the progress report. As well as a questionnaire, to which all 27 Member States plus Norway responded, further information and insights were culled from various sources, including research reports and outcomes of mutual learning events and other forums - actual or virtual - organised by Cedefop.

The second chapter discusses lifelong career guidance. It argues that the ‘paradigm shift’, while contested, is nevertheless helpful in signalling the real, if somewhat unpredictable, socioeconomic dynamics shaping the nature and scope of career guidance in today’s world. It draws on various sources to identify some key features and building blocks of a lifelong guidance system. It indicates how European countries can be placed on a continuum that represents the shift from traditional forms of guidance provision to a more appropriate and relevant model for knowledge-based economies.

Subsequent chapters focus on five of the main building blocks needed to construct a lifelong guidance system, corresponding to the five key areas identified by the Council Resolution. In each case, the chapters identify the central issues to be considered, the progress by different European countries, and the challenges to be addressed. Each chapter takes care to highlight the learning achieved through initiatives implemented in different national and regional contexts, thus promoting development of a Europe-wide community of reflective practice.

Chapter three focuses on the challenge of implementing lifelong guidance systems. The key task is to ensure that, from the citizen’s point of view, services are coherent and holistically organised. The efforts of several countries to establish structures to ensure systemically-linked provision are described. Pride of place is given to establishing national guidance forums that bring a wide range of providers and stakeholders together. While such structures are relatively new, enough experience has been accumulated to identify both factors that can contribute to their success and challenges that must be addressed to reap the benefits of such partnerships.

Chapter four considers increased access to career guidance. This is important because all the evidence suggests that demand for services is greater than supply. Therefore governments have to improve provision despite tight resource environments. Responses to the survey indicate that many have expanded services in an effort to reach out to all potential users, and especially to those citizens who are most in need. Most are exploiting new information and communication technologies to ensure greater access; at the same time, awareness that not all citizens are digitally literate has led to some countries making special efforts to redesign their services to become more effective in everyday lives. Despite all this, it is clear that significant numbers of citizens across Europe still do not have easy access to information, advice and support that are needed to manage learning and occupational pathways.

Chapter five considers attempts by different countries to ensure quality in service provision. As guidance reviews have already indicated, this area is notoriously difficult to address. The nature and complexity of career guidance does not make effectiveness or outcomes easy to

measure. None the less, several countries report making special efforts to ensure quality. Various models have evolved across Europe, ranging from administrative-centred models to more practitioner- or user-oriented ones. Country updates and supplementary data indicate that while quality assurance is increasingly on the agenda of several providers, (a) it is still missing in several countries, (b) where it is present, it tends to draw largely on administrative, top-down models, and (c) as a general rule, there is restricted application of quality assurance mechanisms. Thus, quality assurance (QA) strategies may only be implemented in some sectors and relevant to only some services, or even fail to target comprehensively all clients the services are meant to cater for. These and other challenges need to be faced by the career guidance community, both in the labour market sector – where public employment services have made most headway in implementing QA approaches – and the education sector.

The resolution stresses that the citizen has to be empowered to manage decisions about – and pathways through – learning, training and employment. Chapter six focuses on learning and career management. It documents the ways in which several countries have introduced a range of initiatives to ensure that young people in particular acquire the competences needed for modern living and, through improved understanding and skills development, to attain a greater influence in shaping their own lives in more self-fulfilling ways. Among the more promising of these initiatives are curriculum frameworks that clearly set out learning objectives and approaches that privilege experiential learning, thus ensuring more effective integration of individual skills throughout life.

Chapter seven considers how structures for policy and systems development can be strengthened. Three ways are explored. First is the range of partnerships that can be formed to ease such policy and systems development. Professional associations and research centres specialising in career guidance have a particularly significant role to play, especially if national and regional bodies are in place to help develop a guidance-related policy vision, and to implement that vision. Second, such policy frameworks require suitably trained practitioners with the knowledge and competence base to support and implement the shift towards lifelong guidance provision. Country updates provide many interesting initiatives in initial and continuing training of guidance personnel in the education and labour market sectors, using ICT and web-based forums to complement more traditional instructional strategies to promote the exchange of good practice. Third, policy and systems development can be strengthened not only through critical reflection at regional or national levels, but also by making better use of European Commission instruments to promote policy learning at European level. As country updates and supplementary material clearly show a vibrant and dynamic career guidance field across Europe. Much value can be added if Member States share their experiences in transregional and transnational guidance forums, peer learning events, and knowledge and policy networks.

The report concludes with a synthesis of the challenges to be addressed in each of the five areas highlighted by the resolution. It argues that while much has been achieved by different countries, much remains to be done to develop and consolidate lifelong guidance policies and systems. To do this, both Member State and EU structures have a part to play.

# 1. Introduction

This report highlights the main achievements of Member States in providing career guidance services<sup>(2)</sup> to European citizens since 2004 (Cedefop; Sultana 2004). Several international guidance reviews (OECD, 2004; Sultana, 2003b; Sweet, 2007; Sultana and Watts, 2007; Cedefop, Sultana, 2004; Watts and Fretwell, 2004; Sultana and Watts, 2005) have paved the way for a consensus on measures required to ensure that career guidance services respond to the needs of citizens in a knowledge-based society. The above reviews indicated that career guidance contributes to meeting public-policy goals (lifelong learning, social inclusion, labour market efficiency and economic development) that are closely linked with the Lisbon Council (2000) objectives<sup>(3)</sup>.

Guidance has become part of wider education, training and labour market reforms and a key component of national lifelong learning and employment strategies. The Copenhagen declaration (2002), Maastricht (2004) and Helsinki (2006) communiqués emphasised the need to strengthen policies, systems and practices that support information, guidance and counselling at all levels of education, training and employment<sup>(4)</sup>. The Bergen communiqué (2005), as part of the Bologna process in higher education, stresses the role of guidance and counselling in widening access to learning and supporting social inclusion<sup>(5)</sup>.

The European social partners are taking practical steps to place career guidance at the core of the political agenda. They advocate strengthening dialogue on and partnerships for guidance as one strategy to achieve lifelong development of competences<sup>(6)</sup>. Ensuring inclusive labour

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<sup>(2)</sup> Career guidance refers to services and activities intended to assist individuals of any age and at any point throughout their lives to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers. Such services may be found in schools, universities and colleges, in training institutions, in public employment services, in the workplace, in the voluntary or community sector and in the private sector. The activities may take place on an individual or group basis and may be face-to-face or at a distance (including helplines and web-based services). They include career information provision (in print, ICT-based and other forms), assessment and self-assessment tools, counselling interviews, career education programmes (to help individuals develop their self-awareness, opportunity awareness, and career management skills), taster programmes (to sample options before choosing them), work search programmes, and transition services.

<sup>(3)</sup> For more information on the education and training elements of Lisbon go to: [http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/education\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/education_en.html) [cited 3.3.2008].

<sup>(4)</sup> ‘Copenhagen declaration’, Declaration of the European Ministers of Vocational Education and Training and the European Commission on enhanced cooperation in vocational education and training, (30 November 2002); [http://ec.europa.eu/education/copenhagen/copenhagen\\_declaration\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/copenhagen/copenhagen_declaration_en.pdf) [cited 3.3.2008].

‘Maastricht communiqué on the future priorities of enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training’ (14 December 2004); [http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/ip/docs/maastricht\\_com\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/ip/docs/maastricht_com_en.pdf)

‘Helsinki communiqué on enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training’ (5 December 2006); [http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/helsinkicom\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/helsinkicom_en.pdf) [cited 3.3.2008].

<sup>(5)</sup> The Bergen communiqué on the European higher education area - Achieving the goals (19-20 May 2005) [http://archiv.bmbwk.gv.at/medienpool/12742/bergen\\_communique2005\\_en.pdf](http://archiv.bmbwk.gv.at/medienpool/12742/bergen_communique2005_en.pdf) [cited 3.3.2008].

<sup>(6)</sup> The framework of actions for the lifelong development of competences and qualifications of the European social partners <http://www.etuc.org/a/580> [cited 3.3.2008].

markets through active and preventive measures (such as early identification of skill needs, job search assistance, guidance and training) is included in the integrated guidelines for growth and jobs 2008-2010 <sup>(7)</sup> for the European employment strategy. The joint employment report 2007-2008 <sup>(8)</sup> also indicates that Member States have combined income support and activation policies to encourage inclusion of people furthest from the labour market.

Integrated lifelong guidance systems in lifelong learning, future skills and qualifications, social inclusion and immigration have been addressed in the joint progress report on implementing the Education and training 2010 work programme <sup>(9)</sup>. The Action plan for adult learning (European Commission, 2007) states that high quality information and guidance should be closer to adult learners <sup>(10)</sup>, and the Communication on promoting young people's full participation in education, employment and society (European Commission, 2007) invites Member States to avoid mismatches between education outcomes and labour market requirements by developing better counselling opportunities for young people <sup>(11)</sup>.

Finally, the recently established European lifelong guidance policy network (ELGPN) <sup>(12)</sup> promotes cooperation at Member State level on lifelong guidance and supports setting up national, regional or both types of structures to implement the priorities in the 2004 guidance resolution. The handbook on National lifelong guidance policy forums (Cedefop, forthcoming 2008) is part of Cedefop's contribution to help Member States strengthen structures for more effective guidance policy formulation and implementation. Outstanding initiatives and good practice, as well as insight into strategic choices and experimental approaches used by Member States to organise their national guidance forums are highlighted in this book.

## 1.1. The Council Resolution on lifelong guidance

Europe today is highly diverse and pluralistic. It faces several simultaneous and parallel development processes. National guidance forums are expected to deal with the challenges that a more fluid labour market and new demands for learning pose to citizens throughout

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<sup>(7)</sup> Integrated guidelines for growth and jobs 2008-2010, COM(2007), 803 final; [http://ec.europa.eu/growthandjobs/pdf/european-dimension-200712-annual-progress-report/200712-annual-report-integrated-guidelines\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/growthandjobs/pdf/european-dimension-200712-annual-progress-report/200712-annual-report-integrated-guidelines_en.pdf) [cited 3.3.2008].

<sup>(8)</sup> Draft Joint employment report 2007-2008 [http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/employment\\_strategy/pdf/jer2007\\_2008\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/employment_strategy/pdf/jer2007_2008_en.pdf) [cited 3.3.2008]

<sup>(9)</sup> Draft 2008 joint progress report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the Education and training 2010 work programme – Delivering lifelong learning for knowledge, creativity and innovation (5723/08) <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/08/st05/st05723.en08.pdf> [cited 3.3.2008].

<sup>(10)</sup> Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions Action Plan on Adult learning - It is always a good time to learn COM(2007) 558 final [http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/adult/com558\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/adult/com558_en.pdf) [cited 3.3.2008].

<sup>(11)</sup> Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions on Promoting young people's full participation in education, employment and society [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/-site/en/com/2007/com2007\\_0498en01.pdf](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/-site/en/com/2007/com2007_0498en01.pdf) [cited 3.3.2008].

<sup>(12)</sup> European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network's homepage <http://elgpn.eu> [cited 3.3.2008].

their lives. These forums are frequently called on to inform and advise the government and public authorities on the policy implications of changing societal conditions for the delivery and content of guidance and counselling. It is evident that the sociodemographic, educational and occupational, linguistic, cultural, ethnic, religious and other characteristics of different groups of citizens require multifaceted policies to improve opportunities in Member States.

The complexity of governance makes it essential to promote long-term strategic thinking and planning in lifelong guidance. The need to reform policies, systems and practices for guidance in Europe was reinforced through the guidance resolution (2004). It invited Member States to examine national guidance provision in the education, training and employment sectors and identified the following five key areas:

- (a) implementing lifelong guidance systems, a system of linked service provision catering for citizens' needs for educational and occupational guidance throughout life;
- (b) broadening access to guidance by making delivery and use easier for citizens whenever and wherever needed;
- (c) strengthening quality assurance mechanisms on all aspects of guidance service provision, including information and products;
- (d) refocusing guidance provision to strengthen citizens' competences to manage learning and career developments;
- (e) strengthening structures for policy and systems development at national and regional levels.

At the centre of the Council Resolution is a paradigm shift in how career guidance is conceptualised and delivered, and how to make the transition from traditional models to a lifelong guidance approach.

The European Commission's lifelong guidance expert group<sup>(13)</sup> had a unique position in developing career guidance and pooling European guidance expertise. The common reference tools for improving lifelong guidance policies and systems (Cedefop, 2005)<sup>(14)</sup> were drafted by the expert group. These tools aim to help Member States improve and modernise their policies and systems through self-assessment and self-development of guidance provision at national, regional and local levels. An additional instrument for policy-makers to tackle issues central to the effective delivery of career guidance services is the Career guidance handbook for policy-makers (OECD and European Commission, 2004).

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<sup>(13)</sup> The expert group (2002-07), set up by DG Education and Culture, was acting in support of the Education and training 2010 work programme. Members reflected a lifelong learning cross-sector approach with civil society at the centre. For more information on the expert group, its tasks, mandate and progress reports, go to: [http://www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/Projects\\_Networks/Guidance/expertgroup/](http://www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/Projects_Networks/Guidance/expertgroup/) [cited 3.3.2008].

<sup>(14)</sup> The common reference tools are available in several languages on Cedefop's virtual community 'The European Commission's expert group on lifelong guidance'. To join the virtual community, see: [http://communities.trainingvillage.gr/lifelong\\_guidance](http://communities.trainingvillage.gr/lifelong_guidance) [cited 3.3.2008].



Further, Cedefop in cooperation with the expert group, launched three studies to help address key areas linked to the goals in the resolution. These included a study on quality guidelines and criteria in guidance (Cedefop; Henderson et al., 2004), a study on indicators and benchmarks for lifelong guidance (<sup>15</sup>), and a study on career development at work (Cedefop, forthcoming 2008).

In 2005-06, Cedefop coorganised with Danish, German and Finnish authorities three mutual learning meetings to discuss progress made in several countries in areas identified by the reviews and pinpointed in the Council Resolution. The meeting in Nuremberg (October 2005) focused on indicators and benchmarks for guidance and the meeting in Copenhagen (January 2006) on quality assurance in guidance provision. The third meeting in Helsinki (May 2006) dealt with facilitating and broadening lifelong access to career guidance.

Cedefop and the expert group were key organisers of the Finnish EU conference (2006) which, with the French EU Presidency conference on guidance scheduled for September 2008, helped give career guidance greater policy visibility at national, European and international levels.

## 1.2. Methodology

In reporting on progress in implementing the resolution to date, in both development of policies and concrete actions to improve guidance provision, the report draws on the lessons learned from the reviews, studies, meetings, and initiatives referred to above.

Primary data on such progress were collected using a questionnaire designed and sent out by Cedefop in cooperation with the organisers of the Finnish EU Presidency conference referred to above. Guidance experts from 31 countries (the then EU-25, the two new Member States (Bulgaria and Romania), Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey) were invited to report on the extent to which they had addressed the five key areas in the resolution. A single page questionnaire calling for brief national updates was sent and 20 were received by the conference organisers (<sup>16</sup>). A keynote paper presented at the conference outlined the main outcomes of preliminary analysis of the responses. The conference also gave countries the opportunity to provide additional information on the guidance resolution objectives.

Four challenges had to be faced to turn the preliminary analysis into a fully-fledged report. First, attempts were made to generate more country responses, focusing on EU Member States

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(<sup>15</sup>) den Boer, et al. (2005) *Indicators and benchmarks for lifelong guidance*. Thessaloniki: Cedefop. Available from Internet: [http://www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/upload/Projects\\_Networks/Guidance/expertgroup/Thematic %20Projects/Final\\_report.pdf](http://www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/upload/Projects_Networks/Guidance/expertgroup/Thematic%20Projects/Final_report.pdf) [cited 3.3.2008].

(<sup>16</sup>) Responses were sent by the following countries: Austria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Sweden, Slovenia, Spain and the UK. The template that countries were asked to follow in providing their brief update of progress is presented in Annex 1 to this report.

in particular, to secure data from all 27 countries. Guidance experts from Belgium (Flemish and French-speaking communities), Bulgaria, Greece, France, Hungary, Poland, Portugal and Slovakia were encouraged to complete the questionnaire. Experts from each country responded to the second round of invitations. Accordingly, this report, unlike the preliminary study presented at the Finnish EU Presidency conference, includes progress reports from all EU Member States and Norway, with information about Belgium (French community) obtained from supplementary sources.

A second challenge was the somewhat minimalist responses. Many responses lacked the detail and depth required for a thorough evaluation of progress in implementing the guidance resolution. Several reports failed to distinguish sufficiently between activities and policies being planned, those being implemented and those already in place prior to the guidance resolution. To address this, follow-up face-to-face, telephone or e-mail interviews were held with experts from eight countries (Germany, France, Italy, Malta, Poland, Slovenia, Finland and the UK) to clarify points or deepen understanding of specific issues raised.

A third related challenge arose because the status of the persons who responded to the questionnaire differed significantly from country to country. While some responses came from experts who were knowledgeable about what was happening in their national contexts, and who were able to make an informed judgement on what should be reported, other responses were submitted by individuals from agencies that clearly did not have a comprehensive grasp of the overall picture. This was particularly true for those countries with decentralised forms of governance, where service provision differs significantly from one region to another. In some cases, additional information to the original response was solicited from individual experts or from professional associations, in an attempt to gain a more complete understanding of the situation in a particular country.

Finally, as was expected given the remit of the Finnish EU Presidency conference and the national units that were solicited for a response, country updates focused primarily – though in many cases not exclusively – on guidance developments in the education sector. In the analysis, therefore, data on guidance in the employment sector was also drawn from the recent study commissioned by the European Commission (DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities) (Sultana and Watts, 2005), as well as from the information tabled at the mutual learning events and posted on Cedefop’s virtual community on lifelong guidance.

Despite all these efforts to secure improved data on the state of implementation of the Council resolution in Europe, the value of the present analysis is mainly pedagogical in nature. In other words, the document should serve as a learning tool that helps readers identify some of the main issues surrounding the five key areas identified by the Council Resolution, as well as strategies and policy options that can be considered and emulated in the attempt to provide services more effectively within the lifelong guidance paradigm. While much of this report reflects the situation in Member States – a claim backed by analysis of guidance services in other studies, as well as a review of relevant literature in international journals and other publications – caution must be exercised when making claims on progress achieved. It is quite

possible that some countries have made greater strides forward than they are credited with in this report, while others are still struggling with policies which questionnaire responses have given the impression that they have already implemented. Caution must also be exercised in attributing progress in the shift to a lifelong guidance paradigm to the resolution itself. Not only are causal explanations difficult to affirm with any great degree of confidence when attempting to account for human actions in general, but also in this particular case one must be careful not to give the impression that developments in the career guidance field are divorced from national, regional and local dynamics, or that they wholly or mostly depend on supranational stimuli, such as those represented by the resolution.

Questionnaire responses were subjected to a systematic textual analysis, and coded and indexed according to categories and properties of categories that could throw light on the five main points focused on in the Council Resolution.

The following chapters draw on the responses and supplementary material and deal in turn with each of the five key areas identified by the resolution. However, before providing a synthesis and analysis of the key findings, it is necessary to consider (a) what is meant by lifelong career guidance, (b) the general state of career guidance in Europe, particularly in relation to the presumed shift towards the lifelong paradigm. The position underpinning the resolution and much of the work carried out on guidance by the European Commission is that the interests of citizens and of society can best be served if policy-makers and practitioners reconsider the service from a lifelong, lifespan perspective. It is therefore important that there is a shared understanding of what is meant by lifelong guidance and identification of its key constitutive features.

## 2. The lifelong career guidance paradigm

Stress on the need to provide guidance support throughout life, and of ensuring that guidance services are available when and where needed, has become one of the leitmotifs running through many strands of the European Commission's work. The Maastricht communiqué on the future priorities of enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training (European Commission, 2002), for instance, also includes guidance as a priority at national level and invites Member States, inter alia, to use common instruments, references and principles to support guidance throughout life. Views reinforcing the importance of lifelong access to guidance are further echoed in the European social charter (Council of Europe, 1961, Article 9), in the International Labour Organisation's Recommendation 195 concerning human resources development: education, training and lifelong learning (ILO, 2005), and in the European employment guidelines.

### 2.1. Lifelong guidance: a contested notion

Focus on providing guidance throughout life reflects developments in the labour market which suggest that, in knowledge-based societies and economies, transitions between education, training and work are becoming less linear, and that consequently skills in managing education, training and occupational pathways are increasingly needed by all citizens throughout their lifespan. Emphasis on the need for developing competences in managing career and learning in a context of increased economic vulnerability has given rise to a mixed response<sup>(17)</sup>.

Some view the whole discourse around the need for lifelong learning and training, and consequently the lifelong need for guidance and other forms of support, with suspicion. They argue that it is not helpful or productive to speak of 'knowledge-based economies' in generic terms, given that the labour market still includes many low-skilled jobs. As Grubb and Lazerson (2004, p. 245) note in relation to the extreme claims made on behalf of the knowledge-based economy, particularly in the US context, 'the knowledge revolution has directly touched only a minority of jobs at this point, perhaps 1 to 5 % of all non-governmental workers ... Some claims, such as the statement that college for all is "just common sense", are simply absurd when only 30 % of job openings require any kind of postsecondary education'<sup>(18)</sup>. In knowledge-poor sectors, then, much of the discourse framing the lifelong learning/guidance debate might well be irrelevant.

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<sup>(17)</sup> See Kuhn and Sultana (2006) for an overview of such positions in relation to lifelong learning.

<sup>(18)</sup> Livingstone (2003, 2004) draws on several sources to make similar points regarding Canada, where knowledge workers still made up less than 10 % of the labour force in 1996. He also estimates that for the US labour force only about 20 % of job openings will require a university degree in the early part of this century, compared with over a third of new entrants who have one, while the vast majority of new jobs will require only short-term training. Livingstone's conclusions are that in aggregate terms, the gradual changes

Some also argue not only that it is unhelpful, but, from the point of view of citizenship rights, that it is dangerous to go along with the notion of a paradigmatic shift in the economy – and consequently of a definitive break in the way learning and guidance are conceptualised. The danger lies in the fact that such arguments are informed by a neo-liberal ideology and ethic that individualises public woes: in the lifelong learning/guidance discourse, it is the entrepreneurial individual who, as a ‘good citizen’, must constantly engage in learning/training to maintain ‘use value’ in what has been dubbed ‘the ruthless economy’, where ‘market reform insists that we learn, all the time, about everything, exhaustively and exhaustingly all through our lives’ (Seddon and Mellor, 2006, p. 209). In such a perspective, learning is a commodity, with the individual being construed as an innovative entrepreneur, a ‘can-do’ achiever striving for individual and particular benefits. Guidance, in this perspective, is at best a palliative, helping individuals ‘cope’ with conditions not of their own making, and at worst a service that, unwittingly, colludes with powerful vested interests in shifting the blame for poor life-chances from the economy on to the individual. In such cases, notions of ‘lifelong guidance’ merely force individuals to come to terms with increased vulnerability on the labour market, and to accept responsibility for that.

Such critiques – which featured at both the mutual learning events and in the discussion on Cedefop’s virtual community on lifelong guidance – are important, and indeed this document should be seen as a contributor to that debate, rather than as pre-empting or foreclosing it. The critiques are not new, and have been helpfully synthesised by Watts (1996) in his measured analysis of sociopolitical ideologies in guidance. Neither are such critiques likely to wither away, given that guidance is an activity firmly located within contradictions generated by the ways in which economies in late capitalism are structured, and its room for manoeuvre is consequently limited by this broader context <sup>(19)</sup>.

Despite such limitations, the position adopted in this document is pragmatic <sup>(20)</sup> in at least two respects. First, it recognises guidance as an activity that, while running the risk of being exclusively framed in an economic rationalist perspective – one concerned more about labour market outcomes than social and civic outcomes – can also be mobilised as ‘reclaimed citizenship’. There is therefore agreement with Magalhães and Stoer (2006, p. 88) who argue, with reference to the broader politics of educational activity, that ‘to see amongst the threats and opportunities that are arising from emergent social dynamics only the “invisible” hand, inevitably dirty, of neoliberalism may be a way of refusing renewed forms of political agency’. The Council Resolution, firmly in line with the Lisbon declaration, is necessarily framed by five distinct (and essentially contradictory) perspectives – namely, competition, the knowledge-based economy, sustainable growth, more and better jobs, and greater social

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in skill upgrading of the general job structure lie in contrast to the exponential increase in investment in education and training, and lead to underemployment – in terms of general unemployment, involuntary reduced employment and educational attainments exceeding job requirements.

<sup>(19)</sup> See also Darmon et al. (2006) and Kopac et al. (2006).

<sup>(20)</sup> The term is here being used in the Deweyian sense, whereby the position adopted relates to beliefs and dispositions which qualify as true or false depending on how helpful they prove in inquiry and in action.

cohesion <sup>(21)</sup>). But it does transform conceptualising career guidance through its insistence on the centrality of the citizen in the many facets of the service (use of the word ‘citizen’ rather than ‘client’ is in itself significant).

The present document builds on this focus on the citizen to argue in favour of a guidance service inspired by a desire to empower citizens to understand and gain some control over conditions generated by what has been described as a ‘risk society’ (Beck, 1992), where lifelong job tenure and guaranteed economic security are increasingly threatened features in the social contract between the State and the individual. In such a context, career guidance is seen as one aspect of the State’s duty to provide support to its citizens as they navigate the challenging social and economic vicissitudes of contemporary life. In this sense, career guidance is both a public and private good: it can have a positive impact both on society and on the personal development of the individual, stemming from the role that it plays in assisting people to make decisions on learning opportunities, promoting active citizenship, and so on. Delivered in this framework, guidance can improve work satisfaction and personal and occupational fulfillment. It can also contribute to attaining life balance, social cohesion, and more active citizenship.

The present document is also pragmatic as it sets out to show there is a shift in the way career guidance is being conceptualised and delivered across Europe. While the Council Resolution is correct in pointing out that existing policies, systems and practices for guidance do not quite match the demand of knowledge-based economies and societies, the earlier Cedefop career guidance review (Cedefop; Sultana, 2004) already indicated some important shifts in some countries (see Table 1 for a summary of that review). It was suggested that different Member States – and regions within these States – can be placed along a continuum, where the starting point represents a traditional approach to guidance, and where the opposite end represents a new approach inspired by new economic and social realities, and/or by the lifelong guidance discourse itself. Representation the situation as a continuum is useful because it helps us understand the dynamic nature of the range of responses to the challenges represented by the shift away from a model that emphasises one-off decision-making at key and stable transition points, towards one that supports and accompanies decision-making throughout life. The notion of a continuum also reminds us that changes are not necessarily linear or moving in the same direction: some initiatives can move towards one pole of the continuum, while others (in a different or the same sector) may well be regressive in this respect. It is important to revisit this earlier synthesis, as it helps put flesh on the bones of the concept of ‘lifelong guidance’, and to situate the Council Resolution objectives in a larger picture.

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<sup>(21)</sup> For a discussion of the essentially contradictory nature of these five strands, see Kuhn and Sultana (2006), and Dale and Robertson (2006).

Table 1: Shifts in the direction of a lifelong career guidance model

<i>From a service ...</i>	<i>To a service ...</i>
<b>The nature of guidance:</b>	
considered peripheral	that is central, a key responsibility for government in partnership with others
that draws its rationale and tools from psychology	that is more multidisciplinary
that considers opportunities in the context of a nation State or region ...	that promotes student and worker mobility across Europe
<b>Whom guidance is to be provided to:</b>	
aimed largely at secondary level students	that caters for the needs of all learners
available to unemployed youth and adults	that caters for within/between career moves
targeting risk groups	that is available more broadly
<b>When guidance is to be provided:</b>	
mainly at key decision points	that is lifelong
that is 'curative' and provided at crisis points	that is educative, empowering citizens with learning and career management skills, preparing for wise decision-making throughout life
<b>Where guidance is to be provided:</b>	
offered only in institutional sites	that is also available in leisure sites, the community, and at home
formally bounded in time and space	that is ubiquitous
<b>Who provides guidance:</b>	
exclusively provided by the state	also provided by community organisations, trade unions, employers and other private entities
delivered only by guidance staff	that includes input from stakeholders and others
staffed by non-specialised personnel	that requires pre- and in-service training
that tends to focus on personal and educational guidance issues	that gives due importance to career guidance
that is poorly professionalised	that has clear entry and career progression routes
staffed by same-level personnel	that includes different staff categories, including paraprofessional workers
<b>How guidance is to be provided:</b>	
that focuses on provision	that focuses on self-access and self-service with appropriate levels of assistance when needed
that is centrally managed	that is decentralised, but monitored centrally
that is largely homogenous, irrespective of client diversity	that is differentiated, responding to specific needs
that is segmented according to sector	that values cross-sector collaboration

<i>From a service ...</i>	<i>To a service ...</i>
that works with individuals	that maximises its impact by also working with groups
available to students outside the curriculum	that permeates guidance issues through the curriculum in a planned, coordinated manner
that demands guidance staff to fulfil multiple roles	that encourages specialisation in service delivery
that is unregulated	that has codes of conduct and standards of practice
that fails to connect education and labour market data	that uses ICT to consolidate different data
that is underresearched	that is regularly evaluated and is systematically reflexive

Source: Cedefop; Sultana, 2004.

This account of important shifts taking place in career guidance across Europe, based on country responses to the 2004 survey, suggests that restructuring is taking place. Further work has since been done at European level both to reflect on these shifts and to some extent to try to shape them, by linking the features of a lifelong guidance system, the means to implement a system which exhibits these features, and the principles that should underpin it. Reference is made in particular to the reflections and proposals of the European Commission's lifelong guidance expert group (see for example 'Key features of a systems model of lifelong guidance for European countries' – especially Sections 2 and 4 of the 2005 Cedefop publication *Improving lifelong guidance policies and systems: using common European reference tools*) as well as to the 10 features of lifelong guidance systems identified in the synthesis report of the OECD review (2004, pp. 26, 138).

Several of these elements – which can also be referred to as building blocks – of a lifelong guidance system are presented in Figure 1 below, and will be referred to constantly in the present report. Here, too, one notes the central position of the citizens and insistence that citizens are legally entitled to supportive guidance services where and when needed<sup>(22)</sup>. Other key features are that such services should empower citizens by providing them with the skills and competences needed to decode the world around them and make informed choices as they manage their learning and career pathways. Such services should put citizens' interests first, and should set out to be as effective as possible by involving stakeholders in service design

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<sup>(22)</sup> This is in stark contrast to the views on learning promoted by the Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe (UNICE) which, as Stuart and Greenwood (2006) note, not only unrelentingly stress economic competitiveness and employability in their approach to lifelong learning (LLL), but have rejected the European Trade Union Council's (ETUC) attempt to advocate LLL as an individual right. The notion that citizens are legally entitled to guidance services when and where needed has been contested by some countries fearing that such entitlement also carries with it a right to redress.

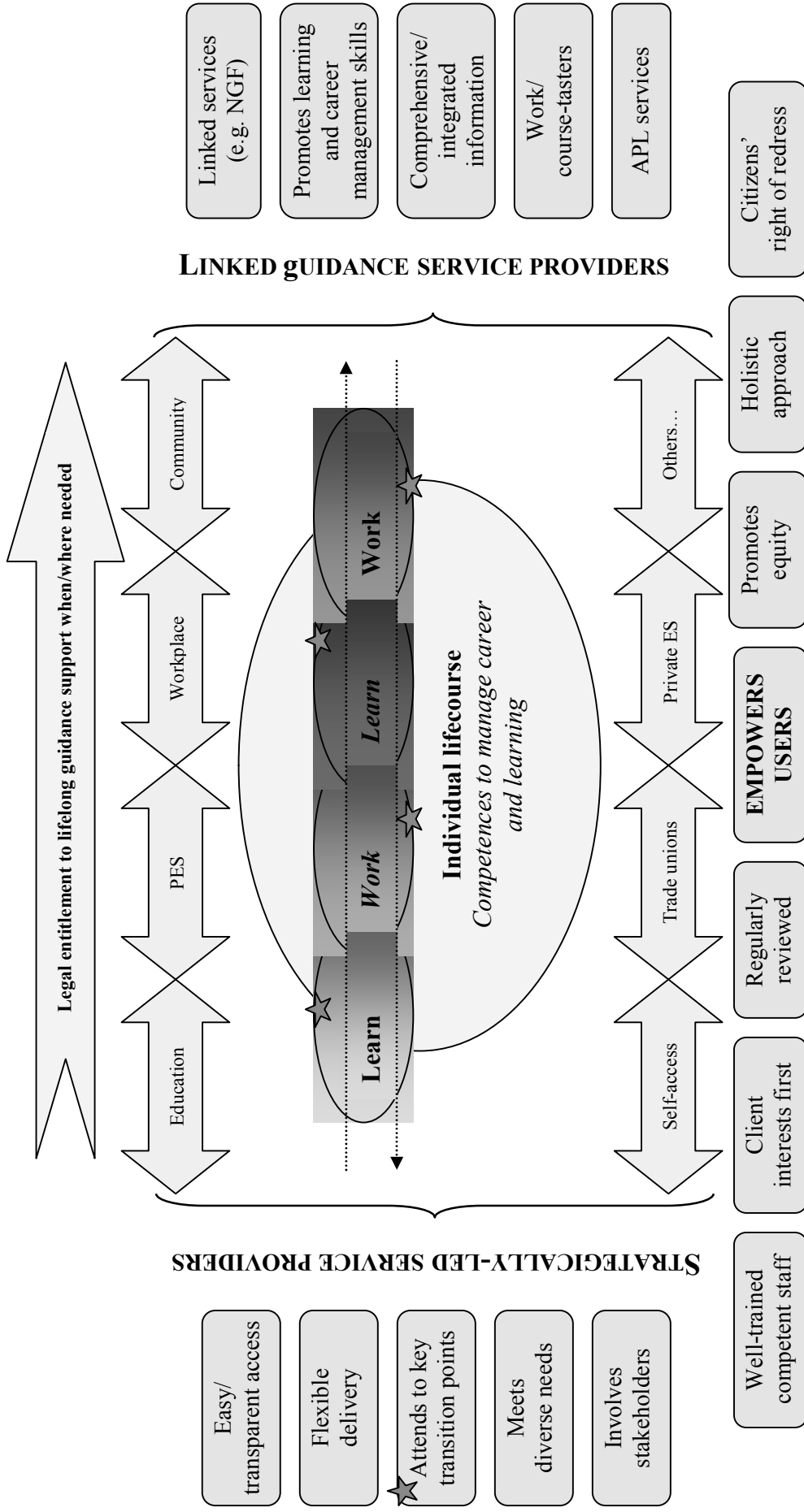


and provision, and by ensuring that they are regularly reviewed and are delivered by well-trained, competent staff.

A guidance service in a lifelong perspective is sensitive to the diverse needs and life situations of clients, and responds to these needs by simplifying access through flexible delivery modes rather than through a one-size-fits-all approach. Such a service is also perceived by users to be ‘lifelong’, in the sense that they experience it holistically, as seamless, linked provision rather than as a set of sequential and fragmented efforts, where information on education, training and employment fail to connect with the individual’s search for fulfillment throughout life.

These and other building blocks that help construct a lifelong guidance ‘system’ should not be considered as a disembodied blueprint that is equally relevant and applicable, irrespective of specificities of context. Rather, they are another entry point into an important conversation on how guidance can best serve citizens.

Figure 1: Aspects of a national lifelong guidance system



Source: Compiled for this report by R. Sultana.

## 2.2. Europe and the lifelong guidance paradigm

The country updates, as well as the rich material generated by the mutual learning meeting (see Section 1.1.), conferences, and initiatives referred to earlier, clearly show that several countries in Europe are engaging with different elements in the shift towards a lifelong guidance paradigm – as synthesised in Table 1 and Figure 1 above, and as already evident in the review (Cedefop; Sultana, 2004) – is clearly noticeable and has been intensified in some cases. The subsequent chapters outline where countries are at in relation to the five key areas signposted by the resolution, all of which directly feed into the debate on the lifelong guidance paradigm. It can be argued that most are far from implementing a comprehensive paradigm shift. However, it is clear that both in the debate and, in some cases, policy-making, there is an effort to deliver more ubiquitous and accessible services that accompany citizens throughout their lives, are quality-assured, provide skills to manage career and learning pathways, and are coherent, transparent and professionally delivered.

Before considering the range of measures undertaken by different Member States to implement the guidance resolution, there is a review the current situation.

Linking ‘shifts’ along a continuum, as proposed in the 2004 Cedefop review, remains useful because it helps us understand better the gradual rather than an abrupt swing in practices. At one level, it is clear there has been much impact on thinking about guidance, due to intensification of the debate on concepts of ‘lifelong learning’ and the ‘knowledge society’ and ‘knowledge economy’ – all reinforced by the Lisbon process. Several countries have commissioned evaluative and analytic surveys (Bulgaria, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Greece, France, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Finland, Sweden and the UK [England, Scotland]) in an attempt to understand better the ways in which guidance should be shaped to be in tune with present (or expected) social and economic realities<sup>(23)</sup>. In the UK, for instance, Careers Scotland commissioned a review of its services, benchmarking these against the six challenges to policy-makers identified by the OECD, all of which resonate with the concerns outlined by the resolution (Watts, 2005a). Others have organised or are organising major conferences to discuss key aspects of career guidance services in response to social, economic and labour market developments commonly associated with the term ‘knowledge-based economies’ (Germany, Latvia, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Finland and the UK [Scotland])<sup>(24)</sup>.

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<sup>(23)</sup> This report often provides a list of countries as examples of the point being made. These lists are not necessarily comprehensive.

<sup>(24)</sup> In particular, a fourth international symposium on career development and public policy was held in Aviemore, Scotland, from 22 to 25 October 2007, led by a UK Steering Group chaired by Careers Scotland. The theme was ‘Growth, groups and geographies: maximising the value of career development for sustainable growth and social equity’.

These critical reflections have fuelled policy debates on delivery systems that can support knowledge and skills development, including career information and guidance. Some country updates, particularly insights generated during the mutual learning events, suggest the role of guidance in the emerging economy is not free from scepticism as already mentioned, raising questions on whether there has been a shift from ‘lifelong employment’ to ‘lifelong employability’ which requires a new type of knowledge worker with a ‘boundary less career’ (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996). In many national contexts, the economy and labour market are still ‘in transition’, implying that guidance has to be conceptualised and delivered to serve the needs of both the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ but still emerging economy, and that competing paradigms have to coexist. It is in acknowledging this complex context that responses in the country update reports are understood better.

In trying to reflect on past provision and emerging economic and social realities, many country responses show intensified policy development, underpinned by new legislation in some cases (Denmark<sup>(25)</sup>, Spain, Poland, Finland), or driven by preparation of strategic policy frameworks (Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, UK [Northern Ireland]). Part of the focus has been on responding to a situation where the demand for services outstrips supply, and where the challenge is not only to reach more citizens, but also to broaden and deepen access to various groups of users, particularly those considered to be at risk (Denmark, Ireland, France, Poland, Slovenia, Finland, and Sweden).

Many reports show improved guidance provision at schools, as well as at public employment services (PES). As the DG-Employment, social affairs and equal opportunities study has shown (Sultana and Watts, 2005), Europe’s PES adopting a personal service model has given considerable scope for embedding career guidance elements in tasks previously more administrative in nature, without necessarily diminishing the importance of specialised and deeper interaction with clients. Many Member States, especially the new ones (the 10 countries that joined the EU in May 2004, as well as Bulgaria and Romania which joined in January 2007), have gone to great lengths to improve information on the educational and labour market offer, putting new information technologies to good use to democratise access to knowledge that is useful for constructing educational and career pathways.

Country updates also indicate that serious research and thought have been invested in trying to ensure that increased access to services focuses both on quantitative and qualitative concerns. The reports suggest that several Member States have made some headway by introducing quality assurance systems and tools (Denmark, Ireland, Lithuania, Poland, UK) – a demanding challenge given that the nature and complexity of career guidance does not make effectiveness or outcomes easy to measure. Many countries report increased investment in staff training at initial, induction and in-service stages (Bulgaria, Ireland, Italy, Malta, Poland, Romania,

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(<sup>25</sup>) See the new act on guidance adopted by the Danish parliament in April 2003 in English at: <http://eng.uvm.dk/guidance/guidance.doc> [cited 3.3.2008]. For a description of the reform of guidance services in the Danish education system, based on the new law, see: <http://pub.uvm.dk/2004/guidance> [cited 3.3.2008].

Finland). As the resolution points out, quality is also improved by ensuring linked provision. Since the first round of guidance reviews was carried out, many more countries report having national guidance forums or councils specifically set up to coordinate different providers at national and/or regional levels (Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Norway, and Slovenia). Some have also founded research centres focusing on career guidance, to provide the intellectual leadership necessary to steer policy and practice (Denmark, Lithuania, and Finland). In Poland, the National Forum for Vocational Guidance, set up in 2000, affiliated itself to the Institute of Career Development in Warsaw in 2004.

Many factors are driving these developments. Certainly, tight labour markets have led policy-makers to turn to career guidance, seeing it as a mechanism to improve the fit between supply and demand for skills, as a tool to help address frictional unemployment, and as a strategy to empower and ‘activate’ citizens on the periphery of the labour market. In education, concerns about early school-leaving and costly course-changing have caused career guidance to orient students towards more fulfilling pathways and remotivate them to invest in learning, thus easing social and economic integration. In many cases, the career guidance reviews themselves, the policy handbook, the reference tools, and the Council Resolution – not to mention efforts to implement lifelong learning strategies – have stimulated policy learning and a Europe-wide quest for innovative solutions. Some countries have been particularly successful in drawing on European Social Funds and on the Regional Development Fund to implement ground-breaking initiatives from which all can learn.

It is clear there is a vibrant and dynamic career guidance field across Europe, and a first, broad conclusion would be that most countries are tackling many of the concerns and issues signalled by the resolution, although some more successfully than others. Some substance to this broad conclusion is given by looking in some detail at each of the five key areas highlighted in the resolution.

### **3. Implementing lifelong guidance systems**

A first goal underlined by the Council Resolution concerns the need for countries to develop lifelong guidance systems: linked provision which strategically formulates steps to ensure effective cooperation and coordination between service providers at national, regional and local levels. The guidance reviews indicated that, generally speaking, the links between different providers – whether public, private, employment- or community-based – are underdeveloped. Career guidance provision therefore tends to end up being a collection of disparate subsystems, each with its own history, rationale and driving forces, rather than a coherent and integrated set of arrangements (Watts and Sultana, 2004). A further merit of moving towards a more systematic model is that it can enable the different interests of stakeholders to be balanced against one another, in the interests of the individual user.

Earlier career guidance reviews concluded that there were few if any examples of integrated guidance systems in Europe. They also argued that this had several negative consequences for providing a coherent, continuous and seamless service for clients. Lack of coordination leads to communication failures, such as failures to integrate information on job content, education and training options and pathways, and labour market supply and demand. These failures end up frustrating users in their attempts to make decisions by taking as many variables as possible into consideration. Lack of coordination also leads to costly duplication at a time when resources cannot keep up with the demand for services, and to inefficient use of the respective strengths of guidance staff in different sectors, which often do not adequately cooperate in servicing client needs across the lifespan. Most important, fragmentation does not provide the environment needed to exercise leadership in creating a vision and developing a strategy for delivering lifelong access to career guidance services <sup>(26)</sup>.

Partnership, on the other hand, can help pool resources, creating economies of scale that enable more goals to be achieved in a cost- and time-effective manner. The synergy created through collaboration can also trigger new ideas, initiatives and new ways of doing things, all of which can work to the benefit of citizens.

#### **3.1. Progress in implementation**

The country updates suggest that while there is not something that approximates a fully implemented, integrated career guidance system in Europe as defined in this document – a system that assimilates most aims, principles and building blocks laid down in the common European reference tools (Cedefop, 2005), and depicted in Table 1 and Figure 1 above – some progress has nevertheless been made in several countries.

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<sup>(26)</sup> National guidance systems. A lifelong guidance service that includes a European dimension would also strive to establish links with other Member States.

In several cases, countries report increasing awareness of the need to design more holistic approaches, with Member States being at different stages towards this goal. Some (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Malta, Poland, Slovakia) are planning to put a national coordination strategy in place. Italy, which in the earlier reporting exercise had expressed its concern at the deep differences in the extent and quality of guidance provision in its regions, is now planning an overall entity to coordinate the field and also ensure networked services at regional level. Austria is planning joint conference and training events, making good use of the European Social Fund. France has set up *Maisons d'Emploi* to provide adult users with a one-stop shop that brings together several services, thus making the offer more transparent, more organic, and more accessible. Cyprus too has declared its intention to intensify its efforts to ensure a more systematic, linked guidance organisation – which, in theory, should be easier to achieve given the size of its population<sup>(27)</sup>.

In some cases, increased awareness has led some countries formally to embed coordinated services to ensure more seamless provision in legal instruments (the Czech Republic, Spain, Luxembourg, Hungary, Poland), in service procedures (Denmark's youth and regional guidance centres), or in interministerial delegations or commissions (Belgium-Flanders, France, Luxembourg), as well as in joint ministerial strategy papers (Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Portugal) and protocols (Romania). Experiences from monitoring previous guidance reviews suggests that formal commitments, even if they find expression in legislation, are no guarantee that implementation will follow. So it will be interesting to see whether such commendable plans lead to systems development in the near future.

Over and above declarations of intent, there are also several examples where integrative structures and practices are gradually being introduced and implemented. Key are initiatives that take holistic client needs as their starting point, with services being organised in response to such needs by drawing together a wide range of service providers. This is the case with the adult educational and guidance initiative in Ireland, the mentor programme in Denmark, and the integrated counselling model in Estonia. Holistic approaches that adopt a lifespan approach are being introduced in Spain, which has established 'integrated centres', jointly financed by the employment and education sectors; these include a career information and guidance service, as well as an accreditation of prior learning (APL) service, offered to a broad range of clients regardless of age.

The 'all-age' services of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales in the UK are particularly promising. Careers Scotland is especially interesting given the arguments presented above in that it has developed extensive services and products to meet client needs at secondary schools, vocational colleges, town-centre careers centres, and community centres, as well as in enterprises. The models underpinning guidance provision<sup>(28)</sup>, use of branded, effectively

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<sup>(27)</sup> Small scale, however, presents specific challenges as well as opportunities for providing career guidance services (see Sultana, 2006a).

<sup>(28)</sup> Careers Scotland stresses the importance of personal career planning, and draws on the career planning continuum model developed at Nottingham Trent University, using it as the basis for a career planning

marketed and attractive products such as Career Box <sup>(29)</sup>, and active networking between the different sites at which guidance is offered, all mean that citizens have little difficulty in recognising the offer, in getting access to it, and in identifying it as a steady and reliable source of support throughout key decision-making steps in their lives. Watts (2005a, pp. 9, 11), in a review exercise benchmarking Careers Scotland against the main conclusions of the OECD (2004) study, notes that, with Wales and New Zealand, Scotland is a prime example of the ‘separate organisational structures’ commended to policy-makers by OECD, since it has succeeded in welding together many different organisations, with different cultures and different practices, by developing a common framework for service delivery, within which a coherent range of services and programmes can be located.

Other examples of efforts to improve integrated delivery are provided in a compendium of case studies put together in 2006 by Innove – the Estonian Foundation for Lifelong Learning Development – one of the joint action projects funded by the European Commission <sup>(30)</sup>. Analysis of these different examples, together with those that came through the country updates, suggests that different Member States are experimenting with a range of instructive modalities. These modalities recall the levels of partnerships identified in earlier reviews, and extend them further. The guidance reviews had suggested that links in service delivery can be organised – and indeed are necessary – at four different levels: within government, among practitioners, at national level involving these and a wider range of stakeholders, and at regional and local levels.

Links are first of all required with government. Collaboration is needed both between different ministries providing guidance services, and in the same ministry. Most countries have at least two systems of public guidance provision, one in the education sector and the other in the labour market sector, and the responsibility for services is often fragmented across the different ministries and branches. Integrated service delivery can be eased by strengthening communication at inter- and intraministerial levels: for instance, by setting up inter- and/or intradepartmental structures bringing different government portfolios together, thus ensuring

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journey. The latter is structured around nine stages, through which individuals are invited to indicate the stage they have reached in their career thinking. It is also used to distinguish the stages addressed by different staff roles. Extensive staff training has taken place in the nature of the model and its usage. Details of the different stages of the career planning journey can be downloaded from: <http://www.careers-scotland.org.uk/> [cited 3.3.2008].

<sup>(29)</sup> Career Box is a flexible teaching and learning career education resource delivered by both teachers and Careers Scotland advisers and supports the stages of the career planning journey. It is a national resource that offers a suite of lessons and activities, ensuring a consistent, coherent approach to career education for young people aged 3 to 18 years. For more details, go to: [http://www.careers-scotland.org.uk](http://www.careers-scotland.org.uk/) [cited 3.3.2008].

<sup>(30)</sup> In 2004, two ‘consortia’ (one led by the UK and including Denmark, Estonia, Ireland, Malta and Slovenia as members, the other led by Austria and including the Czech Republic, Germany, France, Poland and Finland as members) received funding to support development of European networks of national guidance forums to assist the emergence of such forums at national level in countries where they did not exist. Such forums aimed to provide strategic leadership and overcome boundaries between existing services. Details regarding the work of the first network can be found at <http://www.icg-uk.org/article156.html> [cited 3.3.2008] and of the second network at <http://www.lifelongguidance.net> [cited 3.3.2008].



that governmental policies are clearly drawn up, mutually agreed and supported, and effectively presented. This is the case with the adult educational guidance initiative in Ireland. Country updates suggest that efforts to strengthen intersectoral collaboration are taking shape through several initiatives, such as consolidating labour market data on one website, and working on integrating this with career guidance information and tools in user-friendly ways (Belgium-Flanders, Denmark, Lithuania, Slovenia, and Sweden). Some countries are attempting to develop closer links between schools and public employment services to provide more relevant services to their clients (Poland, Romania, Slovenia, and Sweden). But implementing a lifelong approach to career guidance also requires strong intrasectoral collaboration. While collaboration between providers within the same sector may appear to be less challenging, the evidence suggests that here too various factors stimulate fragmentation.

Second, systems development can be simplified when practitioners work more closely together in providing guidance services. Such closer coordination can be improved by setting up national associations that bring different practitioners and policy-makers together, as in the case of the Association of Career Guidance Specialists, set up in Lithuania in 2005, or the Spanish Confederation for Guidance and Psycho-Pedagogy (COPOE) in Spain, established in the same year. In some cases, as in the Czech Republic, different professional associations and guidance professional bodies have decided to work together, rather than remain fragmented in ways that weaken their voice and influence. In Italy, for instance, two different professional associations – Assipro (*Associazione Italiana Professionisti dell'Orientamento*, set up in 2001 with a strong membership base among practitioners) and SIO (*Societa' Italiana per l'Orientamento*, set up in 2004 and having both academics and some practitioners as members) – have decided to fuse to avoid fragmentation and duplication of effort and resources <sup>(31)</sup>.

Closer integration of practitioners can also be improved when initial or continuing staff training programmes bring together different professionals from different sectors, or from different levels in the same sector, as is the case with Finland, Ireland, Malta, Norway and the UK. In some contexts, mutual learning between different providers is eased through the structured sharing of good practice (Ireland, France, Slovenia, UK). These initiatives and training courses that bring together staff from both education and labour market sectors, can help promote a culture of cooperation and increase awareness of one another's work contexts. The UK reported that providers need a similar, overlapping skills set, whether they are offering guidance to students or adults, with specialist courses added to cater for any age-related specificity. Merging different training courses into a programme with joint core modules, and separate specialist modules, allows for a more cohesive, linked profession and prepares the ground for intra- and cross-sectoral collaboration in service delivery. It can also lead to improved multiprofessional collaboration in guidance and counselling.

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<sup>(31)</sup> Information obtained directly from the presidents of the two associations.

The third and fourth levels highlight the usefulness of having coordinating mechanisms at national, regional and local levels, closer to the point of delivery. Establishing local guidance partnerships, drawing on both strategic and professional partners in the adult education area, can be a powerful way of consolidating guidance services to ensure more effective attainment of lifelong learning goals, as Slovenia has shown. Norway too reports piloting regional partnerships to provide career guidance. Coordinating mechanisms at national level ensure links between government providers and other stakeholders, and data suggest that such mechanisms are taking different forms. In some cases, a policy unit has been set up to develop a policy framework applicable to all sectors and providers (Malta). Estonia has opted to establish a national coordinating institution, effectively serving as a platform for common standards and specifications agreed by different ministries.

Some have taken a cue from the OECD and EU surveys and set up fledgling guidance forums which include government and stakeholder representatives, as well as key providers, in an attempt to bring coherence to guidance provision across education, training and employment sectors. National and regional guidance forums, when they have succeeded in developing a holistic vision collectively owned by a body with the breadth of membership to implement the vision, can serve to mobilise the strengths of respective providers to ensure access to the best possible services, when and where needed.

Country updates as well as information coming through the two joint actions project (see footnote 30) indicate that the move to design or, in some cases, redesign structures for promoting national and regional partnerships in career guidance provision is gaining momentum. Several countries – including the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Latvia, Malta, Austria, Poland, Slovenia and Finland – have set up national and, in some cases, also regional guidance forums. The case of Denmark is particularly instructive, given that it has a long tradition of cross-sectoral cooperation in guidance issues at national, regional and local levels. The new national dialogue forum, established by the Ministry of Education in 2003, has a broad representation, including 11 individual members, and representatives of 12 member organisations and as many as five ministries. The forum is striving to stimulate dialogue based on both a top-down, policy-driven approach and a bottom-up engagement from the points of view of users, practitioners and researchers.

These initiatives are immensely promising, particularly in those cases where clear, strategic and time-bound goals have been agreed to by all partners, and where outcomes are monitored.

The following critical success factors were identified by the Austrian-led consortium of national guidance forums. According to members of this consortium, national guidance forums are more likely to succeed if there is:

- shared understanding of the importance of guidance and counselling services;
- common understanding of guidance and counselling, as well as shared awareness of the importance of having a forum and of the goals that should be achieved;

- holistic approach to career guidance, integrating issues arising from different sectors and at different levels;
- a lifelong and lifewide perspective, to ensure that, nationwide, services respond to the needs and demands of persons in different phases of their lives;
- strong political and administrative support for career guidance and counselling, and for cooperation between the different actors;
- clear evidence that career guidance and counselling are beneficial to individuals and the State;
- the right balance between leadership and cooperation in managing a network likely to have many stakeholders and actors;
- sensitivity to the fact that the dynamics of national guidance forums may be different in centralised and decentralised systems: while the goals may be the same, the strategies adopted may need to be different;
- appropriate strategies to coordinate activities at national, regional and local levels;
- coordination of activities to have a clear policy vision which helps to steer the activities of all relevant actors at all levels and across all sectors of career guidance and counselling;
- national stakeholders remaining focused on career guidance, with the necessary financial support to sustain this interest;
- awareness that different European countries have different legal frameworks regulating guidance services, and that therefore national guidance forums need to adapt their operational strategies to fit already existing structures, and may thus have to take different forms.

The value of national guidance forums is improved when, as in Germany, they are sufficiently empowered to take initiatives, have access to adequate funding, and enjoy legitimacy among stakeholders who see them as a potentially effective mechanism to shape and drive a lifelong approach to career guidance. It is also clear from country updates, however, that some forums are still somewhat fragile, and that, as stressed in the concluding chapter, continued networking at EU level is important to maintain their momentum.

### **3.2. Outstanding challenges**

Despite these promising initiatives and developments, several challenges remain in implementing a holistic, linked approach to guidance provision. For example, while across Europe there is better understanding of the need for public employment service staff and resources to be at the disposal of young people still in formal education, the recent survey on guidance in PES (Sultana and Watts, 2005) shows a and opposite trend. As unemployment levels increase and governments put more pressure on the PES to place people in employment, short-term goals take precedence over guidance for longer-term career

development, and ‘curative’ measures take precedence over ‘preventive’ ones. Many PES report that, under severe policy constraints, they have had to withdraw support for school-based career guidance and concentrate limited human and other resources on helping unemployed people. The retreat from educational institutions and focus on the unemployed go counter to the broader, linked and sustained provision of services that the lifelong guidance paradigm implies <sup>(32)</sup>.

Further, focus in many contexts is still on system input, rather than output and outcomes for clients and users. This tends to reinforce concern with the welfare of existing organisational arrangements, rather than holistic, systemic restructuring in the interests of clients.

Cross-sectoral collaboration is also hampered by different interpretations of the role of career guidance. Various factors stimulate fragmentation rather than joint endeavours between sectors. There is a key divergence between guidance models underpinning the education sector and those underpinning the labour sector. The latter is more likely to adopt quick-fix approaches to respond to political pressures to place as many people into employment in the shortest time possible, subordinating career guidance to immediate job placement. In contrast, those working in the educational sector, whether with young people or adults, tend to be keener to promote guidance as a process that supports self-development and occupational fulfilment in a more long-term perspective. They are also more likely to adopt professional models for staff training and continued development, emphasising not just competence frameworks but also, as in the Finnish and Scottish approach to training guidance staff, the stance, values and knowledge base associated with a reflective practitioner.

The Innove case studies also remind us that working with other organisations requires investment of time and effort, and that this does not always lead to the desired outcomes given that institutional cultures differ and can serve as an obstacle to communication and building trust. A tradition of competition for funding is not easily replaced by an approach that values cooperative pooling of resources. Abrupt changes in political or institutional leadership and in policy directions can also create an uneasy environment which is not conducive to stabilising interinstitutional relationships and forming lasting partnerships. Diverging interests of different partners can also easily overcome well-intentioned attempts to attain common goals.

Such problems and challenges are not insurmountable. This is particularly the case as traditional models of career guidance provision are increasingly unsuited to the demands of contemporary pathways in education, training and employment, and as more building blocks to develop a more integrated, less fragmented delivery system fall into place, considering clients’ lifelong needs for guidance and support in career and learning development.

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<sup>(32)</sup> There are, of course, exceptions to this trend. For example, VDAB – Belgium’s PES for the Flemish-speaking community – works closely with educational guidance centres, and has developed a manual for schools and teachers to use in orientation sessions in secondary schools. Sultana and Watts (2005, pp. 95, 105) conclude that VDAB is one of the leading PES in Europe in adopting a lifelong approach to career guidance services. Again, in Poland, the school career centres set up in 2003 are largely operating due to assistance from the Ministry of Labour.

## **4. Broadening access to guidance**

European and international country case studies and reviews consulted strongly indicate that demand for career guidance far exceeds the supply of services. This is not surprising. In the education sector, pathways are becoming more diversified and complex, with students having increasing opportunities to try out courses, to switch between study units and even between institutions, and to follow a tailor-made and individualised education plan. Guidance is called upon to contribute, as it is in intensified efforts to prevent early school-leaving. In the employment sector, not only does restructuring the labour market require a re-engagement with education and training at different points in individuals' lives, but designing occupations increasingly necessitates proactive planning and management of individuals' career development over time. Several categories of people who are vulnerable, at risk of social exclusion, or have special needs because they live in remote communities, or have tenuous links to citizenship rights, have particular guidance needs. Yet their access to these services is either difficult, or provided inadequately, given the pressure on staff and material resources (Sultana and Watts, 2005).

Access consequently has two aspects to it. First, the needs of a wide range of particular groups of citizens – including employed adults, VET and tertiary students, mothers with young children, women returning to work, older adults, people with disabilities, those in remote communities, and disadvantaged groups – are not adequately catered for. Second, as guidance reviews show, guidance services are still being delivered in too limited a range of locations and media, times of the day or week, or points in the life cycle – thus limiting access from a lifelong and lifewide perspective.

The country responses submitted show there have been several initiatives launched in an attempt to broaden access, outlined under six broad headings, taking care to point out the limitations, gaps and outstanding challenges where relevant.

### **4.1. Expanding services**

The first group are those countries attempting to expand services. Given that most of the respondents came from, and focused primarily on, the education sector, the initiatives learned most about in this particular data-collection exercise relates to schools. The Czech Republic, Greece and Poland, for instance, have established several new guidance units for students in educational institutions, and will be expanding the number further over the coming years. Interestingly, compared to the information obtained from earlier reviews, many initiatives are directed at university and higher education students (the Czech Republic, France, Greece, Hungary, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Spain).

The main strategy used by both the education and labour market sectors to broaden access involves expanding self-help services, thus freeing up scarce human resources to cater for

those most in need of personalised support through group or one-to-one interviews. A further strategy to improve access reported is the increase of labour offices to ensure availability of services in different regions (Bulgaria, Denmark, Cyprus). A strategy more often used by PES is to outsource services or to offer services in partnership with others. In some education systems, such partnership in service provision used to include school-based guidance staff working closely with personnel from labour offices. Guidance in PES survey noted, however, that the political and institutional imperative to cater for the unemployed has led to several European PES reducing services to the education sector, so that curative rather than preventive career guidance seems to take precedence. Linked to partnership is the important notion of developing a market of providers. While the present study does not address this issue, it is nevertheless clear that any serious commitment to providing career guidance on a lifelong basis entails more resources than any State can afford. As Watts et al. (2005, p. 8) point out, ‘in the absence of support for comprehensive and universal publicly-funded access, there is a strong case for publicly-funded provision to be complemented by more sustained and more proactive policy support for market-based provision’.

Increasingly, too, guidance for adults in PES and continuing vocational education and training contexts includes accreditation of prior learning as well as ‘skills balance’ (Germany, Spain, France, the Netherlands, Finland) – another indication that guidance is evolving towards providing improved services to a broader range of clients. Such developments have special consequences for vulnerable groups, particularly for immigrants who may have a strong skills profile not supported by paper qualifications. In France, for example, all employees have a legal right, every five years, to a skills assessment (*bilan de compétences*), with separate centres being set up to implement the scheme (Bartlett et al., 2000; Gendron, 2001).

Despite such progress, however, there are some important gaps. In the education sector, for instance, none of the country updates indicate that the career guidance offer has been extended to primary-school students. This is an important factor to consider in implementing lifelong approaches to guidance, given that – as discussed at greater length in Chapter 6 – career self-management skills (for example, decision-making, self-awareness, self-confidence) are important and their foundations are laid at an early age (as are stereotypes that can limit choice). Neither does much progress seem to have been achieved in increasing the offer of guidance to students in VET settings, a lacuna that the guidance reviews highlighted. The assumption is still being made that such students have already chosen their educational and occupational path, and therefore have less need for support<sup>(33)</sup>.

The guidance offer in the labour market sector is similarly characterised by several limitations, largely dictated by pressure to cater for the out-of-work. Employed adults also need access to

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<sup>(33)</sup> The country updates signal a few exceptions. In 2005, for instance, Hungary published a government resolution to improve guidance in the VET sector. In Poland, a European-Commission-funded project managed by the Polish Agency for Enterprise Development and Ecorys made a start by commissioning a guidebook on transition and career guidance-related issues for directors of vocational schools (Sultana, 2006b).

guidance for several reasons. They may require support in planning for career development in their company, for career development outside it in similar work, or to retrain in new skills so they can move into different types of jobs. These clients might want to use PES networks and support services to achieve these goals. They might also want to benefit from publicly funded services, such as vocational training courses. But often they are not able to do so.

As Thuy et al. (2001, p. 166) point out, ‘the PES has potentially an important role to play as the gateway to lifelong learning, helping people to review the direction of their careers, helping them determine what learning would benefit them and steering them to appropriate institutions or learning packages’. Such guidance ‘could be achieved through well-designed computer systems but highly trained counsellors are needed as well’ (p. 166). They add: ‘We are unable to recommend just how the necessary assistance should be given, but believe that governments should consider seriously the claims of PES to fulfil this role in relation to the claims of other organisations’ (p. 166). Similarly, OECD (2004) suggested that consideration should be given to integrating PES guidance services more closely into lifelong learning strategies in general and strategies for lifelong access to career guidance in particular. These services could then be transformed into well-publicised career development services for all, helping people to sustain their employability and respond flexibly to change.

The reality is, however, that few PES have the capacity to expand their services to cater for groups other than the unemployed, and when they do cater for those in employment, this is generally confined to self-service approaches. One exception is Belgium’s VDAB (Flemish public employment service), which, as already noted (see footnote 32), is probably at the forefront of PES innovation in lifelong guidance. Those countries that have set up programmes to develop career guidance services for employees have largely done so outside the PES, often in response to client demands. An interesting – if short-lived – example is in Denmark, where workers called for support in managing their career progression, and guidance corners were developed in response<sup>(34)</sup>. In some national contexts, guidance services that attended to the specific needs of immigrant communities were developed after these communities either requested them, or implemented them themselves.

Such bottom-up initiatives are more likely to take place in a context marked by political devolution and subsidiarity, processes which can serve to empower citizen groups to access public funds to ensure service delivery tailor-made to their needs, given that the formal structures in place fail to respond. Such initiatives also tend to be rather vulnerable unless they are properly funded and integrated into larger institutional arrangements<sup>(35)</sup>.

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<sup>(34)</sup> Information on workplace guidance and adoption of Danish ‘guidance corners’ by other countries can be seen at: <http://www.workplaceguidance.eu/> [cited 3.3.2008].

<sup>(35)</sup> The fortunes of the Danish guidance corners just referred to are a case in point. The project, despite its promise and potential, quickly folded when initial ‘seed money’ ran out. The efforts of external project managers – who had seen it as a niche service to be developed – also fell through when the initiative failed to attract sufficient commitment on the part of the social partners.

Overwhelming demand on PES by the out-of-work, as well as the paucity and vulnerability of bottom-up initiatives, lead to a situation where the heterogeneous nature and diverse needs of the adult population are far from being satisfied. In addition, fee-for-service provision that people can purchase privately is often limited, and as noted in the next section, few enterprises cater adequately for the career development needs of their employees. Although some professional associations and trade unions have shown interest in providing career guidance to their members, many have not, even though they often recognise in principle the need for workforce development to improve competitiveness and equity<sup>(36)</sup>. In conclusion, while access has been broadened for some groups, services for employed adults remain limited.

## 4.2. Providing guidance at the workplace

Given the mismatch between demand for services and supply by traditional providers such as educational institutions and public employment services, a strategy to expand access is to offer career guidance at the workplace. Few country updates refer to such diversification, but some insights can be garnered from the mutual learning activities, as well as from the ‘Career guidance to support workforce development’ (Cedefop, forthcoming 2008). The collective experience of contributors to the Cedefop mutual learning activity at the Helsinki meeting on 30 and 31 May 2006, with participants coming from nine different countries (Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, France, Latvia, Malta, Finland and UK – England and Scotland), was that both trade unions and employers’ organisations are aware of the need for workforce development and that career guidance has an important contribution to make.

However, the view of participants, based on knowledge of their country contexts, corroborates the findings of the guidance reviews, which showed that there were few examples of good practice. The guidance reviews noted that few enterprises provide career development services for their employees. When such services are offered, they tend to be confined to larger organisations, and even then, tend to target managerial and professional staff, rather than the full range of employees. This finding is reinforced by Cedefop (ibid.) who note that while few companies have put in place some career development support for the whole workforce, there is usually a two-tier system where key groups receive more career support. When companies buy in support, such as career coaching and outplacement, the level of support is also usually skewed towards these high-talent groups.

In addition, the guidance reviews indicated that services offered within the enterprise aim to encourage career development inside the enterprise, with little attention to career opportunities elsewhere. As the Finnish case study presented at the Helsinki mutual learning meeting (see Section 1.1.) suggests, work-based guidance is more likely to be recognised by employers’ associations as a principle that deserves support, than to be implemented by individual

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<sup>(36)</sup> See: *Framework of actions for the lifelong development of competences and qualifications: evaluation report 2006* (European social partners, 2006).



enterprises. This is particularly true in the case of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which generally do not have the resources to set up an HR department or unit in the enterprise itself, let alone offer guidance services. This is a particularly important gap, given the large number of SMEs in Europe. The Finnish case suggests that one way of addressing this challenge is for SMEs to pool their resources and offer a service jointly. Some interesting developments in this respect have also been reported by Careers Scotland, which focuses on developing career planning skills with employees both directly and by supporting capability and capacity building with key intermediaries.

Trade unions are particularly well-placed to offer their members career information and guidance, and to support career development in the face of changing occupational fortunes and opportunities. As the Helsinki meeting suggested, trade unions have in some respects been more active than other social partners in searching for ways of offering career information and guidance services to adults in employment, and in particular to those who are employed but who will need to change jobs due to labour market restructuring. Some trade unions have found that offering such services makes union enrolment more attractive at a time of decreasing membership.

Cedefop's study of career development at work (ibid) reinforces the input from participants at the mutual learning event, with the authors noting that a role is developing for a new kind of trade union activist. This is particularly true for countries where the authors noted the most development, such as the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Spain, the Netherlands, Finland and the UK. Depending on the country context, these trade-union activists are referred to as 'learning representatives', 'educational ambassadors', 'near-by' and 'learntrust' representatives, 'personal development consultants', 'competence pilots', and 'career counsellors' assistants'. They are usually volunteers, providing a range of services to union members during working hours, including peer guidance and support with career development, but mostly with a focus on engaging people in learning, and negotiating with employers to provide access to learning opportunities. Many such initiatives target the less skilled or focus on those at risk of unemployment. Some target moderate- to high-skill groups.

In many countries, however, unions have shown limited interest in developing career guidance services for their members. Cedefop (ibid.) concludes that, despite the difficulty of gathering data across the EU, in most countries it appears that unions' direct involvement in delivering guidance at the workplace is limited, though unions may be represented on committees and have some influence on public policy. Where they offer such services themselves, these tend to be delivered by non-specialised personnel and focus on access to training rather than wider career development.

The guidance reviews indicated that where private employment services exist in Europe, they tend to focus on job brokerage and head hunting, and on outplacement for redundant workers. A few services offer personal career guidance to executives. Only rarely do they offer

guidance for career development to a broad range of users, and they therefore cannot presently be considered as key players in constructing lifelong guidance systems in Europe (<sup>37</sup>).

### 4.3. Targeting services

Another response by several countries in their attempts to broaden access has been to target services towards specific groups and categories of clients. A lifelong guidance system is sensitive to the fact that pathways through life are greatly influenced by the gender, ethnic and social background of citizens as well as their age, and that transitions are not experienced in the same way by these different categories of clients. Life tasks faced by older workers, for instance, or women returners, or ethnic minorities, or people with disabilities, or other groups, are quite different. A guidance service that values lifelong access considers the changing needs of clients through their different life stages, rather than ignoring distinctive needs by offering uniform provision. A lifelong guidance system, therefore, adopts a life-course perspective, in that not only does it provide resources and support at different points throughout life, but it is designed to consider the different structural features that shape the passage through life for different groups of people.

Country updates suggest that several EU Member States are attempting to reach out to disadvantaged youths through a range of innovative strategies that include mentoring schemes (Denmark), and specially-designed workshops that engage young people on their own terms, outside formal institutions that tend to be associated with negative experiences (Finland). Many target early school-leavers, developing school guidance programmes to detect and assist young people who leave school early or without qualifications to help them find meaning in staying at school, and to have well-planned exit strategies to enable them to re-engage in learning and successfully complete their secondary education (Greece, France). Some attempt to work closely and cross-sectorally with other individuals and agencies (PES staff, youth workers, social workers, community workers and other adults) that might be better placed to reach out to disaffected youth, to ensure the latter develop the necessary competences to manage career and learning during post-compulsory school years in second-chance learning programmes, employment training programmes, and so on. Few details of such strategies and programmes were presented in country updates, though one notable development considered in greater detail in Chapter 6 is the increasing adoption of personal action planning strategy. This involves encouraging students to develop a ‘personal development plan’ (Belgium-Flanders, Denmark) or ‘individual education plan’ (Ireland), thus aiming to put into place preventive measures (as in Lithuania) rather than merely ‘curative’ ones.

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(<sup>37</sup>) Lack of a market or quasi-market of service providers is of course an important issue (see Watts et al., 2005). The fact that governments have been reluctant to commit the public resources necessary to guarantee lifelong access to guidance means that the role of the market – an issue raised strongly in the OECD (2004) report – is an important one in policy terms. While country updates and supplementary material have not addressed this challenge, it certainly needs to feature in any future debate on lifelong career guidance.

Several countries have also expanded or reinforced access to guidance to groups that have traditionally had lesser opportunities to benefit from specialised services, including immigrants (Poland, Finland), travellers (Ireland, Romania), offenders (UK) and persons with disabilities (Spain, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden). Some of the best practice across Europe and beyond involves vulnerable groups in designing, planning, implementing and monitoring career guidance policies and services, thus greatly improving development of services relevant to their needs.

None of the country reports, however, mentioned any specific initiatives targeting senior citizens. This is an important lacuna, given that ageing populations and demographic structures are leading to pension funding problems across most of Europe, a state of affairs that will require both later retirement ages and more flexible transitions to retirement. Citizens need specialised information and advice to support active ageing: part-time work, more fulfilling leisure, voluntary work, and activities to keep them mentally and physically fit. Most adult guidance providers have been slow to mobilise career guidance services to support such active ageing. Flexible transitions between full-time work and full-time retirement (mixing full-time work, part-time work, voluntary work and periods of inactivity) will require much closer harmonisation of career and financial planning. Employers and worker representatives can promote and take initiatives in service delivery of third-age guidance, using combinations of public and private partnerships.

Special note must be made of the impact of gender on access to services. The survey instrument prepared by the Finnish EU conference organisers in collaboration with Cedefop followed the Council Resolution priorities by specifically targeting gender issues in one of the questions asked, which requested respondents to report on ‘measures to ensure the integration of a gender perspective in all policies and practice relating to guidance provision’ (see Annex 1). Country updates did not provide much information on this crucial aspect, other than to note that gender equity approaches had been adopted in the offer of career guidance services ‘a long while ago’ (Cyprus), that career guidance staff had been trained and/or retrained to be more aware of gender issues (Belgium-Flanders, Germany, Ireland, Malta<sup>(38)</sup>), and that, in many cases, all national policies, measures, and programmes integrated a gender perspective. In some countries, in Ireland for instance, indicators have been developed to assist inspectors in evaluating how schools address gender in their guidance programmes. Others (Germany) noted that special efforts have to be made to reach young males and men, who often are more in need of guidance because traditional approaches of service delivery reach them less readily than they do girls and women. International literature certainly suggests that gender remains a major variable that structures one’s place in – and relationship to – the labour market, and that the effort to improve access to guidance services for both males and females has to develop strategies that resonate more closely with the gender needs and experiences of everyday living (Loughlin, 2000).

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<sup>(38)</sup> In 2004, Malta’s PES, the Employment and Training Corporation, published a *Manual for gender sensitive guidance* for staff development purposes in both the education and the labour market sector (Employment and Training Corporation, 2004).

In considering the relationship between gender and career guidance, Hansen (2006, pp. 10, 11) rightly notes (a) the gender imbalances that prevail in the world of work, (b) women's continued subordination in the labour market, and (c) the fact that career guidance theories tend to be based on the work patterns of white, middle-class, urban, university-educated males. She argues that career guidance policies and programmes have a role in redressing gender imbalances in distributing work opportunities and in promoting gender equality more broadly. She also stresses that a gender-aware approach means that 'the model of working life includes a variety of arrangements of equal value, suitable both to men and women at different stages of their life cycle' and that several gender aspects in relation to career guidance need to be considered. Among these are the following:

- equal access to career guidance services by women and men;
- reduction in stereotyping female and male roles and career aspirations in guidance services;
- discouragement of occupational segregation;
- promotion of work-life balance for both women and men;
- gender-aware promotion of entrepreneurship.

Despite several successful attempts reported in country updates and at the mutual learning meetings (see Section 1.1.) at reaching out to the community and plugging gaps in service provision in an effort to make them more universal, some note the prevalence of what is often referred to as the 'Mattheus effect'. There is a tendency for those who most need the service to be the least likely to receive it, either because they are not aware of its benefits, or because the way the services are conceived, packaged and delivered fails to connect with where particular groups of clients are at in a geographical or social sense. There are also concerns that career guidance, as a 'language', speaks exclusively or mainly to particular groups of clients, identifiable by their location in the social structure. This important challenge can perhaps best be overcome if users are engaged to shape services, thus avoiding the propensity for professionals to mould services in their own image.

#### **4.4. Improved use of ICT**

A fourth set of initiatives to ease access, also much in evidence in the earlier reviews, is improved use of ICT. New technology has great potential for driving change and systems development by making access more possible and cheaper. It also generates innovative and flexible service delivery, ensuring that career information and guidance services become ubiquitous and increasingly mainstreamed in everyday life rather than confined to standard office hours, office-type environments, and specific geographical locations which tend to privilege urban clients over those based in rural and remote regions. Some of the more innovative uses of new technology seem to be in the PES sector, as the guidance in PES study (Sultana and Watts, 2005) suggests.

To broaden access to their guidance services, PES are introducing use of:

- free-phone (Belgium-VDAB, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Poland, Slovenia). In some cases, the facility is merely used to book an interview with a career guidance official (Italy). In other cases the call service is more extensive (Sweden's PEPS information centre);
- Internet to provide self-service career guidance and information facilities, including occupational interest inventories, and matching personal profiles with jobs (most countries);
- e-mail contacts with career and information officers (Poland, Slovenia);
- biometric registration systems that enable quick service in registering clients and in issuing appointments for interviews with employment advisers or employers (Malta);
- SMS/mobile phone texting to communicate job vacancies (Lithuania, Hungary, Malta);
- web-cam consulting (Hungary);
- distance career guidance through video-conferencing facilities (France, Hungary's e-career initiative, Poland, Slovenia, Sweden);
- TV to disseminate information and 'messages': talk show, including 'reality show' style (in Latvia); fiction series (Belgium-VDAB); adverts (Belgium-FOREM); teletext services (Belgium-ORBEM, Switzerland);
- cell-phones and scooters to ease access and mobility in job-seeking (Belgium-VDAB, Spain);
- databases where employers can enter vacancies directly (Belgium-ORBEM, Ireland).

Web- and e-mail-based services, call centres, video conferencing, digital technology, 'jobmultimeters' (Denmark)<sup>(39)</sup>, and so on were referred to in the country updates and at the mutual learning meetings (see Section 1.1.) to support reaching out to a broader client base. For some groups of clients, and especially those who have mastered the competences required to manage their career and their learning, ICT-based resources are particularly helpful in easing access to up-to-date information and forms of guidance support when needed.

Increased use of ICT is therefore linked to new emphasis on self-access and self-help modes of delivery, and it is difficult –based on the information from the country reports – to judge the extent to which there has been any major leap forward since 2004. It is clear all countries have made important investments in providing digital information. Many report improved websites (Spain, France, Hungary, Poland), new guidance services via e-mail (Denmark, the Netherlands, UK), and use of call centres (Germany-Hamburg; UK – England). In several

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<sup>(39)</sup> The 'jobmultimeter' is a tool that helps continuous monitoring of competences of electricians in relation to changing demand for specific competences in the labour market. See (in Danish) at: <http://invers.net/job/> [cited 3.3.2008]. The tool is described in the 'Career guidance to support workforce development' (Cedefop, forthcoming 2008).

cases, too, ICT is being used to reach out to remote communities, offering guidance services through video-conferencing, as in the case of Careers Scotland in the Highlands and Islands, and some public employment services in Sweden.

The promise of ICT should not, however, be considered unproblematic. The digital literacy divide can easily transform ICT from a means of communication, to a barrier to access.

## **4.5. Community outreach**

The final two sets of initiatives are strongly linked, but are dealt with separately to emphasise a point. Many countries have broadened access by reaching out to communities proactively. Some have set up subnational outlets and service points. This is the case with Germany, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden. Denmark is using what it refers to as ‘neutral localities’ – such as municipal libraries– to ensure there are no barriers to access for those who might otherwise find difficulty with approaching guidance staff in formal offices. In Denmark, new guidance centres have been set up to ensure adequate and convenient geographical coverage, with staff also working in schools to be close to students. In Denmark, too, the rationale underpinning setting up ‘guidance corners’ in enterprises (see earlier in this chapter) was specifically to get close to workers at the workplace, rather than somewhere else however central that might be. In 12 of Germany’s largest cities, a *Kompetenzzentrum* was set up with financial support from the Ministry of Youth, to target better the hard-to-reach, such as those who had dropped out of education and training, or those who had substance-abuse and related problems. In the Flemish community in Belgium, one-stop advice centres were set up to reach out more effectively to the groups most at-risk. In Poland, mobile vocational information centres have reached 100 000 young people in rural areas and small towns in 2006.

## **4.6. Marketing services**

Linked to this reaching out process is the attempt to market services more effectively. The guidance resolution states: ‘Services need to be available at times and in forms which will encourage all citizens to continue to develop their skills and competences throughout their lives, linked to changing needs in the labour market’. It adds: ‘Such services need to be viewed as an active tool, and individuals should be positively encouraged to use them’. This places marketing at centre-stage. Such marketing is particularly problematic where there are a range of service providers. In such cases, citizens may not be aware of the kind of support available to them, and where to access it. In the UK, there are recommendations to promote user recognition and access by placing adult guidance services under a common and successful brand – in this case the well-established ‘learndirect’, which enjoys 82 % brand recognition (Leitch, 2006).

In their responses, however, only two countries – Austria and UK – highlighted the importance of this strategy to broaden access, while German providers are attempting to ease access by mapping the services on offer to render them more transparent for users. That marketing did not feature greatly in country updates may be understandable given that guidance staff in the education sector are traditionally used to working with a ‘captive audience’. This is a point Watts (2005a, p. 15) makes when reviewing Scotland’s careers guidance services. Watts notes that ‘When the target group of careers services was mainly the captive audience of students in schools and colleges, this was not an issue of any great importance. But the concept of an all-age service, universal but differentiated in nature, requires a strong and sensitive marketing strategy’. Scotland had indeed striven hard to increase Careers Scotland’s brand recognition, with the percentage of the Scottish adult population that had heard of Careers Scotland rising from 37 % to 72 % between March 2002 and April 2003. The survey that generated these figures also indicated that the proportion who said they would find advice or guidance about careers, training or other learning opportunities ‘very useful’ rose from 12 % to 22 % over the same period.

Given comments about educational institutions having a captive market for their guidance services, it does not come as a surprise that much more emphasis on marketing services came through the guidance in PES study. Here, various innovative strategies to advertise the guidance offer were reported, including use of street billboards, TV talk shows and reality shows, cellular phones, teletext services, and high-profile advertising campaigns during prime-time radio and television. Such campaigns have also been effective in, for example, marketing the Learndirect helpline/web-based service in the UK. The new paradigm of lifelong guidance, the wealth of career guidance resources available through self-help and self-access modes, as well as the increasing broad range of services on offer, require an improved effort to ensure that citizens are as fully aware as possible of the support available to them, and of the ways that such support can be accessed. Marketing services is therefore closely linked to the principles of entitlement and transparency, as well as client empowerment.

An additional point raised at the mutual learning meeting in Helsinki (see Section 1.1.) is guidance also has to be marketed with policy-makers. The lifelong guidance paradigm requires a radical shift in the way services are conceptualised, organised, funded and delivered, and many policy-makers are unaware of the full ramifications that such a shift entails. Many have a limited understanding of the value of guidance, failing to see it as being at the heart of social and economic prosperity, and as a service strongly committed to development of people through lifelong career planning.

## 5. Strengthening quality assurance mechanisms

The guidance resolution echoes the concern that career guidance reviews highlighted regarding the relative lack of quality assurance in providing services. The resolution affirms as a priority ‘the development of high quality guidance provision for all European citizens, accessible at all stages of their lives to enable them to manage their learning and work pathways and the transitions therein’. It also identifies as a specific priority ‘the development at national, regional and local levels, where appropriate, of better quality assurance mechanisms for guidance services, information and products (including online services), particularly from a citizen/consumer perspective’.

### 5.1. Approaches to quality assurance

Quality assurance is central both from the perspective of the citizen, and for reasons of efficiency and accountability in use of public funds. In attempting to ensure quality, services have three key approaches to draw on, namely QA models and mechanisms that are:

- administrative-centred;
- practitioner-centred;
- user-centred.

Each has its own advantages and limitations, and specific combination of the different approaches depends on the context in which such a combination is applied.

All the evidence from the guidance reviews, the mutual learning meetings (see Section 1.1.), and the Cedefop preliminary study on *Quality guidelines and criteria in guidance* (Cedefop; Henderson et al., 2004), as well as the more recent country updates, indicate there are few if any comprehensive systems that set out to assure quality in delivery of guidance services by drawing on the full range of strategies in the three approaches referred to above. The current state of knowledge suggests that where QA systems are being implemented in career guidance service provision across Europe, the most commonly used approach is administrative-centred. Such systems adopt a top-down, centralised approach, and are particularly appealing in countries where decentralisation has led to variable standards of service delivery across regions. In such contexts, national policy frameworks – including national standards, targets or guidelines – are seen as a means to ensure more equitable provision.

Top-down approaches can be comprehensive – applying to all guidance providers – or can be segmented, with different approaches and systems in place in different services. They can include such mechanisms as legislation, or articulation of a set of underlying principles, based



on which national frameworks, guidelines, and service-delivery standards<sup>(40)</sup> are developed, and monitoring, evaluation and inspection procedures implemented to verify that standards are being reached. QA mechanisms in career guidance typically include specification of staff qualifications and training at the recruitment stage, and occasionally at different steps during career progression. Specifying staff competences is also an increasingly common trend. In some cases such lists are used to accredit practitioners who may not have formal qualifications.

In contrast to administrative-centred QA systems are practitioner-centred ones. These are bottom-up QA protocols promoted by professional bodies and associations<sup>(41)</sup>. The notion of ‘profession’ highlights the responsibility and commitment of practitioners to strive systematically to improve levels of service, and to guarantee standards so that their particular activity caters for client needs in the most ‘professional’ way possible. In this way, a profession becomes defined as an activity that is constituted by a discrete set of practices supported by a knowledge base and a range of competences that have been systematically developed over time through professional experience and reflective research on that experience.

A third approach to QA is user-centred. Such systems set out to give users more direct power over the control of the guidance services they receive. While in the previous two models, systems managers or providers establish what marks quality in service delivery, and therefore make judgements on behalf of the clients they serve, in this approach it is the clients themselves— as an individual or as an organisation (e.g. school, PES, firm, trade union, employers’ association) – and as service recipients, who either (a) determine whether service standards have been attained, and/or (b) are directly involved in the design, management and evaluation of guidance services and products. As noted below, the country updates suggest there is an increasing trend across the EU to consult users of guidance about their satisfaction or otherwise in relation to services received. This trend is pronounced, for example, in the employment sector, where adoption of a ‘personal service model’ privileges the client perspective, with the PES specifically setting out to guarantee citizens’ rights for quality,

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<sup>(40)</sup> As the OECD (2004) review showed, national service-delivery standards can be of four types: (a) generic standards applied to a wide variety of activities, of which career guidance is only one (e.g. ISO, EFQM, TQM, involving general rules of service provision and national operational guidelines, often found in ‘work procedure manuals’, typically specifying the format, content and criteria for successful service provision, as well as providers’ and clients’ rights and obligations); (b) standards developed specifically for a particular sector which includes guidance among its range of activities (e.g. PES), or targeting a specific aspect of the service (e.g. quality standards for updating career-related information; gender-fair labour market information; the minimum time for a guidance interview); (c) standards developed specifically for career guidance, with an accreditation procedure to enforce them (e.g. the Matrix standards in the UK); and (d) voluntary guidelines developed for career guidance, which services can adopt and apply if they so wish (e.g. Denmark).

<sup>(41)</sup> A case in point is Poland’s definition of career guidance service standards for secondary schools, prepared in a project on ‘Vocational pathways’ by Ecorys and different stakeholders, including guidance associations and the Ministry of Education. The standards were assessed by practitioners during special workshops organised all over Poland and are ready for implementation.

proximity, personalisation and individualisation of public services. There are, however, no examples in the data of the consumer-led QA model, one where the key player in the quality assurance exercise is the client (<sup>42</sup>).

The PES context is helpful in highlighting the tension between user-centred and administrative-centred QA systems, particularly relating to impartiality. While clients may feel it is in their interest to engage in a career guidance process that addresses longer-term goals, linked to lifelong learning and sustained employability, PES staff will be under pressure to focus on short-term goals, seeking to get unemployed individuals into employment (and therefore off benefit) as quickly as possible – as already pointed out in Chapter 4.

## **5.2. Restricted application of quality assurance mechanisms**

It is clear from the data available that not only have few countries, if any, introduced comprehensive QA mechanisms for career guidance, but those that have done so have put into place restricted QA practices. They are limited in several ways. First, they tend to be confined to a single or small range of sectors in a country, and rarely if ever apply across both the education and employment sectors. Second, there are few mechanisms to ensure effective coordination between agencies and between ministries, and this makes coherent monitoring of approaches to QA in guidance difficult. Increased use of outsourcing renders this particularly topical, and raises concerns about the extent to which the citizen is at risk, with no specific protection or redress. Third, QA strategies currently in place do not comprehensively target the whole range of clients (different age groups; different target citizen groups; different regional contexts) that guidance services are meant to cater for. Fourth, they are also restricted if one considers the range of activities that career guidance can involve. In most cases, the main focus is on ‘informing’ and ‘assessing’. Fifth, they tend not to focus on career guidance and information as such, but rather deal with them as part of an overall range of services (a review of a public employment service, or a school, which considers career information and guidance as one element among others in a string of responsibilities they are accountable for, as in the Czech Republic for instance). Sensitivity to and knowledge of career guidance issues by an evaluation team may, in such cases, be limited. For instance, the Netherlands is developing a thematic focus on guidance for school inspectors.

Other relevant aspects of improving QA in guidance are, even where QA elements tend to be more evident – such as the employment sector – often preoccupation with attaining quantitative targets such as swift and successful placement in employment, rather than qualitative measures which are more appropriate for evaluating processes and service quality. Where QA strategies and mechanisms for career information and guidance are in place in the education sector, they are often voluntary rather than mandatory. Few have adopted QA

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<sup>42</sup>) The case for greater involvement of users of guidance services, not only in assessing quality but also in developing policies, is made by Plant (2006), in a paper written for the Medsui joint actions project.

systems that not only set standards and targets, but also make arrangements for monitoring compliance, and for implementing sanctions or corrective procedures in the case of failure to meet the standards and targets set. Such ‘soft’/advisory guidelines do not, therefore, provide quality guarantees, nor do they give citizens an entitlement to quality service, or to the right of redress.

There are therefore clear deficits in guidance when it comes to quality assurance, though the point must be strongly made that attempts to monitor guidance services, or to generate indicators that provide evidence of targeted outcomes, are notoriously difficult. Guidance is a complex human activity, aspects of which are difficult to measure, particularly in quantitative terms. In addition, guidance is often enmeshed in other activities (education, human resources development, personal counselling, etc.), and difficult if not impossible to isolate for establishing causal relationships (between guidance provision and ‘drop-out’ rates).

### **5.3. Progress in implementing quality assurance approaches**

Despite such limitations in developing QA for guidance, country reports and supplementary material provide us with evidence that some progress is nevertheless being registered. These developments are in part driven by the reviews of guidance carried out between 2001 and 2004. Other drivers include: (a) a general trend towards introduction of QA systems across all public services; (b) the need to safeguard equity in service provision following adoption of a policy of decentralisation, and/or after permitting development of private employment services<sup>(43)</sup>; (c) the need to legitimise public spending on guidance; (d) a shift in the philosophy underpinning guidance provision, with user empowerment and user satisfaction becoming key elements in designing services; and (e) a tendency for guidance to become more professionalised, leading practitioners to establish occupational identity (and closure) through structuring entry into the profession (establishing qualification routes and licensure), and articulating formal standards, competences, registers, and codes of practice.

Guidance experts taking part in the mutual learning meeting on QA in guidance (see Section 1.1.), hailing from nine EU countries (Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Italy, Austria, Poland, Finland, the UK-England and UK-Wales) concluded that there have been some important developments in the focus on quality assurance in guidance provision over the past few years, with QA increasingly featuring on the agenda in many EU countries. They also concluded that, while there seems to be a genuine interest in looking for QA models that can provide a comprehensive and suitable framework applicable to career guidance, the search for appropriate principles, models, strategies and tools to implement QA systems is a process still in its early stages.

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<sup>(43)</sup> This is particularly true for the states that joined the European Union after 2004. Among the older members of the EU, Italy permitted private providers to offer services after the Biagi Reform (Law 30/2003).

It is clear from both the case studies presented at the mutual learning meeting and those reported in country updates that, while the drivers behind development of QA strategies in different national contexts are diverse, the overriding motivation is accountability, and hence the tendency is for QA to be both administrative-centred and introduced in a top-down manner. This may have several implications:

- (a) it reinforces the tendency for QA strategies to be sectoral (responding to the specific interests, concerns and logic of a particular ministry or department, or a particular section of a ministry, rather than looking at the service in ways that acknowledge and promote its lifelong dimension);
- (b) QA strategies introduced in this way run the risk of being seen by guidance practitioners as an imposition and as a control mechanism, rather than as an instrument – and an opportunity – for professional development. Practitioners may therefore resist, or participate perfunctorily, unless they have been involved in designing the system and their consent and support have been ensured;
- (c) administrative-centred QA approaches generally encourage collection of data on user satisfaction, but may be reluctant to involve users in the design, management and evaluation of guidance, or of giving users the right of redress as this could render those responsible for the system (the ministry or the department responsible for guidance services) open to legal proceedings;
- (d) such approaches may be more successful in producing data on aspects of the guidance service than in using the data for service-development purposes;
- (e) these types of QA approaches may end up being overly complex, bureaucratic, unwieldy and costly, so questioning whether the outcomes of the exercise justify the resources used to measure these outcomes. Such resources include time as well as money. The concern would be to see whether time usually spent by the practitioner in servicing client needs is being redirected towards managing aspects of the QA mechanism. Such shifts may also have an impact on roles, with the guidance practitioner having to attend to administrative and bureaucratic tasks as well as to professional ones, though with appropriate preparation and training, the administrative and bureaucratic tasks can be part of professionalism, not apart from it. Systems that are too complex or too expensive to run may end up being unfit for purpose and overly intrusive on service delivery. They may accordingly be used on an ad hoc basis, thus limiting their use compared to more streamlined systems that can be run regularly. They may also be impossible to implement by small companies that offer guidance services;
- (f) given the scope of an administrative-centred QA exercise, there is a tendency for the data produced to be quantitative, and therefore insufficiently sensitive to the processes involved in delivery of guidance services.

In some cases, therefore, top-down quantitative approaches are complemented by more bottom-up qualitative approaches, such as through identifying and sharing good practice, serving to improve standards through emulation.

The country reports indicate that both the education sector, and more particularly the labour market sector, are drawing on a broad range of QA strategies and mechanisms in an attempt to find a positive balance between flexibility and congruence –in ensuring that access to range and quality of services does not substantially differ between places, to the detriment of specific groups of citizens. Much of the emphasis is being placed on three areas.

First, countries are increasingly carrying out client-satisfaction surveys. These, when carried out methodologically, have potential to provide important feedback to the system, and represent an attempt to model QA systems based on citizen empowerment, especially when mechanisms for client protection and redress are provided. Several issues arise.

It seems clear, for instance, that many systems have a greater capacity for producing data than for analysing and using the data to drive change in service provision. Indeed, the mutual learning meeting on QA strongly recommended that quantitative approaches to surveys of user-satisfaction can be profitably complemented by more qualitative approaches, such as using focus groups or client forums which may provide better insights into provision.

It is also clear that clients are not always aware of their rights. concerning what they can reasonably expect from guidance services and staff, and rights to a higher-quality service, and may not have enough understanding of the criteria that can help to discriminate between good and poor-quality services. A case in point would be the lack of awareness that immigrants and ethnic-minority groups might have regarding their right to guidance services that are sensitive to cultural differences. This leads to the conclusion that while client satisfaction is a necessary measure of quality in service provision, it is not sufficient alone. The notion of the ‘briefed user’ becomes central. Some countries try to address such issues by ensuring that users have access to copies of a service charter setting out entitlements in clear and accessible language (the service charters used by the new *Maisons d’Emploi* in France). Often, however, users do not pay much attention to such information. It is therefore important to have other forms of measuring quality beyond user views: ones that are more cognizant of the technical elements that constitute a quality assurance approach to guidance provision.

A second approach to quality assurance reported by many countries is carrying out evaluative surveys (Bulgaria, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, France, Hungary, the Netherlands, Austria, Finland, and Sweden). While such evaluations may be useful in indicating strengths that need to be valued and weaknesses that need to be addressed, they at best provide evidence on an irregular, ad hoc basis, so failing to generate the self-critical culture and implement ongoing evaluation procedures that are the basis of most QA systems.

Third, many countries reported that they attempt to ensure quality through staff training and other strategies to professionalise providers. For details of the extent and nature of such investment see Chapter 7, where the role of professional staff in strengthening structures for policy and systems development is considered. In reflecting on quality assurance, it is important to note that while fully-fledged QA systems need to cover professional qualifications, it is also clear that the latter by themselves do not necessarily guarantee quality. Moreover, the evidence is that few if any countries have a comprehensive system of

qualifications across every guidance sector, and many qualifications obtained are not specifically in career guidance, but rather in fields (psychology, sociology, labour market studies) which may overlap with – and contribute to – the knowledge and competence base required by career guidance providers, but do not comprehensively cover or guarantee it. In some cases, formal qualifications or evidence of the mastery of competences required to offer guidance are used to establish registers of practitioners (Estonia, Romania), with licensing being a way to control quality of provision. However, reliance on professionalisation of staff to ensure quality is also problematic unless there is a systematic approach to continued professional development, supervision and appraisal.

Another practitioner-based QA strategy is drawing up codes of conduct or ethics. In some cases, professional associations are set up to control access to a profession, to ensure there are sufficient opportunities for skills development, and in some cases to strike off individuals from the register if they have failed to maintain agreed standards, or have seriously transgressed against the code of conduct. A limitation with such codes is that they only bind members of the relevant associations. Guidance service providers who either fall outside the association's targeted membership base (where the association only admits psychologists), or who choose not to become members, may consider they are not bound by such codes, or may not even know about them. A further issue related to practitioner-led QA approaches arises when considering the labour market sector. As Sultana and Watts (2005) noted, it may prove difficult to have a strongly-bound profession, given that the public service model has led to guidance-related elements becoming embedded in the work of employment officers.

Some countries are trying to establish more rigorous QA monitoring by drawing eclectically on a broad range of strategies, including development of QA manuals and guidelines (Denmark, Ireland), placing outcomes of quality-auditing exercises on public websites to ensure transparency (Denmark, Ireland), generating a profile of services along a set of indicators of effectiveness that are constantly scrutinised (Denmark, Finland), and through use of e-survey and other online evaluation tools to collect feedback data and establish benchmarks (Denmark, Finland). One of the more diverse approaches to QA is in the UK, which makes use of European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) and Charter Mark (the UK government's national standard for excellence in customer service) standards, but also employs more innovative approaches that specifically target guidance-related issues and processes, such as the Matrix standard, focused inspection, and case-study approaches, as well as 'mystery shopping' <sup>(44)</sup>.

In those sectors where use general quality-standard frameworks such as ISO, total quality management (TQM), and EFQM have been used, the feedback received at mutual learning meetings has been that these general QA frameworks, which do not focus on career guidance as such, are considered by practitioners to be time-consuming, bureaucratic, and based on

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<sup>(44)</sup> 'Mystery shopping' refers to use by a company of anonymous resources to evaluate services and operations, often for third-party clients. Such anonymous resources usually include a 'mystery shopper', a person employed to visit or sample a service incognito to assess the quality of provision.

rigid top-down control rather than serving as a tool for developing the profession and its services. This point was reinforced by some responses to the survey carried out in the Cedefop study on quality guidelines and criteria on guidance (Cedefop; Henderson et al., 2004).

#### **5.4. Specificity of quality assurance on the labour market**

As noted in other chapters, most country updates focused on the education sector. The guidance in PES study provides some insights into the situation of QA in the labour market sector. Several issues arise which are not necessarily present in, or equally relevant to, the education sector.

An example is the propensity for PES across Europe to share and devolve responsibility for service provision. This raises important questions on how to assure the quality of personalised employment and career guidance services provided or subcontracted by PES. Survey responses indicate that in Europe's PES, many countries (the Czech Republic, Greece, Cyprus, Malta, the Netherlands) have not yet introduced standards for their career guidance services. Those that have still need to put quality assurance mechanisms in place to ensure the standards are met. Nevertheless, many countries are either planning to introduce such measures, or are piloting them. Some have common minimal standards (Austria, Estonia, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, UK), which all PES offices as well as partner organisations must attain. Sometimes these are legal standards, as in Italy. Where services are outsourced, the agencies concerned must follow regulations and standards established by the PES. Ireland, Spain and Slovakia, for instance, set quite stringent standards, while in the UK providers have to meet the Matrix quality standards.

Earlier it was noted the approach to quality assurance can be either comprehensive or segmented. It can also be targeted. The comprehensive approach focuses on generic aspects of service standards. In the targeted approach, the focus is on specific aspects of service, which may include career-guidance-related activities. In Austria, quality standards in PES are in place for updating career-related information, gender-fair labour market information, the minimum time for each client during an interview, and the appearance of the room in which to hold individual guidance interviews. Spain's PES has a detailed list of technical specifications for several dimensions of the career guidance process, identifying the methods that can be used in delivering each dimension, the minimum qualifications required by staff in each case, and the minimum time and resources that need to be allocated.

In several countries, the strategy in PES was to ensure standards in provision, while allowing space for local dynamics and initiatives. They did this by seeking to steer through target agreements and 'management by objectives', rather than administrative regulation. In this way, common outcomes are centrally decreed, but methods of attaining them are left to the relevant local level as in, for example, in Belgium-FOREM, Belgium-VDAB, Germany, Latvia, Austria and Finland. Auditing attainment targets is generally based on either quantitative or qualitative indicators, though increasingly it is a mix of both..

## 6. Learning and career management

The guidance resolution affirmed as a priority the need to refocus ‘guidance provision to develop citizens’ lifelong and lifewide learning and management skills as an integral part of education and training programmes’ and to encourage educators and trainers ‘to promote reflective learning techniques and autonomous learning, to enable young people and adults to self-manage their learning and career paths effectively’. Emphasis – as it is in the EU framework of key competences for lifelong learning adopted by the European Parliament and Council in 2006 (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2006) – is on developing metacognitive skills: in our case, those ‘meta’ skills needed to formulate individual action plans for further learning, work and other life goals, and to manage implementation and fulfilment of such plans <sup>(45)</sup>.

### 6.1. Developing competences for life and work

A good example of the focus on such ‘meta’ skills is the approach adopted by the Canadian blueprint for life/work design <sup>(46)</sup>. This translates career development outcomes into nationally agreed frameworks of competences that Canadians require, from childhood to adulthood, to manage their life and work development effectively <sup>(47)</sup>. The blueprint model defines three main blocks of competences: personal management, learning and work exploration, and life/work building. Each of these blocks contains several specific competences (locate and effectively use life/work information), which are then further subdivided into various outcomes covering a range of progressively more difficult levels (discovering and understanding life/work information; locate, understand and use life/work information; locate, interpret, evaluate and use life/work information). These levels – covering four age/stage versions – ensure that the framework is relevant to the needs of both youths and adults.

The Canadian blueprint for life/work designs (National Life/Work Centre, 2000), a framework of competences, suggests development in the following areas:

- (a) Area A: personal management
- build and maintain a positive self-image;

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<sup>(45)</sup> Such competences are also known to be a key variable in explaining wage differentials in OECD countries (OECD, 2002).

<sup>(46)</sup> The blueprint (National Life/Work Centre, 2000) is used by public and private agencies throughout Canada. See: <http://www.blueprint4life.ca/> [cited 3.3.2008]. Another curricular resource which takes citizen empowerment as its fundamental objective is Simon, Diplo and Schenke (1991).

<sup>(47)</sup> An Australian version has also been developed: the Australian blueprint for career development. See: [http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/career\\_development/policy\\_issues\\_reviews/key\\_issues/australian\\_blueprint\\_for\\_career\\_dev/default.htm](http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/career_development/policy_issues_reviews/key_issues/australian_blueprint_for_career_dev/default.htm) [cited 3.3.2008].



- interact positively and effectively with others;
  - change and grow throughout one's life.
- (b) Area B: learning and work exploration
- participate in lifelong learning supportive of life/work goals;
  - locate and effectively use life/work information;
  - understand the relationship between work and society/economy.
- (c) Area C: life/work building
- secure/create and maintain work;
  - make life/work-improvement decisions;
  - maintain balanced life and work roles;
  - understand the changing nature of life/work roles;
  - understand, engage in and manage one's own life/work building process.

Developing competences such as those outlined above is an important element in the shift towards the lifelong guidance paradigm, described earlier in Chapter 2. Older guidance approaches tend to be associated with a medical model, and therefore prone to position the client as a passive recipient of services delivered by expert providers using batteries of tests and assessment tools. In contrast, the lifelong approach to guidance strongly encourages 'empowerment' <sup>(48)</sup> of citizens. It invites the client to develop competences to manage career and learning development, and to engage in self-assessment and reflective, self-directive and autonomous processes, with the dialogic support of career guidance mentors. The new paradigm therefore envisages that clients are persons with resources, not just with problems. It represents an approach to career and career decision-making that adopts a holistic and social interactionist stance: career planning and actions represent an integral part of people's life experiences, and career experiences become meaningful when they are perceived and constructed in people's lives.

Traditionally, school guidance focused on key transition or cut-off points as students moved through the education system, and decisions had to be made on which subject clusters to study, or which schools to move on to. A lifelong guidance perspective both broadens and deepens the remit of school guidance services, in that the goal becomes that of promoting self-reflective, autonomous and skilled decision-making. Several countries across Europe have introduced a focus on career education, either as a separate curricular subject or integrated into a broader subject or included in one or more different study areas. The country progress reports indicate a spate of reforms that provide new or additional curricular space at different levels of the educational system to develop self-awareness and self-management

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<sup>(48)</sup> This term is preferred to the more commonly used term 'activation', given the latter word's negative and interventionist connotations.

skills (Bulgaria, Estonia, France, Cyprus, Latvia, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Finland) <sup>(49)</sup>.

Especially promising are the experiential learning pedagogies being mobilised to ensure that such skills are learned meaningfully and effectively <sup>(50)</sup>. Many countries report using work and course tasters, for instance, as part of a broader set of activities that support learning about work and training in experiential and other forms. In the education sector in particular, some are using portfolios or ‘logbooks’ (Denmark, Luxembourg, Finland, Sweden) to develop those metacognitive skills needed to bring together different inputs on work in different subject areas, promoting a more purposeful and self-reflective approach to career development and career decision-making. In some cases (Belgium-Flanders, Finland), these portfolios are electronic or web-based, and as such have the potential for integrating work- and education-related information in ways that enable students to compare the information they have about themselves with other data sets. More broadly, several reports referred to the fact that their education systems are restructuring their pedagogical approaches to encourage autonomous learning (Ireland, France, Austria), a task in which mastery of ICT is a critical component (Ireland, Poland, Finland, Sweden).

The guidance in PES report has provided evidence that promoting these skills has also become an important feature of the programmes offered to unemployed adults in the EU, particularly through ‘personal action planning’ (Sultana and Watts, 2005). The personal action plan (PAP), also referred to as an individualised (or individual) career or development plan, is a recognised strategy aimed at helping clients identify and meet their changing goals, interests and needs. PAP allows clients to identify goals in the job-search process, and strategies to reach those goals. Clients are often encouraged to develop objectives that are SMART: specific, measurable (quantified), attainable (realistic as well as challenging), result-focused, and time-oriented or -bound. In other words, an effective action plan sets out a concrete timetable and a set of clearly defined steps that help the client reach the objectives set.

The PAP is distinguished by a process that is ongoing and bi-directional, meaning that the client can move back to previous steps to gather more information or clarify choices. The process is also marked by joint ownership, where both the client and the adviser have clearly defined responsibilities. The client commits to implementing the plan, while the adviser commits to assisting the client in the process and to providing the resources that may be required for this purpose. Progress reports from countries suggest that the PAP strategy has been adopted by several guidance services in the education sector as well. Staff set out to

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<sup>(49)</sup> None however report introducing such skills at primary-school level. Promoting metacognitive skills (the skills needed to plan, organise and evaluate one’s own cognitive processes) helps embed the competences needed to manage one’s learning and development throughout life at an early age. The OECD (2004) notes development of primary-school career education programmes in Canada, as well as in The Czech Republic and Denmark.

<sup>(50)</sup> Helmut Zelloth, project manager of the career guidance research and development portfolio at the European Training Foundation, aptly refers to the shift from a ‘testing’ approach to a ‘tasting’ approach (personal communication).

engage students in ‘personal career planning’ and in developing a ‘personal career journey’ (Luxembourg, Norway, Sweden, UK [Scotland]), to devise an ‘individual transition plan’ (Denmark), or to become ‘protagonists of a life project’ (France, Italy). The critical element is structuring the competences needed to manage career and learning in such a way that they are clearly recognisable and attainable, and that citizens are knowledgeable and purposeful in the way they construct their personal action plans.

## **6.2. Frameworks and curricular guidelines**

Also promising are those initiatives which attempt to ensure that students adopt a lifelong orientation towards learning and career development by introducing competence frameworks or curricular guidelines. In this way, the key skills needed by students to become self-reflective and autonomous learners – and which are central to the paradigm shift in guidance – are set out in a systematic and structured manner. Finland (National Board of Education, 2003, 2004) and Ireland (National Centre for Guidance in Education, 2004), for instance, have reported publication of new curricular guidelines that support development of learning and career management skills.

The logic behind such initiatives is conceptualised well in Finland’s national core curriculum for upper secondary schools. This states that ‘the objective of educational and vocational guidance is to guide students towards independence and responsibility, to enable them to devise their own individual study plans, identify problems in relation to their studies and seek information about how to get help for these problems. The aim is that students are able to study to the full throughout their time at upper secondary school and are capable of developing their learning-to-learn skills and identifying their own individual learning styles and strengths as students’ (National Board of Education, Finland, 2003, p. 220).

Another good example of a curricular framework is the ‘Learning outcomes from careers education and guidance’ (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 1999) which was subsequently developed into a national framework for careers education and guidance in England for those aged 11 to 19 (Department for Education and Skills, 2003). Participation of key stakeholders – including, for instance, the two headteachers’ associations – meant there was ownership of the framework, which eased its implementation. Their awareness of the needs of different groups of service users, as well as their professional experience in different contexts, meant that the framework could be more inclusive. An important access-related issue was the decision to start the framework at age 11 instead of age 13, and to extend it beyond age 16 to age 19, given rising participation rates in post-compulsory education. However, as the curriculum framework is only recommended and not statutory, as it is an objective and not an outcome, and it is left to individual schools to implement across the curriculum rather than a specific course in its own right, this has tended to weaken its impact.

### 6.3. Remaining challenges

Despite country updates indicating a degree of progress in implementing the resolution's advice to build citizens' ability to manage their learning and work, four key points need to be made.

The first is that large groups of students have limited access to support in managing career and learning. As already noted, the reports at hand do not indicate much progress in relation to the concerns expressed by earlier reviews that guidance support is underdeveloped in the primary education and VET sectors. With regard to the latter, the assumption is presumably being made that VET students have already chosen their educational and occupational paths, and they therefore have less need for support. This takes little account of lifelong learning and occupational mobility. Neither does it take account of increasing flexibility in upper secondary and higher VET programmes, or of the wide range of career options and jobs that can flow from broadly designed vocational education and training. Skills to manage learning and career planning and development are increasingly needed in this sector.

Second, the shift to easing management of career development and learning requires new skills from guidance practitioners and teachers. In schools, for instance, career guidance staff need to work closely with other subject teachers, given that increasingly guidance issues feature across the curriculum, and transition and lifelong learning issues are seen as a cross-curricular responsibility of all school staff members. They also need to know how to encourage and support self-reflection by young people as they take part in experiential learning about the world of work through their involvement in work taster schemes, and to assess the extent to which important competences to manage learning and career have been developed. It is not clear whether current training programmes adequately attend to these aspects.

Third, despite awareness of the need for a paradigm shift in service provision, focused on lifelong career management, public employment services are, as noted in Chapter 4, still under great pressure to focus mainly on short-term objectives relating to the out-of-work. The guidance in PES report has clearly shown the extent to which the labour market sector in Europe needs to respond to the challenge of opening up its guidance services to embrace a more long-term, lifelong perspective –more in tune with the needs of citizens in the knowledge economy where individuals increasingly move through occupational and training pathways in more complex, non-linear ways.

Finally, a cautionary note. Many would endorse the resolution's emphasis on the need to develop skills for self-directed learning and career development throughout life. However, the image of a smart, entrepreneurial individual capable of flexibly navigating the stormy waters of fast-changing and insecure labour markets, and purposefully making choices from the opportunities available, has to be tempered by realisation that such opportunities are often determined by the vitality or otherwise of the economy and sometimes by the social milieu of which the individual is a part. A lifelong guidance system wary of the tendency of some States

to curtail welfare guarantees would argue that while individuals and groups need to develop competences to manage career and learning self-reflectively and purposefully, they need to do so in supportive, resourced environments. In other words, the stress on autonomy needs to be balanced by an equally strong emphasis on solidarity (<sup>51</sup>).

This is where the notion of ‘flexicurity’ seems to be most relevant, in its promise to address the contradictory demands of the flexibility-security nexus. As a model that combines easy hiring and firing (flexibility for employers) and high benefits for the unemployed (security for the employees), ‘flexicurity’ captures the nature and direction of the new social contract between the State and the citizen (Wilthagen and Tros, 2004). The policy concept, in which workers are protected but jobs are not, is in fact being investigated by the EU as a possible future European model, largely because it is considered to have contributed to near-full employment in Denmark where it was first implemented in the 1990s. In this model, to receive full benefits an unemployed person is required to seek constantly employment or further education. While there are conflicting views on the extent to which ‘flexicurity’ is able to deliver on its promise of ‘balancing’ and ‘reconciling’ the traditional labour-capital nexus (see Ozaki, 1999 for instance), the critical role of career guidance as a feature of a social model that is a true complement to the economic model is clear.

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(<sup>51</sup>) Much the same points are made by contributors to Cedefop’s virtual community discussion on lifelong guidance, and especially by VC animator Alan Brown. The latter makes reference to what Lash (2003) calls a shift towards ‘insourcing’, reallocation of functions, activities and responsibilities to the individual (learner, trainee, employee), that were previously regarded as primarily the responsibility of institutions and collectives. Reference is also made to Beck et al.’s (2003) notion of ‘socially constructed autonomy’ to highlight the resulting paradox, whereby what is expected of the individual in terms of adaptation to certain values is collectively defined, but the individual is then expected to respond to this individually. One response to such trends is precisely to ensure that individuals are not expected to assume greater individual responsibility without offering appropriate support, particularly of a collective nature. Career guidance services embedded in the lifelong paradigm as envisioned in this document are one form of such collective support.

## **7. Strengthening structures for policy and systems development**

Much of the progress that policy-makers, practitioners and researchers would like to see in career guidance, signposted by the guidance resolution, can only be achieved if the structures supporting policy and systems development are strengthened. The guidance reviews carried out between 2001 and 2004 indicated clearly that a key failing is strong, strategic and purposeful leadership. Without such leadership, and without systems that sustain development through research and innovation, there is a danger that many excellent initiatives that the country updates and supplementary data have showcased will remain ad hoc and dependent on the goodwill of individuals. Many innovative strategies that have been reported also tend to be linked to a project, which means, unless they are institutionalised, they will tend to disappear when funding dries up at the end of the project. Such initiatives have little hope of developing to scale, or of making the systemic impact that helps to shift the paradigm through which career guidance is offered.

Policy and systems development can be supported in diverse ways. The resolution highlights three strategies. It first underlines the importance of ensuring key players – such as ministries, social partners, employment services, service providers, guidance practitioners, education and training institutions, consumers, parents and youth – are involved in the process. It then points out that the desired development needs to be backed up by a well-prepared profession, with initial and continuing education and training of guidance practitioners being both relevant and of high quality. The resolution finally suggests that policy and systems development can be greatly simplified if EU Member States work closely together to share best practice. The next sections consider each strategy in turn, taking note of the progress achieved in the three areas, as documented in the country updates and supplementary material.

### **7.1. Partnerships in policy and systems development**

Already noted in Chapter 3 is the immense value of having providers coming together at national and/or regional levels to form a guidance forum or council to share systematically and purposefully their concerns, aspirations and strategic objectives, and to devise ways of collaborating to articulate clear visions, and influence policy- and decision-makers. Many benefits can accrue from setting up national guidance forums, as the joint actions projects have shown (see footnote 30), with a whole range of stakeholders coming together to articulate sometimes quite ambitious action plans, leading to more purposeful steering of career guidance. Table 2 provides an example drawing from the achievements of the 12 fledgling national guidance forums established over the past three years, which, in each country context, have brought together around the same table a wide range of guidance providers and stakeholders – including, often, those from the education and employment sectors, as well as the employers, trade unions and special interest groups.

Table 2: *Career guidance development through stakeholder partnership*

<b>Gap/weakness identified</b>	<b>Action to address gap/weakness</b>
Lack of clear policy steering	Draft of national guidance policy framework presented to ministry in November 2006
Lack of input by the social partners, NGOs, and community organisations	Each entity/sector invited to appoint a person responsible for career guidance. Representatives now attend national guidance forum meetings
The pre- and in-service training of guidance staff requires further investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A new degree in lifelong career guidance and development launched. training offered jointly by education and labour market specialists, to education and labour market sector staff</li> <li>• Foreign experts to address local knowledge/skills gaps invited</li> <li>• Arrangements for staff to complete a masters in career guidance to create a cadre capable of leading systems development</li> </ul>
Occupational information systems need to be developed (print and/or ICT-based)	Occupational descriptors are being developed with EU funding in a project to which the PES, Euroguidance, and a university research centre are contributing
Lack of career guidance resources (tests, games ...)	Plans to set up a national career guidance centre are in place
Formalised quality-auditing procedures not in place	Research on QA mechanisms started
Impact of guidance service needs to be evaluated	Research on impact of guidance services commissioned
Cross-sectoral collaboration needs to be developed	Triannual cross-sectoral meetings (joint seminars, workshops, conferences) planned
Developing the guidance-oriented school	Strategy integrated in a national policy framework
There are no guidance services/specialists to cater for specific client groups	Research commissioned on career guidance for persons with disabilities. Results disseminated at national conference

Professional associations and research centres can also be key partners in supporting systems development in career guidance. The role of such bodies to ensure coherence and direction in the offer of services can be quite central. Several country reports referred to progress in developing such entities. Key among these, in addition to the new professional associations reported in Chapter 3, are research centres in England and Finland and a new expert centre in Denmark:

- in Denmark, the Ministry of Education is responsible for developing and running a national centre of expertise for guidance. This includes activities such as: collecting examples of best practice and knowledge on guidance, quality development, coordination among different types of guidance services, and initiating analyses, surveys and cross-sectoral

experimental and developmental activities. To support and disseminate information on these activities, a virtual resource centre has been established, specifically aimed at guidance counsellors (<sup>52</sup>). This includes an electronic news service, an online journal on guidance, a virtual library, links to relevant legislation, information on best practices, recent research activities, surveys and analyses, etc., on guidance;

- in Finland, Jyväskylä University has recently established a cross-sectoral research centre for lifelong guidance policy and practice. For this first phase it has a five-year mandate as a cross-disciplinary research unit until the end of 2011. The centre is an innovative network composed of university faculties/centres and regional institutes, and its steering group has representatives from national policy-makers and social partners. The idea is to create a research and training unit that focuses specifically on career guidance issues, to strengthen the evidence base required to inform national policy development. The centre focuses on the challenges identified in the EU resolution and also in national educational and labour market policies. Its activities and priorities are structured according to the chapters of the OECD and European Commission career guidance handbook for policy-makers (OECD and European Commission, 2004);
- in the UK, the Centre for Guidance Studies (CeGS) at the University of Derby carries out national and international research and also caters for continuous professional development of guidance staff. It offers a range of research, learning programmes and information services, and aims to bridge the gap between guidance theory, research and practice in support of lifelong learning. The centre has developed expertise in such areas as research and evaluation services, leading projects designed to inform and improve service planning and delivery in youth policy, adult guidance and workforce development. This includes mapping service provision, producing annotated bibliographies and systematic literature reviews, working in partnership with client organisations to support organisational development and management processes, and managing professional networks. Its National Library Resource for Guidance (NLRG) holds the largest collection of career-guidance-related material in the UK (<sup>53</sup>).

The impression one gets from the country updates and supplementary material is that examples of such strategic bodies that attempt to bridge policy and practice, while on the increase, are still limited, and that more needs to be done to shape the field at national levels.

Other less structured forms of professional networking were described in the country reports. These include grass-roots, bottom-up initiatives organised by practitioners themselves, such as Internet forums where issues are debated (Lithuania, Sweden, UK) and where examples of successful practice that may be emulated are shared or placed in a databank (Denmark, Finland).

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<sup>52</sup>) Available from Internet: [www.vejledningsviden.dk](http://www.vejledningsviden.dk) [cited 3.3.2008].

<sup>53</sup>) CeGS publications can be downloaded from <http://www.derby.ac.uk/cegs/index.asp> [cited 3.3.2008].



This kind of activity is to be commended, since practitioners are closest to citizens and best placed to test out the soundness and wisdom of policy directions, as well as develop innovative ideas in response to emerging challenges and environments. From the perspective of systems and policy development, the earlier caveat concerning the sustainability and impact of such micro-initiatives is also relevant.

## **7.2. Initial and continuing education of guidance practitioners**

The role of guidance practitioners in strengthening career guidance is clearly central: too many countries have developed ambitious policy frameworks in relation to a broad range of services, only to find that little if any progress could be registered without the availability of a pool of adequately trained – and in many cases retrained – staff. The Council Resolution recognises this in highlighting the need for Member States to reflect current best practice across the EU in their training programmes.

Several country updates report some progress. The activities and initiatives reported fall under four main headings: increased investment in training; development of a more uniform curriculum for training guidance personnel; increased use of new technologies in delivering training; and improved EU-wide cooperation in the initial and continuing education of guidance practitioners.

Several countries – including Bulgaria, Estonia, Ireland, France, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Malta, Austria, Poland, Romania and Finland – report major investments in staff development, aiming for an increased level of professionalism among career guidance personnel. In the education sector, this is often done by providing university-level credentials, at certificate, diploma and master's levels.

Many have indicated awareness of the need to strengthen training provision to support reforms in guidance services. This is the case, for example, with Denmark, where introduction of a new guidance system (Danish Ministry of Education, 2004) was accompanied by investment in developing staff competences:

- (a) one of the objectives of the Danish guidance reform is to improve the qualifications and competences of guidance practitioners to professionalise Danish guidance services. Consequently, many different, and mainly short, sector-specific further training courses have been replaced by one common training programme available to guidance counsellors from all sectors. It is now obligatory to have followed the new training programme to be employed by one of the new guidance centres;
- (b) six centres for higher education across the country offer the new training programme on a part-time basis. It is equivalent to six months' full-time studies and consists of three modules:
  - careers guidance and the guidance practitioner (guidance theories and methodologies, ethics, ICT in guidance, etc.);

- careers guidance and society (labour market conditions and policies, the education system and educational policies, development of society and business, etc.);
  - careers guidance and the individual (different target groups, human development, learning theories, etc.);
- (c) the training programme is offered as an adult learning programme and corresponds to half a diploma degree. Entry requirements are, as a minimum, a completed short-cycle (two-year) higher education programme and two years of relevant working experience.

The study on PES (Sultana and Watts, 2005) indicated that in the labour market sector too, there is a marked tendency for staff offering guidance – or services which have a guidance element embedded in them – to receive more training than in the past. The survey noted a trend for specialised training in career guidance to be increasingly offered in the PES context, with such opportunities being recently introduced in several countries (Hungary, Malta). In some cases such training has been made mandatory (the Czech Republic, Austria, Portugal). Other countries (Cyprus) are planning to go down the same route. Much of this training is carried out after being employed as guidance staff, through in-house competence development rather than through formal certification routes at university.

A second set of initiatives fall within the overall scope of quality assurance of services by ensuring that all citizens have access to services delivered by equally competent staff, irrespective of the point of delivery. This has entailed articulation of lists of competences that all guidance personnel must have<sup>(54)</sup>, and which are at times specified in a national qualification framework (Latvia), or as a guide that specifies qualification parameters for counsellors (Lithuania). Such competence frameworks also serve as the basis for developing a more coherent and unified curriculum for staff training (Italy). Norway reports that its national network for career guidance personnel also has, as a goal, strengthening the training offer and ensuring more uniform training for counsellors. In some cases, the core competences are required from guidance staff working both in the education sector and in PES. The intention is to ensure there is better synergy between the two sectors, seen as one of the key building blocks in developing a guidance system that has a lifelong orientation. This synergy is, in a few cases, eased through joint training opportunities, with a core set of modules followed by all guidance staff, and with specialist modules aimed at personnel from different sectors (Malta).

A third set of initiatives focuses on innovative methods of delivering training, including improved use of new technologies in increasing access to professional development opportunities. In PES in particular, where it is rare to find staff being trained through formal credentialed routes, innovative methods for delivering training are provided by organising

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<sup>(54)</sup> The focus on competences that guidance staff should have has been reinforced by the competence framework for guidance developed by the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance – IAEVG (2003). While the list is based on self-report by practitioners rather than empirical observation of competences actually in use, it is nevertheless useful in that it helps demystify the constitutive elements of guidance services.

structured meetings that enable personnel from different local and/or regional offices to share their experiences and examples of interesting practice (Estonia, Lithuania, Poland). Estonia has extended this approach to include a case-analysis supervision methodology, ensuring that sharing experience and expertise becomes institutionally embedded through mentoring. France's PES – the *Agence nationale pour l'emploi* (ANPE) – has established a *Forum des Initiatives* at both national and regional levels, where good practice is showcased, and even rewarded with certificates of achievement and prize money.

Increasingly, such sharing of professional practice as well as continued staff development is organised on IT platforms. Some courses are delivered online, in both the education and labour market sectors. Examples of the former include the Czech Republic and Ireland, where e-learning modules have been developed, with the Irish initiative targeting improvement of whole-school guidance planning. Examples of online training for staff in PES include the 'Atene' programme in Norway, and Finland's basic training course for client service staff. In addition, Internet facilities are increasingly being used to animate online discussion on specific career-guidance-related themes, with the central office setting key readings to start off the debate, and then inviting counsellors to contribute comments, experiences and further readings (as in Portugal's PES). Austria uses intranet for similar purposes.

Using web-based forums to ease dialogue between practitioners, researchers and policy-makers, and for disseminating ideas and good practices among the guidance community, is proving to be quite popular, though research needs to be undertaken to measure impact and effectiveness. In the UK, the national guidance research forum seems to be particularly strong in implementing this strategy<sup>(55)</sup>, as is Lithuania with its Internet forum for career advisers. Finland, too, has developed a web-based resource bank of good practices. The Swedish National Agency for Education has set up a website to support guidance practitioners in their daily work, thus creating a virtual meeting point for different guidance staff to exchange information, experience and knowledge. This is just one of the initiatives that Sweden has implemented in reaction to an evaluation carried out in 2005 showing that many guidance staff did not have the required level of training.

A final set of initiatives focus on exploiting the wealth of experiences in training provision across the EU for different Member States to learn from one another, to draw on strengths and emulate best practice. There are several such projects funded by the European Commission, ranging from peer learning visits, to joint training modules and development of training manuals. Some of these are mentioned in the next section, where the value of transnational projects not only in providing staff training opportunities, but also in simplifying and strengthening policy and systems development is considered.

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<sup>(55)</sup> See: <http://www.guidance-research.org/> [cited 3.3.2008].

### 7.3. The transnational dimension

Country updates provide details of some promising initiatives concerning practices and setting up transnational structures that have the potential to simplify policy learning across the EU and beyond. Many were involved in peer learning visits across EU borders, with Cedefop giving lifelong guidance some priority in its study visits programme over the past two years. This gave participating countries an opportunity to examine their provision and compare and contrast it with that of other EU countries. Such experiential learning can act as significant informal drivers in different Member States, leading, in some cases, to important forms of systems development, and to formation of influential knowledge and policy networks.

EU funding was used to set up regional and transregional networks that encourage learning and share good practice. Prominent examples are EU networks such as Academia and EQUAL, which provide opportunities for staff development and exchanges of knowledge and experience between Member States. Other networks include that of seven Nordic-Baltic Euroguidance centres – involving Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Norway and Sweden – whose goal is to create a forum to exchange good practice. Another example is the south European initiative for guidance, which aims to bring 10 countries together in the region (Bulgaria, Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Romania, Spain, and Turkey).

The European guidance and counselling research forum, also funded by the EU, supports online collaboration of guidance practitioners, researchers and policy-makers in five partner countries (Denmark, Greece, Slovenia, Finland, UK). Expert groups in these countries, selected from the target groups for the website, meet face-to-face to discuss issues of policy and practice, with discussions continued online. Summaries of discussions from each country are translated into the language of each partner, with more extended commentaries in English, as part of the continuing process of new knowledge creation for the network. This ensures development and transfer of innovation in training and continuing professional development to the wider community of guidance and counselling through use of ICT. The target groups for the forum are practitioners, managers, researchers, trainers, students and policy-makers, and others interested in guidance and counselling research. The forum's website (<sup>56</sup>) helps create and support an online community interested in guidance, brings practice, research and policy closer together, and focuses on core problems of counselling and guidance practice.

These initiatives in a sense foreshadow the European lifelong guidance policy network, which could potentially play a strategically critical role in fostering European cooperation, knowledge creation and transfer, in liaising with national guidance forums and other key actors, impacting on national and EU-level policy-making, and monitoring further progress in implementing the Council Resolution on lifelong guidance.

The final chapter considers this and other ways of sustaining focus on the key objectives outlined in the resolution.

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<sup>56</sup>) See: <http://www.guidance-europe.org/> [cited 3.3.2008].

## 8. Ways forward

Enhanced cooperation between the European Commission, Member States, international organisations (WHO, OECD, Cedefop, European Training Foundation) and other relevant stakeholders has developed and agreed various European reference tools, common principles, guidelines and frameworks in lifelong guidance. These instruments together with the Lifelong learning programme 2007-13 and the structural funds have supported EU and national policy reforms and policy reflection in the Education and training 2010 work programme at EU level. Further, scientific initiatives taken by Cedefop, establishment of the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network, the international guidance policy conferences and comparative studies have consolidated the position of lifelong guidance on the European agenda.

This Cedefop report confirms that education and employment objectives must be driven by both economic and social imperatives. Member States have much to learn from each other as they experiment and innovate with new approaches to achieve more equitable participation in education and working life. The report showcases the complex links between policy, research and practice. Legislation that emphasises improving the education and training system, supports smooth transitions for citizens throughout their education and career pathways, and ensuring workforce development reinforces the need for cooperation. Sustainable systemic change is only possible, when different administrations form a partnership and work towards knowledge sharing and joint efforts to improving accountability and guidance service quality.

Traditionally information, advice and guidance services in most Member States have been organised according to clear distinctions between target groups, levels and functions. Establishing a lifelong guidance system requires reinterpreting the guidance concept and reforming existing service delivery structures. Additionally, it calls for moving from a general to a tailored individualised service, implementing quality frameworks for service delivery, empowering citizens to manage their own learning and careers and widening use of ICT in service provision. This requires expanding the horizons of guidance professionals from specialised to multiple competences through initial and continuous training.

This study provides evidence that Member States have accepted that citizens need lifelong access to high quality guidance services. They realise the long-term benefits and value of lifelong learning and guidance for societies and individuals. Guidance provision should cover, in an integrated way, the formal, non-formal and informal dimensions of learning, socio-professional aspects and develop citizenship to support lifelong learning and employment policies. Individual users with their diverse and multiple needs should always be at the centre of the lifelong guidance policy and service delivery.

The country updates and supplementary data on which this report is based give the European citizen a fair measure of hope that the career guidance services to which they are entitled are moving in the right direction. Certainly, reinvigorated by the series of reviews, major conferences, and intensifying exchanges between countries, guidance is striving to bridge research and policy in searching for optimal solutions to shared challenges. The preceding

chapters outline both the achievements of different countries in relation to the priorities signposted by the resolution, as well as the gaps, limitations and weaknesses that still need to be addressed. It is useful to present a synthesis of the latter to be in a better position to consider the ways forward. Thus:

- (a) there is increasing evidence that countries are more and more aware of the need to design holistic, linked services, with providers cooperating to attend to citizen needs across the lifespan. However:
- providers in the education and labour market sectors still tend to operate with a different rationale and sometimes contrasting interpretations of career guidance, rendering cooperation a challenge;
  - national guidance forums and other structures that bring different providers and stakeholders together are still at an early stage, and need to gain credibility and support to be in a position to shape systems development;
  - focus in many contexts is still on system input, rather than on output and outcomes for clients and users. This tends to reinforce concern with the welfare of existing organisational arrangements, rather than with systemic restructuring that works in the interests of the client more holistically.
- (b) much is being done across Europe to ease access to career guidance services, when and where they are needed, with new technology being put to good use, and with efforts being made to ensure that the offer of career guidance information, advice and support is more transparent, easy to access and readily mobilised in favour of those who are most vulnerable. However:
- several categories of citizens still have difficulty in ensuring their entitlement to such information, advice and support;
  - much of the responsibility in trying to match supply of services with demand in many countries, still falls on the State. This leads to important gaps in service provision, particularly for adults in employment;
  - possibly because demand for services outstrips capacity to supply, few countries seem to be giving adequate attention to marketing career guidance, so large groups of citizens may well be unaware of the kind of support available to them, where to go to access it, and the benefits that can accrue if they manage to access it.
- (c) Quality assurance of career guidance services is attracting increasing attention, with several countries exploring options in the strategic choice of QA models. However:
- the search for appropriate principles, models, strategies and tools to implement QA systems in career guidance is still in its early stages;
  - those countries that have adopted quality assurance mechanisms have usually opted for administrative- and practitioner-centred ones, with few if any instances of implementation of consumer-led models, where the key player in the quality assurance exercise is the client. Often, the role of the user is restricted to expressing satisfaction

or otherwise with the service received. In most cases, the citizen does not enjoy the right of redress;

- in most cases reported, application of QA mechanisms is restricted to a specific sector, to a narrow range of client groups, and to a few aspects of the wide repertoire of activities that guidance can involve. In many cases, the focus is also placed on quantitative indicators that fail to capture issues related to the process of service provision.
- (d) in the education sector in particular, some countries are investing in helping young people develop the competences needed to manage learning and career development. In a few cases, these skills are defined in curricular frameworks and guidelines that ensure systematic and structured coverage by groups of specially trained educators. However:
- several categories of young people and particularly adults are missing out on opportunities to develop the skills needed to manage learning and career development;
  - school guidance staff have often not been trained to work closely with their colleagues, which is increasingly necessary given that guidance, transition and lifelong learning issues are often addressed in a cross-curricular manner;
  - the almost exclusive focus by public employment services on the out-of-work leads it to adopt quick-fix approaches that respond to political pressures to place as many people into employment as possible, in the shortest time possible, rather than to support youths and adults to develop the competences required in the search for occupational fulfilment in a more long-term perspective.
- (e) development of guidance-related policies as well as career guidance systems is being reinforced through several strategies, including setting up partnerships between providers and stakeholders, establishment of research centres to generate the data needed to shape the field and give it a sense of direction, and improved opportunities for both skills and policy learning through initial and continued training of practitioners and through participation in transnational activities. However:
- the national and transnational partnerships developed thus far are still tentative and fragile, and can easily dissolve unless they receive adequate support;
  - government commitment to a lifelong career guidance model requires increased funding and resources at a time when State budgets are tight and restricted. More clear evidence is needed to strengthen the claim that guidance generates economic benefits, as well as personal ones;
  - professionalising staff in career guidance is still at an early stage, and competence profiles often only partially match the requirements of a lifelong guidance model.

The way forward builds on the strengths that career guidance has achieved in addressing the weaknesses identified. There are at least two levels at which this task can be undertaken.

First, it is imperative for each Member State to consolidate its policy vision by forging strong partnerships at national, regional and local levels and to take stock of where it is in relation to the shift to the lifelong guidance paradigm, and in particular in relation to the five key areas signposted by the guidance resolution. In doing so, Member States now have at their disposal a vast array of comparative data against which they can benchmark themselves and their services. They also have several case studies of successful responses to the challenges that most countries are facing in their attempt to develop a guidance system that serves well both the public and the private good. Further, they have a set of practical common reference tools for designing and improving lifelong guidance systems and policies.

Second, this vitally important work at Member State level needs to link into and benefit from the cross-European network being put into place, whose role is to consolidate, support and add value to national-level efforts. Epistemic and policy networks have an established history of successfully supporting capacity-building and transfer of knowledge and know-how, as well as policy learning (Creech and Ramji, 2004). The European policy network on lifelong guidance, recently established by the Commission to build on the work of the expert group on lifelong guidance, can play a pivotal role in sharing policy options and shaping policy development, in information gathering and dissemination, commissioning policy analysis and research, and generally sustaining and strengthening national structures.

In analysing developments in implementing the lifelong guidance model in different Member States, and placing such efforts in a broader European context, it is hoped that this report will support both national and EU-wide efforts to be of greater service to citizens, in their quest for meaningful, fulfilling and dignified lives.



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# **Annex 1 Questionnaire used by the Finnish EU conference organisers and Cedefop**

## **Update on progress made in implementing the May 2004 Council Resolution on guidance throughout life**

Background and purpose:

Brief national updates on progress in implementing the Council Resolution on guidance would serve as background material for the Finnish Presidency conference taking place in November 2006. Cedefop will commission a contractor to produce a synthesis report for the conference so there would be a review of achievements made and remaining challenges to be addressed. In preparing the synthesis report, it would be helpful if Member States followed the outline headings below when providing their updates.

Please briefly describe any concrete measures taken or planned to:

- (a) develop lifelong guidance systems (including steps to ensure effective cooperation and coordination between providers of guidance at national, regional and local levels in the provision of guidance services and measures to ensure the integration of a gender perspective in all policies and practice relating to guidance provision);
- (b) broaden access to guidance across the lifespan with a view to ensuring that high quality guidance provision is accessible for all European citizens at all stages of their lives to enable them to manage their learning and work pathways and the transitions therein;
- (c) strengthen quality assurance mechanisms for guidance services, information and products especially from a citizen perspective;
- (d) refocus guidance provision to develop citizens' lifelong and lifewide learning and management skills as an integral part of education and training programmes (including through encouraging schools, institutes of further and higher education, training providers to promote reflective learning techniques and autonomous learning, in order to enable young people and adults to self-manage their learning and career paths effectively);
- (e) strengthen structures for policy and systems development at national and regional levels, especially by:
  - (i) involving the appropriate key players (such as ministries, social partners, employment services, service providers, guidance practitioners, education and training institutions, consumers, parents and youth);
  - (ii) encouraging and supporting providers of initial and continuing education of guidance practitioners to reflect current best practice across the Union in their training programmes;
  - (iii) cooperating in the improvement of the quality of information relating to international and national best practice available to policy-makers

Please attach brief descriptions of any relevant examples of policy and practice.





Cedefop (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training)

**From policy to practice**  
**A systemic change to lifelong guidance in Europe**

*Ronald G. Sultana*

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## From policy to practice

### A systemic change to lifelong guidance in Europe

The need to improve policies, systems and practices for guidance in Europe was stressed by the Council Resolution on lifelong guidance (May 2004), which identified as priorities: widening access to guidance services; improving quality assurance mechanisms; refocusing guidance provision to empower individuals to manage their own careers and learning, and strengthening structures for policy development at national and regional levels involving a range of key players.

This report aims to document how much progress is being achieved in reforming career guidance provision. All European Union Member States plus Norway have reported on the extent to which they have addressed the five priority areas identified in the Council Resolution. The report outlines significant developments, trends and challenges of guidance systems and policies, and identifies interesting practice from which policy-makers and practitioners can draw inspiration.

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