

eGuidance in Denmark:

A new initiative to help more persons into education

In January 2011, the Ministry of Children and Education launched a new guidance service and established it as part of the Danish guidance portal www.ug.dk. Every person in Denmark who seeks information on education will get guidance from experienced counsellors via various communication channels (hotline, chat, email, SMS messaging and Facebook) every day of the week.

eGuidance was designed to enforce and complement the existing offers within the Danish guidance system. It is a contribution to the Danish Government's overall target to encourage every young person to participate in education. The service provides easy access to independent information and guidance as to education and employment. Furthermore, it offers guidance to citizens who seek assistance with their career management and competence development.

Originally, the service was established for a period of two years, but it has later been prolonged with a year. It is currently being evaluated to assure that the targets are met and that the quality of the activities offered is high. Here, you can read an interview with the manager of eGuidance, Mrs Kirsten Hahn Larsen, about the first results after 2.5 years in action.

How is eGuidance organised in Denmark?

We are part of the Danish Ministry of Children and Education and located in an agency called UNI-C. We have 35 employees out of which 14 work full time for eGuidance. Physically we are located in the offices of the Ministry which is situated in the heart of Copenhagen, next to the Danish Parliament and several other ministries.

Furthermore, we have a large group of colleagues who work part-time for eGuidance. They are employed in other guidance units (Youth Guidance Centres, Regional Guidance Centres or Job Centres) and work for eGuidance either 40% or 60% of

their time, which is about 2-3 work days per week. In this way, we can maintain close



Mrs Kirsten Hahn Larsen, Manager of eGuidance in Denmark

communications and cooperation with the numerous guidance centres we have throughout Denmark. This is of course a management challenge, but it provides an incredibly good synergy between the different ways of working. The part-time employees work in home offices.

Which methods do you use and are some more popular than others?

We use chat, e-mail, telephone, text messaging and Facebook.

Chatting on the Internet is a relatively new tool within the guidance field. Almost 50% of

our guidance sessions are via chat, which has made us pretty experienced in guiding people this way. As a result, we are now developing a methodology of guidance via chat.

We have realised that chatting is a unique guidance tool. It works on the terms of those who seek guidance. People can address us exactly when they want to and abandon the conversation if they do not wish to continue. Furthermore, chat provides great opportunities for reflection during the guidance session. Chatting is particularly popular among the young. In 2012, 28,000 pupils and students in primary, secondary and upper secondary education have received guidance by chatting with a counsellor. This is a rise of 30% compared to the previous year.

Since 2012, we also use Facebook, where the clients can get in direct contact with a guidance counsellor and see who is in charge of our Facebook site that day. <https://www.facebook.com/eVeiledning>



At the eGuidance Facebook site, young persons can share their reflections and experiences with choice of education with others and in this way, the social media provide a brand new opportunity for young people to make a qualified choice of education. eGuidance has just reached 10,000 “likes” on Facebook and of these more than 60% are pupils at lower secondary education who are about to make their choice of upper secondary education.

Guidance via social media entails challenges and experiences, which are completely different from working with traditional channels. When you start using the new media, a guidance practice has to be developed for the use of the individual medium. For instance, we have developed a model for use in counselling which is differentiated according to the individual medium that we use.

Since the launch of eGuidance in Denmark, we have guided more than 200.000 children, young persons and adults (there are approx. 5 million inhabitants in Denmark). We try to gather the experience we have gained and communicate it to our partners through newsletters, articles and presentations at various conferences.

Who are your target groups and how do they find you?

We provide guidance in education for everyone. The target groups can roughly be divided into:

- Young people in lower secondary schools who are about to choose a youth education after the 9th or 10th year of school;
- Adolescents in upper secondary education who will choose among higher education offers;
- Adults seeking continuing education and training or who wish to begin a youth education or a programme within the higher education system.

Popularly speaking, we provide guidance from cradle to grave. In other words, we offer a wide range of guidance opportunities. This makes our work really exciting and challenging since we have to cover a wide area of knowledge. To this end, we make use of our general guidance competencies, and it is essential that we are all educated, skilled and experienced guidance counsellors; otherwise this would not be possible. It also requires a systematized structure of information search and a good system of knowledge sharing. Those who seek guidance find us through UG.dk, but also via

our new app. Besides, information about our offers is available in primary schools and in youth education institutions.

Were you inspired by other countries?

When setting up the eGuidance services in Denmark, we have been inspired by other countries, i.e. Learn Direct in the UK and the experiences made in Sweden.

We have shared our experiences with guidance counsellors and policy makers from a large number of European countries at meetings, seminars and conferences either in Denmark or abroad. We are very interested in future exchanges of experience, methods and practices with colleagues in other countries who have established similar eGuidance systems.

Where do you see future challenges?

The future challenges primarily consist of integrating eGuidance with the existing guidance activities to ensure that those who seek guidance experience them as an integrated whole – a coherent guidance offer. Young people clearly want to use the digital media, which they are very familiar with from their daily communication with e.g. friends, but it has to be integrated with the guidance activities that are going on at their educational institutions.

We are currently developing further channels of guidance. This spring, we have experimented with digital group guidance, and our first experiences are very positive, so we expect to develop this further in the coming months. We organise webinars for the applicants when the deadlines for application are approaching, and the guidance counsellors in primary and lower secondary school have brought groups of pupils into the IT rooms to enable them to carry out a group guidance session with an eGuidance counsellor.

As a digital guidance unit, we must continuously think outside the box. We have to be innovative and develop new areas and channels of guidance, and it is both exciting and challenging to step into unknown territories.

Read more about eGuidance in Denmark, in Danish: www.ug.dk/evejledning.aspx

Read more about the Danish Guidance System (booklet in English) at:

<http://fivu.dk/en/publications/2012/guidance-in-education-2013-the-educational-guidance-system-in-denmark>



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