

## 6th European conference on lifelong guidance policy 13-14 June 2016 | Haarlem | the Netherlands

### Conference summary and conclusions

#### Conference Theme: Regional and cross-sectoral approaches to lifelong guidance

##### Context

Education and labour markets are fast changing in a global economy where jobs, skills and growth are paramount to integrated societies, social cohesion, sustaining people's livelihoods and supporting individuals' well being. The magnitude of change in European cities, towns, and urban settlements in recent years is unprecedented. Neither governments nor market systems are individually able to fully provide the necessary public goods or services in education, training, entrepreneurship and/or employment.

This invitational conference, hosted by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science with Euroguidance the Netherlands<sup>1</sup>, 'put the spotlight on' the role of lifelong guidance within regional and cross-sectoral approaches that support regional and national developments in education, vocational education & training (VET), social inclusion, public employment services and lifelong learning.

**Ten key themes** emerged building upon exemplars of good and interesting policies and practices:

##### i. Lifelong guidance<sup>2</sup>

Europe's future prosperity depends on the '*optimal use of our human capital*'. This is a simple way of understanding lifelong guidance<sup>3</sup> as a key contributor to maximising

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<sup>1</sup> More information and publications of Euroguidance: [Euroguidance.nl](http://Euroguidance.nl) and [Euroguidance.eu](http://Euroguidance.eu)

<sup>2</sup>Refer to: ELGPN (2015) *Guidelines for Policies and Systems Development for Lifelong Guidance*, ELGPN Tools No. 6. Finland: University of Jyväskylä. Visit: <http://www.elgpn.eu/publications/elgpn-tools-no-6-guidelines-for-policies-and-systems-development-for-lifelong-guidance>; and see also, ELGPN (2012). *Lifelong Guidance Policy Development: A European Toolkit for Policymakers*, ELGPN Tools No. 1., Finland: University of Jyväskylä, - visit: [http://www.eucen.eu/images/posts/elgpn\\_resource\\_kit\\_2011-12\\_web.pdf](http://www.eucen.eu/images/posts/elgpn_resource_kit_2011-12_web.pdf); and See also, the Council of the European Union (2004). *Strengthening Policies, Systems and Practices on Guidance throughout Life*. 9286/04. EDUC 109 SOC 234 and the Council of the European Union (2008). *Better Integrating Lifelong Guidance into Lifelong Learning Strategies*. 15030/08. EDUC 257 SOC 653.

<sup>3</sup> Lifelong guidance is defined in the EU Council Resolutions (2004 & 2008) as "a continuous process that enables citizens at any age and at any point in their lives to identify their capacities, competences and interests, to make educational, training and occupational decisions and to manage their individual life paths in learning, work and other settings in which those capacities and competences are learned and/or used. Guidance covers a range of

individuals' potential, supporting successful transitions and higher levels of entry, participation, attainment and retention in learning and work. It contributes towards personal wellbeing, a satisfying work-life balance and successful active ageing in an ageing society. Greater attention should also be given to the education, economic and social outcomes associated with lifelong guidance.

**ii. Career guidance (and counselling) is a professional system in its own right but integrated within the work of partnerships at a European, national, regional and local level**

It is vital that lifelong guidance is integrated within the work of regional and cross-sectoral arrangements operating within partnerships. Career guidance as a professional system however has to maintain a level of independence and impartial provision for both young people and adults working with employers, local authorities, municipalities, education, VET, public employment services (PES) and social inclusion agencies.

**iii. Shifts towards municipalities, regional and local alliances**

Many European, national and regional policy agendas are shifting from “centralised” to “decentralised” approaches whereby local and/or national collaborative public, private and third sector alliances are emerging. Collaboration and co-operation among public agencies, private organisations, and the community is steadily growing.

While governments' motivation for engaging in regional/cross-sectoral approaches may initially be financial, there is also a real opportunity to use these partnerships to harness local community commitment, engagement, and empowerment in ‘supporting the learning of others’ through a wide range of innovative lifelong guidance initiatives, e.g.

- *co-operation on providing career guidance and innovative approaches* to young people and adults e.g. outreach, mobile units and/or blended guidance particularly for marginalised groups such as early school leavers, unemployed (NEET), asylum seekers, refugees, migrants and other targeted groups
- *co-construction of meaningful programmes of learning* with young people (e.g. street culture) and with adults (e.g. responding directly to the local needs of adults)
- *co-development of training* in career dialogue for teachers, parents, advisers, employment specialists, employers/employees, administrators and mentors.
- *co-operation and communication between and across agencies* on tracking, open source data, intelligence sharing, information exchange and pooling of resources to achieve maximum impact.

**iv. Citizen/User Involvement – holistic and outreach approaches for social inclusion**

Services to young people and adults need to be as seamless as possible. Many European Member States are developing innovative approaches to service design and delivery that focus on the individual and/or targeted groups by adopting a more

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individual and collective activities relating to information-giving, counselling, competence assessment, support, and the teaching of decision-making and career management skills.”

holistic approach to social, health, education and employability support and shared services. Models such as: One Stop Shops (Finland); Youth Career Agencies (Germany); Regional Guidance Centres (Denmark); IBoBB- Café Graz (Austria); Regional Learning and Work Service Centres (The Netherlands); and the Bridge Project – Guidance for Lower Skilled Adults (Germany, France & Sweden). In contrast, career guidance in Rotterdam South (The Netherlands) focuses on co-operation between schools and employers to work with pupils from the age of nine, as part of a sectoral approach, focusing on technical and health care skills.

**v. ‘Top-down’ and ‘bottom up’ arrangements - partnerships**

New regional and national cross-sectoral arrangements rely heavily on a range of collaborative and partnership activities at both a national (*top-down*) and regional (*bottom-up*) approach.<sup>4</sup> Bringing together the skills and assets of all partners to deliver a public service or goods (both online or offline) for public consumption is a welcome development. The sharing of resources, responsibilities and risk necessitate some form of a national lifelong guidance framework or ‘careers strategy’ that monitors accountability, transparency, social equity and quality provision for citizens, particularly for those most in need. Having a shared vision of what success will look like in policy terms requires both vision and leadership.

**vi. A clear mandate - improving access, quality and relevance of learning and work**

Achieving success in balancing responsibilities for delivering the various components that support education (formal and informal), community learning, vocational education & training (VET), social inclusion, public employment services, entrepreneurship, and lifelong learning policy goals can be complex. As with any partnership, success lies in having a clear mandate, finding the appropriate balance between the needs of citizens and access to services, particularly *those most in need of support*, and the capacities and capabilities of the partners in order to meet the long-term goals of the shared agreement. Regional and cross-sectoral arrangements should avoid “shotgun partnerships” that develop when a partner is given a directive to engage in a partnership from a governmental office, or when the office stipulates the creation of a partnership as a funding criterion.

**vii. A New Skills Agenda for Europe - Skills Guarantee**

Learning and work decisions are becoming harder as individuals face a sequence of complex choices over a lifetime. What people think about their future hopes and aspirations’ matters and significantly impacts upon the individual, families, communities, as well as local, regional, national and European economies (European Commission, New Skills Agenda, 2016<sup>5</sup>). Lifelong guidance prepares citizens to make meaningful choices of learning and work opportunities and to choose the appropriate learning pathways to those work opportunities. It supports citizens’ transitions including for internal and transnational

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<sup>4</sup> This may also include vertical, horizontal and diagonal partnerships as illustrated by the Finnish team at the conference.

<sup>5</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/rep/1/2016/EN/1-2016-381-EN-F1-1.PDF>

mobility for learning and work.<sup>6</sup> The concept of a *Skills Guarantee* designed to help low-skilled adults acquire a minimum level of literacy, numeracy and digital skills and progress towards an upper secondary qualification is a foundation ‘anchor point’. This requires to engage in meaningful policy dialogue about the role of lifelong guidance in the context of the Skills Guarantee at a European, national and regional level.

#### **viii. Career Management Skills<sup>7</sup> and Practitioner Competences<sup>8</sup>**

A number of EU Member States have invested in resources in developing Career Management Skills (CMS) programmes for students in schools, in further education and higher education settings (e.g. Finland, Germany, Lithuania, France, Portugal), for young people and adults engaged in online e-guidance (Scotland) and partnership-based CMS model for individuals with disabilities (Croatia). However, in many countries these skills do not feature prominently in learning programmes from an early age. There is an urgent imperative to reach out to citizens at a time, method and place best suited to their needs, using ICT and labour market intelligence as part of online and offline approaches. This requires financial investment in continuous professional development (CPD) at both a national and regional level. Quality assurance and evidence-based approaches<sup>9</sup> can also be applied to inform and support practitioner competence and capability to deliver meaningful learning and work within and outside of the classroom, using multi-channel blended services and involving a wide range of intermediaries that can benefit from career guidance professionals’ expertise.

#### **ix. Bench Learning - Making lifelong guidance more visible and comparable**

A wide range of European investment funds<sup>10</sup> are supporting municipalities, regions and local arrangements to support more integrated societies, strengthen social cohesion, and boost jobs, entrepreneurship, skills and growth. These are designed to stimulate and develop innovation in local services. At a European, national and/or regional level, there are few mechanisms in place for bringing together a shared understanding of the outcomes from such investments. There is an opportunity for increased ‘bench learning’ and country peer reviews to understand what works best with particular groups and in what circumstance, with added-value investment and returns.

#### **x. Advancing skills intelligence and informed career choices – strengthening the evidence base for lifelong guidance**

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<sup>6</sup> Refer to: ELGPN (2015) *Guidelines for Policies and Systems Development for Lifelong Guidance*, ELGPN Tools No. 6. Finland: University of Jyväskylä. Visit: <http://www.elgpn.eu/publications/elgpn-tools-no-6-guidelines-for-policies-and-systems-development-for-lifelong-guidance>

<sup>7</sup> Refer to: ELGPN (2015) *Designing and Implementing Policies Related to Career Management Skills (CMS)* ELGPN Tools No. 4. Finland; University of Jyväskylä and ELGPN (2012) *Career Management Skills: Factors In Implementing Policy Successfully*, ELGPN Concept Note 3. Finland; University of Jyväskylä. Visit: <http://www.elgpn.eu/publications/elgpn-tools-no-4-cms>

<sup>8</sup> Refer to: ELGPN (2015) *Strengthening the Quality Assurance and Evidence-Base for Lifelong Guidance*, ELGPN Concept Note 5. Finland: University of Jyväskylä, Visit: [http://www.elgpn.eu/publications/browse-by-language/english/ELGPN\\_OAE\\_tool\\_no\\_5\\_web.pdf/](http://www.elgpn.eu/publications/browse-by-language/english/ELGPN_OAE_tool_no_5_web.pdf/)

<sup>9</sup> Refer to: ELGPN (2015) *The Evidence-Base on Lifelong Guidance*, ELGPN Tools No.3. Finland: University of Jyväskylä, Visit: <http://www.elgpn.eu/publications/elgpn-tools-no-3-the-evidence-base-on-lifelong-guidance>

<sup>10</sup> For example: The European Investment and Structural Funds - the European Social Fund (ESF) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) - will inject over €30 billion to support skills development in the current period 2014-2020. The Erasmus+ programme, Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and Horizon 2020 are also high profile funding initiatives.

The use of ICT and labour market intelligence and information (LMI) needs to be further developed in line with new e-government strategies and the growing need for better informed choices through more focused ‘career dialogue’. Cedefop’s forthcoming research publication<sup>11</sup> on ‘LMI in lifelong guidance’ highlights a number of solutions adopted across Member States to improve access to LMI, while integrating it with guidance and career education activities. Beyond this, there is also scope for greater use of tracking career trajectories over time and assessing which types of interventions yield short, medium and longer-term returns on investment for individuals and for governments.

## **KEY CONCLUSIONS**

### **European approaches**

#### **Recommendation 1**

Lifelong guidance should be an essential component in the policy dialogue for designing new European, national, regional and cross-sectoral partnerships designed to boost jobs, growth and investment as well as to enhance social equity, cohesion, and inclusion because effective lifelong guidance contributes towards the achievement of educational, economic and/or social outcomes as outlined in evidence-based policies, research and practice.<sup>12</sup>

#### **Recommendation 2**

Review the 2006 Recommendation on Key Competences in order to bring it in line with the economic and social transformations that have occurred in the last ten years and incorporate career management skills (CMS) within an updated European key competences framework.<sup>13</sup>

#### **Recommendation 3**

The European lifelong guidance sector should be invited to contribute to further consultations on the design and development of the European Commission’s new Skills Guarantee and New Skills Agenda.

#### **Recommendation 4**

Extend bench learning and country peer review approaches building on best practice to help ‘connect the dots’ between lifelong guidance innovation, intelligence and creativity within differing EU partnerships and funding streams. Gather more evidence on the effectiveness of different services/tools, for example, by undertaking comparisons in different countries and/or to stimulate experimental studies.<sup>14</sup>

#### **Recommendation 5**

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<sup>11</sup> Cedefop (2016) *LMI in Lifelong Guidance: Background Paper*, Thessaloniki (16<sup>th</sup> May 2016)

<sup>12</sup> Refer to: ELGPN (2015) *Guidelines for Policies and Systems Development for Lifelong Guidance*, ELGPN Tools No. 6. Finland: University of Jyväskylä. Visit: <http://www.elgpn.eu/publications/elgpn-tools-no-6-guidelines-for-policies-and-systems-development-for-lifelong-guidance>

<sup>13</sup> ELGPN (2015) *Designing and Implementing Policies Related to Career Management Skills (CMS)* ELGPN Tools No. 4. Finland; University of Jyväskylä,

<sup>14</sup> The European Network of Regional Labour Market Monitoring and Cedefop provide examples of good and interesting policies and practices in this regard.

The setting up of sectoral-skills partnerships, including more and better VET opportunities, and business-education-research partnerships, should also include the promotion of formal agreements on lifelong guidance policies and practices.

### **National approaches**

#### **Recommendation 6**

A national lifelong guidance framework (sometimes referred to as a careers strategy) is essential for a comprehensive, coherent and transparent quality provision of guidance services and system for all citizens and an essential component for monitoring and accountability of guidance services. This National Framework may take differing forms such as: *legislation, regulatory frameworks, statutory and/or non-statutory guidelines, national strategic fora* and/or a *national body overseeing services within and across regions*.

#### **Recommendation 7**

Collaborative partnerships should have a clear mandate with defined levels of governance, financing, risk, responsibilities, and outcomes for each party. In this context, new experimental approaches should be encouraged by governments that provide positive and sustainable outcomes for young people and adults, as well as using existing structures for innovation and creativity ‘thinking outside of the box’.

### **Regional and cross-sectoral approaches**

#### **Recommendation 8**

Partnerships should harness community commitment, engagement, and resources for ‘supporting the learning of others’ through lifelong guidance initiatives. More employers also need to step up to offer more relevant exposure to the world of work for both young people and adults.

#### **Recommendation 9**

Robust regional (and national) careers strategy frameworks are needed to provide services that actively involve citizens in co-creating guidance services that can reach out to and make a positive impact both online and offline. This should include offering incentives to motivate marginalised individuals to make good use of available lifelong guidance resources.

#### **Recommendation 10**

Career management skills should feature prominently in learning programmes from an early age, supported by some financial investment to help build practitioner competence. This will help boost jobs, skills and growth at a regional and cross-sectoral level (*See also, recommendation 2*)

#### **Recommendation 11**

Greater attention should be given at a regional (and national) level to the use of ICT and labour market intelligence/information (LMI)<sup>15</sup> and links between this and individuals’ education, economic and social outcomes.

### **Moving forward: where next from this conference?**

The conference delegates highlighted the potential for:

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<sup>15</sup> The European Network of Regional Labour Market Monitoring and Cedefop provide some excellent examples of good and/or interesting policies and practices in this regard.

- Annual Meeting, possibly linked to a Ministry and EU Presidency Lead;
- Annual Meeting, funded by another source e.g. other EU funded programmes;
- Thematic Policy Working Groups, in cooperation with the European Commission, to scaffold the implementation of the New Skills Agenda;
- Peer Learning / Bench Learning Exchanges.

Finally, thank you to all nations, keynote speakers and workshop facilitators who participated in this invitational European conference.

*Prepared by: Dr Deirdre Hughes (Conference Chair) on behalf of the Ministry of Education, Culture & Science and Euroguidance, The Netherlands and based on input from the participants present at the conference and comments received after the conference.*

20<sup>th</sup> June 2016

### ***Appendix 1 – List of participating countries***

Austria  
 Belgium  
 Croatia  
 Cyprus  
 Czech Republic  
 Denmark  
 Estonia\*  
 Finland\*  
 France  
 Germany\*  
 Greece  
 Hungary  
 Ireland  
 Italy  
 Lithuania  
 Luxembourg  
 Norway\*  
 Netherlands\*  
 Poland  
 Portugal  
 Romania  
 Slovakia  
 Slovenia  
 Spain  
 Sweden  
 Switzerland  
 Turkey  
 United Kingdom

\* These countries provided comments of this document ‘Conference summary and conclusions’.