

# Lifelong Guidance Policies: Work in Progress

A report on the work of the European Lifelong  
Guidance Policy Network 2008-10

SHORT REPORT

European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network  
(ELGPN)

2010

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The full report can be obtained from the ELGPN Co-ordinator ([elgpn@jyu.fi](mailto:elgpn@jyu.fi)) or can be downloaded from the ELGPN website (<http://elgpn.eu>). A Summary Briefing is also available.

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## Foreword

Over the last decade increasing attention has been given to lifelong guidance at European and national levels. It is recognised as a crucial dimension of lifelong learning, promoting both social and economic goals: in particular, improving the efficiency and effectiveness of education, training and the labour market through its contribution to reducing drop-out, preventing skill mismatches and boosting productivity. Two EU Resolutions of the Education Council (2004<sup>1</sup>; 2008<sup>2</sup>) have highlighted the need for strong guidance services throughout the lifespan to equip people with the skills to manage their learning and careers and the transitions between and within education/training and work. The Resolutions focused attention on four priority areas: the development of career management skills; accessibility of services; quality assurance; and co-ordination of services. Member States were invited to take action to modernise and strengthen their guidance policies and systems.

The Commission, closely assisted by Cedefop and the European Training Foundation, has actively supported developments through commissioning studies, producing a handbook for policy makers jointly with the OECD<sup>3</sup>, and promoting peer learning and the development of common reference tools with the support of a European expert group which met between 2002 and 2007. In 2007, the Member States decided to set up a European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN). The Commission warmly welcomed this initiative as a commitment and means to take forward the concrete national implementation of the Resolution priorities. The Commission currently provides financial support to the ELGPN under the Lifelong Learning Programme and takes part in meetings of the network

I congratulate the ELGPN in what it has achieved during the first three years of its existence and thank our Finnish colleagues – Raimo Vuorinen and Lea Pöyliö – for the dynamic leadership they have shown in co-ordinating the network. This report presents the main results and demonstrates the added value of the network at national and European levels. The network has helped to reinforce co-operation and promote “joined-up” guidance services covering learning and work, and has inspired some countries lacking a forum to bring all stakeholders together to create one. For each of the four Resolution priority areas the findings of the collective work are presented and the main remaining challenges are identified.

The increased frequency of transitions citizens have to face over the course of their life, coupled with greater diversity and mobility in education/training and the labour market, make effective lifelong guidance systems more important than ever. The successor to the Lisbon strategy – *Europe 2020: A European strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth* – includes amongst its targets cutting early school leaving to 10% and ensuring that 40% of the younger generation has a tertiary degree. The strategy also highlights the need to: improve young people's entry into the labour market; promote the recognition of non-formal and informal learning; improve educational outcomes and enhance the

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<sup>1</sup> Council of the European Union (2004). *Strengthening Policies, Systems and Practices on Guidance throughout Life*. 9286/04 EDUC 109 SOC 234.

<sup>2</sup> Council of the European Union (2008). *Better Integrating Lifelong Guidance into Lifelong Learning Strategies*. 2905<sup>th</sup> Education, Youth and Culture Council meeting, Brussels, 21 November 2008.

<sup>3</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development & European Commission (2004). *Career Guidance: a Handbook for Policy Makers*. Paris: OECD.

openness and relevance of education systems; reinforce the attractiveness of VET; and ensure that citizens are able to acquire the competences needed to engage in further learning and the labour market from an early age and to develop them further throughout their life. Good-quality, accessible and co-ordinated guidance systems are crucial to achieving these goals, I therefore urge the ELGPN to continue with its valuable work and wish it every success.

Gordon Clark  
Head of Unit  
Directorate General for Education and Culture  
European Commission

## Acknowledgements

This report is the result of the collective efforts of the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN). It reflects contributions from all of those participating in the network, in particular:

- The national delegations which defined their priorities within the ELGPN 2009-10 work programme, illuminating these themes from their own perspectives.
- The host countries of the Plenary Meetings, and also of the Thematic Activities with their examples of national policies and case studies to support mutual learning.
- The officials of the French and Spanish Ministries of Education who advanced the work of the ELGPN through their hosting of EU Presidency Conferences.
- The representatives of partner organisations who have participated in the work programme, including Mika Launikari (Cedefop), Helmut Zelloth (ETF), Karen Schober (IAEVG), Dr Gerhart Rott (FEDORA), Dr John McCarthy (ICCDPP) and Dr Wolfgang Müller (EU PES Network).
- The representatives of the lead countries for each Thematic Activity, who have provided leadership for the activity in co-operation with the ELGPN Co-ordinator and have managed the preparation of the relevant sections of this report:
  - WP1: Jasmin Muhic, Czech Republic.
  - WP2: Jean-Marie Lenzi, France; Dr Guðbjörg Vilhjálmsdóttir, Iceland.
  - WP3: Dr Peter Härtel, Austria; Dr Bernhard Jenschke, Germany.
  - WP4: Steffen Jensen, Denmark; Dr Helena Kasurinen, Finland.
  - TG2: Brigita Rupar, Slovenia.
- The contracted experts who prepared prior briefing papers and reflection notes for the Thematic Activity meetings as well as drafting the relevant sections for this report:
  - WP1: Professor Ronald Sultana, Malta.
  - WP2: Professor Fusûn Akkök, Turkey.
  - WP3: Professor Tony Watts, United Kingdom.
  - WP4: Associate Professor Peter Plant, Denmark.
  - TG1: Françoise Divisia, France; Dr John McCarthy, Ireland.
  - TG2: Saša Niklanovič, Slovenia.
  - Evaluation: Peter Weber, Germany.

The Network decided to address simultaneously the four priorities identified in the 2008 EU Resolution remit: hence the width and scope of the activities represented here.

Thanks are also due to the representatives of the European Commission (Gordon Clark, Carlo Scatoli, Jennifer Wannan and Maïke Koops from DG EAC; Susanne Kraatz from DG EMPL) for their support in the implementation of the work programme.

Raimo Vuorinen  
Co-ordinator, ELGPN

## 1. Overview

The purpose of this report is to communicate the outcomes to date of the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN) to relevant policy-makers and stakeholders at both European and national levels.

The ELGPN aims to assist the European Union (EU) Member States (and the neighbouring countries eligible for the EU Lifelong Learning Programme) and the European Commission in developing European co-operation on lifelong guidance in both the education and the employment sectors. Its purpose is to promote co-operation at Member State level in implementing the priorities identified in the EU Resolutions on Lifelong Guidance (2004; 2008). The network was established by the Member States; the Commission supports its activities under the Lifelong Learning Programme.

The ELGPN represents a major development in support of national lifelong guidance policy development in Europe. As a Member-State-driven network, it also represents an innovative form of the Open Method of Co-ordination within the EU.

Membership of the ELGPN is open to all countries eligible for assistance under the EU Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-13. The participating countries designate their representatives in the network, and are encouraged to include both governmental and non-governmental representatives. Almost all countries include representation of the education ministry; over half include representation of the ministry of labour/employment; and some include NGOs (see Annex 1). Through appropriate liaison arrangements, the network ensures regular contact with other relevant bodies and networks at national, European and international levels.

The ELGPN currently consists of 26 member countries (AT, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HU, IS, IT, LV, LT, LU, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, SE, SK, SI, TR, UK), with 4 additional countries as observers (BE, BG, IR, RO).

Members report that participation in the network has enriched their awareness of possible responses to common challenges and given them a fresh perspective and new insights into their national provision. Specific issues where progress is considered to have been made include:

- Support for improved co-ordination of services (currently all 30 countries have either set up or are in the process of developing a guidance forum or other mechanism).
- Emergence of a common understanding of career management skills.
- Appreciation of the potential of new technologies to broaden access to services by complementing face-to-face provision with telephone and interactive internet-based services.
- Understanding of the need for a stronger evidence base, linked to quality assurance.

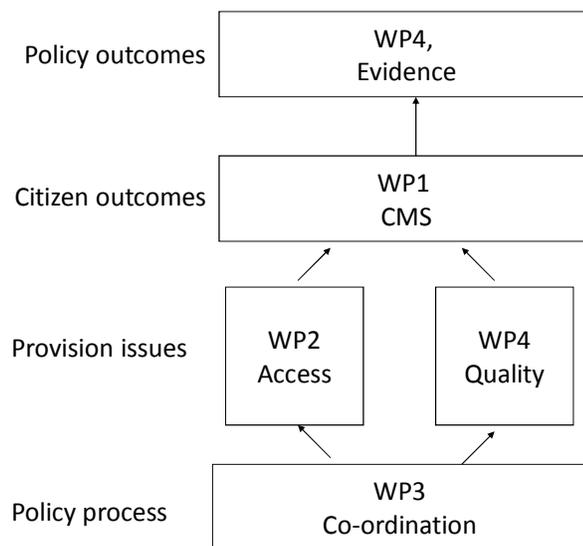
## 2. ELGPN Work Programme 2009-10

During 2009-10 four ELGPN Plenary Meetings have been held (Luxembourg, March 2009; Riga, Latvia, September 2009; Zaragoza, Spain, May 2010; Lisbon, Portugal, September 2010).

The whole network agreed that the work programme for 2009-10 should be built around the four themes identified in the 2008 Resolution. Accordingly, work was undertaken in four Work Packages (each involving 10-12 countries) to:

- Encourage the lifelong acquisition of *career management skills* (WP1).
- Facilitate *access* for all citizens to guidance services, including accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL) (WP2).
- Encourage *co-operation and co-ordination mechanisms* in guidance policy and systems development between the various national, regional and local stakeholders (WP3).
- Develop *quality assurance* and an *evidence base* for policy and systems development (WP4).

The relationship between these four themes can be outlined thus:



Each Work Package had one or two lead countries and a contracted expert to co-ordinate and support the activity in co-operation with the ELGPN Co-ordinator. In each case, the programme included two separate thematic field visits and a third synthesis meeting. The field visits provided opportunities for the host countries to inform and enrich their own policies and practices, and to involve key policy-makers within these processes. For each meeting, the contracted expert provided a Briefing Note and a Reflection Note.

In addition, the ELGPN 2009-10 work programme included two thematic Task Groups, focusing on:

- European education & training and employment policies from a lifelong guidance perspective, including Policy Briefings related to the four Work Package themes as identified in the 2004 and 2008 Resolution, plus a commentary on the role of lifelong guidance in relation to the current economic crisis (TG1).
- The synergy between EU-funded projects and their links with lifelong guidance policies (TG2).

The work of each of these Work Packages and Task Groups is summarised in the ensuing sections of this report. This is followed by evaluation data and plans for the next phase. Annex 2 indicates the participation of each member country in the various activities.

The ELGPN website (<http://elgpn.eu>) acts as a document repository and survey platform for the Network. The website is structured according to the EU Council Resolution priorities. It supports the management of the network and includes information on the ELGPN national contact points. It also includes a database which enables members to share and disseminate experiences on interesting national initiatives or projects related to lifelong guidance policy development. The format for these national examples is based on the European Commission's Knowledge System for Lifelong Learning (KSLLL). This enables them to be published in the KSLLL as well as on the ELGPN website.

### **3. Career Management Skills (Work Package 1)**

#### **Rationale**

Career Management Skills (CMS) are a range of competences which provide structured ways for individuals and groups to gather, analyse, synthesise and organise self, educational and occupational information, as well as the skills to make and implement decisions and transitions. Such competences are required by citizens to manage the complex transitions that mark contemporary education, training and working pathways. Given the requirements of a knowledge-based economy, and in response to rapid changes in technology, markets, and related employment opportunities, citizens' engagement with formal learning, training and re-training is likely to last well into adulthood. The teaching of CMS can support citizens in managing non-linear career pathways, and in increasing their employability, thus promoting social equity and inclusion.

Across many ELGPN member countries, school curricula have been or are being developed to help young people become more adept at planning and managing their transitions between education, training and employment. In higher education, the Bologna Process promotes CMS by seeking to foster active student-centred learning and to enhance graduates' employability. CMS are also promoted with unemployed people: many Public Employment Services deliver or outsource programmes that build the employability skills of adults, to increase their chances in tight labour markets.

Such a renewed emphasis on CMS should not be interpreted to suggest that those who end up out of work have themselves to blame for failing to prepare for transitions. Care should be taken to avoid the "individualisation" of social issues: while CMS can support and facilitate transitions, many problems that individuals face lie not in the individuals themselves but in structural failings in the economy.

#### **Developments and progress to date**

CMS content and modalities of programme delivery across the EU have been diverse, but with a high degree of convergence. At pan-European level, the term "CMS" is now widely employed; at member country level, other terms may be used to refer to a similar set of skills (e.g. "lifeskills", "personal and social education", "career development learning"). Underpinning these different terms is convergence around a similar agenda: fostering competences which help individuals and groups to gather, analyse, synthesise and organise self, educational and occupational information, as well as to make and implement decisions and transitions. Such an agenda is now widely accepted and pursued across the EU.

#### **Issues, challenges, and key messages**

The main debates related to CMS include:

- *The level at which different CMS themes can be addressed, depending on age and educational level. While a developmental approach to CMS is often adopted, this is not the case in all countries.*
- *The need to identify CMS that are specific to the needs of at-risk target groups, with the target groups playing a strong role in developing such CMS programmes.*

- *The need to recognise diverse curricular traditions in different countries.* This may inhibit the development of a Europe-wide CMS framework.
- *The desirability of a national framework for CMS, defining a minimum knowledge and skills base available to all citizens,* while permitting a flexible interpretation of this framework in response to specific contexts.
- *The challenge of integrating CMS in an educational context.* Options include CMS as a separate, timetabled “subject”; infusing it throughout the curriculum; offering it as an extra-curricular activity; or a mixture of these strategies.
- *The deployment of experiential and innovative pedagogies.* It is critical that educators go beyond didactic instruction to include a range of experiential learning strategies, career games, computer-based resources, and so on.
- *The assessment of CMS.* In some countries, the view is that learners’ motivation is sufficient for CMS learning, without any need for assessment. In others, emphasis is placed on the learner’s right to have skills development formally acknowledged. Within an educational tradition where examinations play a central role, any curricular area that is not formally evaluated can end up appearing as unimportant in the knowledge hierarchy, and consequently in the eyes of learners. The use of innovative assessment methods, such as portfolios, has the advantage of facilitating and recognising learning, without stifling innovative teaching methodologies.
- *The modalities through which CMS can be delivered to adults within a Public Employment Service context,* in order to ensure that the unemployed learn a range of skills that increase their employability. Some of the best examples are in “job clubs”, particularly those outsourced to service providers close to the target client group. In such contexts, a “group” approach is more likely to be empowering and enabling.
- *The need to ensure that CMS are not taught from a deficit perspective* that sees individuals as somehow “lacking”, but rather from an empowering perspective. It is important to consider clients as persons with strengths, not with problems.

### **Ways forward**

- Many countries still need to develop a national CMS framework.
- Many also need to articulate a clear policy regarding the place of CMS in the curriculum.
- A clear training strategy is needed for those delivering CMS, as well as relevant support resources that can be used in a wide variety of contexts.
- CMS programme development needs to take into account the specific needs of at-risk target groups.
- Further work is needed to develop appropriate assessment strategies.
- Despite the constraints, the possibility of developing a European CMS framework should be pursued.

## 4. Widening Access (Work Package 2)

### Rationale

Widening access has been on the agenda of many countries, including how to expand services for different target groups, usage of ICT tools, and how to manage and fund more integrated services. Two aspects of lack of access are identified in many settings:

- The needs of a wide range of particular groups of citizens are not adequately met.
- Guidance services are still often being delivered in a limited range of locations and media, at limited times of the day or week, and at limited points in the life cycle, thus restricting lifelong and life-wide access.

With the present economic crisis and increasingly high rates of unemployment, access to career guidance services has a pivotal role to play. The present crisis also underlines the need for new provisions to widen access with a focus on specific target groups (e.g. young people at key transition points in education and from education to work, drop-outs from education, unemployed young people and adults, and those who are disadvantaged in the labour market).

A large number of countries identified technology, in particular web and phone, as being a key driver for career resource development, as well as enabling more people to access services at a time, place and method most suitable to their needs. Technology is making it possible to provide services through a combination of media such as e-guidance and telephone helplines, as well as face-to-face guidance. Existing guidance provision needs to be re-engineered in terms of cost-efficient delivery modes.

### Developments and progress to date

Several countries have new legislation related to access, the delivery of services and the development of new tools and systems. These include legislation on counselling services as part of employment policies (CZ), on establishing the right of all citizens to lifelong guidance provided free of charge by public services (FR), on adult education supporting workplace guidance and the validation of the non-formal and informal learning processes (IS), and on counsellors' qualifications (FR, IS, PL). Other policy decisions highlight priorities for more effective use of ICT in guidance (LT), and ICT tools in guidance becoming part of an e-Government strategy (SK). Further significant developments include a new integrated service (FR), conception of an internet portal and telephone service as instruments to support career choice, plus a programme to promote local guidance initiatives linked to local learning strategies (DE), a new adult careers service in England (UK) and a web-based National Career Information System (TR).

### Key messages

- *The complementary nature of the delivery channels.* While technology has been identified by most countries as important in the development and delivery of career services, face-to-face services in the form of individual and/or group work remain an essential part of guidance delivery. The new technologies have great potential for making access both more feasible and cheaper, creating innovative and flexible service delivery linked to self-access and self-help modes, complementing more traditional forms of guidance.

- *Developing integrated services.* To develop integrated services for people of all ages is a new challenge, demanding a rethinking of institutional contexts and professional competences, and a new mentality and culture.
- *Different levels of services to meet different individual needs.* Individuals range from those who are self-motivated and able to make career decisions successfully on their own, to individuals who need substantial assistance.
- *Accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL) as an effective methodology for the development of employability.* Access to adequate guidance and support is necessary to help citizens, especially those with low skills and no employment, to make use of APEL and thereby to value their prior learning.
- *Standards in provisions.* Standards (e.g. validity, reliability, accuracy, objectivity, comprehensiveness, relevance to target groups, timeliness) need to be developed for ICT-based and other career materials.
- *Ethical issues concerning use of ICT in guidance.* These include the quality of assessments available on the Internet.
- *Access as a social justice issue.* To achieve a satisfactory balance between quality and access requires a better understanding of the effectiveness of career guidance not only in relation to its cost but also as an instrument for achieving social-equity goals.

#### **Key challenges**

- How to develop practitioners' competences to use ICT tools.
- How to make effective use of the potential of web-based social media and mobile technologies.
- How to evaluate national service-delivery resources in relation to the new lifelong guidance paradigm.
- Ethical aspects.
- Evaluating the relative effectiveness for different groups of different service-delivery modes.
- How to allocate funding between different delivery channels in meeting the needs of different priority groups.
- How legislation can define citizen entitlements to guidance and service-delivery provision.
- How to better promote the availability of guidance services to citizens.

## 5. Co-operation and Co-ordination Mechanisms (Work Package 3)

### Rationale

In all countries, guidance provision is distributed across many different sectors, under different ministries and other jurisdictions (schools, tertiary education, public employment services, social partners, the voluntary sector, the private sector). One of the key roles of such services is to help individuals to move effectively across sectors in the course of their personal and career development. Accordingly, effective policies for lifelong guidance need to involve a number of different authorities and stakeholders. A national lifelong guidance forum is a mechanism for bringing these bodies together, in order to produce more effective policy development and more harmonised service provision.

For a national lifelong guidance forum to be widely recognised as such, it should satisfy four requirements:

- It should involve, or at least be recognised by, the government.
- Its membership should not be confined to government departments but should include other key stakeholders.
- It should embrace the fields of education and employment.
- It should cover both guidance for young people and guidance for adults.

In some cases, alternative mechanisms may be developed to achieve some of the benefits of a national forum.

A forum or similar mechanism can operate at one or more of three levels:

- *Communication*. This might include exchanging information, and exploring possibilities for co-operation and co-ordination.
- *Co-operation* between partners, within existing structures. This might be largely informal in nature, and based on a co-operation agreement, with decision-making powers being retained by each partner.
- *Co-ordination*. This is likely to require a co-ordinating structure, with operational powers and funding (and possibly a contract or legal mandate).

At the first level (communication), it can take the form of a working party or network or think-tank; at the third level (co-ordination), it is likely to need a more formal and more sustainable structure.

### Developments and progress to date

National lifelong guidance forums have now been established in 17 European countries, and are in the process of being established in 10 others. In three further countries, alternative mechanisms have been or are being established. Thus all member countries are giving attention to improved co-operation and co-ordination of services.

### Key messages

Experiences to date suggest ten key messages for countries wishing to establish such forums:

- To make a clear connection to lifelong learning, employment and social inclusion strategies, and to articulate the role of lifelong guidance as a public good in relation to these strategies.
- To establish shared definitions and terminology.
- To be selective in determining those invited to participate.
- To have clearly identified goals, tasks and roles.
- To have clear leadership, strong champions, and strong commitment from key parties.
- To define clearly the relationship with the government (including, where appropriate, regional and local government).
- To have a secretariat which is independent or at least “ring-fenced”.
- To encourage evolution but remain true to the core mission.
- To be aware of the risks of role conflict.
- To strive to work from the viewpoint of the individual citizen, recognising the public benefits of doing so.

### **Issues and challenges**

Key issues and challenges include:

- Whether the forum should be set up by the government, possibly through legislation (“*top-down*”), or be established on the initiative of a number of non-governmental organisations, which then establish appropriate links with the government (“*bottom-up*”). There may be merit in integrating elements of both processes.
- In countries where significant powers relating to education and/or employment are devolved to regional/local authorities, the importance of *co-operation and co-ordination at regional/local level*. This may be at least as important as at national level. Neither of these levels of co-operation and co-ordination may be effective without the other.
- The *integrative potential of ICT*, for example in bringing together career information and guidance providers from different sectors to develop a common web portal. This shares costs, places the user at the centre of service design, and accordingly is likely to attract more users, with mutual benefits for all partners. If developed further, it could be the means through which service providers can transform their separate, sector-based and provider-centred provision into a user-centred lifelong guidance system, with the web portal conceptually at the centre, supported by co-ordinated sectoral provision of face-to-face and other services. The quality and effectiveness of such an approach depends on its implementation into a process-oriented, coherent and comprehensive lifelong learning system.

## 6. Quality Assurance and Evidence (Work Package 4)

### Rationale

WP4 deals with links between guidance policies, research and practice, in two respects:

- The role of and development of quality assurance (QA) approaches in guidance.
- The evidence which is or could be produced to underpin, explain, improve and legitimise guidance activities.

The transversal role of lifelong guidance requires high-quality service provision and a cross-sectoral approach to the design of a QA system in guidance.

### Developments and progress to date

Some EU Member States have established comprehensive, yet mostly sector-based QA systems (e.g. DK; UK). Some of these approaches contain some elements of evidence-based policy development. Scotland, for instance, has a comprehensive, all-age guidance approach, where evidence is defined as a range of individual and societal outcomes, including economic benefits. In Germany, a co-ordinated process for the development of common agreed quality standards has been initiated.

### Elements for a QA framework

After reviewing policy initiatives and interesting practices in participating countries regarding quality assurance in career guidance, as well as research undertaken to provide an evidence base for policy development, it was decided to draw up a suggested list of elements to be included in a QA framework. Five “common reference points for quality assurance systems for guidance provision” had been developed by the EC Expert Group on Lifelong Guidance. WP4 decided to add two further dimensions (outcomes; impact).

The resulting framework contains a matrix of “reference points” and indicators, based on an input-process-outcome model, and including suggestions for data to be collected in order to assess how and to what extent the indicator is met:

Reference point	Selected indicators
Citizen and user involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Availability of information about rights and services</li><li>• Customer reaction systems are in operation and used</li><li>• Regular customer satisfaction surveys published/used</li></ul>
Practitioner competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Nationally/regionally accepted defined standards</li><li>• Certification/accreditation systems</li><li>• Training requirements and availability</li><li>• Supervision required</li><li>• Professional behaviour and use of adequate methods</li></ul>

Service improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Existence and compulsory use of QA systems</li> <li>• Defined standards for service delivery exist (code of ethics, methodology, counsellor-clients ratio, service circumstances, financial resources, administrative procedures, ICT equipment, updated information, labour-market information, service delivery for clients with special needs, etc.)</li> <li>• Development of an action plan with clients</li> <li>• Documentation of the guidance process and results</li> <li>• Monitoring to assess the service improvement and results</li> </ul>
Coherence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Existence of an all-age service and/or co-operation and co-ordination of different service providers</li> <li>• Agreement on common principles</li> </ul>
Outcomes/impact: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Learning outcomes</li> <li>– Labour-market/ economic outcomes</li> <li>– Social inclusion outcomes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant improvement of client’s knowledge and competences, career management skills, confidence level, decision-making competences, job readiness, etc.</li> <li>• Transition rates to next level of education/training/ employment</li> <li>• Improvement of retention rates and reduction of drop-out rates</li> <li>• Successful matching processes on the labour market</li> <li>• Level and duration of unemployment</li> <li>• Improvement of labour supply according to demand</li> <li>• Cost-effectiveness of the service</li> </ul>

The draft framework includes both qualitative and quantitative indicators. Designing a framework based on mostly quantitative indicators is ambitious, taking into account the severe methodological problems involved. In addition, there is the danger of unintended effects if QA is exclusively directed towards quantitative measurement. There has to be a balance between the professional preference for qualitative evaluation, and the demand of policy-makers and service managers for empirical evidence and cost-benefit analysis in order to run services effectively and justify the investment of tax-payers’ money into such services.

Further work on the indicators and on the data should be carried out in the next phase of ELGPN’s work. The aim is not to impose the framework on member countries but to encourage a discussion leading to agreement on elements to be included in a QA approach to career guidance. This follows similar European work in other areas, e.g. the European QA frameworks for VET, for higher education, and regarding “services of general interest”. It is essential for the feasibility and potential implementation of the framework that there is a broad common understanding and ownership of it among ELGPN members. This process, too, will be a task for the ELGPN’s next phase.

## **7. EU Policy Monitoring (Task Group 1)**

Task Group 1 was established by the ELGPN with a two-fold role:

- To ensure that the outcomes of the network activities have an impact upon regional, national and European lifelong guidance policy development.
- To share and transfer information so that all ELGPN members can have access to such information and an opportunity to be involved in the relevant policy processes.

The tasks of TG1 were accordingly defined as being:

- To support the knowledge base of ELGPN members on relevant EU policy developments in education, training, employment and social inclusion; to gather and analyse data on how such European policies take account of lifelong guidance; and to share that information within the network.
- To support the ELGPN work programme: to ground the thematic activities of the ELGPN firmly in an EU policy context.
- To assist ELGPN members in influencing European and national policy processes on the key role of lifelong guidance for the relevant policy fields: to provide alerts to ELGPN members on current policy processes; and to provide advice to help the network members to be involved in these processes.

The Lisbon Strategy forms the broad policy context in which the ELGPN was established. Focusing on the knowledge society and economy, social cohesiveness, and global competitiveness, the Lisbon Strategy has led the first decade of this millennium in terms of Europe-wide reforms of national policies for education, training, employment and social inclusion. As the reform strategy has unfolded, reference to lifelong guidance provision has become more explicit. In addition to agreements for a reform agenda for lifelong guidance policies and systems themselves (Council Resolutions on Lifelong Guidance, 2004, 2008), the European Employment Strategy (1995-2005), the Commission's Communication on Lifelong Learning (2001), the Council Resolution on Lifelong Learning (2002), the Concrete Future Objectives of Education and Training Systems (2002) and the Copenhagen Process on EU co-operation on VET (2002 and subsequent Communiqués) have all made specific reference to how lifelong guidance can assist in the achievement of the reform objectives. The European Social Partners (2002) have acknowledged the importance of information and guidance to develop the competences and qualifications of the workforce.

In the renewal of the Lisbon Strategy in 2005, the European Council emphasised the optimisation of human capital, especially through lifelong learning, with particular attention to be paid to lifelong guidance. The Recommendation of the European Parliament and Council (2006) on key competences for lifelong learning made reference to guidance as part of the "learning to learn" competence.

The end of 2008-10 cycle of the Lisbon Strategy has coincided with the economic downturn, focusing attention on reducing its economic and social impact. Two future goals were defined:

- Better combining flexibility with security, through the new concept of “flexicurity”. In 2007, flexicurity became a cornerstone of EU employment policies for workforce adaptability, development and employability, with special reference to lifelong learning. Flexicurity policies are intended to support citizen work transitions, and highlight the role of the national Public Employment Services and the social partners in such support and in the identification and anticipation of skills needs.
- Better anticipating skill needs through the New Skills for New Jobs initiative. The awareness of the need for better anticipation and matching of labour market skills appears in most of the documents pertaining to education and employment proposed by the Commission and adopted by the Council since 2007. The role of guidance is underlined: to support job-seekers in identifying the competences required to move to where there are skills gaps.

The Jobs and Skills initiative with special emphasis on youth, launched in 2008, underlines that the mismatch between supply and demand in the labour market is one of the main factors in youth unemployment and highlights the important role of career guidance in this context, in particular regarding transitions between education and training and the labour market.

The report of a group of experts on the New Skills for New Jobs initiative (2010) underlined the lack of the right skills in Europe and concluded that “upgrading, adapting, and widening the skills portfolio of individuals”, making people “shift from job seekers to job shapers” and “being able to make better-informed choices” should be ambitions for the future.

“Europe 2020” is the successor to the Lisbon Strategy, of which the Strategic Framework for European Co-operation in Education and Training (“E&T 2020”) is one of the main components. In the latter, guidance is explicitly included in the first strategic objective (“making lifelong learning and mobility a reality”), and implicitly referred to in the three others. Guidance has a particularly important role to play in helping to achieve the Europe 2020 benchmarks of reducing early school leaving to 10% and ensuring 40% of the younger generation has a tertiary degree, and in taking forward action to improve young people's entry into the labour market and adult learning. Lifelong guidance will be a key element in promoting the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, reinforcing the attractiveness of VET, and supporting citizens to acquire and update their competences throughout life.

For the next phase of ELGPN’s work, it is proposed that – within the framework of the Europe 2020 initiatives in general and the E&T 2020 programme in particular – strong interfaces be established with EU sectoral policy development in at least six areas: schools, VET, higher education, adult education, employment and social inclusion.

## **8. EU-Funded Projects: Synergies and Links to Policy (Task Group 2)**

There is a strong and widely-shared belief that the benefits and impact of EU-funded projects could be greatly enhanced by:

- Minimising overlap between projects.

- Strengthening links with policy.
- Encouraging the longer-term impact of projects, after the funding ends.

Accordingly, growing importance is being attached to achieving enhanced value from such projects, in two main ways:

- By establishing synergies with other related projects.
- By giving increased attention to “exploitation”: i.e. seeking changes in policies and practices based on the project’s work. This is in addition to the traditional emphasis on dissemination – transmitting information about the project and its outputs – and effectively gives such dissemination an outcome-related edge.

Task Group 2 has examined a wide range of projects in relation to these issues. In the light of this analysis, it proposes four sets of suggestions addressed to different stakeholder groups, which they are invited to consider.

The first is addressed to project commissioners, both at EU level (the Commission and its executive agencies) and at national level:

- Project commissioners should strive to develop effective procedures to avoid overlapping between projects.
- To avoid “reinventing of wheels”, project co-ordinators (promoters) should be required to demonstrate that they are familiar with previous similar projects and to indicate the ways in which they are building on the experience of these projects.
- They should also be encouraged to demonstrate how links to relevant policies are built in to the methodology of the projects.
- These policy links should, where possible, be explicitly linked to the four priorities of the 2008 Resolution.
- Priority should be given to projects that meet these criteria.
- Supports should be provided to assist potential project promoters, including access to examples of good practice (e.g. through a database or manual).

The second set of recommendations is addressed to national guidance forums (where these exist):

- National forums should adopt a proactive role in linking projects to national policies and priorities.
- Where appropriate, this should include encouraging relevant ministries to provide co-funding for the national contribution to projects which meet national priorities.
- They should also adopt a proactive role in encouraging synergies between projects.

The third set of recommendations is addressed to the network of Euroguidance centres. It is recognised that the structures and roles of these centres vary across countries. However, it is suggested that Euroguidance centres should work closely with the ELGPN to:

- Maintain a database of national guidance projects (including EU-funded projects) and of transnational guidance projects including partners from their country. This should be part of a common database on policy and practice related to lifelong guidance.
- Promote successful projects (good practices) to policy-makers, stakeholders and other relevant audiences through national guidance forums where they exist and through the existing Euroguidance communication channels (websites, conferences, publications) or additional ones.
- Engage in a broadly based reflection process to suggest ways in which the impact of completed projects can be supported after they have ended.

The final set of recommendations is addressed to those responsible for managing relevant projects:

- Project co-ordinators should involve relevant stakeholders not just when bidding for the project but in its implementation.
- Attention to synergies with other projects should be given not just at the application stage, but throughout the project's life. This should include attention to the possibility of working in clusters of projects, i.e. formal co-operation between projects on similar topics.
- Similarly, issues related to the dissemination and exploitation of the project's outcomes should be addressed not just at the end of the project, but throughout the project's life, involving all relevant stakeholders in this process.

## **9. Evaluation of ELGPN's Work**

Before and after each of the main ELGPN meetings, participants were asked to appraise (a) how the work was going and (b) what was being achieved in terms of impact at national (and European) level. The evaluation covered the following aspects:

- Communication (Process).
- Organisational aspects and leadership/co-ordination (Process).
- Networking/co-operation (Process).
- General outcomes (Output).
- Outcomes and impact at national level (Output).

The results were fed back so that they could be used in planning future activities. In addition, an online summative evaluation questionnaire was completed by national teams in May 2010.

In general, the participants were very satisfied with the overall communication processes in the network. They felt that the clarity of the tasks and working methods as well as the leadership within the 2009-10 work programme were good. Improvements were needed in meeting the deadlines and in the financial arrangements. Most of the members were especially satisfied with the opportunities to participate in the activities, as well the principles of equity and respect among the network members. The outcomes were perceived to be in accordance with the agreed work programme.

In line with the principles of the Open Method of Co-ordination, the member countries have been able to use the outcomes of the ELGPN in accordance with their own priorities. Several member countries translated and disseminated ELGPN reflection notes and related materials so that they could be utilised at national level. In future there could be scope for countries using the same language to share such costs.

The catalytic role of the ELGPN was particularly evident during the national seminars which were arranged in conjunction with network Plenary Meetings or Work Package field visits. These events provided opportunities for policy makers and stakeholders to be updated on international developments, as well as allowed the host countries to showcase their national policies and practices.

Further evidence of the catalytic role of ELGPN was visible in several countries. The sharing of experiences helped to inspire the development of new services and new initiatives. In particular, the existence of ELGPN was influential in a number of countries in stimulating national forums or other co-ordination mechanisms.

## **10. The Next Phase**

The next phase of the ELGPN work programme (2011-12) will be designed to build on the experience and development of the existing work and to improve the internal efficiency of the work of ELGPN itself. Its precise objectives will be agreed with the Commission when funding is sought, but at this stage it is envisaged as being likely to focus on:

- Broadening the base of involvement of all Member States in the four priority areas.
- Increasing national awareness of ELGPN knowledge and experience based on these four priorities.
- Deepening the work on the four priorities through additional peer learning, particularly with national and EU outcomes for each in mind.
- Strengthening the policy links/interface between the work of ELGPN and EU policy development for schools, VET, higher education, adult education, employment and social inclusion.
- Providing national policy-makers, developers and stakeholders with concrete supports to assist them in their national and EU policy development.
- Extending the dissemination of the ELGPN's work.
- Strengthening the ELGPN's links with relevant international organisations, e.g. OECD.

A key objective will be to develop operational tools or common projects to support concrete policy implementation. This will include updating the 2004 OECD/EU handbook for policy makers, and drawing upon elements of the existing EU common reference tools. The new tools should be piloted at national level in a small number of countries interested in conducting a holistic review of their national guidance system based on a peer-learning process.

## Annex 1: Composition of the national delegations and contact points in the ELGPN 2009-10

		Education sector	Ministry of labour or employment	National forum	Euroguidance	Other
Austria	AT	1	1			1
Cyprus	CY	1	2			
Czech Republic	CZ	1	1		1	
Denmark	DK	2		3		
Estonia	EE	1	1	1		
Finland	FI	1	1			1
France	FR	4	1			
Germany	DE	2		1		
Greece	EL	1	1		3	
Hungary	HU	1	1			1
Iceland	IS	1				3
Italy	IT		1		4	
Latvia	LV	2	2			1
Lithuania	LT	1	1			1
Luxembourg	LU	1				3
Malta	MT	2				
Norway	NO	2	1			
Poland	PL	1	2			1
Portugal	PT		2			
Slovakia	SK	1	1			1
Slovenia	SI	1	3			2
Spain	ES	5				
Sweden	SE	2	1			
The Netherlands	NL	1	1		2	
Turkey	TR	3				
United Kingdom	UK	4				
Belgium (Obs.)	BE					1
Bulgaria (Obs.)	BG	1				
Ireland (Obs.)	IE	1				
Romania (Obs.)	RO					
<b>Total</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>16</b>

## Annex 2: ELGPN member countries' contributions to ELGPN 2009-10 activities<sup>4</sup>

		WP1 CMS	WP2 Access	WP3 Co-operation and co-ordination	WP 4 Quality	TG1 Policy analysis	TG2 Synergy between projects	ELGPN Steering Group meetings	ELGPN Plenary Meetings
Austria	AT	x		x, LC			x		
Cyprus	CY		x	X, SM					
Czech Republic	CZ	X, LC, FV	x				x		
Denmark	DK	x			X, LC		x, TGM		
Estonia	EE				x, SM	x, TGM			
Finland	FI			x	x, FV	x			
France	FR	x	x, LC, FV		x	x		SgM	
Germany	DE		x	x, LC	x, FV	x		SgM	
Greece	EL			x	x		x, TGM		
Hungary	HU			x, FV	x	x		SgM	
Iceland	IS		X, LC, SM						
Italy	IT	x		x					
Latvia	LV			x	x			SgM	PM
Lithuania	LT	x, FV	x						
Luxembourg	LU	x			x			SgM	PM
Malta	MT	x							
Norway	NO			x					
Poland	PL		x				x, TGM		
Portugal	PT	x			x			SgM	PM
Slovakia	SK	x, SM				x, TGM		SgM	
Slovenia	SI	x		x, FV		x	x, LC		
Spain	ES		x	x				SgM	PM
Sweden	SE	x							
The Netherlands	NL		x						
Turkey	TR		x	x		x			
United Kingdom	UK	x	x, FV		x				
Belgium (Obs.)	BE								
Bulgaria (Obs.)	BG								
Ireland (Obs.)	IE								
Romania (Obs.)	RO								

<sup>4</sup> LC = Lead Country, FV = Field Visit host, SM = Synthesis meeting host, TGM = Task group meeting host, SgM = Steering group meeting host, PM = Plenary meeting host, x = participant