

Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council of 21 November 2008 on better integrating lifelong guidance into lifelong learning strategies

(2008/C 319/02)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE MEMBER STATES, MEETING WITHIN THE COUNCIL,

CONSIDERING THAT:

1. The growing globalisation of trade and lengthening of the period of active employment are increasingly requiring individuals to adapt their skills, in order to remain ahead of foreseeable or necessary changes and to safeguard their career paths.
2. The enlargement of the European Union has increased the potential for mobility in education and training, as well as in the labour market, thereby creating the need to prepare Union citizens to develop their learning and professional pathways in a broader geographical context.
3. Citizens' lives are increasingly characterised by multiple transitions: notably from school to vocational education and training (VET), higher education or employment, or from employment to unemployment, further training or departure from the labour market. Guidance plays a decisive role in the major decisions that individuals have to take throughout their lives. In this respect, it can contribute to empowering individuals to manage their own career paths in a more secure way in the context of today's labour market, and to achieve a better balance between their personal and professional lives.
4. The labour market is also characterised by the mismatch between persistent unemployment and difficulties in recruiting in certain sectors, and guidance provides a means of responding more effectively to labour market needs.
5. Social inclusion and equal opportunities are still major challenges for education, training and employment policies,

CONFIRM:

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

RECALL THAT:

1. the Council Resolution of 28 May 2004 ⁽¹⁾ on strengthening policies, systems and practices in the field of guidance throughout life sets out the key objectives of a lifelong guidance policy for all European Union citizens;
2. the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning ⁽²⁾ underlines, with reference to several key competences, that the ability to search for the education and training opportunities and guidance and/or support available is essential for an individual's personal fulfilment, professional development and social integration;
3. the Council Resolution of 15 November 2007 on new skills for new jobs ⁽³⁾ invites the Member States and the Commission to equip people for new jobs within the knowledge society by providing them with vocational guidance, which should enable jobseekers to identify the competence modules required to move to new jobs where there are skills gaps;
4. the 2008 joint progress report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the work programme 'Delivering lifelong learning for knowledge, creativity and innovation' ⁽⁴⁾ notes that 'particular attention must also be given to lifelong guidance';
5. the Council conclusions of 25 May 2007 on a coherent framework of indicators and benchmarks for monitoring progress towards the Lisbon objectives in education and training ⁽⁵⁾ are an important tool for assessing implementation of the goals set by the Lisbon Strategy and thus for monitoring the progress made by Member States in the area of guidance in their lifelong learning strategies;
6. the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning ⁽⁶⁾ creates a common reference framework designed to serve as a translation device between different qualifications systems and their levels. That framework should facilitate workers' mobility and help make guidance part and parcel of Member States' education and employment policies and practices;

⁽¹⁾ Doc. 9286/04.

⁽²⁾ OJ L 394, 30.12.2006, p. 10.

⁽³⁾ OJ C 290, 4.12.2007, p. 1.

⁽⁴⁾ Doc. 5723/08.

⁽⁵⁾ OJ C 311, 21.12.2007, p. 13.

⁽⁶⁾ OJ C 111, 6.5.2008, p. 1.

7. the Council conclusions of 22 May 2008 on adult learning ⁽¹⁾ point to the economic, social and individual benefits generated by strengthening adult learning and stress that it is the responsibility of government to establish quality information and guidance systems which are more person-centred, so that, fairly and equitably, individuals can become more active and independent learners.

NOTE THAT:

1. recent evaluation reports, in particular that by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) in 2008 on the implementation of the Resolution of 2004, stress that although progress has been made, more efforts are needed in order to improve the quality of guidance services, provide fairer access focused on individuals' needs and aspirations, and to coordinate and build partnerships between existing forms of guidance provision;
2. in 2007, the Member States set up a European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN), comprising representatives of each Member State which chooses to participate, thus increasing the opportunities for Member States to learn from one another and to cooperate on developing policies, systems and practices in the field of lifelong guidance;
3. the priorities for implementing an active guidance policy under the national lifelong learning strategies need to be confirmed. It is necessary to specify those priorities in the form of activities and to deploy European instruments and tools.

INVITE THE MEMBER STATES TO:

- strengthen the role of lifelong guidance within national lifelong learning strategies in line with the Lisbon Strategy and with the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training,
- where appropriate, carry out reviews of guidance policies and practices at national level,
- make use of the following guiding principles (as detailed under 'Priority Areas' in the Annex hereto), in accordance with national contexts and legislation and with a view to supporting the lifelong career transitions of citizens:

1. encourage the lifelong acquisition of career management skills;
 2. facilitate access by all citizens to guidance services;
 3. develop the quality assurance of guidance provision;
 4. encourage coordination and cooperation among the various national, regional and local stakeholders,
- use the opportunities provided under the Lifelong Learning Programme and the European Structural Funds, in accordance with Member States' priorities.

INVITE THE MEMBER STATES AND THE COMMISSION, WITHIN THEIR RESPECTIVE COMPETENCES, TO:

1. strengthen European cooperation on lifelong guidance provision, in particular through the ELGPN, with the support of the Lifelong Learning Programme, and in liaison with Cedefop.

In particular:

- enable Member States to share information on their policies and practices, and on their evaluation of both, so that each may benefit from the successes of others,
 - monitor national and European implementation of activities in the four priority areas under this Resolution, using surveys, studies, reports, and peer learning activities including case studies and conferences at European-level,
 - endeavour to ensure that lifelong guidance is more consistent and more tightly dovetailed with the various European policy areas and in particular with those of employment and social inclusion,
 - consider whether more evidence-based policy on guidance should be developed at European level;
2. provide citizens and guidance stakeholders with reliable information resources which comprehensively cover Member States' education and training systems and guidance services, in particular via the Euroguidance network;
 3. foster the development of lifelong guidance in third countries in accordance with the four priority areas outlined in this Resolution, in particular through the activities of the European Training Foundation.

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 140, 6.6.2008, p. 10.

ANNEX

PRIORITY AREAS**PRIORITY AREA 1: ENCOURAGE THE LIFELONG ACQUISITION OF CAREER MANAGEMENT SKILLS**

Career management skills play a decisive role in empowering people to become involved in shaping their learning, training and integration pathways and their careers. Such skills, which should be maintained throughout life, are based on key competences, in particular 'learning to learn', social and civic competences — including intercultural competences — and a sense of initiative and entrepreneurship. Career management skills include the following, particularly during periods of transition:

- learning about the economic environment, businesses and occupations,
- being able to evaluate oneself, knowing oneself and being able to describe the competences one has acquired in formal, informal and non-formal education settings,
- understanding education, training and qualifications systems.

To make progress in this priority area, Member States should, depending on their specific situations, consider:

- including teaching and learning activities which foster the development of career management skills in general, vocational and higher education programmes,
- preparing teachers and trainers to conduct such activities and support them in this task,
- encouraging parents to become involved in guidance issues,
- involving civil society organisations and the social partners more closely in this area,
- facilitating access to information about training opportunities and their links to the professions, and about the skills needs anticipated in a given locality,
- developing career management skills in adult training programmes,
- making guidance one of the objectives of schools, VET providers and higher education establishments. Integration into working life and the operation of the local, national and European labour markets are aspects, in particular, that should be taken into account.

PRIORITY AREA 2: FACILITATE ACCESS BY ALL CITIZENS TO GUIDANCE SERVICES

Guidance services, as services of general interest, should be accessible to everyone, irrespective of their knowledge base or their initial skills, and should be readily understandable and relevant. A particular effort should be made to improve access to guidance services for the most disadvantaged groups and persons with special needs.

To make progress in this priority area, Member States should, depending on their specific situations, consider:

- actively promoting guidance services with the public and raise their profile using the full range of information and communication media,
- offering a clear range of easily accessible services based on an evaluation of people's aspirations and needs, and taking account of their living and working environments,
- enabling people to benefit from support in obtaining validation and recognition on the labour market of their formal, non-formal and informal learning outcomes, in order to safeguard their employment and maintain their employability, in particular during the second part of their careers,
- promoting open access to documentary resources, the provision of support in information searches, individual counselling and institutional provision.

PRIORITY AREA 3: DEVELOP QUALITY ASSURANCE IN GUIDANCE PROVISION

The development of high quality guidance services is a goal shared by the Member States.

To make progress in this priority area, Member States should, depending on their specific situations, consider:

- improving the quality and ensure the objectivity of career information and advice, while taking account of users' expectations and labour market realities,
- ensuring that the information presented, advice given and support provided are tailored to suit the various different users,
- developing tools for the forward-planning of jobs and skills, building on both national resources and on the Union's common resources, in particular Cedefop,

- relating information on training provision and the operation of the labour market to the local area,
- enhancing, including through initial education and further training, the professional profile and standards of guidance practitioners, and promoting their competences and skills, in particular with regard to the provision of information, counselling and support, in order to better respond to the needs and expectations of both citizens and policymakers,
- measuring the effectiveness of guidance provision, where appropriate by collecting reliable data covering both users' perception of guidance services and the benefits obtained by them in the medium term,
- developing quality standards for guidance services which define the service provided and which pay as much attention to the goals and results for the beneficiary as to methods and processes.

PRIORITY AREA 4: ENCOURAGE COORDINATION AND COOPERATION AMONG THE VARIOUS NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS

Guidance caters for different segments of the population: pupils, university entrants, job-seekers, those in vocational training and those in employment, which gives rise to differing systems. There should be greater complementarity and coordination between the different areas, with national and local government, businesses, relevant agencies, the social partners and local communities collaborating to improve the efficiency of reception networks accessible to everyone seeking guidance.

To make progress in this priority area, Member States should, depending on their specific situations, consider:

- developing effective, long-term national and regional mechanisms for coordination and cooperation among the key stakeholders in lifelong guidance provision,
 - facilitating such coordination and cooperation by developing a guidance dimension within national lifelong learning and labour market strategies, in keeping with the concept which each Member State has adopted,
 - supporting a partnership policy and the local networking of lifelong guidance services, including by pooling services wherever this proves effective, in the interests of streamlining user access,
 - developing a common culture, including by means of quality assurance, among the various services responsible at local, regional and national levels.
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