



Theme Edition: Guidance for people from different cultural backgrounds



Guidance practitioners play a very important role when it comes to the integration of newcomers into their societies. For some people moving to another country is an exciting challenge, as demonstrated in the interview with Marit Grønskei, however others find it much harder to deal with the new situations they encounter. Guidance practitioners use a variety of tools and methods to support those newcomers who might not be familiar with the host country – for example its language(s), culture, education system and labour market. They help them to adapt as best they can, with all the help they can find. In this issue of Insight you will be introduced to some proven best practices from across Europe.

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Integration of Refugees and Newcomers through Employment and Job Coaching



In Flanders, as in the rest of Europe, participation in the labor market has proven to be a significant factor in the long-term integration of asylum seekers and immigrants into society. Their first priority is usually housing and residency, closely followed by employment.

In 2015, the Flemish Public Employment Agency (VDAB) launched 'Integration Through Work': an action plan that facilitates accelerated activation of refugees and newcomers in the labour market. Referral of refugees and newcomers to VDAB mainly happens through its partners: Public Centres for Social Welfare (OCMW's), Flemish Agency for Integration, the shelters and local reception initia-

tives.

In 2016, VDAB set up a communication campaign to inform refugees and newcomers directly about its services. The campaign kicked off on July 14th, when the Flemish Minister for Work and State Secretary for Asylum and Migration together signed a declaration of intent to form a structural partnership between VDAB and Fedasil (Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers). Cooperation agreements were also concluded with the Flemish Integration Agency, the Union of Flemish Cities and Municipalities (VVSG) and the Ministry of Education and Training.

The communication campaign involved several tools developed by VDAB to meet the needs of the

target group. To guide refugees and newcomers towards the labor market, partner organisations can use flyers in different languages, information through the VDAB website, online videos on VDAB services (available in 7 languages) and appointment cards.

Integration through employment is also facilitated by encouraging employers to engage newcomers or refugees who do not (yet) have the required skills. VDAB offers three programmes: Dutch on the workforce (professional Dutch language training in the workplace), On-the-job training (paid or unpaid internship with clearly defined learning outcomes) or Job coaching.

Job coaching involves free guidance during the first 6 months of employment. The job coach focuses not only on technical skills, but also on motivation, work attitudes and communication skills. After the intake, a plan of action is drawn up – including main working points. This plan is monitored through follow-up sessions with input from the employee, employer and his/her colleagues.

The job coach also:

- supports the employer with the reception and care for the employee
- serves as a neutral point of contact and confidant
- informs the employer about the available employment systems
- promotes diversity in the work place

For further information, please contact:

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Source: VDAB

Euroguidance Flanders

Recognition of refugees' qualifications

The Lisbon Treaty establishes that the procedures for recognition of foreign education and qualification at educational institutions should take into account refugees' unusual situation. The Danish Agency for Higher Education offers an advisory statement for those who cannot provide the necessary documents and has developed a tool which will aid in a more effective recognition of their qualifications.



In many instances, documents for educational background will not be among the refugees' belongings as they flee their war-affected homelands and sometimes it is impossible to retrieve them later on. Therefore the Lisbon Treaty on recognition envisages that European countries develop flexible procedures, so that refugees and other persons in a similar situation can get a quick and fair assessment and not be prevented from undertaking further education, even if they lack the relevant documents.

On the basis of the Lisbon Trea-

ty, the European networks for the recognition of academic and professional qualifications, ENIC/NARIC, have developed a guiding [document](#) for institutions on the recognition of refugees' qualifications.

Assessment at the Danish Agency for Higher Education

At the Danish Agency for Higher Education, anyone with completed and documented foreign qualifications can receive an evaluation, which assesses what the Danish equivalent of the particular qualification is. When a person is not able to obtain or present the necessary documents, the Agency offers an advisory statement in the form of a background paper describing the refugees' qualifications. This is based on information that the applicants provide themselves about their

educational background, any existing and available supporting documents concerning their particular education as well as the Agency's knowledge of the respective country's educational system.

This system of counselling and evaluation of foreign qualifications has existed since 2003 but is particularly important now in the midst of a refugee crisis, where many find themselves without the relevant documents.

Hotline ensures effective and quick evaluation

In order to complement this, a newly developed tool in the form of a hotline has also been established by the Agency. It is meant to assist municipalities and asylum centers with guidance counselling and evaluating refugees' education, making the process more effective. For example, the hotline is able to pro-

cess documents in Arabic with no need of a translation and enquiries will be responded to by e-mail to the municipalities within a few days.

Progression into the job market

The aim of the system of evaluation and recognition of refugees' qualifications, which includes the new hotline, is to have a more effective and faster progression of refugees into the job market – something which is of great importance to the Danish government.

Allan Bruun Pedersen, Danish Agency for Higher Education

Natalie Clausen and Birtha Theut, Euroguidance Denmark



From international and multicultural towards diversity – A new perspective for guidance



Words such as “international” or “multicultural” do not have the same resonance as before. They are a part of our everyday vocabulary and we use them somewhat lightly without noticing what their true meaning is. At the same time we are highly international and multicultural and therefore it is surprising to realise that we still have the need to explicitly pinpoint and emphasise that something is international or multicultural.

These two words have become quite value-laden: “international” is usually experienced as something elitist and positive, whereas “multicultural” is often considered as posing an unpleasant or even critical challenge to society. Going abroad for studying, training or working is normally seen as “Wow! You’re so international!”, but when thousands of ref-

ugees arrive in our countries, with different languages, traditions and cultures, it creates a multicultural environment, which is not always looked upon favourably.

The international dimension is something that is constantly present and well integrated into our daily lives, and it should not be seen as something that is isolated or separate from what is meant by national or domestic. Multiculturalism is here to stay and seen frequently in the field of guidance where the client-base is becoming more and more mixed. We cannot run away from it when it is already knocking loudly on our doors.

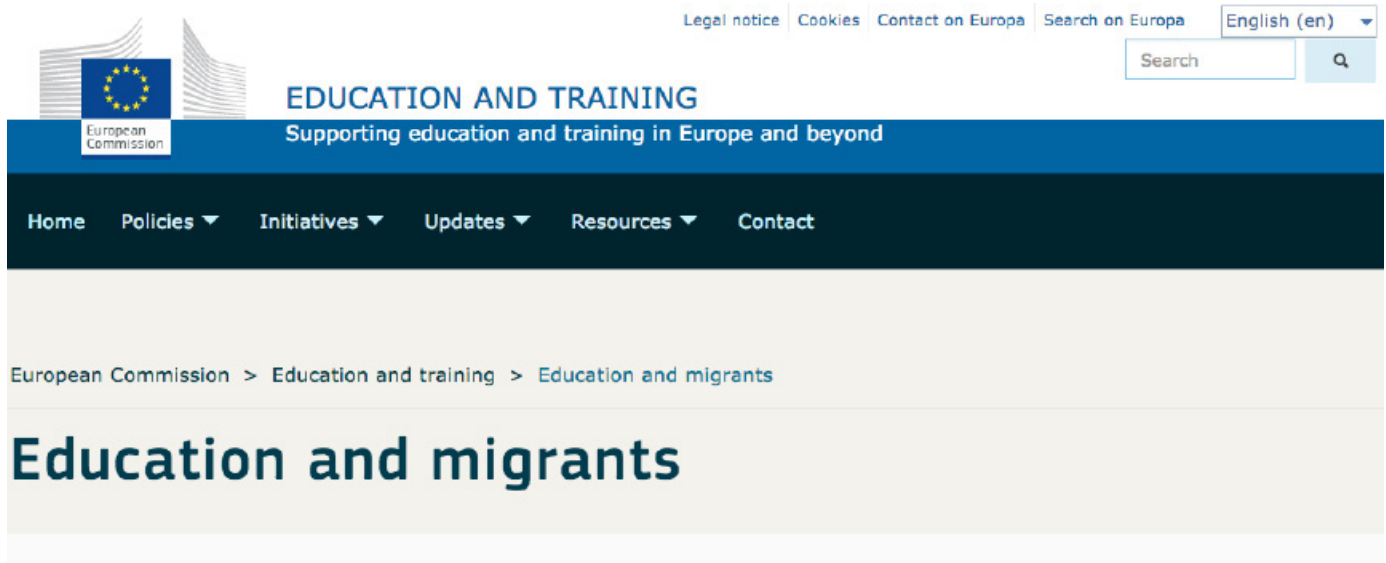
Therefore, many guidance practitioners have started talking about plurality and diversity to describe their clientele. These concepts are regarded as more neutral and more value-free, and they also create a

nice umbrella embracing a wide range of aspects in human life. In simple terms, diversity refers to similarities and differences among people in terms of age, ethnic background, physical (dis)abilities, worldviews, gender, sexual orientation and many more. Basically no matter who you are or where you come from, diversity aims to recognise, respect and value people’s differences to contribute and realise their full potential by promoting an inclusive culture for us all.

Read more about diversity and learn about the Diversity Wheel model in [the blog](#) by Mr. Mika Launikari, Finland.

Mika Launikari, Euroguidance Finland

Good practices on the integration of migrants



The screenshot shows the top part of the European Commission website. At the top right, there are links for 'Legal notice', 'Cookies', 'Contact on Europa', and 'Search on Europa'. A language dropdown menu is set to 'English (en)'. Below these is a search bar with the text 'Search' and a magnifying glass icon. The main header features the European Commission logo on the left and the text 'EDUCATION AND TRAINING' in large blue letters, followed by the subtitle 'Supporting education and training in Europe and beyond'. A dark blue navigation bar contains the following menu items: 'Home', 'Policies', 'Initiatives', 'Updates', 'Resources', and 'Contact'. Below the navigation bar is a breadcrumb trail: 'European Commission > Education and training > Education and migrants'. The main heading of the page is 'Education and migrants' in a large, bold, dark blue font.

The European Commission facilitates the exchange of good practices on the integration of migrants and funds relevant projects across the different levels of education.

In light of the current migration crisis, the European Commission highlights the urgency and importance of supporting the efforts of EU countries to integrate refugees into European education systems and ensure their skills development. The European Commission brings added value by sharing initiatives which are already taking place in EU countries and by offering support through its programmes.

To achieve this, the Directorate General for Education and Culture (DG EAC) has established a website on education and migration, which seeks to facilitate the exchange of good practices

on the integration of migrants and provide educational institutions and organizations with guidance on how to tailor the provision of education for migrants.

The projects which receive funding from the European Commission spans across different levels of education, from schools to higher education institutions as well as adult education and language learning.

To read more about various EU projects dealing with migration and to learn about good practices, visit this [website](#).

Natalie Clausen and Birthe Theut, Euroguidance Denmark

Cross Border Seminar 2016: Cross Cultural Guidance and International Careers – Integrating Migrants and Minorities



In June 2016 the 11th Cross Border Seminar took place in Potsdam under the motto „Cross Cultural Guidance and International Careers – Integrating Migrants and Minorities“. Since 2005 the annual event has offered a platform for professional exchange and networking to educational and vocational counsellors and psychologists from 11 European countries.

The aim of the Cross Border seminar is to share best practices, discuss common challenges and educate participant about current trends in the European education and labour market. The welcome speech, given by Dr Wolfgang Mueller, Managing Director and legal representative of Euroguidance Germany, focused on how to value and make use of the different skills that en-

rich culturally diverse societies. It also recognised, as well as participation in education and/or work, guidance and counselling play an essential part of the support framework that helps people to integrate and to enter the labour market. In order to understand the magnitude and historical underpinnings for migration, the global perspective on migration flows was also presented at the seminar with a focus on the need for a more open and inclusive view towards migrants, refugees and ethnic minorities.

Peer learning is an essential part of the Cross Border seminar. Several workshops presented successful integration projects from participating countries as well as innovative guidance approaches within an intercultural context. In addition, participants were able to try different methods and exercises that

encourage change of perception and self-reflexion.

Presentations and country surveys from the seminar can be found [here](#).

The compendium of the seminar will be available until end of this year at the [Euroguidance website](#).

Ilse Lore Schneider, Coordinator Euroguidance Germany

Over time you realise that it isn't good or bad, only different!

At a seminar for guidance practitioners from Nordic and Baltic countries, Marit Grønскеi from AFS Intercultural Programs in Norway¹ was invited to talk about the learning outcomes that can be gained by students from an high school exchange year abroad. She shared her insights into what the most appreciated learning outcomes are and how to deal with more and more partners becoming involved in the students exchange experience – the parents.

– We tend to think that mobility is about learning about other cultures. But you also say that culture sensitivity to our own culture is equally or even more important?

– Yes, absolutely. To be able to understand another culture you have to start by understanding your own. Your own references are drawn from your own culture, so if you haven't understood those references it will be very difficult to put the new culture's references into context, Grønскеi explains. This is why AFS always provide some kind of training about my culture and background and the motivation that I have for learning something new, she adds.

Cultural sensitivity takes time

According to Grønскеi, the students undergo certain phases of development on their way to



having a deeper cultural sensitivity. It starts with where we come from, which is the comfort zone and also the norm.

– And then one day they realise that something outside of their own bubble is different, that people are different. Realising these differences

and then minimising them takes time. This is why we believe that exchanges needs to last for more than a couple of days. They should preferable last for a year. And then after a while they will find themselves self adapting to the new culture. Over time they begin to realise that all the new

¹ AFS is an international, voluntary, non-governmental, non-profit organization that provides intercultural learning opportunities to help people develop the knowledge, skills and understanding needed to create a more just and peaceful world. afs.org

things aren't dangerous, only different, Grønnskei says.

AFS has a saying: It is not good or bad, only different.

Language is a bonus

– You say that language is not at the top of the student's list of appreciated learning outcomes. Do we have to change our perceptions of why young people should study abroad?

– Not necessarily. When we look at what motivates them to go abroad in the first place it is; language skills, becoming independent and learning about a new culture. But then during the exchange and afterwards they open their eyes to many other aspects, so the language then feels more like a bonus they learnt in the process, Grønnskei says.

A boring day is a good day

– The language is just a tool for communication, it is always the hidden aspects and artefacts of a culture that becomes the essential of the experience, says Grønnskei.

– When the students have done a whole year, lived with a family and been part of the local community, they get an understanding of the culture in a completely different way. I myself went to Venezuela, but it took me many years to reflect deeply upon what I had really learnt, not to mention

explaining it to someone else, says Grønnskei.

She reminds us that the students are young, 15 to 18 years old.

– They are not going to be happy with everything all of the time. They would not be at home either, would they? Having a boring day in Argentina could very well be a good sign, meaning that that you have adapted and become part of daily life. It is a reality check.

Parents who interfere

– The role of parents has changed over the years. You describe more involvement and frequent contact between student and home. Why is this happening?

– This is a very tricky question, and we ask ourselves this every day. I think that some parents today have the tendency to be very much in contact and also in control. And this continues while they are abroad too, and not always necessarily a good thing because it can give the parents too much opportunity to take control.

Grønnskei and her colleagues sometimes see cases where the parents have taken control of a situation when the student would rather have been given the opportunity to handle things on their own. Being able to sort things out on their own is a learning opportunity and gives the student the opportunity to learn

and reflect on their experiences, which is what the exchanges are all about

–I feel sorry for a lot of parents, because when the kids are happy they don't hear anything but as soon as they have a bad day they involve the parents. Grønnskei says.

There are big cultural differences in opinions and upbringing, according to her. AFS has strict recommendations.

– No parental visits, as we don't want them to be too involved. And the students need to respect the fact that now they have a new family who decides. They have to obey the laws of the country, the rules and norms of the family too. So after a couple of months, the girl that you sent away and who you know better than anyone else is no longer the exact same person. That is a tough nut to crack for a lot of parents.

Mobility Becomes a Reality in French Schools

In France, a new legal framework has been put into force¹ regarding the mobility of secondary school students' in Europe and beyond. Through this legislation, in 2017, each secondary school is required to be involved in an international partnership and to have a named mobility reference teacher who is in charge of helping other teachers and students to carry out mobility projects.



Dissemination of information about European mobility

This year Euroguidance France/Education has published a booklet which will help to inform education communities about the different mobility opportunities and programs that are available to secondary students, university students, teachers etc. The booklet also contains useful advice about setting up mobility partnerships in schools. They have also

created some practical tools for teachers and guidance professionals which will help them to share information with student about the possibilities of mobility.

These tools are available (in French) [here](#).

Networking

In partnership with the National Europass center and the National coordination point for European

Qualifications Framework, Euroguidance France/Education also organised its fifth Euroguidance Network national conference meeting. The focus of the meeting was to create synergies between different guidance networks.

The conference, entitled “Guidance and Skills: assessment and practices in France and in Europe”, was attended by stakeholders’ from the lifelong guidance networks and took place near Paris on October the 17th and 18th 2016.

Promotion of international mobility

The Euroguidance France Network has distributed a new promotion video designed to show that mobility is for everyone, not just university’ students. Three different cases are presented: Yassine an 18 years old boy without a diploma, Elsa a 21 year old girl in vocational training, and François a 50 year old

¹ Source : Legal framework : Circulaire n°2016- 091 du 15 juin 2016 relative à la mobilité des élèves de collège et de lycée en Europe et dans le monde



unemployed man.

This video is available [here](#).

Manon Klein and Graziana Boscato, EG Strasbourg



www.euroguidance.eu

Scripts are always welcome and should be sent to the following e-mail address: Dora.Stefansdottir@Rannis.is

