



Lifelong guidance: Connecting learning, work and development

*Summary of a paper on Lifelong guidance
by Euroguidance the Netherlands.*

Career development has shifted from predictable, linear paths to complex, dynamic journeys shaped by rapid labor market and technological changes. Citizens now need continuous support to navigate transitions between education, work, and personal development. Lifelong guidance is recognized across Europe as a crucial connector between learning, working, and living for people of all ages.

In the Netherlands there is no integrated vision linking careerguidance and lifelong learning, yet. There is strong careerguidance for students at school and careerguidance for adults that is fragmented and not always easily accessible. For this reason, other countries in Europe have been surveyed to learn from each other.

Definitions

- **Lifelong learning:** Proactive development of qualities and skills throughout life, driven by personal motives and societal needs, with focus on sustainability, self-direction, and well-being.
- **Lifelong guidance:** Continuous access to career information, advice, and support enabling individuals of all ages to recognize competencies, make informed choices, and manage transitions in education and work.

European approaches

Finland

- Careerguidance embedded in national curriculum since 1970.
- National Coordination Group (2011) ensures equal access, professional development, and quality assurance.
- Integrated system linking schools, labor market services, and ministries.
- Practical tools: compulsory career modules, personal competence plans, training vouchers, and one-stop youth guidance centers.

Insight: Seamless guidance across education and labor market, coordinated nationally by multiple ministries.

Austria

- Federal system with a **National Strategy for Lifelong Guidance** (2005–2006) and **LLL:2020 strategy**.
- National Forum Lifelong Guidance prevents fragmentation and fosters cooperation.
- Schools implement standardized **IBOBB curriculum** for career orientation, renewed in 2023.

Insight: Strong structural embedding in schools, with national vision guiding diverse regional priorities.

Scotland

- Careers Strategy (2020) emphasizes Career Information, Advice, and Guidance (CIAG) for all ages.
- Skills Development Scotland (SDS) acts as national skills agency, linking education and labor market.
- Focus on career management skills, professionalization of guidance staff, and digital platform *My World of Work*.

Insight: Guidance recognized as a professional field, highly visible and accessible, aligned with national skills planning.

Bonaire

- No central vision or structural funding, but growing initiatives in education and labor market.
- Collaboration among MBO Bonaire, labor bureau, ROA CN, and local organizations.
- Focus on shortage sectors (healthcare, welfare) with new training programs and cross-island cooperation.

Insight: Bottom-up initiatives show potential despite limited resources and absence of overarching policy.

Key takeaways

- Lifelong guidance is essential to help citizens adapt, discover opportunities, and manage transitions.
- Successful systems integrate education and labor market services, supported by national strategies and cross-sector collaboration.
- Professionalization, accessibility, and visibility of guidance services are critical for impact.
- The Netherlands can learn from Finland's integrated system, Austria's structural embedding, Scotland's professionalization, and Bonaire's collaborative initiatives.



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