

## **THE EUROGUIDANCE NETWORK VIEW ON THE NEW SKILLS AGENDA AND THE REVISION TO TOOLS AND SERVICES**

**Comments from the Strategy and Quality Working Group  
and the leaders of the other Working Groups within the Euroguidance Network\*  
with reference to the consultation meeting in Brussels on Monday 29/02/2016**

### **EUROGUIDANCE NETWORK – LINKING LIFELONG GUIDANCE AND INTERNATIONAL MOBILITY ACROSS EUROPE**

Since 1992, the Euroguidance Network provides knowhow and expertise in lifelong guidance and learning mobility within education, training and employment in Europe. Altogether 34 European countries belong to the Euroguidance Network. The national Euroguidance Centres contribute to the implementation of the Erasmus+ objectives as well as the EU policies and strategies in the context of lifelong learning and sustainable employment.

The Euroguidance Network's primary target group is guidance professionals, who work in the education and employment sectors and provide information, advice and guidance to European citizens on studying and training opportunities abroad. On top of this, the Euroguidance Network promotes the international exchange and cooperation of guidance practitioners and is involved in developing lifelong guidance provision at a European level.

### **KEY ROLE OF GUIDANCE WITHIN THE NEW SKILLS AGENDA**

The Euroguidance Network firmly believes that citizens can take well-informed choices and decisions on their learning and career paths when professional information, advice and guidance support is easily available to them. Smooth transitions across education and labour markets both nationally and internationally can be helped by guidance services that are easily accessible to the clients of all ages.

Guidance can make people, for example,

- more aware of their own interests, potential and options;
- discover their hidden competences/tacit knowledge;
- facilitate their overall life management and life design.

High quality lifelong guidance is crucial to support lifelong learning and it contributes to people's employability, social inclusion and active citizenship. Therefore, there is a need to make guidance more visible and give it a more central role as a clearly identified transversal element within the European policies in the fields of education and employment, the New Skills Agenda included. In this respect, the New Skills Agenda should follow the Lifelong Guidance terminology and link to the EU Resolutions on Lifelong Guidance (2004 & 2008). Currently there is a tendency to limit guidance to information giving.

\*This is the view only of the Euroguidance experts mentioned above and does not reflect any national points of view.

## **CAREER MANAGEMENT SKILLS AS A TRANSVERSAL SKILL**

Guidance supports the development of key competences for students and adults. Career Management Skills (CMS) should be included as a transversal skill in the communication on skills within the New Skills Agenda. CMS give individuals the skills to gather, analyse, synthesise and organise self, educational and occupational information as well as to make and implement decisions and transitions.

By looking at guidance as a learning process in a broad perspective, CMS shift the focus from where the role of guidance is to help young people and adults to make choices to a role where guidance is to provide activities that equip individuals with the skills to manage recurring choices and cope with their life in a longer run. This enables individuals to update and upgrade their skills in a lifelong learning perspective.

## **THE EUROGUIDANCE NETWORK AS THE MAIN REPRESENTATIVE OF THE GUIDANCE SECTOR IN EUROPE**

Currently the Euroguidance Network is the only guidance network in Europe, and thus it has a key role regarding the contribution of the European guidance sector to the priorities of the New Skills Agenda. The Euroguidance Network is connecting all major guidance stakeholders at national and European levels. It cooperates closely with the communities of guidance practice, policy and research.

The majority of the Euroguidance centres are hosted by national bodies connected to the Ministries of Education or Labour. This enhances the Networks' capacity in supporting the development of guidance practice in relation to the European initiatives for skills and qualifications.

The Euroguidance Centres implement annually a wide range of concrete activities at national level, as set up in the yearly work plan of each centre\*. Further, they run joint cross-country events and development projects at an international level. These actions strengthen the European dimension in guidance and contribute to the European Lifelong Guidance priorities defined within the EU Resolutions on Lifelong Guidance.

## **EUROGUIDANCE AS A BASE FOR SYNERGIES BETWEEN EUROPEAN TOOLS IN GENERAL**

Against the above background, it is important to state that Euroguidance Network and guidance as a professional service cannot be considered as tools (like European Qualifications Framework EQF and Europass are).

The national Euroguidance Centres offer services to the guidance community in each country, and the guidance professionals deliver services to the end users. While providing these services, the European tools for skills and qualifications may be used, but guidance is needed to make the tools meaningful for the individual citizens and useful in their career planning.

The Euroguidance Network serves as a bridge between the guidance professionals and the available tools, but its mission cannot be reduced to only a service for skills and qualifications. The role of the national Euroguidance Centres is to support the guidance practitioners, their professionalism in mobility and their knowledge of modern tools and working methods in lifelong guidance in Europe.

\* Examples of activities can be found under the heading "Awareness of the Euroguidance brand" and in Annex 1.

## **EUROGUIDANCE IN RELATION TO EUROPASS AND EQF**

The cooperation between the three networks (Euroguidance, Europass, EQF) is already very active and they work together on national level whenever it is relevant for the target groups. As guidance practice includes providing quality information on international learning and career opportunities, it is inevitable for the Euroguidance network to disseminate information on Europass and EQF as well. It could also be seen from a former internal survey, conducted 2013 by the Strategy and Quality Working Group, that the Euroguidance Network often invites the other networks when arranging training sessions for guidance professionals.

Because of the nature of the activities it is not equally inevitable for Europass and EQF to inform their target groups about Euroguidance activities. Therefore, the merging of these three networks is not necessarily the most effective way to serve the end users. Euroguidance has a close cooperation with most EU networks and might, for example, have more in common with other information networks, which also support mobile individuals. As the three networks (Euroguidance, Europass, EQF) operate at different levels and consequently also with different audiences, the organisation of the cooperation should be decided on at national level, with regard to the specificities of the different target groups and the institutional structures in the countries.

## **AWARENESS OF THE EUROGUIDANCE BRAND**

The aim of the Euroguidance Network is to provide support to guidance professionals in their national context. In practical terms, this means organizing trainings, seminars and fairs, developing websites and career tools, producing newsletters and informational material and arranging job shadowing and study visits (including Academia study visits). This is something else than promoting the use of a template (Europass) and/or building a system for skills and qualifications (EQF).

It is easier to explain a concrete tool, like a CV template, and make it well known among end users, than to promote a whole range of services. What makes it even more difficult is the fact that the main target group, the guidance professionals, when discussing mobility opportunities with their clients, seldom or never mention the fact that they might have gone through a Euroguidance training to learn about the topic. This contributes to the invisibility of Euroguidance on EU level, but should not be mistaken for a lack of activities and/or impact on national level.

## **FOCUS ON CITIZENS NEEDS WHEN DEVELOPING INFORMATION RESOURCES**

To assist individuals to access clear and transparent information on skills and qualifications a common portal to serve as a gateway to all the EU services and tools supporting the New Skills Agenda might be a possible solution. The portal could be supported by the European Commission at EU level to promote easy access for all the EU citizens according to the needs of different target groups. The further development of such a portal could include at a later stage, distance support to the end users via e-services.

However, with the experiences from many years of working with the Portal for Learning Opportunities and Qualifications in Europe, it is uncertain if such a portal would actually be able to deliver the desired service to the citizens. The risk is that a large web-based system becomes unmanageable and difficult to grasp for the user. If such a system is created, it is important to have an individual/user perspective and to focus on citizens' needs and their digital skills. Users should be

defined and national entrances as well as need based entries to the system might be useful. Constant updating and technical support and the adequate budget should be ensured.

## **THE EU PORTAL FOR LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES AND QUALIFICATIONS**

The functioning of the current Portal for Learning Opportunities and Qualifications in Europe cannot entirely be the responsibility of the national Euroguidance Centres. In previous years, developed technical solutions on EU level have required additional financing on a national level, which has not always been available. Today the more long-term goals for the portal are unclear and there are needs for technical developments that no single centre can take care of. The last message from the Commission regarding the portal was 1,5 years ago and lack of support from the contracted consultant as well as lack of communication regarding user statistics and broken links makes it difficult to keep the level of expected common quality.

## **GOVERNANCE OF THE EUROGUIDANCE NETWORK**

In terms of governance the Euroguidance network would like to put forward the following points:

- Longer contract periods, so-called multi-annual budgets, would give a better planning horizon and facilitate the evaluation of results and impact of the networks' activities.
- At the same time there is a need to establish quality assurance mechanisms that are reasonable in relation to the budget and scope of the network.
- The proposed coordination mechanism at EU level could offer support for the network and improved the visibility, but at the same time it is important for the network to still have a continued close cooperation with both the Commission and EACEA to ensure a direct and clear communication and avoid any double coordination that would generate extra work.
- In the case of a common contract for all three networks we hope to be able to keep the separate budgets and work plans.

## **Annex 1. Euroguidance Network in numbers and figures**

The Euroguidance Network consists of 34 European countries. It is actively promoting guidance for learning mobility in Europe and beyond. For doing so a wide variety of means and channels is used to inform guidance practitioners and end-users on mobility-related opportunities. The most recent figures about the Euroguidance network's scope of promotional activities originate from 2014 when ...

... more than 200,000 copies of different types of printed materials (incl. reports, brochures, booklets, leaflets, information and fact sheets) have been produced and disseminated by the Euroguidance centres to those seeking studying and training opportunities abroad.

... nearly 80,000 visitors were reported to have sought information, advice and guidance on mobility issues at Euroguidance booths at careers fairs held in different European countries.

... Euroguidance centres maintained and managed 136 different national thematically focused and field-specific websites to provide information on studying, training and learning opportunities abroad and more specifically about the services they provide to the clients.

... seminars, conferences and meetings organised and hosted by Euroguidance centres reached some 84,000 participants.

... around 35,000 individual consultations with clients were held on mobility-related issues.

... altogether 61 international study visits for guidance experts and practitioners were organised in different parts of Europe, many of them through Academia programme and the rest were tailor-made for Euroguidance experts from other countries visiting their colleagues in other centres.

... almost 43,000 visitors were registered at the Euroguidance network's website [www.euroguidance.eu](http://www.euroguidance.eu).