

SIXTH INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND PUBLIC POLICY (BUDAPEST, 5-7 DECEMBER 2011)

COMMUNIQUÉ

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PREAMBLE

The symposium was attended by 127 representatives from 31 countries. Each country team prepared a country report in advance of the event, covering the four themes outlined below. Theme syntheses provided the basis for round-table discussions, the conclusions of which were fed back and synthesised at plenary sessions. This Communiqué represents a summary of the collective conclusions of those present at the event. It does not bind any of the institutions which they represented. It is addressed primarily to policy-makers.

Theme 1: Political, economic and social changes and the changing role of career guidance policies and practice

Principles

1. A key role of career development systems and services is to help individuals to manage the interface between their career development and economic, political and social changes, to their own benefit and the benefit of the wider society.
2. To perform this role, such systems and services must always aim at a dynamic balance between aspirations and realism, between personal goals and labour market demand.
3. At a time of economic crisis, the need and potential demand for career development services are increased, but so are the challenges for public expenditure to respond to this need.

Recommendations to countries

1. Assert the case for access to such services as a citizen right, linked to affirming human worth, dignity and hope.

2. At the same time, link the role of career development¹ systems and services more strongly to policy priorities, including those designed to support economic growth (e.g. skills strategies) or reduce costs (e.g. reducing drop-out).
3. Secure an appropriate balance between targeting intensive services to those who need them most, and providing core services to all (avoiding 'marginalising the mainstream').

Recommendations for international collaboration

1. Through the International Centre for Career Development and Public Policy (ICCDPP) and the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance (IAEVG), strengthen links between the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN) and other symposium countries, to enable the strong collaborative structures and processes within ELGPN to be enriched by practices from countries outside Europe, for mutual benefit.
2. Ensure that such links include, but extend beyond, global sharing of ELGPN publications and tools – recognising that good practice is based on sharing learning, not importing models.

Theme 2: Lifelong guidance policy as a part of integrated human resource development policies – challenges and opportunities

Principles

1. Career development is integral to effective human resource development and skills strategies: i.e. to harnessing individual talents and motivations, to the benefit of the economy and the wider society.
2. Career development policies and provision tend to be located within sectors (schools, vocational education and training, higher education, adult education, and employment). But careers involve the construction of pathways across these sectors, on a lifelong basis. Services to support them need to be as seamless as possible. It is accordingly important to develop lifelong strategies based on communication, collaboration and co-ordination across sectors.
3. Career development policy forums or other policy co-operation/co-ordination mechanisms can be established to develop such strategies. These may include the relevant ministries, the social partners (employers and trade unions), associations of career professionals and other stakeholders. (Many countries, in Europe in particular, have now developed structures of these kinds.)

Recommendations to countries

1. Countries that have not yet established a career development policy forum or other policy co-operation/co-ordination mechanism to consider what structure would best suit their needs, and how they can draw from the experiences of other countries in this respect.

¹ For terminology used here and elsewhere in this document, see Annex.

2. Countries with such structures in place to regularly review their remit, goals, tasks, membership and processes, to ensure that they are sustainable and effective.

Recommendations for international collaboration

1. Extend the existing structures of collaboration and communication within the ELGPN to enable other interested countries outside Europe to benefit from, and contribute to, the sharing of experiences in establishing and sustaining such structures.
2. Extend the consultation processes related to the proposed ELGPN glossary, to give it global relevance.
3. Complement this with work on a taxonomy, to cover the language used not only by careers practitioners and policy-makers but also by the general public.

Theme 3: The changing world and the changing role of career guidance – skills and competencies for lifelong guidance practitioners

Principles

1. From a policy perspective, ensuring that the skills and competencies of career development practitioners are fit for purpose is a crucial aspect of assuring the quality of services.
2. High-quality services require a strong careers profession. Currently, the level of professionalisation (including whether relevant qualifications are required to practise) varies considerably between and within countries.

Recommendations to countries

1. Develop strong professional standards, linked to strong quality-assurance frameworks, to cover a variety of roles in a variety of different sectors – distinguishing core competencies from specialist competencies. Governments may wish to provide some financial support for the relevant professional association(s) or sector body to manage this process.
2. Link the standards to national qualification frameworks, with recognition of prior learning, and with progression pathways into, within, and beyond the careers profession.
3. Build closer links between policy-makers, professional associations, employers and training bodies, to ensure that professional standards and training provision are informed by developments in policy and practice, and lead innovation rather than lagging behind it (e.g. in relation to using labour market intelligence and harnessing technology).

Recommendations for international collaboration

1. Through ICCDPP, IAEVG and other professional networks, support sharing of policies and practice in relation to professional standards and training provision (curriculum and methodologies).

2. Develop self-evaluation criteria for professional associations in the career development field, to enable them to review their fitness for purpose, their effectiveness, and directions for development.

Theme 4: Evidence-based practice; evidence-based policies

Principles

1. If public expenditure on career development systems and services is to be justified, it needs to be supported by clear evidence of their effectiveness and impact.
2. Such evidence needs to include accountability frameworks for routine data collection, plus longitudinal research studies to determine longer-term impact.
3. A strong research and evidence base is also an essential underpinning for good practice in career development delivery.

Recommendations to countries

1. Review existing accountability frameworks across all sectors. Potentially these might include data on inputs, processes, learning outcomes (e.g. career management skills), short-term behavioural outcomes (e.g. participation in education or employment) and longer-term economic and social outcomes, alongside other quality criteria (e.g. practitioner competence, citizen/user involvement, service provision and improvement strategies, cost-benefits to society and individuals).
2. Develop a research strategy to provide a strong underpinning for evidence-based policy and practice.

Recommendations for international collaboration

1. Encourage the ELGPN in its next work programme (2013-14) to include the development of a handbook for policy-makers which will pull together the key existing evidence on the impact of career development services, and provide a guide to the possible elements of accountability frameworks (with examples); and to do this in collaboration with ICCDPP and other relevant research networks outside Europe.
2. Encourage OECD and partner organisations to repeat the influential country reviews conducted in 2001-03, taking advantage of other data sources now available.

Annex

The symposium included significant discussions on terminology and on branding. It was recognised that the language used to describe career development in relation to public policy is varied and often confusing. Some branding based on core concepts is needed to support consistency, coherence and continuity. It is proposed that, for the next two years prior to IS2013, this should be based on the following three levels:

Core concept:	Career Development
Definition:	Lifelong Guidance for Learning and Work
Linked policy agendas:	Lifelong Learning Workforce Development Social Inclusion

‘Lifelong Guidance’ is used because – linked to ‘Lifelong Learning’ – it is the basis for international collaboration within Europe. It is important, however, to add two caveats:

- ‘Guidance’ could be viewed as being somewhat directive in nature, whereas career development is designed to promote people’s capacity to manage their own careers, with access to help where needed.
- ‘Lifelong guidance’ could be viewed as suggesting that the state should pay for securing access to guidance on a lifelong basis. But while assuring access to such help throughout life is a public as well as a private good, this does not mean that the state should necessarily be expected to pay for it all: some will be funded by the state, directly or indirectly; some in other ways. The roles of the state can be to stimulate the market, to quality-assure the market, and to compensate for market failure.

Other terms that could be used include:

- Education; Training; Employment; Jobs.
- Skills Strategies; Human Resource Development.
- Career Counselling; Employment Counselling; Career Information and Advice; Careers Education; Career/Job Coaching; Career Mentoring; Livelihood Planning.

The selection of terminology should be adapted to different contexts and different audiences.