



Transparency of qualifications,
validation of non-formal and informal learning,
credit transfer.

Leonardo da Vinci Thematic Conference

“Competences, Learning outcomes, Qualifications: Transparency contributing to Employability”

Rome, 5-6 July 2007

Workshop 4 The role of guidance to foster employability

The aim of this workshop is to:

- Explore the different contributions that guidance services give in the different countries to support the employability of individuals, by providing information and support (on existing qualifications, training opportunities, needs of the labour market, career opportunities), as well as by contributing to the assessment and validation of prior learning.
- Bring in experiences and case studies representing different typologies of users of guidance services and related to training of counsellors (in particular with respect to validation).

The outcome of the discussion is to present:

1. Strengths, weaknesses, existing useful tools, possibilities, limits and future plans within the system of guidance and counselling to support the employability of individuals.
2. Viewpoints and recommendations to the European Commission on what to consider in the design of new policy priorities for lifelong guidance, particularly in regards to guidance supporting employability and validation of prior learning, and to potential new project promoters who are considering developing new guidance projects.

Workshop Theme

Improving skills is recognized as the key to employability and guidance in this area is seen as having a key role in preventing inflows into unemployment, particularly long term unemployment. Employers are more likely to hire people who have good basic skills and who have endeavoured to develop their skills and expand their experience whatever their circumstances. It is therefore essential that through periods of unemployment people – especially people with lower skills - are encouraged to continue learning for their own self-esteem and to enhance their chances of future success. Learning can take place in a formal setting but also in non-formal and informal settings. The process of assessing and validating skills or knowledge acquired in a formal school setting is relatively easy and transparent but tools and methods for assessing and validating non-formal and informal learning are still few and far apart.

Europe is also facing demographic changes that will have a major impact on society and on the European economy. These changes will also influence education and training of the European population. The population projections show that European population is ageing: over next 30 years the number of younger Europeans (up to 24 years) will fall by 15% and one in three Europeans will be over 60 years old, and about one in ten will be over 80. The Extension of the employment of older people consequently means a major impact for improvement of their skills and adaptability especially of the lower skilled workers. There is a big challenge for developing lifelong learning for older workers and there is a big challenge how to support them with the lifelong guidance.

Organisations dealing with education, training and employment face the need for continual development of existing services according to the needs of the users and an ongoing search for new approaches which will prove more effective for treatment of employed and unemployed people. ***The guidance counsellor plays a very important role in this process.*** Some concerns in this regard are stressed in the Commission's Career Guidance Handbook for Policy Makers:

- Preventing inflows into unemployment, particularly into long-term unemployment, preventing skill mismatches, encouraging regional labour mobility, and developing employability skills are key parts of national, European and international employment strategies.

- Within most PES, those who provide career guidance for the unemployed often have to undertake other tasks as well: for example, policing benefit entitlements; information-giving; and job placement. This reduces the priority that they can give to career guidance. It can also lead to conflicts of interest between competing priorities of placement targets and career guidance.
- Employed adults need access to career guidance for career development within their company, for career development outside it in similar work, or to retrain in new skills so that they can move into different types of jobs. Yet very few career guidance services are available for employed adults.

To see the full text of the Handbook go to <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/53/53/34060761.pdf>

This means that guidance service provision for employed and unemployed people, particularly for those with lower skills is a challenge for all involved institutions, organizations and stakeholders in developing methods to identify the skills of the target group, validate their prior learning and experiences, find the right individual counselling and support the people to find the way into the job market and enhance the individual future success.

Key issues to be discussed during the debate session:

Beside the exchange of experience, the following points will be / can be discussed in smaller working groups:

1. What guidance **strategies** aimed at fostering employability have been used in your country? How effective have these client targeting strategies been? What was the crucial point for effectiveness? What are the possibilities and limits of applying these strategies? What is the main challenge for developing or extending these strategies?
2. What **useful tools** (examples of good practice) in regards to guidance and validating prior learning for employed and unemployed people with higher and lower skills have been created in your country? Are there special tools to support guidance practitioners in their daily work with employed and unemployed people? Which useful tools could be applied in other countries?
3. What **competences** and **skills** do guidance counsellors need to have to be able to effectively guide people into employability and provide, not only information, but active career guidance?
4. What are the ways of **motivating** and **involving users, social partners** and **other relevant stakeholders** like employer organisations, education and training institutions, public employment services etc. in the process of developing guidance services for employed and unemployed people as well as tools for assessing and validating their prior learning? In which way can the voice of users be integrated into the guidance provision?
5. What **activities** would support development in the field of guidance services for employed and unemployed people **on EU level**? What could be recommended to the Commission in designing of new policy priorities for Lifelong Guidance?

Workshop organisation:

First session:

10.05 - 10.15	Welcome by the Chair
10.15 - 10.25	Introductions of participants
10.25 - 10.45	Expert introductory speech / presentation
10.45 - 10.50	Questions and answers
10.50 - 11.05	1 st Experience presentation
11.05 - 11.20	2 nd Experience presentation

11.20 - 11.30	Questions and answers
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Second session (after the coffee break):

12.00-13.00	Debate
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Participants will do “brainstorming” of some of the key issues presented in this document (20 minutes). Following the brainstorming the participants will be divided into smaller discussion groups (40 minutes)

13.00 - 13.20	Sharing of conclusions and recommendations
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13.30 - 13.30	Review of “key messages” from workshop by rapporteur
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