



PANORAMA

Establishing and developing national lifelong guidance policy forums

A manual for policy-makers and stakeholders



Cedefop

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national lifelong guidance policy forums
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Foreword

Today, there is a political consensus in Europe that guidance and counselling are seen as key strategic components for implementing lifelong learning and employment strategies at regional and national levels. Accordingly, the main challenge for Member States is to ensure that citizens have easy access to guidance services, that these services are coherent and holistically organised, and that they support citizens' ability to formulate personal action plans for further learning, career management and other life goals. Measures to involve citizens more systematically in designing, developing, evaluating and managing guidance services are also strongly encouraged.

The Council resolution on strengthening policies, systems and practices in guidance throughout life in Europe (Council of the European Union, 2004) invites Member States to create a suitable institutional environment and adequate systemic devices for converging strategies towards building national and regional lifelong guidance systems across sectors, with high levels of equity, efficiency and quality. In this context, improved cross-sectoral and multiprofessional cooperation, increased dialogue and stronger partnerships among all key players and stakeholders will help lifelong guidance become a reality in the Member States.

This manual is part of Cedefop's contribution to supporting Member States in establishing and strengthening structures for more effective guidance policy formulation and implementation. It not only identifies outstanding initiatives and good practices, but also gives insights into strategic choices and experimental approaches that Member States have taken in setting up their national guidance forums.

By providing the reader with concrete examples, this publication is an ideal tool for policy- and decision-makers with responsibility for national and regional guidance policies, systems and practices in the education and employment sectors. It is especially valuable for the European lifelong guidance policy network that supports implementation of the 2004 resolution, as well as continuing the development work carried out by the European Expert Group for Lifelong Guidance (2002-07) to which Cedefop actively contributed.

Along with the guide *Improving lifelong guidance policies and systems: using common European reference tools* (Cedefop, 2005), this manual will help Member States reinforce their policy- and decision-making mechanisms in lifelong guidance and benchmark them in relation to other European countries and regions. We hope the contents of the manual will be openly debated and actively applied at national and regional levels.

Aviana Bulgarelli
Director of Cedefop

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- Cedefop project managers Rocío Lardinois, who initiated the study, and Mika Launikari, who was responsible for overall supervision of the publication;
- Dr Søren Kristensen of Techne, Dr John McCarthy of the International Centre for Career Development and Public Policy (ICCDPP) and Professor Tony Watts of the National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling (NICEC) drafted this report and undertook the research on which it is based ⁽¹⁾;
- thanks are also due to the members of the European lifelong guidance policy network who commented on the draft report;
- finally, thanks are due to Christine Nychas from Cedefop for her technical support in preparing this publication.

This publication provided valuable input and inspiration for debates at the following events: the European lifelong guidance policy network's peer learning session on Strengthening representative structures at national level (Vienna, April 2008) and Cedefop's peer learning event on National lifelong guidance policy forums – Facilitating access, active citizenship and social inclusion (Thessaloniki, June 2008). Further, this manual is part of Cedefop's scientific contribution to the French EU Presidency conference on lifelong guidance (Lyon, September 2008).

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Table of contents

Foreword	1
Acknowledgements	2
Table of contents	3
Executive summary	5
1. Introduction.....	7
1.1. Methodology.....	8
1.2. Structure	9
1.3. Caveats	9
2. Core elements	10
2.1. Introduction	10
2.2. Policy context.....	11
2.3. Actors	13
2.4. Roles and functions	15
2.5. Potential benefits	16
3. Tasks.....	17
3.1. Introduction	17
3.2. Improving communication	18
3.2.1. Providing a forum for discussion on key policy issues.....	19
3.2.2. Establishing a common definition of guidance.....	19
3.2.3. Developing shared terminology for guidance	20
3.3. Encouraging collaboration.....	20
3.3.1. Encouraging interagency cooperation and coordination on specific activities (events, projects, research).....	21
3.3.2. Taking transversal initiatives on issues which span several services or sectors	21
3.4. Identifying citizens' needs	22
3.4.1. Mapping services and identifying gaps in provision.....	22
3.4.2. Managing consumer research and public consultation exercises.....	24
3.4.3. Developing career management competence frameworks for citizens	26
3.5. Improving service quality.....	27
3.5.1. Developing quality standards and quality assurance systems.....	27
3.5.2. Developing competence frameworks and accreditation schemes for guidance practitioners	29

3.6.	Influencing policy.....	30
3.6.1.	Developing improved structures and strategies for supporting lifelong guidance delivery.....	30
3.6.2.	Promoting lifelong guidance as an integral part of national learning, employment and social-inclusion policies	32
3.6.3.	Seeking policy support to fill gaps in lifelong guidance provision.....	32
3.7.	Benefiting from international cooperation	33
3.7.1.	Supporting national participation in the European lifelong guidance policy network.....	33
3.7.2.	Supporting national participation in international policy symposia.....	35
3.7.3.	Disseminating innovation and best practice generated by European and international initiatives	35
3.8.	Terms of reference.....	36
4.	Organisational issues	39
4.1.	Introduction	39
4.2.	Status	41
4.2.1.	Statutory council/legal entity.....	41
4.2.2.	Government-initiated body	42
4.2.3.	Voluntary association.....	42
4.2.4.	Experimental/project-based body.....	43
4.2.5.	Regional forums	44
4.3.	Membership.....	45
4.4.	Resourcing.....	47
4.5.	Steering and day-to-day coordination.....	49
4.5.1.	Chairperson	49
4.5.2.	Executive committee and subcommittees	50
4.5.3.	Secretariat.....	51
4.6.	Decision-making processes	52
4.7.	Communication channels	53
5.	Conclusions and key messages	55
	Bibliography.....	59
Annex 1	Current national guidance forums/mechanisms	61

Executive summary

Many European countries are trying to improve coordination and coherence in policies and systems for guidance provision, so the various services responsible for guidance delivery can present themselves to individual citizens over their lifetimes as a seamless and coherent system, rather than a series of fragmented entities. Such development stems from recognition by governments and the European Commission that lifelong learning is a key factor for employability, and that lifelong guidance provision is a key component of national lifelong learning strategies. Such guidance must be available to individual citizens not just at selected transition phases but at any point in their learning and employment trajectories.

Formation of national forums and similar policy coordination mechanisms is an important feature of these efforts, bringing together actors and stakeholders in guidance on a shared platform. National forums may be complemented by regional forums: either in support of national forums, or – in countries with devolved government – as separate and independent mechanisms.

Membership of national forums normally includes national ministries responsible for providing guidance, in particular Ministries of Education and Employment, accompanied by representatives of organisations which operate the main guidance services, namely education and training establishments and public employment services (PES). Other core players such as social partners, associations of guidance professionals, and representatives of user groups (parents, students, senior citizens, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, etc.) are also commonly represented in the forums. The composition of membership varies from country to country, and depends on what role the forum is intended to play at national policy level.

Four roles of national forums may be distinguished:

- dialogue: a platform where actors and stakeholders meet to discuss and exchange information and viewpoints, and whose main sought outcome is creation of a common understanding and voluntary coordination of activities;
- consultation: a body set up primarily to act as a reactive sounding board for government initiatives and policies;
- policy development: a proactive forum to promote the concept of lifelong guidance through concrete policy proposals and initiatives;
- systems development: a place for developing concrete, practically-oriented issues within the framework of lifelong guidance (quality assurance frameworks, or training provision).

These roles are not exclusive, and many national forums undertake more than one role.

Decisions on roles will also determine the functions of the forum. Seven main functions can be distinguished, each of which can be defined as a cluster of related tasks:

- improving communication – providing a forum for discussion on key policy issues; establishing a common definition of guidance; developing shared terminology for guidance;
- encouraging collaboration – stimulating interagency cooperation and coordination on specific activities (events, projects, research); taking transversal initiatives on issues which span several services or sectors;
- identifying citizens' needs – mapping existing services and identifying gaps in provision; managing consumer research and public consultation exercises; developing career management competence frameworks for citizens;
- improving service quality – developing quality standards and quality assurance systems; developing competence frameworks and accreditation schemes for guidance practitioners;
- influencing policy – developing improved structures and strategies for supporting lifelong guidance delivery; promoting lifelong guidance as an integral part of national learning, employment and social-inclusion policies; seeking policy support to fill gaps in existing lifelong guidance provision;
- benefiting from international cooperation – supporting national participation in the European lifelong guidance policy network; supporting national participation in international policy symposia; disseminating innovation and best practice generated by European and international initiatives.

Defining roles and functions comprises the terms of reference of a national forum. This will in turn influence resolution of several practical issues on the structure and operation of the forum. These structural and operational questions include:

- status – whether the forum should be a formal structure, possibly even anchored in legislation, or a more informal organisation, and what its relationship to government should be;
- membership composition – exactly which actors and stakeholders should be invited to participate in the forum;
- resources – what kind of funding and support is needed to perform the tasks, and how this should be provided;
- steering and day-to-day coordination – whether or not the forum should have a chairperson, how it is determined who this should be (appointed or elected), whether an executive committee is needed, and how secretarial services should be provided;
- decision-making processes – whether the forum should take any decisions, and if so, how these are to be reached (consensus, simple majority, qualified majority);
- communication channels – how the forum should communicate the outcome of its activities, and to whom.

In this manual, the roles, functions, structures and operations of national forums are discussed, and illustrated with examples of practice drawn from experience to date across Europe.

Finally, 10 key messages derived from these experiences are outlined.

1. Introduction

Recent policy and strategy developments in lifelong guidance in Europe have been led by a clear vision. There have been several important milestones, high-level initiatives and development processes along the way to strengthening the role of guidance in European Union education and employment policies.

There is political consensus at international level that guidance and counselling are seen as key strategic components for implementing lifelong learning and employment strategies at regional and national levels. As European knowledge-based societies are committed to developing individuals and economies through lifelong learning, citizens require information, guidance and counselling more than ever before to make proper education and career choices and acquire the right skills for successful adjustment to their environments.

The complexity of governance makes it essential to promote long-term strategic thinking and planning in lifelong guidance. The outstanding question is how best this should be done. Establishing national guidance forums for improving policy- and decision-making, building leadership capacity as well as looking at cross-sectoral cooperation arrangements seems an excellent answer.

Policy coordination mechanisms in guidance – or national forums for guidance – are by no means a recent invention. The need for coordinating and streamlining guidance services for the individual in a constantly changing world has long been acknowledged. The first structures of this kind – the Danish National Council for Vocational Guidance, the UK Guidance Council and the more informal Finnish ministerial working groups on guidance – were set up in the 1980s and early 1990s.

In the past decade, however, the logic of lifelong guidance as an integral part of lifelong learning policies has become ever more compelling. Several other European countries have accordingly established national forums (or similar policy coordination mechanisms) or are doing so. Also, some similar developments are evident at regional level.

But what is the current situation in Member States and what are the prospects for implementing a real system change in local, regional, national and European guidance policy coordination mechanisms? This manual by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) is an attempt to capitalise on the experience of existing structures to offer inspiration and practical advice for new or emerging structures and provide common learning material for these structures. It is addressed to all policy-makers and stakeholders already involved in such structures, or interested in developing new ones.

1.1. Methodology

The work that led to this manual comprised four distinct (but linked) phases:

- mapping the structures and initiatives supporting lifelong guidance policy and system development, which promote interinstitutional and cross-sectoral cooperation;
- analysing and describing these structures and mechanisms;
- identifying examples of good practice and concrete examples of strategic tools developed by national forums;
- developing practical guidelines for stakeholders, practitioners and policy-makers in guidance based on the above.

Given the diversity of guidance systems and socio-political cultures in European countries, it would be inappropriate to adopt a prescriptive approach. There is no ‘blueprint’ for national forums, no ideal solution, even though the general challenges faced are much the same. Different systems have tackled these challenges in different ways, and what they can offer to others is first and foremost inspiration. The most helpful approach is therefore, basically descriptive and analytical, where conclusions are based on analysis of examples of practice in their socio-political context and assessment of their transfer value.

The evidence base for the manual was developed using a three-pronged data-gathering process:

- document analysis: compilation and analysis of all existing and available documentation on national forums at European and national (and in some cases also regional) levels;
- questionnaire survey: sending out a questionnaire to Euroguidance centres (and, in some countries, national authorities) in the 29 countries covered by the manual;
- expert interviews: telephone interviews with selected national-level experts to cover lacunae in the information provided by other sources and assess the validity of this information.

To ensure the information gathered is accurate and the conclusions are in accordance with this information, the draft manuscript of the manual was circulated to members of the European lifelong guidance policy network (ELGPN) (see Section 3.7.1.) for comments. Input provided by these various sources was highly valuable for the study.

1.2. Structure

The main body of the manual is divided into four parts:

- an introductory section (Chapter 2) with some reflections on the policy rationale for national forums and similar policy coordination mechanisms in guidance, a description of the basic functions and types of actors involved, and some definitions of key terms;
- an empirical section (Chapters 3 and 4) with descriptions of the range of actual and possible tasks and activities of national forums and how these are translated into concrete structures and procedures;
- a concluding section (Chapter 5) where key messages that can be derived from the evidence provided are formulated;
- an annex with descriptive files of national forums and similar policy coordination mechanisms existing at the time of writing this manual.

1.3. Caveats

The main difficulty in writing the manual was the dynamic nature of current developments in the guidance field in Europe. This meant that information in some cases was difficult to collect: developments are still unfolding and key informants (experts, actors and stakeholders) are uncertain of how to interpret them. Moreover, data gathering was carried out over a relatively short period (September-December 2007). Urgency had to be weighed against thoroughness, and therefore it was better to publish the manual now, rather than present a more polished product when evidence may be stronger but the need less acute. Any omissions or inaccuracies in this manual are due to this.

It should also be noted that this publication is intended as a manual for practical use by policy-makers and stakeholders, not as a research report. This has implications for both form and content. The present manuscript is in some ways the ‘tip of the iceberg’, where aspects of more academic interest had to be left out. Hopefully, however, these can be put to good use in other contexts.

2. Core elements

2.1. Introduction

What do the terms ‘national forum’ and ‘policy coordination mechanism’ mean?

An official EU document (European Commission, DG EAC, 2004) ⁽²⁾ presents the following definition: ‘A national forum is an assembly of all the relevant actors concerned with the development of policies, systems and practices for lifelong guidance’. While this definition has the advantage of brevity, it leaves several key issues unresolved. In particular:

- who are ‘all the relevant actors’?
- what does ‘development of policies, systems and practices’ mean in concrete functions?

For this publication, a pragmatic rather than a prescriptive approach was adopted. The point of departure was not a standard definition of the terms: existing structures in Europe are so diverse that any rigorous definition would exclude some of them. Instead, any structure or body that our national (and, in some cases, regional) sources or informants chose to designate as coming under the broad heading ‘national forum or other policy coordination mechanism’ was included. The main sources used are:

- national policy documents;
- representatives of national authorities (ministries);
- Euroguidance centres;
- (in some cases) national academic experts on guidance and related matters.

This information provided a broad (inclusive) framework rather than a narrow (exclusive) one.

Accordingly, there is no hard and fast definition of what ‘national forums and other policy coordination mechanisms’ should comprise. Guidance systems and their sociopolitical contexts are so different that such an exercise would be misguided. Instead, a range of possibilities is offered for consideration by authorities and stakeholders engaged in setting up new national forums (and similar policy coordination mechanisms).

At times the term ‘national guidance forum’ is used as shorthand to cover both forums and other mechanisms. While the main focus is on national developments, many points made are applicable to regional forums: accordingly, ‘national’ can usually be read as ‘national and regional’ (for a specific discussion of regional initiatives, see Section 4.2.5.).

⁽²⁾ The advice note of the European Commission for the joint actions (2004) programme, one of the priorities of which was to support establishment of European networks of national guidance forums.

2.2. Policy context

Strategic leadership in ‘lifelong guidance’ was identified as a significant policy issue in the OECD career guidance policy review carried out 2001-03 (OECD, 2004). The review highlighted the limitations of a fragmented approach to career guidance provision, and noted in particular:

- lack of coordination in service and resource developments across the education and labour market sectors;
- lack of a common view of how career guidance can support citizens’ lifelong learning and employability.

One of OECD’s main conclusions was that strategic leadership for lifelong guidance provision requires a partnership approach between government ministries and other key stakeholders, so that a vision of lifelong guidance provision for citizens can emerge and be acted upon. The review further advocated establishing consultative bodies or mechanisms which would ensure strong cooperation between the education and labour market sectors. Such bodies or mechanisms could undertake a broad range of tasks such as:

- setting strategic directions;
- identifying gaps in services;
- coordinating the activities of different stakeholders.

All were viewed as important actions that need to be collectively owned.

At the time of the OECD review, only a few European countries⁽³⁾ had any practical experience of formal policy coordination in guidance. In most of Europe, the OECD proposal was effectively breaking new ground.

The EU Council of Ministers for Education took up the OECD recommendations at its meeting in April 2004. The Presidency conclusions of that meeting made several references to the importance of strategic leadership and coordination in guidance throughout life in supporting and furthering the Lisbon agenda. In particular, they stressed the importance of:

- the key role of governments and policy-makers in governments and elsewhere, in association with other stakeholders, in providing national policy strategies for developing effective guidance services, including – where appropriate – interministerial cooperation and a legislative framework for provision;
- promoting cooperative approaches to guidance provision across all ages and groups, by establishing forums, networks and other structures, both to ensure coherence of provision and to disseminate best practice;

⁽³⁾ Notably the Czech Republic, Denmark, Poland, Finland and the UK.

- strengthening structures for policy and systems development, particularly through cooperation at national, regional and local levels, underpinned by attention to quality of services from the perspective of the client and to information on the outcomes of guidance provision;
- increased cooperation between policy-makers and providers at both national and international levels in guidance, to make full use of the diversity of Member States' current systems.

These conclusions were subsequently endorsed in a Council of Ministers' resolution on strengthening policies, systems and practices on guidance throughout life in May 2004 (Council of the European Union, 2004). The resolution underlined the need to:

- strengthen structures for policy and systems development at national and regional levels by involving appropriate key players (ministries, social partners, employment services, service providers, guidance practitioners, education and training institutions, consumers, parents, youth);
- ensure effective cooperation and coordination between providers of guidance at national, regional and local levels, widen access and ensure coherence of provision, especially to groups at risk;
- pursue increased cooperation in guidance at all levels within a lifelong learning perspective, make full use of the diversity of systems and overcome fragmentation between different forms of provision;
- recognise beneficiaries of guidance services as central in both designing and evaluating guidance provision for young people and adults;
- identify, with all relevant actors including the social partners, areas where cooperation and support at European level can improve national guidance developments;
- strengthen structures for policy and systems development at regional level: this refers particularly to countries with devolved or regional governments which have responsibility for education, training and/or employment policies.

Since publication of the OECD review in early 2004, guidance across Europe has undergone considerable development in these respects. At the time of completing this publication, national forums or similar policy coordination mechanisms (some still very informal) could be identified – at various stages of development – in the following European countries: Austria, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the UK.

For some of these countries, establishing a national forum is still 'work in progress', and key aspects are still unresolved. For some countries, it is more appropriate to talk about 'institutional initiatives' rather than national forums, in the sense that existing national-level organisations (usually, guidance practitioner organisations), which do not structurally possess

the characteristics normally associated with a national forum, are currently carrying out some of their functions or tasks, by initiating discussions on lifelong guidance policies and practices among actors and stakeholders.

Details of current progress in all European countries are provided in annex.

2.3. Actors

The ministerial resolution of 2004 (see Section 2.2. above) specified ‘appropriate key players’ who could contribute to strengthening structures for policy and systems development at regional and local levels.

The Ministries of Education and Employment (⁴) tend to be the cornerstones of guidance policy development and service provision, given their responsibilities for human resource development and labour market efficiency. Career guidance supports citizens’ pathways through learning and work, and is therefore a common concern of both ministries. There is accordingly a strong case for these ministries to:

- share and pool resources;
- coordinate their work to efficiently use these resources;
- identify gaps in service provision;
- develop common standards of service;
- share training;
- present a coherent image of career guidance services to the general public;
- show how citizens’ learning and work guidance needs can be met as they move progressively through different stages of their life – from student to pensioner through different occupational roles, through recurring cycles of employment and unemployment, and including homemaking.

The Ministries of Education and Employment are usually the main guarantors of public career guidance services. But services for certain groups may fall under the jurisdiction of other ministries such as the Ministry of Youth; or the Ministry of Justice (for guidance of criminal offenders). There may also be further ministries with responsibilities or tasks in guidance (Ministry of Social Affairs; Ministry of Health). These, too, might need to be involved in coordination arrangements.

In addition, many other institutions and groups have interests and involvement in career guidance provision, and need to be involved in developing effective strategies.

⁽⁴⁾ These ministries may of course be structured differently in different countries. In Malta, for example, there is a joint Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment.

Employers and trade unions are usually viewed as strategic partners with government for developing national strategies and plans for human resource development:

- employers and their organisations are interested in developing present and future workforces, and provide opportunities for initial and continuing training. They are also key sources of labour market and career information and taster experiences. They benefit from career guidance provision by having well-motivated and skilled workers;
- trade unions and their organisations have important roles as advocates of information, advice and guidance services, and as deliverers of such services to workers, particularly workers' access to training and lifelong learning.

Education and training institutions provide settings for delivering career guidance services. They can benefit from guidance services in better-motivated students and trainees, higher completion rates from their programmes, and improvements in the quality of learning. Career guidance provision eases transition between and across different levels of education and training, and transition between education, training and work. National associations of managers of such institutions are relevant stakeholder representatives, as are associations of municipalities where education and training are a municipal responsibility.

Public employment services play an important role in supporting unemployed persons in developing their skills and returning to work. They may offer guidance services to other groups too. They are also an important source of labour market information at local, regional, national and European levels.

Several other national associations concerned with education, training, employment and social inclusion may be relevant stakeholders:

- parents are often the most significant influence on the career choices of young people and are closely involved in their career decision-making. They can be a useful source of feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of career guidance services provided in education, training and employment settings, and can offer useful advice on how such services can be better designed and improved. They also constitute significant resources for career guidance in schools;
- student associations can also provide such advice and feedback, not least on how students can be involved more actively in developing programmes. Former students too are significant resources for career guidance in schools, colleges and universities;
- adult education providers are an important source of guidance for adults. Their associations also tend to be aware of the difficulties that many adults have in accessing good-quality career guidance services;
- national consumers associations can provide valuable feedback on the public's access to career guidance provision;

- associations concerned with the interests of particular groups (women, senior citizens, persons with disability, Roma) can provide information and advice on suitable strategies to address their needs;
- guidance practitioner associations can provide advice and information based on their professional knowledge and expertise;
- training institutions for guidance practitioners are deeply involved in all issues of career guidance and their implications for future skills needs;
- the guidance research community – research institutions and individual researchers – may through studies and comparative analyses provide valuable conceptual input to discussions.

2.4. Roles and functions

National forums are not identical across Europe, and play different roles in their different contexts. In broad terms, four main roles that a national forum can play can be distinguished:

- dialogue: a platform where actors and stakeholders meet to discuss and exchange information and viewpoints, mainly to create common understanding and voluntary coordination of activities;
- consultation: a body set up primarily to act as a reactive sounding board for government initiatives and policies;
- policy development: a proactive forum to promote the concept of lifelong guidance through concrete policy proposals and initiatives;
- systems development: a place for developing concrete, practically-oriented issues in the framework of lifelong guidance (quality assurance frameworks, or training provision).

These roles are not necessarily exclusive, and should primarily be seen as analytic constructs; as such, however, they can be helpful in the reflection phase preceding establishment of a national forum.

Concrete tasks (or functions) can then be assigned to forums according to the role (or roles) they are intended to play. Six general functions for national forums can be distinguished, each of which can be converted into several concrete tasks:

- improving communication – providing a forum to discuss key policy issues; establish a common definition of guidance; develop a shared terminology on guidance;
- encouraging cooperation – encourage interagency cooperation and coordination of specific activities (events, projects, research); take transversal initiatives on issues covering several services or sectors;
- identifying citizens' needs – mapping existing services and identifying gaps in provision; managing consumer research and public consultation exercises; developing career management competence frameworks for citizens;

- improving service quality – developing quality standards and quality assurance systems; developing competence frameworks and accreditation schemes for guidance practitioners;
- influencing policy – developing improved structures and strategies for supporting lifelong guidance delivery; promoting lifelong guidance as an integral part of national learning, employment and social-inclusion policies; seeking policy support to fill gaps in existing lifelong guidance provision;
- benefiting from international cooperation – supporting national participation in the European lifelong guidance policy network; supporting national participation in international policy symposia; disseminating innovation and best practice generated by European and international initiatives.

These functions will form the basis of the detailed analysis of tasks in Chapter 3.

2.5. Potential benefits

To date, no systematic evaluations of the long-term impact of national forums' activities have been undertaken. The following list of potential benefits is therefore mainly based on individual perceptions of experts and actors/stakeholders.

The ultimate beneficiaries of national guidance forums are citizens. The potential benefits to citizens (users and potential users of guidance services) include:

- provision of a more comprehensive, integrated and easily identifiable guidance service;
- a common standard of delivery of quality guidance services across sectors;
- easier access to guidance services;
- effective systems of referral.

In addition, potential benefits of a national guidance forum to its participating stakeholders include:

- an enlarged knowledge base through exchange of information, knowledge and ideas;
- improved working relationships and trust between stakeholders;
- common learning through sharing good practice;
- efficient use of resources (preventing duplication and promoting appropriate referrals);
- collaborative staff training;
- opportunities for joint projects;
- common support;
- joint marketing and publicity;
- participation in joint events;
- advocacy for providing lifelong guidance in government policies and programmes;
- giving a coherent voice to lifelong guidance provision at national and EU levels.

3. Tasks

3.1. Introduction

What concrete tasks can or should a national forum undertake?

The European Commission's advice note (European Commission, DG EAC, 2004) (see Section 2.2.) cites a list of possible tasks for national forums:

- developing standards (organisational quality) of service delivery;
- promotion/stimulation of demand for high-quality services;
- developing a common marketing and branding approach;
- conducting research;
- coordinating training (of guidance practitioners);
- developing the European dimension of guidance;
- developing guidance practitioner competence frameworks;
- developing client outcome frameworks.

As will be developed further in this chapter, national forums have undertaken some of these (standards, research, training, European dimension, practitioner competence and client outcome frameworks) while others (stimulation of demand, common marketing and branding) have yet to be developed.

In the mapping exercise, tasks that forums and mechanisms were either undertaking or planning to undertake comprised:

- providing a forum for discussion on key policy issues;
- establishing a common definition of guidance;
- developing shared terminology for guidance;
- encouraging interagency cooperation and coordination on specific activities (events, projects, research);
- taking transversal initiatives on issues which span several services or sectors;
- mapping existing services and identifying gaps in provision;
- managing consumer research and public consultation exercises;
- developing career management competence frameworks for citizens;
- developing quality standards;
- developing a competence framework for guidance practitioners;

- developing improved structures for supporting lifelong guidance delivery;
- promoting lifelong guidance as an integral part of national learning, employment and social-inclusion policies;
- seeking policy support to fill gaps in lifelong guidance provision;
- supporting national participation in the European lifelong guidance policy network;
- supporting national participation in international policy symposia;
- disseminating innovation and best practice generated by European and international initiatives.

In addition to these concrete tasks, there are two ‘meta-tasks’ that concern running the forum:

- agreeing sought outcomes: defining end-goals to help participating stakeholders focus their efforts and take ownership of their activities;
- extending its terms of reference: some national forums are able to influence the range of tasks they address, take initiatives, and extend their lifespan beyond that originally foreseen.

The aim of this chapter is to inform on formulating terms of reference (description of role, functions and activities) and remit (list of concrete tasks to be addressed). In the sections that follow, the main tasks adopted to date – with the exception of the two meta-tasks – are grouped under the functions listed in Section 2.4. Examples from existing forums have been added to illustrate implementation in practice. Finally, the terms of reference under which national forums operate are discussed, with particular attention to their impact on selection of tasks.

3.2. Improving communication

Improving communication concerns:

- providing a forum for discussion on key policy issues;
- establishing a common definition of guidance;
- developing shared terminology for guidance.

3.2.1. Providing a forum for discussion on key policy issues

An important role of a national forum is to provide a focal point for dialogue and debate.

In **Finland**, the Cooperation Group for Educational Guidance and Counselling and Employment Services has discussed:

- the role of municipalities and regions in implementing and evaluating guidance and counselling provision;
- provision of guidance services to young people not in education or employment;
- future national coordination mechanism for lifelong guidance.

In **Lithuania**, the National Career Guidance Council reviews progress of the national career guidance strategy and the further development of national career guidance services.

In addition, the forum may arrange wider events.

In **Denmark**, the National Dialogue Forum for Educational and Vocational Guidance regularly organises conferences and seminars to stimulate discussion and reflection on key policy issues:

- conference on ethics in guidance (2005);
- seminar on IT in individual guidance (2005);
- conference on future development of professionalism and cooperation in educational and vocational guidance (2007).

The **Malta** Career Guidance Forum organised a conference on guidance for persons with disabilities.

3.2.2. Establishing a common definition of guidance

An early task for several national guidance forums was to agree a common definition of guidance. This is helpful both to identify the boundaries of the forum's work, and enable it to communicate effectively with outside bodies.

In **Ireland**, the National Guidance Forum developed its own definition of guidance ⁽⁵⁾: 'Guidance helps people throughout their lives to manage their own educational, training, occupational, personal, social and life choices so that they reach their full potential and contribute to developing a better society'.

⁽⁵⁾ Adapted from: http://www.nationalguidanceforum.ie/documents/Definition_Guidance.doc [cited 2.4.2008].

In **Germany**, the definition of guidance used in the EU Council resolution on lifelong guidance (Council of the European Union, 2004) was adopted:

‘In the context of lifelong learning, guidance refers to a range of activities that enables citizens of any age and at any point in their lives to identify their capacities, competences and interests, to make educational, training and occupational decisions and to manage their individual life paths in learning, work and other settings in which these capacities and competences are learned and/or used’.

The mission statement from Germany ⁽⁶⁾ also made clear the types of guidance not covered by its activities: ‘Psychotherapeutic and specific economic guidance of companies or organisations do not belong to the areas of activities of the national forum’.

3.2.3. Developing shared terminology on guidance

Developing a common terminology on guidance is one of the major challenges in improving communication and bringing coherence to guidance services based in the education, training, employment, and community sectors. Different stakeholders use different guidance terminology, often based on professional and other positions, which reinforce professional positions at the cost of a coherent service to citizens. Funders of guidance services may increase this confusion by resourcing different guidance activities based on their particular interpretation of the terminology. National forums may accordingly find it helpful to develop a common terminology as a basis for their work.

In the **UK**, the Guidance Council (1993-2006) was able to build upon the work of a precursor body, the standing conference of associations in guidance settings (SCAGES), which produced a statement of principles and definitions. This included definitions of 11 guidance activities: informing, advising, counselling, assessing, teaching, enabling, advocating, networking, feeding back, managing, innovating/systems change.

3.3. Encouraging collaboration

Encouraging collaboration concerns:

- encouraging interagency cooperation and coordination on specific activities (events, projects, research);
- taking transversal initiatives on issues which span several services or sectors.

⁽⁶⁾ See: *Nationales Forum – Beratung in Bildung, Beruf und Beschäftigung*, http://www.forum-beratung.de/cms/upload/pdf/Leitdokument_Mission-Statement_Endfassung_Dec.pdf [cited 2.4.2008].

3.3.1. Encouraging interagency cooperation and coordination on specific activities (events, projects, research)

Meeting regularly can encourage organisations to explore ways of working together where they have common interests. This may range from issuing joint statements to organising joint events or working together on common projects. Some may involve all members of the forum; some may only involve a subset of members.

The National Career Guidance Council of **Lithuania** monitors implementation of two national projects funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) – ‘Development and implementation of the career guidance system’ and ‘Development and elaboration of the open information, guidance and counselling system’ – which involve interinstitutional cooperation and coordination.

3.3.2. Taking transversal initiatives on issues which span several services or sectors

One of the benefits of a national forum is that it can take transversal initiatives on issues which span several guidance services and where it has hitherto been unclear who should take the lead.

In **Greece**, at the end of 2006, the Greek National Centre for Vocational Guidance (EKEP) completed compilation of its two career counselling and guidance guides: one for the education sector; the other for the employment sector. The main principle governing the guides is to encourage linking career counselling and vocational guidance agencies and practitioners in all areas of the field. The topics in the guides cover key educational and career issues, both theoretical and practical. They are designed as a basic tool for use by vocational guidance counsellors from education agencies such as: regional educational and career counselling centres (KESYP); school bureaus of educational and career counselling (GraSEP); technical vocational schools offices for liaison with the labour market (GraSY); and career offices of higher education institutions (AEI) and higher technological education institutions (TEI). In addition, the guides are intended for use by career guidance professionals from such agencies as career development offices (GEAS) of institutes for vocational training (IEK), and by employment counsellors working at centres for promotion to employment of the Greek manpower employment organisation (OAED). All these practitioners can find the latest information on career counselling and vocational guidance in these guides.

3.4. Identifying citizens' needs

Identifying citizens' needs concerns:

- mapping services and identifying gaps in provision;
- managing consumer research and public consultation exercises;
- developing career management competence frameworks for citizens.

3.4.1. Mapping services and identifying gaps in provision

One of the first steps in developing a lifelong guidance system is to map what services currently exist. This can help stakeholders identify the strengths of current guidance provision and gaps in this provision.

In **Ireland** a subcommittee of the National Guidance Forum produced a paper *Guidance in Ireland* to outline current provision and identify gaps. The paper summarised guidance providers, services provided, and client groups of these services, according to the following categories:

- guidance services linked to the labour market: public employment and training services, local employment services, national contact centre and website;
- other guidance services linked to the labour market: training networks, small enterprises associations, enterprise mentoring, refugee information, employee assistance programmes, association for unemployed, area development partnerships;
- community sector providers: youth information, area-based partnerships, public libraries, citizens advice bureaux, family resource centres;
- third-age guidance: retirement planning, age action associations;
- primary education: school completion support, support teachers, home-school liaison, school transfer/transition;
- secondary and further education: school support, curriculum programmes, guidance counselling, guidance enhancement initiative, second-chance schools, traveller training, community education, special needs;
- adult education: adult educational guidance initiative;
- higher education: careers advisory services;
- private sector: guidance practitioners, life coaches, psychologists.

The paper informed the recommendations of the forum on policy development and coordination of guidance services.

In **Germany**, the Federal Ministry of Education commissioned a review and mapping of guidance provision in the education and employment sectors (*Bestandsaufnahme in der Bildungs-, Berufs- und Beschäftigungsberatung und Entwicklung grundlegender Qualitätsstandards*) at the initiative of the steering group for establishing the national guidance forum. Three aspects were especially focused on in the mapping study: the perspective of users, the methods of guidance and counselling, and the structure of guidance provision.

In **Spain** (Navarre), a mapping exercise (*Estudio-Diagnostico de los Servicios de Informacion y Orientacion*) was conducted on behalf of the Council for Vocational Training, whose membership includes representatives of the education and employment departments, the public employment service and the social partners. One of the trade unions undertook the task on behalf of the other partners with their assistance. The study addressed the questions:

- which types of guidance services exist;
- how are they distributed geographically;
- what is their coverage;
- how do they function;
- what resources, human and otherwise, do they have;
- organisational details: user profile, quality assurance, relationships between services and other entities providing guidance, capacity to provide an all-age guidance service;
- relationships between guidance services.

The findings were used to develop proposals (*propuesta sistema integrado de informacion y orientacion profesional*) for a lifelong guidance network in Navarre. The proposals were grouped under several headings:

- entities that can participate in the network;
- the client groups of network partners;
- careers information provision for users and for professionals;
- how partners function in the network;
- the human resources and training requirements for the network;
- an integrated careers information tool;
- quality assurance and evaluation of guidance actions;
- actions to promote the network;
- consequences of implementing the network proposal.

3.4.2. Managing consumer research and public consultation exercises

Guidance services are set up in countries and regions to serve the needs of citizens. Citizens are a key source of information and feedback in any quality assurance system for guidance services, information and products. Few countries have so far undertaken studies of the general public's experiences and views of guidance services. Such studies can provide a rich source of data to national guidance forums, enabling them to reflect on the adequacy of their services and how to improve them.

The Guidance Council in the **UK** commissioned (with support from government funding) two consumer-research studies of demand for, and perceptions of, information, advice and guidance (IAG) services (MORI, 2002; Taylor et al., 2005). Both were conducted by a commercial market-research company (MORI).

Issues covered included:

- awareness of IAG services;
- sources of information about IAG services;
- use made of IAG services;
- nature of IAG interventions;
- satisfaction with IAG experiences;
- outcomes of use of IAG services;
- unmet needs and gaps in provision;
- willingness to pay for IAG services.

The National Guidance Forum in **Ireland** commissioned the study *Perceptions of the general public on guidance and guidance services* (Hayes and Murray, 2006). The research and consultation was undertaken with members of the general public to determine their experiences, opinions and recommendations about guidance services in Ireland. This was the first research of its kind in Ireland and was one of the main pieces of work completed by the forum. Methodology for the consultative process included:

- an extensive review of Irish and international literature on guidance, to provide a context for the consultative process and a platform from which to interpret the findings of the research;
- a questionnaire issued by forum members to members of the public and to a range of organisations and voluntary bodies (635 responses);
- seven focus groups, which allowed for more exploration of the issues with specifically targeted groups including older people, parents of pre-school and primary-school children, people of different nationalities, people with physical and/or learning disabilities, and unemployed people or those living on a low income (72 participants).

The findings included:

(a) *people's views on and experiences of guidance services*

While some respondents were critical of the type of guidance received, many were clear about the benefits and role of guidance in helping them access lifelong learning. Guidance was seen as having a broader role than helping people with career choice;

(b) *guidance for children and young people*

There was a wide range of opinions of guidance services in schools; however, there was general agreement on the importance of guidance. Respondents made several recommendations on how guidance services for children and young people could be improved in the future;

(c) *guidance for adults*

There was widespread agreement that the focus of guidance for adults needs to be widened, to include employed as well as unemployed adults, adults with financial difficulties and those earning a good income, students in higher education, and retired adults. Research suggests that guidance is held in very high regard by many people;

(d) *training and quality control*

Participants in the consultative process expressed the view that some guidance counsellors working at schools in the past were not adequately trained. They were concerned that this deficit should be addressed in the future, with proper monitoring of practitioners and high professional standards being maintained;

(e) *access to guidance services*

Many respondents referred to difficulties in accessing guidance services, for children, young people and adults. This can be linked to lack of information, lack of eligibility to use services, lack of confidence and lack of funding;

(f) *implementing policy*

While participants in the consultative process were not necessarily familiar with Irish and European policy documents, there was a marked similarity in how the general public and policy-makers viewed the importance of lifelong guidance. It is clear that both believe guidance services in Ireland need further investment to support implementing lifelong guidance policies;

(g) *individual responsibility*

The challenge for guidance policy-makers, service providers, trainers and practitioners is to ensure that guidance services are accessible, well-resourced, well-run and available to everyone who needs and wants them. At the same time, the right of the individual not to engage with services must be respected.

3.4.3. Developing career management competence frameworks for citizens

The EU Council of Ministers for Education meeting in 2004 (see Section 2.2.) drew attention to the importance of teaching citizens the skills to manage their learning and work transitions and life-paths. A first step in this direction is developing a framework encompassing the career management competences that citizens need to acquire at different stages of their lifespan. Such a description can inform education and training programmes and curricula for citizens. It also shows the competences that guidance practitioners need to acquire during their initial and continuing training to enable them in turn to empower citizens.

The central feature of the integrated strategy being developed by the National Guidance Forum in **Ireland** is a national lifelong guidance framework for citizen career management competence which outlines the knowledge, skills and competences to assist citizens to develop at different stages of their lives. The forum drew on international models (see Section 3.7.3.) covering the whole lifespan, considering lifelong learning, career transitions and establishing a life-work balance, while recognising that learning such knowledge and skills should be needs-based rather than age-based.

The five stages of the framework are linked to the following approximate age groups:

- 0–6 years: includes development of knowledge, skills and competences in the family setting and early childhood education;
- 6–12 years: includes development of knowledge, skills and competences in primary-school programmes and through family support;
- 12–16 years: includes development of knowledge, skills and competences through the range of programmes and curricula available in lower-secondary education;
- 16–18/19 years: includes development of knowledge, skills and competences in upper-secondary education, further education, and vocational education/training sectors;
- 18/19 years + (adulthood): includes development of knowledge, skills and competences needed for employment, life-work balance and lifelong learning in a range of learning contexts including the workplace, higher education and the community.

The lifelong guidance framework is designed to reflect person-centred values and promote personal, social and economic development.

In proposing this framework, the forum recognised the need for balance between individual and group approaches to guidance and counselling at all stages of the lifecycle. Full implementation of the framework will require adequate resources so learning and guidance approaches are combined to help learners achieve the outcomes at each stage.

The range of learning and guidance approaches includes:

- provision of information;
- small-group and large-group work;
- self-directed learning;
- mentoring by guidance practitioners and others;
- one-to-one encounters with guidance practitioners;
- curriculum-based teaching and learning programmes;
- experiential learning.

These approaches will be applied by providers and practitioners as appropriate to the age of learners and the context in which they are learning. In the Irish national lifelong guidance framework, it is proposed to have four groups of outcomes for citizens expressed in terms of knowledge, skills and competences:

- emotional development;
- social development;
- learning development;
- career development.

The framework document indicates some of the main learning outcomes for each group. Specific education and training programmes are not mentioned because the forum considers it more appropriate to indicate broad approaches to learning and guidance at each stage of the framework. The forum recommends that fully developing the lifelong guidance framework should be undertaken as an immediate priority by a national agency responsible for guidance.

3.5. Improving service quality

Improving service quality means:

- developing quality standards and quality assurance systems;
- developing competence frameworks and accreditation schemes for guidance practitioners.

3.5.1. Developing quality standards and quality assurance systems

Quality assurance frameworks and guidelines for lifelong guidance systems are not just an important individual and collective reflection exercise for stakeholders. They are key to ensure consistency of guidance service standards for citizens in and across education, employment and community sectors, especially given the range of guidance providers. They contribute to coherence of approach and also to consistency of service standards for citizens where delivering guidance services is devolved by central government to regions, municipalities, and/or institutions.

Stakeholders of national guidance forums of several countries have accordingly developed guidelines for the quality assurance and evaluation of guidance services.

In **Germany**, the Federal Ministry of Education commissioned a review of quality assurance systems for guidance provision, at the initiative of the steering group for establishing the national forum. The review consisted of interviews with experts and analyses of national and international literature. Quality assurance schemes used by providers in Germany were also considered. The study identified 50 quality criteria, defined by aim, characteristics, implementation method and measuring instrument. One of the main results was increased policy awareness of the need for improved transparency of quality assurance in career guidance in Germany. In addition, the innovation committee set up by the Federal Ministry of Education was enlarged in early 2007 by establishing an additional working group on educational and career guidance.

In **Ireland**, a subcommittee of the forum developed a quality framework for guidance services designed to assist individuals, organisations and agencies to provide high-quality guidance services to clients and to act as a basis for assessing the quality of services. The framework consists of a code of principles based on the results of a Leonardo da Vinci project entitled 'Quality guidelines for adult guidance' (which had an Irish partner), a descriptive list of guidance services to which the principles could apply, and advice for assessing and evaluating the service.

The code of principles has 11 categories:

- accessibility (including publicity with appropriate languages, formats, and publications);
- appropriateness (services appropriate to client needs and life stage);
- confidentiality within the law (subject to ethical and legal requirements; client informed);
- equality of opportunity (and inclusiveness, covering both guidance processes and learning and work opportunities);
- impartiality (providers able to demonstrate this principle or make clear to clients factors that limit impartiality of service provision);
- individual ownership and responsibility (client-centred process and client decision-owning);
- integration (quality assurance, qualitative and quantitative, should reflect the personal, educational and vocational aspects of the service);
- quality standards of service (information on service delivery, up-to-date and accurate careers information, staff with appropriate knowledge, skills and training, facilities and resources corresponding to client group needs and service level);
- team approach (importance of practitioner cooperation);
- transparency (practitioners make the guidance process clear to clients);
- complaints handling (complaints procedure and systems for client feedback).

The final part of the quality framework refers to assessing and evaluating the guidance service. The following advice is proposed:

- assessment should be internal and external;
- internal assessment can include: documenting the elements of service provision to evaluate if key elements are being provided to relevant quality standards; reviewing client feedback; identifying weaknesses; putting in place short-term and long-term improvement measures;
- external assessment should be independent, credible and appropriate; be conducted by experienced assessors; take place within an appropriate timeframe; and support continuous improvement of the service.

In the **UK**, the Guidance Council was funded by the government to develop a set of national quality standards for learning and work to cover all sectors of guidance provision. It subsequently received further funding to support implementing the standards. The standards, recast as the matrix standards, are now mandatory for all adult guidance provision in England in receipt of public funding.

Later, the Guidance Council decided to withdraw from its role of developing and supporting the standards. It is widely perceived that this decision was significant in causing termination of the Council, which was finally wound up in 2007.

3.5.2. Developing competence frameworks and accreditation schemes for guidance practitioners

Competence frameworks for guidance practitioners can support organisational quality standards (see above). They can also serve several other purposes. They:

- identify the range of knowledge, skills and attitudes required by persons working in different guidance work roles and different work settings;
- enable providers of initial and continuing training of guidance practitioners to develop a coherent and consistent approach to training programme content, within and across education, employment and community sectors;
- enable training and qualification pathways to be constructed according to national and EU qualifications frameworks, to enable persons working in guidance roles to develop their skills and their career paths incrementally;
- contribute to consistent standards of lifelong guidance regardless of the settings in which it takes place.

The stakeholders of the National Guidance Forum in **Ireland** have developed a competence framework for guidance practitioners drawing on best international practice. The framework is designed to fit within the Irish national framework of qualifications, thus simplifying recognition of prior learning. It also provides for mutual recognition of guidance qualifications between the education and labour market sectors, and enables practitioners to progress from one level of qualification to another.

The framework is an overview of the competences that practitioners will require to work within the broad context of lifelong guidance services. Core competences are grouped into five broad categories:

- theory and practice of vocational, educational and personal/social guidance across the lifespan: competences to help citizens make meaningful choices;
- labour market education and training: competences for giving career and labour market information and interpretation; enterprise education; teaching self-management, job search and networking skills; learning professional networking;
- counselling: competences for individual and group counselling; ethical counsellor behaviour and supervision; teaching life-planning; learning to make appropriate referrals;
- information and resource management: competences for information management skills; case and project management; client information recording and confidentiality;
- professional practice: competences to recognise the value of continuing professional development (CPD); research and evaluation skills; ethical behaviour; organising and managing a guidance service; developing and implementing strategic and operational plans for guidance services.

When the framework is fully developed as part of a wider consultation process, there will be several areas of specialisation that will enable practitioners to undertake specialised tasks or work with specific client groups. It is intended that the competence framework will inform future development of a comprehensive and flexible set of professional education and training programmes for guidance practitioners.

The forum envisages that future initial education and training of guidance practitioners will be modular, allowing practitioners to become qualified to work in a range of roles across the whole spectrum of lifelong guidance services. It is further envisaged that the framework will enable practitioners at any stage in their careers to study and qualify through additional modules, so they will be competent to take on new guidance roles in the national lifelong guidance service.

3.6. Influencing policy

Influencing policy means:

- developing improved structures and strategies for supporting lifelong guidance delivery;
- promoting lifelong guidance as an integral part of national learning, employment and social-inclusion policies;
- seeking policy support to fill gaps in lifelong guidance provision.

3.6.1. Developing improved structures and strategies for supporting lifelong guidance delivery

In many countries, guidance services are fragmented. National forums may accordingly want to consider how existing services can be linked to provide a more coherent and citizen-centred approach in a lifelong learning framework across sectors, and what additional structures may be needed for this purpose.

The National Guidance Forum in **Ireland** established a subcommittee to consider what structures were needed to deliver lifelong guidance. It developed proposals for effective implementation structures at national, local and provider-unit levels (including education and training institutions, community bodies and voluntary organisations). These included developing national and local structures, with criteria for efficiency and effectiveness at each level, to ensure linked delivery of lifelong guidance services and enable gaps in delivery to be identified and addressed.

The recommended national structures comprised:

- establishment of a national guidance agency, whose roles would include: policy development; monitoring and evaluating delivery; implementing the first national guidance forum report; collaborating with new local coordination structures; commissioning research; and collaborating in EU and international activities. The agency would report to a ministry/department;
- a national guidance forum, whose roles would include: advising the national guidance agency on policy development and implementation; identifying areas for provider, practitioner and other stakeholder cooperation; collaborating with national forums of other European countries; reflecting on research needs; reporting to the national guidance agency.

The recommended structures at local level were:

- a lifelong guidance coordination board, whose roles would be to: coordinate delivery of guidance services by education and labour market sectors; report regularly on local delivery of lifelong guidance services and policy to the national agency and national forum; establish a local guidance forum;
- a local guidance forum consisting of provider, practitioner and user interests, whose roles would be to: evaluate lifelong guidance policy implementation; identify gaps in provision; make recommendations to the local coordination board.

The recommended criteria for efficiency and effectiveness for these new structures included:

- national structures: clear legal basis and mandate; promoting linked policy-making and delivery of lifelong guidance; appropriate executive capacity, including staff and budget;
- local structures: clear legal basis; appropriate executive capacity, including staff and budget; integrating service provision and delivery; linking national and local policy and provision; giving local voice to all stakeholders;
- provider units: using existing management structures; ensuring lifelong guidance is reflected in unit and organisational planning; providing appropriate staff and funding to meet the standards prescribed in national guidance, quality and competence frameworks; providing a voice for users, practitioners and other stakeholders on guidance provision, delivery and policy.

Criteria common to all levels included: optimising use of existing structures at national level; using existing providers to deliver an improved service; ensuring structures are lean and focus only on precise terms of reference.

3.6.2. Promoting lifelong guidance as an integral part of national learning, employment and social-inclusion policies

A national forum can seek to ensure that lifelong guidance is an integral part of national education, training, employment and social-inclusion policies.

The National Guidance Forum in **Ireland** submitted a national development plan 2007-13 to government which included requirements to support a lifelong guidance system that would span sectors and address service gaps.

The National Guidance Policy Forum of **Slovenia** made a proposal to government for its sustainability under the European Social Fund (ESF) operational plan and also made proposals for developing lifelong guidance services as part of the ESF plan.

3.6.3. Seeking policy support to fill gaps in lifelong guidance provision

A national forum may be able to influence government policies to fill gaps in guidance provision and extend the range of services available to citizens. If it can establish a relationship of trust with the government, it may also be invited to help design such services.

In the **UK**, the Guidance Council played a significant role in establishing the Learndirect Advice helpline. The case for the helpline was made in a consultative paper prepared by the council on a national strategy for adult guidance. The government subsequently invited the council to set up an advisory group to design the helpline, and in due course accepted the group's proposals. Following a change of government, the helpline was subsequently established somewhat differently, but was

still influenced by the council's work. The helpline is promoted to all citizens through regular marketing including advertisements on prime-time television. It offers information and guidance over the telephone and receives nearly a million calls a year.

Joint ministerial groups can also play an influential role in identifying gaps in provision and developing policies to fill them.

In **Finland**, a joint ministerial working group developed a framework for individualised learning paths for students in adult education. The model was tested in a national development project from 2000 to 2007. As a result of this project, an adult student entitlement for support in designing individual learning paths was included in current legislation on adult education.

The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour launched a national development plan for adult guidance for 2007-13. The development will be implemented in the national European Social Fund programme. A joint ministerial steering group was mandated in November 2006 to support implementation. The development plan consists of national projects focusing on technology-assisted services, recognition and validation of prior learning, and guidance in workplaces. These initiatives will be supported by training programmes for guidance providers in different settings. Additional funding will be allocated to training for certified counsellors. Research activities will focus on evaluating the effectiveness of different delivery modes and links between career development and labour-force development. A long-term goal is to develop a sustainable national feedback mechanism for both ministries.

3.7. Benefiting from international cooperation

Benefiting from international cooperation concerns:

- supporting national participation in the European lifelong guidance policy network;
- supporting national participation in international policy symposia;
- disseminating innovation and best practice generated by European and international initiatives.

3.7.1. Supporting national participation in the European lifelong guidance policy network

National and regional assemblies of guidance stakeholders have strong national roles as described above. They also have international roles, particularly in EU policy and systems development.

From 2004 to 2006, assemblies and emerging national guidance coordination groups of 12 countries took part in the joint actions EU programme (education, training, and youth). Collaborative activities included:

- developing a good-practice guide on national partnership (*Collaboration in the provision of career guidance services*, Innove, 2006);
- commissioning a monograph on *Challenges for career guidance in small states* (Sultana, 2006);
- developing a good-practice guide on *Involving the users of guidance services in policy development* (Plant, 2006);
- conducting a mapping exercise comparing national codes of principles for guidance delivery against the common EU reference tool *Common aims and principles for lifelong guidance* (Annex 2 in European Commission and OECD, 2004);
- exploring different models of national guidance forums through participation in common learning activities;
- helping form national forums for guidance in partner countries where they did not exist;
- supporting national awareness raising of EU lifelong guidance policy developments;
- providing advice to the European Commission on the added value of a European lifelong guidance policy network.

The experience of these networks gave impetus to establishing the European lifelong guidance policy network (ELGPN) in December 2007. Its aim is to promote cooperation in developing policies and systems for lifelong guidance provision at national level through European cooperation. This includes policy sharing, and promotion and support for development of the broader EU policy framework for lifelong guidance. The ELGPN's initial work programme addresses the following four themes:

- strengthening lifelong guidance policy development and implementation at national level;
- strengthening representative structures for lifelong guidance policy and systems development at national level;
- creating synergy between EU-funded projects on lifelong guidance at national and EU levels;
- supporting EU and wider international collaboration on outcome-focused and evidence-based lifelong guidance practice and policy development.

Membership of the network is open to each of the countries eligible for assistance under the lifelong learning programme 2007-13. Participating countries designate their representatives of the network. To fulfil the network's objectives, representatives should:

- be able to represent a lifelong learning perspective (preferably covering education, training and employment for both young people and adults);
- be clearly linked to relevant policy-making processes in their country;
- have the capacity both to contribute to network activities and to involve relevant national stakeholders in education, training and employment, including the social partners and guidance practitioners.

In practice, each national delegation should comprise no more than three persons – linked to wider networking mechanisms – and include both government and non-government representatives. Where national coordination bodies or forums exist, these will provide a suitable basis for the composition and wider networking of national delegations.

3.7.2. Supporting national participation in international policy symposia

Predating ELGPN, and now running alongside it, several international symposia on career development and public policy have been held: in Ottawa (1999), in Vancouver (2001), in Sydney (2006) and in Aviemore, Scotland (2007). The next will be held in Wellington, New Zealand in 2009. Countries attend the symposia in teams comprising a mix of policy-makers and professional leaders, and prepare country papers in advance on particular themes of wide international interest. The themes at the 2007 event were:

- blending economic and social goals;
- strategic leadership;
- harnessing diversity;
- impact evidence and measurement;
- the role of the citizen (in designing and delivering services).

Each symposium ends with national and international action plans. The International Centre for Career Development and Public Policy⁽⁷⁾ provides support for the symposia and for implementing international action plans.

National forums can take an active role in forming country teams and supporting implementation of national action plans.

3.7.3. Disseminating innovation and best practice generated by European and international initiatives

National forums can consider innovative practices derived from international contacts developed through ELGPN, international symposia, and other means, and explore whether they might be adapted for their own country's purposes. There could also be considerable scope in drawing on the experience of European collaborative projects.

In developing its lifelong guidance framework for citizen career management competence (see Section 3.4.3.), the National Guidance Forum in **Ireland** drew on international models from Canada⁽⁸⁾ and Australia⁽⁹⁾.

⁽⁷⁾ See: www.iccdpp.org

⁽⁸⁾ The Canadian blueprint for life/work design (<http://www.blueprint4life.ca>).

⁽⁹⁾ The Australian blueprint for career development (http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/career_development/policy_issues/australian_blueprint_for_career_development/).

In the framework of the Medsui joint actions project, the **Estonian** National Resource Centre for Guidance (which is integrated into Innove – the Foundation for Lifelong Learning Development), produced a study, *Collaboration in the provision of career guidance services*, which contains descriptions and analyses of nine examples of good practice in lifelong guidance from Denmark, Estonia, Ireland, Malta, Slovenia and the UK (Innove, 2006).

3.8. Terms of reference

National guidance forums choose themes and tasks according to their national priorities, which vary from country to country. The tasks that any national lifelong guidance forum undertakes are dependent on a range of factors that may include:

- terms of reference of the forum laid down in the legislation establishing it (and as interpreted and agreed by the forum);
- terms of reference given to it by ministries;
- terms of reference agreed by all participating stakeholders;
- funding available to carry out the tasks.

In **Denmark**, the legislation (2003) establishing the National Dialogue Forum for Educational and Vocational Guidance specifies its aims as:

- to improve cooperation and develop the level of quality in Danish guidance services;
- to secure dialogue between the Ministry of Education and relevant organisations, institutions, guidance counsellor associations and individuals holding a leading position in Danish guidance.

The forum itself decides which concrete tasks it should undertake to achieve these aims.

In **Romania**, the mission of the National Lifelong Guidance Forum is to:

- support the authorities and responsible government institutions in designing guidance and counselling policies and lifelong learning and guidance strategies;
- promote the quality of guidance and counselling services in education and labour;
- contribute to the personal development and socio-economic efficiency of people working or in search of a job, support their competitiveness on the global labour market and their (re)integration into socio-professional life;
- support access of all persons to guidance and counselling services and contribute to their decision-making on career or educational paths;
- stimulate professional collaboration and networking and adherence to ethical standards and principles;
- find efficient solutions for improving access of special-needs persons to guidance and counselling services;
- promote continuous training of practitioners in guidance and counselling;
- stimulate development of guidance and counselling programmes to ease transition from school to work;

- support partnerships between all responsible institutions in guidance and counselling, at national, regional and local levels.

This mission was established at meetings between experts from the Ministry of Labour, Family and Equal Opportunities and representatives of the Institute of Educational Sciences and Euroguidance Romania, based on external evaluation reports on career guidance services in Romania by the World Bank and the European Training Foundation.

In **Germany**, national stakeholders agreed a set of terms of reference for their National Forum for Guidance in Education, Career and Employment⁽¹⁰⁾: ‘the national forum for guidance understands itself as a platform of all stakeholders and actors in this area for an exchange of knowledge and experience across all institutional sectors, for the discussion of common concerns and projects, and for the achievement of common aims’. The stated aims of the forum point to specific issues to be addressed, including: easy access to guidance services; quality assurance of such services; professionalisation; raising public awareness of the importance of guidance; and supporting education, labour market and social policies at federal and *Länder* levels.

Stakeholders of the **Malta** Career Guidance Forum set out to provide and promote a vision for career guidance in Malta to: encourage closer participation between providers; identify gaps in service delivery; mobilise actors to address the gaps; commission research and ensure its dissemination; build professional capacity through training; collect examples of best practice in the EU and disseminate them; generate funds. They also agreed to outsource specific tasks to different partners.

Some national forums have the status and position enabling them to respond to opportunities arising from external sources not included in the original remit.

The National Guidance Forum in **Ireland** made a submission on lifelong guidance provision to the government’s national development plan 2007-13. It submitted a proposal to the Department for Education and Science and the Department for Enterprise, Trade and Employment for establishing a national learning helpline. It also endorsed a recommendation of a report on *Careers and labour market information in Ireland* from the expert group on future skill needs to establish a national careers portal as a delivery mechanism to achieve improvements in career information services.

⁽¹⁰⁾ See: *Nationales Forum – Beratung in Bildung, Beruf und Beschäftigung*, http://www.forum-beratung.de/cms/upload/pdf/Leitdokument_Mission-Statement_Endfassung_Dec.pdf [cited 2.4.2008].

The national coordination point for guidance in **Slovenia** made significant input on lifelong guidance developments to the national European Social Fund operational programme 2007-13 (see Section 3.6.2.).

Conversely, opportunities for collaboration on a joint task can bring key players together.

In the **UK**, the four devolved administrations worked together to host the Fourth international symposium on career development and public policy, which examined the social and economic impacts of lifelong guidance provision ⁽¹¹⁾. This promoted discussions on what ongoing national collaborative mechanism might be required in the future in the UK.

In addition to terms of reference, funding is critical to determining the range of tasks that any national or regional assembly can undertake or commission. This aspect is explored further in Section 4.4.

⁽¹¹⁾ For details of the papers, proceedings and outcomes, see www.iccdpp.org

4. Organisational issues

4.1. Introduction

Chapter 3 looked at the possible remit of national guidance forums – the range of tasks that national forums can take on board.

This chapter deals with organisational aspects of national forums: in other words, how the various tasks described above are inserted into a practical context. What is desirable from an ideal (systemic) point of view may not always be possible in current political circumstances. Even though the logic of lifelong guidance may appear compelling, creating a national forum may encroach upon established power bases and disturb existing balances, and may be resisted by some actors and stakeholders.

Any plan for creating a national forum or similar policy coordination mechanism will have to consider the following points, and weigh these against the concrete context:

(a) permanence:

- can the forum be established as a permanent structure, or should it have a more time-limited nature, linked to completion of specific tasks?
- if the latter, could provision be made subsequently to extend its life to take on new tasks?

(b) degree of formality:

- are the role and function/tasks of the forum such that they require a formal organisation to undertake them, or can they be satisfactorily addressed by an informal working group?

(c) independence:

- is the forum to rely primarily on one actor/stakeholder (or group of actors/stakeholders) for political and financial support, or be broadly anchored?
- what is the relationship to government? Does it or its funding depend on government? Is the forum free to provide an independent opinion on government policies and initiatives?
- how is the forum governed?
- who is in charge of daily business?
- where does the funding come from?

(d) powers:

- is the forum primarily a place for discussion and exchange of views and information, or will it have concrete tasks to carry out?
- can the forum take initiatives and make decisions or recommendations (be proactive), or is it designed primarily as an advisory/consultative body (reactive)?

(e) acceptance:

- how can it be guaranteed that all actors and stakeholders as well as the general public will recognise the legitimacy of the forum and support its work?

(f) visibility/transparency:

- is the forum going to have a high profile, or operate quietly out of the public eye?
- how will the forum ensure that outcomes of discussions (and possibly recommendations) are made known to all interested parties?

(g) impact evidence:

- how can the impact of the forum be defined, recorded, measured and made visible to stakeholders and the general public?

These points are interrelated: for example, a proactive forum with concrete tasks is likely to need independent status and funding corresponding to the nature of its role.

Once determined, these considerations will need to be translated into concrete decisions on the exact nature of the forum:

- its status;
- its membership composition;
- its resourcing;
- its mode of steering and day-to-day coordination;
- its decision-making powers and processes;
- its communication channels.

In the following sections, examples of how each of these issues has been tackled in several countries are presented. In each case, the pros and cons are briefly discussed and, where appropriate, the circumstances which led to the approach adopted in the country concerned are indicated.

4.2. Status

‘Status’ means formal status – the form or organisation type chosen for the national forum. In European countries which have already set up national forums or similar policy coordination mechanisms, different solutions can be observed, ranging from statutory councils to more informal, experimental and temporary arrangements. Each of these options has its advantages and disadvantages: it is important that the option selected is in harmony with the needs and aspirations of the founders and participants.

4.2.1. Statutory council/legal entity

A statutory council is established by an act of parliament, which sets out its powers. Establishing such a council can be a difficult and protracted process, but the body that emerges can enjoy a relatively high degree of permanence. Although not invulnerable, it cannot be summarily dissolved because of a sudden change in the political climate. A statutory council has a high degree of legitimacy and independence; however, its effectiveness in relation to the potential range of tasks depends on the remit and funding it is given.

In 1981, the Danish National Council for Vocational Guidance (RUE – *Rådet for Uddannelses- og Erhvervsvejledning*) was set up as a focal point for all types of guidance activities in **Denmark** by an act of parliament. Its main functions were defined as providing printed information on educational and vocational matters, and acting in a policy-making role by taking guidance-related initiatives and commenting on relevant government legislation. However, the council did not have any executive powers, and hence had more of a networking than a coordinating role. The council was dissolved in 2003. Under the 2003 Act on Guidance, the Minister for Education established the Danish National Dialogue Forum for Educational and Vocational Guidance to replace it.

In **Greece**, the national system for linking vocational education and training with employment (ESSEEKA) was introduced by law in 2003. As part of ESSEEKA, a special subsystem for counselling, vocational guidance and connection with the labour market was introduced to coordinate and harmonise guidance services in Greece into a more streamlined national counselling and vocational guidance system. The Greek National Centre for Vocational Guidance (EKEP) has a lead role in this respect. ESSEEKA is led by an executive committee with representatives from the ministries involved and the social partners; a special coordination committee will be led by EKEP to deal with guidance-related matters.

4.2.2. Government-initiated body

An alternative to a statutory council is a working group or other body, set up by one or more of the ministries involved for a specific (temporary) or indefinite duration. Temporary initiatives may be set up either to solve specific ad hoc tasks, or to prepare for more permanent solutions. The advantage of such a structure is that it will, as a rule, have some legitimacy due to its relationship with the relevant ministry (or ministries). Further, it will have access to resources from this ministry to carry out its work. Limitations spring from the same source: due to its proximity to government, it may be effectively barred from taking a critical stance on government policies or from launching its own independent initiatives.

In **Romania**, the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth with the Ministry of Labour, Family and Equal Opportunities set up the Romanian National Lifelong Guidance Forum in 2007. The forum includes representatives of all major stakeholders in guidance, as well as beneficiaries of guidance and counselling services, and guidance experts. The remit addresses a range of general and specific tasks relating to introducing lifelong guidance policies, including improving training provision for guidance counsellors and access to guidance services for people with special needs.

In **Lithuania**, the National Career Guidance Council is an advisory body established by the joint order of the Minister for Education and Science and the Minister for Social Security and Labour (21 December 2006) and functions on a voluntary basis.

In some cases, other government-initiated mechanisms may be created to encourage cross-sectoral coordination.

In **France**, the government created an interministerial representative in charge of guidance (*délégué interministériel à l'orientation*) to coordinate and streamline guidance services for young people, in particular the transition from education and training to the labour market (the remit does not include guidance of adults). The mission of the *délégué* was defined jointly by the Ministries of Education and Labour. The *délégué*, supported by a team, is represented in the French delegation to the (ELGPN).

4.2.3. Voluntary association

Forming a voluntary association may in some cases be more feasible than securing government action. It also has the advantage of being independent from the government and thus free to provide an independent opinion on its policies and launch independent initiatives. But its legitimacy and effectiveness depend on its success in attracting key actors and stakeholders in guidance as members. It may consist of factions grouped around specific stakeholders and become a lobbying organisation for particular interests. It also has to raise sufficient funds, either from its members or from external donors (which may or may not include government project funding).

In **Germany**, the National Forum for Guidance in Education, Career and Employment (*Nationales Forum Beratung in Bildung, Beruf und Beschäftigung*) was established as an association in 2006. The forum sees itself as a platform for all stakeholders and actors in guidance. Its aim is to promote exchange of knowledge and experience across all institutional sectors, stimulate discussion of common concerns and projects and work towards achieving common aims. More specifically, the forum seeks to achieve improved transparency of guidance services for individual citizens, better quality in guidance services, and strengthen guidance-related training provision and research. Membership is open both to organisations and individuals who represent a guidance institution, scientific or research institution, or university active in training guidance practitioners, or who are recognised guidance experts, all of whom pay an annual subscription. The Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is a supportive member; the Federal Ministry of Education does not hold membership. Both ministries however are members of the advisory board (*Kuratorium*) ⁽¹²⁾.

4.2.4. Experimental/project-based body

Where there are barriers to establishing an official (or semi-official) forum or policy coordination mechanism, one solution is to set up a platform as an experiment, or a project, for example, in the framework of an EU programme. Using such an approach is only a temporary solution, and may only be feasible for some aspects of lifelong guidance policies. It has the advantage of allowing actors and stakeholders to conduct feasibility studies and test models, build relationships and confidence, and thereby possibly convince others of the need for a more formal and long-term structure.

In **Estonia**, use was made of the EU joint actions (2004) programme to establish a national steering group as a lead into developing a national guidance policy forum. The steering group adopted an action plan, consulted key stakeholders on terms of reference and membership, studied different models of forums in the EU, and drew up a strategic plan for setting up the Estonian National Guidance Policy Forum.

Slovenia used the EU joint actions (2004) programme to set up an ‘initiative group’ for establishing a national guidance policy forum. The group’s task was to plan and prepare all necessary activities for effective establishment and operation of the forum. Its membership included representatives of four ministries, plus the National Institute for Education, the National Centre for Adult Education, and the National Employment Service.

⁽¹²⁾ For an account of the establishment of this forum, see Jenschke (2007).

4.2.5. Regional forums

In addition to national forums and policy coordination mechanisms, similar mechanisms – in fully developed or embryonic forms – are evident at regional level in several EU Member States. There are two types of regional forum:

- regional support mechanisms, set up to prepare or coordinate regional implementation of lifelong guidance policies developed in the framework of a national forum;
- regional forums in countries with devolved government, where regions have autonomy in matters of guidance.

The first type of forum exists in several countries, where it has been set up to translate national policies into regional strategies and in some cases also to take on board particular cross-sectoral guidance tasks.

In **Finland**, regional committees were set up between 2003 and 2005 in a project coordinated by the Finnish National Board of Education. The committees coordinate guidance provision for adult education and develop regional strategies for lifelong guidance. In some cases, the committees have piloted national quality criteria for guidance services.

In **Denmark**, regional, and in some cases local, representative bodies known as regional guidance committees (*Vejledningsfaglige Udvalg*) were set up, where regional links were established and developed on a voluntary basis, regional cross-sectoral courses for guidance practitioners were run, and regional material on educational and labour market issues were edited and distributed. These regional forums were dissolved in 2006.

The second type – regional forums in countries with devolved government – only exist in embryonic form as yet. Since authority in guidance-related matters has been delegated from national to regional level, these forums are comparable to national forums in most other countries.

In **Scotland**, the initiative to develop a Scottish forum arose from the UK's involvement in the joint actions project (2004-06) (see Section 4.4.) and the wish to build a UK forum based on a bottom-up approach from the four 'home countries' (England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland). The Scottish forum's proposed remit includes:

- improving dialogue with the Scottish Government on a range of policy developments in guidance, learning, social inclusion, economic development and regeneration;
- providing a focal point for professional guidance matters in Scotland (including improving professional qualifications and occupational standards in guidance);
- providing a channel for Scottish, UK and international communications in guidance;

- collectively raising the profile, value, contribution and understanding of guidance in terms of social, learning and economic impact;
- improving interagency and joint developmental work in information, advice and guidance services;
- working with professional guidance associations to strengthen their role;
- taking forward the implications of international symposia on career development and public policy (see Section 3.7.2.).

In **Spain**, the 17 regions have autonomy on most guidance-related issues. Navarre, for example, has been experimenting with, or preparing for, introducing a regional forum for guidance through mapping exercises, research projects, and establishing a local network of providers in which ICT plays a key role.

Regional strategies are likely to be influenced by geographical and population size. Of the two examples above, Navarre with 0.6 million inhabitants is comparable in size to some smaller European countries (Iceland, Luxembourg), whereas Scotland with 5.1 million inhabitants is comparable to countries such as Denmark and Finland.

4.3. Membership

The concept of lifelong guidance covers, in principle, the entire lifespan of individuals from cradle to grave. They may potentially be in contact with a plethora of guidance services – in connection with learning and work, and also in related fields. The task of coordinating and streamlining thus involves many actors and stakeholders. As discussed in Section 2.3., these include not only ‘core ministries’ with responsibilities and powers over these services (usually, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour) but also other ministries with responsibilities or tasks in guidance (Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Youth, Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Health). In addition, there are many others with interests in guidance and in the work of a national forum, including:

- employers and trade unions,
- education and training institutions,
- various organisations in education and training (school principals’ organisations, adult education organisations),
- public employment services,
- user representatives (parents’ organisations, student unions, etc.),
- national consumers associations,
- associations of guidance professionals,
- representatives of universities/colleges responsible for training guidance counsellors,
- local government representatives,
- Euroguidance representatives.

The exact composition of a national forum is dictated by its context: the main actors/stakeholders, the tasks which the forum is taking on board and the socio-political tradition in which the forum is based. In principle, membership should be large enough to be representative of guidance services and stakeholders, yet small enough to be manageable.

In **Austria**, the National Platform for Lifelong Guidance has the following members:

- Federal Ministry of Education, the Arts and Culture,
- Federal Ministry of Science and Research,
- Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour,
- Federal Ministry of Social Affairs and Consumer Protection,
- Public Employment Service,
- National Agency for Lifelong Learning,
- Austrian Trade Union Federation,
- Chamber of Commerce,
- Chamber of Agriculture,
- Federal Association of Industry,
- Austrian Association for Education and Economics,
- network of practitioners (bib-infonet),
- Euroguidance Austria.

In **Lithuania**, the National Career Guidance Council includes representatives of two ministries (education, labour), two labour market agencies, four social partner organisations, four associations of education and training institution interests, four user-group associations, the association of local authorities, the association of guidance practitioners, information and support centres, and Euroguidance Lithuania.

The **Romanian** National Lifelong Guidance Forum is a consultative network which includes Ministry of Education and Labour officials, representatives of research institutes and universities that provide initial and continuous training for guidance practitioners, information and guidance specialists from higher education counselling offices, school counsellors (coordinated by the Ministry of Education), guidance counsellors (coordinated by the Ministry of Labour), social partners (trade unions, employers organisations), representatives of professional associations, and other authorities/institutions involved in designing and implementing policies, as well as beneficiaries of guidance and counselling services.

Besides stakeholder and other actors, some national forums invite guidance experts and researchers to participate in their activities. These can provide professional advice based on their expertise.

In **Denmark**, the National Dialogue Forum for Educational and Vocational Guidance (*Nationalt Dialogforum for Vejledning*) was set up in 2004 to replace the former forum (RUE). Forum membership comprises, besides organisational representatives, 11 members appointed individually by the Minister for Education, six of whom are experts and researchers. These individual members are appointed for a two-year period, but the minister may appoint additional members for a shorter period if relevant for the forum work. Organisational representatives are appointed for four years at a time.

4.4. Resourcing

The question of resources is crucial for a national forum. The resources available dictate what is possible: there has to be an adequate match between these resources and the forum's tasks. The term 'resources' is largely synonymous with 'funding', but can also cover contributions in kind, such as:

- secretarial support,
- infrastructure (housing, furniture, etc.),
- the time of members.

In cases where the forum is entirely dependent on one ministry, and where the main task is establishing a platform for dialogue and exchanging information, it may operate exclusively based on contributions in kind: the ministry provides housing and covers secretarial support, and forum members receive no remuneration for their work.

In **Finland**, the government created working groups (platforms) for actors and stakeholders in guidance since the 1980s. Working groups are set up for a prescribed period, to solve specific tasks. They involve representatives of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour, as well as representatives of regional authorities, students' organisations, the school principals' organisation, etc. Ministries have taken turns in convening working groups and have issued letters of appointment, with the main tasks outlined. Working groups have then decided on working methods and schedules themselves, and have issued a final report with recommendations. All direct costs in connection with their work have been covered by the ministry responsible.

Where the forum is nominally independent of the government – when it assumes the role of a statutory council – it may have its own government-funded budget with some degree of independence and manoeuvre.

In the 1981 legislation that created the **Danish** National Council for Vocational Guidance (RUE), provision was made for funding an independent secretariat.

Some forums operate on a membership basis and charge membership fees. To be inclusive, however, they may have to set such fees at modest levels.

In **Germany**, the National Forum for Guidance in Education, Career and Employment is organised as an association, where members pay annual membership. This fee is currently (2007) EUR 75 for individuals and EUR 400 for organisation members; members are free to pay more if they wish.

To supplement membership fees, it is common for forums to seek grants. These are often 'earmarked', given by donors to support specified tasks, and cannot be used for other purposes. With contributions in kind, they represent an important source of support for many forums. Grants tend to be time-limited, and can create dependence on donors. If they come from one source only, there is a risk that this may unduly sway the forum's work and prevent certain issues being tackled.

A further important source of resourcing is project funding for a particular task, for a mapping exercise or to develop quality standards. In some cases, project funding may constitute the major source of funding for a national forum.

In **Malta**, the Career Guidance Forum received funding from the social partners (who are also members of the forum) to carry out a study on lifelong guidance provision.

In the **UK**, the Guidance Council (1993-2006) did not receive any direct funding from the government, but financed many of its activities through government project funding. In particular, it received substantial funding to support developing and implementing organisational quality standards to cover all sectors of guidance for learning and work (see Section 3.5.1.).

Finally, some forums may have opportunities to undertake revenue-generating activities and thus to create a surplus that may (in principle) be spent on activities decided upon by the forum itself. Such activities may however mean that the forum is competing with some of its own members or with others in the guidance community. This may create friction and affect cooperation with these bodies.

The main task of one of the first **Danish** national forums, RUE (1981-2003), was to provide information and guidance material for both guidance counsellors and users of guidance services. Over the years it built up a flourishing publication department, which enjoyed a certain degree of commercial success. But its double role as a public non-profit and quasi-commercial publishing company made it open to criticism from market-oriented politicians and other commercial actors which was, arguably, one of the factors that led to its eventual demise in 2003, under a new government.

Besides funding available from national sources, there are also EU sources which may be used towards setting up and running a national forum: for example, the European Social Fund.

From 2004 to 2006, two major projects concerning national forums in guidance were financed from the EU joint actions programme: the Medsui project, comprising Denmark, Estonia, Ireland, Malta, Slovenia and the UK; and the European guidance forum - lifelong guidance (EGF-LLG) project, comprising the Czech Republic, Germany, France, Austria, Poland and Finland. Of the countries involved in the projects, some had prior experience with national forums; some did not. During the project period, countries developed joint issues, exchanged knowledge and examples of practice, and formulated recommendations.

In **Slovenia**, ESF funding is used to support the work of the national coordination point for guidance (the National Guidance Policy Forum) (see Section 4.2.4.).

4.5. Steering and day-to-day coordination

How is the work of the national forum coordinated at practical level, and who will set agendas and chair meetings? These are important questions, especially when different ministries, stakeholders and services, with their existing relationships, sit down together and try to work out common strategies and share resources. Most national forums are led by a chairperson, and some (especially those with larger membership numbers) have set up executive committees. All have some sort of secretarial assistance at their disposal.

4.5.1. Chairperson

Chairpersons have a pivotal role as they (as a rule) decide on the agenda for meetings and manage discussions. They can also play an important role in championing the cause of the national forum at national level. The chairperson can be either elected by members of the forum, or appointed by the founding organisation(s).

The choice between appointment and election is often influenced by the degree of formality adopted in the forum. Informal bodies or temporary ad hoc structures, which do not have a high public profile, often appoint a chairperson from the membership circle (in most cases the founding organisation); whereas more long-term or high-profile structures tend either to go through an election process, or appoint a neutral person from outside.

In **Latvia**, the Guidance and Counselling System Cooperation Council (*Karjeras attistibas atbalsta Sadarbības padome*) comprises all stakeholders in guidance and counselling. It is led by a chairperson from the membership circle, who is elected by majority vote among all members of the Council.

In **Austria**, the National Steering Group for Lifelong Guidance Policies was set up as an informal practical working arrangement in 2005 by the Federal Ministry of Education. It comprises the most relevant stakeholders and services. Meetings of the group are always chaired by a representative of the Ministry of Education.

In **Ireland**, the National Guidance Forum was set up as an interministerial initiative by the Ministries of Labour and Education with a high public profile and extensive membership. As chairperson, a neutral person from the academic world was appointed who had no formal links with any of the stakeholders represented but was respected by all.

In **Denmark**, the National Dialogue Forum for Educational and Vocational Guidance was set up by an act of parliament as a permanent body in 2003. It is funded by the Ministry of Education, and meetings of the forum are always chaired by the Minister for Education (or a representative from the Ministry of Education).

There is a risk in having a representative of one of the stakeholders as chairperson, as it may lead to accusations of partisanship. This may result in weakening the forum's impact and effectiveness. This risk can be greater when the forum is not only a platform for exchanging experience and information, but also plays a role in the policy-making process. This can lead to difficult situations, such as a chairperson representing a ministry having to pass recommendations that go against the ministry's own views.

4.5.2. Executive committee and subcommittees

For large assemblies, it may be convenient to set up an executive committee to deal with issues that do not necessarily require the presence of the full assembly. An executive committee can focus energy to drive the forum's agenda, and involving stakeholder representatives in an executive role can improve the sense of active participation. It is important however that it is perceived to represent the wider membership.

In the **UK** Guidance Council (1993-2006), members were broadly categorised into six groups, each of which appointed a member for the executive committee. This ensured that the executive committee was reasonably representative of the full span of members.

It may also be necessary to allocate the forum's tasks to subcommittees.

In **Ireland**, the National Guidance Forum involved 34 representatives from 26 organisations. To avoid working with a huge and unwieldy assembly, the forum's work was delegated to smaller subcommittees, where the main actors and stakeholders addressed particular tasks such as quality frameworks for services and competence frameworks for citizens and practitioners.

In **Germany**, the national forum elects a Board of Directors (comprising a president and two vice-presidents) according to the statutes. These are elected for four years by all members at the general assembly.

4.5.3. Secretariat

A secretariat is necessary for the day-to-day operation of the forum. Its tasks may include:

- organising meetings and events;
- preparing minutes of meetings;
- drafting papers (reports, recommendations, etc.);
- setting up and updating web-based and other information sources.

Depending on the forum's remit, the secretariat may also perform other tasks: fact-finding missions, representing the forum at relevant meetings, providing specific services to members, etc.

National forums basically have two choices when deciding on secretarial assistance:

- to use the facilities of one of their members;
- to set up a dedicated and independent secretariat.

In **Estonia**, one of the participants in the informal working group set up by the Ministries of Social Affairs and Education is the Estonian National Resource Centre for Guidance (Euroguidance), which also acts as the secretariat for the group.

In **Denmark**, the Danish National Council for Vocational Guidance (RUE) (1981-2003) built up a large secretariat with more than 20 full-time employees, most of whom were performing tasks in relation to the council's publishing activities.

The secretarial facilities for the new National Dialogue Forum for Educational and Vocational Guidance, which replaced RUE, are provided by the Ministry of Education.

Considerations for decisions on the size, staffing and location of the secretariat include:

- the tasks to be performed – related to the remit of the forum;
- the degree of permanence envisaged (it could be problematic to set up a dedicated secretariat for a body that is only intended to last for a limited period);
- costs (an independent secretariat can be costly to set up and maintain);
- 'political' considerations. Like the chairperson, the secretariat has a degree of power that can ease or impede the ambitions of the forum. If secretarial duties are designated to a forum member and not clearly defined, work for the forum may be impeded by other priorities. Further, locating the secretariat with one of the stakeholders may carry implications for the forum's independence.

4.6. Decision-making processes

The key issue is the extent to which the forum is likely to take any significant decisions. This depends on which of the four roles identified in Section 2.4. are covered in its remit:

- dialogue,
- consultation,
- policy development,
- systems development.

In the first two of these roles, decision-making is not really an issue. In the first (dialogue), the main function is the free and unhindered exchange of information and viewpoints between members, and to push for decisions may be counterproductive. In the second (consultation), the output will often be a report, where both the pros and cons of a proposed policy or initiative are listed, and there is thus no need to take decisions: this is left to the government.

In **Estonia**, the two main ministries for guidance-related activities – the Ministry of Education and Research and the Ministry of Social Affairs – set up an informal working group to discuss implementing lifelong guidance policy in Estonia. The group provides input directly to the ministries, which then decide on what actions to take.

In the case of the other two roles, however – policy development and systems development – some sort of joint action is needed on issues where several options are available, and hence decisions may have to be taken. In a context where the overarching aim is to bring together a group of hitherto dispersed actors and stakeholders and secure some sort of alignment and coordination, there is a risk that decision processes may rekindle existing rivalries or open up new rifts, particularly when these decisions contain recommendations that involve some kind of redistribution of resources or curbing of powers. Even though all actors and stakeholders may be convinced of the desirability in principle of coherent and streamlined guidance provision for individuals throughout their lives, day-to-day budget considerations and power struggles may prove stronger in the short run, and important stakeholders may withdraw from the forum or refuse to be party to crucial decisions. This may effectively undermine the forum's work.

Where decisions need to be taken, this can be done in several ways:

- consensus: all members of the forum have to agree on the decision;
- simple majority: members vote for or against a proposal, and a simple count of votes decides the outcome;
- qualified majority: members vote, but the proposal is only adopted if, for example, three-quarters of members are in favour.

The **UK** Guidance Council (1993-2004) was set up as an independent body with no formal links to government. Most decisions in the executive committee of the council were made by consensus, and only rarely did voting take place. Where it did, the decision was taken by simple majority.

In connection with all three of these modes of decision-making, it is helpful to determine a quorum: the number of members that need to be present for a vote to be valid.

4.7. Communication channels

This section looks at the ways in which a national forum disseminates the outcome of its work or communicates it to relevant target groups. These target groups could include:

- the government,
- the guidance community (guidance professionals),
- other stakeholder organisations (the social partners),
- the public (users of guidance services).

The choice of communication channel(s) depends on the nature of the forum's work. Some forums are informal working groups set up by government to provide input into formulating lifelong guidance policies, and the outcome of the work is one or more reports intended only for government, which then decides on any further dissemination. Other forums have a more formal status and operate independently of government, and/or have a remit that focuses on dialogue and exchanging information between all actors and stakeholders. In these cases, the forum has an interest in communicating the outcomes of its work (or aspects of this work) or its messages to a wider public. Various communication channels are in principle available, which can be used alone or in combination, depending on what needs to be disseminated and the resources available. These channels include:

- newsletters: in electronic form can be sent out cheaply and quickly to many people, though it takes time to build up circulation, and writing and editing consume resources.
- magazines: are more durable; though they can be costly and may require resources beyond the scope of many forums.

In **Denmark**, the Danish National Council for Vocational Guidance (RUE) (1981-2003) ran its own magazine (*RUE-Revy*), which functioned as the professional magazine for all types of guidance counselling in Denmark.

- conferences: are an intensive and effective way of communicating, though they can be costly and time-consuming to organise, and only directly reach a limited number of people. Some costs may be offset by charging a participation fee.
- websites: can be set up quickly and can be an excellent platform for storing and disseminating information. They may also be developed to include special features such as discussion forums and special sections for certain user groups. Problems mainly arise in getting the website known, keeping it up to date, and making it sufficiently attractive for users to return frequently.

In **Germany**, the National Forum for Career Guidance in Education, Training and Employment (*Nationales Forum Beratung in Bildung, Beruf und Beschäftigung*) set up its own website with information about the forum and its activities as well as links to relevant documents and publications in Germany and elsewhere. The website consists of a public part, to which all users have access, and a restricted part that is only available to members.

- press releases: in principle, a simple and cheap way of getting a message across to a large public. But it is the press that decides whether it wants to run the news item or not, and in what form. Also, not all types of information lend themselves to press releases.

The reports of cooperation groups in **Finland** are carried in national newspapers, with impact on ensuing public discussion.

- articles in professional magazines: (such as from associations of guidance counsellors) can be effective in gaining access to the guidance community and related groups, provided the magazine enjoys widespread circulation among these groups. Articles can, however, take time to prepare and even longer to be published.

An important question is whether to use dedicated communication channels – new and exclusive to the forum – or existing channels:

- dedicated communication channels have the advantage that they belong to the forum, which can decide on their form and contents. But writing and circulating newsletters requires a commitment of time and other resources;
- existing channels may require less investment of time and other resources, and may also reach a much larger audience. But they are controlled by others and are usually created for other purposes, so messages may be less strong and under less direct control.

In **Latvia**, the Guidance and Counselling System Cooperation Council (*Karjeras attistibas atbalsta Sadarbības padome*) will disseminate the outcomes of its work in the career guidance department newsletter of the State Education Development Agency (VIAA), which also provides secretarial assistance to the council.

5. Conclusions and key messages

The following key messages are derived from appraisals of national forums provided by experts and stakeholders for this manual. The list below outlines the top 10. They are based on the limited experience to date: some may be modified or invalidated by subsequent practice; or other more important issues may appear. But they represent a set of propositions that merit consideration in establishing and developing national forums.

1. In the rationale for the forum, there should be a clear connection to lifelong learning and employability strategies.

Lifelong guidance is an integral part of strategies and policies on lifelong learning and employability, and this should clearly be the main rationale for creating a forum. If this is an end-goal to which all actors and stakeholders can subscribe, the forum may find it easier to work strategically and avoid getting bogged down in details of minor importance.

2. It is important to establish common definitions and terminology as a necessary prerequisite for dialogue and debate.

‘Guidance’ is an ambiguous term, for which many definitions and interpretations exist in each national context. If a national forum is to be effective, its work needs to be based on a common understanding of its meaning. One of the first important tasks of the forum (or of the work leading to establishing the forum) is for all involved to develop and agree a working definition of ‘guidance’ and related concepts.

3. Key stakeholders should be identified, and some selectivity should be applied in determining those invited to participate, so the forum is not too unwieldy.

The potential number of actors and stakeholders in guidance processes stretching from cradle to grave is extensive, and it may be necessary to exercise some selectivity when defining the membership circle, based on a clear perception of the forum’s aims. If forums are large, clearly defined tasks may need to be allocated to smaller subcommittees with clear remits and appropriate representation.

4. The forum should have some clearly identified tasks and roles. Merely being a platform for dialogue and exchange of information may not be enough.

There is value in dialogue. But if the forum is perceived as a mere ‘talking shop’, attendance may slip away. If there are concrete tasks with deadlines and visible outcomes, this may produce stronger commitment and, as a by-product, richer dialogue.

5. The forum needs one or more strong champions to support its work, plus a strong commitment from all key parties involved.

A national forum must have the necessary acceptance and goodwill from all actors and stakeholders, if it is to carry out the tasks assigned to it. One or more organisations and/or

individual persons with the necessary clout and perceived objectivity to spearhead the forum and secure its position can be an immense asset. Also, key parties must actively participate in and support the forum's work if it is to establish and retain its credibility.

6. The relationship with government should be clearly defined, including the extent to which the forum can voice an independent view on government policies and initiatives.

A forum must clarify its role *vis-à-vis* government at an early stage. If the forum is set up and financed by government to act as a sounding board for government policies, it should be clear on how far it is able to make public comments on these policies.

7. The forum should have a secretariat which should ideally be independent of any stakeholders, or have its tasks and functions clearly defined so the forum has its own identity and can manage its own resources.

The importance of the secretariat in performing the daily functions of the forum should not be underestimated. In some forums, secretarial facilities are provided by one of the members (one of the involved ministries), often for reasons of cost. Yet control of secretarial functions has implications, and a decision to withdraw or limit secretarial support can represent a powerful means to control its activities. If it is not feasible to set up an independent secretariat, care should be taken to protect the good functioning of the forum from the consequences of such actions.

8. Care should be taken to avoid mission drift.

It can be healthy for forums to adapt or develop their roles and tasks. But this should be a transparent process, with care being taken to secure the assent of as many as possible of those involved. There is a risk that forums may lose sight of their original aims, and drift into alternative activities by force of circumstance or because of the interests of particular members.

9. Forums should be aware of the risks of role conflict, where their activities may collide with activities of individual members or other guidance actors and stakeholders.

Restructuring guidance policies in lifelong guidance may involve redistributing tasks and means, as well as new transversal functions emerging. The forum may decide to take on some of these, but should analyse carefully in advance the extent to which this might bring it into conflict with real or perceived functions or interests of core members. It should also be careful about launching revenue-generating activities (research, publishing, etc.) that may be perceived as competing with some of its members.

10. The forum should strive to work for the benefit of individual citizens and how they can best secure seamless guidance services in a lifelong perspective.

The interests of individual citizens, rather than the needs of services or organisations, should be the paramount perspective through which the forum addresses and evaluates its activities – partly because this is a principle to which all involved are likely to give assent. By adhering to this principle, discussions and activities of the forum may transcend narrow sectoral interests, and potential conflicts based on such interests may be defused.

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Annex 1 Current national guidance forums/mechanisms

This summary is based on information received from country informants, the Euroguidance network, and country studies undertaken by Cedefop, the European Training Foundation (ETF) and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). It presents the situation in January 2008. It is organised according to seven fields:

<i>Country</i>	in English
<i>Title</i>	in English and/or national language
<i>Status</i>	legal-statutory; non-statutory with formal agreement; voluntary association; informal
<i>Membership</i>	by categories
<i>Main roles</i>	dialogue; consultation; policy-making; development (see definitions below)
<i>Functions</i>	Improving communication; encouraging collaboration and coordination; identifying citizens' needs; improving service quality; influencing policy; benefiting from international collaboration (see definitions below)
<i>Comments</i>	important information not contained in the above elements, or is necessary to interpret it correctly website address

The definitions used are as follows:

Role

<i>Dialogue</i>	a platform where actors and stakeholders meet to discuss and exchange information and viewpoints, and whose main sought outcome is creation of common understanding and voluntary coordination of activities
<i>Consultation</i>	a body set up primarily to act as a reactive sounding board for government initiatives and policies
<i>Policy development</i>	a proactive forum to promote the concept of lifelong guidance through concrete policy proposals and initiatives
<i>Systems development</i>	a place for developing concrete, practically-oriented issues within the framework of lifelong guidance (quality assurance frameworks, or training provision)

Functions

<i>Improving communication</i>	providing a forum for discussion on key policy issues; establishing a common definition of guidance; developing common terminology for guidance
<i>Encouraging collaboration</i>	encouraging interagency cooperation and coordination on specific activities (events, projects, research); taking transversal initiatives on issues which span several services or sectors
<i>Identifying citizens' needs</i>	mapping existing services and identifying gaps in provision; managing consumer research and public consultation exercises; developing career management competence frameworks for citizens
<i>Improving service quality</i>	developing quality standards and quality assurance systems; developing a competence framework and accreditation schemes for guidance practitioners
<i>Influencing policy</i>	developing improved structures and strategies for supporting lifelong guidance delivery; promoting lifelong guidance as an integral part of national learning, employment and social-inclusion policies; seeking policy support to fill gaps in lifelong guidance provision
<i>Benefiting from international cooperation</i>	supporting national participation in the European lifelong guidance policy network; supporting national participation in international policy symposia; disseminating innovation and best practice generated by European and international initiatives

Country	Title	Status	Membership	Main roles	Functions	Comments
Austria	National Platform for Lifelong Guidance	Advisory body initiated by Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Arts	Federal Ministries of Education, Arts, Culture, Science, Research, Economics, Labour, Social Affairs, Youth, Generations; social partners; economic sector organisations; guidance practitioners; national agency for EU programmes; other relevant organisations	Dialogue Consultation Policy development Systems development	Improving communication Encouraging collaboration and coordination Identifying citizens' needs Improving service quality Influencing policy Benefiting from international collaboration	See: www.schulpsychologie.at/guidance
Belgium fl	None					
Belgium fr	None					
Belgium de	None					
Bulgaria	Establishment of a national forum under consideration, initiated by the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET) (NAVET is an interministerial body whose remit includes guidance)	NAVET established by law in 2000; coordination responsibility includes licensing vocational guidance and information centres; one of its 15 expert commissions concerned with vocational guidance	Management board of NAVET includes representatives of Ministries of Education and Science, Labour and Social Policy, Health Care, Environment and Water, Economy, Agriculture and Food Supply, and the social partners; expert commissions have similar tripartite representation (employers, trade unions, government) as well as experts	Dialogue Consultation	Improving communication Encouraging collaboration and coordination Influencing policy Benefiting from international collaboration	See: www.navet.government.bg
Cyprus	None					

Country	Title	Status	Membership	Main roles	Functions	Comments
Czech Republic	<p>Discussion forum on guidance in schools since 2001</p> <p>Discussion forum on guidance related to employment since 1990</p> <p>National guidance forum being planned</p>	Formal non-statutory (institutional initiative)	<p>Schools forum – six practitioner associations/organisations plus the Institute for Educational-Psychological Guidance (a Ministry of Education institution)</p> <p>Employment forum – heads of guidance units and centres of public employment service (meetings hosted and organised by Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs)</p>	<p>Dialogue</p> <p>Consultation</p>	<p>Improving communication</p> <p>Encouraging collaboration and coordination</p> <p>Influencing policy</p>	<p>Schools forum – activities paid for by associations</p> <p>Employment forum – activities paid for by ministry</p> <p>These two associations currently have no formal role in relation to public policy, but play a role in encouraging collaboration</p>
Denmark	National Dialogue Forum for Educational and Vocational Guidance (<i>Det Nationale Dialogforum for Uddannelses- og Erhvervsvejledning</i>)	Established by a Danish Parliament Act in 2003 on guidance provision for persons up to 25 years	Social partners; youth; individuals including experts nominated by government; economic sector organisations; municipalities; local government; Ministries of Education, Labour, Maritime, Culture, Refugee, Immigration, Integration, Science, Technology, Innovation	<p>Dialogue</p> <p>Consultation</p>	<p>Improving communication</p> <p>Encouraging collaboration and coordination</p> <p>Improving service quality</p>	<p>The Danish Ministry of Education has set up a virtual knowledge centre for guidance (<i>Videnscenter for Vejledning</i>) which can be consulted at http://www.ug.dk/Videnscenter%20for%20vejledning/forside.aspx (Danish, with short overview in English)</p> <p>For an overview, see: www.uvm.dk/vejl/medlemsoversigt.htm?menuid=7535 (Danish only)</p>
Estonia	No formal body but interministerial initiatives with other stakeholders to develop a lifelong guidance system	Informal	Ministries of Education and Research, Social Affairs, Economic Affairs; labour market board; guidance practitioner association; National Resource Centre for Guidance (Foundation Innove)	<p>Dialogue</p> <p>Consultation</p> <p>Policy development</p> <p>Systems development</p>	<p>Improving communication</p> <p>Encouraging collaboration and coordination</p> <p>Identifying citizens' needs</p> <p>Improving service quality</p> <p>Influencing policy</p> <p>Benefiting from international collaboration</p>	Use of ESF funding to develop lifelong guidance system

Country	Title	Status	Membership	Main roles	Functions	Comments
Finland	Cooperation Group for Educational Guidance and Counselling and Employment Services Cooperation Group for Guidance and Counselling Services for Adults 55 regional guidance forums	Advisory bodies appointed by Ministry of Education or Labour	Ministries of Education, Labour, Social Affairs and Health; National Board of Education; national association of local and regional authorities; state provincial offices; student counsellors' trade union; student organisations; public employment service; school management Social partners represented in cooperation group for adults	Dialogue Consultation Policy development Systems development	Improving communication Encouraging collaboration and coordination Influencing policy Identifying citizens' needs	Consideration being given to establish a permanent national advisory body for guidance and counselling National centre for lifelong guidance expertise set up at Jyväskylä University (http://www.jyu.fi/ohjauskeskus)
France	Coordination unit for public guidance services for youth (<i>Délégué interministériel</i>)	Mission decided by the Prime Minister's Office	Staff of Ministries of Education, Higher Education, and Employment	Dialogue Consultation Policy development	Improving communication Encouraging collaboration and coordination Influencing policy	Matters relating to lifelong guidance are also discussed in the High-Level Committee for Education, Economy and Employment (HCEEE) and the National Council for Lifelong Learning (CNFPTLV)
Germany	National Forum for Guidance in Education, Career and Employment (<i>Nationales Forum Beratung in Bildung, Beruf und Beschäftigung</i>)	Legal status of an association	Organisational and individual membership includes: Federal Ministry of Labour; Federal Institute of Vocational Training; social partners; guidance practitioner associations; trainers of guidance practitioners; representatives of adult education and training providers associations; research institutes and universities	Dialogue Consultation Policy development	Improving communication Encouraging collaboration and coordination Identifying citizens' needs Improving service quality Influencing policy	Funded by organisational and individual subscriptions; federal ministries give funding for particular tasks, e.g. guidance service mapping. Ministry of Education and Science and Federal Employment Agency are represented with others in the Advisory Board (<i>Kuratorium</i>) See: www.forum-beratung.de (German, with English summary and selected documents in English)
Greece	Coordination committee for the system of counselling, vocational guidance and connection with the labour market (members yet to be appointed)	A subsystem mandated by Law 3191 (2003) on the national system for linking vocational education and training with employment (ESSEEKA)	Bodies represented will be Ministries of Education and Religious Affairs, Employment and Social Protection; social partners; career guidance services in education and employment; EKEP; public employment services	Dialogue Consultation Systems development	Improving communication Encouraging collaboration and coordination Improving service quality	The national forum was established as a statutory body, but no members have yet been appointed

Country	Title	Status	Membership	Main roles	Functions	Comments
Hungary	Hungarian Lifelong Guidance Council founded in January 2008		Ministry of Education, National Employment Office, regional employment centres, national associations of education and training, guidance practitioners associations	Dialogue Consultation		http://internet.afsz.hu/engine.aspx?page=full_kulfoldi_palyaor_eu_magyar_llg_tanacs (only Hungarian version available at present)
Iceland	No current plans					
Ireland	National Guidance Forum	Formal non-statutory agreement between Ministries of Education and Science and Enterprise, Trade and Employment to convene the forum	Ministries of Education and Science, Enterprise, Trade and Employment; social partners; consumers; parents; human resource managers association; public employment service; national training authority; higher education institutions; school management interests; teacher unions; guidance practitioner associations; trainers of guidance practitioners; national educational psychological service; National Agency for Guidance in Education	Dialogue Consultation Policy development Systems development	Improving communication Encouraging collaboration and coordination Identifying citizens' needs Improving service quality Influencing policy Benefiting from international collaboration	www.nationalguidanceforum.ie
Italy	National guidance committee (currently not operating)	Initiated by Ministry of Labour; advisory body status	Ministries of Education, Labour; social partners; regions; universities and research	Dialogue Consultation Systems development	Improving communication Encouraging collaboration and coordination Influencing policy Benefiting from international collaboration	

Country	Title	Status	Membership	Main roles	Functions	Comments
Latvia	Guidance and Counselling System Cooperation Council (<i>Karjeras attīstības atbalsta Sadarbības padome</i>)	Mandated by the State Education Development Agency (VIAA)	Ministries of Education and Science, Welfare, Regional Development and Local Government, Economics; public employment service; social integration centre; national associations for adult education and for regional and local governments; social partners	Dialogue Consultation Policy development Systems development	Improving communication Encouraging collaboration and coordination Identifying citizens' needs Improving service quality Influencing policy Benefiting from international collaboration	
Lithuania	National Career Guidance Council (<i>Lietuvos profesinio orientavimo taryba</i>)	Formal interinstitutional working group	Ministries of Education and Science, Labour and Social Security; social partners; labour market agencies; associations of education and training institutions; association of local authorities; student, youth and adult associations; guidance practitioner association; Euroguidance Lithuania; information and support centres	Dialogue Consultation Policy development Systems development	Improving communication Encouraging collaboration and coordination Influencing policy Benefiting from international collaboration	
Luxembourg	National Forum for a Lifelong Guidance Strategy	Commission of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training	Ministries of National Education and Vocational Training, Labour and Employment, Families and Integration; National Youth Service; representatives of school directors; social partners; guidance services	Dialogue Consultation Policy development Systems development	Influencing policy	Main aim is to develop and promote a vision and a possible system for lifelong guidance

Country	Title	Status	Membership	Main roles	Functions	Comments
Malta	Malta Career Guidance Forum	Non-statutory and informal status; will apply for NGO status under new law	Ministry of Education, Employment and Youth; social partners; public employment service; higher education institutions; student advisory services; national commission for persons with disability; EU programme agency	Dialogue Consultation Policy development Systems development	Improving communication Encouraging collaboration and coordination Identifying citizens' needs Improving service quality Influencing policy Benefiting from international collaboration	Aim is to provide and promote a vision for career guidance, and particularly to identify areas that need to be developed
Netherlands	None					
Norway	Currently planning to establish a national guidance coordination unit					
Poland	National Careers Advisory Forum (<i>Narodowe Forum Doradztwa Kariery</i>) Association of Educational and Vocational Counsellors (<i>Stowarzyszenie Doradców Szkolnych i Zawodowych Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej</i>)	Institutional initiative Institutional initiative	Guidance practitioners, researchers, trainers and academics; membership open to other stakeholders Guidance practitioners, researchers, trainers and academics; membership open to other stakeholders	Dialogue Dialogue	Improving communication Encouraging collaboration Improving communication Encouraging collaboration	See: www.doradztwokariery.pl See: www.sdsiz.pl These two associations currently have no formal role in relation to public policy, but are encouraging collaboration
Portugal	None					A national coordination mechanism for social and economic integration policy for youth including guidance provision was set up in 1997, but was dissolved in 2002

Country	Title	Status	Membership	Main roles	Functions	Comments
Romania	National Lifelong Guidance Forum	Informal	Ministries of Education, Labour; trainers of guidance practitioners; guidance practitioner representatives from schools, higher education and public employment service; social partners; representatives of professional associations and other authorities/institutions involved in the design and implementation of policies; beneficiaries of guidance and counselling services	Dialogue Consultation Systems development	Improving communication Encouraging collaboration and coordination Identifying citizens' needs Improving service quality Influencing policy	
Slovakia	In national strategy for lifelong learning adopted in April 2007, plan to establish a forum during 2008					
Slovenia	National coordination point for guidance (<i>Nacionalna točka za karierno orientacijo</i>)	Informal	Ministries of Education and Sport, Labour, Family and Social Affairs, Economic Affairs, Higher Education and Science; government office for regional policy and local development; National Employment Service; National Institute for Education; National Centre for Adult Education; social partners; guidance practitioner association; higher education institute	Dialogue Consultation Policy development Systems development	Improving communication Encouraging collaboration and coordination Identifying citizens' needs Improving service quality Influencing policy Benefiting from international collaboration	ESF funding being used to support the forum's activities

Country	Title	Status	Membership	Main roles	Functions	Comments
Spain	No national guidance forum in place Initiatives at autonomous region level to coordinate services and actors, e.g. Navarre	Training and employment guidance is one strand of Vocational Training and Qualifications Act (2002) with autonomous regions responsible for local implementation	Social partners represented on General Council for Vocational Training which advises government at national level and on vocational training councils which advise local government at autonomous region level National and regional Ministries of Employment and Education also involved	Dialogue Consultation	Improving communication Encouraging collaboration and coordination Influencing policy	
Sweden	No formal body in place; responsibility for guidance fully decentralised to municipalities Informal meetings between personnel from key national agencies	Informal	National agencies for education; networks and cooperation in higher education; research network on career choices; guidance practitioner association; international programme office for education and training	Dialogue Consultation	Improving communication Encouraging collaboration and coordination Benefiting from international collaboration	
United Kingdom	No formal UK-wide body currently in place (Guidance Council recently wound up) Key personnel from the government and devolved administrations acted as steering group for international symposium on career development and public policy 2007 and continue to interact informally Scottish guidance network established	Informal	Department for Education and Skills; Welsh National Assembly; Scottish Government; Department for Education and Learning Northern Ireland	Dialogue Consultation	Improving communication Encouraging collaboration and coordination policy Benefiting from international collaboration	

Cedefop (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training)

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The Council resolution on strengthening policies, systems and practices in guidance throughout life in Europe invites Member States to create a suitable institutional environment and adequate systemic devices for converging strategies towards building national and regional lifelong guidance systems across sectors, with high levels of equity, efficiency and quality. Improved cross-sectoral and multiprofessional cooperation, increased dialogue and stronger partnerships among key players and stakeholders are considered remedies for making lifelong guidance become a reality in Europe.

This manual supports Member States in strengthening structures for more effective guidance policy formulation and implementation. It identifies outstanding initiatives, good practices as well as gives insights into strategic choices and experimental approaches that Member States have taken while setting up national guidance forums. This publication is an ideal tool for policy- and decision-makers with responsibility for national and regional guidance policies, systems and practices in the education and employment sectors.

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