

PRESIDENCY CONCLUSIONS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF GUIDANCE THROUGHOUT LIFE IN SUPPORTING AND FURTHERING THE 'LISBON AGENDA'

European Ministers of Education and the Commission of the European Union convened in an informal meeting in Dublin on 28/29th April 2004

Aware that

Investment in human capital is now central to the development of advanced economies and democratic societies.

The demands of modern economies require individuals to be able to make decisions about learning opportunities and careers at all stages in their lives.

Guidance throughout life contributes to the achievement of the European Union goals of economic development, labour market efficiency and occupational and geographical mobility.

Guidance is one of the key actions to create open, attractive and accessible learning environments identified in the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy.

In a fast-changing knowledge-based society, governments need to promote and encourage measures that will enable their citizens to acquire the skills to self-manage their career-paths effectively, to be motivated to learn continuously and to critically analyse, manage and use knowledge effectively.

Effective guidance provision has a key role to play in promoting social inclusion, social equity, gender equality and active citizenship by encouraging and supporting individuals' participation in education and training and informing their choice of realistic and meaningful careers.

Stress the importance of

All European citizens having access to guidance services at school level and at all later life stages, as appropriate and reflecting local circumstances.

Ensuring that guidance provision at all levels reflects and recognises the cultural diversity that exists across the Union.

Particular attention being paid to early intervention with individuals and groups at risk of dropping out of school and of alienation from society and to provision for persons with special educational needs.

The key role of governments and of policy makers within governments and elsewhere, in association with other stakeholders, in providing national policy strategies for the development of effective guidance services, including, where appropriate, interministerial co-operation and a legislative framework for provision.

Promoting co-operative approaches to guidance provision across all ages and groups, through the establishment of fora, networks and other structures both to ensure coherence of provision and to disseminate best practice.

The need to strengthen structures for policy and systems development at national and regional levels, particularly through co-operation and collaboration at national, regional and local levels, underpinned by attention to the quality of services from the perspective of the clients and to information on the outcomes of guidance provision.

The involvement of all relevant actors, including, as appropriate, the social partners, parents, and the clients themselves in the guidance process, both in ensuring workers' access to guidance services, and in supporting education and training providers and guidance services.

Increased co-operation between policy makers and providers at both national and international levels in guidance, in order to make full use of the diversity of systems currently to be found in the Member States of the European Union.

Working together through the Education and Training 2010 programme to improve guidance provision for all European citizens, building on current best practice across the Union.

Recognising that guidance practitioners require training appropriate to the demands of providing a quality guidance service.

Ensuring maximum return in terms of impact on policies, systems and practices at Community and national levels from collaborative activities with the Member States in the field of guidance throughout life, funded by existing and future education and training instruments and the European Social Fund.