

Session 2: Lifelong guidance framework: commentary in context from the IAG WGCG members

Moderator: *Cynthia Harrison*, Policy officer, VET supporting policies-guidance, Cedefop

Speakers:

- *Glenda Quintini*, Senior economist, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)
- *Ramon Iriarte*, Education program specialist, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
- *Pedro Moreno da Fonseca*, Technical specialist, Lifelong Learning, International Labour Organisation (ILO)
- *Florian Kadletz*, Human capital expert, European Training Foundation (ETF)
- *Aristea Politi*, Policy assistant, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL), European Commission



Rapporteur: *Marko Bankovic* – Assistant Director at Fondacija Tempus, Serbia, CareersNet expert



Summary:

The session provided a global perspective on the position of lifelong guidance within broader systemic policies, delivered and moderated by representatives of member organisations of the TVET Inter-Agency Working Group on Career Guidance (WGCG). The panellists outlined their organizations' strategic approaches to building guidance systems across different regions offering their reflections on the value of the new framework. They highlighted how guidance systems must adapt to diverse regional contexts to effectively support individuals navigating complex life and career transitions driven by digitalization, greening economies, and shifting labour markets. Collectively, they emphasized the urgent need to move away from fragmented, reactive interventions toward holistic, evidence-based guidance ecosystems that leverage cross-sectoral collaboration and secure sustainable investment.

Key points discussed:

1. **Lifelong guidance (LLG) has already positioned itself as an essential enabling framework** and has recently been embedded within the wider policies and actions not only in the EU (Union of Skills, Human Capital Recommendation, Individual Learning Accounts, etc.) but also in neighbouring countries and different regions globally. This is evidenced by the projects, actions and reviews presented by speakers and implemented by their respective organizations.
2. **However, there is a need for increasing the evidence base** so that the LLG implementation is matched with adequate resources. The evidence and growing indications on positive effects of guidance interventions (OECD presented some evidence), and the “cost of inaction”, need to be researched, documented and presented to stakeholders. The countries were invited not to miss the opportunity to engage researchers when implementing and adapting the guidelines presented in the LLG Framework.
3. **The focus on the lifelong perspective of guidance and the development of career management skills (CMS)**, as opposed to only provision of career information or individual interventions during transitions, involves a mindset change that sees guidance holistically, connecting it to other life skills. It fits the current developments in relation to labour market and technological changes, green and digital transformations. Therefore, there is a need for LLG to leverage the existing services and be systematically embedded instead of “as an afterthought in policy design”. This highlights the importance of professionalisation of practitioners and others providing guidance and support, ensuring access for all, quality services and stakeholder cooperation.
4. **Targeting vulnerable groups and leveraging AI responsibly.** Vulnerable populations need more access and better targeted guidance. Recent AI developments potentially open the doors to more personalized services at scale,

but there are a lot of questions yet to answer before being able to say whether it will effectively rise to this challenge.

Notable quotes:

From the Commission perspective, this Framework arrives at a very important moment for Europe, and we have been particularly pleased to see how strongly the wider EU policy context, including the Union of Skills, is reflected throughout the framework. As previous speakers have already highlighted, lifelong guidance is increasingly connected to some of the big challenges that Europe is trying to respond to today. (Aristea Politi, DG EMPL, European Commission)

I would like to refer to the cost of inaction. What will happen if career guidance is not strengthened or is not addressed? It can lead to higher dropout rates, skills mismatch, it can lead to poor education and training choices. And all this has a cost. And it's very clear. So, I think it is a strong argument in favour of strengthening career guidance. (Ramon Iriarte, UNESCO)

It's very important that investment in infrastructure needs to come with investment in skills development. The connective point there tends to be career guidance. (Pedro Moreno da Fonseca, ILO)

I have presented some evidence that career guidance has the potential to make a big difference both for young people and for adults' outcomes, and also for training and education outcomes, but we still need to understand what are the type of interventions that work best – what works best for whom. (Glenda Quintini, OECD)

It is essential to help people develop interests, help them widen their aspirations and help them overcome gender and socioeconomic stereotypes in decision-making and aspirations, which can only be achieved through creating real life experiences. Information and interest testing alone will not do the job. (Florian Kadletz, ETF)