



6. Lifelong Guidance in the EU Policy Agenda*

This chapter describes and analyses some of the challenges and opportunities for the place of lifelong guidance in EU education, training, youth, employment and social inclusion policy fields.

6.1 Longer education-to-work transitions

Lifelong guidance has been traditionally conceived at EU citizen level as a tool that supports the successful transitions of EU citizens between different levels and forms of education and training and, on completion, between these and the world of work.⁸

School to work transitions in Europe have become increasingly longer and more complex (the average exit age from education-to-employment was 21 years, Eurostat, 2014). In 2009 the average length of the transition from education to work was 6.5 months in the EU (Eurostat⁹). Good social and economic circumstances and positive first experiences in employment enable youth to access the next suitable employment while others without these supportive backgrounds lag behind on both counts. The average transit age from education to the labour market was 21 in 2009 and better (also higher) educated youth found their first job faster and obtained a permanent contract more easily.

As an outcome of the Global Economic Crisis, the duration of unemployment – meaning the time spent by job-seekers looking for the next suitable job which matches with their primary competencies-

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⁸ "Guidance can provide significant support to individuals during their transition between levels and sectors of education and training systems and from school to adult and working life." Draft Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the Member States meeting within the Council on Strengthening Policies, Systems and Practices in the field of Guidance throughout life in Europe, Brussels, 18 May 2004

⁹ Eurostat (2012) School-to-work transition statistics, http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/School-to-work_transition_statistics

has become longer. In 2011 in the EU¹⁰ the average duration time for European youth was four months to find job vacancies, which included temporary contracts with low level of social protection. In 2013 42.7% of the EU youth under the age of 25 held temporary work contracts (Eurostat, 2013).

The economic crisis has created new types of pressure on every stakeholder, not only youth, families, parents and schools but also the employers and governments. The OECD (2010¹¹) concluded as follows:

Newer cohorts may find that hard pressed employers concerned by their immediate survival are less willing to offer workplace training. Fewer jobs mean that potential learners are keener to remain in, or take up full-time education and training. At the same time public expenditure pressures, sharpened by the crisis, make it harder to accommodate the increased demand (OECD 2010:11).

Last but not least the crisis has long standing effects on social inclusion and equity. Changes in the distribution of income are also strongly challenging European social policies and EU 2020 targets. A recent OECD publication on inequality stated the following¹²:

Since the mid-1990s, more than half of all job creation was in the form of non-standard work. Many non-standard workers are worse off in many aspects of job quality, such as earnings, job security or access to training. In particular low-skilled temporary workers face substantial wage penalties, earnings instability and slower wage growth.

Households that are heavily dependent on earnings from non-standard work have much higher income poverty rates (22% on average), and the increase in the number of such households in OECD countries has contributed to higher overall inequality (OECD 2015:15-16). This means that available vacancies are often neither springboards for safer employment at the individuals' level nor the best economic solutions for the economy. Knowing how to navigate from job to job has never been as essential as nowadays.

6.2 Europe 2020 key targets and LLG

The headline targets of the Europe 2020 Strategy¹³ both at the EU and at Member State levels are strongly linked with lifelong guidance as a system and as a support system for transitions. The goals of "full employment" which means 75% of employment between the age of 20 and 64, reducing the rate of early school leavers who left school without an ISCED 3 level of qualifications, and increasing the percentage of the age group of 30-34 obtaining higher education diplomas are all interconnected with different lifelong guidance activities. Lifelong guidance policies and systems are equally pertinent to the fifth key target: easing 20 million EU citizens out of poverty or of the risk of social inclusion.

The Juncker Committee¹⁴ (2014-2019) was elected on the basis of political priorities that¹⁵ focus on growth and jobs as well as democratic dialogue. The new President of the European Commission set down his strategy as follows: "I see it as my key task to rebuild bridges in Europe after the crisis. "To restore European citizens' confidence. To focus our policies on the key challenges ahead for our economies and for our societies. And to strengthen democratic legitimacy on the basis of the Community method." The presidential programme which this time was endorsed by the European Parliament, also mentions the mid-term review of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) at the end of 2016 (Juncker 2014:4). This timing seems appropriate to compare the achievement of the ex-ante criteria as well as the mid-term achievement of the 2014-2020 MFF. The year 2016 also offers an opportunity to follow-up and evaluate the effectiveness of the European Semester process and the effects of the Country-specific Recommendations (CSRs) which were issued for the fifth year running in 2015. The Juncker Committee also sped up the process

¹⁰ ECOFIN Policy Brief Post-crisis unemployment developments: US and EU approaching? Suzanne Casaux and Alessandro Turrini, May 2011

¹¹ OECD (2010) Learning for jobs, Paris

¹² OECD (2015) In it together, Paris

¹³ http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/europe-2020-in-a-nutshell/targets/index_en.htm

¹⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/commission/2014-2019/president_en

¹⁵ A New Start for Europe: My Agenda for Jobs, Growth, Fairness and Democratic Change October 2014

of the European Semester and made the CSR more comprehensive, with less recommendations to the Member States.

While lifelong guidance policy and systems are not usually mentioned in the CSRs, they are implicit in the National Reform Programmes (NRPs), Member States' responses to the CSRs, that address issues such as early-school leaving, youth unemployment, combat against low-skilled jobs or supporting career transitions. As an ELGPN initiative 2016 can be also a year in which to review how lifelong guidance policy has been contributing the achievement of the political priorities set down by the Juncker Committee, of the NRPs, of the process of the European Semester, and how the tools and products of the ELGPN have been used for these purposes.

Policies and systems for lifelong guidance also connect together European initiatives in the fields of education, employment and social inclusion, and youth policies at the citizens' level. Likewise many such initiatives use or mention lifelong guidance as a key component to support their achievement e.g. VET, adult learning, youth guarantee, entrepreneurship, though often treating lifelong guidance as a sector specific activity rather than as a cross-sector transversal learning support.

6.3 The role of lifelong guidance in supporting better career transitions and better social integration

6.3.1. Employment and Social Inclusion

PES 2020: transition broker agency

With the development of the Europe 2020 Strategy, the EU public employment services were eager to contribute to the design and later to the implementation of this new strategy. The PES 2020 Strategy Output¹⁶ paper addressed this as follows: "employ-

ment relationships have become far less stable and diverse transitions are made over the life time into, within and away from the labour market....The new reality of the transitional labour market requires new policy responses, in order to empower citizens in coping with 'risky transitions' and improving their own (working) life. Hence scholars launched the concept of 'positive transitions', which involve a self-reinforcing process of further investment in the employability of citizens." (PES 2020 Output Paper p 3.)

The new European strategy of the public employment service aims to develop a new type of PES which deals mainly with transitions through the lifespan and not only from school-to-work or simple matching to jobs. It has its three pillars i) improved outreach capacity, ii) transition broker role, and iii) partnership development. This new PES concept perfectly matches the concept of lifelong guidance policy and systems building as enunciated in the Council Resolutions on Lifelong Guidance 2004, 2008, and as addressed in ELGPN Resource Kit, 2012, and the Guidelines for Policies and Systems Development for Lifelong Guidance: A Reference Framework for the EU and for the Commission, 2015.

The European Network of Public Employment Services¹⁷ was established by a Decision of the Council and the European Parliament in May 2014. One of the key activities of the new Network is to evaluate the performance and the business model of the 29 PES members via self-assessment. This bench-learning mechanism uses a modified model of the European excellence in public administration, the Common Assessment Framework (CAF). The work programme of the PES Network for 2014-2017 explicitly mentions ELGPN as a partner Network and connects certain elements of lifelong guidance policy with PES reforms and the implementation of the Youth Guarantee or other active labour market programmes. Given the emerging coherence between the new concept of PES (support for transitions throughout life)

¹⁶ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=9690&langId=en>

¹⁷ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1100&langId=en>

and the role of lifelong guidance in lifelong learning strategies (Council Resolutions 2004, 2008), and the work of ELGPN since 2007, there is even a stronger argument for continued EU political co-operation in lifelong guidance post 2015, including using the Resource Kit and the Guidelines to help develop the new emerging concept and design of the PES. Of necessity, there is a need for more co-operation on the theme of lifelong guidance policy between the various policy units of EAC (schools, higher education) and EMPL (VET, adult learning). Such co-operation should be mirrored by the Member States at national, regional, and local government levels.

Implementing Youth Guarantee and consultation on Long-Term Unemployment

There are several vulnerable groups in the EU's labour market, most of whom have been suffering in the current economic situation. Two important European policy initiatives address the needs of youth (under age 25/29), and there has been a recent (May 2015) public consultation on the issue of the long-term unemployed¹⁸. Both contain individual action planning, coaching and mentoring as substantial elements of transition support. The implementation process of the Youth Guarantee¹⁹ programme started across the EU in 2012-2014. Based on the first results/feedback it is clear that countries/regions have different levels of knowledge concerning the role of lifelong guidance in these processes. The profile and toolkit of the career mentors/ coaches are often unclear; network-building around the needs of the users is not always easy and obvious. The Council Recommendation²⁰ on the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market refers to guidance as a service which assists better labour market integration. "Enhanced individual assessments should include

a skills audit and lead to counselling and guidance based on the person's experience, job search history, gender related employment barriers and taking into account labour market needs" (p. 12).

Refugee/migrant crisis in the EU

The current migrant and refugee crisis in the EU demands lifelong guidance provision (e.g. multicultural guidance, guidance services which facilitate social inclusion and successful labour market integration) and resourcing in the education, training, employment, and social inclusion sectors to help the migrants/refugees to find their pathways in learning and work and to make successful transitions. This has to be a long-term human capital investment.

6.3.2 Education and Youth

Education and Training 2020²¹

The European Commission Education and Training Monitor 2014 shows serious remaining challenges, such as low level of basic skills for both youth and adults, a still significantly high level of early school leavers (11.1%), a low level of engagement in lifelong learning, and the employability problems of graduates. The document proposes six priority areas for action instead of the previously used 13. These are as follows:

1. Relevant and high quality skills and competences, focusing on learning outcomes, for employability, innovation and active citizenship.
2. Inclusive education, equality, non-discrimination and promotion of civic competences.
3. Open and innovative education and training, including by fully embracing the digital era.
4. Strong support for educators.

¹⁸ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=hu&catId=89&newsId=2183&furtherNews=yes>

¹⁹ COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION On Establishing a Youth Guarantee Brussels, 5.12.2012 COM(2012) 729 final

²⁰ COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION On the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market {SWD(2015) 176 final} Brussels, 17.9.2015 COM(2015) 462 final

²¹ Draft 2015 Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET2020) New priorities for European cooperation in education and training {SWD(2015) 161 final} Brussels, 26.8.2015 COM(2015) 408 final

5. Transparency and recognition of skills and qualifications to facilitate learning and labour mobility.
6. Sustainable investment, performance and efficiency of education and training systems.

Both VET and adult education policy make links with lifelong guidance. VET priorities refer to lifelong guidance as a support for transition to VET and progression from VET. Adult education action steps link guidance with adult learning supply and demand issues.

Medium-term enablers for VET / Riga Conclusions²²

The ministers in charge of vocational education agreed a new simplified medium-term action plan in Riga (June 2015). The Riga Conclusions highlighted five key enablers for 2015-2020. Based on the learning outcomes approach, they are as follows:

1. Promote work-based learning in all its forms, with special attention to apprenticeships, by involving social partners, companies, chambers and VET providers, as well as by stimulating innovation and entrepreneurship.
2. Further develop quality assurance mechanisms in VET in line with the EQAVET Recommendation 7 and, as part of quality assurance systems, establish continuous information and feedback loops in I-VET and C-VET systems based on learning outcomes.
3. Enhance access to VET and qualifications for all through more flexible and permeable systems, notably by offering efficient and integrated guidance services and making available the validation of non-formal and informal learning.
4. Further strengthen key competences in VET curricula and provide more effective opportunities to acquire or develop those skills through I-VET and C-VET.

5. Introduce systematic approaches to, and opportunities for, initial and continuous professional development of VET teachers, trainers and mentors in both school and work based settings.

In the Riga Conclusions on VET, lifelong guidance is positioned as supporting informed choice of learning pathways, long-term employability, adaptability to evolving skills' needs, improving access to VET and to progression within VET, to the validation of non-formal and informal learning, and to entrepreneurship. This resonates very strongly with the EU Guideline on Lifelong Guidance in VET (ELGPN, 2015). The emphasis on "efficient and integrated" services also resonates with the EU Guidelines on Strategic Leadership and Quality Assurance in Lifelong Guidance (ELGPN 2015).

Promoting youth entrepreneurship through education and training and youth and social inclusion policies

In the past two years the European Council and the European Parliament, confronted by the challenges of historically high youth unemployment (23.8%) and a youth emigration brain drain, have adopted policy positions in the fields of youth, social inclusion, and education and training policies, aimed at improving the entrepreneurial capacity of youth. The Council Conclusions (Education, Youth, May 2014) on entrepreneurship and social inclusion drew attention to the role of youth organisations in providing information, counselling and coaching, and quality training to young people at risk of social exclusion to enable them to obtain the necessary skills in order to find a job or to start their own project and to develop transversal and soft skills.

The Council Conclusions (Education, Youth, December 2014) on promoting entrepreneurship in education and training invited Member States to encourage synergies between entrepreneurship education and training and career guidance to support the acquisition of the entrepreneurship key competence and to reflect venture creation as a career

²² Riga Conclusions 2015 on a new set of medium-term deliverables in the field of VET for the period 2015-2020, as a result of the review of short-term deliverables defined in the 2010 Bruges Communiqué

opportunity. Furthermore it invited Member States to promote and support student venture initiatives, for example by encouraging the creation of appropriate learning environments, the provision of sound careers guidance at all levels of education and training, making use of past graduates' experience in entrepreneurship and of graduate tracking information.

The European Parliament's Resolution (September 2015) on the promotion of youth entrepreneurship in education and training stressed the need mentoring, tutoring and career guidance for students to facilitate their understanding of the entrepreneurial process and to develop an entrepreneurial mind-set. It also stressed that entrepreneurship competence should be developed and improved by a lifetime approach, including via work experience and non-formal and informal learning. It called on Member States to promote entrepreneurship as a positive career option within secondary and tertiary education, and to tackle the negative stigma surrounding entrepreneurship as a career option which is prevalent in some Member States. To these ends it recommended that entrepreneurship be integrated into the training of teachers and career advisers.

The Council Conclusions (2014) and the Resolution of the European Parliament (2015) on entrepreneurship highlight once again the need for a crosscutting policy or strategic approach at the European Commission and at Member State level to lifelong guidance provision and for a lifetime approach in education, training, youth, employment and social inclusion policies. Co-ordination across policy fields is required at EU and national levels from both a policy perspective and a guidance delivery perspective.

6.3.3 Leipzig Initiative²³ (apprenticeship/internship)

The role of work-based learning vs. school-based activities has been emerging since the beginning of the current economic and social crisis. The European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA) was launched on 2 July 2013 in the context of the World Skills competition in Leipzig, Germany. It advertises the role of companies and workplaces in learning and often cross-connects with the idea of dual training in VET or HE. In its original meaning WBL can be achieved in vocational schools as well. The pedagogical meaning of WBL is much closer to the project-based teaching/ learning²⁴

"a systematic teaching method that engages students in learning knowledge and skills through an extended inquiry process structured around complex, authentic questions and carefully designed products and tasks." This process can last for varying time periods and can extend over multiple content areas. (UNC, School of Education website).

WBL also highlights the strong involvement of the employers in education, for example supporting the development of *career maturity* of the young adults during the years in vocational education and beyond. ELGPN Concept Note (No. 5) on work-based learning made distinction between three different phases;

- Engagement: Increasing citizens' understanding of work-based learning, the routes into it and the rewards of participation.
- Achievement: Helping participants (learners, employers and learning providers) in work-based learning to remain engaged and consider how best to enhance their skills and employability.
- Transition: Assisting the effective utilisation of the skills developed within work-based learn-

²³ The European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA) was launched on 2 July 2013 in the context of the WorldSkills competition in Leipzig, Germany

²⁴ <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/4753>

ing by supporting individuals in transitions from work-based learning programmes to sustainable employment.²⁵

Work-based guidance can support work based learning as a process²⁶ which process includes both institutional level development (e.g. vocational school/higher education and workplaces) but also has a strong individual level development. This second component of the process can be supported with different elements of lifelong guidance.

6.3.4 The validation of non-formal and informal learning

The constant shortfall of jobs (Kok, 2004)²⁷ in the EU has long standing political and social effects. This burning political and social issue was on the political agenda during the Lisbon Process (2000-2010) and one of the key points of the Europe 2020 strategy (2011-2020). The future of the labour market and the real need for certain skills cannot be fully predicted. Even with the best established forecast system it is always clear that these prognoses are built more on scenarios than concrete numbers which can directly feed VET engagement. Instead of this different scenarios have been drafted. For example the background document of the Europe 2020 Strategy stated; *“Europe is left with clear yet challenging choices. Either we face up collectively to the immediate challenge of the recovery and to long-term challenges – globalisation, pressure on resources, ageing, – so as to make up for the recent losses, regain competitiveness, boost productivity and put the EU on an upward path of prosperity (“sustainable recovery”). Or we continue at a slow and largely uncoordinated pace of reforms, and we risk ending up with a permanent loss in wealth, a sluggish growth rate (“sluggish recovery”) possibly leading*

to high levels of unemployment and social distress, and a relative decline on the world scene (“lost decade”)” (Europe 2020, 2010:6-7²⁸).

Negotiation mechanisms (Sector Skills Councils in the UK, local negotiations in DK, national mechanism in FI etc.) between the different stakeholders have been reinforced in the last two decades to ensure that the employment and education and training systems can be flexible enough to meet the needs created by globalized and often unpredictable economic changes. From an EU citizen learner perspective, such systems flexibility can be very challenging. Citizens have to learn how to navigate both between and within these systems. Lifelong guidance provision is an enabler; it assists the EU citizen learner to make successful transitions. Systems flexibility and the corresponding need for lifelong guidance support for EU citizen learners have been noted by the EU Ministers of Vocational Training in the Riga Conclusions (June, 2015). Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning and National Qualification Frameworks, the further development of guidelines on validation (CEDEFOP 2015)²⁹ after the first set of guidelines³⁰ (2009) were issued, are strongly connected with the issue of more difficult transitions and changing institutional borders, both in the world of education and in the world of work.

In the age of *boundaryless careers*³¹ (Rousseau 1996) or patchwork careers, learning has a complex meaning which is far from the linear learning models of the highly industrialised societies until the late 1980s. This new proposal (CEDEFOP, 2015) on validation reinforces the role of lifelong guidance

²⁵ Work-based Learning and Lifelong Guidance Policies ELGPN Concept Note No. 5 Tibor Bors Borbély-Peczé and Jo Hutchinson, 2014

²⁶ <http://eqavet.eu/workbasedlearning/GNS/Home.aspx>

²⁷ Facing the challenge The Lisbon strategy for growth and employment Report from the High Level Group chaired by Wim Kok November 2004

²⁸ Communication from the Commission on Europe 2020: A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, Brussels, 3.3.2010 COM(2010) 2020

²⁹ CEDEFOP (2015) European guidelines for validation of non-formal and informal learning, Draft (print version 30/April/2015) - for external distribution and comments

³⁰ CEDEFOP (2009) European guidelines for validating nonformal and informal learning

³¹ Arthur, M.B. & Rousseau, D.M. (1996). The boundaryless career: A new employment principle for a new organizational era. New York: Oxford University Press.

services through the validation process, using the EU definition on LLG from the resolution 2004³².

The 2012 Council Recommendation³³ affirmed the role of guidance in the validation process and stated:

.....Member States should provide within validation arrangements (*'... information and guidance on the benefits of, and opportunities for validation, as well as on the relevant procedures, that are available to individuals and organizations, and the validation of non-formal and informal learning is supported by appropriate guidance and counselling and is readily accessible..* .

The European Qualification Framework³⁴ (EQF) and National Qualification Frameworks (NQFs) are translation tools that help communication and comparison between qualifications systems in Europe and within the Member States. They also can be understood as tools in the lifelong guidance process, enabling the EU citizen learner to make better individual career choices, and enabling more efficient learner engagement and performance in education and training programmes and institutions based on better information and guidance.

New national validation systems must be installed in EU Member States by 2018 and the national implementation processes of the NQFs are close to completion. Both of these policy developments are under the frame of lifelong learning. Lifelong guidance provision is essential to the successful implementation of lifelong learning policy goals that include the use of the validation of non-formal and informal learning and the application of the NQFs.

The EU policy panorama described above, the references to lifelong guidance in the broad set of policy fields, and the role of EU institutions, such as the Commission, the Council, and the European Parliament in promoting references to lifelong guidance provision, underline the need for a comprehensive and integrated approach to lifelong guidance policy development at EU level.

The various policy development tools produced by ELGPN, and in particular the *Guidelines for Policies and Systems Development for Lifelong Guidance*, provide the EU institutions with the possibility of having a coherent approach to lifelong guidance provision for EU citizens. The EU institutions should take full advantage of and utilise such policy tools in all future references to lifelong guidance in setting social policy directions.

³² Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the Member States meeting within the Council on Strengthening Policies, Systems and Practices in the field of Guidance throughout life in Europe, Brussels, 18 May 2004 9286/04

³³ Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning

³⁴ European Parliament (2006) Report on the creation of a European Qualifications Framework (2006/2002(INI)) / Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning