

The Future of Educational, Vocational and Career Guidance in Europe

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1. EU policy on lifelong learning and guidance

This article compares the situation of career guidance in Germany with the international and especially European development in this field. It demonstrates the new understanding of guidance and its important role in achieving political goals as lifelong learning and labour market efficiency in Europe.

In many European countries educational and vocational guidance has not been counted as a major issue of public interest, nor was it at the top of the political agenda of those responsible for education and labour market policies. In Germany for example the 2005 coalition treaty between political parties CDU/CSU and SPD gave hope that this might change in the future. The educational-policy projects specified in the treaty include optimising educational guidance in order to increase participation in continuing education and thus to let lifelong learning become reality.²

In some countries of the world this is quite different. It is therefore not surprising that the guidance scene and guidance services in Germany are often stimulated externally - by countries far ahead of us in this field (as for example the USA, Canada, Finland, Denmark or the United Kingdom) and by international organisations like the OECD and the EU, whose recommendations also influence the situation in Germany.

¹ This article is based on a German article, published in: Peter Faulstich (ed.), „Lernwiderstände – Für eine umfassende Lernberatung“, VSA - Verlag, 2005. The authors put the German situation in a wider framework of an international and European development of guidance and describe the conceptual base of the creation of a National Guidance Forum.

² „Gemeinsam für Deutschland – mit Mut und Menschlichkeit“. Coalition treaty between CDU, CSU and SPD, November 11, 2005, number 1745 onwards, page 35

The perception of educational and vocational guidance in Europe and worldwide as a major lever to achieve important political goals has been improved by the following activities, institutions and political processes, which have at the same time decisively influenced the further development of guidance services with reference to content, conceptions and strategies:

- The International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance (IAEVG/AIOSP) holds annual conferences all over the world (Lisbon, September 2005, Mexico 2006)). It adopted Ethical Standards (1995) and the Paris Declaration (2001) and approved the „International Competencies“, which were published 2003 in Bern. Thus it laid a foundation for professional and quality standards in guidance worldwide.³ As an NGO, the IAEVG has been promoting the professionalisation of educational and vocational guidance for over 50 years. It also campaigned for the political recognition of guidance as a fundamental right essential for the participation in education and employment.
- The high professional standard of the Canadian guidance services is partly due to the dedicated work of the Canadian Career Development Foundation (CCDF). In three major international symposia (1999, 2001, 2003)⁴ it has brought together vocational guidance practitioners and policy makers from different countries in order to demonstrate the strategic importance of vocational guidance in achieving important political goals and also in order to advertise a better policy on vocational guidance worldwide. A similar symposium has taken place in April 2006 in Australia.⁵
- The EU-programme Leonardo da Vinci has long been promoting projects in the sphere of educational and vocational guidance. These projects are not only aimed at further developing conceptions and methods of guidance offers, but also at professionalisation and quality assurance of guidance and guidance practitioners. By establishing and promoting National Resource Centres for Vocational Guidance (NRCVG) all over Europe they added a European dimension to the national guidance systems and thus contributed to the transnational exchange of experiences and know-how.
- At their conference in Lisbon (2000) the EU heads of state and government set the ambitious political goal for Europe to become by 2010 the world's most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy, capable of sustainable economic growth, more and better jobs and greater social cohesion. Development, advancement and optimal use of human resources and a policy that proactively promotes lifelong learning have been identified as essential requirements for achieving these goals. The recommendation on lifelong learning (2001) by the Council of Ministers and the Copenhagen Resolution (2002) for increased cooperation in education and training between the member states confirmed this. All these documents

³ Cf. www.iaevg.org; IAEVG (ed.), Ethical Standards (1995), IAEVG (ed.), Paris Declaration (2001), IAEVG (ed.), International Competencies (2003)

⁴ Making Waves, Vancouver 1999; Going for Gold, Vancouver 2001; Bridging the Gap, Toronto 2003

⁵ www.ccdf.ca

emphasize the great importance of extensive high-quality educational and vocational guidance as well as career guidance to implement a strategy of lifelong learning. Therefore an effective policy on lifelong learning has to include measures to promote, intensify and improve lifelong guidance services (guidance policy).

- In order to support the aforementioned guidance policy the Commission set up an EU experts group „Lifelong Guidance“. Its task is emphasizing in all EU resolutions and documents the aspect of lifelong guidance as a key instrument to achieve the objectives agreed on in Lisbon and Copenhagen. In that respect, it also aims at supporting the working groups concerned with the implementation of the programme „Education and Training 2010“.⁶ The EU experts group has amongst other things participated in preparing the Resolution of the Council of Education Ministers on lifelong guidance and worked out two further publications on tools for strategic positioning of guidance⁷ and a “Handbook” on policy advice with regard to implementing and optimising national guidance policy and guidance practice⁸.
- In the context of its continuous educational analyses the OECD recognized the importance of guidance services in improving educational opportunities and increasing the output of educational systems, but also in ensuring economic growth and prosperity. In the years 2001-2003 it carried out an extensive “Review of Career Guidance Policies” in 14 member states, which has led to important discoveries regarding the different policies on educational and vocational guidance (for details see section 4).⁹
- EU/EFTA and the World Bank have joined this scientific project and carried out comparable studies in a further 15 European and 7 non-European countries. In this respect it is especially remarkable that the World Bank, which is active in emerging countries, recognized the great benefit of vocational guidance for the economic development of these countries and therefore promotes the development of guidance systems and guidance policies in these countries. A synthesis report published by CEDEFOP sums up the most important results for the EU and EFTA states (cf. section 4).¹⁰
- Based on the results of these studies, the Council of EU Ministers of Education on May 28, 2004, during the Irish presidency, adopted a “Resolution on Strengthening Policies, Systems and Practices in the field of Guidance throughout life in Europe”¹¹, which puts educational and vocational guidance on the political agenda of the EU. Within the framework of their respective competencies the member states and the Commission are invited to examine their national

⁶ On its website CEDEFOP set up a *virtual community* for the expert group, where all projects and work results can be found: http://cedefop.communityzero.com/lifelong_guidance

⁷ „Improving lifelong guidance policies and systems using common European reference tools“, edited by CEDEFOP, Jennifer Wannan and John McCarthy, Luxembourg 2005

⁸ OECD and EU Commission (ed.), „Career Guidance – a Handbook for policy makers“, OECD/EU 2004

⁹ OECD (ed.), Career Guidance and Public Policy – Bridging the Gap, OECD 2004

¹⁰ Ronald G. Sultana, Guidance Policies in the Knowledge Society. Trends, Challenges and Responses across Europe. A Cedefop Synthesis Report, Cedefop Panorama Series; 85, Luxembourg 2004

¹¹ Council of the European Union, Document 9286/ 04 EDUC 89 SOC 234

systems with regard to the objectives of the resolution and to implement the results of the international studies. This means especially widening access to guidance, ensuring the coherence of provision (especially to groups at risk) and providing a better coordination and network of providers on a regional, national and European level, as well as improving the quality of guidance services and training of counsellors by following current best practice across Europe.

- Within the context of the "Joint Action Programmes 2004 – 2006" the Commission started two trans-national projects with respectively six participating countries in order to implement the aims of the resolution. These projects are aimed at promoting a network of all actors interested and involved in guidance, stakeholders and those politically responsible first on a national and later on a European level. The key objective is promoting the creation of National fora or networks wherever they do not yet exist. The participating countries should have the opportunity to share experience on a European level to strengthen guidance policies and improving guidance delivery systems in their countries.¹²
- The international activities and studies on guidance as well as the Resolution of the Council of Ministers presented above led to the foundation of an International Centre for Career Development and Public Policy (ICCDPP) as a very concrete result. Operating in the first instance only as a virtual centre, this centre will aim among other things at providing comprehensive professional material for counsellors, promoting international exchange of information and knowledge, stimulating and forwarding researchable issues on guidance etc. At the moment this centre is still being built up. A website and a newsletter already exists.¹³

2. Guidance for the achievement of socio-political and economic goals

With English as the dominating language in international discourse, usually the word „career guidance“ is used when talking about educational and vocational guidance on an international level. This does, however, not mean the concept of „vocational guidance“ still prevailing in some countries as in the past in Germany, meaning a guidance offer for young people that are in a transition period between school and training, university or employment. It rather refers to more comprehensive understanding of career guidance intended to assist people of any age throughout their lives (as entrenched in the German Social Security Code III, § 29 for example, but not fully realised in practice), which include issues as continuing education, professional reorientation, change of job as well as vocational integration in case of unemployment or in case of re-entry into working life after a break.

¹² « Creating European networks of national forums for lifelong guidance: Joint-Action-Programme Call for Proposals 2004, DG EAC, Brussels 2004

¹³ „Policy Points“ – Newsletter of the ICCDPP; edition 1 and 2/2005; to purchase please contact John McCarthy, Director of the Centre (jmc@iccdpp.org)

In their reviews and publications the OECD and the EU agree on the following definition of career guidance including at the same time statements on task and function of guidance¹⁴:

„Career guidance refers to services intended to assist people, of any age and at any point throughout their lives to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers. Career guidance helps people to reflect on their ambitions, interests, qualifications and abilities. It helps them to understand the labour market and education systems, and to relate this to what they know about themselves. Comprehensive career guidance tries to teach people to plan and make decisions about work and learning. Career guidance makes information about the labour market and about educational opportunities more accessible by organising it, systematising it, and making it available when and where people need it.“¹⁵

According to the OECD and the EU understanding career guidance is an individual-oriented service, the effects of which are of great benefit to both society and economy. Career guidance is therefore a private as well as a public good. The reviews differentiate between three fundamental categories of the aims of career guidance intervention:

- learning goals
- labour market goals
- social equity goals (equal opportunity goals, social inclusion)

The reviews of the three international organisations show that the countries examined have to a large extent agreed on the social and economic goals they strive for: Embedded in a strategy of lifelong learning educational, vocational and career guidance promote and support the following activities:

- Development and achievement of individual learning goals (individual coaching, identification of competencies, decision making and career management skills),
- Enhancement of effectiveness and efficiency in the education system (e.g. reduction of drop-outs from education and training, quality improvement, transparency of educational opportunities, improvement of selection processes)
- Development and preservation of employability (avoidance of unemployment)
- Allocation and matching processes on the labour market (avoidance/reduction of unemployment, avoidance of ill-qualification and processes of dequalification),
- Achievement of sociopolitical goals (social integration of disadvantaged groups).

3. Reviews on guidance undertaken by the OECD, EU/EFTA and the World Bank

Beyond the borders of the EU awareness of the political importance of educational, vocational and career guidance has been rising during the last years. Hence in many countries of the world there are demands for strengthening and intensifying guidance services in the sphere of education and

¹⁴ In this text, *career guidance* refers to all guidance activities assisting people in education, training, employment and career (including the use of modern ICT and media to assist individuals and groups).

¹⁵ OECD (2004) p.19

employment. Against this background OECD, EU and the World Bank, supported by the IAEVG, the CCDF (Canadian Career Development Foundation) and the HRDC (Human Resources Development Canada) – now part of Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC) – carried out comparative reviews in 36 countries¹⁶ on „Career Guidance and Public Policy” from 2001 to 2003. The review aimed at analyzing the current situation of educational and career services in these countries and identifying possible common trends and policy demands. The results and conclusions were presented and discussed at the conference „Career Guidance and Public Policy – Bridging the Gap“, which took place in Toronto 6 - 8 October, 2003. The individual studies, summarizing reports and conference results are accessible on the website of the conference.¹⁷

As a example we describe the participation of Germany in the OECD-review that was carried out 2001/2002 in 14 member states. German participation was coordinated by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). The Secretariat of the Standing Conference of Land Ministers of Education (KMK) and the Federal Employment Service (BA) were also involved, as well as selected schools, universities, organisations of the social partners, private educational institutions and private guidance and counselling agencies. On the basis of a comprehensive questionnaire, which was answered by BMBF, BA and KMK, an OECD expert team¹⁸ visited selected policy and practice areas and carried out additional expert interviews. A seminar, which was attended by the OECD expert team and approximately 25 representatives from institutions and professional associations concerned with educational and vocational guidance, was organized by the BMBF on June 5, 2002 and marked the completion of the phase of data collection. The country survey on career guidance policies in Germany conducted by the OECD expert team was published in German in September 2002.¹⁹

4. Comparable trends in guidance throughout the world

In spite of partly very different systems and different legal, economic and social conditions in the countries examined and despite a different level of development educational and career services, the development directions and trends observed are similar. They may be more distinctive in one country and less in another, but on the whole they seem to be quite universal and to suggest similar conclusions and recommendations for political action.

In his synthesis report of the EU/ETF country surveys for CEDEFOP Ronald Sultana identified the following main trends with regard to contents and methods that can be observed in the development of

¹⁶ Australia, Bulgaria, Chile, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, United Kingdom, Ireland, Iceland, Italy, Canada, Korea, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Austria, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Rumania, Russia, Sweden, Slovak Republic, Spain, South Africa, the Czech Republic, Turkey, Hungary, Cyprus

¹⁷ http://www.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/sp-ps/arb-dgra/conferences/2003/guidance_orientation/home.shtml

¹⁸ Prof. Anthony Watts, OECD and Prof. Peter Plant, Danish University of Education, Copenhagen

¹⁹ „OECD-Gutachten zur Berufsberatung – Deutschland. Länderbericht“, Bundesanstalt für Arbeit (ed.), Informationen für die Beratungs- und Vermittlungsdienste (ibv), No. 38/02 (September 18, 2002, Nürnberg)

guidance services and cannot be presented in more detail here. They can be found in the corresponding publication and also on the website of the EU Lifelong Guidance Expert Group²⁰.

| From a guidance offer that is ... | To ... |
|---|---|
| ... available in specific periods of transition | ... lifelong guidance. |
| ... focussed on and limited to risk groups | ... a mainstream offer for all. |
| ... curative and reactive | ... a preventive, pro-active approach. |
| ... mainly based on psychology | ... a multidisciplinary approach. |
| ... focussed on individuals | ... offers also for groups. |
| ... focussed on personal mentoring and advice | ... guidance offers aimed at self-information and self-assessment. |
| ... aimed at periods of time apart from school | ... guidance offers during all phases of life |
| ... mainly public/state-run | ... guidance services offered increasingly by private and non-profit providers. |
| ... mainly conducted by full-time practitioners | ... increasing participation of stakeholders. |
| ... limited to the national market | ... trans-national mobility. |

In the participating countries, the trends towards professionalisation respectively deprofessionalisation of guidance services and in this context the issue of quality and qualification of guidance practitioners are evidently not harmonised, nor is the development of (minimum) quality standards and quality management systems. These again are closely linked to the generally visible ambition to evaluate effects and profitability of supply and make cost-benefit calculations. Against the background of scarce public resources this is legitimate, but it poses new challenges for guidance services.

5. Recommendations for further development from an OECD and EU perspective

- Guidance services have so far been intervening mainly selectively in critical moments of decision or transition periods. They are usually not aimed at assisting people of any age throughout their working lives. According to the studies, apart from support only in particular cases and concrete moments of decision educational and vocational guidance has to aim more directly at imparting career management skills in order to advance personal responsibility and the individuals' ability for independent career planning, continuing education and preservation of employability.
- These processes have to start early at school and go on during employment. Hence the OECD calls for occupational orientation to be embedded in the school curriculum. Under such programmes external actors (especially practitioners representing job management, business and universities) are to be more involved in occupational orientation at school in order to convey contents that are related to practice and relevant to the labour market.

²⁰ http://cedefop.communityzero.com/lifelong_guidance

- c. In educational and vocational guidance (for all age groups) offers of internships, work trial and work shadowing have to be increased to enable individuals to try out their own abilities and competences. This does not only apply to young people but also to adults, whether employed or unemployed.
- d. Access to educational and vocational guidance services has to be widened and improved. So far throughout the world mostly young people and unemployed persons benefited from public guidance offers. There are much fewer offers for persons employed, elder groups, migrants, those who want to re-enter working life, marginalised groups and often – surprisingly – for students in the tertiary education sector. Depending on the target group different strategies have to be embarked on.
- e. Preventive guidance offers for employed persons (e.g. those interested in career change or professional development and the preservation of their employability) should be implemented by offering services close to the work place in cooperation with companies and/or worker representation.
- f. With regard to a necessary diversification of supply for specific target groups and in order to increase accessibility and customer orientation top priority has to be given the development of call centres, hotlines und internet-based information and guidance offers. These strategies require high-quality, up-to-date information supply which is comprehensive and user-friendly. Such self information institutions have to be completed and – as regards content - combined with programmes of self assessment that are scientifically established and easy to handle.
- g. Apart from some leading countries (e.g. Canada, Switzerland, Australia, Finland, UK) and the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance (IAEVG/AIOSP) for educational and vocational guidance services there are hardly any accepted quality standards and quality management systems that also include defined qualification standards for guidance practitioners.²¹ These have to be developed on a national level in order to support the various public and private guidance services as guidelines. For consumer protection as well as for public and private investors such standards and quality assurance systems are decision support in financing of offers.
- h. So far findings on results, effectiveness and costs of guidance offers are developed insufficiently. Policy-makers and investors are in urgent need of research and development providing them with cost-benefit analyses in this area in order to help them justify the expenditures for guidance services.

²¹ Canada: www.career-dev-guidelines.org; UK: www.guidancecouncil.com; www.icg-uk.org; IAEVG: www.iaevg.org

- i. The development of career guidance services cannot be continued at the expense of government budgets as it is desirable.. Hence intelligent and low-cost, but still effective measures have to be developed in order to increase supply (cf. measures mentioned in paragraph a, e and f). Part of this is involving all stakeholders– parents, teachers, schools, companies, trade unions, non-governmental and non-profit organisations, local authorities and private providers. These groups are supposed to participate namely by submitting individual or cooperative offers as well as by financing of offers.
- j. In all countries examined career guidance is regarded as a public as well as a private good intended to support individuals, economy and society in achieving important economic and social goals. The state, however, does not always have to provide these services itself. Yet it is responsible for a stately guaranteed framework of providing guidance services that are easy accessible by everyone and meet defined quality standards.

6. Networking and „Strategic Leadership“ – Recommendations for a strategic orientation of guidance policies

In almost all of the examined countries competences, financing and realisation of educational and vocational guidance is fragmented between different departments (especially between the departments of education and the departments of employment) and institutions and insufficiently coordinated, although they are as a rule publicly financed. This may on the one hand positively influence competition, diversification of supply and development of innovative strategies, on the other hand it also involves the risk of duplication of work and financing and could affect the necessary transparency as well as the development of common strategies and required quality standards.

Only in a few countries does exist a well-directed and coordinated career guidance policy or an institution that takes a strategic leadership role in developing and coordinating guidance services. The OECD hence recommends that these countries create a National Forum for Career Guidance in which representatives of all participating departments, providers, guidance practitioners and relevant groups of society are involved. The tasks of such a board, which is not supposed to have decision-making and discretionary power, are provision of transparency and exchange of information between the institutions as well as between politicians and practitioners. Its tasks also include improved cooperation, coordination of joint initiatives, stimulating advancement of standards and instruments, identification of information gaps and need of research as well as policy advice.

7. National Fora and European networks in support of guidance on lifelong learning

The studies carried out in 36 countries for the first time allow evaluating broad, empirically supported findings on educational and vocational guidance and its legal-institutional and political foundations.

The findings have been discussed in the OECD Directorate for Education, in the European Commission and the Council of the European Union and in the World Bank, which resulted in recommendations for action to the member states. Based on these recommendations policies are developed and support programmes are conducted in the European Union and the individual countries. With its "Joint Action Programme 2004 – 2006" the EU promotes European networking for the creation of National Fora on Career Guidance in order to support the implementation of the recommendations mentioned above. Thus the policy for lifelong learning that is part of the Lisbon strategy is accompanied by a policy that ensures continuous, easily accessible high-quality guidance offers. To achieve this, an essential requirement is a network of actors on a national, European and international level.

In Germany for example especially the EU resolution, but also the results of the OECD review lead to a joint initiative, in which participated policy makers – in this case especially the responsible Federal Ministries of Education and Research respectively Economics and Labour as well as the Federal Employment Agency (BA), the National Federal Training Institute (BIBB) and the National Agency "Education for Europe". In June 2004 they organized a comprehensive expert conference in Bonn titled "Future of Guidance for Education, Career and Employment – Shaping and Networking"²². At this conference the implications of the EU resolution were discussed and priority areas of action for Germany were identified. Following the conference a first meeting took place for an initiative to create a "National Forum Career Guidance in Education, Training and Employment" in Germany as recommended in the EU Resolution. In this forum initiative all groups of society were represented (ministries, trade unions and employers, the Federal Employment Agency, municipal institutions, Non-Governmental Organisations, youth welfare service, guidance practitioners and policy-makers).

The forum initiative aimed at providing a platform for guidance practitioners and policy makers to enable them to discuss concerns of guidance and make suggestions for quality standards and other necessary improvements and advancements to politicians. It also gives them the opportunity to create more transparency and cooperation between guidance institutions that are still working in parallel, but not in coordination.

For the first steps two areas of action regarded as priority areas by the members of the initiative were analysed and solutions suggested within the framework of a research project commissioned by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research:

- The creation of a „guidance map“, meaning a survey of all guidance offers and guidance providers in Germany
- The development of quality standards for guidance and for basic and advanced training of counsellors that can be regarded by guidance providers as a common basis for their work, as well as suggestions for quality assurance and an evaluation of quality standards

²² http://www.nabibb.de/home/vortraege_details.php?ID=15&site=Vortr%26auml%3Bge+%26+Pr%26auml%3Bsentationen

On an EU level two European networks have been created within the framework of both projects of the Joint Action Programme. Both aim at the creation of National Guidance Fora in the participating countries and later to be established a European Guidance Forum that want to take concrete measures and support the creation of National Forums in participating countries.

- Project 1 with the participating countries Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Finland, France and Poland (www.lifelongguidance.net)
- Project 2 with the participating countries UK, Ireland, Slovenia, Malta, Denmark and Estonia

National Guidance Fora originally did in fact exist only in three of these countries: in the UK, Denmark and Poland. In the remaining countries fora had to be created with support of the Joint Action Programme. The success of these projects is not only dependent upon the commitment of the partners cooperating in these networks, but primarily upon the will of those politically responsible to bring forward the development of educational and vocational guidance in their countries. In Germany the forum initiative succeeded to create the German National Guidance Forum within the working period of the EU Joint Action project. On 27 September 2006 the German Forum were formally established as a registered association according civil law²³.

The creation of National Guidance Fora and the cooperation in networks on a national level are not an end in themselves but provide a basis for professionalisation and quality assurance of guidance. Meanwhile the EU Commission has announced in the Finish EU guidance conference in November 2006²⁴ a call for the creation of and participation in a European Guidance Network that should be based on the already established National Fora. Lifelong guidance has to be secured through this European Guidance Network which will continuously support and enhance the development of high quality guidance policies, systems and practices throughout the member states.

Translated by Frederike Strunk

²³ see the related article by Bernhard Jenschke on the foundation of German National Guidance Forum below in this book and: www.forum-beratung.de

²⁴ EU Finish Guidance conference "Lifelong Guidance Policies and Systems - Building the stepping stones": <http://ktl.jyu.fi/ktl/guidance2006/>