

COLLABORATION IN THE PROVISION OF CAREER GUIDANCE SERVICES

Initiative examples

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Foundation for Lifelong Learning Development Innove
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One of the key weaknesses identified by the OECD and EU surveys on career guidance in Europe and beyond is the lack of collaboration between providers and stakeholders. The surveys reported several important and commendable initiatives which deliver career information and guidance to young people and adults in different contexts such as schools, Public Employment Services, and workplaces. However, the challenge of ensuring that delivery is strategically planned and co-ordinated so that clients experience guidance as a seamless service throughout their life course still remains to be addressed.

The notion that lifelong guidance requires that services within the different sectors are effectively co-ordinated, coherently planned, and well integrated is an important one for at least two reasons.

First, there is an increasing realization that, from the point of view of the user, education, training and occupational information and advice need to be available when and where needed, in ways that respond to issues, concerns and questions that clients experience at different points throughout their life. The effectiveness of such support is often limited because clients can find it difficult to get access to services that meet their needs, and frequently services are inconsistent between sectors such as education and employment. **One cannot talk of a system of career guidance, which seriously takes into account a lifelong perspective, if there is a lack of collaboration both between different government departments, and between government and other stakeholders in developing and planning career guidance services.** The surveys in fact note that few countries have developed policy structures to ensure that the different sub-systems that provide career guidance are connected to each other, through such means as inter-ministerial or inter-departmental committees, national guidance forums, or a policy unit which has the whole system of provision as its remit.

Partnership and collaboration is important for a second reason. **The lack of coordination between different service providers can create costly duplication.** A case in point is the provision of career and labour market information, where different ministries collect different but potentially complementary information, creating data sets that cannot always be consolidated in a way that helps users make better sense of options and opportunities. It is not unusual for governments to produce a number of overlapping databases, which together provide only partial coverage of what is available. Partnership, on the other hand, can help pool resources, creating economies

of scale that enable more goals to be achieved in a cost- and time-effective manner. The synergy created through collaboration can also trigger off new ideas, initiatives and new ways of doing things, all of which can work out to the benefit of citizens.

This is why the attempt to document instances of partnerships in career guidance service delivery is commendable. The present collection of case studies is a first attempt at putting together a compendium that may serve as an inspiration to others, and to provide insights as to the modalities that can be developed, as well as to the challenges that may arise and how to overcome them. The partnerships that are described in this compendium are varied. While the OECD and EU surveys highlighted **cross-sectoral partnerships** - ie those that involve joint efforts between the education and labour market sectors - the present case studies also look at other types of partnerships, namely those between different providers and practitioners within the same sector (UK), between central government and a range of institutions at the municipal level (Denmark), and between a range of departments within different Ministries (Estonia). In some cases (as in Slovenia) a helpful distinction is made between **strategic partnerships** - ie partnerships between different administrative, business, political and other institutions that have a strong impact on the conditions of local development - and **professional partnerships** - ie partnerships between professional institutions, operating in a particular setting in the area of adult education and guidance or in similar activities.

The motivation behind these attempts at institutionalising collaboration are the same, even if the specific goals targeted vary between one country and another. In all cases, **the key motivating factor is improved service delivery**, whether this is achieved through ensuring practitioner feedback to policy-makers (UK) and different ministries (Denmark), through facilitating mutual learning between different providers thus promoting good practice (UK, Ireland, Slovenia), through identification of gaps in provision (Ireland), through the pooling of resources and expertise, thus avoiding duplication (Malta, UK), through improving the quality of the information system available to users (Slovenia), or through creating professional development opportunities that bring providers from different sectors together so that each learns from the other, thus enhancing a more integrated approach to service delivery (Ireland, Malta, UK).

The **different initiatives** described in this compendium suggest some of the ways in which different countries have started taking measures to combat fragmentation. Key among these are:

- the setting up of national associations that bring together different practitioners and policy-makers (eg the National Association of Educational Guidance for Adults in the UK);

- the facilitation of communication at inter- and intra-ministerial levels, through the setting up of inter- and/or intra-departmental structures bringing different government portfolios together, thus ensuring that governmental policies are clearly articulated, mutually agreed and supported, and effectively presented (the Adult Educational Guidance Initiative in Ireland);
- the creation of staff training programmes that bring together different stakeholders (Ireland, Malta, UK);
- the **establishment of local guidance partnerships**, drawing on both strategic and professional partners in the adult education area, with a view to consolidating guidance services in order to ensure a more effective attainment of lifelong learning goals (Slovenia);
- the launching of **initiatives that take holistic client needs as their starting point, and organise services** in response to such needs by drawing together a whole range of service providers (the AEGI in Ireland; the Mentor Programme in Denmark; the integrated counselling model in Estonia); and
- the **establishment of co-ordination structures**. The latter can take different shapes. In some cases, a policy unit has been set up to develop a policy framework that is applicable to all sectors and providers (eg Malta). Estonia has opted to establish a national co-ordinating institution, effectively serving as a platform of common standards and specifications agreed to by different ministries. Some have formalised agreements specifying the nature of the coordination that must exist between different ministries in the delivery of guidance services, and encouraging cooperation between and among institutions at national, regional, district and local levels (eg Denmark). Yet others have taken a cue from the OECD and EU surveys and set up fledgling guidance forums (Denmark, Ireland, Malta) which include government and stakeholder representatives, as well as key providers, in an attempt to bring coherence to guidance provision across education, training and employment sectors. The case of Denmark is particularly instructive, given that it has a long tradition of cross-sectoral cooperation in guidance issues at national, regional and local levels. The new National Dialogue Forum, established by the Ministry of Education in 2003, has a broad representation, including 11 individual members, and representatives of 12 member organisations and as many as five ministries. The Forum is striving to stimulate dialogue based on both a top-down, policy-driven approach and a bottom-up engagement in terms of policy-making from the points of view of users, practitioners and researchers.

Of course, partnership is not without its **challenges**. As one notes from the case studies, working together with other organisations **requires investment of time and effort**, which does not always lead to expected outcomes given that institutional

cultures might differ and serve as an obstacle to communication and to the building up of trust. A tradition of competition for funding is not easily replaced by an approach that values co-operative pooling of resources. **Changes in political or institutional leadership and in policy directions** can also create an uneasy environment which is not conducive to the stabilisation of inter-institutional relationships and to the formation of lasting partnerships. In addition, diverging interests of different partners can easily overcome the well-intentioned attempts to attain common goals.

Such problems and challenges are not insurmountable, however. What these brief case studies show us is the increasing realization, on the part of many European countries, that **traditional models of career guidance provision are unsuited to the demands of contemporary trajectories and pathways in education, training and employment.** These attempts at overcoming fragmentation in service delivery, partial, tentative and incomplete though they may be, are an indication of the search for ways of implementing a new guidance paradigm, one that sees guidance as being at the heart of social and economic prosperity, and which is strongly committed to the development of people through lifelong career planning. Such ambitions and aspirations cannot be attained unless stakeholders work in partnership to develop innovative and context-sensitive ways of servicing citizen needs across the lifespan.

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Country: Denmark

Name of the initiative

The Mentor Programme

Context

A number of pilot programmes involving mentors in the guidance of young people with **temporary special guidance needs**. The programmes will be conducted at the municipal Youth Guidance Centres and will be carried through from January 2005 till September 2007.

In spite of consistent political efforts, approx. 17% of pupils leaving the Danish *Folkeskole* do not embark on further education. A number of problems prevail within this group, eg unemployment and exclusion from the labour market, social problems and crime. Most of these young people are lost in the education system during the period of transition from school to further education, because they do not embark on further education, or, if they do, they most often drop out again.

The Danish government has set up a goal: to get at least 85% of this group of youngsters to carry through a youth education programme within 2010, and at least 95% within 2015.

The government and the association of Local Government Denmark (LGDK) have launched a number of pilot projects with these mentor arrangements, in total 7 projects, involving 9 municipal Youth Guidance Centres.

Goals of the initiative

Test project to include mentors in the guidance of young people – ie well qualified and committed adults who will undertake the **role of pathfinder** in cooperation with the young person. The aim is to try out whether the use of mentors will be efficient, in terms of resources as well as quality, compared to the results in terms of the number of young people that will carry through a youth education programme.

Co-operation partners

- The Danish Ministry of Education
- Local Government Denmark
- Danish municipalities
- Youth Guidance organisation

Local partners will be the municipal Youth Guidance Centres, local youth education institutions, the local Folkeskole, youth schools and clubs, etc.

Description and challenges of working in partnership

The project will operate at national, regional and local level, thus it will be necessary to establish good cooperation between all political organs, public authorities, guidance centres, educational institutions and other youth organisations involved. A steering committee has been set up to monitor the project and make formal decisions. The committee is set up by representatives from the Danish Ministry of Education, the municipalities, counsellors and advisory bodies in the field of education.

It will be a challenge to establish efficient cooperation between the parties involved in each individual project. Furthermore, centrally established network cooperation between the 7 projects should facilitate exchange and use of experiences.

Test results must also be communicated to relevant stakeholders all over the country, in order to benefit in full from the experiences that are made. Therefore, efforts should be made to disseminate knowledge and project results.

Partnership related outcomes

The test outcomes should be:

- to increase the number of young people embarking on a youth education programme;
- to create proper basis for evaluating whether the mentor programmes should be permanent;
- to demonstrate the most efficient methods in terms of organising and carrying through the mentor programmes.

Impact on policy

The tests will provide politicians with a proper basis in order to choose what actions should be taken to reach the government's goals in terms of youth education.

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Country: Denmark

Name of the initiative

National Dialogue Forum on Guidance

Context

Denmark has a long tradition of cross-sectoral cooperation on guidance issues at national, regional and local levels. At national level, this tradition is continued through a new National Dialogue Forum, which was established by the Minister of Education in 2003.

Goals of the initiative

The purpose of the Dialogue Forum is two-fold:

- to secure a close dialogue between the Minister and relevant leading organisations, institutions, guidance counsellor associations and individuals with the field of guidance in Denmark;
- to contribute to the development of quality in Danish guidance services and the coordination of these services.

Co-operation partners

Currently, the Dialogue Forum consists of 11 individual members, plus representatives from 12 member organisations and 5 ministries. Examples of member organisations are:

- national employers' and employees' organisations;
- guidance counsellor associations;
- youth organisations;
- county and municipal authorities.

Description and challenges of working in partnership

The National Dialogue Forum is not a traditional formal guidance organ. Discussions are not expected to bring forward a common statement adopted by all and reflecting all parties' different views. Individual members will present own viewpoints and evaluations in direct cooperation with the Ministries and the other parties and without any intermediaries. Thus, their work will get an immediate influence on the development in the field of guidance.

The challenge has been to initiate a dialogue based on both a top down, policy driven approach and a bottom-up engagement in terms of policy making from users', practitioners' and researchers' view points.

**Partnership
related
outcomes**

Besides the tasks described above, the Dialogue Forum has initiated the **organization of several Conferences:**

- Ethics in guidance
- IT and individual guidance
- Cooperation and dialogue between actors in the field of
- guidance

**Impact on
policy**

Yes, according to the purpose of the Dialogue Forum.

**Further
information**

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Country: Estonia

Name of the initiative

Development and Implementation of an Integrated Counselling Model

Context

The provision of **counselling services** to young people in Estonia is **fragmented** between many different providers within the education, social affairs, public health and the labour sector. Responsibility is divided to the extent that different approaches at the level of local governments do not support the delivery of coherent, high quality and effective services.

Young people in Estonia at the same time need a support network of professionals to provide information and counselling about opportunities available to them in learning, their spare time and work, and advice and guidance in making meaningful choices and informed decisions about their future. Young people do not split their needs into career related, psychological, social, educational etc – they need answers to their questions and a transparent support structure of trustworthy practitioners to help them.

Although the main focus of the integrated model was on young people, lifelong and lifewide guidance are part of the wider objective framework.

Goals of the initiative

To involve different stakeholders in preparing and implementing an integrated counselling model for young people that ensures a sustainable and coherent development of services, and helps to meet both the defined and undefined information needs of young people.

The model should also:

- establish the common elements of different counselling (career, educational, psychological, social etc) and information (youth, labour market etc) providers;
- clearly identify the responsibilities of respective counterparties;
- take into account regional and national needs;
- follow general developments at European level;
- involve users of the counselling services.

Co-operation partners

An applicable model and a “living strategy” should be elaborated in collaboration with the representatives from:

- Estonian Ministry of Education and Research;
- Estonian Youth Work Centre
- Ministry of Social Affairs
- Estonian Labour Market Board;
- National Resource Centre for Guidance (Foundation Innove);
- National Institute for Health Development;
- Regional Youth Information and Counselling Centres.

In addition, input at that stage should likewise be given by different counterparties involved in the future implementation of the model at the provider level – eg teachers, psychologists, youth workers, parents, social workers, child protection officials, health specialists, and a range of other specialists working with young people.

Description and challenges of working in partnership

Career guidance involves **many stakeholders**, it is part of many sectors, levels of education etc but there is no clear-cut responsibility for the field in any of the ministries. **A guidance strategy** is needed for the adoption of legislative measures and establishment of a long-term budget. Without **clear support and prioritisation** of guidance by any of the ministries the co-ordination of the model elaboration, its subsequent implementation and above mentioned further developments are all extremely challenged.

Partnership related outcomes

Establishment of a national co-ordinating institution that will unite different networks of educational and social counselling, collect, organise and disseminate information about services and providers, and be responsible for development and quality assurance of the field.

Impact on policy

The approval of the model would contribute to the preparation of the legislative measures and establishment of cross-sectoral structures (eg national co-ordinating institution, boards of experts, etc) that are to support sustainable and coherent development of guidance and counselling services in the future.

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Country: Ireland

Name of the initiative

Adult Educational Guidance Initiative (AEGI)

Context

In 1998, the National Centre for Guidance in Education published a report entitled **Guidance in Adult and Continuing Education** which set out the need for such provision and made recommendations on the types of service that should be provided. Following on from this report, the Adult Educational Guidance Initiative (AEGI), was established in 1999, reflecting a priority identified in the **White Paper on Adult Education: Learning for Life (2000)** in terms of the systematic investment in the development of core support services for adult education eg guidance and counselling. Budgetary provision of 44.5M euro was allocated by the Department of Education and Science for this service and for staff development and programme support initiatives over the period of the National Plan 2000 - 2006.

NCGE was given the lead role in supporting this Initiative. The nature of the service was determined to include:

- the provision of a coherent information base which can be self-accessed by learners;
- initial consultations with a trainer guidance counsellor to help clarify needs, indicate appropriate pathways and/or referrals;
- more specialised support such as counselling (career, educational) and assessment.

Goals of the initiative

Prior to this time, within the Further Education Sector, there had been no guidance service for participants on adult literacy, VTOS and adult and community education programmes. The Adult Educational Guidance Initiative Pilot Programme (which consisted initially of 11 projects) was launched to serve the needs of these priority target groups.

Its primary objectives were as follows:

- to provide adult educational guidance to support participants in adult literacy, VTOS and adult and community education programmes;
- to develop and document models of good practice which could be mainstreamed and would impact on future policy;
- to address gaps in the provision of adult educational guidance;
- to build local capacity, to develop support structures and to encourage local partnerships.

The AEGI Pilot Programme has proceeded in four phases. Phase I commenced in 1999, Phase II in 2001, Phase III in 2002 and Phase IV in 2005. By end 2005, there will be 35 projects operating and it is envisaged that with this expansion of the service, coverage will be virtually on a national basis.

The projects set out to establish and inform the guidance needs of their target groups, with the aim of providing a responsive service on a local basis. The service was to include personal, educational and career guidance to cover pre-entry, entry, on-going and pre-exit stages. The focus was placed on the educational needs of adult learners whilst other counselling and psychological services would continue to be a matter for the Department of Health and Children.

Co-operation partners

Co-operation partners may be described on **three levels** as follows:

- target group(s) or key stakeholders, ie adult learners engaged with Vocational Training Opportunities Schemes (VTOS); Back to Education Initiative (BTEI); literacy schemes; adult education courses and community education programmes;
- the Department of Education and Science (policy and funding), the National Centre for Guidance in Education (policy and support) and Vocational Education Committees (target group course providers and AEGI employers),
- other national/local partnerships: National Adult Literacy Association, Aontas, FAS, local advocacy services, Local Employment Services (LES) and Partnerships, other government departments (eg Health and Children, Social and Family Affairs), PLCs (post second level/further education colleges), third level colleges and universities and employers.

Description and challenges of working in partnership

The AEGI projects have been instrumental in working collectively with other agencies, organisations and sectors (as above) who support the policy and practice of guidance and lifelong learning to effect change and establish capacity to respond to emerging developments.

A key principle which has underpinned the development of the AEGI has been such partnership working with other agencies and organisations at both local and national levels. The AEGI has also been developed against the backdrop of ongoing policy developments and a changing environment both in relation to the Irish context and the White Paper, and EU and OECD policy documents. There is now a need to take account of the way in which partnership working and more integrated service delivery can be reinforced, further progressed and achieved at local, regional and national level in relation to such developments at both policy and practice levels.

**Partnership
related
outcomes**

The planning, implementation and ongoing review of AEGI has presented a sound base of information and experience that will contribute to the strategic planning of cohesive, integrated guidance provision that meets the needs of establishing access to quality provision of lifelong guidance.

**Impact on
policy**

The AEGI service offers information, advice and guidance on an individual and group basis to assist people to make the best choices for learning. AEGI projects aim to provide a quality adult educational guidance service to participants on the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS), literacy and other adult and community education programmes (including BTEI). The desired outcome of the Pilot Initiative is to inform the decision of the Department of Education and Science regarding the mainstreaming of the service after the period 2000 – 2006.

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CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD) FOR GUIDANCE COUNSELLORS IN WHOLE SCHOOL GUIDANCE PLANNING

Country: Ireland

Name of the initiative

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for Guidance Counsellors in Whole School Guidance Planning

Context

The Education Act (1998) requires schools to prepare a school development plan. A recent publication (2005) and Circular Letter (2005) from the Department of Education and Science state that schools are required to develop a school guidance plan and provide **appropriate guidance** in order to meet the requirements of the Education Act (1998). Furthermore schools are required to undertake a whole school approach to the provision of guidance in the school ie involve staff, parents and students.

In response to requests for ongoing support in school guidance planning the NCGE developed a programme of continuing professional development for guidance counsellors in 2004 - 2005. This programme is being piloted with 19 schools at present.

Goals of the initiative

To:

- support schools and guidance counsellors in the guidance planning process;
- provide schools and guidance counsellors with the knowledge, skills and competences to develop a whole school guidance plan;
- foster a whole school approach to guidance in schools;
- foster collaboration between schools in the exchange of information and best practice in whole school guidance planning.

Co-operation partners

In developing the CPD Programme the NCGE involved the following stakeholders in the process:

- Department of Education and Science
- Institute of Guidance Counsellors (IGC)
- School Development Planning Initiative (SDPI)
- National Centre for Technology in Education (NCTE)
- Guidance Counsellors
- School Principal
- E-learning professionals
- Learning and Teaching professionals
- Curriculum and action research professionals

Within this partnership of professional bodies/professionals the NCGE developed the CPD Programme. In addition, the Centre has worked closely with the Department of Education and Science and the SDPI in the delivery of the pilot programme.

Description and challenges of working in partnership

The following challenges were perceived by the Centre:

- development of a strong relationship with the partnership to develop an innovative model of learning for guidance counsellors working in post primary schools;
- development of an interactive, user friendly and attractive e-learning environment for guidance counsellors;
- interest and uptake on the CPD programme – the methodology employed in the delivery of the programme (blended learning – e-learning and workshops) and the requirement that learners engage in reflective practice.

Partnership related outcomes

- The development of a programme of CPD and a Virtual Learning Environment that responds to the needs of schools and guidance counsellors.
- The development of ongoing relationships with the above partners in pursuing other goals and projects.

Impact on policy

The Model of CPD developed by the Centre in conjunction with the partnership above is being launched by the Minister for State at the Department of Education and Science in December as an innovative model of learning. The Model of CPD may impact on the provision and development of in-service training provided to teachers currently, the development of a national e-learning website and the delivery of guidance in schools.

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Country: Malta

Name of the initiative

Diploma in Career Guidance and Counselling (organised by the Centre for Labour Studies at the University of Malta and the Employment and Training Corporation)

Context

The need for training was identified by the Lifelong Guidance Forum. Thus Initial training for career advisors working at the Employment and Training Corporation as well as teachers employed by the Maltese Education Division. The course was also open for others who wanted to attend such as a career advisor from the University of Malta and a teacher from a private school. The total amount of participants was 32.

Goals of the initiative

- School teachers and career advisors were brought together to train in guidance. This provided the creation of informal networks;
- An awareness that “giving out advice” with regard to careers needs professional training and can be as important as personal counselling;
- The sharing of experiences from the employment sector as well as the education sector. Making teachers aware that today’s students are tomorrow’s workforce and that work is in fact a continuation of school.

Co-operation partners

- The Centre for Labour Studies at the University of Malta
- The Employment and Training Corporation

Description and challenges of working in partnership

- The Maltese people are by nature very competitive and are used to individual assessment. They also by nature like to stick to the people that they already know and it is difficult for them to form new partnerships unless it is strictly necessary.
- During one of the subjects that the career advisors and teachers had to undergo, namely Placement Skills they were required to work in pre-established, mixed groups. Two members were from the Employment and Training Corporation whilst two others were from a school or educational entity. This created a lot of resistance initially since it was thought that grades for the whole of the group would be awarded.
- Candidates had to present the following work:
 - the use of learning patterns in establishing the client-advisor relationship;
 - the use of career tests;
 - a group presentation;
 - group research pertaining to a relevant issue in career guidance;
 - an individual reflective diary.

Partnership related outcomes

- An actual outcome was that in order for the work to be done, candidates had to meet. This required that career advisors had to visit schools and that the teachers had to visit the employment and training corporation.
- The creation of an informal network at a practitioner's level would make the work of these people at both entities much simpler now that they have access and contact on this level.
- Avoidance of duplication which is even more costly in a small Island of 400 000 inhabitants and limited resources.

Impact on policy

Agreement and contact on this level would make issues even clearer for policy makers and consensus could be reached in a quicker way.

Further information

University of Malta
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Country: Malta

Name of the initiative

National Guidance Forum

Context

General Background

In Malta, the main guidance service providers are the education sector and the labour market sector – ie guidance is provided in schools from the lower secondary level onwards, and in public employment services. There is a degree of cross-sectoral collaboration, most recently reinforced by the fact that the Minister of Education also has the PES in his portfolio of responsibilities (he is in fact the Minister of Education, Youth and Employment).

Other forms of collaboration have largely been restricted to:

- visits by PES guidance staff to schools;
- visits by school guidance staff and students to PES premises;
- joint seminars and in-service training sessions.

An important initiative has been the **launch of a diploma in lifelong guidance and career development** which has staff from both the education and the PES sectors. This was an intentional move to encourage a united profession that speaks the same language and which has experience of working closely together.

The National Guidance Forum

The idea developed after the publication of a report by Ronald Sultana titled **Lifelong Guidance and the European Challenge: Issues for Malta** (Euroguidance Malta, 2003). This built on the learning that had emerged from the EU and OECD guidance reviews, and suggested closer collaboration between the different service providers.

The forum was also inspired by a similar initiative led by Poland, and initially involved a small representative group of people from different agencies (education, labour market, trade unions, industry) which met for a year and which set some agendas and priorities. These are set out in the next section. The Forum was formally launched in December 2004, and opened up to further membership.

Goals of the initiative

Several **goals** were set up by the founding group. These are listed below:

- development of lifelong guidance policy framework;
- each entity/sector to appoint a person responsible for career guidance;
- organisation of separate and joint in-service training programme;
- bring in foreign expertise to address local knowledge/skills gaps;
- promote masters' level studies to create pool of specialists;
- develop template for occupational descriptors;
- research and develop quality standards;
- implementation of quality indicators for guidance providers;
- regular joint seminars, workshops, conferences;
- organisation of tri-annual cross-sectoral meetings for heads of career guidance services;
- joint action committee with one guidance representative from each sector to carry out needs assessment, and develop a cross-sectoral plan;
- preparation of a cross-curricular school guidance programme;
- model plan for guidance provision in a school as part of school development planning;

- opening up of guidance services in HE sector;
- research the specific client groups that may need targeted career guidance, with a special focus on early school leavers.

Co-operation partners

Founding group:

- Guidance Unit of the Education Division
- Guidance Unit of the Employment and Training Corporation (Malta's PES)
- The University's Institute for Labour Studies
- General Workers' Union
- Union of United Workers
- Federation of Industry
- Euroguidance

Other members who have expressed an interest:

Richmond Foundation (a NGO working with persons with disability)

The National Commission for Persons with Disability

Description and challenges of working in partnership

- In a **small country**, the same people have to fulfil a broad range of tasks and have to be multi-functional, ie they have to wear different hats. This has an impact on their capacity to work through the details of any initiative and to sustain it over a long period of time, as new agendas and new priorities emerge.
- Since most **people are stretched**, they have little time to invest in new initiatives.
- **Resources are scarce**, and the education and labour market sector see each other as competitors for scarce resources. There is not yet the mentality of combining forces and resources in order to achieve the same goals.
- Despite the experience of working together, there is still the feeling among PES people that **education-based guidance staff** are too distant from the world of work, and encourage students to make unrealistic choices. On their part, education-based guidance people feel that **PES guidance staff** are too ready to mould young people in relation to the needs of the labour market, rather than in relation to potential and self-actualisation.

Partnership related outcomes

It is a bit difficult to establish cause-and-effect: what can be said is that the guidance forum has helped to facilitate the following developments:

- guidance is increasingly on the national agenda;
- there is a greater awareness of the need for specialised personnel in guidance;
- four people are following masters' courses in guidance overseas;
- 18 people have started a post-graduate diploma in career guidance at the University of Malta: 16 of these are from the education sector, 2 from the PES;
- for the first time, this diploma is being offered jointly by the Faculty of Education and the Institute of Labour Studies, helping to facilitate the rapprochement between the education and labour market sectors at the level of research and training;
- agendas established at the guidance forum level are receiving some visibility: eg guidance for persons with disability;
- on the recommendation of the forum, the Ministry set up a guidance policy unit to recommend a policy framework for guidance across the different sectors; the policy should become available this year.

Impact on policy

At this stage, two aspects can be highlighted:

- guidance has become more visible in the policy-making discourse: it was even mentioned as a priority by the Minister in his budget speech in Parliament;
- the Minister followed this up by establishing a unit to come up with a policy framework for guidance. The brief clearly specifies that the policy should look at the need for guidance from a lifelong perspective, and that therefore the policy should embrace all service providers.

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Country: Slovenia

Name of the initiative

Local Guidance Network For Adult Education

Context

How to acquire knowledge, how to use the possibilities available in adult education and learning, and various forms of help that make learning successful and effective in today's world of information, rich choice of educational programmes and educational organisations – all this is becoming one of the most important questions in adult education.

In Slovenia the fourteen local guidance centres for adult education have been established in the period of 2001 - 2005 in folk high schools but they act as independent and autonomous units.

Goals of the initiative

The mission and goals of the 14 partnerships at the 14 local guidance centres are:

- to ensure quality, wholesome and professional informing and counselling to all adults as a form of support to their education and learning;
- to connect as many providers of educational and counselling services for adults into a local network and thus ensure quality, wholesome and co-ordinated work in the field of informing and counselling in adult education.

Co-operation partners

The network connects educational and other institutions, which carry out different educational and counselling services, and those organisations that can influence the development of counselling activities for adult education in the local environment.

Considering the various roles that different partners have in the local community, they are divided into two groups within the guidance network: strategic partners and professional partners with specific tasks.

Description and challenges of working in partnership

Strategic partners are different administrative, developmental, business, political and similar institutions, from local area that have a strong impact on the conditions of local development.

Strategic partners:

- estimate the need for further development of guidance activities in the local area;
- estimate the interest of employers, employees and other social partners for guidance activities,
- discuss and agree on coherent and economical development of activities, on usage of all resources and on connection of relevant institutions from local environment,
- represent interests of local guidance network in developmental programmes of local environment etc.

Professional partners are different professional institutions from local the area, operating in the area of adult education and guidance or in similar activities. They:

- develop various kinds, forms and contents of guidance service, which consider the needs of different target groups;
- ensure the best possible access to their service with regard to time and place;
- offer professional and objective counsellors (advisers) with higher education;
- maintain national and local up-to-date databases to support guidance activities;
- monitor and analyse the needs for information and guidance in education and learning of various adult target groups;
- monitor and continuously improve the effectiveness and quality of the provided services etc.

Challenges:

- a network always involves many different organisations with different interests, sometimes these interests become more important than mutual goals as partners in the network;

- some organisations can be suspicious about the independency of the local guidance centre, and can therefore not trust that the co-ordinating centre does represent common interests of all partners;
- for the network it is important that partners are active but sometimes some of them prefer a passive role.

Ensuing tasks for the future:

- to strengthen networks which do not operate effectively and/or successfully enough;
- to combine different interests of the network partners to provide quality and wholesome service for the client, who has to be in the centre of all activities;
- to encourage partners to be more active in the network;
- the network should become an important partner in defining local and regional policy concerning guidance in the field of adult education.

Partnership related outcomes

Main outcomes are:

- permanent expert co-operation and the exchange of experience with other guidance centres;
- better co-operation between guidance centres and adult education organisations;
- all educational organisations participating in the local guidance network are informed about the latest events and findings important for adult education;
- all educational organisations participating in the local guidance network have access to information about the educational needs in the local environment;
- the guidance centre offers counselling services to all those educational organisations that do not have their own counselling services developed.

Impact on policy

The added value of the partnership for the policy is:

- the co-operation between different partners in developing adult education in the local area;
- to create common activities of different partners for the promotion of adult education, professional co-operation etc.
- to improve the quality of the information system for adult education in local area;
- widening access for different groups of potential adult learners to lifelong learning.

Further information

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Country: United Kingdom

Name of the initiative **The National Association of Educational Guidance for Adults – NAEGA – Branch Development Project**

Context This project demonstrates partnership working between government and non government agencies to support practitioners in influencing policy making.

NAEGA was founded in 1982 to provide a focus for the growing field of lifelong learning guidance for adults. It is a professional association and a membership organisation. Members, can be individual or corporate (organisational membership), but all are involved and/or have an interest in the development of adult guidance. NAEGA is essentially a practitioner based organisation, with a membership of around fifteen hundred, including: learning providers, eg colleges, adult and community education providers, universities; careers services and independent guidance providers; voluntary and community based organisations; and some employers. Government departments and government agencies are also members as the Association provides them with a valuable link to guidance practitioners. The rapidly growing membership is therefore becoming genuinely representative of the range and diversity of adult guidance practice.

NAEGA is administered nationally through a Board of Directors, all volunteers, including representatives of regionally based groups who are responsible for activities and events in their area. The Association produces a national newsletter four times a year and holds a highly successful annual conference. NAEGA is a voluntary body and a limited company. It is funded through membership subscriptions, any profit made from the annual conference and some sponsorship, for the conference, from government.

NAEGA currently has active branches in the East of England, London and the South East, the North West, Yorkshire and Humberside. Each meets regularly with an agreed programme of activities and elects a representative to the NAEGA Board. Branch meetings take place 3 - 4 times a year and normally include a mix of business activity and training /briefing events. For example last year presentations and workshops have included: cross cultural communication, opportunities for non-IT graduates in IT, held in collaboration with AGCAS (the professional association for guidance staff in universities) and E-skills UK, opportunities in probation and social care facilitated by the probation service, psychometric testing for guidance and recruitment, briefing and discussion on the recent Government White Paper and redundancy counselling.

Each year a different branch forms a voluntary planning committee for the annual NAEGA Conference. The two day residential event is designed to meet the needs of adult guidance practitioners across a broad range of practice. Conference 2003, was held in the NW of England, 2004 in Armagh N. Ireland, and 2005 in Llandudno, Wales. NAEGA conferences attract around 300 from across the UK. The costs to the participants are kept low through the generosity of sponsors, which enables practitioners to attend.

NAEGA has a good relationship with the DfES who send an observer to Board meetings. The Association played a major role in persuading the government to set up the **learnirect** helpline / website.

Goals of the initiative

The overall aim of the project was to enable members of NAEGA, most of whom are practitioners, to take a proactive part in achieving the aims of the Association, see below, through greater participation at regional / local level.

The project proposed to develop new branches and strengthen existing active regional/national branches of NAEGA in appropriate areas in the UK. National branches would be developed in Scotland, N. Ireland and Wales. Regional branches would be developed in the 9 regional government areas in England.

NAEGA aims, which were also the objectives of the project :

- **Promotion of guidance:** promoting the development, understanding and acceptance of adult guidance;
- **Professional development:** promoting high standards of delivery, through providing training and dissemination of good practice;
- **Linking the voice of practitioners to policy development:** providing feedback at regional and national level, on issues affecting access to learning and work opportunities for adults;
- **Information exchange:** assisting in the dissemination of relevant information between practitioners;
- **Promoting good practice:** identifying, acknowledging and giving a platform to good practice by colleagues in the branch area;
- **Partnership and collaborative working:** promoting collaborative working and partnership activity through sharing knowledge, pooling resources and expertise and spreading good practice.

Co-operation partners

Funding the Project and members of the Project Steering Group:

- The DfES Adult Guidance Unit
- The LSC Learning and Skills Council, who fund and implement - adult guidance policy in England.
- NAEGA

Managing/administering the project:

NAEGA a voluntary organisation

Implementing the project at regional level:

NAEGA members who include those working in guidance for adults in Careers Services, colleges, adult and community education providers, universities, locally based voluntary and community organisations, probation service etc.

Description and challenges of working in partnership

There was some discussion within the NAEGA membership as to why the government would fund NAEGA (a voluntary body with a history of criticising government), to develop itself as an organisation. There had to be a clear understanding on both sides that each partner would be able to achieve its own purposes and that NAEGA's views would not be compromised.

NAEGA is a NGO, that is a non-government organisation. The current labour government in the UK has made a commitment to working with NGOs to develop and deliver policy objectives. In some cases 'compacts' have been agreed between government departments and voluntary bodies/NGOs. The government does not expect to always hear good news. Critical comment is expected and that is what they get! There are however effective and ineffective ways of delivering such criticism.

Developing regional groups of those interested in adult guidance, most of whom will be practitioners, gives government the opportunity to collect opinion, disseminate information and especially to develop locally based professional development opportunities. For NAEGA the branches enable better services to members and in particular an opportunity to collect views to inform NAEGA comment at a national level on government policy.

Mentors were appointed to work with groups of NAEGA members to form branches. Practitioners have less and less time off to get involved in Branch activities and had to understand the added value of such arrangements in order to persuade their employers.

Practitioners have benefited from locally based events and activities which enable them to work with colleagues from other types of organisations and together improve their practice.

Partnership related outcomes

The relationship between NAEGA and government is stronger than ever before. NAEGA is able to play the difficult role of critical friend maintaining that relationship in order that its views are valued. The voice of the guidance practitioner is heard in government.

More funding was made available to develop the NAEGA website in order to further support the branches.

Branches are now established in each of the 9 English regions, N. Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Branches now participate fully in the management of NAEGA and as a consequence get the support they need from the organisation.

The NAEGA membership has risen significantly increasing its range and diversity across the broad spectrum of guidance activity. This strengthens the associations voice and extends its influence.

Impact on policy

NAEGA is playing a significant role in the current major review of guidance policy for adults in England. Practitioners have a real opportunity to get their views heard.

Further information

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