

## **A brief contribution from Leonardo Evangelista**

First of all, I would like to send my regards to all the forum's participants. I am looking forward to meeting you all, and I hope that we can have a meaningful and fruitful discussion.

Every day in Italy, when dealing with clients in my role as a guidance counsellor, I am aware of the lack of and the need for a policy on Lifelong Learning. I believe there is a need:

- to create a complete and effective system of distance learning
- to provide a system of effective further and adult education (sandwich courses included)
- to establish a widespread 'stage' system for students and adults
- to provide for flexible working arrangements (part time and so on) in order to facilitate a return to studying
- to provide for a set of tax incentives and concessions to encourage adult learning
- to ease the many barriers to entering the 'libere professioni' (autonomous professions such as solicitors, accountants, architects, etc.)
- to set up a system of certification of skills acquired both on the job and through the various educational or training courses

I agree with the framework set out in the *Terms of reference* document. I think we all agree that technology and globalisation have changed the traditional labour market. The pace of change is accelerating, periodic unemployment is being experienced by an increasing part of the working population. Firms and individuals (and Nations) are required to adapt rapidly to change and to acquire new skills in order to stay competitive. This makes a good case for lifelong learning.

With regard to lifelong learning, guidance is crucial in:

- helping people to see the sense in lifelong learning and to understand the need to continue their training and personal development beyond school and university
- helping people to discover and select the educational and training opportunities best suited to their career paths, thereby limiting the incidence of 'dropping out'
- helping adults (and perspective adults) to combine and reconcile work and learning in their lives

But lifelong learning is not only about traditional skills and subjects like maths and science, it is also about acquiring the new skills required by the changing economy.

Globalisation and technology have changed the traditional career development pattern (education - employment - retirement). As you know, choosing a vocation is no longer a once and for all decision. People are having to acquire a new set of 'survival skills' for the new economy: to construct a personal career path, to make career choices, to take control of their working life, to find new jobs, and to confront the many periods of transition.

I think these 'survival skills' can be taught and learned in the same way as maths or a foreign language. Their teaching is becoming increasingly important for the success of individuals and the prosperity of Europe.

In my view these developments call for:

- more careers education in all EU schools, at all ages
- more careers guidance available to adults
- more emphasis given to careers guidance and careers guidance practitioners by the EU Commission
- the establishment of a European standard for careers guidance and careers guidance practitioners
- identifying these 'new survival skills' (see later what has already been done in other industrialised nations), how to teach them (preparing material in order to develop the activity of careers guidance on a European scale), and how to measure their implementation

The impression is that until now there has been a lack of a coherent and structured policy on careers guidance at a European level. Careers guidance has been regarded as an ancillary activity to other European programmes like Socrates and Leonardo. Until now a European programme for careers guidance has been missing. I believe that Europe is paying the price for being behind in this discipline, while the United States, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, and Japan have set national guidelines and produced 'national' materials for the development of the activity of careers guidance.

Some examples of good practice in this field:

- United States: the National Occupational Information Co-ordinating Committee (NOICC, <http://www.noicc.gov/>) in 1989 developed the *American Career Development Guidelines* (last edition 1996) see <http://icdl.uncg.edu/ncdg.html>. The Guidelines provide (1) a blueprint of career development skills that children, young people, and adults should master; (2) information about the structure, support and commitment necessary in organisations to implement effective career development programmes; (3) an outline of skills needed by professionals in the field.
- Canada: Canada developed its own Guidelines in 1999, called *Blueprint for Life/Work Designs* (see at [http://lifework.ca/pr\\_blueprint.htm](http://lifework.ca/pr_blueprint.htm)). The Blueprint has the same structure and aims as the *American Career Development Guidelines*.

- Japan: Japan is currently implementing its own *Competency-based Model for Career Development*, with the same structure and aims as the *American Career Development Guidelines*.
- *The Real Game series*: several countries, including Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom (Department for Education and Employment), France (Fondation Jeunesse Avenir Enterprise), Australia and New Zealand, are collaborating in developing and implementing The Real Game Series (TRG Series) of developmentally-sequenced programs to help students at all levels, and adults master essential life/work skills. The basic aim of the Series is to introduce realities of the adult world of work in a meaningful way and to help participants master the career development skills outlined in the *Blueprint for Life/Work Designs* (Canada) and the *National Career Development Guidelines* (USA). The programmes are packaged in three-ring binders, which include all teaching and student materials (including overhead transparencies, posters, and reproducible masters) needed to implement the programmes, for as many participants as desired, over several years. Each game takes anywhere from 14 to 30 hours to play. So far, over 30.000 classes have used it in North America. See at <http://www.realgame.com/>

How to improve the EU policy towards careers guidance? The Commission might consider sponsoring:

- European standards and contents for careers guidance
- a distance learning programme (partly through a website) addressed to careers practitioners, focused on the European standards and contents above mentioned
- an assessment programme addressed to careers practitioners (something like 'Microsoft Certified Professionals')
- a set of materials like *The Real Game* series (diffused through the Internet)

The Commission might also consider partial funding of careers guidance programmes held by 'EU certified counsellors' using the EU materials.

A few more tips:

Careers guidance with adults: many adults nowadays encounter involuntary career transitions. For young people the transition is easier: usually they are confident and sure about their capabilities and opportunities. As for the adults, they are more prone to despair; they experience anger and diminishing self-esteem. With adults the focus of guidance shifts from 'helping people to make informed careers choices' to 'helping people to be able to cope with the many transitions they will encounter and maintain a balance between work and life roles in rapidly changing labour markets' (Jarvis, 2000).

Careers guidance, as far as adults are concerned, must consider their ties and constraints and help them to rebuild their self-esteem and to feel in control again.

In working with adults I find very useful the 'Portfolio approach' (the equivalent of the French 'Bilan de competences'). As many of you probably know, a portfolio is a collection of documents, which contain information and observations on the client's professional paths, put together by the client himself. This information is then used to make, with the help of the counsellor, educational and career decisions. The 'Portfolio approach' helps people to make better choices and to see their professional development as lifelong.

The information maze: I think every Country needs to develop its own 'national' gateway web-site to resources on job search, professions, schools, vocational training, universities and research. See for instance the Canadian *WorkINFOnet* <http://workinfonet.ca/>, the UK *National Grid for Learning* <http://www.ngfl.gov.uk/ngfl/>, the Italian *Orient@mento in rete* <http://www.aiuto.net/> (produced by myself).

In my view these gateway sites should not adopt a 'librarian like' approach (as in the case of the above mentioned Canadian and British sites): listing hundreds of sites with a brief review of each.

This is fine for librarians, but not for people looking for careers information and guidance. See at <http://www.aiuto.net/ituk6f.htm> for a more user friendly approach. See also <http://cybercounsel.uncg.edu/manuscripts/EvangelistaI.htm> (<http://cybercounsel.uncg.edu/>) on providing career advice using the Internet.

The Commission might consider sponsoring some web-sites of this kind.

Best wishes to you all, see you soon,

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