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Guidance and counselling in education
and training in the perspective of LLL

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Submission on Key Challenges and
Obstacles and Examples of Good Practice

by

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Key Challenges and Obstacles

1. Common Vocabulary for Guidance and Lifelong Learning

Is there a common vocabulary for guidance between Member States and across the education, training and employment sectors within Member States? Should there be a common vocabulary? Why? What are its benefits?

The Commission publication "Educational and Vocational Guidance in the European Community (1993) provides the answer in describing the range of activities that guidance encompasses (See Section 2.1.2). Guidance refers to a range of activities to assist people to make choices – educational, vocational, personal/social – about their lives and to implement these choices (personal project). The operational definition of guidance as a range of activities facilitates a recognition of the role of both formal and informal providers of guidance.

The Commission has a key role in promoting this common vocabulary. It assists dialogue between and within Member States about what guidance means in terms of Lifelong Learning support. It gives a minimum specification for costing of guidance provision to support Lifelong Learning. It provides a framework for training guidance practitioners and for the development of collaborative activities in Lifelong Learning guidance within the European Union.

2. Government Policy, Lifelong Learning and Guidance in Member States.

How many Member States have policies on Lifelong Learning? How many of these policies refer to guidance? The answer to the first question is 'all have'. The answer to the second question is 'few have'. This begs the question: why? It also postulates the consequence: very few Member States have budgeted to provide guidance in a Lifelong Learning strategy.

3. Has the Commission a Role in Stimulating National Policy Making in the Field of Guidance?

The answer to this question is yes. But its record to date in this respect is dismal. The first ever international conference on policy making and guidance was held in Ottawa, Canada in May 1999. The conference was hosted by Canada. Fourteen countries were represented including several Member States of the European Union. The Commission did not send a representative.

The output of the present series of policy input seminars must filter through Member States' policies. At a European Union level, the Commission should be taking the lead in organising a conference for national policy makers, particularly in the context of Lifelong Learning.

4. European Commission Policy on Guidance

The record of the Commission with respect to guidance policy left much wanting from a leadership perspective. Guidance is a peripheral rather than a central part of Community Initiatives and Programmes. Only in the PETRA II programme was there a dedicated guidance strand.

The Commission's attitude as operationally expressed – start – stop – ad hoc – interest – no interest – fashionable – unfashionable, seems to depend on the interest and knowledge of the Commission official assigned to the task. It is just not good enough that the Commission provision of guidance policy should depend on subjective interest. There have also been significant variations of interest across Directorate Generals (DGs), for example, old DG5 versus old DG XXII. CEDEFOP and the ETF seem more aware/alert to the key role of guidance in economic and social development and for social inclusion.

5. Do the Public Understand what Life Long Learning Guidance is?

Most members of the public know what to expect when they go to the dentist over their life span. The same cannot be said of the public visiting the guidance practitioner. The guidance profession appears to have failed to explain to the public what guidance is and what are its benefits, especially over the life span.

This has had a knock on effect on policy makers. The public do not know what to ask for; there is no consequent demand on politicians and policy makers. There are no budgetary consequences. No provision is made for guidance in a Lifelong Learning policy.

6. Do Providers of Education(LLL) also Provide Guidance as Learner Support?

The attitude of individual educational and training institutions (learning providers) reflects the black hole of government policy. With the exception of Scotland(UK), most providers of education and training in Member States are very neglectful of this learner support. Education and training is very much supply driven than demand driven. The predominant demand drive is labour skills shortage. However, such demand at time denies learners' own demands and needs. Guidance has a critical role in mediating these.

Education and training providers need to learn what guidance is, how it can benefit learners, and why they should budget for such provision..

EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE (IRELAND 1997-2000)

- 1997:** National Centre for Guidance in Education(NCGE) commissioned research into adult learners' experience of guidance. The provision of guidance was almost non-existent. Salaried learners were willing to pay for it as an additional service.
- 1998-
- 1999 National Centre promoted a LEONARDO pilot project – *Adult Guidance – Training of Trainers*. The project aimed to educate learning opportunities providers in how to establish, manage, market and quality assure guidance for adults. The Scottish partner provided transnational training of trainers. Ireland, Slovakia and Iceland subsequently organised national training for learning providers.
- 1998: Department of Education and Science(Ireland) published Green(Discussion) Paper on LifeLong Learning. Significance was attached to guidance provision.
- 1999: Department of Education and Science(Ireland) mainstreamed the Educational Management of Adult Guidance course developed in the LEONARDO pilot.
- 1999-
- 2000: Department of Education and Science(Ireland) initiated a pilot adult educational guidance service in 10 locations with a view to mainstreaming over the next 7 years. £35million has been set aside for this.

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