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## The Work of European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network

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# The Work of European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network

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This article outlines the activities of the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN), which was active from 2007 to 2015 and importantly contributed to promoting awareness regarding the importance of lifelong career guidance across the EU member states and beyond. Based on a 2015 source, the first part summarises the work of the ELGPN and the results of its work. Within this framework, an Erasmus+ project took place that was aimed at designing a curriculum for enhancing competences for the career development of educational staff. This curriculum represents a significant step in implementing the EU recommendations in the area of lifelong guidance.

*Keywords:* ELGPN, lifelong career guidance, guidance policy, curriculum for the career development of educational staff, Erasmus+

## Toward Common EU Guidance Policy: European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network

The European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN)<sup>1</sup> assisted the European Union member states (and the neighbouring countries eligible for the Lifelong Learning Programme and the Erasmus+ Programme) and the European Commission in developing European co-operation on lifelong guidance in both the education and the employment sectors. It promoted co-operation and systems development at member-country level in implementing the priorities identified in the EU Resolutions on Lifelong Guidance (Council of the European Union 2004).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This text is based on ELGPN 2015b, with the permission of authors.

<sup>2</sup> 'Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, Meeting within the Council of 21 November 2008 on Better Integrating Lifelong Guidance into Lifelong Learning Strategies.' *Official Journal of the European Union*, 13 December 2008, c 519.

The Network was established by the member states; the Commission supported its activities under the Lifelong Learning Programme 2007–2014 and Erasmus+ programme in 2015. As a member-state driven network, it also represented an innovative form of the open method of co-ordination within the European Union (EU).

In 2015, the ELGPN has consisted of 30 member countries (AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, IS, IT, LV, LT, LU, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, RS, SE, SI and SK), with one additional observer country (CH).

Through appropriate liaison arrangements, the Network ensured regular contact with other relevant bodies and networks at European and international levels: with International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance, the European Forum for Student Guidance, European Association for International Education, European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP), European Training Foundation, the International Centre for Career Development and Public Policy, the Public Employment Services (PES) Network, Euroguidance, the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and the European Youth Forum. During its five phases (2007–2015), the ELGPN was co-ordinated by a team from Finland. The Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture and the Finnish Ministry of Employment and the Economy assigned the co-ordination task to the Finnish Institute for Educational Research at the University of Jyväskylä. This unit convened the Network and supported the implementation of its initiatives. The ELGPN members appointed a Steering Group in accordance with the EU Presidency arrangements to ensure effective management of the Network and to support the Co-ordinator in defining the priorities and budget allocation within the Work Programmes. ELGPN liaised closely with the European Commission and also utilised the support of a number of contracted consultants.

The Network has promoted lifelong guidance, particularly through the open method of co-ordination. As the EU member states are responsible for their own lifelong guidance policies and systems, the Network members jointly identified and defined the objectives to be achieved, with the Council Resolutions of 2004 and 2008 as their basis. They used jointly agreed on tools to support and measure progress in lifelong guidance policy and systems development. The members stimulated innovation and convergence through peer learning and the exchange of best practices.

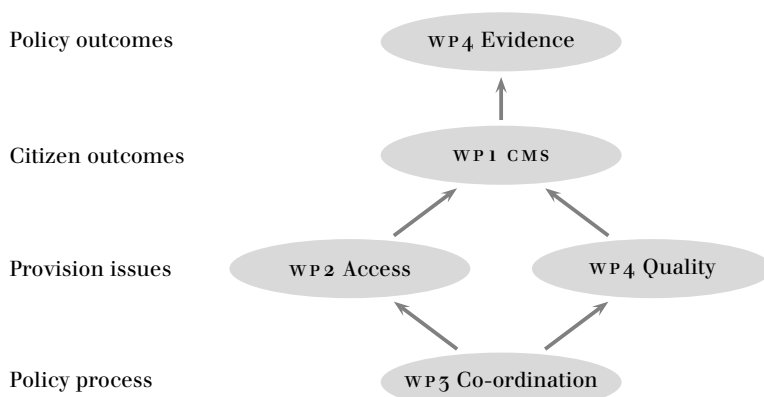


FIGURE 1 Model Indicating the Relationship between the Work Packages

The Network was developed on a step-by-step approach. The long-term goal was to promote co-operation in the development of policies and systems for lifelong guidance provision at national and regional levels through European co-operation. This includes policy sharing, promotion and support for the development of a broader EU policy framework for lifelong guidance. The main aim during the initial phase (2008) was to establish the network infrastructure and through peer learning activities to identify in more detail the areas of guidance where national developments could be enhanced through the ELGPN.

The mandate of the ELGPN was formally endorsed in the 2008 EU Council Resolution on better integrating lifelong guidance into lifelong learning strategies, which invited the member states and the Commission, within their respective competences, to strengthen European co-operation on lifelong guidance, in particular through the ELGPN, with the support of the Lifelong Learning Programme, and in liaison with CEDEFOP. In 2008, the ELGPN consisted of 26 member countries, with 3 additional countries as observers (Belgium, Bulgaria and Ireland). During the 2009–2010 Work Programme, the focus shifted to implementing the thematic activities around the four themes identified in the 2008 Resolution (figure 1).

The activities were linked to a range of different working methods: four plenary meetings, peer learning activities within field visits, task groups (6–8 members), commissioned technical work, and technical work funded from other sources.

The European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN) developed a comprehensive range of EU reference tools and publications for European lifelong guidance policy and systems developments at EU and national levels through systematic policy sharing and learning. The utilisation of this toolbox by the member states will support all engaged partners of the European Semester to have an even stronger and cross-cutting impact on different and related policy areas: education, training, employment, youth and social policies.

The ELGPN member-countries have translated many of its tools and concept notes into their national languages. The most translated publication is the ELGPN Resource Kit, which is available in 18 languages. The ELGPN *Tools*, *Concept Notes*, and *Policy Briefings* and their translations to 27 languages can be found on the Network website.<sup>5</sup>

### ELGPN Tools

ELGPN Tools are designed to help policy-makers and other stakeholders at EU and national levels to:

- Enhance the efficiency and comprehensiveness of the EU and national policies for education, training, employment, youth and social inclusion, and their interactions, by providing policy-makers and developers with expert knowledge and inspiration;
- Review existing national and regional lifelong guidance provision with a view to their improvement;
- Identify policy issues requiring attention and gaps that need to be addressed at the EU, national and regional levels, drawing on the knowledge and learning experiences of other European countries.

### ELGPN Tools 1: A European Resource Kit

The European Resource Kit (European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network 2012) was developed during the ELGPN Work Programme 2011–2012 to help policy-makers and other stakeholders to review existing lifelong guidance provision within their country or region, and to identify issues requiring attention and gaps that need to be filled, drawing from practices in other European countries. Its specific focus was the four priorities for action identified in the

<sup>5</sup> See <http://www.elgpn.eu/publications>.

Council Resolution 2008: Career Management Skills (CMS), Access, Cooperation and Co-ordination, Quality Assurance and Evidence. These priorities were examined from sectoral perspectives. The Resource Kit provides suggestions for policy improvement. It can be used for policy review and peer learning processes both within and between countries.

### ***ELGPN Tools 2: Lifelong Guidance Glossary***

The ELGPN Glossary was developed during the 2011–2012 Work Programme to provide a common set of definitions for lifelong guidance (LLG) policy development and related guidance terminology (European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network 2014c). It provides a set of definitions that have been agreed on by the members of the ELGPN to support the use of ELGPN Lifelong Guidance Policy Development, a European Resource Kit.

A critical issue for the Glossary was to define a set of terms, many of which are used in the Resource Kit, in a lifelong guidance context and thus facilitate dialogue on LLG policy development across the EU. As far as possible, the Glossary uses existing EU definitions, but these have been supplemented and extended where necessary to provide definitions that are relevant in a contemporary guidance context. However, certain terms, which have been defined in EU resolutions and directives, have not been changed.

### ***ELGPN Tools 3: The Evidence Base on Lifelong Guidance; A Guide to Key Findings for Effective Policy and Practice***

The purpose of the Evidence Guide, developed during the 2013–2014 Work Programme, is to present the existing international research base on the impact of lifelong guidance, including its educational outcomes, economic and employment outcomes (European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network 2014d). It builds on the existing work by the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN), including the Quality Assurance and Evidence (QAE) Framework (2009–2010) which provides an approach for policy-makers to address quality assurance and evidence-based policy and system development. The Evidence Guide synthesises the existing evidence on the impact of lifelong guidance and suggests how policy-makers might want to make use of this evidence and contribute to its development. The guide draws together what is already known and aims to present it in a way that is accessible

to policy-makers. In order to do this, the main messages are summarised and illustrated with examples drawn from the literature.

***ELGPN Tools 4: Designing and Implementing Policies Related to Career Management Skills (CMS)***

This ELGPN tool (European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network 2015a) is addressed to policy-makers who wish to further develop a comprehensive national guidance policy with the focus on the acquisition of CMS. It proposes 11 questions to be considered by policy-makers and provides elements of answers to those questions based on the combined knowledge and experience of ELGPN members and other international sources. The CMS tool is intended to support policy-makers in considering each of these important questions by sharing insights, good practice and conclusions across the ELGPN member countries.

***ELGPN Tools 5: Strengthening the Quality Assurance and Evidence-Base for Lifelong Guidance***

The aim of this tool (European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network 2015c) is to stimulate stakeholder discussion and action for the continuous improvement of lifelong guidance policies and practices, focusing on strengthening quality assurance and evidence-based policy systems development. Five key quality elements, criteria, indicators and examples of possible data emerged in 2008–2012 from extensive ELGPN reviews of national, EU and international quality assurance and evidence-base frameworks, including global professional standards. These key quality elements include: practitioner competence, citizen/user involvement, service provision and improvement, cost benefits to governments, cost benefits to individuals. By drawing upon these, it is possible to identify a common language, to examine opportunities and challenges with a collective ambition for continuous improvement, in line with regional, national and European targets on education, employment, poverty and social exclusion.

***ELGPN Tools 6: The Guidelines for Policies and Systems Development for Lifelong Guidance: A Reference Framework for the EU and for the Commission***

These Guidelines (European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network 2015d) provide a comprehensive framework that links together

the ELGPN tools and products listed below. The Guidelines cover transversal (common to all sectors) issues e.g. funding, ICT, and sectoral (i.e. specific to a sector) issues e.g. schools, unemployed, disadvantaged groups. Each guideline explains its importance and gives suggestions for improving policies. The Guidelines were developed by the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network in 2013–2015. They are informed by its experience supplemented by international best practice.

The ultimate goal of the Guidelines is to help improve the quality and efficacy of the career learning experience of all EU citizens. They contribute to improving the consistency of such experience across the education, training, and employment sectors and to strengthening the professionalism of services, tools and products.

### ELGPN Concept Notes

ELGPN Concept Notes explore and debate emerging EU and national issues from a career guidance perspective. They are intended to inform and inspire policy-makers and developers at EU and national levels, demonstrating how lifelong guidance provision contributes to the successful implementation of pertinent policy measures. The Concept Notes are as follows:

- ELGPN Concept Note No. 1 – *Flexicurity: Implications for Lifelong Career Guidance* (Sultana 2012)
- ELGPN Concept Note No. 2 – *Youth Unemployment: A Crisis in Our Midst; The Role of Lifelong Guidance Policies in Addressing Labour Market Supply and Demand* (Hughes and Borbély-Pecze 2012)
- ELGPN Concept Note No. 3 – *Career Management Skills: Factors in Implementing Policy Successfully* (Gravina and Lovšin 2012)
- ELGPN Concept Note No. 4 – *The Youth Guarantee and Lifelong Guidance* (Borbély-Pecze and Hutchinson 2013)
- ELGPN Concept Note No. 5 – *Work-based Learning and Lifelong Guidance Policies* (Borbély-Pecze and Hutchinson 2014)
- ELGPN Concept Note No. 6 – *Early School Leaving and Lifelong Guidance* (Oomen and Plant 2014)
- NVL/ELGPN Concept Note – *A Nordic Perspective on Career Competences and Guidance* (Thomsen 2014)
- ELGPN Research Paper No. 1 – *An Analysis of the Career Development Items in PISA 2012 and of their Relationship to the*



*Characteristics of Countries, Schools, Students and Families*  
(European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network 2014a)

### **ELGPN Policy Briefings**

Policy Briefings focus on relevant EU policy developments in education, training, employment, youth and social inclusion from a lifelong guidance perspective. They are intended to inform national and EU stakeholders. From 2010 to 2012, five documents were published.<sup>4</sup>

### **ELGPN Website**

The ELGPN website acted as an effective communication channel to inform ELGPN collaborators, the wider guidance community and other interested parties about the Network and its activities and publications. The ELGPN website was visited over 31,000 times from 145 countries between 1 January 2013 and 30 September 2015. The total number of unique visitors was 4,861 in 2013, 6,845 in 2014 and 8,803 in 2015 (by the end of September 2015).

A large majority of website visitors came from the ELGPN member countries, but a significant number of visits also originated from non-member countries. For example, the ELGPN website was visited over 2,300 times from the United States, Australia and Brazil.

From the beginning of 2013 until the end of September 2015, the number of visits to the ELGPN website also increased from the ELGPN member countries. The number of visits clearly rose in the second half of the 2013–2014 Work Programme in all member countries with few exceptions (e.g. France, Lithuania, Poland and Turkey). In some countries, the total number of visits to ELGPN website doubled (e.g. Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Iceland and Switzerland) or almost tripled (e.g. Croatia, Norway and Slovakia) in 2014.

### **ELGPN LinkedIn Group, Newsletter and Mailing List**

The ELGPN LinkedIn group acts currently as an important communication channel to engage and inform the wider professional community about the Network and latest developments in lifelong guidance policy. In March 2017, the ELGPN LinkedIn group had

<sup>4</sup> See <http://www.elgpn.eu/publications/policy-briefings/>.

approximately 1,100 members, a large majority of whom were not formally members of any ELGPN national delegation. The ELGPN Newsletter containing periodic updates was published 2–4 times a year. It provided information to Network members and other interested parties about national developments and events as well as reports related to the ELGPN Work Programmes. In addition to email and mailing list distribution, the Newsletter was also made available on the ELGPN website. The ELGPN open access mailing list was launched in January 2013. Before its closure in December 2015, it had 190 subscribers. A majority of these subscribers were not formally engaged in ELGPN activities. Materials disseminated through the mailing list included the ELGPN Newsletter and alerts about relevant developments in the guidance policy.

### **ELGPN Contribution to International, National, Cluster and Cross-Border Events**

The ELGPN national delegations, consultants and the Co-Ordination Unit contributed to a large number of international, national, cluster and cross-border events. They reported and discussed the development, adaptation and dissemination of ELGPN outputs in various national and international events. The ELGPN Steering Group members and consultants also represented the ELGPN in Commission Working Groups, workshops, seminars and EU Presidency events.

The ELGPN Co-Ordinator has been a member of the Commission Working Group on Quality on Adult learning (2012–2014) and ET 2020 Technical Working Group on Adult Learning (2014–2015). He has also provided inputs to the ET 2020 Working Groups on Early School Leaving and VET, PES Network meetings and PES to PES dialogue meetings and CEDEFOP Peer Learning Activities. The Co-Ordinator discussed potential use of ELGPN outputs in 19 EU-funded project meetings, in 28 invited lectures in career practitioner training programmes, in 10 presentations to cross-border or ELGPN cluster events and in 86 national level lifelong guidance policy events in 24 ELGPN member countries and in six non-member countries.

The ELGPN Co-Ordinator has also been invited to present ELGPN outputs in 37 international conferences, including the International Symposia on Career Development and Public Policies and at the annual conferences of international associations such as International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance,

National Career Development Association (a founding Division of the American Counseling Association), Career Development Association of Alberta and Asia Pacific Career Development Association.

### **Learning Outcomes from the Network Activities**

In general, the participants have been very satisfied with the opportunities to participate in the activities, as well as with the principles of equity and respect among the Network members. The outcomes that emerged during all Work Programmes were perceived to be in accordance with the agreed frameworks. Generally speaking, the participants were satisfied with the work carried out in the Thematic Groups in all Work Programmes. A large majority of national teams agreed that the outcomes achieved in their respective Work Packages or Policy Review Clusters had been of high quality. Overall, the outcomes have met the members' expectations at least to some extent.

The first two Work Programmes focused primarily on sharing good practices and peer learning activities. The general outcome of the ELGPN Work Programme 2008–2010 among the ELGPN members appeared to be a better understanding of their own national guidance systems, as well as of guidance practices and systems in other European countries. This provided valuable ideas and inspiration for the further development of national guidance systems. During the 2010–2012 Work Programme, the Thematic Activities and Field Visits were reported to have given the Network members opportunities to learn more about lifelong guidance systems and different options for organising the services. According to the findings, the members had become more aware of the challenges and factors which influence lifelong guidance policy development and successful implementation of national initiatives. Members also felt that interaction in the thematic groups had given them an opportunity to review their national lifelong guidance systems, as well as to explore what worked and why in particular contexts. The field visits of the 2011–2012 Work Programme had helped them to reflect on the relative progress of their country in developing a national lifelong guidance system and on the level of engagement of national stakeholders in this process.

The findings of the initial evaluation of the ELGPN Work Programme 2013–2014 and ELGPN Work Programme 2015 indicated

that the national delegations' expectations for the 2013–2014 ELGPN Work Programme could be divided into two groups: some country teams were most interested in the adaptation and implementation of the ELGPN Resource Kit, while others planned to focus more on general information, knowledge and experience sharing. In general, countries with the more developed guidance systems were in the former group, and countries placing a greater emphasis on the development of their guidance systems were in the latter.

The last two Work Programmes appear to have supported the Network members in meeting these aims, as in the mid-term and closing evaluations the respondents reported they had learned about different practices and challenges faced by other countries. The findings of the closing evaluation of two last Work Programmes indicated that through Peer Review Cluster activities the country teams succeeded in the adaptation and implementation processes of the ELGPN Resource Kit in their country satisfactorily. Some reported that participation in the ELGPN Work Programmes 2013–2014 and 2015 functioned as an inspiration for them. A majority of the respondents reported that they had successfully translated and disseminated the ELGPN Resource Kit and other ELGPN publications. A majority of the respondents were also content with the transition from the 2013–2014 Work Programme to the 2015 Work Programme. The process of developing the 2015 outputs was mainly perceived successful in all three Work Streams (i.e. Guidelines, CMS, and QAE). Similarly, the respondents generally felt that the ELGPN Work Streams consolidated the achievements of the Network to a large extent (European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network 2015b).

The evaluation findings suggest that the means of sharing information gained in ELGPN within each member-country did not vary significantly during the 2013–2014 Work Programme and 2015 Work Programme. In the initial evaluation, almost all respondents noted that they planned to use their national guidance forum to share knowledge and to distribute the ELGPN Resource Kit.

In the mid-term evaluation and in the 2013–2014 Progress Report (European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network 2014b), several country teams reported that they had also shared information and knowledge gained in ELGPN work in different regional and national meetings, seminars and workshops. The most common means of involving other national actors in ELGPN work was in-

deed through the national forums. In general, it was reported that participation in ELGPN has helped emphasise the importance of LLG-related issues in national policies.

Overall, the ELGPN members appear satisfied with the organisational and co-ordination aspects of the ELGPN. They value the outputs and outcomes of the work and see their participation in the Network and its activities as being worthwhile. A challenge for the future is to ensure the dissemination, sustainability and further enhancement of the Network outcomes beyond 2015.

To avoid fragmentation and to maintain and strengthen the political momentum of LLG policy development, it is necessary to further enhance synergies between and among the different guidance actors and stakeholders at national, regional and local levels. The ELGPN as a member-state driven network has been an agent for innovation and peer learning in the field of LLG policy development and implementation, helping its member countries as well as European stakeholders in human resource policy developments. This feature needs to be sustained in whatever the model for systematic European co-operation in lifelong guidance policy development evolves in the future.

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### **Delo Evropske mreže za politike v vseživljenjski karierni orientaciji**

V članku je predstavljeno delovanje Evropske mreže za politike v vseživljenjski karierni orientaciji (ELGPN), ki je delovala od leta 2007 do leta 2015 in bistveno prispevala k spodbujanju ozavešanja o pomembnosti vseživljenjske karierne orientacije v vseh državah EU in širše. V prvem delu so po viru iz leta 2015 povzeti njeno delovanje in rezultati dela. V ta okvir je bil umeščen projekt programa Erasmus+, katerega namen je bil zasnova kurikula za krepitev zmožnosti strokovnih delavcev za karierni razvoj. Ta kurikul pomeni velik korak

k uresničevanju priporočil EU na področju vseživljenjske karierne orientacije.

*Ključne besede:* ELGPN, vseživljenjska karierna orientacija, karierna politika, kurikul za krepitev zmožnosti strokovnih delavcev za karierni razvoj, Erasmus+

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