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**FOLLOW-UP OF THE THEMATIC REVIEW ON TRANSITION FROM INITIAL  
EDUCATION TO WORKING LIFE**

**Policies for Information, Guidance and Counselling Services: Making Lifelong  
Learning a Reality**

(Note by the Secretariat)

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### NOTE BY THE SECRETARIAT

1. As part of its discussion of the 2001-2002 Programme of Work at its Spring 2000 meeting, the Education Committee considered a proposal for a follow up activity from the Thematic Review of the Transition from Initial Education to Working Life on information, guidance and counselling services. At that point it was indicated that the proposed activity was also likely to be of interest to the Employment, Labour and Social Affairs Committee.
2. This paper outlines a proposal for an activity to examine policies for information, guidance and counselling services, both for young people in transition to work and for adults. It outlines the context, scope, and operational procedures of the activity.
3. As a follow-up activity to the recently completed Thematic Review of the Transition from Initial Education to Working Life, it seeks to locate policies for information, guidance and counselling services both within a broader lifelong learning framework, and within the context of moves towards more active mutual obligation approaches to labour market and welfare policies.
4. Its primary focus is upon key policy issues in the organisation, management and delivery of information, guidance and counselling services.
5. Delegates are invited to:
  - i. **COMMENT** upon the organisation, scope and methodology of the activity; and
  - ii. **INDICATE** their country's interest in participating in the activity

## The context

*Lifelong learning implies much wider access to career information, guidance and counselling<sup>1</sup>...*

1. Translating lifelong learning for all into a reality requires:
  - Increased connections between: general and vocational education; vocational education and tertiary study; learning in the classroom and learning in the workplace;
  - Pathways and programmes within initial education that can meet the full range of students' interests and talents, and more diverse learning modes and locations to meet varying individual needs;
  - Mechanisms to recognise, make transparent and give status and value to all forms of knowledge and skill, wherever acquired: the classroom, the workplace, or the community;
  - Links between initial education and training and the further education and training of adults, so that barriers to an easy return to learning are removed, no matter what the nature or level of adults' initial education; and
  - A stronger student-centred approach to learning: increased scope for individual choice over the content, mode and location of learning, and more supple routes through both initial and further education and training.

*...for both adults and for young people in transition*

2. Each of these implies increased services to help people to make education and job choices: sophisticated and effective information, guidance and counselling systems that can provide appropriate "signposts" for lifelong learners. A lifelong learning framework implies wider access to such services, both for young people in transition to work and for adults.

*Complementary developments within employment and welfare services imply a similar increase in the provision of these services*

3. Within many OECD countries a parallel and complementary emphasis can be seen, within welfare and employment policies, upon mutual obligation: upon active participation in education, training or job search as a condition of government financial assistance. Such an approach is evident, for example, in welfare-to-work policies in the United States (General Accounting Office, 1999), in locally-managed early intervention programmes for school drop outs in Denmark, Norway and Sweden (OECD, 2000), and in the United Kingdom's New Deal for the unemployed (Irving and Barker, 2000; Wells, 2000)). Delivering such policies on the ground requires assistance to be individually tailored. It requires individual action plans to be developed in conjunction with mentors or counsellors who provide advice and guidance on available education, training and employment services: not simply benefit information according to standard formulae.

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1. There are differences within and between countries in the ways that the terms 'guidance' and 'counselling' are used. The distinction between the terms is a matter of on-going and unresolved debate in some countries. To avoid unnecessary disagreement and confusion, both terms are used here.

*Such services have received limited attention within the OECD's programme of work*

4. To date the policy issues involved in the organisation, management and delivery of information, guidance and counselling services have not been treated comprehensively in OECD work:

- In the mid 1990s the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation conducted case studies of national approaches to career guidance for youth. It pointed out that recognition of the importance of career guidance was only just beginning to move from the professional literature into the reality of policy (OECD/CERI, 1996).
- A number of the reviews of the Public Employment Service (PES) conducted during the 1990s -- for example the Danish and Finnish reviews (OECD, 1996) -- have contained brief descriptive material on guidance services. Computerised job banks and job-matching services were referred to in papers presented at the July 2000 OECD conference on the PES, including a detailed paper on the Flemish Office for Employment and Vocational Training (Vercammen and Geerts, 2000).
- The Thematic Review of the First Years of Tertiary Education (OECD, 1998) noted that job placement and career counselling are often neither well understood nor well incorporated into tertiary institutions' course planning and teaching.
- The Thematic Review of the Transition from Initial Education to Working Life (OECD, 2000) identified well organised information and guidance services as one of six key features of effective national transition systems, and devoted a chapter to discussing them
- A recent study (OECD, 1999a) has commented briefly upon the roles of personal advisers within welfare-to-work programmes and upon the tools that are required for them to do their jobs effectively.

*Evidence for their effectiveness is not easy to find*

5. Research, much of it coming from the United States, seems to indicate that guidance leads to positive learning gains among young people (Killeen, 1996; Killeen et.al., 1999). The *prima facie* arguments in favour of information, guidance and counselling services improving the transparency and flexibility of labour markets through wider access to information and improved decision making are relatively self-evident. However empirical support for the apparently self-evident is not easy to find. Guidance seems to increase young people's exploration or information search activity, but its impact upon job matching, the efficiency of job search or unemployment duration is not clearly demonstrated (Killeen, 1996).

6. Attempts to establish these types of causal links are, of course, made more difficult by the fact that guidance is normally just part of a package of interventions. What does seem clear is that even if their separate effects cannot readily be disentangled information, guidance and counselling services are commonly identified as being among the key features of effective policy approaches: to labour market programmes (Martin, 1998; OECD, 1999b); to welfare-to-work programmes (General Accounting Office, 1999; McIntyre and

Robins, 1999); to secondary schooling (Lapan et. al., 1997); and to the transition from school to work (OECD, 2000).

***What evidence there is provides limited help for policy makers***

7. A further feature of the research base is that it generally takes the organisation and delivery mode of information, guidance and counselling services as a given, providing little help to policy makers wishing to decide priorities between different client groups, wishing to understand how different delivery methods might increase access, improve efficiency or raise quality, or wishing to understand the skills and qualifications required by the several types of staff who can provide different types of services.

***They can be organised in quite different ways in different countries***

8. Information, guidance and counselling services can serve a range of purposes -- school completion; educational choice; occupational choice; and job placement are examples -- and are organised and provided in quite different ways in different countries. For example:

- In Germany the Federal Employment Service (*Bundesanstalt für Arbeit*, or BA) provides an extensive vocational guidance service. Young people are a key target group, but it also provides guidance services for adults and the disabled. Until changes introduced in 1998 legislation the BA had a public monopoly on the provision of such services. The BA assumes a primary role in providing careers guidance to school students, supporting teachers who provide a general orientation to working life (*Arbeitslehre*) in the compulsory school.
- In Japan the school is the focus of guidance services for youth. Career guidance teachers are appointed from among regular teachers and given a time allocation to take career guidance classes, and to conduct interviews with students and employers. In addition normal classroom teachers frequently undertake individual counselling with all of their students.
- In the United States, unlike in Japan, school guidance counsellors are normally required to have professional counselling qualifications.
- In the United Kingdom and New Zealand the major vocational guidance services are located neither in schools nor in the Public Employment Service, but in a separate careers service.
- In Austria vocational information and guidance are provided in many forms as the result both of legal regulations and of the co-operation of a large number of actors. Local or regional employer and trade union organisations run information and guidance centres for young people. These are in addition to services provided in schools and employment offices.
- In some countries -- Germany, New Zealand and the United Kingdom are example -- careers services operate within a formal legal framework. In some countries a legislative framework also provides individual rights to services. In France, for example, 1989

legislation provides the right to guidance and information on education and careers as part of the right to education (Guichard, 2000). 1985 French legislation gives employees a right to undertake an assessment (the *bilan de compétence*) of their professional and personal competences as well as their motivation and aptitudes. 1991 legislation strengthened this by providing a right to paid educational leave for the purpose (Colardyn, 1996).

- The growth of quasi- or contestable markets for guidance services can be seen in some countries: the Netherlands, France and the United Kingdom for example (Rees et. al., 1999). In some countries the private sector plays a role through private consulting firms and private employment agencies who provide careers assessment and guidance for a fee.
- In many countries governments play the dominant role in the production of educational and occupational information for use in career information, guidance and counselling. Elsewhere -- for example in the United States -- there is a vigorous private market for career and educational information. In some cases -- for example Australia -- the production of the major public national careers guide has been contracted out to private firms that specialise in the publication of careers guides. In France and North America individual career coaching or mentoring services are provided on a fee-for-service basis.

***The advantages and disadvantages of these have not been subject to a great deal of scrutiny***

9. However they are organised, it is common for career information, guidance and counselling services to be provided within a very wide range of settings, and by a very wide range of actors: the community, employment services both public and private, welfare agencies, tertiary education, schools, private consultants, and on-line services. The advantages and disadvantages of the many ways of providing and organising services have not been subject to a great deal of comparative scrutiny.

***They have also received a low policy priority within many Member countries***

10. The Thematic Review of the Transition from Initial Education to Working Life (OECD,2000) concluded that, despite some exceptions and many individual examples of innovation and good practice, in many countries information, guidance and counselling services for young people frequently fail to reach the right targets, are often perceived to be marginal activities, and commonly lack a systematic national policy priority backed by clear objectives and adequate resources. Observed variations within countries in roles and responsibilities for delivery, in staff qualifications and training and in resources support these conclusion. In some countries devolution of responsibility for school funding decisions to schools and regions, combined with overall resource constraints, has helped to increase the marginal status of schools' careers services in the absence of clear national priorities and guidelines.

11. Initial findings from the current OECD Thematic Review of Adult Learning suggest that information, guidance and counselling services for adults are also commonly underdeveloped in relation to need. They appear to be frequently difficult to access by those adults with the greatest needs, unless

participation is linked to questions of continued receipt of unemployment or welfare benefits. It also appears that the level of need for such services can increase where education and training systems present students with complex choices and where navigation through the many available options is complex. A similar conclusion emerged from the Danish review conducted as part of the transition Thematic Review.

***Traditional paradigms have limitations***

12. Traditionally information, guidance and counselling services have relied upon two dominant delivery models, each of which is normally complemented by the publication and dissemination, in various forms, of educational and occupational information. Both suffer from weaknesses as ways to meet national lifelong learning objectives.

- The first is face-to-face, one-to-one guidance and counselling, commonly delivered by trained professionals, with psychology being the dominant field of training. From a lifelong learning perspective its principal problem is one of cost: it might be appropriate when levels of demand are confined to relatively small proportions of the population or to those with special needs. Expanding it to meet the levels of demand required by fully implemented lifelong learning frameworks is financially practical in few countries<sup>2</sup>. Face-to-face delivery methods are also open to the accusation that counsellors act as culturally biased ‘gate keepers’, with consequences for the transparency of their advice and the information that they provide (Rosenbaum, Miller and Krei, 1996).
- The second is classroom based career education. It helps to address the problem of unit costs. However it is not appropriate for those who are not enrolled in formal education, and hence it cannot meet adults’ needs well. It is also open to question on the grounds of quality. The teachers who provide it frequently have limited knowledge of and contact with occupations outside of the education industry.

***New models, techniques and technologies provide opportunities for productivity to rise***

13. New models of delivery are, however, beginning to emerge, even if some remain on the periphery. Self administered and self scored assessment techniques such as the Self Directed Search (Holland, 1997) and the Career Decision-Making System (Harrington, 2000) have been shown able to meet the career exploration and self understanding needs of many people, reducing the need, for some people and for some purposes, for counselling interventions. Initially developed in paper and pencil form, these tools are increasingly available electronically, either on CD-ROM or on the internet (Sampson et. al., 1999).

14. Models have been suggested (Dusseldorp Skills Forum and Career Education Association of Victoria, 1997; Watts, 1999) in which more strategic and systematic use is made of the community as a source of advice, information and expertise, rather than depending upon teachers or counsellors exclusively: parents, employers, alumni for example. There is little evidence of the widespread

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2. The use of group counselling and guidance methods can reduce unit costs to some extent, although few national services use this as their dominant delivery method.

adoption of these models within national policy frameworks or of consideration of their implications for resourcing and for staff skills and training.

15. Rapid progress has been made during the last three years in the development and delivery of Internet-based services (Sampson et.al., 1999). Multiple sites now offer “career navigation systems”: career and job information and help with career decision making; and at times also access to mentors and experts, self assessment services, links to job vacancy data banks, and job matching and placement services. Whilst this rich career resource remains young, the proliferation of sites has sparked concern to set quality standards (Ravary, 2000)<sup>3</sup>. A unanswered central policy issue is the role that such services can play within comprehensive information, guidance and counselling: which needs can they best meet; what clients are they best suited to; how do their costs and benefits compare to other options?

16. An example of the strategic use of such delivery methods is provided by the United Kingdom’s Learndirect service. Launched in 1998, Learn Direct provides a single, free access national telephone number that allows adults<sup>4</sup> to obtain information from a national data base on learning opportunities -- of all types. Initial inquiries are handled by basic information providers, with careers advisers being available on-line for those with more complex inquiries: referral to the Careers Service for face-to-face interviews is available for those whose needs cannot be met on the telephone. Learndirect is complemented by web-based access to its database. Its site (<http://www.learndirect.co.uk/>) also provides users with access to basic self-assessment techniques that can be used to narrow information searches according to personal interests and skills.

17. These new models could provide opportunities for a significant increase in the productivity of information, guidance and counselling services, and hence for a substantial increase in access. Realisation of these potential productivity gains will require a number of key policy issues to be addressed.

*To date policy issues have not received substantial attention in the professional literature*

18. Information, guidance and counselling is not a field with a strong tradition of policy analysis, although some exceptions can be seen (Hiebert and Bezanson, 2000; Watts, 1996). Neither, with one or two notable exceptions (Ginzberg, 1971), is it a field to which policy analysts from other disciplines have paid a great deal of attention.

#### **Policy issues to be considered by the activity**

*Access, quality and affordability need to be balanced*

19. If lifelong learning frameworks are to be implemented, in parallel with active employment and welfare policies, the key challenge for policy makers is to find ways to widen access to information, guidance and counselling services that are at the one time of high quality and affordable.

*If access to high quality services is to*

20. A number of specific issues need to be addressed in balancing access,

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3. See also <http://www.workinfont.ca/cwn/english/main.html>

4. Three quarters or more of all calls to Learn Direct are from those aged over 25.

***increase, in a way that is affordable, a number of key policy issues need to be addressed*** quality and affordability:

*Delivery models*

21. What is an appropriate balance between different information and guidance models and delivery systems (classroom-based career education; one-to-one counselling; group counselling; telephone advisory services; computer-based advice and information; community-based services) for young people and for adults? How can the boundaries between information services, advisory services, and guidance and counselling services be defined, managed, staffed and resourced?

*Costs and benefits*

22. How can the level of need for information, guidance and counselling services be established? Is the public interest best served by concentrating resources upon those most in need, or upon comprehensive services containing special provision for special needs? What potential is there for screening tools such as those used within many PES's to establish client needs and allocate service levels? Within individual countries, what are the costs and benefits of different delivery models? How do the costs and benefits vary according to the nature of the client group and the types of services provided? How can cost-effectiveness be maximised in selecting an optimal mix of delivery models?

*Roles of the parties*

23. What are the appropriate roles of education authorities, labour market authorities, employers, trade unions, community agencies and the private sector in the provision of information and guidance and counselling services? What examples exist of planned complementarity in these roles? How can services be located most appropriately to meet the needs of different client groups?

*Staffing*

24. What qualifications and training are appropriate for information guidance and counselling personnel? What is an appropriate mix and range of staff qualifications and training within a comprehensive national information, guidance and counselling framework? How do new policy demands within education, employment and welfare services alter the skills and qualifications required?

*Financing*

25. What financing models are appropriate for information, guidance and counselling services? What are the respective roles of governments, employers and individuals, and how do these vary according to the nature of clients and their needs?

*Quality*

26. How can quality be defined, measured and assessed: for information services (both print and electronic), as well as for advice, guidance and counselling services? What role can public authorities play in setting and

monitoring standards and quality? What is the role of the guidance and counselling profession?

*Knowledge base*

27. What light can existing national research shed upon these issues? What research and evaluation base is needed to support both quality standards and judgements on costs and benefits? What measures are needed to assess the effectiveness of information, guidance and counselling services?

## Operational procedures

### *Defining the scope and aims of the activity*

***Career information, guidance and counselling services overlap with many other services***

28. The study of information, guidance and counselling services can give rise to complex boundary issues. Not only are they delivered in many ways and in many settings, but they overlap with other forms of personal service: job placement; personal counselling, community-based personal mentoring, welfare advice and educational psychology are examples. Frequently these services are delivered by people who also deliver career information, guidance and counselling.

29. These related services are not the main scope of the activity. It will concentrate upon career information, guidance and counselling directed at assisting youth and adults to select courses of study and jobs, and will consider these services to the extent that they assist the objectives of career information, guidance and counselling.

***Policy issues will be the focus of the activity***

30. The limited research effort that has been devoted to policy issues in the field results in a significant information gap in many countries on the details of how services are provided, by whom, to whom, with what benefits and at what costs. Filling this information gap and detailed mapping of service provision are beyond the scope of the activity<sup>5</sup>.

31. The activity will attempt to gather some basic data from countries. However its key aim will be to focus upon policy issues. The intent is to ask how the organisation, management and delivery of information, guidance and counselling services might advance the public policy objectives of lifelong learning and active employment and welfare policies.

***The activity will co-operate closely with relevant professional organisations***

32. The activity will co-operate closely with relevant professional organisations. They have much to contribute, and their close involvement is important if the issues are to be carried forward. The International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance (IAEVG) has expressed a strong interest in the activity, and has offered its welcome assistance and participation. The Canadian Career Development Foundation has also expressed interest in the

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5. Some service mapping exercises are already available, even if they are not always comprehensive, or at times are dated. See Watts et. al. (1993), Watts and Van Oesbrook (1998), Hiebert and Bezanson (2000).

activity, and has offered support for OECD participation in its international symposium on guidance and public policy to be held in Vancouver in early March 2001.

### *Operating procedures*

33. A detailed questionnaire will be developed, in conjunction with participating countries and experts, to explore and gather information on the key issues of the activity. Seeking agreement on the questionnaire, as well as on the detailed timetable and operating procedures of the activity, will be a key task of a planning meeting consisting of national representatives and experts to be held in Paris in mid January 2001.

34. It is proposed that these questionnaires will be supplemented by short (one week) national visits by a member of the secretariat, assisted by no more than one expert in each case, to hold discussions with relevant policy makers and to visit selected information, guidance and counselling services. These visits will depend upon the number of participating countries and upon country agreement to contribute to the associated travel costs.

35. On March 5-6, 2001 the Canadian Career Development Foundation is hosting an international symposium on guidance and public policy in Vancouver, Canada, in association with the IAEVG that will bring together both counselling experts and national policy makers. The OECD has been invited to take an active role in the organisation of the symposium, as well as to contribute to it.

36. A workshop on the role of information, guidance and counselling services in lifelong learning will be held in late November 2001. It will form a venue for the presentation and discussion of the expert papers commissioned by the activity, for presentation and discussion of the implications of the findings of the activity, and for discussion of the ways in which the findings will be presented in a final report. The draft report will be presented to the EDC and the ELSAC in Spring 2002, and the final report will be published in the Summer of 2002.

37. The IAEVG has offered to host an implementation conference, at which the implications of the activity's results can be considered by policy makers and by guidance professionals, in the late Summer of 2002, in conjunction with one of its own meetings. The venue has yet to be finalised: Spain and Poland are options that are being considered.

### *Proposed timetable*

January 15-16, 2001: Planning meeting with experts and national representatives, Paris.

March 5-6, 2001; CCDF/IAEVG symposium on guidance and public policy, Vancouver.

March -- October 2001: Secretariat and experts country visits.

Summer 2000:	National questionnaires due.
November 2001:	Workshop on guidance and lifelong learning, and to consider findings from the activity.
Spring 2002:	Presentation of draft report to EDC and ELSAC.
Late summer 2002:	Implementation conference in association with IAEVG.

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