

# The international symposia on career development and public policy: Retrospect and prospect

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### Abstract

Between 1999 and 2011, seven international symposia on career development and public policy were held at various venues across the world, and an International Centre was established to support and maintain continuity between these events. These developments were closely intertwined with a number of other significant international developments. The origins of the symposia are described; their core design features are defined; their evolution is outlined and reviewed; and their impact is assessed. This article concludes with a discussion of the prospects for future symposia and for the International Centre.

### Keywords

Career development, public policy, international symposia, career learning, career education

### Origins

The international symposia for career development and public policy emerged from a series of conversations that took place in 1996–98 between a small group of individuals in Canada (Lynne Bezanson and Sareena Hopkins), New Zealand (Rory O'Connor) and the United Kingdom (Tony Watts). The basis of these discussions was the growing recognition in these and a number of other countries that national strategies were needed for lifelong access to career development support. Such strategies needed to bring together the range of current career development services and programmes within a framework which could use resources to best effect, encourage continuity and progression, and identify gaps which needed to be filled. It was acknowledged that the mechanisms needed to develop such strategies varied. In a few countries, national councils had been set up, sometimes involving wider 'stakeholders' (employers, unions, education and training organisations, etc.). Sometimes (e.g. Denmark) these were statutory bodies; sometimes

(e.g. UK) they were independent of government. In other countries, the need for a mechanism of this kind was recognised but had not yet been developed.

More broadly, there was a recognition that many countries were struggling to find ways of connecting the contribution of career development to wider workforce preparation and development, and social cohesion issues, demonstrating the field's strategic worth. Finally, and crucially, it was felt that there was much that countries could learn from each other, but no mechanism to do so.

From these discussions, a proposal emerged that an international seminar be held to bring together key interested parties from a number of countries. The aims of the seminar would be to share experience in the development of national strategies for career development and to explore the possibility of establishing a network through which such experiences could be exchanged on a continuing basis.

The initial plan was for the event to be planned by a core of Commonwealth countries (Australia, Canada,

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New Zealand, South Africa, UK) and supported by the British Council. It was however envisaged from the outset that it might also involve other Commonwealth countries, other European countries with national councils (e.g. Denmark, Netherlands) and the USA. In the event, the discussions with the British Council faltered, but – with significant help from Stu Conger, representing the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance (IAEVG) – the Canadian Career Development Foundation (CCDF) attracted the support of Human Resources Development Canada to provide the core funding for the first symposium, entitled ‘Career Development and Public Policy: International Collaboration for National Action’, and held in May 1999.

While the concept of the symposium was developed by individuals from non-governmental organisations (Canadian Career Development Foundation; National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling in the UK) or government agencies (Career Services Rapuara in New Zealand), care was taken from the outset to consult relevant government officials in each of their respective countries. It was also recognised that the success of the symposium would be dependent on the active involvement of such officials in the event.

### Core design features

The vision in designing the first symposium was that it was to be not a conference but a working event, with high expectations for active involvement and commitment to action. This vision and the core design features adopted in the first symposium have, with some elaborations, characterised the subsequent symposia. Six in particular can be identified.

First, participants in the event come not as individuals, but as members of a country team. Ideally the team includes a mix of government officials from both education and employment ministries, professional leaders (to represent front-line practice) and senior researchers; in some cases there has also been representation from the social partners (employer and trade union representatives). The size of the team usually varies between two and four, though some have been larger (particularly from the host country). The team is formed in advance of the event; meets periodically during the event to share what has been learned and, towards the end of the event, to develop a national action plan; and is charged with follow-up at national level after the event in order to implement the action plan.

Second, each country team is responsible for preparing before the event a brief country report on themes defined by the symposium planning team, for advance circulation to all participants. These represent a kind of country report card, describing the country’s current position in relation to these themes, where it is trying to go, successes it is ready to share

and challenges it faces. The reports are designed to inform, and provide a ‘running start’ to, the symposium discussions. They should be based on consultation with relevant national authorities and with key actors and information sources. Such consultation is also designed to support the later implementation of the national action plan.

Third, again in advance of the event, a synthesis report is produced and circulated on each of the symposium themes. This pulls together the salient points from the various country reports on the relevant theme, identifying similarities and differences, and extracting issues for discussion at the event itself.

Fourth, within the event, inputs are kept to a minimum, and as much time as possible is devoted to round-table discussions, usually in groups of 8–10. The agenda for the discussions is based upon the issues that have been identified in relation to the symposium themes. Each group has a facilitator and a rapporteur, both appointed in advance of the symposium: the facilitator’s role is to support the discussions and ensure that all members are able to take part; the rapporteur’s role is to record the main conclusions from the group discussions and feed them back to the plenary sessions.

Fifth, the conclusions from the discussion groups are synthesised by a symposium rapporteur working with a small supporting team and fed back for approval at the end of the event. The resulting communiqué is made available shortly after the event to all participants, to complement and support the national action plans, and is then available as a record and for wider dissemination. The communiqué from the most recent symposium (2011) is attached to this article as an Annex, both as an example and because of its intrinsic interest (including the additional note on terminology and branding).

Sixth, the working language of the symposia is English. This reflects the Commonwealth origins, but also the growing prevalence of English as a working language in Europe and elsewhere. In order to keep the costs of the event to a minimum, no interpretation or translation services are provided.

### Evolution

The first symposium, held in Ottawa, Canada, on 2–4 May 1999, was attended by 46 participants from 14 countries. Only four of the countries fielded government officials (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, UK), but one of the most stimulating sessions was a ‘fish-bowl’ in which they had a conversation with one another in an inner circle, with the other participants listening in an outer circle (and an empty seat into which the other participants could move for a while if they wished to contribute to the discussion). The full proceedings of the event were published in a bound volume (Hiebert & Bezanson, 2000).

The second symposium was held in Vancouver, Canada, on 5–6 March 2001, immediately preceding the IAEVG international career development conference ‘Going for Gold’. It was attended by 71 participants from 17 countries. The participants also included representatives from three major international organisations: Laura Cassio from the European Commission, Richard Sweet from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and David Fretwell from the World Bank. This played a significant role in facilitating the relationships between these organisations which led to the subsequent series of overlapping international policy reviews (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2004; Sultana, 2003; 2004; Watts & Fretwell, 2004). Again the full proceedings were published in a bound volume (Bezanson & O’Reilly, 2002).

The next symposium held in Toronto, Canada, on 6–8 October 2003, differed from the others in that had a more formal official status. It was jointly sponsored by OECD and the Canadian Government, in association with the European Commission, the World Bank and IAEVG, and was designed to disseminate and discuss the implications of the international reviews. It accordingly sat outside the symposia sequence, but can conveniently be viewed as part of this sequence, maintaining its continuity: the design features were the same and were managed by many of the same people, with CCDF playing a strong role in facilitating its process. The symposium was attended by 109 people from 25 countries. A ‘mega-synthesis’ of the key findings from the linked international reviews, at that stage covering 37 countries, provided a core background paper for the event (Watts & Sultana, 2004). The 10 key features of a lifelong career development system identified in the OECD review (Table 1) have continued to inform the subsequent symposia. An important linked initiative was a policy handbook produced by Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the European Commission (2004): an international resource, translated into 15 languages (including Arabic), providing practical examples and a process

through which countries could benchmark their own systems in relation to these features and other systems.

Meanwhile, following the 2001 Vancouver symposium, discussions had been taking place about the possibility of setting up an International Centre for Career Development and Public Policy (ICCDPP) to support and maintain continuity between the symposia and to provide a focal point for sustained international collaboration. A proposal was developed by a small group led by CCDF. In his closing address at the Toronto symposium, John Dennehy (Secretary-General of the Department of Education and Science in Ireland and Chairman of the OECD Education Committee) stated his support for this significant initiative and announced that Ireland would make available an expert (John McCarthy) for a 3-year period, to help to establish the centre. The OECD, the European Commission and IAEVG publicly expressed support for the setting up of the centre, and the World Bank actively considered hosting it in its Washington DC offices (though this suggestion was not implemented).

The third symposium in the original series – and the first to be based outside Canada – was held in Sydney, Australia, on 21–24 April 2006. It was attended by 86 participants from 21 countries. It included a particular focus on the relationship between career development and workforce development. It also paid more attention than previous symposia to developing countries, leading to the establishment of a Developing Countries Network. This network, however, proved difficult to sustain: an example of the problems of maintaining initiatives based heavily on voluntary effort.

Later in the same year, in November 2006, a European conference based on the same design principles was held in Jyväskylä, Finland. This led to the establishment of a European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN), supported by the European Commission. The inaugural meeting to establish the Network took place in Helsinki, Finland, in May 2007. Co-ordinated by a team based at the University of Jyväskylä, membership of

**Table 1.** Key features of lifelong career development systems.

- Transparency and ease of access over the lifespan, including a capacity to meet the needs of a diverse range of clients.
- Particular attention to key transition points over the lifespan.
- Flexibility and innovation in service delivery to reflect the differing needs and circumstances of diverse client groups.
- Processes to stimulate regular review and planning.
- Access to individual guidance by appropriately qualified practitioners for those who need such help, at times when they need it.
- Programmes to develop career management skills.
- Opportunities to investigate and experience learning and work options before choosing them.
- Assured access to service delivery that is independent of the interests of particular institutions or enterprises.
- Access to comprehensive and integrated educational, occupational and labour market information.
- Involvement of relevant stakeholders.

Source: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2004).

the network was open to all members of the European Union (EU) and of the European Economic Area, as well as to the EU candidate countries, and to partner organisations including ICCDPP, IAEVG and a number of European organisations. ELGPN's subsequent work has strongly extended and complemented the work of the international symposia.

The fourth international symposium in the core series was held in Aviemore, Scotland, on 22–25 October 2007. It was attended by 109 participants from 26 countries. It noted the evolution of world-region structures, including not only ELGPN and the Developing Countries Network, but also a regional network in the Mediterranean region managed by the European Training Foundation (ETF): its recommendations included the development of such world-region networks in areas of the world where they did not currently exist. It also noted that the series of international policy reviews had by now been extended to cover 55 countries.

The fifth symposium was held in Wellington, New Zealand, on 14–17 November 2009, immediately preceding a global IAEVG conference. It was attended by 76 participants from 23 countries. These included significant representation from Pacific Island nations, focused on establishing a career development network in the Pacific region (which, as with the Developing Countries Network, proved difficult to get off the ground in a sustainable form).

The sixth symposium was held in Budapest, Hungary, on 5–7 December 2011. It was attended by 127 representatives from 33 countries. The first of the symposia to be held in a non-English-speaking country, it included significant representation from European countries, supported by ELGPN. Its recommendations (see Annex) included encouraging ELGPN in its next work programme (2013–14) to include the development of a handbook for policy-makers on impact evidence, in collaboration with the International Centre and other relevant research networks outside Europe. This recommendation has been implemented and such a handbook has now been published (Hooley, 2014).

In all of these cases, some funding and other support has been provided by government departments (both education and employment) or government agencies within the host country. A 'home team' has been responsible for logistical and other support, working with an international planning group.

ICCDPP has continued to support the symposia and to provide continuity between them. Initially the centre was based within the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) (an agency of the European Commission) in its Brussels (Belgium) offices, with John McCarthy spending some of his time on centre business and some on CEDEFOP business. A website and a newsletter (*Policy Points*) were launched. The CEDEFOP arrangement ended in 2006, and John

McCarthy's 3-year secondment from Ireland was extended to 2009. He continued as director, but the centre was now established as a separate legal entity, subsequently with more modest funding provided by sources in a number of countries including government funding from Australia, Denmark and Luxembourg, and other funding from Canada (CCDF), New Zealand (Career Services), the UK (Careers Scotland; Learndirect) and the USA (National Career Development Association). The centre moved to New Zealand (Wellington) in 2010, with an office provided by New Zealand Career Services, and then relocated to France (Nice) in 2013. It has supported two work groups arising from the 2009 symposium – entitled 'Prove It Works' and 'Transformational Technology' – which have had periodic virtual meetings and produced short reports for the 2011 symposium. The centre's other main manifestation has been its website, which acts as an international policy sharing and learning resource. It currently includes materials in 12 languages (including Arabic) and has especially attracted attention from the USA, China, South America and Russia – including some countries which have never participated in the symposia.

## Review

If the 2003 Toronto symposium is included in the sequence, then the seven symposia have covered a total of 57 countries (see Table 2). Four of the Commonwealth countries involved in the original discussions – Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the UK – have continued to provide the core support for the symposia, fielding strong teams comprising government officials as well as professional leaders, and providing the venues for the first six symposia. The USA has also regularly provided a substantial team, though consisting mainly of professional leaders and researchers (the lack in the USA of strong federal policies related to career development, with most of the relevant powers devolved to the states, has been a significant causal factor here). Two further countries have been represented at all seven symposia (Denmark and Finland); four others have been represented at all but one (Germany, Hungary, Ireland and the Netherlands).

In the more recent symposia, representation has increasingly been extended from relatively wealthy western countries to include more countries from other parts of the world, with budgets being organised to encourage this (the basic funding model is for the core funding to be provided by the host country, usually through a grant from the government or a government agency, with other participants covering their travel and accommodation costs, either collectively as country teams or as individuals). Despite this, however, participation from some parts of the world – notably Africa (apart from South Africa) and South

**Table 2.** Symposia participants.

	1999	2001	2003	2006	2007	2009	2011
Argentina	2	–	–	–	–	–	–
Australia	2	5	2	7	3	3	5
Austria	–	–	1	1	1	1	4
Bhutan	–	–	–	1	3	–	–
Botswana	–	–	1	1	3	–	–
Canada	4	12	29	7	7	6	3
Chile	–	–	1	–	–	–	–
China	1	1	–	–	–	–	–
Cook Islands	–	–	–	–	–	1	–
Croatia	–	–	–	–	–	–	3
Cyprus	–	–	–	–	–	–	3
Czech Republic	–	–	3	–	–	3	–
Denmark	1	2	3	2	3	2	4
Egypt	–	–	–	–	1	–	–
Estonia	–	–	–	–	–	–	5
Finland	3	5	2	3	3	2	1
France	1	–	–	–	3	1	–
Germany	1	3	3	–	2	1	3
Greece	–	3	–	–	–	–	3
Hungary	–	2	2	1	2	1	10
Iceland	–	–	–	–	1	–	1
India	–	–	–	2	2	–	1
Ireland	2	3	6	4	3	–	3
Israel	–	1	–	–	4	–	5
Italy	–	–	–	1	–	–	–
Japan	–	–	–	–	–	3	–
Korea	–	–	1	–	–	3	3
Kosovo	–	–	–	–	–	–	3
Latvia	–	–	–	4	–	–	3
Lebanon	–	–	–	–	–	–	2
Luxembourg	–	–	2	1	–	–	–
Maldives	–	–	–	–	6	–	–
Mexico	–	–	–	1	3	–	–
Montenegro	–	–	–	–	1	–	1
Netherlands	3	3	3	–	3	3	2
New Zealand	2	3	3	7	5	7	4
Niue	–	–	–	–	–	1	–
Norway	–	–	3	3	4	–	4
Oman	–	–	–	3	–	–	–
Poland	–	1	3	3	–	–	2
Portugal	–	–	2	–	–	–	2
Qatar	–	–	–	–	–	2	2
Romania	–	–	4	–	–	–	–
Russia	–	–	–	–	–	–	1
Samoa	–	–	–	–	–	1	–
Serbia	–	–	–	–	–	–	4
Slovenia	–	–	–	–	1	2	3
Solomon Islands	–	–	–	–	–	3	–
South Africa	–	–	3	2	1	7	5
Spain	2	2	1	–	–	–	–

(continued)

**Table 2.** Continued.

	1999	2001	2003	2006	2007	2009	2011
Sweden	–	2	–	–	–	–	–
Switzerland	–	–	1	–	–	–	–
Thailand	–	–	–	–	1	–	–
Tonga	–	–	–	–	–	5	–
Turkey	–	–	2	–	–	–	4
UK	4	7	10	6	21	3	5
USA	6	5	3	4	5	5	5
Other	12	11	14	22	17	10	18
Total	46	71	109	86	109	76	127

America – has been very limited, and participation from Asia has not been as substantial or as sustained as from Australasia, Europe and North America. Having English as the only working language during the symposia, without translation or interpretation services, has no doubt impacted on country participation. Involving a wider range of countries remains a challenge for the future.

The themes explored at the seven symposia (see Table 3) have shown some continuity but also some evolution. They have in addition tended to be influenced by policy priorities within the host country, responding to its funding support. Continuing themes have included the relationship between career development practice and public policy, innovation (with particular attention to transformational technology), quality (including professional standards and training) and the impact evidence base. Themes which have attracted growing attention have included the role of the citizen and harnessing cultural diversity.

### Impact

It is not easy to assess the impact of the symposia as events. All have received very positive evaluations from participants. For the public officials involved, they have provided high-quality staff development events, deepening their knowledge of the career development field and enabling them to develop an international perspective on their work. The broader value of the events in sharing good and interesting practices, and enabling countries to benchmark their policy development and practices against those in other comparable countries, has been widely reported.

In several cases the working relationships established within the teams formed for the events have been sustained thereafter and have led to positive outcomes. It is difficult to quantify such benefits and to separate them from other processes within the countries concerned. But many countries have now established national career development fora or other co-ordination mechanisms (for details of developments in European countries in this regard,

**Table 3.** Symposium themes.

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1999	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Preparation for the world of work.</li><li>2. The impact on career delivery services of information and communications technology.</li><li>3. Connecting career development and public policy with counselling process issues.</li><li>4. Career development and public policy: the role of values, theory and research.</li></ol>
2001	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Career development policy models.</li><li>2. Quality outcomes for career development across all ages sought by policy-makers and practitioners.</li><li>3. Costs/benefits of career development interventions.</li><li>4. Roles of the public sector (government, education), employers, unions, the private sector, community agencies and the voluntary sector in the provision of career development services, with examples of collaboration, competition and complementarity in these roles.</li><li>5. The appropriate range of professional training, qualifications and skills in the career development field.</li></ol>
2003	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Connecting policy and practice.</li><li>2. Connecting research and knowledge development.</li><li>3. Career information.</li><li>4. Access to services.</li><li>5. Measuring outcomes.</li><li>6. Innovation.</li></ol>
2006	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Connecting career development to workforce development.</li><li>2. Career development for young people (workforce preparation).</li><li>3. Career development for adults at work (workforce adaptability).</li><li>4. Career development for adults re-entering work (workforce reintegration).</li><li>5. Career development and older workers.</li><li>6. Career development: the evidence base and professional infrastructure.</li></ol>
2007	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Blending economic and social goals.</li><li>2. Strategic leadership.</li><li>3. Harnessing diversity.</li><li>4. Impact evidence.</li><li>5. Role of the citizen.</li></ol>
2009	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Transformational technology.</li><li>2. Prove it works.</li><li>3. Role of the citizen.</li><li>4. Culture counts.</li></ol>
2011	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Political, economic and social changes and the changing role of career guidance policies and practice.</li><li>2. Lifelong guidance policy as a part of integrated human resource development policies – challenges and opportunities.</li><li>3. The changing world and the changing role of career guidance – skills and competencies for lifelong guidance practitioners.</li><li>4. Evidence-based practice; evidence-based policies.</li></ol>

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see European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network, 2012, Annex 4), and a fair number have developed national lifelong career development strategies. In addition, some participating countries, particularly those in which regional devolution is strong and national strategies accordingly difficult to develop and sustain, have held national symposia based broadly on the model adopted in the international symposia: the UK (with Ireland) did this in 1999 and 2001; Canada in 2003.

The international symposia have been closely linked to, and had an important facilitative role in supporting, a number of other significant international developments. As already noted, the 2001 symposium helped to facilitate the unusually close working relationships between a number of

international organisations which enabled the subsequent overlapping international reviews to be based on a common methodology and therefore to build upon each other (for a more detailed discussion of the reviews and their impact, see Watts, 2014). In addition, the symposia informed the European Commission's Expert Group on Lifelong Guidance, and the methodology of the symposia was used both for an ETF symposium for EU acceding and candidate countries (Bratislava, Slovakia, December 2003), and for a European symposium (Jyväskylä, Finland, November 2006) which led to the establishment of ELGPN; it has also continued to influence the design of ELGPN activities, notably in the biennial conferences which have closed each of ELGPN's work programmes to date, held respectively in

Lyon, France (September 2008), in Lisbon, Portugal (September 2010), in Larnaca, Cyprus (October 2012) and in Rome, Italy (October 2014). Most of these have conveniently alternated with the international symposia. No progress has however been made with establishing similar enduring networks in other parts of the world, largely because of the absence of strong underpinning political and funding structures comparable to the European Union: the other networks established following particular symposia did useful work, but have not proved sustainable.

The original symposium vision was that each country would create an achievable action plan to be initiated and implemented as far as possible in their respective countries, with progress reported on at subsequent symposia. This has proved feasible in some smaller countries with highly centralised government departments. In some ways, the formation of the ELGPN and its subsequent cross-Europe working groups can be seen as an implementation of this vision. But policy developers in larger countries outside Europe have not had access to such world-regional networks to support them in the implementation of their plans.

For larger highly decentralised countries such as Australia, Canada and the USA, implementation of such a vision presents particular challenges. Impacts have therefore taken quite different forms. In Canada, for example, for a number of years the federal government established a Career Development Services Working Group under its Forum of Labour Market Ministers to support and co-ordinate initiatives across provincial and federal departments. Funds to conduct applied research to advance the evidence base were provided. Following examples in other countries, the Canadian Council for Career Development has been established and is growing in influence. In the case of Australia, too, there is no doubt that the development of national and some state policies and strategies have been influenced by the involvement of policy-makers and developers in the international symposia. These are direct spin-offs from the symposium movement but take much longer to achieve than the time between symposia.

The recent (2013–14) joint initiative of the International Labour Organisation and the ETF in establishing international training programmes in policies for career guidance is also an outcome from the experience of the international symposia. The demand for training places demonstrated by this initiative (in English, again without translation or interpretation) reflects the value of the symposia as training events for policy developers.

### Future prospects

Hopes that a further international symposium in the series would be held in 2013 did not materialise due to cuts in government spending in the proposed host country (Finland). Plans are currently underway for

a 2015 symposium in the USA, to resume the series. Other countries that have indicated a possible interest in organising future symposia include Korea, Qatar and South Africa. Meanwhile, the European Commission has indicated its willingness to support ELGPN financially until the end of 2015, though thereafter it may need to develop a new form and/or new sources of funding.

As the symposia have expanded to be more inclusive of countries at very different stages of development with respect to career development infrastructure, the complexities of keeping the symposia relevant for all have significantly increased. Additionally, even across countries at comparable development levels, there is enormous variation in the status of career development as a recognised instrument to achieve workforce and economic development goals. Both of these factors have made it increasingly challenging to attract the participation of senior policy officials in education, training and employment. In earlier symposia, most notably the 2003 OECD-endorsed symposium, senior policy officials were strongly in attendance and the impacts were transparent. In the later more diverse symposia, senior policy persons were less attracted to attend unless there were plentiful opportunities to interact at the same level across countries. Subsequent symposia have evolved a more attainable focus on attracting ‘influencers’: that is, individuals positioned to connect with, brief and influence senior decision-makers, including those working for international organisations such as ETF, an agency of the European Commission that undertakes policy development work in EU neighbouring countries. The structure, content and reach of the symposia have shifted and evolved in response to expanded inclusiveness. How far this can continue to evolve and still retain impact and relevance is yet to be determined.

Country papers are requirements for attending the symposia and originally were endorsed by the participating countries. Depending on the country, such approvals could require multiple levels of approval, extended periods of time and ‘politically correct’ edits. Over time, these have evolved into ‘working documents’ endorsed by the country team and sometimes their organisations. This has not necessarily made them less effective but it has rendered them less influential at very senior levels.

Since 2009 the reduction in the International Centre’s government and other funding has resulted in a decrease in work activity. The centre’s management committee, comprising government officials and international career guidance policy experts, has accordingly decided to try a partnership approach with the private sector alongside maintaining public funding support, designed to develop a more sustainable structure. A partnership agreement has been established with Kuder Inc covering an initial period of 5 years, with Kuder providing management and marketing consultancy, technical website support,

a US office address alongside ICCDPP's current address in France and core funding for the 2015 symposium and its follow-up, in return for which the centre will provide Kuder with policy advice. Many governments are increasing pressure on non-government organisations to seek private-sector partnerships and to become more self-sufficient. Care is being taken to ensure that the link with Kuder does not undermine the impartiality of the centre's work. If the partnership proves sustainable, it could provide a stronger basis for the future of the centre and of the symposia than they have had to date.

There is currently discussion about the possibility and importance of a second OECD review some 15 years following the initial review. Several countries appear interested in pursuing this possibility. Were this to happen, and it is very tentative at present, it could circle the initiative back to its higher-level policy roots and impacts, and further strengthen the role of the ICCDPP as a resource for knowledge transfer and exchange.

## Conclusions

The initiation and development of the international symposia has been based on voluntary collaboration between a number of committed individuals, located in different countries, with access to resources and contacts within their own countries and elsewhere that have supported the symposia and the International Centre. Members of the centre's board for some or all of the period of the symposia reviewed here have been from Australia (Robyn Bergin, Helen McLaren, Richard Sweet), Canada (Lynne Bezanson), Denmark (Lise Skanting), Finland (Raimo Vuorinen), Hungary (Tibor Bors Borbély), Ireland (Margaret Kelly), New Zealand (Lester Oakes), the UK (Gareth Dent, Liz Galashan, Tony Watts) and the USA (Ed Herr, Spencer Niles). The organisation of each of the symposia was dependent on one of the countries involved volunteering to take on the responsibility of doing so.

At the same time, close attention has been given to involving government departments within each of the countries concerned and also a number of relevant international organisations. IAEEVG, as the world professional association in the career development field, has been actively supportive throughout. In addition, representatives have been present at one or more of the symposia from relevant inter-governmental organisations, including the European Commission, the International Labour Organisation, OECD and the World Bank (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has so far been a conspicuous omission from this list). Some of the most important achievements of the symposia have stemmed from their involvement.

The structure of the centre and symposia has been somewhat fragile: a network with a support structure,

rather than an institution; a voluntary policy movement with some government support. But perhaps this has been a source of their creativity and flexibility, enabling a range of initiatives from a range of national and international organisations to take place, without any dominating force. Whether the current structure will survive, or develop into something stronger, remains to be seen. But the merits of some structure and process of this kind, to support international collaboration in the career development field, have in our view been definitively demonstrated.

## Declaration of conflicting interests

None declared.

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## Annex: 2011 symposium communiqué

### Preamble

The symposium was attended by 127 representatives from 31 countries. Each country team prepared a country report in advance of the event, covering the four themes outlined below. Theme syntheses provided the basis for round-table discussions, the conclusions of which were fed back and synthesised at plenary sessions. This communiqué represents a summary of the collective conclusions of those present at the event. It does not bind any of the institutions which they represented. It is addressed primarily to policy-makers.

### Theme 1: Political, economic and social changes and the changing role of career guidance policies and practice

#### Principles

1. A key role of career development systems and services is to help individuals to manage the interface between their career development and economic, political and social changes to their own benefit and the benefit of the wider society.
2. To perform this role, such systems and services must always aim at a dynamic balance between aspirations and realism, between personal goals and labour market demand.
3. At a time of economic crisis, the need and potential demand for career development services are increased, but so are the challenges for public expenditure to respond to this need.

#### Recommendations to countries

1. Assert the case for access to such services as a citizen right, linked to affirming human worth, dignity and hope.
2. At the same time, link the role of career development systems and services more strongly to policy priorities, including those designed to support economic growth (e.g. skills strategies) or reduce costs (e.g. reducing drop-out).
3. Secure an appropriate balance between targeting intensive services to those who need them most and providing core services to all (avoiding 'marginalising the mainstream').

#### Recommendations for international collaboration

1. Through the ICCDPP and the IAEVG, strengthen links between the ELGPN and other symposium countries, to enable the strong collaborative structures and processes within ELGPN to be enriched

by practices from countries outside Europe, for mutual benefit.

2. Ensure that such links include, but extend beyond, global sharing of ELGPN publications and tools – recognising that good practice is based on sharing learning, not importing models.

### Theme 2: Lifelong guidance policy as a part of integrated human resource development policies – challenges and opportunities

#### Principles

1. Career development is integral to effective human resource development and skills strategies, i.e. to harnessing individual talents and motivations, to the benefit of the economy and the wider society.
2. Career development policies and provision tend to be located within sectors (schools, vocational education and training, higher education, adult education and employment), but careers involve the construction of pathways across these sectors, on a lifelong basis. Services to support them need to be as seamless as possible. It is accordingly important to develop lifelong strategies based on communication, collaboration and co-ordination across sectors.
3. Career development policy forums or other policy co-operation/co-ordination mechanisms can be established to develop such strategies. These may include the relevant ministries, the social partners (employers and trade unions), associations of career professionals and other stakeholders. (Many countries, in Europe in particular, have now developed structures of these kinds.)

#### Recommendations to countries

1. Countries that have not yet established a career development policy forum or other policy co-operation/co-ordination mechanism to consider what structure would best suit their needs and how they can draw from the experiences of other countries in this respect.
2. Countries with such structures in place to regularly review their remit, goals, tasks, membership and processes, to ensure that they are sustainable and effective.

#### Recommendations for international collaboration

1. Extend the existing structures of collaboration and communication within the ELGPN to enable other interested countries outside Europe to benefit from, and contribute to, the sharing of

- experiences in establishing and sustaining such structures.
2. Extend the consultation processes related to the proposed ELGPN glossary, to give it global relevance.
  3. Complement this with work on a taxonomy to cover the language used not only by careers practitioners and policy-makers but also by the general public.

### **Theme 3: The changing world and the changing role of career guidance – skills and competencies for lifelong guidance practitioners**

#### *Principles*

1. From a policy perspective, ensuring that the skills and competencies of career development practitioners are fit for purpose is a crucial aspect of assuring the quality of services.
2. High-quality services require a strong careers profession. Currently, the level of professionalisation (including whether relevant qualifications are required to practise) varies considerably between and within countries.

#### *Recommendations to countries*

1. Develop strong professional standards, linked to strong quality-assurance frameworks, to cover a variety of roles in a variety of different sectors – distinguishing core competencies from specialist competencies. Governments may wish to provide some financial support for the relevant professional association(s) or sector body to manage this process.
2. Link the standards to national qualification frameworks, with recognition of prior learning, and with progression pathways into, within and beyond the careers profession.
3. Build closer links between policy-makers, professional associations, employers and training bodies, to ensure that professional standards and training provision are informed by developments in policy and practice, and lead innovation rather than lagging behind it (e.g. in relation to using labour market intelligence and harnessing technology).

#### *Recommendations for international collaboration*

1. Through ICCDPP, IAEVG and other professional networks, support sharing of policies and practice in relation to professional standards and training provision (curriculum and methodologies).

2. Develop self-evaluation criteria for professional associations in the career development field, to enable them to review their fitness for purpose, their effectiveness and directions for development.

### **Theme 4: Evidence-based practice; evidence-based policies**

#### *Principles*

1. If public expenditure on career development systems and services is to be justified, it needs to be supported by clear evidence of their effectiveness and impact.
2. Such evidence needs to include accountability frameworks for routine data collection, plus longitudinal research studies to determine longer-term impact.
3. A strong research and evidence base is also an essential underpinning for good practice in career development delivery.

#### *Recommendations to countries*

1. Review existing accountability frameworks across all sectors. Potentially these might include data on inputs, processes, learning outcomes (e.g. career management skills), short-term behavioural outcomes (e.g. participation in education or employment) and longer-term economic and social outcomes, alongside other quality criteria (e.g. practitioner competence, citizen/user involvement, service provision and improvement strategies, cost-benefits to society and individuals).
2. Develop a research strategy to provide a strong underpinning for evidence-based policy and practice.

#### *Recommendations for international collaboration*

1. Encourage the ELGPN in its next work programme (2013–14) to include the development of a handbook for policy-makers which will pull together the key existing evidence on the impact of career development services and provide a guide to the possible elements of accountability frameworks (with examples), and to do this in collaboration with ICCDPP and other relevant research networks outside Europe.
2. Encourage OECD and partner organisations to repeat the influential country reviews conducted in 2001–3, taking advantage of other data sources now available.

### Additional note

The symposium included significant discussions on terminology and on branding. It was recognised that the language used to describe career development in relation to public policy is varied and often confusing. Some branding based on core concepts is needed to support consistency, coherence and continuity. It is proposed that, for the next 2 years prior to IS2013, this should be based on the following three levels:

Core concept:	Career Development:
Definition:	Lifelong Guidance for Learning and Work
Linked policy agendas:	Lifelong Learning Workforce Development Social Inclusion

‘Lifelong Guidance’ is used because – linked to ‘Lifelong Learning’ – it is the basis for international collaboration within Europe. It is important, however, to add two caveats:

- ‘Guidance’ could be viewed as being somewhat directive in nature, whereas career development is designed to promote people’s capacity to manage their own careers, with access to help where needed.
- ‘Lifelong guidance’ could be viewed as suggesting that the state should pay for securing access to guidance on a lifelong basis. But while assuring access to such help throughout life is a public as

well as a private good, this does not mean that the state should necessarily be expected to pay for it all: some will be funded by the state, directly or indirectly; some in other ways. The roles of the state can be to stimulate the market, to quality-assure the market and to compensate for market failure.

Other terms that could be used include:

- Education; Training; Employment; Jobs.
- Skills Strategies; Human Resource Development.
- Career Counselling; Employment Counselling; Career Information and Advice; Careers Education; Career/Job Coaching; Career Mentoring; Livelihood Planning.

The selection of terminology should be adapted to different contexts and different audiences.