



The Evidence Base on Lifelong Guidance

A GUIDE TO KEY FINDINGS FOR EFFECTIVE POLICY AND PRACTICE

EXTENDED SUMMARY



EUROPEAN LIFELONG GUIDANCE POLICY NETWORK

The Evidence Base on Lifelong Guidance: a Guide to Key Findings for Effective Policy and Practice

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This is an extended summary of the ELGPN Evidence Guide commissioned by the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN), a Member State network in receipt of EU financial support under the Lifelong Learning Programme. The views expressed are those of the author, approved by the ELGPN, and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the European Commission or any person acting on behalf of the Commission.

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Extended summary

Introduction

The Council of the European Union invites member states to... strengthen the role of lifelong guidance within national lifelong learning strategies in line with the Lisbon Strategy and with the strategic framework for European co-operation in education and training.¹

Europe is experiencing a period of rapid economic and demographic change, posing major policy challenges for governments. How to address these issues and to ensure that individuals remain resilient during changing times is likely to be a key focus for public policy in the foreseeable future.

The Council of the European Union Resolution suggests that lifelong guidance services offer public-policy tools that can address these challenges. It notes that lifelong guidance refers to:

a continuous process that enables citizens at any age and at any point in their lives to identify their capacities, competences and interests, to make educational, training and occupational decisions and to manage their individual life paths in learning, work and other settings in which those capacities and competences are learned and/or used. Guidance covers a range of individual and collective activities relating to information-giving, counselling, competence assessment, support, and the teaching of decision-making and career management skills.²

ELGPN has also produced a Resource Kit for European policy-makers that explains the key features of a lifelong guidance policy system.³ This Kit includes a Quality-Assurance and Evidence-Base (QAE) Framework which identifies a series of key elements that should be

built into national systems to support quality service delivery and underpin the collection of evidence.

Understanding the evidence that supports lifelong guidance is key to effective policy-making. Such evidence can support the development of effective policies and ensure their successful implementation. This extended summary sets out an overview of this evidence for policy-makers. Further detail, including detailed references to the relevant literature, can be found in the full version of this guide.

Lifelong guidance and public policy

Lifelong guidance is a cross-sectoral activity which contributes to a wide range of different policy aims. It covers interventions that help an individual to manage their progression in life, learning and work. Although guidance interventions are primarily focused on the individual, they also have positive impacts for organisations, localities and regions, countries and the European Union as a whole.

The key public-policy areas to which lifelong guidance contributes include:

- Economic development.
- Efficient investment in education and training.
- European mobility for learning and work.
- Labour market efficiency.
- Lifelong learning.
- Social equity.
- Social inclusion.
- Youth employment.
- Active ageing.

Effective lifelong guidance empowers individuals to achieve their potential and supports them to overcome personal, social and economic barriers to their progression. Guidance helps individuals to navigate their way around the complex systems of the learning

¹ Council of the European Union (2008). Council Resolution on better integrating lifelong guidance into lifelong learning strategies. 2905th Education, Youth and Culture Council meeting Brussels, 21 November. Available from http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/educ/104236.pdf [Accessed 27 January 2014]. This Resolution confirmed the definitions developed in an earlier 2004 Resolution.

² Ibid.

³ European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (2012). *Lifelong Guidance Policy Development: A European resource kit*. Jyväskylä, Finland: ELGPN.

and labour markets and actively engages those who have failed to make successful transitions or have become socially disengaged.

The unique value of lifelong guidance is that it is a cross-cutting activity which can foster coherence for individuals as they engage with a range of different systems. It supports transitions between these systems, including challenging transitions between learning and work. Consequently, guidance can be found in schools, VET, adult education and higher education, and also with unemployed workers and those in work, as well as those who are moving from country to country, or are tapering their work towards retirement. In the context of current European policy, guidance can help to address Europe 2020 targets on education, employment, and poverty and social exclusion.

Given the importance of lifelong guidance to this wide range of policy areas, it is critical that interventions are based on the best available evidence and that their effectiveness is evaluated. ELGPN has also

developed an approach to quality and evidence in this area: the QAE Framework. This guide builds on this framework by summarising the existing evidence in this field.

The impact of lifelong guidance

There is an extensive research base on lifelong guidance which highlights a range of levels of impact. It recognises that there are many beneficiaries of lifelong guidance, including individuals, their families and communities, and the organisations where they study and work, as well as society as a whole. It describes the key areas that lifelong guidance impacts upon as being:

- educational outcomes;
- economic and employment outcomes;
- social outcomes.

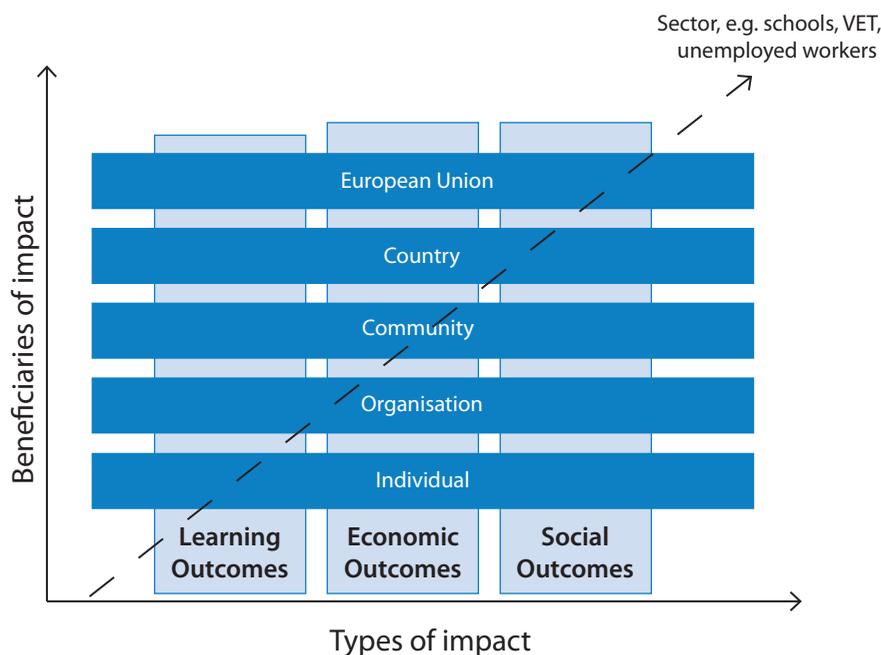


Figure: Types of impact and beneficiaries of impact⁴

⁴ Figure 2 is a further iteration of a model developed within ELGPN in 2011-12. Borbély-Pecze, T.B. (2011). Review of the working methodology and the content of the ELGPN WP4 2011-12. Presentation at ELGPN WP4 field visit, Tallinn, Estonia, 23 May.

Guidance impacts on a range of different areas in different ways for different beneficiaries. The figure below shows how these interact and build on each other, in all of the sectors where guidance can be found. So, for example, a guidance intervention with an unemployed worker can support that worker to improve their education, re-engage with the labour market and become more socially included. Such impacts are experienced by the individual, but also have benefits at broader political and economic levels.

The evidence supports the use of lifelong guidance in a range of different sectors and demonstrates its impact in relevant policy areas.

Much guidance takes place within the learning system. The following table summarises the key impacts that have been identified in relation to guidance in each of the sectors. It also highlights key policy concerns that are addressed by guidance activities within each sector.

Guidance in lifelong learning		
Key impacts observed by research	Key policy concerns addressed	Relevant EU policies
<p>Career guidance in schools contributes to increasing students' engagement and success in school by clarifying the relevance of subjects to future opportunities, and supporting transitions from school through providing information and skills to underpin good decision-making, so helping students to establish successful lives and careers.</p>	<p>Engagement and participation in school</p> <p>Learner attainment</p> <p>Successful transitions to further learning and work / Preventing unemployment</p>	<p>Council Resolution on lifelong guidance</p> <p>EU 2020 target: Reducing school drop-out rates below 10%</p> <p>Rethinking Education</p>
<p>Career guidance in vocational education supports individuals to see opportunity and value in vocational options and helps those in vocational education to make the most of their skills and knowledge.</p>	<p>Enhancing the skills base</p> <p>Skills utilisation</p> <p>Successful transitions to work / Progression into further learning / Preventing unemployment</p>	<p>Council Resolution on lifelong guidance</p> <p>EU 2020 target: Reducing school drop-out rates below 10%</p> <p>Rethinking Education</p>
<p>Career guidance in higher education supports good career decision-making and effective transitions to the workplace, helping to ensure that graduates' learning and skills are well used.</p>	<p>Skills utilisation</p> <p>Successful transitions to work / Preventing unemployment</p>	<p>Council Resolution on lifelong guidance</p> <p>EU 2020 target: At least 40% of 30-34-year-olds completing third-level education</p>
<p>Career guidance in adult education supports adults to consider their return to education, enhance their skills and employability, and utilise their skills effectively in the labour market.</p>	<p>Lifelong learning</p> <p>Enhancing the skills base</p> <p>Social and educational inclusion</p>	<p>Council Resolution on lifelong guidance</p> <p>EU 2020 target: At least 40% of 30-34-year-olds completing third-level education</p> <p>Council Resolution on renewed European agenda for adult learning</p> <p>E&T 2020 – Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality</p>

Guidance also plays an important role in the labour market. The following table highlights the key areas of activity and the key policy concerns that are addressed.

Guidance for work		
Key impacts observed by research	Key policy concerns addressed	Relevant EU policies
<p>Career guidance is frequently used as a way to engage unemployed adults in the labour market. As such, it forms a key part of active labour market policies. The evidence suggests that, within the bounds of the broader performance of the labour market, career guidance is effective in re-engaging unemployed people in work.</p>	<p>Active labour market policies</p> <p>Social inclusion and equality</p> <p>Poverty</p>	<p>EU 2020 target: 75% of 20-64-year-olds to be employed</p> <p>EU 2020 target: At least 20 million fewer people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion</p>
<p>Guidance is important in helping individuals to manage their return to the labour market following periods of injury, illness, caring responsibilities, or other kinds of career breaks.</p>	<p>Flexible labour market</p>	<p>E&T 2020 – Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality</p>
<p>Guidance is useful for young people who have failed to make successful transitions to the labour market. This can be an effective strategy, particularly where it is possible to develop approaches that recognise the diversity of the youth population and that seek to pre-empt and/or to manage failed transitions.</p>	<p>Active labour market policy</p> <p>Youth employment</p>	<p>EU 2020 target: 75% of 20-64-year-olds to be employed</p> <p>EU 2020 target: At least 20 million fewer people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion</p> <p>Youth Guarantee</p>
<p>Guidance for working people can take place within the workplace or outside it. It benefits both the individual and their employer. Business benefits include increasing employee satisfaction and engagement, and supporting knowledge transfer and cohesion.</p>	<p>Skills utilisation</p> <p>Talent management</p> <p>Employee engagement and retention</p> <p>Flexicurity</p>	<p>Agenda for New Skills and Jobs</p>
<p>Guidance supports the mobility of workers both in the home country and in the host country. It helps people to understand the opportunities and processes of mobility and to re-orientate themselves and become productive once they have moved.</p>	<p>Mobility</p> <p>Skills utilisation</p>	<p>E&T 2020 – Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality</p>
<p>Guidance supports older workers to engage in learning and actively manage their staged retirement.</p>	<p>Active ageing</p> <p>Skills utilisation</p>	<p>Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations</p>

Ensuring effective services

The evidence suggests a number of key features of effective lifelong guidance policy and practice. In particular, the research suggests that guidance services which have impact:

- focus on the individual;
- support learning and progression;
- ensure quality.

These can be developed as ten evidence-based principles for service design and development.

Ten evidence-based principles for the design of lifelong guidance services

Focus on the individual	Support learning and progression	Ensure quality
1) Lifelong guidance is most effective where it is genuinely lifelong and progressive.	4) Lifelong guidance is not one intervention, but many, and works most effectively when a range of interventions are combined.	8) The skills, training and dispositions of the practitioners who deliver lifelong guidance are critical to its success.
2) Lifelong guidance is most effective where it connects meaningfully to the wider experience and lives of the individuals who participate in it.	5) A key aim of lifelong guidance programmes should be the acquisition of career management skills.	9) Lifelong guidance is dependent on access to good-quality career information.
3) Lifelong guidance is most effective where it is able to recognise the diversity of individuals and to provide services relevant to individual needs.	6) Lifelong guidance needs to be holistic and well-integrated into other support services.	10) Lifelong guidance should be quality-assured and evaluated to ensure its effectiveness and to support continuous improvement.
	7) Lifelong guidance should involve employers and working people, and provide active experiences of workplaces.	

Implications for policy and practice

The review of the evidence base demonstrates that there are clear and observable benefits from lifelong guidance. Such benefits have most usually been observed as impacts on the individual. However, there is also a strong strand of research which has explored the benefits of lifelong guidance from the perspective of public policy and economic development.

Many of the immediate implications of this work for the design and delivery of guidance services are spelt out in the section above. There are three more general implications for policy-makers:

Recognising the strength of the evidence base

There is a broad research literature that demonstrates the effectiveness of lifelong guidance. This literature is cross-sectoral, includes studies from a range of countries, and utilises a range of methods. There is therefore a considerable evidence base which policy-makers can draw upon in the development of lifelong guidance policies. Such evidence provides both reassurance about efficacy and models of best practice that can be drawn on when implementing interventions.

Committing to the Lifelong Guidance Policy Cycle

There is a need to commit to the ongoing development of the evidence base. Effective policy-making in this area can be conceived as a policy cycle which encompasses: understanding the evidence, developing and implementing new policies and interventions, and monitoring their effectiveness.



The Lifelong Guidance Policy Cycle

As the evidence base is developed, efforts should be made to enhance the overall quality of the evidence by addressing areas of weakness and increasing the level of methodological sophistication. This might include: the development of new meta-analyses; randomised control trials; longitudinal work; making use of new technologies; and further economic modelling and econometric analysis of the value of the impacts.

Establishing effective quality systems and processes

The evidence base highlights the importance of quality processes to ensuring effective lifelong guidance. The ELGPN QAE Framework offers an established cross-national framework that can be used to enhance quality approaches and improve the quality of evidence collected.



EUROPEAN LIFELONG GUIDANCE POLICY NETWORK (ELGPN) aims to assist the European Union Member States (and the neighbouring countries eligible for the Lifelong Learning Programme) and the European Commission in developing European co-operation on lifelong guidance in both the education and the employment sectors. The purpose of the Network is to promote co-operation and systems development at member-country level in implementing the priorities identified in EU 2020 strategies and EU Resolutions on Lifelong Guidance (2004; 2008). The Network was established in 2007 by the Member States; the Commission supports its activities under the Lifelong Learning Programme.

THIS IS AN EXTENDED SUMMARY of the ELGPN Evidence Guide. The purpose of the guide is to present the existing international research base on the impact of lifelong guidance, including its educational outcomes, economic and employment outcomes, and social outcomes. The guide has been prepared for ELGPN by Professor Tristram Hooley, International Centre for Guidance Studies, University of Derby, UK. It builds on the work undertaken by the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN) during 2008–14, including the Quality-Assurance and Evidence-Base (QAE) Framework which provides an approach for policy-makers to address quality assurance and evidence-based policy and system development. The guide synthesises the existing impact evidence. It suggests that guidance is most effective when it is conceived as a lifelong system and that policy-makers should continue to develop this evidence base to ensure that policies are based on the best evidence available. The full version of the guide is available in print and online on the ELGPN website.

ELGPN represents a major development in support of national lifelong guidance policy development in Europe. It currently has 31 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, SE, SI, SK, TR, UK), with an additional country as an observer (CH). The participating countries designate their representatives in the Network, and are encouraged to include both governmental and non-governmental representatives. As a Member-State-driven network, it represents an innovative form of the Open Method of Co-ordination within the European Union (EU).