P R O M E T H E U S -
Promoting management and entrepreneurial thinking amongst career counsellors and guidance practitioners in EU societies

Career Pathways Research and Analysis Synthesis Report: Prometheus team lead by Careers Europe
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Introduction to the Prometheus Project

The PROMETHEUS project addresses the need for re-skilling and up-skilling of adults through increasing incentives for adult learning, information on access to lifelong learning services such as career guidance and by offering tailored learning opportunities to individual learners. PROMETHEUS will facilitate enhanced participation in learning and employability by developing quality career guidance, counselling and support services. To achieve these goals, the project will use innovative pedagogies, ICT-based methodologies and open education resources in diverse European languages.

The project team includes 6 partner organisations from 6 European countries:

- Business Foundation for Education, Bulgarien (www.fbo.bg)
- Centro Italiano per l'Apprendimento Permanente, Italien (www.ciape.it)
- BEST Institut für berufsbezogene Weiterbildung und Personaltraining GmbH, Österreich (www.best.at)
- Institute of Entrepreneurship Development, Griechenland (http://entre.gr)
- Aspire-igen, Großbritannien (www.aspire-i.com)
- Cork Institute of Technology, Irland (www.cit.ie)

The main project output - the website - www.prometheus-eu.net is a One Stop Virtual Space for Career Counselling and Guidance Services. It will be an innovative platform offering careers professionals a space to learn, discover, network and share information in a range of European languages. It will gather a range of resources, from educational videos, information on best practices, to training resources tools and instruments. The platform will contribute to the continued professional development of careers advisers and provide a space to share information and extend their professional networks. It will have a particular focus on promoting the managerial and entrepreneurial skills of guidance professionals.

Target groups

- Young people about to enter the labour market:
  Unemployed young adults
  Young adults that need advice on further education or training
  Young adults that need advice to change their job
Young adults that need guidance in planning their future career paths

- **Career Guidance Professionals**
  - Career counsellors
  - Guidance practitioners
  - HR professionals
  - Teachers and trainers involved in careers education

- **The main indirect PROMETHEUS target groups are:**
  - Representatives of adult education authorities
  - Training and education providers
  - Future beneficiaries of the project and its impacts: students, employers and social partners

The current report has been elaborated as a result of interviews with career counselling professionals in Bulgaria, Austria, Greece, Italy and the United Kingdom, research of existing national documents and resources related to career guidance, services provided in the different countries, etc. The aim of the report is to gauge the key needs and challenges facing career professionals, particularly with regards to online platforms. The findings from this report will form the basis for the next project stages and the recommendations will be used to develop an e-book of best practices, forum discussions, guide for online career counselling, and empower talk movies.
European Context

There are several networks and organisations that deal with guidance at a European level. For example, the Euroguidance network brings together professionals from across Europe (EU member states, applicant countries and members of the EEA) to share knowledge and developments within the field. In addition, the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) looks to support VET policies across Europe by improving knowledge and facilitating European wide cooperation. Member states have also established the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN) to enable closer collaboration and knowledge sharing related to lifelong guidance. Similarly, Eurodesk is a non-profit organisation which provides information and support to young people in Europe surrounding their mobility opportunities.

In 2008 the European Council adopted a resolution related to improving the role lifelong guidance plays within lifelong learning. This resolution built on previous EU policies and Recommendations, such as a 2006 Recommendation by the European Parliament and the Council on key competences for lifelong learning, the 2004 Resolution on Strengthening Policies, Systems and Practices in the field of Guidance throughout life in Europe and the 2002 Copenhagen Declaration.

The 2008 resolution emphasised the central role played by guidance within education and training policies, as well as the influence it can have on the employment growth of individuals. It also set out four main priority areas:

- Encourage the lifelong acquisition of career management skills
- Ease access for all citizens to guidance services
- Develop quality assurance in guidance provision
- Encourage coordination and cooperation among the various national, regional and local stakeholders

The resolution has gone on to influence the work of the Commission, as well as the activities of organisations such as CEDEFOP.

Many of the organisations mentioned above are involved in research into career guidance in Europe. The Commission manages the website EU Skills Panorama, which provides up to date information on European labour market trends. This is complemented by the work of CEDEFOP, which regularly publishes a wide range of
resources and statistics on VET and guidance developments; from a magazine for industry professionals to country specific reports. Likewise, the ELGPN produces a series of resources. Their Concept Notes explore and debate current issues and are meant to serve as catalysts for lifelong guidance policy development. Meanwhile, their ‘Tools’ publications include a series of booklets designed to help policy-makers and other stakeholders identify issues and review existing lifelong guidance provision within their country or region.

There are also a number of websites which provide online advice and support within the field of career guidance. The Commission manages the PLOTEUS portal, which offers guidance on learning and work-based training across the EU, as well as the EURES portal which helps both job seekers and employers find opportunities abroad. Furthermore, job seekers are also able to make use of the Europass website to develop documents which make their skills and experiences easily understandable across member states.

These Commission-led resources are complemented by the work of Eurodesk in informing young people on the opportunities they have to move around the EU. Equally, a number of recent Erasmus+ projects have seen national agencies working together to develop online guidance resources to help both career guidance professionals and end users of careers services.

In addition to these online resources, career guidance professionals are able to share best practice and further develop their own knowledge through exchange visits organised by the Academia programme. These trips usually last 1 week and see a group of around 10 careers guidance professionals visit a centre for career guidance in another member state, where they take part in talks, discussions and job-shadowing. Similar trips have also formed the basis to several Erasmus+ KA2 mobility projects between European partners.
1. Comparison of national reports and studies on career guidance

In Bulgaria and Italy there are no comprehensive national studies related to career guidance services and career practitioners’ needs. Only brief overviews are available in European documents, such as those produced by European networks, project and organisations (CEDEFOP, Euroguidance etc.). However, in the UK and Greece, nationally recognised bodies are responsible for most national studies and are complemented by the ongoing publication of European reports and projects. These studies show a number of common challenges faced by career guidance professionals, including:

- The range of skills, information and CPD (continued professional development) required by career guidance professionals, e.g. administrative, managerial, training, counselling
- Time/resource/funding limitations

In Greece and Bulgaria ‘providing career counselling services to specific target groups, such as people with special needs, migrants and Roma, is a particular challenge’. A challenge specific to career guidance professionals in Italy and Austria is the recognition and standardisation of their profession and qualification. For example, in Italy there is currently no official recognition of career guidance as a profession, and all attempts to define a clear professional profile with related accreditation system and training pathway have not yet led to any results.
2. Comparison of skills and professional development of career counsellors

In Bulgaria, UK and Greece formal education for career advisers is provided by universities and further education institutions – for example the QCF in England, Northern Ireland and Wales. In Italy and Austria there is no formal education available to become a career adviser, except for small courses within university departments. This is mostly due to the lack of recognition of career guidance as a professional occupation, so no standard accredited programme exists.

A single national point of reference for ensuring and promoting the professional status of career practitioners exists in three of the partner countries:

- Bulgaria - The Global Career Development Facilitator (GCDF) credential owned by the National Board of Certified Counsellors (NBCC)
- UK - UK Register of Career Development Professionals, applicants must hold at least a relevant Level 6 QCF diploma
- Greece – EOPPEP accredits a variety of certification programmes

Steps have been made towards an Italian certification as this is considered key to an integrated career guidance system (National conference Government-regions in 2011). Austria has seen some individual initiatives which provide some certifications and certified programmes; however they are sometimes seen as an unnecessary cost for individuals already working in the field.

In all partner countries career professionals are involved in a broad range of activities; the most popular include organising and attending career events, employer engagement, corporate presentations, visits to companies and career fairs, training seminars, national and European projects and research. These activities require a whole host of skills and so there are a number of opportunities for non-formal training and continuous professional development, delivered by both the public and private organisations in all partner countries. These are generally short courses and can vary considerably in length, target group, content and aims.

In addition to the obvious skills expected of career guidance professionals, those working on a freelance basis or through a private company must obtain various
contracts and funding from different sources (e.g. EU funding, national contracts, local projects and contracts etc.). For these groups they are required to have excellent entrepreneurial skills and other skills including business management skills, bid writing skills, basic knowledge on legal and tax systems. These skills are however not as essential to professionals working in the public sector.
3. Comparison of provisions, services and target groups

Desk research across the partner countries showed many similarities into the types of provision and services available, as well as activities and target groups. The results are as follows:

Organisations and institutions providing guidance:

- School advisers
- VET centres
- Career centres in universities
- Public employment offices
- Private companies specialising in career / psychological counselling and HR services
- NGOs
- Individual/freelance providers (career counsellors, psychologists, coaches, trainers, etc.)
- Trade unions

Information, advice and guidance on:

- CVs and applications
- Labour market trends
- Courses, qualifications and training
- Career planning and development
- Work experience opportunities e.g. internships
- Skills and competencies
- International opportunities
- Interview techniques

Activities include:

- Career and employment fairs
- National career days
- Face-to-face guidance (most common way advisers deliver guidance)
Coaching and mentoring
Group guidance sessions
Psychometric tests
Online resources, websites, social media and interactive platforms
e.g. job profile and job search websites
Engagement with employers

**Target groups of guidance activities:**

- Pupils (especially those in 7th grade, who have to choose a high school and those in 12th grade, who are graduating)
- Students and young graduates
- Employed people who need upskilling/vocational qualification; seeking new career opportunities or help to deal with career transitions and life-career balance
- People who have been made redundant
- Unemployed and NEETs (Not in education, employment or training), those on long-term benefits
- People at risk of social exclusion
- Minority groups (clients with physical disabilities, migrants, Roma, etc).

**And the three hardest to reach target groups reported were:**

- People with disabilities and mental health issues, due to the physical/emotional barriers they face
- Migrants and Roma, main barriers are cultural and linguistic differences, as well as knowledge of the new country’s systems/guidance services
- Long term unemployed, this could be due to any number of reasons from lack of qualifications, to lack of motivation and/or confidence
Online resources:

Career and job websites set up by universities and private companies targeted at the general public exist in varying extents across Europe. In Bulgaria limited information is available online for self-exploration - occupational information, further educational opportunities, job offers and tips for job application, career planning; though some European project websites do offer information for specific groups. It is quite different in the rest of the partner countries where a wealth of information can be found online, from career planning to professional orientation and job searches. The challenge in this case is knowing which are the reliable sources and up-to-date information as not all websites can be regulated.

Useful information, news updates and bulletins specifically targeted at careers professionals can be found online in most partner countries - except for Bulgaria - however relevant, useful information is not necessarily available in one place, and so advisers tend to research information from many different sources. Interactive discussion is usually in informal groups on social media platforms (such as LinkedIn) where career professionals share advice etc. In Greece “IRIDA” is a forum for dialogue and consultation on important issues concerning the provision of career guidance services, intended both to promote synergy and complementarity of actions of career counseling professionals and institutions of the public and private sector, at a local and national level. Produced by EOPPEP it highlights the best use of available resources and recommendations on how to improve the quality of related services.

In terms of platforms that allow careers advisers to deliver their services online, this requires some previous skills and knowledge, such as how to apply ICT in counselling and how to take advantage of social networks, Linked-in, Skype, new platforms for e-portfolios, etc. These platforms are non-existent in Bulgaria and rare in Italy. In the UK The National Careers Service website (nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk) offers personalised information and resources, for example users of this website (who are over the age of 13) can open an account to manage the careers guidance information they receive (test results, useful pages etc). They are also able to take part in instant messaging guidance sessions or email advisers. Similarly in Greece online career counselling services are widespread and mainly offered by companies specialising in career / psychological counselling and HR services. The online provision of these services are online career guidance tests and mentoring via skype meetings.
In Austria the site “bib-atlas.at” is a good example how clients can find the right advisor for their specific needs. It consists of a user friendly questionnaire where - after having introduced some key data (like gender, age or work situation, goal of the search, means of communication) - the user receives a list of the most appropriate centres or institutions to contact.
4. Comparison of policy and practices of careers services

Regulations and legal frameworks seem to vary considerably across the partnership – for example in countries where career counselling is still a ‘young’ profession (Bulgaria), or for those countries working towards an integrated careers system (Italy), there are no official legal documents or authorities regulating the provision of the career services.

In the UK careers guidance for young people in England is covered by the Department for Education’s Statutory Guidelines (most recently reissued in March 2015) as well as the Education Act 2011. Similar acts and guidelines are issued through the devolved parliaments for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. In Greece the legal framework for career services offered by schools is covered by the Law 1566/85 and is regulated by three main authorities – the Ministry of Education, Culture and Religion, the Manpower Employment Organisation and EOPPEP.

IBOB (Information, Counselling and Orientation for Education and Profession – a department from the Federal Ministry for Education and Women) published the “Lifelong Guidance Strategies” in Austria which were based on national and international studies following EU guidelines.

Frameworks that cover the behaviour and practice expected of career professionals exist at national level in the UK (CDI Code of Ethics), Greece (National Code of Ethics for Career Counselling Services – EOPPEP) and Bulgaria (GCDF Code of Ethics). These form the basis for most career services and contribute to internal policies. Austrian practices that apply to training vulnerable groups also apply to career guidance practitioners. In Italy, however, there is no common ethical framework or guidelines. Again this could be linked to the lack of recognition of the profession at national level.
Conclusions

The main differences between partner countries can perhaps be attributed to how well career guidance is recognised as a profession at national level. Professionalization of career counselling seems to be in different stages of development across Europe, from more well developed (UK and Greece), to newly established (Bulgaria) and still in the process (Italy and Austria). This lack of recognition of career guidance as a profession in its own right affects the formal training of career professionals, quality assurance of services, code of ethics, legal obligations etc. Italy and Austria would benefit from UK, Greek and Bulgarian experience in these areas, particularly through sharing best practice.

Despite the differences, the range of activities, target groups and challenges seem to be very similar across the board. Common challenges include:

- Keeping up-to-date with the range of skills, information and CPD (continued professional development) required by advisers, e.g. administrative, managerial, training, counselling, entrepreneurial...
- Time/ resource limitations
- Delivering specialised guidance to certain target groups; migrants, people with physical/mental health issues, long term unemployed

The Prometheus best practices empower talks and online forum will be useful for sharing interesting tools and methods to face these common challenges amongst the European guidance community.

Although many guidance professionals across Europe believe that online career services would contribute to addressing some of the aforementioned challenges, such as more efficient time use, better outreach and a bigger variety in provision, there is still a concern that the shift to web based guidance would present new challenges. The shift from traditional to virtual guidance means a significant change in the role of guidance professionals and the Prometheus Guide to Online Counselling should contribute to addressing the following concerns:

- Establishing trust between the adviser and the client; making good judgement of clients’ traits and needs, in order to tailor services and set adequate goals
• Communication challenges – the online barrier in interaction, do we understand each other, how messages appear online and how to avoid misunderstanding, using netiquette

• Practical and technology-related issues – managing information (updating sources, providing prompt answers, enhancing usability of websites – readability, accessibility, navigation, simple language, etc.), online safety, handling breakdowns and technical challenges

• More training and CPD – for example how to use a new set of ICT skills or market services online

• Accessing hard to reach target groups (50+, disabled, low-skilled, migrants, Roma, NEET)

• Monitoring and evaluation – how to measure the effectiveness, quality and feedback of the service

• Ethical issues surrounding confidentiality, appropriate behavior, referral to other services.

The current analysis clearly demonstrates the need to focus on the online career services, due to their potential to make an impact both on individuals and for society, and at the same time, to achieve this it is necessary that the emphasis be put on ongoing quality assurance and on the counsellors’ continued professional development.