



Education and Culture DG

STATEMENTS ON 'Guidance through transition moments in the learning pathway'.

EUNEC Seminar

Budapest, 13-14 October 2009

EUNEC

EUNEC is a network of education councils in the European Union. As a network, EUNEC brings together the expertise of advisory bodies and of the stakeholders and experts who are involved in the national/regional advisory processes. These advisory bodies give advice to the governments on the different European countries in the field of education and training.

What are these statements meant for?

EUNEC discussed guidance through transition moments in the learning pathway, together with experts from the national councils and from the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network. The European councils gathered in Budapest and formulated critical remarks and statements on these issues.

EUNEC wants to disseminate these statements pro-actively towards the European Commission, the European Parliament, relevant DGs. EUNEC also wants to promote actions by its members at national/regional level. These critical remarks and statements offer an input for national advisory opinions of education councils. They should provide a significant input for reflection and action by relevant stakeholders in the field of education and training such as providers of education, teacher trade unions, social partners, experts in the field of education and training.

The conference

EUNEC organised the conference on guidance through transition moments in the learning pathway on 13 and 14 October 2009 in Budapest, together with the Hungarian National Council for Education. 15 countries were represented.

Statements

1. Guidance, an emerging theme for EUNEC

Guidance has always been a part of the common understanding of EUNEC. In the past, EUNEC focused particularly on vulnerable learners and the effects of national and European policies on these target groups; EUNEC discussed EQF, ECVET and learning outcomes. Implicitly, guidance is the 'fil rouge' of the EUNEC statements on those subjects.

However, guidance is not a goal in itself; it is an instrument.

Drivers for the choice of guidance at this particular moment are

- The European education and training policy
- The lack of transparency of VET and education systems; the lack of smooth transitions
- The economic and social situation

2. Guidance, multiple perspectives

Guidance is at the crossroad of different perspectives and needs:

- The needs of society: welfare, social cohesion, health
- Equity and education goals: all pupils should leave schools qualified
- The needs of labour market, of career and life
- Guidance as a private good

Guidance is part of a global educational concept: participation of learners, participation of parents, active learning, learning outcomes,...

Guidance is part of the lifelong learning paradigm.

Guidance is a necessity, because of the fact that education systems became more flexible and diverse, dealing with diversity and equity, with inclusive education and special needs.

Characteristics of guidance

- Guidance is not a separate subject, but part of a cross curricular approach with links to the curriculum, the hidden curriculum, the school organisation, the learning pathways. There are also links to reflection, to self esteem, to soft goals in education.
- Guidance has to be a mainstream service; we should avoid the remedial image of guidance.
- Guidance at transition moments is crucial but guidance should be integrated in a lifelong continuous and trajectory approach, starting with early childhood.
- Guidance takes into account the context of the learner (family, social environment)
- In the field of guidance schools stand in the first line, but networking with other professional actors is crucial
- Guidance involves the responsibility of the user: every person has to manage his own career, make his own choices.

Networking: a key word

In the field of guidance, schools should be networking with the broader context: labour market, cultural background, sociography of the neighbourhood. There is a need for transversal policy lines at local/regional and at national level (actors, ministries).

Gaps between education and training levels and sectors should be closed.

Collaboration between multiple different actors should have a formal status and support structures in order to be able to build bridges and interfaces. An efficient guidance system needs to be transparent in order to improve common understanding.

Enhancing the care taking capacity of schools

The policy making capacity of school leadership has to be stressed: within this capacity a strand has to do with care, with managing arrangements for the pupils.

3. Vulnerable learners

Who are they?

- School repeaters
- Unqualified school leavers, drop outs
- Children with special needs
- Youngsters and adults suffering from critical conditions on the labour market, life crisis and reorientation, unemployment
- Youngsters and adult with insufficient level of literacy and numeracy

If guidance wants to be effective, it cannot be centred only on the vulnerable learner as an individual. It has to take into account the whole context: his family and social, economic and cultural background.

3.1 Unqualified school leavers

It is very important to work on a positive approach building self confidence. Guidance should convince people : 'Society needs you; you are valuable to society'. On the other hand, there are links with active citizenship: people have to be willing to take that responsibility.

Guidance should offer second chances and flexible learning pathways, appealing to the diverse competences and talents of people.

During the trajectory guidance approach, the 'salmon principle', where people start at a lower level and are able to make their way up thanks to efforts and education, is more motivating than the 'cascade principle' (people starting on a high level, and having to take a step back if they don't succeed).

The concept of 'open school' assures links with the neighbourhood and the environment.

The concept of 'community schools' assures a coordinated and diverse offer of learning pathways within a geographical area.

3.2 Adult learners

Guidance should help to maintain and enhance the eight key competences for adult learners. The approach will be flexible and personal, tailored to the needs of the adult learner.

Guidance has to be seen in a broad perspective: individual development, but also integration and citizenship, work perspective..

4. Critical conditions (level of the system)

Guidance has to be embedded in a global policy project, linking to different policy domains.

Professionalization is a key word: the importance of networking, of counselling, teachers' experience of the labour market... The competences of the guidance professionals and of school leaders have to be stressed.

A careful implementation is an important part of the guidance policy.

5. The role of education councils

Education councils are organisations with room for dialogue . Ideas on education are discussed between different partners in education and society. Guidance is a transversal subject; education councils can play the role of boundary worker in this field.

Some of the EUNEC members worked on the subject of guidance playing an agenda setting role.

Education councils can identify the place of guidance in the own education system.

It is important to follow up the effectiveness of the new measures. One of the roles of education councils is to insist on the assessment of guidance measures.