

The involvement of the European Union in career guidance policy: a brief history

A. G. Watts · Ronald G. Sultana · John McCarthy

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Abstract The history of the involvement of the European Union in the development of policy related to career guidance is analysed in terms of three broad periods. In the first two of these, interventions were confined to pilot projects, exchanges and placements, study visits and studies/surveys, with particular attention to young people; whereas the period since 2000 has seen greater attention being paid to lifelong activities that support the implementation of EU policy priorities and their mainstreaming at national level. These trends reflect both the EU's "creeping competence" and the emerging concept of "lifelong guidance."

Résumé L'histoire de la participation de l'Union Européenne dans le développement de la politique liée à l'orientation professionnelle est analysée en trois grandes périodes. Dans les deux premières périodes, les interventions étaient confinées à des projets pilotes, des échanges et des placements, des observation et des recherches/sondages, tout en donnant une attention particulière aux jeunes; alors que la période depuis 2000 a vu plus d'attention se développer pour les activités tout au long de la vie qui encouragent l'implémentation des priorités de la politique de l'UE et leur intégration au niveau national. Ces tendances reflètent à la fois la « creeping

A. G. Watts (✉)
International Centre for Guidance Studies, University of Derby, Kedleston Road,
Derby DE22 1GB, UK
e-mail: tony.watts@zen.co.uk

R. G. Sultana
Euro-Mediterranean Centre for Educational Research, University of Malta, Msida,
MSD 2080, Malta
e-mail: ronald.sultana@um.edu.mt

J. McCarthy
International Centre for Career Development and Public Policy, Careers Services, Level 4,
CMC Building, 89 Courtenay Place, PO Box 9446, Wellington, New Zealand
e-mail: jmc@iccdpp.org

competence » (extension progressive de l'influence politique) de l'UE et le concept émergeant de « lifelong guidance » (conseil tout au long de la vie).

Zusammenfassung Die Geschichte der Involvierung der Europäischen Union in die Entwicklung der Politik bezüglich Berufs- und Laufbahnberatung wird anhand von drei generellen Perioden analysiert. In den ersten beiden waren Interventionen beschränkt auf Pilotprojekte, Austausch und Platzierung, Studienbesuche und Studien/Befragungen mit spezieller Beachtung von jungen Personen, während in der Periode seit 2000 eine grössere Beachtung von lebenslangen Aktivitäten erfolgte, welche die Implementierung der politischen Prioritäten der EU sowie deren Etablierung auf nationaler Ebene unterstützen. Diese Trends widerspiegeln sowohl die „schleichende Kompetenz“ der EU als auch das aufkommende Konzept der „lebenslangen Beratung“.

Resumen La historia de la implicación de la Unión Europea en el desarrollo de políticas relacionadas con la orientación para la carrera se analiza a través de tres grandes periodos: en los dos primeros, las intervenciones se limitaban a proyectos piloto, intercambios y pasantías o estadias, visitas de estudio, y estudios/encuestas, con atención especial a los jóvenes. Sin embargo, a partir del 2000, se observa una mayor atención a las actividades a lo largo de la vida que apoyan la implementación de las políticas prioritarias de la UE y su incardinación en los contextos nacionales. Estas tendencias reflejan tanto la “competencia de entrar sigilosamente” (*creeping competence*), como el concepto emergente de “orientación a lo largo de la vida”.

Keywords Guidance · Europe · Policy

Most career guidance services are publicly funded and free to the user. Accordingly, public policy is critical to the development of career guidance services (Watts, 2009). Such policy is usually determined largely at national level, though it may be devolved to regional, local or institutional level. A role of growing significance is however played by international organisations. These can exert influence on national governments, in a variety of ways. One of the most influential has been the European Union. Its evolving role in relation to career guidance is therefore worthy of study. In the present paper, we focus on the changing nature of this role. It is hoped that this may stimulate subsequent studies of the nature and extent of its impact.

The European Union represents a new constitutional form: an entity that is larger than the nation-state, yet not quite supranational in its executive powers. Some commentators consider that it constitutes “the first truly novel state-form in history since the invention of the nation-state” (Miller, 1988, para 6.3.2). It has a much more developed and complex institutional structure than inter-governmental organisations like the UN, OECD and NATO, and much broader policy responsibilities: “Few significant policy areas have completely escaped the EU’s attention” (Nugent, 2006, p. 550). But the depth of these responsibilities varies, from areas of policy where key initiating and decision-making powers have been

transferred from the member-states to the EU, to areas where no such transfers have occurred and where the EU's actions have to be very "light touch." Moreover, while "its strength—and its novelty—lies in its subtle amalgam of the powers of the member states and its own institutions," it is also "fragile, increasingly in danger of erosion as states balk at the constraints imposed by a system they themselves created and control" (Menon, 2008, p. 72).

The main institutions of the EU are the Council of Ministers, the European Parliament, and the European Commission (EC). The Council represents the governments of the member-states and is the EU's main decision-taking body. The Parliament represents the people and shares legislative and budgetary power with the Council. The EC represents the common interest of the EU and is its executive body; it has the right to propose legislation and seeks to ensure that EU policies are properly implemented. The EC is supported in its work by agencies such as the Centre Européen pour le Développement de la Formation Professionnelle (CEDEFOP) (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training), the European Training Foundation, and the European Foundation for the Improvement of Working and Living Conditions.

One of the policy areas which has come within the EU's purview is career guidance. As in its member-states, this tends to be viewed not as a policy area in its own right, but as an aspect of wider policy areas, notably education, training and employment. Within the member-states, many of the main initiatives have been within the framework of education policy. But until 1992 this was a problem within what was then the European Community, because it was only following the Treaty of Maastricht that its policy remit was extended to cover education. Prior to that, European initiatives related to career guidance tended to be under the remit of vocational training, which limited and to some extent distorted their nature.

In principle, European co-operation in such fields as education and training can be viewed as taking place at three levels. Level 1 includes Council of Ministers' resolutions, conclusions and communiqués; Level 2 involves the establishment of action programmes and instruments, through decisions and recommendations of the Council (and, after 1997, of the European Parliament); Level 3 refers to pilot projects, exchanges and placements, study visits and studies/surveys, usually part-funded by EU programmes. Level 1 gives political direction; Level 2 consists of an agreed programme of activities aimed at making Level 1 decisions operational, with financial support; and Level 3 are practitioner-, researcher- and manager-level activities that may or may not be related to Levels 1 and 2, though ideally contributing to them. The EC may also take initiatives in policy development by proposing policy changes to member-states through Communications (staff working papers) and through Green and White Papers.

Of these various mechanisms, Levels 1 and 2 represent "soft law," in the sense that they are not legally binding. Decisions are the most powerful legal acts that can be based on Community Treaty articles on education and training. In particular, they are the only legal tool that involves specific budgetary resources. However, member-states may decide to opt out partially or totally from any programme or instrument established by a decision.

In policy terms, directives are much more powerful, imposing obligations on member-states. No directives have yet been based on Treaty articles on education and training, though some directives based on other Treaty articles relate to these areas. An example is Directive 77/486/EEC (Articles 2 and 3) (Council of European Communities, 1977) which is based on Treaty articles relating to the free movement of workers within the EU: It imposes an obligation on the authorities of member-states of the EU to provide children of migrant workers not only with intensive tuition in an official language, but also to promote the teaching of the mother tongue and the culture of the country of origin of the child (Barnard, 1992). Career guidance has not yet been directly affected by any such directive.

In broad terms, EU interventions in career guidance can be divided into three broad periods. The first is the period prior to 1992. The second is the period that started in 1992 with the Treaty of Maastricht, the name-change to the European Union, and the completion of the Single European Market. The third is the period that started in 2000 with the setting of what has been called the Lisbon Agenda, aimed at making the EU, within ten years, “the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world” (Presidency Conclusions—European Council, 2000).

During these three periods, the scale of the EU progressively enlarged. In the course of the first period, the original six member-states (Belgium, France, West Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands) increased to nine in 1973 with the addition of Denmark, Ireland and the UK; to ten in 1981 with the inclusion of Greece; and to 12 in 1986 when Portugal and Spain joined; in 1990 the German membership was extended to include East Germany. During the second period, the number increased to 15 in 1995 with the addition of Austria, Finland and Sweden. Finally, in the third period, there were further increases to 25 in 2005 (Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia) and to 27 in 2007 (Bulgaria, Romania). These enlargements have progressively increased the complexity of negotiation processes within the EU, but also the extent of its influence and impact. The latter has been extended further through the EU’s policy influence on countries which either are candidates for membership (e.g. Turkey) or have a special relationship with the EU linked to proximity (e.g. the west Balkans).

We will review some of the main interventions that have occurred during each of the three periods. Then we will consider how these trends reflect the EU’s “creeping competence” (Field & Murphy, 2006) in terms of the gradual extension of its political influence, achieved predominantly through “soft governance” (Tucker, 2003); and we will examine the emerging concept of “lifelong guidance” to which this influence has to some extent been applied. We also provide an Appendix Table 1 containing a chronology of the key milestones.

Foundations: 1957–1992

The European Community’s first major policy attention to what was then termed “vocational guidance” was in the 1961 European Social Charter adopted by

European governments (Council of Europe, 1961). The Charter guaranteed the social and economic rights of Europeans in their daily lives. In Part 1 item 9 of the Charter, the right to vocational guidance is recognised: “Everyone has the right to appropriate facilities for vocational guidance with a view to helping him choose an occupation suited to his personal aptitude and interests.” This was elaborated as follows:

With a view to ensuring the effective exercise of the right to vocational guidance, the Parties undertake to provide or to promote, as necessary, a service which will assist all persons, including the handicapped, to solve problems related to occupational choice and progress, with due regard to the individual’s characteristics and their relation to occupational opportunity: this assistance should be available free of charge, both to young persons, including schoolchildren, and to adults. (art. 9)

In more specific terms, the European Community’s early concern for career guidance services derived from the Treaty of Rome 1957, Article 128 of which provided that it should “lay down general principles for implementing a common vocational training policy, capable to contributing to the harmonious development both of the national economies and of the common market.” The EC was tasked with promoting close co-operation between member-states in a number of areas, including vocational training. This was included to address the implications of the common market for the labour force and the need to train and retrain young workers in particular.

The Council of Ministers (1963) accordingly established Guidelines for a Vocational Training Policy. The third principle included the statement that:

Special importance shall be attached... to a permanent system of information and guidance or vocational advice, for young people and adults, based on the knowledge of individual capabilities... every person to have recourse to the system provided for at any time before choosing his [sic] occupation, during his vocational training and throughout his working life. (OJ No. 63, 1963)

The guidelines also set out the types of co-operation envisaged: studies and research, exchanges of information and experience, and preparation of programmes by the member-states to be put into effect in accordance with the principles.

In 1966, after having consulted and taken advice from the European Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee, the Commission made a recommendation to the member-states to develop a “responsive and co-ordinated guidance service for young people and adults,” and to undertake mutual learning activities through collaboration within the European Community. It also committed to publishing a regular report on “the function of vocational guidance, its progress and experience gained,” including progress made in the implementation of the recommendation in the member-states (OJ No. 154, 24/8/66). Such reports were published in 1967, 1968, 1969, 1971 and 1975 (e.g. CEC, 1975). Each consisted in the main of separate statements by respective government authorities in each member-state, presented in a common format but with little attempt at comparative evaluation or synthesis.

Subsequently, further reports were commissioned from independent experts. The first, by Walter Jaide (Germany), covered the period from 1975 to 1980; the second, by Jean Drevillon (France), covered the period from 1975 to 1983 (Drevillon, 1985). These were followed by a series of comparative reviews adopting a more strongly analytical approach: a review of services for young people covering the then ten member-states (Watts, Dartois, & Plant, 1987); an extension of this review to include the new member-states of Portugal and Spain (Watts, Dartois, & Plant, 1988); and a subsequent review of all-age services (Watts, Guichard, Plant, & Rodríguez, 1994). These were complemented by more specific studies of guidance services for adults (Köditz, 1989), of transnational guidance activities (Plant, 1990), of the occupational profiles of vocational counsellors (Watts, 1992), and of career guidance services for disadvantaged young people (Chisholm, 1994). Most of these studies included country studies that were published alongside the synthesis reports.

In terms of mutual-learning programmes, the development of guidance was a major theme in the action programme on the transition of young people from education to working life, which ran in two stages from 1978 to 1987 and included a variety of pilot projects (IFAPLAN, 1987). The Commission's conclusions on the second part of the programme (1982–1987), endorsed by the Council of Education Ministers, included recommendations to strengthen the guidance function of the secondary school, to improve training for teachers and specialists with guidance responsibilities, and to promote continuing guidance for school-leavers (88C 177/01, OJ No.C177, 6/7/88). Subsequently, guidance was an important theme in the PETRA programme, launched in 1988 to raise the quality of initial vocational training of young people.

There were also occasional Council resolutions in other policy areas which related to career guidance. For example, in 1987 the Council of Employment Ministers recommended that measures be taken in the member-states to combat long-term unemployment. It noted that these measures should include “counselling in order to identify individual problems and to provide motivation, particularly for those at risk of becoming long-term unemployed; such counselling should be available at regular and frequent intervals, take a properly structured form and place emphasis on follow-up measures” (87/C 335/01, OJ No. C355, 15/12/87).

Thus, in terms of the typology presented earlier, this first period saw some initiatives at Level 1 (resolutions and communiqués), but these were limited in nature; most of the activity was at Level 3 (pilot projects and studies/surveys).

Consolidation: 1992–2000

The nature and extent of European collaboration in the field of career guidance was significantly transformed by the advent of the Single European Market at the end of 1992 (see Banks, Raban, & Watts, 1990). A key aim of the Single Market was to encourage the mobility of goods, services and capital, which had major implications for the mobility of students, trainees and workers. To support the successful management of such mobility, a strong case was made for effective networking between guidance services in each of the member-states. This required action at EU

level as well as within the member-states themselves. Career guidance accordingly began to rise on the EU policy agenda.

This was reflected in the PETRA II programme, approved by a Council decision in 1991 (Annex to 91/387/EEC, OJ No.L214, 2/8/91). For the first time, this programme included a separate action strand focusing specifically on vocational information and guidance. The strand was managed by a committee which included representatives of all the member-states, and so brought together civil servants from each country with responsibilities in relation to career guidance. This significantly enhanced opportunities for collaborative action. Such actions included provision for establishing a Community network of national contact points or centres to develop and update data for use by guidance services in all member-states, in order to support transnational mobility for education and training: This was the start of what subsequently became the Euroguidance network (for an evaluation of the network, see Spangar, Arnkil, Rissanen, Teppo, & Vuorinen, 2004). They also included the development of a *European Handbook for Guidance Counsellors*, which was published in all Community languages. In addition, they included a variety of collaborative projects involving clusters of member-states: for example, to enhance the European dimension in the training of guidance counsellors; to develop information resources designed to support transnational mobility of students and trainees; and to encourage work of a pioneering nature on non-formal guidance for disadvantaged young people.

The Single Market also fostered the growth of the ERASMUS programme (launched earlier in 1987) to promote mobility of students in higher education. This in turn provided a significant stimulus to the development of a European association for student guidance in higher education. Founded in 1988, FEDORA (Forum Européen de l'Orientation Académique) provided a platform for career advisers and student counsellors in higher education to meet and exchange their experiences. It also later worked with the Commission to support a comparative study of student guidance and counselling services in higher education across the EU (Watts & Van Esbroeck, 1998).

A further significant development was the inclusion of education as a common European policy concern in the Treaty of Maastricht 1992 (Article 126). Instead of having to be introduced under the restricted banner of vocational training or employment, EU initiatives in career guidance could now encompass the full field of education and training (though these two domains were still separated). The principle of “subsidiarity,” respecting the diversity of national situations and the powers of member-states, was still maintained. But the extension of the EU’s remit was soon reflected in an extension to the range of action programmes, providing opportunities for clusters of member-states to work together on issues of common interest. The Leonardo programme (covering vocational training) was complemented by such programmes as Socrates (covering secondary education), Comenius (covering pre-primary, primary and secondary education) and Grundtvig (covering adult education). This programme funding supported innovative transnational pilot projects, research, and exchanges and placements.

In relation to employment policy, the Treaty of Maastricht 1992 noted that this was both a national responsibility and a matter of common European concern.

During the 1990s, however, a political consensus emerged around the structural nature of Europe's employment problem. The Treaty of Amsterdam 1997 accordingly added a new "title" on employment, which provided a framework for developing national employment policies based on shared EU interests and priorities. From this emerged the first European Employment Strategy (EES) in 1997 (revised subsequently in 2005). This strategy had four components: common Employment Guidelines for the national implementation of the EU priorities decided by the Commission, annual National Action Plans, an annual Joint Employment Report, and Recommendations by Council. But reference to vocational guidance appeared only once in the Employment Guidelines, as a measure to prevent drift of persons into long-term unemployment.

It was in the context of this emerging political consensus that Community initiative programmes were launched in 1995 to bring fresh ideas to common employment and social inclusion challenges in Europe. Adapt, Youthstart and Eurocounsel were European Social Fund programmes in which projects concerning career guidance were developed for different target-groups of employed people, unemployed people and persons at risk of exclusion from the labour market. Watt (1996) reported the outcomes of the Eurocounsel programme, in a study subsequently synthesised with some other studies (Chiousse & Werquin, 1999). These ESF programmes were distinguished from the EU education and training programmes in three respects:

- Their primary focus was national (member-states selected and monitored projects according to budgets negotiated with the EC through funds allocated from the ESF);
- Mainstreaming was a key principle underpinning the projects;
- The transnational component was a minor part of the activity.

These features stand in marked contrast to the EU education and training programmes, where the project, research and exchanges and placements proposals were selected through an EC procedure and where the member-states subsequently ratified the selection decisions. Such proposals had to involve transnational partnerships: indeed, the European grant given for such successful proposals was intended to cover only the cost of the European dimension of the planned activity. So there tended to be a greater disconnect between these successful proposals and subsequent mainstreaming at national level than in the case of the parallel activities on the employment side.

In general, the links at both national and EU levels between projects supported by the education and employment programmes, respectively, tended to be weak and, in several instances, led to lack of coherence and duplication of effort. However, an interesting feature of Leonardo programme management at the national level was the expectation that both education and employment ministries would be represented on the national co-ordination committee. This expectation established working relationships between ministries on thematic issues such as career guidance and became important in subsequent efforts to develop joint approaches to lifelong learning strategies.

An area of particular interest was the growth of computer databases and computer-aided guidance systems, which encouraged interest in their use for networking information across the EU. The Commission sponsored two European conferences on computers in career guidance: Brussels (1985) and Cambridge (1989). Three further conferences in the series were funded by the EU programmes and by the host member-states as part of their EU Presidency activities: Nürnberg (1992), Dublin (1996) and Gothenburg (2001). Links between databases were encouraged by the formation of the European Association for the Development of Databases in Education and Training (EUDAT).

In terms of placement information, the Commission had for some time supported SEDOC (European System for the International Clearing of Vacancies and Applications for Employment), designed to encourage co-operation between the public employment services in the member-states. Set up in the early 1970s, it was never operationalised or publicised sufficiently to be widely used. In 1992 it was replaced by the upgraded EURES system, which included information not only on vacancies but also on living and working conditions, and was supported by a network of specially trained “Euro-advisers” within each national service.

This second period was accordingly characterised by a growing range of collaborative activities, but, in terms of our typology, mainly still at Level 3 (pilot projects and studies/surveys).

Elevation: 2000 to the present

A significant boost to the policy significance of career guidance at EU level was stimulated by the meeting of the European Council in Lisbon in March 2000, which outlined the European Union’s aspiration to become “the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world” by the year 2010 (European Council, Lisbon, 23–24 March 2000, Presidency Conclusions). Engagement in lifelong learning—merging education and training—was acknowledged as one of the key ways through which this goal could be achieved, and the Commission’s consultative *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* (EC, 2000) highlighted the importance of guidance in this respect. This led to a consultation process across Europe to identify coherent strategies and practical measures that could foster lifelong learning for all. The outcome was the Commission’s Communication on lifelong learning (EC, 2001): This reiterated the key role of guidance in national lifelong learning strategies, and included a recommendation that a European Guidance Forum be established.

Some member-states, however, resisted this proposal, partly because of concerns about the size and unwieldiness of a forum representing both education and employment ministries coming together under an education umbrella at EU level. Recognising this political reality, but concerned not to leave the issue of lifelong guidance in support of lifelong learning to chance, the Commission set up an Expert Group on Lifelong Guidance, as part of the Education and Training

2010 Work Programme. Chaired by the Commission, the group included officials from some education and employment ministries, a number of international guidance experts, and representatives of European associations of some key stakeholder groups (social partners, parents, youth, and consumers, as well as guidance professionals).

The Expert Group operated from 2002 to 2007, and provided a focal point for a number of significant developments. Close links were established with a Career Guidance Policy Review conducted by OECD (2004) and extended by the World Bank (Watts & Fretwell, 2004): Parallel reviews were carried out first in the acceding and candidate countries from central and eastern Europe (Sultana, 2002) and then in all the existing member-states (Sultana, 2004; for a synthesis see Watts & Sultana, 2004). Alongside these studies, the expert group developed common reference tools for use by member-states on the aims and principles of lifelong guidance provision, criteria for assessing quality, and key features of a lifelong guidance system: These were designed to encourage convergence of guidance delivery systems. Many of these activities were supported by CEDEFOP, through studies, peer learning activities and an on-line forum. The reference tools were included in a policy handbook published jointly with OECD, which in addition summarised the main policy lessons from the policy reviews (OECD/EC, 2004). The Expert Group also played an important role in ensuring that lifelong guidance was referenced in relevant EC Communications, Council Resolutions, and Joint Reports of the Council and the Commission.

Of these, a particularly significant European political development for the provision of lifelong guidance was the adoption by the Council of Education Ministers in 2004 of a Resolution on lifelong guidance (Resolution 9286/04 EDUC 109 SOC 234, 18 May 2004): the first time it had passed such a measure on this topic. Drawing upon the results of the international reviews, the Resolution identified five key areas where, across the EU, reform was needed:

- The development of lifelong guidance systems;
- The broadening of access to guidance across the lifespan;
- The strengthening of quality-assurance mechanisms for guidance services, information and products, especially from a citizen/user perspective;
- The refocusing of guidance provision to develop citizens' career management skills;
- The strengthening of structures for policy and systems development at national and regional levels.

Particularly notable, compared with the 1966 Recommendation, was the stronger focus on citizens, both in relation to the approach to quality assurance, and in the focus on their career management skills. The latter reflected a conceptual change from viewing guidance as a remedial, one-off and directive activity to a preventive, lifelong and learner-centred process. Within this context, policy development ceased to be viewed as an activity owned only by ministries: Citizens were acknowledged as stakeholders who should be consulted in the development of policies and systems for career guidance. The Resolution thus reflected “a paradigm shift in how career guidance is conceptualised and delivered, and how to make the

transition from traditional models to a lifelong guidance approach” (Sultana, 2008, p. 12).

The acknowledgement of the existence of other stakeholders than ministries was also reinforced in the Council Resolution recommendation to strengthen structures for policy and systems development at national and regional levels “by involving appropriate key players.” In some countries such national instances already existed (Denmark, UK) or had just been founded (Ireland, Malta), but their fragility was recognised, as was the need for a European instrument to support their development and/or emergence. A priority theme of the Joint Actions programme (2004–2006) was the establishment of European networks of national guidance forums. Two network projects involving 12 countries aimed to enhance mutual learning of a research and policy nature and indirectly supported the emergence of national guidance forums in some of the partner countries (e.g., Austria, Germany, Slovenia). The networks were also viewed as a testing ground for developing a European-level structure to eventually replace the Expert Group.

The Expert Group played an important role in supporting the drafting of the Resolution. Its chief weakness, however, was that it was not representative of all the member-states, and therefore had difficulties in translating its efforts into effective action at member-state level. The Commission, recognising these limitations, and noting the success of the Joint Actions supported networks, indicated its willingness to support the development of a voluntary European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN) which would be led by the member-states themselves and would also be open to candidate and European Economic Area countries. The member-states agreed to adopt this suggestion, and the Network met for the first time in December 2007. It is co-ordinated by one of the member-states (initially, Finland) and funded under the Lifelong Learning Programme (2007–2013), which effectively integrates the Leonardo, Socrates and Grundtvig programmes. Its objectives include:

- Promoting the use of the existing common reference tools within member-states, and developing new tools;
- Identifying trends and issues which merit collaborative action at EU level (through peer-learning clusters and research activities);
- Disseminating the policy lessons from collaborative projects, including those under the new Lifelong Learning Programme;
- Supporting policy development at EU level, and ensuring that the role of guidance is addressed within relevant European policies and instruments.

In the discussions that preceded the establishment of the ELGPN, it was recognised that the number of members from each participating country needed to be limited if it was to avoid being unwieldy, and that it accordingly should wherever possible be supported by a lifelong guidance forum or other co-ordination mechanism at national level (and in some countries, at regional level too). These can bring together relevant ministries and stakeholders, and act as a reference group for the country’s involvement in the Network, as well as providing strategic leadership at national level. By the end of 2007 such co-ordination mechanisms

could be identified—at various stages of development—in 24 countries (CEDEFOP, 2008). One of the thematic activities of the ELGPN is designed to enable countries to share their experiences in relation to the establishment and maintenance of these forums.

The role of the ELGPN was given a clear endorsement and mandate in a further Resolution of the Council of Ministers adopted under the EU French Presidency in 2008. Addressed to “better integrating lifelong guidance into lifelong learning strategies,” this reinforced many of the key messages of the 2004 Resolution, and looked to the ELGPN as the means of strengthening European co-operation in addressing them.

On the whole, developments in relation to lifelong guidance have continued to be more strongly embedded in EU education and training policies than in employment and social affairs. The Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities did however commission a review of the role of career guidance in Europe’s public employment services (Sultana & Watts, 2006a, b). This indicated the contested nature of career guidance services within PES, but also the extent of PES services which contained career guidance elements, and the potential for enhancing them and linking them more closely to lifelong guidance strategies.

In general, in terms of our typology, whereas the two earlier periods were mainly characterised by interventions at Level 3 (pilot projects and studies/surveys), the period since 2000 has seen significantly more substantial interventions at Levels 1 and 2, including resolutions and decisions by the Council of Ministers. In particular, it should be noted that whereas in the earlier periods EU programmes were primarily concerned with innovation and pilot testing, greater attention is now being paid to activities that support the implementation of EU policy priorities and their mainstreaming at national level.

Discussion

In tracing the influence of the EU on career guidance policy and practice, it is important to recognise that the education, training and employment policies in which they are embedded remain national responsibilities. Education in particular is considered to be the “competence” of the member-states, acknowledging the fact that educational systems, policies and practices are deeply embedded in local histories and cultures (Alexander, 2005; Green, Wolf, & Leney, 1999). However, education, training and employment are fields that are also characterised by a common interest and concern across European countries, giving meaning and expression to the concept of European citizenship through the creation of a European space for education, training and work.

The three periods we have adopted for the purpose of our analysis reflect those adopted by other authors (e.g., Ertl, 2006; Grek, 2008; Pépin, 2007) for analysing the relationship between the EU and education policies. Thus in the pre-1992 phase, the main preoccupation of the EU was with the construction of a European space through the identification and consolidation of a common culture as

supportive of the European integration agenda. The Treaty of Maastricht 1992 gave education a clear legal basis within the policy framework of the EU, and signalled a more intense investment in education by the EU, both quantitatively and qualitatively; it also broadened the EU's previous focus on vocational education to embrace general education, blurring the distinction between the two. Finally, the Lisbon agenda moved education from the margins of European governance to the centre of its policy-making, and tied it more closely to the realm of employment.

Several authors (e.g., Dale & Robertson, 2006; Field & Murphy, 2006) concluded that developments post-Lisbon assigned far more of a policy role in education to the EU than it had previously been able to establish. Field and Murphy (2006) refer to the EU's "creeping competence" in educational matters, including funding leads via EU programmes, invitations to converge policy and practice (e.g. the so-called Bologna, Copenhagen, and Maastricht processes), key officials becoming socialised into the transnational culture of EU policy-making, and encouraging peer pressure through the so-called "open method of co-ordination" (OMC) to emulate what is benchmarked as "good practice." The OMC represents a new form of "soft governance" (Tucker, 2003) which uses Europe-wide benchmarks and indicators alongside non-binding co-ordination processes in order to steer national policy-making into directions that are compatible with EU aspirations (Grek, 2008; Overdevest, 2002; Souto-Otero, Fleckenstein, & Dacombe, 2008). Through the OMC, member-states remain free to develop their own coherent and comprehensive strategies, and to design and manage their own systems within the principles of subsidiarity, but the goal ultimately is that they broadly move in the same direction, on the basis of a shared normative basis for common action.

An even more structured influence on the lifelong learning agenda in the member-states can be attributed to the European Employment Strategy (EES), given that in terms of policy convergence, the EES has played an important role in making lifelong learning a political priority, generating debate but also providing raw data for evaluating comparative progress towards pre-established goals. Nonetheless, while education and training are now fully integrated, the fissures with employment policy remain evident.

While initially EU intervention in education focused on the development of a "European dimension," with a view to promoting the *feeling* of being European (Shore, 2000), increasingly this European dimension has come to be seen as a strategy to add value to the efforts of each member-state's efforts to transform itself into a knowledge-based economy. From the point of view of the Commission, trans-border EU efforts in education and training, through mobility, convergence of educational cycles, and equivalence structures in qualifications, are expected to generate a new dynamics where the whole would be larger than the parts, putting Europe on track to attain the Lisbon targets.

Within this context, "lifelong guidance" has replaced "vocational guidance" as the focus of EU policy formation. The change is significant in two respects. First, the distinction between educational and vocational guidance is now much more blurred, in line with the merging of education and training. Second, the focus is now

on providing guidance throughout life. This reflects developments in the labour market which suggest that, in knowledge-based societies and economies, transitions between education, training and work are becoming less linear, and that consequently skills in managing education, training and occupational pathways are increasingly needed by all citizens throughout their lifespan.

The concept of “lifelong guidance” is a contested notion, as is the concept of “lifelong learning” to which it is linked. The move from “education and training” to “learning” moves the primary focus from structures and institutions to the individual learner; a heightened attention to guidance is a natural complement to this change. Some writers see such concepts as being informed by a neo-liberal ideology and ethic that individualises public woes: In the lifelong learning/guidance discourse, it is the entrepreneurial individual who, as a “good citizen,” must constantly engage in learning/training to maintain “use value” in what has been dubbed “the ruthless economy,” where “market reform insists that we learn, all the time, about everything, exhaustively and exhaustingly all through our lives” (Seddon & Mellor, 2006, p. 209).

On the other hand, lifelong guidance can alternatively be viewed as a manifestation of “reclaimed citizenship” (Sultana, 2008, p. 17), inspired by a desire to empower citizens to understand and gain some control over conditions generated by a “risk society” (Beck, 1992), where lifelong job tenure and guaranteed economic security are increasingly threatened features in the social contract between the state and the individual. In such a context, career guidance is seen as one aspect of the state’s duty to provide support to its citizens as they navigate the challenging social and economic vicissitudes of contemporary life (Watts, 2000).

In principle, this view would seem highly relevant to the concept of “flexicurity,” which has been very influential within DG Employment and a cornerstone of the EES. It seeks to utilise social security and active labour market measures to reconcile flexibility for employers with security for employees. But guidance for individuals has not so far been strongly represented in policy statements and other documents relating to flexicurity (EFILWC, 2008; Wilthagen & Tros, 2004). This reflects the lower level of attention given to guidance within employment as opposed to education and training policies within the EU. Lifelong guidance policies are only likely to be robust if elements of education, training and employment policies are effectively integrated. But while progress has been made on the integration of education and training policies, strong integration with employment policy currently remains as problematic at EU level as within most, if not all, of its member-states.

Appendix

See Table 1.

Table 1 Key milestones

Year	No. of member-states (with names of new member-states)	Developments potentially affecting career guidance policy	Career guidance policy/ programme developments	Career guidance reports
1957	6: Belgium, France, West Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands	Treaty of Rome: establishment of European Community		
1963	6		Council Decision on principles for a common vocational training policy, including vocational guidance	
1966	6		Commission Recommendation to Member-States on vocational guidance	
1967	6			Report on vocational guidance in Member-States
1968	6			Report on vocational guidance in Member-States
1969	6			Report on vocational guidance in Member-States
1971	6			Report on vocational guidance in Member-States
1973	9: Denmark, Ireland, UK			
1975	9			Report on vocational guidance in Member-States (CEC, 1975)
1978	9		Initiation of first Action Programme on Transition of Young People from Education to Working Life (1978–1982)	
1981	10: Greece			
1982	10		Initiation of second Action Programme on Transition of Young People from Education to Working Life (1982–1987)	
1985	10			Drevillon (1985)

Table 1 continued

Year	No. of member-states (with names of new member-states)	Developments potentially affecting career guidance policy	Career guidance policy/ programme developments	Career guidance reports
1986	12: Portugal, Spain			
1987	12			Watts et al. (1987) and IFAPLAN (1987)
1988	12		Initiation of PETRA programme on initial vocational training; Establishment of FEDORA (European Forum for Student Guidance)	Watts et al. (1988)
1989	12			Köditz (1989)
1990	12 (Germany now including East Germany)		Joint opinion by social partners on transition from school to adult and working life stresses role of guidance	Plant (1990)
1991	12		Initiation of PETRA II programme, with separate strand on vocational information and guidance; Establishment of EURES (European employment information network)	
1992	12	Maastricht Treaty establishes European Union, including some powers in field of education; Completion of Single European Market	Establishment of National Resource Centres for Vocational Guidance (later termed the Euroguidance network)	Watts (1992)
1994	12			Chisholm (1994) and Watts et al. (1994)
1995	15: Austria, Finland, Sweden		Initiation of first Leonardo and Socrates programmes (1995–1999), including many collaborative projects on guidance	
1996	15			Watt (1996)
1998	15			Watts and Van Esbroeck (1998)
1999	15			Chiosse and Werquin (1999)

Table 1 continued

Year	No. of member-states (with names of new member-states)	Developments potentially affecting career guidance policy	Career guidance policy/ programme developments	Career guidance reports
2000	15	Adoption of Lisbon goals	Memorandum on Lifelong Learning, including section on 'rethinking guidance and counselling'; initiation of second Leonardo and Socrates programmes (2000–2006)	
2001	15		Communication on Lifelong Learning	
2002	15		Establishment of Expert Group on Lifelong Guidance	Sultana (2002)
2004	25: Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia		Council of Education Ministers Resolution on Lifelong Guidance; Joint Actions programme support for developing European networks of national lifelong guidance fora	Sultana (2004), OECD/EC (2004) and Spangar et al. (2004)
2006	25			Sultana and Watts, (2006a, b)
2007	27: Bulgaria, Romania		Establishment of European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network	
2008	27		Council of Education Ministers Resolution on Lifelong Guidance	CEDEFOP (2008) and Sultana (2008)

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