



NICEC

National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling



The Guidance Council

**CEDEFOP commissioned Preliminary Study on
Quality Guidelines and Criteria in Guidance**

FINAL REPORT

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Executive Summary

1. Purpose and context

This report contains the results of a preliminary study, commissioned by CEDEFOP at the request of the European Commission, carried out by the Guidance Council and the National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling (NICEC). The study was intended to support the implementation of the Work Programme of the European Commission's Expert Group on Lifelong Guidance and contribute to the follow-up of the Concrete Objectives for education and training and of enhanced co-operation in VET by informing the debate on how the quality of guidance provision could be better assured, especially from a citizen/user perspective.

Reflection on how to quality assure guidance services and products is one of the priority tasks set out in the mandate of the Expert Group on Lifelong Guidance. The career guidance policy reviews of 29 European countries carried out by the OECD, CEDEFOP and the ETF also highlight the importance of developing better quality assurance mechanisms.

2. Summary of report contents

Section 1 highlights the rationale behind the launching of the study and outlines the main outcomes the study was intended to achieve (overview of existing quality guidelines and criteria for guidance provision, identification of good examples of policy and practice and options for approaches that could be adopted at European level to assure quality guidance provision).

Section 2 sets out the approach taken to the study, outlines the methods used (design & piloting of a questionnaire and analysis of the results of the responses as well as desk research of secondary sources) and describes the main sources of data on which the study drew.

Section 3 considers two fundamental aspects of building quality assurance systems - the role of training, assessing and accrediting professional practice and of the user. This section also outlines the various steps involved in developing quality frameworks. The study team drew inspiration from the Common Quality Assurance Framework adopted by the Technical Working Group on Quality in VET and decided to follow a similar approach beginning by examining existing national and international standards and norms, their application, strengths and weaknesses and then identifying a draft common core of criteria for quality development at European level.

Section 4 provides an overview of existing policy and practice in promoting quality in guidance services and products across the enlarged EU and presents the main findings from the responses to the questionnaire on possible core criteria for a European approach to quality assurance.

Based on the evidence of the career guidance policy reviews undertaken between 2001 and 2003 and the responses to our questionnaire, there are few full quality assurance systems that combine standards or targets, arrangements for monitoring compliance, sanctions or corrective procedures in the case of failure to meet standards. Where quality assurance systems do exist they tend to be confined to a single or small range of sectors within a country. User-oriented features are found in statements of service or the collection of client feedback, but are rarely at the core of a quality assurance strategy.

Some individual countries were planning quality assurance systems, and in some sectors guidance was covered by systems applied to the host organisation, for example in schools. The sheer range and diversity of quality assurance systems in place mean that it would not be feasible to develop and apply one single system for all sectors in all countries. (Case studies of interesting practice are included in Appendix 5 to provide a fuller illustration of existing approaches to quality assurance).

Following the procedure used by the Technical Working Group on Quality in VET, the study team drafted a list of key features ('meta-criteria') corresponding to the common core of quality criteria found in the wide range of different approaches to quality assurance within the EU. 104 organisations from 28 countries were then sent a questionnaire asking for their views on these draft 'meta-criteria'. The responses received (30 from 21 countries) showed:

- strong general support for a 'meta-criteria' type approach;
- broad agreement that the individual 'meta-criteria' proposed for consideration were appropriate and useful;
- widespread belief in the potential of the 'meta-criteria' approach to improve coherence between the quality assurance systems of different sectors and autonomous regions within countries as well as between Member States.

Section 5 presents the conclusions from the study and outlines recommendations for next steps in the process to develop common guidelines for adoption at European level. The way forward needs to be flexible enough to take account of the fact that Member States are at very different stages of development of: guidance systems; quality assurance systems; and in accepting the interests of the user/citizen as the primary touchstone for both. A draft set of eighteen 'meta-criteria' are proposed, structured into five blocks (citizen/user involvement, professional practice/competence, service improvement, coherence and sector coverage). It is recommended that these draft 'meta-criteria', which have been endorsed by the Expert Group on Lifelong Guidance:

- be further validated and refined to ensure they are , in so far as possible, context free internally consistent and can form part of any quality assurance model (planning, methodology, implementation, evaluation, review);

- are used on a voluntary basis by Member States for self-assessment and self-development of quality assurance models for guidance services and products at national, regional and local levels;
- are considered as a first step only and that further work is done to build a common framework (including the development of a model, a methodology and a monitoring system with indicators as well as an agreed operational approach) for quality in guidance services and products. Such a framework would serve as an appraisal instrument, providing common references to policy makers and service providers to enable them to understand how quality assurance systems for guidance services and products work and to identify and develop areas of existing models requiring improvement.

It is suggested that two specific aspects of the 'meta-criteria' - focusing on the needs of the citizen/user and taking account of diversity – require more detailed attention and should be the subject of future work. Some concrete proposals are put forward for consideration in this regard.

It is also proposed that the issue of entitlement is examined further and the possibility of linking the 'meta-criteria' to the aims and principles of lifelong career guidance⁽¹⁾ to develop a kind of citizen's charter be explored.

Lastly, it is recommended that attention be given to the kind of support which the Member States, Commission and CEDEFOP could provide to encourage the application of the meta-criteria at national level, including through a developmental approach involving peer review, benchmarking, country visits and the sharing of good practice.

⁽¹⁾ Developed by Objectives Working Group G in co-operation with the European Commission Expert Group on Lifelong Guidance.

Section 1: Introduction

This section highlights the rationale behind the launching of the study and outlines the main outcomes the study was intended to achieve.

The contribution career guidance can make to the achievement of four public policy goals - lifelong learning, social inclusion, labour market efficiency and economic development - is increasingly widely acknowledged. Such public policy goals are fundamental to the attainment of the Lisbon Council (2000) aim of making Europe, by 2010, the most competitive economy and knowledge based society in the world, marked by social cohesion.

In December 2002 the Commission set up an Expert Group on Lifelong Guidance (LGEG) as part of the implementation of the Resolution of the Education Council *on Enhanced European Co-operation in Vocational Education and Training* and the follow-up to the *Communication on Lifelong Learning* and the *Report on the Objectives of Education and Training Systems*.

In line with the Education/Youth Council *Resolution on Enhanced Co-operation in Vocational Education and Training*, adopted on 12.11.2002 the overarching aim of the Expert Group is to work towards the : *'strengthening of policies, systems and practices that support information, guidance and counselling in the Member States, at all levels of education, training and employment, particularly on issues concerning access to learning, vocational education and training, and the transferability and recognition of competences and qualifications, in order to support occupational and geographical mobility of citizens in Europe'*.

The mandate of the LGEG identifies four priority areas for attention, one of which is:

'To reflect on the quality of guidance provision with a view to developing common guidelines and quality criteria for accreditation of guidance services and products from a citizen/consumer perspective, taking into account different policy contexts.'

This final report is submitted by the Guidance Council and the National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling (NICEC) as part of a study commissioned by CEDEFOP, on behalf of the European Commission's Expert Group on Lifelong Guidance, to:

- **produce an overview of existing quality guidelines and criteria for guidance services and products;** the principles and assumptions underlying the approaches, and the challenges of their implementation, within and across sectors;
- **capture good examples of policy and practice,** particularly of citizen/user involvement;

- **identify options for approaches that could be adopted at European level** to assure quality guidance provision. In particular, to identify how such criteria could be designed to incorporate a citizen/user perspective at its core and to take account of the diversity in guidance settings and systems among the 25 Member States and 3 candidate countries.

Section 2: Method

This section sets out the approach taken to the study, outlines the methods used and describes the main sources of data on which the study drew.

2.1 General Approach and main steps

Overall, our approach has been to gather and review existing data and knowledge on the subject, identify appropriate methods to gather further information and formulate a development process to identify appropriate meta-criteria. We divided the study into three stages.

Stage 1: (October-November 2003)

- Key questions and steps in the data collection process clarified with CEDEFOP, the Commission and the Expert Group
- Agreement reached on meetings with the Expert Group
- Desk research undertaken – existing studies and discussions reviewed
- First stage of data collection – search tool designed to systematically analyse the results of the OECD, CEDEFOP, ETF and World Bank career guidance policy review for 29 European countries
- Definitions of key terms agreed (see Appendix 6)
- Identification of appropriate Member State contacts (utilising sources such as the OECD and the Euroguidance network of National Resource Centres)
- Completion of Interim Report and presentation/consultation at Expert Group meeting on 11th December 2003.

Stage 2: (November 2003-January 2004)

- Survey piloting and distribution
- Continuing survey administration and follow-up of non-respondents
- Data analysis
- Ongoing desk research
- Second stage of fieldwork – identification of in-depth case studies and following up examples of good practice.

Stage 3: (January-May 2004)

- Completion of data collection including verification of case study data
- Completion of data analysis
- Expert Group/CEDEFOP, Commission input
- Production of draft final report
- Presentation/consultation at Expert Group meeting on 17th March 2004
- Revision of draft final report to take account of comments received.

2.2 Main Sources

The main sources⁽²⁾ on which the study team drew were the results of the career guidance policy reviews carried out by the OECD, Cedefop, ETF and the World Bank. Reflections on the data provided through the national responses to the reviews highlighted some contrasts in the interpretation of the activities and approaches in policy and practice in particular countries. We aimed to incorporate data from different perspectives on services in different settings for people of different ages in order to try and triangulate/verify the data and ensure that all views/angles were addressed. The main ages, perspectives and settings we aimed to capture were:

- Young people up to end of secondary education
- Young people in further/higher education
- Adults up to 45
- Adults over age 45 (third age)
- Policy-makers (e.g. civil servants)
- Practitioners (and umbrella organisations)
- Service users/intermediaries (individual and collective e.g. trade unions, professional bodies)
- Academics/researchers
- Education - School/FE/HE/Adult and Community
- Employment – workplace
- Unemployment – public agencies
- Voluntary sector
- Informal
- Other

In addition to analysing the individual national responses to the career guidance policy review, the study team examined the various synthesis reports produced by the OECD, CEDEFOP, ETF and the World Bank. These all summarise and reflect on the methods that the countries are using or planning in relation to quality assurance, but against the essential and more complex background of the principles on which national policies have been drawn up, and what the different countries are aiming to achieve: in fact the notion at national level of good quality itself. At this detailed level, not only does public provision from the education and employment ministries usually have different targets and ways of promoting quality, but the systems are often different again in relation to different age groups, educational sectors, employment status etc. Conclusions and recommendations about quality assurance at a synthesis level are made yet more difficult by the way in which different responses to the OECD questionnaires can take 'quality assurance systems' as synonymous with any of the following:

- performance monitoring
- ongoing evaluation procedures
- evaluation research
- professional codes of practice

⁽²⁾ See bibliography for full references of the documents used by the study team.

- codes of ethics
- 'soft' guidelines
- professional training
- professional qualifications

Few reports look at quality systems (or indeed any of the quality-related process listed) used to improve work by agencies outside state systems such as employers, trade unions and non-governmental organisations, and we were aware that if our meta-criteria were to be useful they had to have application with those 'services of general interest' that must, like publicly-funded provision, ensure user and consumer protection.

Other documents examined by the study team included:

- thematic papers written in preparation of the OECD's career guidance policy review, including an overview of quality systems ⁽³⁾ available for, and relevant to, career guidance provision;
- other European and national texts relevant to guidance, in particular Bartholomeus et al, 1995, outlining an EQFM approach to quality assurance across a number of Member States; and the UK centralised kite-mark approach on which government financing is dependant but which is also available to private and non-governmental organisations;
- ⁽⁴⁾ Green Paper on Services of General Interest;
- the records of the discussions on quality which took place in meetings of the European Commission's Expert Group on Lifelong Guidance;
- the papers produced by and about the Technical Working Group (TWG) on Quality in vocational education and training (VET).

Throughout the study, the team liased closely with the CEDEFOP and Commission staff responsible for guidance. The main working languages for the project were English and French.

⁽³⁾ Quality in Careers Guidance written by Peter Plant for the OECD November 2001
⁽⁴⁾ European Commission COM(2003) 270 final 21.5.2003

Section 3: Background

This section outlines key issues arising from the preliminary reflections of the LGEG, explains the main themes the study considered and the various steps involved in developing quality frameworks.

3.1 Context

Between December 2002 and May 2003 the Commission's Expert Group on Lifelong Guidance (LGEG) held a number of brainstorming discussions on the issue of assuring quality in guidance. During these discussions a learning matrix ⁽⁵⁾ approach was examined, looking at quality from the users' perspective (based on a similar one from the National Career Development Guidelines in the USA and the Blueprint for Life/Work Designs from the National Life/Work Centre in Canada). The LGEG thought this approach was interesting but needed to be complemented by a more practical approach of operational use to systems at different stages of development. The LGEG looked at the UK MATRIX Standard and at the UK's draft delivery principles for information, advice and guidance for adults. The LGEG also considered a citizen's charter approach, setting out the minimum core standards that service users could expect, exemplified by the European Youth Information Charter. Members of the LGEG wanted any overall formal quality system to contain some elements common to all settings for guidance delivery and some to be specific to each setting. In the light of the difficulties posed by the sheer numbers of different kinds of settings, the **study team felt that a more open set of 'meta-criteria' was needed that attempt to address the needs of all systems regardless of their stage of development.** We were aware that our draft meta-criteria, had to:

- be broad enough to relate to the wide range of approaches to guidance and to quality that appear in the 28⁶ European countries;
- complement, and not inadvertently undermine, work in any of those countries;
- be defined tightly enough to help all the Member States reach an acceptable minimum and then continue to improve: in fact, it had to be a meta-quality-assurance system that models quality assurance systems at national level.

3.2 Contributing themes

In addition to examining quality assurance systems per se, it has also been necessary for the study to consider related issues such as the systems in place for training, assessing and accrediting professional practice and the role of the user in determining quality.

⁽⁵⁾ Proposed by Professor Peter Plant, Danish University of Education.

⁽⁶⁾ This figure includes the 25 Member States and the 3 candidate countries (Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey).

3.2.1 Training, assessing & accrediting professional practice

Standards against which the work of practitioners is judged, either in the form of assessment at the stage of initial training, or as the framework determining ongoing professional development, are vital to quality assurance systems. Many countries rely on training and accreditation alone for the quality of their vocational guidance and, where there are quality standards, they include reference to initial training and qualifications as well as continuous professional development (CPD).

The synthesis report⁷ of the recent OECD review of career guidance policy concludes with six major issues that should be considered in designing improved lifelong guidance systems in OECD countries. Two of these six issues are central to the present study :

- Developing better quality assurance mechanisms and linking these to the funding of services;
- Working more closely with career guidance practitioners to shape the nature of initial and further education and training qualifications in support of the development of career self-management skills, better career information, and more diverse service delivery.

The national responses to the career guidance policy review carried out by the OECD, CEDEFOP, the ETF and the World Bank, show that, at that time (between 2001-2003), relatively few countries had introduced quality assurance systems. In several cases the responses show that quality was regarded as synonymous with training and qualifications and, apart from codes of practice or professional ethics, other means of assuring quality were rarely reported.

While the training and qualifications of practitioners are clearly crucial components in establishing norms of good practice and promoting quality, they do not, by themselves, constitute a quality assurance system. Moreover, even within each country's own terms, a comprehensive system of qualifications across every guidance sector that would underpin a professional national service was generally lacking. To provide a full guarantee of quality, in addition to good training and a comprehensive system of qualifications, we need: *'quality standards⁸ ... to influence how organisations deliver career guidance'* and that *'apply either to the processes used to deliver career guidance (the more common case), or to the outcomes expected from it.'*

The European Report on quality indicators of Lifelong Learning⁹ underlined the need for both professional and organisational targets within guidance.

⁽⁷⁾ OECD 2004 'Career Guidance and Public Policy – Bridging the Gap

⁽⁸⁾ Quote from the above-mentioned OECD report, section 9.4

⁽⁹⁾ European Commission Report based on the work of the Working Group on Quality Indicators, June 2002

Some of the responses to the career guidance policy reviews cited partial approaches to quality assurance, such as performance monitoring, 'soft' guidelines, one-off evaluation research projects or ongoing evaluation procedures. In his synthesis report ⁽¹⁰⁾ of the European countries involved in the reviews carried out by the OECD, CEDEFOP and the ETF, Sultana points out that:

'There is little regular and systematic analysis of the quality of guidance across the 29 European countries reviewed. When investigative analysis is carried out, it tends to be quantitative in nature, throwing little light on processes. Second, when there is such evaluation, it tends not to be targeted specifically at guidance, but at guidance as part of an overall range of services...As such, much depends on whether the evaluating team has an interest or expertise in guidance. Thirdly, where a quality framework is articulated, it tends to be voluntary rather than mandatory, and operates as a set of guidelines.'

An Expert Group ⁽¹¹⁾ on personalised services with a special focus on guidance and counselling, comprising representatives from six ⁽¹²⁾ public employment services, reporting on qualifications and quality assurance in public employment services, found strong training and qualification systems but wide diversity in the *supply* of qualified staff and in quality assurance arrangements. This highlights the importance of each sector of vocational guidance being reviewed separately at national, and even regional, level.

To be effective, full quality standards need to subsume professional qualifications within them. For example the matrix quality standard for information, advice and guidance services, devised for the adult guidance sector in the UK, covers the qualifications of the staff working within this sector. However, it is important to remember that professional training and qualifications are a distinct system-within-a-system of quality assurance, and the fact that they have been conflated in many countries until now has added to the confused picture so well analysed by Sultana.

Qualifications and competences are reflected in the second block of our proposed meta-criteria. It is not appropriate for this study to make recommendations on a single framework of competences. However, we would like to draw the attention of the Expert Group on Lifelong Guidance to the 'International Competencies for Educational and Vocational Guidance Practitioners' ⁽¹³⁾ developed by the IAEVG and invite them to consider this

⁽¹⁰⁾ Cedefop 2004, "Guidance Policies in the Knowledge Society – Trends, Challenges and Responses Across Europe" , section 10.3

⁽¹¹⁾ This Expert Group was working within the PES Partners in Development Project. The Group's report is entitled: "PES Role in Guidance & Counselling – An Insight Into Current Thinking & Practices"

⁽¹²⁾ Norway (AETAT), Ireland (FAS), Portugal (IEFP), Spain (INEM) & Belgium (ORBEM/BGDA & VDAB)

⁽¹³⁾ Repetto, E, et al. (2003). International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance. See <http://www.iaevg.org/iaevg/nav.cfm?lang=2&menu=1&submenu=5>

work as well as the international validation system developed by the Institute for Career Certification ⁽¹⁴⁾.

3.2.2 The role of the user

The other key aspect which this study has considered is the role of the user or citizen in determining quality in guidance. As with the variety of quality systems in use, there are many ways of involving the user and it is important to be clear how this role is interpreted within any quality framework. For example the user may be seen simply as a source of information on experience of, and satisfaction with, a direct service; or there may be user representation in the management of a service; or user involvement in the design of a quality system; or in its implementation. Sometimes people act on behalf of other users, as in the concept of the 'mystery shopper'. There may be a statement of service setting out what the user is entitled to as the keystone of quality assurance. The extent to which the entitlements have been met is assessed through feedback from the user in response to questions such as : 'Did we deliver what we promised the user we would?'

"User" can also be taken to refer to organisations such as schools, HE institutions, Public Employment Services and firms and to those acting on behalf of groups of potential users, including trade unions or employers' associations. Article 5 of Convention 142 (1975) of the International Labour Organisation called for vocational guidance to be '*formulated and implemented in co-operation with employers' and workers' organisations and, as appropriate and in accordance with national law and practice, with other interested bodies*'. However, to date there is little evidence of this type of co-operation across European career guidance systems.

Feedback from users is essential to assess how far guidance services are meeting their stated objectives, to identify unmet needs and highlight areas for improvement. As a minimum, therefore, seeking the views of the actual users should be a *sine qua non* of any quality assurance system. But the effort put into collecting this information is wasted without intelligent interpretation and use of it. It is important to value negative, as well as positive, feedback and to be aware that a happy customer is no more necessarily a sign of a good service than an unhappy one is of a bad service. In other words, feedback needs to be nuanced in order to be meaningful. However, creating standardised, easily applied quality criteria in such a way as to be able to take account of nuanced information is no simple task.

Moreover, to ensure that guidance services are responsive to real needs users should be involved in the design and overall evaluation of the service. Given the difficulty in describing career guidance to potential users in general terms, this is an important area for development.

⁽¹⁴⁾ See www.careercertification.org

3.3 Developing quality frameworks

The current study uses a similar approach to developing a Common Quality Assurance Framework (CQAF) to that adopted by the Technical Working Group (TWG) on Quality in Vocational Education and Training. The approach entails 5 steps/stages:

1. to examine existing national and international standards and norms, their application, strengths and weaknesses;
2. to identify a common core of criteria for quality development at European level;
3. to develop a limited set of coherent quality indicators for VET at systems level, on the basis of good practice;
4. to develop an operational approach based on the common core of criteria and the set of indicators. Such an approach should include concrete methods and practical tools to support self-assessment, as well as guidelines and checklists for quality assurance;
5. to outline a proposal for a co-operation framework in order to develop common activities between countries on specific issues, to promote the exchange of good practice and the use of voluntary peer review at different levels. This should include monitoring the follow-up of the operational approach (see 4. above) by the Member States.

The present report covers the process from step 1 through to stage 2. The Copenhagen Co-ordination Group's Stocktaking Report ⁽¹⁵⁾, explaining the general approach that has been adopted in pursuing the aims of the Copenhagen Declaration, summarises stage 2 as follows:

'The logic of the Common Quality Assurance Framework builds on the key principles of the most relevant existing quality assurance models. Therefore, it must not be considered as a new model, but as a cross reading instrument which can help policy makers and practitioners to get a better insight of how the existing models work, and how to improve them, on the basis of a commonly agreed core of criteria and set of indicators at European level. It allows also for the identification of the weak and strong points of the different models and their implementation, and can thereby provide the basis for the identification and exchanges of good practices.'

The meta-criteria proposed in the present report correspond to the common core of quality criteria found at the heart of the wide range of different approaches to quality assurance in the existing 25 Member States and 3 candidate countries.

If the Commission and Member States decide to follow the proposals of this present report, there is more work to be done to develop stage 2 in accordance with the CQAF approach. Further work would include designing a

⁽¹⁵⁾ European Commission October 2003

model, methodology, monitoring system and measurement tool, and then, in accordance with stages 4 and 5, identifying an operational approach and a co-operation framework within which to promote real improvements.

The Lifelong Guidance Expert Group's November 2003 progress report ⁽¹⁶⁾ on its contribution to the implementation of the Work Programme for Education and Training 2010 includes among its recommendations that:

'Governments should play a key role in promoting quality assurance for lifelong guidance services and in ensuring that such services provided by public, private and voluntary/community sectors work together in a co-ordinated way to provide lifelong guidance services for all citizens.'

At European level the Expert Group on Lifelong Guidance, with its broad-based membership, drawn from the Social Partners, from European consumer, parents, and youth associations, from education and labour ministries, as well as from international bodies, constitutes a useful mechanism to explore ways of building such a co-operation framework.

The support provided under the Joint Actions Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci and Youth Programme 2004 for the creation of European networks of national stakeholders with responsibility for career guidance policy will help to provide a base for discussion on how to promote co-operation at national level.

Sultana (2004) points out that standards at national level can play three different roles: set minimum thresholds, establish targets, and add coherence to a diversified system. The same three roles also apply to the set of meta-criteria proposed in this present report.

⁽¹⁶⁾ European Commission November 2003

Section 4: Findings

This section begins with an overview of existing policy and practice in promoting quality in career guidance services and products in 29 European countries. It then goes on to summarise the responses to our questionnaire on possible meta-criteria for a European approach to quality assurance.

4.1 Existing Practice

A search tool (Appendix 3) was designed to systematically analyse the relevant parts of the responses to the career guidance policy reviews carried out by the OECD, World Bank, CEDEFOP and ETF (Appendix 4). It took the form of a checklist of questions against which each national response, and country note (in the case of OECD reviews), was examined by a member of the team. The information gathered reflects the instrument used, but the overall picture which emerged from this analysis strongly confirmed the findings of the synthesis reports of the career guidance policy reviews. However, our analysis faced the same difficulties as the career guidance reviews themselves. That is to say there may be approaches to quality assurance operating in any country unknown to the respondent; that the respondent's understanding of quality assurance may differ from that assumed in the present study and also that developments may have taken place in the period between the collection of the data and the publication of the report.

A review of the different approaches to quality assurance at national level, with illustrative case studies, is given in Appendix 5. In summary, as discussed in section 3, there are **few full quality assurance systems that combine standards or targets, arrangements for monitoring compliance, sanctions or corrective procedures in the case of failure to meet standards**, all culminating in some form of quality branding. Where quality assurance systems do exist they tend to be confined to a single or small range of sectors within a country. User-oriented features are found in statements of service or the collection of user feedback, but they are rarely at the core of a quality assurance strategy. Some countries were planning to develop quality assurance systems, and in some sectors guidance was covered by systems applied to the host organisation, for example in schools. These made use of a number of different quality assurance models as can be seen in Appendix 5 of the present report.

On the basis of the analysis of the responses to the career guidance policy reviews, it became clear that the diversity of approaches, and varying stages of development of guidance systems across the Member States, meant that one single system for all sectors in all countries was not feasible. But, in line with the approach taken by the Technical Working Group on Quality in VET,

the **study team drafted a list of key features** ⁽¹⁷⁾, suggested by the quality systems they found in the country reports, **that could be applied as a common core of criteria for quality development at European level.** These criteria are structured into five blocks: Citizen/user involvement; Professional practice/Competence; Service improvement; Coherence; and Sector Coverage. The intention is that these **criteria would serve as a yardstick for Member States to use to measure their quality assurance systems, thus promoting a common Community-wide framework** which could be applied across countries and between sectors within a single country. At a later date the Member States could build on the criteria and discuss monitoring arrangements and quality accreditation, including through the use of a quality mark, for example.

During this phase the study team identified many examples of good or interesting practice. Some of these have been included in Appendix 5 as case studies to illustrate the ways in which guidance providers in different countries have addressed quality issues.

4.2 Views on the meta-criteria approach

The project team initially piloted a questionnaire and then sent it to a total of 104 organisations from 28 countries, asking for their views on the proposed set of meta-criteria for quality assurance in career guidance. These organisations were also invited to complete a self-assessment of their country's current approaches to assuring quality in guidance using the meta-criteria framework. For each criterion they were asked:

- whether the factors covered by the criterion already applied in their country's approach to assuring quality in guidance;
- whether they believed such a criterion would help to improve their country's approach;
- whether they believed such a criterion, if modified slightly, would help improve their approach;
- whether they believed such a criterion would undermine their country's approach to assuring quality in guidance.

30 responses from 21 countries were received within the timeframe ⁽¹⁸⁾ available for the study. In most cases we have only had one response from each country.

In addition, the findings of the study and the draft meta-criteria were discussed with the European Commission's Expert Group on Lifelong Guidance. The Expert Group endorsed the meta-criteria approach and broadly agreed with the proposed individual criteria. However, the Group felt

⁽¹⁷⁾ The key factors were developed by: 1) hypothesising what the desiderata could be, 2) testing the hypothesis through the desk research/analysis of the career guidance policy review reports. 3) testing the resultant meta-criteria through a survey.

⁽¹⁸⁾ The organisations were given six weeks within which to reply.

that the response rate to the study survey was disappointingly low and recommended that further testing be done in order to validate the results of the study and the draft criteria.

Views from guidance stakeholders were also sought via Cedefop’s lifelong guidance virtual community, which has over 600 members. Members of the virtual community were invited to comment both on the proposed meta-approach and on the criteria themselves. During the 3 week period for comments 4 contributions were received.

What follows is a summary of all the responses received ⁽¹⁹⁾ to our questionnaire broken down by each of the five blocks of criteria in turn.

4.2.1 Citizen/User Involvement

Do the approaches to assuring quality in guidance in your country:	applies already	would help us improve our approach	would help if changed slightly	would undermine our approach
1.a Include some way of consulting individual users on their satisfaction with, and experience of the service?	7	11	1	0
1.b Require the service providers to make systematic use of the findings from such consultations?	2	15	1	0
1.c Include information for the user about entitlement (e.g. users’ charters) and take account of the work of Consumer Associations in processes for consumer protection and redress?	0	14	3	0

Seven countries indicated that they have methods in place to gather user feedback. However there is little evidence that such feedback is collected systematically in a regulated way, rather the responses reported a more ad hoc and voluntary approach. In Slovenia the employment service is implementing ISO standards and, they comment that, *‘user involvement is not among the priorities in this system’*. Poland carries out an analysis of user assessments and their satisfaction when new databases are produced, when new product versions are produced and when currently used products are checked for their effectiveness; in addition, the opinions of users are analysed through feedback from career counsellors. In Italy the national plan of guidance for the school and the university requires the involvement of the citizen/user. In Lithuania service providers commission surveys (e.g. for the Institute of Labour and Social Research) although *‘these are not sufficient and permanent’*. Slovakia comments that *‘in most centres (educational and labour offices) there are complaints books available’*.

⁽¹⁹⁾ Please note that the figures will not always add up to 30 as not all questions were answered by every respondent.

There appears to be little systematic use of the user feedback data once gathered: *'practitioners do what they believe to be best for his/her service'*. In Scotland there is mention of the implementation of an *'evidence-based practice strategy'*.

Approaches that are based on the concept of entitlement and that take into account consumer protection and redress are rare. One view is that career guidance is a public good and should be *'provided free'*, so it might be considered that the concept of needing to have an "entitlement" is unnecessary. Another comment was that *'entitlement is old hat'* and they are now concentrating on the value benefits and outcomes of career planning services. On the other hand, one of the views expressed by a contributor from the virtual community (from England) proposed that the criteria incorporate a statement defining entitlement and that they be reordered so that the criterion on entitlement would come first. Again, whilst there is support for the concept – *'information for the user about entitlement is good'*, the implementation is ad-hoc. *'Users' charters are not introduced yet though some isolated examples may be found'*. There appears to be very little involvement with consumer bodies *'Consumer organisations are not involved (at all)'*

4.2.2 Professional Practice

Do the approaches to assuring quality in guidance in your country:	applies already	would help us improve our approach	would help if changed slightly	would undermine our approach
2a Include the monitoring or assessment of practitioners to ensure they are following professional principles and/or codes of ethics?	6	11	2	0
2b Require guidance practitioners to hold or be working towards agreed minimum levels of qualification?	13	7	0	0
2c Require on-going professional development and service improvement?	7	13	0	0
2d Include all relevant professional associations in the development of standards and quality assurance procedures?	4	12	3	0

The majority of countries that responded indicated that the meta-criteria would help them to improve their approach regarding professional ethics and principles. Comments show that development work is under way. In Scotland they are *'about to introduce a process of peer and line manager quality monitoring of Guidance interviews'* and in Romania *'the code of ethics for counsellors is ready for printing. We'll use it in the future'*. In Slovakia there is a code of ethics for civil servants and one for psychologists but nothing yet specifically for career guidance practitioners.

Most countries have qualification requirements for career guidance practitioners, frequently at university degree level. However, as commented by Northern Ireland, *‘while we have these things in place we can do much better’*. In Poland, since 1993 all those employed as career counsellors have to have an MA degree (preferably psychology); in 1995 the profession of career counsellor was added to the “classification of occupations and trades”; and in 1997 a university curriculum for career counsellors was introduced (as part of the World Bank project). A new Act has introduced the idea of a licence for career counsellors – to keep their licence counsellors have to participate in professional training each year.

A number of concerns were mentioned in relation to continuous professional development (CPD) such as the *‘lack of training’* available and that career guidance was being *‘marginalised’* within CPD for a broader role. It was commented that *‘different organisations encourage professional development but the process is not systematic’* and that *‘ongoing CPD is not specifically required’*. Scotland is trying to ensure that quality standards cover the full range of activities and *‘this includes more than guidance, e.g. inclusion, employability and enterprise’*. In Italy, the national plan of guidance defines a plan of training “for all”.

The question concerning whether all relevant professional associations were included in the development of standards and quality assurance procedures, revealed that **some countries (especially the new Member States) do not have professional associations** yet. In Lithuania there is *‘no National Career Guidance Association but some initiatives have been taken in this direction’*. In Slovenia *‘professional associations are not established’*. In the UK the awarding body for the Qualification in Careers Guidance is the Institute of Career Guidance, the professional association that represents career guidance practitioners with a lobbying, advocacy and policy role. The Institute also accredits institutions to provide the Qualification.

4.2.3 Service Improvement

Do the approaches to assuring quality in guidance in your country:	Applies already	would help us improve our approach	would help if changed slightly	would undermine our approach
3a Include some way of monitoring and evaluating the use and usefulness of standards or guidelines relating to service delivery?	3	18	0	0
3b Include some way of monitoring and evaluating whether it in fact results in reaching specified standards and ongoing improvement in: services to users; information (printed, through ICT or otherwise delivered)?	3	17	1	0
3c Include some way of differentiating and monitoring service provision in relation to different target groups?	5	12	2	0
3d Require services to form working links	3	14	1	0

with, and provide support for, groups and bodies that offer guidance informally (e.g. parents, voluntary organisations or bodies associated with leisure activities)?				
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The responses clearly showed that the majority of countries would welcome meta-criteria on service improvement. Although there is some evidence of the existence of standards, evaluation of their usefulness appears limited. In Poland, they comment that *‘we are at the beginning of the road, the only significant step was the development of standards for Career Counselling Services by the National Labour Office in 1999, but they do not have an obligatory status’*. The monitoring of standards in terms of results, in Scotland, focuses on the development of impact measures for guidance – these are described as being: *‘well under way’* but *‘do not yet cover supporting processes such as information’*. In Lithuania elements of the monitoring system exist (e.g. statistics, user records) but there is *‘no structured system of quality assurance’*.

Most countries have ways of differentiating service provision for different target groups, although, as in Spain *‘there are not written criteria for assuring quality, but in practice there are ways of differentiating service provision’*. In Romania they have indicators of performance monitoring different target groups, such as *‘women, youth, disabled persons, Roma peoples etc’* In Slovakia, although *‘quality guidelines/standards are not developed’*, they have special approaches and measures for different groups and in their Employment Services a bilateral project with the Netherlands is working to develop a profiling system.

The development of links with informal guidance providers is another area where the meta-criteria were seen to be especially helpful. In Scotland they have *‘a strategy specifically for parents and a range of Partnership Agreements with voluntary sector but nothing with leisure activity providers’*.

4.2.4 Coherence

Do the approaches to assuring quality in guidance in your country:	Applies already	would help us improve our approach	would help if changed slightly	would undermine our approach
4a Include links to ensure effective working relationships within and across Government Departments on quality assurance in guidance?	2	17	1	0
4b Ensure there are no conflicts between different quality assurance systems operating in different guidance sectors, or in relation to different target groups?	1	19	0	0
4c Include ways of monitoring the use and usefulness of links between guidance providing agencies?	1	17	1	1

There appear to be few mechanisms to ensure effective co-ordination between agencies and between ministries, which makes coherent monitoring of approaches to assuring quality in guidance difficult. The Scotland response reports that joint work is ongoing on performance indicators: *'We are working with Communities Scotland on performance indicators for Community Learning and Development supported by Community Guidance'*. In Lithuania they comment that there is *'no structured system'*, whilst in Slovakia *'the level of co-operation between the Ministry of Education and of Labour has not been very strong'*. Recently they have adopted a sectoral operational plan on human resources, and it is supposed that: *'co-operation will improve substantially'*.

Issues regarding potential conflicts between different quality assurance systems were seen as not applicable where there is only one system, for example, Poland *'it's hard to talk about coherence when we don't have different quality assurance systems'*. But Lithuania commented that *'the co-operation among the various guidance sectors is insufficient'*: One obstacle to better collaboration can be the difficulty in distinguishing the difference between the intentions of a system and the extent to which these are actually met. However the adoption of the meta-criteria would provide a stimulus for promoting coherence between different ministries and agencies.

While one respondent commented on the need *'to be convinced of the value of this when other aspects of inter-agency working are a higher priority in the short term'*, it appears to be **generally accepted that better links between guidance providers are very desirable**.

4.2.5 Sector Coverage

	Applies already	Would help us improve our approach	would help if changed slightly	would undermine our approach
5a Cover work done by private agencies, employers, trade unions and other providers not funded through the State?	0	16	1	0

There was little evidence of coherent approaches to quality assurance amongst the private sector, employers and trade unions. Generally this is seen as an unexplored area, particularly in the new Member States. In Slovakia *'career guidance provided by private agencies is quite a recent phenomenon'* and in Poland there are *'no guidelines at all for private agencies, employers, trade unions and non-governmental organisations. The private sector is only just beginning to enter the Polish market'*.

There are some efforts in place to achieve regulation. New legislation coming into operation in Cyprus *'will give some control'* and in Romania there is a *'law*

about the specific criteria which private providers have to meet to get accreditation’.

The final comment in this section must go to Greece: *‘if a concrete quality assurance approach has not been forwarded for the guidance services monitored by the State, how can we expect to reach and assess the private sector guidance services?’.*

4.2.6 Overall reaction to the meta-criteria approach

Respondents were asked for their overall views on the ‘meta-criteria’ approach. The following is a summary of their responses.

- a) Views on using ‘meta-criteria’ as a way forward
 - i. **There was strong general support for the meta-criteria approach**, expressed explicitly by Northern Ireland, Slovenia, and Austria and implicitly by others. Greece welcomed such a ‘compass for services’. Romania emphasised the importance of quality assurance systems generally;
 - ii. Lithuania thought it was a particularly effective way to create and improve quality assurance standards in the new Member States, and comments from Hungary and Estonia supported this. Estonia welcomed the possibility of international co-operation to develop their systems;
 - iii. Cyprus appreciated the self-development aspects of the approach;
 - iv. Poland, Scotland and Ireland welcomed its potential for encouraging standardisation between different countries. The Czech Republic and Slovakia particularly valued the potential for creating a single approach within the European Union. The Czech respondent said: *‘We believe that the ‘meta-criteria’ approach can significantly contribute to the establishment and development of effective career guidance and counselling systems on the national level and simultaneously essentially contribute to social and economic cohesion in Europe’;*
 - v. Finland welcomed the framework, but suggested that it would be more useful with case studies and, perhaps in the longer term, a database of specific systems;
 - vi. Sweden and Spain both welcomed the meta-criteria approach but cautioned in favour of gradual development. The Spanish respondent noted that they had standards for work in schools and some other guidance activities, but would need time to work towards a comprehensive quality assurance system;
 - vii. The Commission’s Expert Group on Lifelong Guidance proposed that a model be developed to illustrate user involvement in assuring quality in guidance;
 - viii. Of the views expressed through the virtual community, two (one from England and one from Spain) suggested that the criteria would be

more effective if they were outcome-based and specified the impact to be achieved. Another (from Ireland), raised the issue of whether, within a VET and career guidance context the promotion of closer links with the world of work should be made more explicit under all 5 criteria blocks. Another (from Scotland) queried the feasibility of the proposals concerning coherence and the regulation of private sector provision not funded by the State and believed that these were at the level of aspirations rather than actual criteria.

b) **Whether the list of meta-criteria covers all the relevant career guidance quality assurance/improvement issues**

While some countries were happy with the list as it stood, others made helpful suggestions of additions to consider if this work is taken forward.

- i. Scotland, Slovakia, Ireland, Greece, Lithuania, Slovenia, Hungary and Austria thought the current list did cover the key elements of an overarching system. Sweden felt that a longer time period for reflection was needed to reach a considered view.
- ii. Northern Ireland suggested including a measure of impact or distance travelled to complement measures of user satisfaction.
- iii. Spain wanted more clarity and a better articulated approach that would permit a country with a number of autonomous regions, to consider each separately and further, to differentiate all sectors of guidance within them.
- iv. Some countries wanted to be more specific about different aspects of service provision. Poland gave as examples the quality of resources and accreditation systems used; Estonia mentioned accessibility and supervision.
- v. Italy thought the meta-criteria should include minimum standards for particular components of service delivery such as premises, computers, and data banks.
- vi. Cyprus suggested that guidance activities within universities and colleges are sufficiently different from those of other providers to warrant separate attention.
- vii. The Czech Republic respondent suggested distinguishing the strategic management of services, including the co-ordinating mechanisms and links amongst providers from that of general provision. This could include the activities of defining goals, identifying processes and responsibilities, finding methods for evaluating how effective the processes are for achieving the goals, developing processes for continuous improvement, and identifying sources of help in achieving this.

c) **What needs to be done to strengthen the provision of quality assurance in career guidance in countries?**

Some responses to this question stressed the **need for quality assurance systems in order to improve the overall standard of service**, and some focussed on its **potential for promoting coherence between sectors**. The **most urgent call was for a lead at national level**.

- i. Some countries felt a sufficient start had already been made: for example, the Scotland respondent said that there, quality assurance is part of an overall performance management system which is continuously evolving. *'Key milestones include implementing impact measures and introducing evidence-based practice'*.
- ii. Lithuania and Poland felt that it was very important to get the process under way. In Estonia the National Euro-guidance centre is now to take it forward.
- iii. Estonia and Sweden said that more interest was needed from their government. Sweden said that in their case the system has been too decentralised with the result that no one takes responsibility, but that hopefully the 'meta-criteria' can help address the problem. Romania suggested that lack of government interest may be because guidance does not lead directly to employment (as it focuses on developing life chances for the individual).
- iv. In some cases, without specifying the government, country respondents cited the need for a national policy with regard to lifelong guidance in general and quality assurance in particular. These included Spain, Austria and Slovakia.
- v. However, the respondent from Cyprus felt that bureaucratic controls were currently blocking development and that this study could perhaps support change.
- vi. Respondents from Spain, Romania and Hungary referred to a more fundamental problem of lack of coherence in guidance provision generally, and felt that this needed to be addressed first. Estonia said they believed they should embark on a systematic review of their work. Northern Ireland had in fact recently restructured and now felt they should embed quality assurance systems. Together with Romania they thought international support and benchmarking would be essential in this work.
- vii. Some country respondents, including the one from the Czech Republic, believed that a quality assurance system that covered all services could contribute to coherence across sectors. Greece referred to the particular problem of private services; Ireland to the need to bring the work of the public employment services into the same quality assurance procedures as that in other sectors.
- viii. Other countries mentioned issues specific to their own systems. For example in Spain the emphasis on psycho-pedagogical support, with a bias in favour of young people with learning difficulties, undermines the development of a generalist careers guidance service. Romania mentioned a shortage of staff and Estonia, Italy and Romania mentioned the particular need to develop better training frameworks for practitioners.

- d) **Whether there are systems in place in all sectors e.g. Schools, Higher Education, Labour Market Employment Services.**
- i. There was some uncertainty with this question as to whether it referred to guidance provision or quality assurance, but Greece, Poland and Lithuania answered with a straight no, and Cyprus said it was only rudimentary with no active initiatives to take it forward. Slovakia commented that while there were systems in place for employment services and schools, this was not really the case for higher education and private providers.
 - ii. Some countries reported that while there was guidance offered in most sectors (Spain, Italy) there were not necessarily associated quality assurance systems in place, and even where this was so, there was no coherence between them (Czech Republic). The Scotland respondent summarised this as, *'They are all different and not joined up'*.
 - iii. Others gave more detail about the level of development. Austria said that quality assurance mostly consisted of in-service regulations and job commitment. Hungary is developing different systems in different sectors (EFQM in the employment sector and ISO in the education sector). Estonia mentioned the existence of some systems and laws to regulate provision and entitlement in different sectors, but no overall quality assurance system or even any proper quality guidelines. Romania was in the stronger position of having had specific World Bank funding to set up provision simultaneously in the labour, education and youth sectors which has made it possible to look at building coherence in from the start. However, trades union and employer provision was not included in this overall scheme.

Section 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

This section summarises the conclusions from the study, and puts forward some recommendations for next steps in the process to develop common guidelines at European level.

5.1 Conclusions

Overall there are **many different approaches to assuring the quality of career guidance provision across the enlarged EU**. At a systems level they can be loosely grouped into three categories:

- a **coherent top-down, centralised approach**;
- a **top-down but segmented approach** with different approaches and systems in place within education and employment Ministries and services;
- a **bottom-up approach** where quality assurance initiatives have been promoted through professional bodies (for example through codes of conduct and professional registers).

In some countries there are combinations of elements of each of these approaches. All of them include ways to consult users but there are **no examples of a 'consumer-led' model** as such. Most countries accept and recognise the importance of minimum professional qualifications, and some examples of trans-national approaches to the training and development of career guidance practitioners are being developed.

At provider level, some sectors within countries have adopted approaches based on quality systems such as the EFQM-based Excellence model and the ISO approach. The responses to our questionnaire suggest that the **ISO model may not be sufficiently citizen/user focused or flexible enough for the approach we are recommending**, and not all countries or sectors are in a position to adopt an EFQM mode

While quality assurance systems as such are rare, the responses to our questionnaire and the analysis we carried out of the career guidance policy reviews show an **increased desire to improve coherence within and between sectors of service delivery**, and to develop the ways in which citizen/user's perspectives can be understood and addressed. There appears to be a growing trend to define and state the principles upon which service delivery is based, often through the efforts of professional associations

Such principles are important components of a quality assurance system, but on their own they are not enough. There are challenges of implementation within and across sectors. The advisory nature of guidelines may limit adherence to specified requirements - even existing legal requirements may not be adhered to (in one country the OECD report indicates that despite a regulation requiring certain professionals to hold a specific qualification, large numbers do not do so). **If there is no implementation plan or agreement,**

and no resource to monitor implementation, advisory guidelines may be ignored or implemented in a fragmented way. Guidelines are more effective if the agencies and staff expected to implement them feel some ownership of them. Staff may need *support* to implement guidelines and, for quality to improve across a guidance system as a whole, guidelines need to be followed-up and monitored.

The task is not an easy one. As well as the diversity of practice within different sectors there are particularly complex issues which a quality assurance system will have to address. One example is the **issue of 'impartiality'** of a service, both as regards the interests of user and learning provider or employer, as well as the potentially competing providers and employers. Another is the tension for public employment services between the government's goal of reducing unemployment, often through quantified targets, and the interests of a user to find the most suitable job. Gathering user feedback and involving users in the design and evaluation of services are essential to ensure that their needs are met.

A particular challenge is any kind of regulation of private sector providers. The lack of regulation places the citizen/user at risk with no specific protection or redress. Development of criteria to include the private sector would be particularly welcome in the new Member States and candidate countries where the private sector is very new, and there may be an opportunity to shape practice.

Where quality is assured through the ethical principles of professional associations there are further difficulties. Since membership is self-selected, and there may be fragmentation with several professional bodies in one state, such principles do not apply comprehensively to all those working in the profession. Moreover, not all countries have professional associations and, where they do, it is unclear how members of professional associations can be monitored for non-adherence. **Reliance on the professionalism of staff may not be sufficient**, particularly where there is no systematic approach by the employer to requiring continuous professional development, supervision or appraisal.

For all these reasons, implementing a quality assurance system within one country is complicated enough, and designing a framework which will complement, and be compatible with, the approaches taken in nearly 30 Member States and candidate countries is even more of a challenge. Basing such a framework on the perspective of the user adds an additional dimension of complexity. **The way forward needs to be flexible enough to take account of the fact that Member States are at very different stages of development of: guidance systems; quality assurance systems; and in accepting the interests of the user/citizen as the primary touchstone for both.** Not only practitioners but the population itself may need to be supported in developing an understanding of these concepts.

5.2 Recommendations

5.2.1 A Common Quality Assurance Framework

The Copenhagen Declaration specifically identifies ‘information, guidance and counselling’ and ‘promoting quality assurance’ as priority areas for action at Community level.

On 28 May 2004, building on the work of the Technical Working Group on Quality in VET, the **Education/Youth Council, adopted Conclusions on a Common Quality Assurance Framework (CQAF) in VET**. This CQAF is intended to: ‘*provide a basis and support for Member States in developing and improving their existing national or regional systems and approaches to quality assurance [and to] help Member States to monitor and evaluate their own systems and practices*’. The CQAF includes the following integrated elements:

- *‘an appropriate model, to facilitate planning, evaluation and review of systems at the appropriate levels in Member States;*
- *an appropriate methodology for review of systems, for example self assessment, to enable Member States at the appropriate level to be self critical and strive for continued improvements;*
- *monitoring as appropriate at national or regional level, possibly combined with voluntary peer review;*
- *measurement tools developed at national or regional level to facilitate Member States to monitor and evaluate their own systems’.*

We believe that such a CQAF approach should apply to guidance provision, since what is required is a voluntary approach and a sufficiently broad and flexible model to take account of the diversity of national systems and the varying stages of development across the Member States. In reaching agreement on such a CQAF the importance of anchoring the model in Member States experiences and building consensus must be underlined. The framework may be a ‘top-down’ one but to be effective it needs to be promoted from the bottom-up.

Achieving a common understanding and identifying a framework suitable for, and acceptable to, all the Member States is no easy task and takes time, commitment and ingenuity. The Quality in VET TWG was able to build on the work of the Quality Forum which preceded it. There is no equivalent representative grouping in guidance at European level and this lack may make it more difficult to build consensus.

On 28 May the **Education/Youth Council also adopted a Resolution on lifelong guidance**. This is evidence of commitment at a high political level. The Resolution affirms as a priority: ‘*the development of high quality guidance provision for all European citizens, accessible at all stages of their lives to enable them to manage their learning and work pathways and the transitions therein*’. The Resolution also identifies as a specific priority: ‘***the development at national, regional and local levels, where appropriate, of***

better quality assurance mechanisms for guidance services, information and products (including on-line services), particularly from a citizen/consumer perspective.

It is therefore an especially opportune moment to invite Member States to consider whether a CQAF in guidance would help to improve their provision. It should be possible to capitalise on the momentum developed in the wake of the Resolution to concentrate attention on how the issue of quality assurance of guidance provision could most effectively be taken forward.

We **propose below a set of draft core criteria to be used as reference points in assuring quality in guidance provision**. At this stage of development, these criteria are necessarily systems-based. The draft meta-criteria form the basis of elements 1 and 2 of the CQAF (i.e. a model, to facilitate planning, evaluation and review of systems at the appropriate levels in Member States and a methodology for review of systems, for example self assessment, to enable Member States at the appropriate level to be self critical and strive for continued improvements). A full model and methodology should be designed and other elements (monitoring and measurement tools) of the CQAF should be developed incrementally. We recommend that, over time, a move should be made towards an outcome-based approach.

It should be noted that the meta-criteria presented below are not identical to those included in our survey questionnaire. As a result of feedback received from the survey, from the Commission's Expert Group on Lifelong Guidance and other guidance stakeholders, **some additional criteria have been included for consideration**. These new criteria are indicated with an asterisk. The ordering of the criteria and the wording have also undergone some changes.

5.2.2 Meta-criteria to be used as references for assuring quality in guidance provision.

a) Citizen and user involvement

Quality assurance systems for career guidance should:

- Include information for the user regarding their entitlement (for example through users' charters) and take account of the work of national and European consumer associations in processes for consumer protection and redress.
- Ensure that individual users are regularly consulted on their experience of and satisfaction with the service.
- Require service providers to make systematic use of the findings from such consultations.
- *Involve the user in the design, management and evaluation of guidance services and materials.

b) Practitioner competence

Quality assurance systems for career guidance should:

- *Require practitioners to have the competence needed to perform the guidance tasks they are called on to undertake.
- *Require guidance practitioners to hold, or be working towards, qualifications that ensure that they have the competencies required to undertake guidance tasks.
- *Include the monitoring or assessment of the work of guidance practitioners with respect to the outcomes of guidance interventions that they are expected to deliver.
- Require on-going professional development and service improvement.
- Include relevant practitioner associations in the development of standards and quality assurance procedures.

c) Service Improvement

Quality assurance systems for career guidance should:

- Include clearly defined standards of service ⁽²⁰⁾, some way of monitoring whether a service meets those standards, and, where this is not the case, a procedure to follow to bring them up to standard.
- Include some way of monitoring and evaluating whether action undertaken to improve services and information, in fact, results in reaching specified standards and in ongoing improvement.
- Include some way of differentiating and monitoring service provision in relation to the needs of different target groups.
- Require services to form working links with, and provide support for, groups and bodies that offer guidance informally (such as parents, voluntary organisations or bodies associated with leisure activities).
- *Ensure that guidance materials used (for example assessment tools) meet quality assurance technical specifications.

d) Coherence

- Quality assurance systems for career guidance should:
- Include links to promote effective working relationships within and across government departments on quality assurance in guidance.
- Ensure compatibility between different quality assurance systems operating in different guidance sectors, and for different target groups.
- Include ways of monitoring the use and usefulness of links between guidance-providing agencies.

⁽²⁰⁾ Standards of service should apply both to direct services to users, and to information (whether printed, through ICT or in some other format) provided to users.

e) Coverage of sectors

Quality assurance systems for career guidance should contain guidelines on guidance activities undertaken by private agencies, employers, trade unions and other non-State providers.

5.2.2 Next Steps

It is our view that the meta-criteria approach could act as a catalyst in terms of the development of policies and linkages between and within countries the enlarged EU.

Our study showed that:

- There was strong general support for the meta-criteria approach
- There was general agreement that the meta-criteria offered for consideration were appropriate and useful,
- The respondents saw the potential of the meta-criteria approach both for improving coherence between different sectors and autonomous regions within their own countries and between Member States.

However, we believe that:

- As a first step, **more work is needed to test and validate the criteria further and then to refine them.**
- Secondly, **consensus needs to be built on an operational approach to implement and monitor the meta-criteria and on the development of a model and methodology.** European networks of national fora that bring together representatives of all the stakeholders with responsibility for guidance have a key role to play in fostering discussion and co-operation.
- Thirdly, **consideration needs to be given to the support which the Member States, Commission and Cedefop could provide to encourage the application of the meta-criteria at national level.** A developmental approach should be supported including methods such as peer review, benchmarking and country visits. Good practice in countries should be identified and shared.

More specifically we feel that two aspects, in particular, of the meta-criteria require further attention:

- a) focusing on the needs of the citizen/user, and
- b) taking account of diversity.

As regards focusing on the needs of the citizen/user, we propose that:

- **More detailed research is undertaken into the existing and potential involvement of users in quality assurance in guidance**

across Europe taking consumers' rights and legislation into account, and that where Consumer Associations exist they are actively engaged in this process

- **A model is developed that illustrates what user involvement in quality assurance would look like** and describes the benefits of such an approach to users, practitioners and policy-makers.
- **Guidance providers in Member States are encouraged to conduct detailed research to understand better the needs of European citizens**, and to make particular use of qualitative as well as quantitative methods
- **Users' views on services and products (process of use and outcomes) should be included as performance indicators** for any service measurement framework
- **Professional Associations should consider the extent to which the user perspective is incorporated into existing competence and ethical frameworks** and practitioner based quality assurance systems– and whether these need to be reviewed.

As regards taking account of diversity, we propose that:

- **Further work is undertaken to identify specific issues related to the meta-criteria**, to ensure that they can be used for different target groups in different settings such as:
 - in schools
 - for young people outside school
 - for adults outside education, training or work
 - in higher education
 - in employment-related work done by ministries of employment or labour
 - in post-school education or training (for adults or young adults)
 - by employers
 - by trade unions
 - by private (fee-charging) bodies.
- **Special attention should be paid to inclusion and differentiation issues arising from applying the meta-criteria to guidance work in different settings such as sectors of education, training and employment.**
- **Professional Associations work together to promote inter-cultural competency** among their members and a coherent approach to the development of ethical standards and quality guidelines.
- **Member States are encouraged to use national fora for guidance** to develop further, at State and European levels, stakeholder consensus, coherence and common agreements relating to the quality assurance of citizen/user centred career guidance services and materials.

Lastly, we consider that, in the development of user centred QA (quality) systems, more attention needs to be given to the issue of entitlement. In this context we draw attention to the draft aims and principles of lifelong career guidance which were developed by Objectives Working Group G in co-operation with the European Commission Expert Group on Lifelong Guidance. We believe that the 17 principles ⁽²¹⁾ could be used to develop a kind of citizen's charter so that each user across the E.U would know what they are entitled to expect from guidance services and materials.

⁽²¹⁾ Independence, impartiality, confidentiality, equal opportunities, transparency, enabling, competent staff, holistic approach, continuity, availability, accessibility, responsiveness, appropriateness of methods, continuous improvement, collaboration, friendliness, right of redress.

Appendix 1

Glossary

Accreditation - The process of recognising an organisation as maintaining standards, frequently by authorising the use of a quality mark.

Brand - A mark made to attest manufacture or quality or to designate ownership

Benchmarking - The process of comparing one service with others from different organisations

Compliance - The outcome of an internal or external assessment that a standard has been met

Criterion - A standard on which a judgement or decision on quality may be based.

Ethical standards – standards of behaviour and practice, typically established by a professional organisation

Inspection - A process where an external body examines the work of an organisation against a predetermined framework and (usually) produces a report.

Meta-criteria - Higher level criteria that transcend existing quality systems and that can be used as reference points for their further development.

Monitoring - The process of keeping track of, or checking that something has, or is, happening

Mystery shopper - A person employed to report on services by acting as a service user. Can also be described as a 'briefed user' in an educational context, e.g. a student that has been previously briefed to report on specific criteria after the service has been delivered.

Quality framework – A basic conceptual structure of standards or criteria

Quality guidelines - Broad statements of quality or conduct

Self-assessment - The process of assuring one's own organisation that standards or criteria have been met

Standard - A statement set up and established by authority that defines the level at which a service /or product should be delivered

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2. Principles / assumptions underpinning quality

2 (a) What principles or assumptions (if any) underpin the quality of the services delivered?

2 (b) How is adherence to principles monitored?

2 (c) Other comments

3. Staff competence

3 (a) How do services ensure that the staff delivering career guidance are competent?

Staff delivering services are qualified in (career) guidance	
Staff delivering services are required to undertake continuing development	
Staff performance is supervised / monitored	
Staff performance is reviewed through an appraisal process etc	
Staff work within an Code of Ethics / Code of Practice	
There is a directory or register of qualified guidance practitioners	
There are agreed national standards / criteria relating to staff competence	
Other (specify)	

3 (b) Other comments

4. Careers information

4 (a) How is the quality of careers information assured? (Both collection and use)

	Paper-based	Electronic / Internet
Covered by quality standards		
Covered by quality guidelines / criteria / framework		
Other (specify)		

4. (b) Other comments

5. User / citizen involvement

5 (a) How are citizens and users of services involved?

Asking users if they were satisfied with the service they received	
Asking users for suggestions for improvements in the service delivered	
Asking users what outputs / outcomes have been from the guidance they received. (i.e. whether they found a job or learning opportunity)	
There is a user / citizen / student Council	
Users provide case studies / histories for publicity	
Users help in the selection and recruitment of staff	
Users help in producing a user / citizen / learner charter	
Users help in designing the service offered	
User / user / learner / citizen Charter	
Other (specify)	

Please give further information below about any of the options ticked (and /or under examples of good practice)

6. Future Plans

6.1 Please outline below any plans identified relating to quality assurance, including sectors / services to be covered and timescale for introduction (e.g. examples of policy and practice)

7. Examples of good practice

7.1 Please outline below any good practice found (particularly user involvement)

8. Gaps in information

8.1 Indicate below any areas where information is lacking or insufficient

9. Implications for European approaches

9.1 Indicate below implications (if any) for approaches that could be adopted at European level

Appendix 4: Table of documents searched by country - Stage 1

	Country	Agency that carried out career guidance policy review	National response to career guidance policy questionnaire	Career guidance policy country note
EU member states				
1	Austria	OECD	Yes	Yes
2	Belgium	CEDEFOP	Yes	Yes
3	Denmark	OECD	Yes	Yes
4	Finland	OECD	Yes	Yes
5	France	CEDEFOP	Yes	
6	Germany	OECD	Yes	Yes
7	Greece	CEDEFOP	Yes	
8	Ireland	OECD	Yes	Yes
9	Italy	CEDEFOP	Yes	
10	Luxembourg	OECD	Yes	Yes
11	Netherlands	OECD	Yes	Yes
12	Portugal	CEDEFOP	Yes	
13	Spain	OECD	Yes	Yes
14	Sweden	CEDEFOP	Yes	
15	United Kingdom	OECD	Yes	Yes
Candidate countries:				
a) New member states				
I	Czech Republic	OECD	Yes	Yes
II	Cyprus	ETF	Yes	
III	Estonia	ETF	Yes	
IV	Hungary	ETF	Yes	
V	Latvia	ETF	Yes	
VI	Lithuania	ETF	Yes	
VII	Malta	ETF	Yes	
VIII	Poland	ETF and WB	Yes	Yes
IX	Slovakia	ETF	Yes	
X	Slovenia	ETF	Yes	
Candidate countries:				
b) Applicants				
i	Bulgaria	ETF		
ii	Romania	ETF and WB		
iii	Turkey	WB		Yes
EEA members				
	Iceland	CEDEFOP		
	Norway	OECD	Yes	Yes
	Liechtenstein	Not covered		
Not a member of any group				
	Switzerland	Not covered		

Appendix 5: Review of existing approaches to quality assurance at national level, with case studies

1. Principles underpinning approaches to quality

In some European states some groups of practitioners and policy makers have discussed and agreed on a number of principles which underpin the quality of the career guidance work undertaken. These are likely, although not exclusively, to be found in any Codes of Conduct or Codes of Ethics developed by professional associations with an expectation that their members should work within these. It is not always clear how adherence to these principles is monitored or whether any sanctions are applied if they are breached.

Membership of professional associations may be limited to people with a particular career guidance role such as that of a psychologist. It is therefore possible that others working in different roles in the same country may not be eligible for membership of that or indeed a member of any, professional association, so may not be working to an agreed Code. In some countries there was interest in, and support for, the principles agreed by the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance (IAEVG).

Case Study 1

Source: The OECD report on the Czech Republic: information updated by Libor Berny, Narodni Ustav Odborneho Vzdelavani, Prague

There are 3 professional associations linked to career guidance in the Czech Republic, all of which support the professional development of their members. The Association of Counsellors in Education comments on professional standards and ethics. The Association of School Psychologists, has created a Code of Ethics for its members. The Association of Counselling Psychologists, which represents workers from consulting centres for pedagogy and psychology also has a Code of Ethics.

The Codes cover issues around user confidentiality; user-centredness; counsellors working within the boundaries of their knowledge and competencies; and transparency about the cost and the nature of the service offered. Members are obliged to work to these Codes. Any member who violates any of the rules within them can be excluded from an association.

Principles underpinning quality may also be reflected in legislation governing provision, covered in more detail in point 6 of this appendix. In some cases monitoring does then follow, often against targets (examined in point 7 of this appendix), but this is not always the case and even where such performance indicators are used they only reflect one aspect of quality.

2. Quality standards / frameworks/ guidelines

A number of states have developed quality guidelines or criteria, but there is limited information on how these have been implemented, or are being monitored. In Estonia, advisory quality guidelines have been developed for the YICC (Youth Information and Counselling Centres) and for services in the education sector, which encompass underlying principles, and relate to the provision of information (breadth of coverage; range of media, target groups) and elements of delivery (open to young people without an appointment; referral to a more specialised service). Where guidelines are advisory, impact may be limited.

Case Study 2

Source: Danish response to the OECD questionnaire; information updated by Steffen Svendsen, Jysk Center for Videregående Uddannelse

In Denmark, the National Council for Educational and Vocational Guidance (RUE) produced guidelines for the assessment of goals, purposes and content in relation to electronic careers materials. It also produced a document aimed at organisations producing career information which suggested including a declaration to enable users to assess the nature of the materials (i.e. in relation to objectivity, neutrality etc.) However RUE had no authority over guidance service delivery and producers of guidance material and there was little evidence of impact on the various producers of career information. An electronic gateway is now being developed aspiring to include all relevant career guidance material on the web and this will be run according to detailed quality standards set up by the Ministry of Education. It is expected to change the situation in Denmark substantially.

Standards are being developed for sectors where career guidance is delivered, such as in Austria, where 'seals of quality' are being established in vocational educational institutions. These specify the standards which need to be met, and include criteria relating to information and counselling services. In Italy, the National University Forum has produced a set of guidelines relating to the scope and range of guidance services. In Ireland, the Training and Employment Service (FAS) is promulgating the Euro Counsel Guidelines'. In Italy, the 'Cesos' project is a 'systems' initiative funded by the Ministry of Labour to test a monitoring and evaluation model and a rating model. However, except for the **matrix** Quality Standard in the UK, there is little evidence of comprehensive accredited quality standards for career guidance with mechanisms for checking compliance.

Case study 3

Source: English response to the OECD questionnaire; information updated from <http://www.matrix-quality-standard.com/main/home.asp#>

In the UK the **matrix** Standard is a national quality standard for organisations delivering information, advice and guidance services for learning and work. It is maintained and promoted by The Employment National Training Organisation. The independent Guidance Accreditation Board is responsible for awarding the associated **matrix** Quality Mark.

Its purpose is to identify the essential features of successful delivery of any information, advice and guidance service, regardless of context or sector and to provide key indicators by which organisations can measure their current activities. It helps organisations keep high standards as well as continuously improve their service.

It consists of ten elements which define best practice in assisting users of the service and in the efficient management of people and resources. Five are about delivery of the service and five are about managing it. Organisations are helped to achieve the elements through demonstrating 54 performance measures.

The **matrix** Standard supports and complements other quality systems including ISO 9000, PQASSO and the EFQM Excellence Model.

Overall there seem to be more guidelines in public employment services than within education. For example, in Germany, the Federal Employment Service has developed a comprehensive Service Catalogue.

3. User, citizen and stakeholder involvement in quality assurance

Increasing attention is being given to user views on career guidance provision in some European states, but apart from the UK **matrix** Standard, which does require agencies to take account of the views of their users, most examples are restricted to: isolated cases; an approach to quality assurance in a particular sector (e.g. an inspection process in Further or Higher Education); or one-off evaluation studies.

Case Study 4

Source The OECD report on Austria; information updated by Anton Dobart, Bundesministerium für Bildung Wissenschaft und Kultur, Vienna

The regular Client Monitoring Survey of the Austrian Employment Service (AMS) covers a wide range of services and quality aspects. Customers are basically asked whether services, environment, staff competence etc. met their expectations. In certain labour market programmes which include counselling elements, a correlation is made between user expectations before the intervention - and their assessment afterwards.

The results are included in a report that is available for all employees of the Austrian Employment and published on the intranet. The AMS has a target-oriented management system and many of the results are used as indicators within this. The regional (Bundesland) branch organisation of the AMS is mainly responsible for meeting the targets. Reports produced from the monitoring of specific user groups participating in labour market result in organisational changes on a case-by-case basis.

In order for useful feedback to be obtained from consumers of career guidance, it is important for them to have an informed perception of what they can reasonably expect a career guidance service to deliver. In those Eastern European states in which there was mandatory assignment to jobs in the Soviet era, steps have had to be taken to help the public understand the role and benefits offered by career guidance.

Case Study 5

Source: Estonian response to the ETF questionnaire; information updated by Margit Rammo, Euroguidance Estonia

In order to help the population in Estonia understand the role and services offered by the labour market services, the Labour Market Board has produced guidelines to help the users clarify what their expectations should be before using the services. There is a document called the 'Standard of Public Services: Vocational Guidance in Employment Services' and covers:

- what vocational guidance is, where it is available and how it is delivered
- who is entitled to it and where information can be obtained
- what the characteristics of a good service are and how the quality is assured
- what rights and responsibilities are of all parties and how complaints can be made and redress sought.

The Standard of Public Services is available on the Internet on the home page of the Estonian Labour Market Board. In the printed format, the Standard is displayed in all Employment Offices where users can read them independently, usually in an information room.

The Standard is reviewed once a year; any amendments are approved with the signature of the Head of the Labour Market Board. Informal feedback has indicated that the Standard is necessary, comprehensive and easy to understand, but that it could be shorter and more specific.

A possible recent trend is a more active involvement of young people in service design and delivery. Examples of this include:

- the Youthreach programme in Ireland, which is designed to involve service users (and potential service users);
- in England young people are involved in the recruitment of staff for the Connexions service.

There is less evidence of how data gathered from satisfaction surveys and from stakeholders is used systematically to improve the quality of services delivered.

Stakeholders are those parties which have an interest in career guidance services but are not direct users themselves. These could include, for example, parents and guardians, employers or trade unions. The social partners are the stakeholders most likely to be involved in career guidance or labour market services: there appears to be less contribution from parents, other than parent representatives on school bodies. Stakeholders are involved in service design and in contributing to policy development. In the new member states a common model appears to be the tripartite advisory committee of local authorities/local government, trade unions and employers who act in an advisory capacity for the employment/labour services. In Malta there is a 6 monthly 'employment barometer' exercise getting employers and the employment service together to share knowledge on occupational and skills gaps.

Case Study 6

Source: The OECD report on the Czech Republic: information updated by Libor Berny, Narodni Ustav Odborneho Vzdelavani, Prague

In the Czech Republic Labour offices have established consulting bodies, consisting of representatives from employers, trade unions, and also secondary technical and vocational schools from the region. In many regions of the Czech Republic these bodies also work with organisations of people with disabilities. These meet monthly to review the labour market situation and develop employment policy in their region. They comment (amongst other things) on the organisation of counselling activities.

4. Assuring quality through staff competence

There is a heavy reliance on the professionalism of staff to assure quality in a number of states. 'Professionalism and quality are closely-linked concepts – professionalism is essential in discussions about quality in guidance' (OECD report on Denmark). A number of states have developed competency frameworks. A team of experts in Poland produced a description of standard of job qualification for career counsellors working within the structures of two Polish Ministries (Education and Labour). A university degree, special diplomas in guidance and counselling and in-service courses are included. Ireland has a competency specification for career counsellors.

Poland and Germany are involved (with Austria and Hungary) in a 'trans-national vocational guidance' project - the outcome of which will be 'a curriculum for trans-national post-graduate studies in career guidance' – with one certificate recognised in all 4 countries.

The private sector is unregulated in terms of qualifications in most countries. The report on Germany says that 'anyone can call themselves a career counsellor in Germany; however the Federal Employment Service does have powers to prohibit private services from operating in order to protect the interests of users.

Initial training in career guidance. Qualification and competence requirements tend to differ between the education and employment sectors. Some staff will be working in career guidance as a main role, whereas for others such as teachers in schools this will be only be a minor part of their overall responsibilities. However it is a common pattern for those working as career guidance specialist professionals in formal structures in both education and the public employment services to be qualified at Higher Education level, often with a degree or post-graduate qualifications in Education or Psychology. The study of career guidance *per se* may not be covered in depth in such qualifications. Some states aspire to ensure staff meet the qualification standards or competence they have set, but in reality have not yet achieved this.

Case study 7

Source: Turkish response to the World Bank study

Class guidance teachers. Courses in guidance and in educational and developmental psychology are compulsory in the initial training that every teacher must take at university in addition to the courses of their own specialist subject. Courses in class management, behaviour management, communication skills and practical guidance have also recently been included in teacher education. Some teachers who undertake graduate studies take supplementary guidance courses in addition to courses in their own subjects.

There are also examples of staff, particularly in less formal settings, who are not qualified. For example, in France, one of the characteristics of guidance

provision has been the growth in schemes and initiatives in the last 20 years that draw unqualified people into posts with some responsibility for career guidance. The authors of the French country report note that:

'There has been a worrying upturn in the number of practitioners with little or no theoretical or practical training who are often unaware of ethical issues and the codes of conduct of their profession.'

Continuing professional development. Ensuring that opportunities exist for staff training and professional development is seen in some states as an important mechanism to enhance the quality of services available. In-service training is often available to those already qualified, although as with initial training, where career guidance is not the main role updating in guidance issues may only be a small part of the programme.

Case study 8

Source: Romanian response to the ETF questionnaire; updated by Mihai Jigau, Department for Educational and Vocational Guidance at the Institute of Educational Sciences

Continuing professional development (CPD) for all teaching staff, including counsellors, is provided by the National Centre for Secondary Teachers Training (NCSTT) and funded by the Ministry of Education (MoE). The Centre accredits other specialised training if it meets certain quality standards.

Training sessions for school counsellors in the pre-university and university education system are provided through the Information and Career Counselling National Resources Centre in cooperation with the Department of Educational and Vocational Guidance at the Institute of Educational Sciences (this coordinates work done in school counselling centres. Vocational guidance topics have included: computer-based guidance and counselling tools, counselling methods, fundraising, and quality assurance. One training programme was offered through the Distance Counselling Project.

Counsellors working in the MoE network must attend 40 hours of training annually, and training courses must be certified by the organising institution and validated by the NCSTT. The promotion of all teachers, including counsellors, depends on their participation in such training.

Professional associations often provide development opportunities for their members. Therefore where membership is dependant on holding a particular qualification, unqualified workers may not be able to access the training opportunities offered or benefit from other activities such as the discussions leading to the agreement of Codes of Practice or Ethics.

Participation in on-going development activities may be encouraged or expected, but with the exception of Romania, seldom appears to be obligatory or monitored systematically in any way, other than sometimes on an individual basis by line managers. There are small-scale initiatives to try to ensure on-

going staff competence. For example, in Vienna, a Professional Association of Counsellors (the Vienna Association for Vocational Counselling) with approximately 40 members requires initial training or experience in the field and a willingness to accept professional supervision and to undertake on-going training. Members must also make a commitment to ethical standards. Further details are at <http://www.berufsberater.at>.

Staff supervision, monitoring and appraisal. Staff supervision, monitoring and appraisal is particularly important where the professionalism of staff is perceived to be crucial in enhancing the quality of career guidance services. Absence of evidence suggests it may not be sufficiently widespread enough to be effective, particularly where guidance is delivered through informal settings.

Validation of professional practice. Some countries have developed qualifications that can be acquired through the assessment of competences developed on the job. Examples are the National Vocational Qualification in advice and guidance offered at a range of levels in the UK, and the international qualification for the private sector of outplacement provided by the Institute for Career Certification International.

Case study 9

Source: www.careercertification.org. and www.insala.com.

The Institute for Career Certification (ICC) International provides a qualification system for people outside state provision working mainly in outplacement. Outplacement professionals can work towards a range of statuses through collecting Professional Development Credits (PDCs) to meet minimum requirements for certification. The ICC International governing body includes members from Italy, the UK and the Netherlands among its many other international members, and the administrative office is in Washington DC, USA. Fontys University in the Netherlands, together with an outplacement software company called Insala, have developed an on-line training programme for outplacement professionals to achieve ICC International accreditation, under the name of the European Career Management Training Foundation.

5. Models of Quality Assurance

Some countries, including Wales, have adopted the European Framework for Quality Management (EFQM) as the basis for developing quality management systems.

Case study 10

Source: the Welsh response to the OECD questionnaire

The Careers Wales Careers Education and Guidance (CEG) Award is being developed, building on existing local schemes and based around EFQM (European Framework for Quality Management) principles and common standards. Such awards are viewed as 'effective catalysts in raising the profile of CEG within schools

and leveraging up standards'. Schools and colleges will be offered consultancy support as they work towards their award.

In careers companies, an All Wales Quality Manual, developed over a number of years and revised in 2000 by a working group including the Assembly and Wales Quality Centre, has been produced. The Manual is designed to be a self-assessment framework based on the standard EFQM criteria. The learning outcomes from the application of the CEG framework will also be used by Careers Wales in the development of a quality award for careers education in schools and colleges.

In Turkey as in Spain guidance takes its place within an overall system for education provision more generally.

Case study 11

Source: Spanish response to the OECD questionnaire; updated by María José Arias Fernández of the Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte and with additional material from his response to the consultation on meta-criteria

In Spain, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport promotes and supports the voluntary use of the European Excellence Model (based on the EFQM) as a self-assessment model in schools. This promotion is done through 'Annual National Rewards to Quality in Schools'. Every Autonomous Community or region has full competence to develop this model or any other. Guidance department self-assessment forms are part of the overall evaluation process in each school.

There are two types of criteria, or references, used in the model for schools conducting self-assessment, namely:

Enablers: leadership, planning and strategy, school staff, resources and collaborating entities, processes.

Results: education service user results, staff results, results for the surrounding community, key results for the school.

The European Excellence Model is essentially a self-assessment model, i.e. an evaluation tool that schools apply to themselves. Through self-assessment, the school can ascertain its performance against established criteria. Schools using the model are really interested in improving and see the model as a part of the planning and strategy process. Examples of specific activities in guidance:

- Exhibitions and fairs. Criteria: number of visitors (annual trends)
- Web pages. Criteria: number of visitors
- Telephone consultations. Criteria: number of calls (annual trends)
- Printed materials. Criteria: materials demand

The self-assessment method used in this model is RADAR logic: on the grounds of the Results, a new Approach is planned, which is then Deployed, Assessed and Reviewed.

The Irish Training and Employment Agency (FAS) has achieved the ISO 9001 standard for training centres, employment services and other sections of the FAS organisation.

6. Regulation through legislation

Regulation of guidance provision is a feature in some member states, but this tends to be restricted to committing the country to the delivery of guidance, mainly for economic and social purposes. This is sometimes defined in some way by the nature of the provision rather than specific reference to how the quality of the provision is to be assured, although there is occasionally reference to underlying principles. There is little mention of personal development, although in Malta guidance and counselling are 'seen to be important instruments by which citizens can attain their own personal fulfilment'.

Case Study 12

Source: The Luxembourg response to the OECD questionnaire

In Luxembourg, legislation lays down the organisation and working of the employment department and the requirement to provide information, guidance and counselling in schools. The following principles are enshrined in Article 20 of the Employment Law of 1976 and subsequent amendments:

- in the guidance process, account is taken above all of the interests, aptitudes and abilities of the user
- the next steps suggested by the employment adviser are optional; and
- the employment situation, changes and the chances of future work are taken into account.

Some mechanisms exist between ministries to promote co-operation, such as the National Guidance Committee in Italy, but in most countries there are two main delivery settings with separate structures (employment offices and educational institutions/services) and the resulting lack of coherence is generally considered a weakness.

7. Monitoring, evaluating and inspecting delivery processes

Some member states have inspectorates or similar structures in place to monitor and evaluate the quality of the provision. Frequently career guidance provision will be included as part of a broader process focusing on, for example, an education provider. The depth of the inspection of career guidance *per se* may therefore be variable, often depending on the status accorded the provision. Examples of this approach include Ireland, which has a Guidance Inspectorate, and Malta, where there is a Guidance Unit monitoring the work of teachers. In Ireland there is also monitoring by their National Centre for Guidance in Education and quality guidelines in guidance work in adult education settings are being piloted. A main theme across the

countries is on monitoring against targets, particularly within the Public Employment Services.

Case Study 13

Source: The Italian response to the CEDEFOP questionnaire

In Italy, the State-Regions agreement set minimum operating standards for employment services (including reception, information and guidance) to ensure that all citizens receive equivalent services throughout the national territory. The plan sets timetables, methods and evaluation indicators for the overall process as well as the basic and advanced resources that services should supply.

The Ministry of Labour set up a Technical Committee to lay down and inspect minimum quality standards, using a practical model setting out quantitative and qualitative requirements. The regions and autonomous provinces will in practice be responsible for accreditation and certification procedures. Application methods and feasibility are being evaluated.

8. Quality assurance of career information

New technologies can contribute to enhancing the quality of guidance provision by increasing access to guidance, particularly in states where use of guidance centres might be limited by their location, climatic conditions, lack of transport etc. There is evidence of significant investment in new technologies for guidance delivery throughout Europe, particularly focusing on career information – but also more broadly career guidance. For example, in Estonia, certain public bodies are expected to have websites and practitioners are being trained to use IT. In Hungary, Internet access is available in every school and the National Career Information Centre is making a range of information on Hungary / EU states available through its website. Germany has labour market information databases at both national and regional levels.

The development of a self-help approach through IT does however require the population to possess certain skills, for example, in interpreting information, if they are to become effective users of career information. France is looking to improve the skills of population to make them more independent. Similarly it is important to have standards in place to assure the quality of information provided both for paper-based and electronic products.

There have been a number of initiatives to assure the quality of career information. The national advisory body in Denmark developed quality guidelines for career information (see above).

Electronic products now offer the possibility of gathering user feedback in a more efficient way through the inclusion of appropriate software in website design. A national web-based questionnaire for institutional evaluation is

being developed in Finland. New technologies also contribute to quality assurance by offering mechanisms for:

- increasing control over the quality of career information provided
- supporting the continuing development of practitioners
- a centrally-managed processes.

Case Study 14

Source: Finnish response to the OECD questionnaire; updated by Raimo Vuorinen, Institute of Educational Research at the University of Jyväskylä

In Finland, the Opintoluotsi project is developing a portal (the Asiantuntijaluotsi portal, <http://www.asiantuntijaluotsi.net>) to support guidance workers, including Internet-resources related to counselling and guidance work, research, and links to evaluated and recommended guidance and counselling sites etc. Users are asked about their information needs. As part of this project the Ministry of Education has been developing a website for 'quality-assured' information about Finland's education and training provision, where the information can be checked and controlled. Data is collected from institutional web sites, so educational institutions are being helped to find ways of improving the quality of career information on their web sites. The portal itself provides a platform for benchmarking the institutional web sites.

The Asiantuntijaluotsi project has been involved in the planning and implementation of a national in-service training programme for guidance practitioners how to use ICT in guidance. The training focuses on the usage of web-based career information but also the role of guidance practitioners as managers of guidance resources. This means, in practice, also their role in improving the institutional web pages from guidance and career information perspectives.

9. Activities and other approaches supporting quality assurance

There are a number of activities that can support quality assurance and improvement processes, such as benchmarking, self-assessment, 'mystery shopping', peer review and the sharing of good practice. Some of these may be a feature of quality assurance models such as EFQM or inspection processes (as in the UK and Finland), but there was relatively little evidence of these processes in the OECD studies.

The state of development of research bases, which can support quality improvement through the dissemination of good practice, is very variable. Some such as France with a tradition of academic research, have well-established and resourced research bodies. In the UK, the National Guidance Research Forum (consisting of a web forum as well as a Strategic Group) is undertaking this role. Elsewhere this may be limited to a few studies from Higher Education institutions or EU-funded projects.

Appendix 6: Questionnaire Stage 2

EUROPEAN STUDY INTO QUALITY GUIDELINES FOR CAREER GUIDANCE

Background

The Council (Education/Youth) *Resolution on Enhanced Co-operation in Vocational Education and Training*, adopted on 12 November 2002, gave a mandate to work towards the following priority:

« strengthening policies, systems and practices that support information, guidance and counselling in the Member States, at all levels of education, training and employment, particularly on issues concerning access to learning, vocational education and training, and the transferability and recognition of competences and qualifications, in order to support occupational and geographical mobility of citizens in Europe ».

In this context CEDEFOP has commissioned a study on behalf of the European Commission Lifelong Guidance Expert Group to look at the possibility of developing a European framework to ensure quality in careers guidance. After a close scrutiny of the quality assurance systems described in the recent OECD, CEDEFOP, ETF and World Bank surveys of guidance provision in the member states and candidate countries. The study team believe that:

- it would be impossible to devise a single quality assurance system that would suit all;
- many countries already have good systems in place and others are in the process of developing their own.

However, we do believe it would be possible to identify the *features* of quality assurance system that should be in place to ensure that citizens in all European countries are ensured the best service, and that the service is consistently good across borders. These 'meta-criteria' are not meant to be applied to career guidance provision itself, but to the *quality assurance system or systems* that are in place to regulate it. Thus, a country may have adopted an EFQM or an ISO9000 system for its guidance work, or another of its own; but they should ask themselves if that system addresses satisfactorily a number of 'meta-criteria'.

These meta-criteria for quality assurance should:

- be broad enough to relate to the wide range of approaches to guidance and to quality that appear in all 29 ⁽²²⁾ countries ();
- not inadvertently undermine work in any of those countries;

⁽²²⁾ This figure includes the 25 Member States, the 3 candidate countries (Bulgaria, Romania & Turkey) and Norway.

- be defined tightly enough to help all the member states reach an acceptable minimum and then continue to improve: in fact, it must be a meta-quality-assurance system that models quality assurance systems at national level.

We have been asked to ensure that the voices of all stakeholders play a significant part in any system, including especially the citizen/user of the services.

No country that we know of has one single quality assurance system for all sectors of guidance (see 'Definitions' below). We hope that if all sectors in your country work to meet these meta-criteria in relation to the system most appropriate for them, then gradually any one country will achieve more internal coherence, and the countries of the European Union will achieve coherence between them. The aim is that user/citizens will develop a clear sense of what to expect from a good guidance service wherever it is in Europe.

Completing the questionnaire

Please refer to the sources of any data (reports, publications etc) and include copies of key documents, wherever possible.

We ask you to complete the comments section in detail – continue on additional sheets as needed – this will help to increase our understanding of the arrangements in your country.

If your remarks refer to a particular sector or sectors, please make that clear.

Definitions

The term '**guidance**' is defined as a 'range of activities designed to assist people to make decisions about their lives (educational, vocational, personal)'

'**Career guidance**' includes activities such as helping service users clarify career goals and understand the world of work; personal or group-based assistance with decisions about courses of study, job choice, job change, or work force re-entry; computer-based services to provide information about training and careers, or to help people to make career choices. It includes services for those who have not yet entered the labour force, for job seekers and for the employed.

'**Careers education**' (programmes to help people learn how to plan their careers) which is often provided in schools, should also be subject to quality assurance processes (this is sometimes covered by more general inspection of learning in school). In this questionnaire we are using 'careers guidance' to include such programmes

'**Citizen**', '**user**' refers to the people who do or who might want to use a service

'ICT' (information and communication technology) refers to all aspects of computer use, and can include other technology such as telephones.

'Quality Assurance' is a procedure by which a service is monitored against specified quality standards (the degree or grade of excellence of the service) and if it does not conform with those, some sanctions are in place to that requires the service to improve

'Quality guidelines' are statements or other indications of policy or procedure for service delivery or professional practice, intended to help a service or practitioner determine a course of action and reflect on the quality of their work.

'Quality standards' are carefully defined targets for separate aspects of service delivery or professional practice, in a form that allows performance to be assessed.

'Sector' refers to the different administrative area in which guidance is offered. In many countries, different government departments or other sources fund (and therefore are responsible for the quality of) careers work:

- in schools
- for young people outside school
- for adults outside education, training or work
- in higher education
- in employment-related work done by the ministry of labour
- in post-school education or training (for adults or young adults)
- by employers
- by trade unions
- by private (fee-charging) bodies.

There may be other sectors in your country.

'Target groups' refers to the sub-groups of users/users/citizens for whom any one service has particular interest (or responsibility) to serve – for example: unemployed people; members of a particular trade union; school children; adults over the age of 50; refugees etc.

Section 1: Meta-criteria overall approach

- a) What are your views on using 'meta-criteria' as a way forward?
- b) Do the questions in the self-assessment (section 2) list cover all the relevant career guidance quality assurance/improvement issues?
- c) What needs to be done to strengthen quality assurance in career guidance in your country?
- d) Are there systems in place in all sectors e.g. Schools, Higher Education, Labour Market Employment Services, etc?

Section 2: Country Self assessment

Please answer the questions in blue by placing X in the relevant box and explain why or how below.

<p>1. Citizen/user involvement</p> <p>Do the approaches to assuring quality in guidance in your country:</p>	<i>In my country, this meta-criterion:</i>			
<p>a) Include some way of consulting individual users on their satisfaction with, and experience of, the service?</p>	<i>applies already</i>	<i>would help us improve our approach</i>	<i>would help if changed slightly</i>	<i>would undermine our approach</i>
<p>b) Require the service providers to make systematic use of the findings from such consultations?</p>				
<p>c) Include information for the user about entitlement (e.g. users' charters) and take account of the work of Consumer Associations in processes for consumer protection and redress?</p>				
<i>Comments on this section:</i>				
<p>2. Professional practice</p> <p>Do the approaches to assuring quality in guidance in your country:</p>	<i>In my country, this meta-criterion:</i>			
	<i>applies already</i>	<i>would help us</i>	<i>would help if</i>	<i>would undermine</i>

		<i>improve our approach</i>	<i>changed slightly</i>	<i>e our approach</i>
a) Include the monitoring or assessment of practitioners to ensure they are following professional principles and/or codes of ethics?				
b) Require guidance practitioners to hold, or be working towards, agreed minimum levels of qualification?				
c) Require on-going professional development and service improvement?				
d) Include all relevant professional associations in the development of standards and quality assurance procedures?				
<i>Comments on this section:</i>				
3. Service improvement Do the approaches to assuring quality in guidance in your country:	<i>In my country, this meta-criterion:</i>			
	<i>applies already</i>	<i>would help us improve our approach</i>	<i>would help if changed slightly</i>	<i>would undermine our approach</i>
a) Include some way of monitoring and evaluating the use and usefulness of standards or guidelines relating to service delivery?				
b) Include some way of monitoring and evaluating whether it in fact results in reaching <u>specified standards</u> and <u>ongoing improvement</u> in services to users?				

In information, (printed, through ICT or otherwise delivered)?				
c) Include some way of differentiating and monitoring service provision in relation to different target groups?				
d) Require services to form working links with, and provide support for, groups and bodies that offer guidance informally (e.g. parents, voluntary organisations or bodies associated with leisure activities)?				
<i>Comments on this section:</i>				
4. Coherence Do the approaches to assuring quality in guidance in your country:	<i>In my country, this meta-criterion:</i>			
	<i>applies already</i>	<i>would help us improve our approach</i>	<i>would help if changed slightly</i>	<i>would undermine our approach</i>
a) Include links to ensure effective working relationships within and across Government Departments on quality assurance in guidance?				
b) Ensure there are no conflicts between different quality assurance systems operating in different guidance sectors, or in relation to different target groups?				
c) Include ways of monitoring the use and usefulness of links between guidance-providing agencies?				

<i>Comments on this section:</i>				
5. Independent Provision Do the approaches to assuring quality in guidance in your country:	<i>In my country, this meta-criterion:</i>			
	<i>applies already</i>	<i>would help us improve our approach</i>	<i>would help if changed slightly</i>	<i>would undermine our approach</i>
a) Cover work done by private agencies, employers, trade unions and other providers not funded through the state?				
<i>Comments on this section:</i>				

Appendix 7: Questionnaire Response Table

Responses to the questionnaire in stage 2 were received from:

Austria 1
Belgium 1
Denmark 1
Finland 1
Greece 1
Ireland 2
Italy 4
Spain 1
Sweden 1
UK 2 (1 -Scottish Executive)
Czech Republic 1
Cyprus 1
Estonia 2
Hungary 1
Lithuania 1
Poland 1
Iceland 1
Norway 1
Slovakia 1
Slovenia 1
Romania 1