

Description of the Career Guide Network Project

Career Guide is a European Network Project which brings together experts in pedagogy, psychology, technology and labour market, promoting career guidance practices in European schools. The target group is pupils up to 12 years old, counsellors, teachers specialized in career guidance and policy makers.

The aims of the project are:

- to promote career education and awareness in European schools, bridging the gap between school and the world of work,
- to bring career guidance to the education policy front and contribute to the upgrading of teaching and learning career development,
- to explore the best practices on the implementation of career guidance education in Europe
- to gather and evaluate ICT-based methodologies and practices addressed to career guidance
- to offer specialised support and training opportunities to educators of career guidance in schools throughout Europe
- to develop new curriculum guidelines in the field of career guidance.

The rationale of the programme

The demands of the labour market have multiplied in terms of skills (especially technological), experience, flexibility and mobility. Getting a job is a basic step towards becoming fully integrated in society. But today's young people are concerned not only with avoiding unemployment, but also with finding a job that offers some satisfaction. They realise that employment is a key factor of social cohesion and the basis for financing social and intergenerational solidarity. The transition between school and work is filled with obstacles and young people are becoming more depended economically. The area which significantly influences and will more and more influence the harmony between education and labour market is the area of career education and counselling. There is no part of life where the need for guidance is more empathic than in transition from school to work--the choice of a vocation, adequate preparation for it, and the attainment of efficiency and success.

At present, we may state insufficient transformation of career counselling to new socio-economic conditions, to crucial changes in the world of work. The career guidance in education sector has a principal significance not only for the choice of educational career of pupils and students but also for the transition of school-leavers to the world of work. It increases the probability of their success, interest in further education and will of retraining, that means, the preparedness for change of employment.

Studies of guidance and counselling programmes, reports by the business community, and feedback from parents have raised concerns that many young people do not have the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes to make a successful transition from school to the world of work. Career planning is not instinctive. The educational system must provide to students information and taught basic knowledge, skills and attitudes to facilitate a smooth journey from adolescence to adulthood. Life career development is self-development over the life span. It

occurs through the integration of the roles, settings and events in a person's life. The word life in life career means that the focus is on the total person -- the human career. The word career identifies and relates the roles in which individuals are involved (worker, learner, family member, citizen), the settings where individuals find themselves (home, school, community, workplace), and the events that occur over their lifetimes (entry job, parenthood, job change, retirement). Finally, the word development is used to indicate that individuals are always in the process of becoming.

According to the concept of life career development, it is practically unthinkable to prepare young people for their life of work without occupational exploration. This is accomplished through the student's school subjects and extra curricular activities with the help of parents, teachers, friends and representatives of the world of work and the community. This way of proceeding not only allows the students to explore who they are but to explore their surroundings. Thus, the students can be exposed to a whole range of occupational opportunities, establish a relation between their personal characteristics and those of occupations, and acquire more information about the knowledge, skills and values required in the world of work.

The life career development of young people should be a process of planned intervention whereby educators, parents, government agencies and community members work together to provide students with hope for the future and to empower them to believe in themselves. Young people need help to keep their eyes open for opportunities in the world that will allow them to fulfil their values, beliefs and interests and to reach their fullest potential.

In Europe, there are various differences in the career guidance interventions. These include, for example, differences between educational systems with strong early-streaming and tracking mechanisms and those with more flexible pathways: guidance services tend to play a more important role in the latter than in the former. They also include differences between countries in which most public services – including career guidance services – are delivered by the state or state agencies, and countries in which there has been a strong policy to deliver services through the private and voluntary sectors wherever possible.

School vocational programmes that are comprehensive and proactive are more often successful. A comprehensive school vocational programme includes a guidance curriculum which is the shared responsibility of teachers, counsellors, parents, and community members. It is particularly important for schools to take advantage of vocational guidance services providing up-dated information on the labour market, on occupations and training opportunities, as well as information on possibilities of using one's intellectual and personal potential, according to individual interests.

Reviewing all the above mentioned facts one could conclude that it is absolutely necessary for actors implicated in the educational system to empower students to acquire the knowledge, skills, information, and attitudes to understand and positively enhance their own life career development. Young people must be prepared to cope with the changing trends of our days, by having the capacity to be resourceful, adaptable and flexible amidst change and ambiguity. It is in this context of constant change that adolescents must make decisions regarding their life careers. Cooperative efforts of the school, home and community are needed to help young people successfully make the transition from school to the world of work.

Methodology

Our methodology comprises the development of a cooperation school network, the development of the Career Guide for Schools Web Portal (www.career-guide.eu), the dissemination of career guidance methodologies and the development of a series of research activities. Those activities are based on three thematic axes, which represent the three research working groups of the project. Those three working groups represent also the three vital steps of a child when he/ she starts his/ her career path and a more structured and clear methodology for career guidance network teachers and counselors, as well. All working groups are based on the theoretical and scientific background of career guidance. Those are:

- **Working Group 1** : Know about yourself. In this working group, the procedure of recognition of the self aspects is the vital thematic, as it is the first step of child who is growing up and is starting his/ her long life path. In this framework, practices concerning personal recognition and development are investigated. Other parts of the research activities of this working group are the unities of self-concept, self-esteem, self-assessment, children's interests and values. An activity concerning personal development was implemented in Ellinogermaniki Agogi School in the third class of High School. This trial implementation is the main thematic of the presentation that was made by the representators of Ellinogermaniki Agogi, Nora Gikopoulou and Eleni Lampou (page).
- **Working Group 2** : Know about the labour market. In this working group, topics concerning labour market are worked on. Main topics are industry constraints, researches on marketable and non marketable professions. Apart from the labour market information, an attempt also is made in order to provide a methodology for organizing career panels and career days in high schools or educational institutes. All these activities represent the second step of a child and are correlated with the function of getting and classifying all the appropriate information.
- **Working Group 3** : Develop your career path. In this working group, practices concerning career design skills – especially, problem solving and decision making – are studied. The development of competencies and skills or role playing games, theoretical models on decision making skills, CV writing, developing presentation skills, social skills, communication skills, personal effectiveness, cultural adaptation skills and learning how to search job vacancies are the chapters that are investigated.