

Quaderni di Comunità

Persone, Educazione e Welfare
nella società 5.0

Community Notebook
People, Education, and Welfare
in society 5.0

n. 2/2024
ORIENTAMENTO AL FUTURO

a cura di
Speranzina Ferraro, Lavinia Cicero,
Andrea Zammitti, Diego Boerchi



Iscrizione presso il Registro Stampa del Tribunale di Roma
al n. 172/2021 del 20 ottobre 2021

© Copyright 2024 Eurilink
Eurilink University Press Srl
Via Gregorio VII, 601 - 00165 Roma
www.eurilink.it - ufficiostampa@eurilink.it
ISBN: 979 12 80164 88 9
ISSN: 2785-7697 (Print)
ISSN: 3035-2525 (Online)

Prima edizione, dicembre 2024
Progetto grafico di Eurilink

È vietata la riproduzione di questo libro, anche parziale, effettuata
con qualsiasi mezzo, compresa la fotocopia

INDICE

EDITORIALE	
<i>Speranzina Ferraro</i>	11
RUBRICA EDUCATION	27
1. Quale orientamento per quale società?	
<i>Gabriella Burba</i>	29
2. L'orientamento per gli adulti in una società che cambia	
<i>Emilio Porcaro</i>	39
RUBRICA EMPOWERMENT	49
1. Orientamento e innovazione: l'Intelligenza Artificiale a supporto del decision making di carriera	
<i>Marco Cristian Vitiello, Francesco Catalano</i>	51
SAGGI	61
1. L'orientamento nel XXI secolo: approcci e competenze per gli orientatori	
<i>Angela Russo, Lavinia Cicero, Giuseppe Santisi, Andrea Zammitti</i>	63
2. Professione orientatore: analisi comparative tra Italia e altre nazioni europee	
<i>Diego Boerchi, Simona Benini, Serena Tacconi</i>	95
3. Quality assurance: framework of indicators and evaluation models for career guidance	
<i>Concetta Fonzo, Enric Serradel-Lopez</i>	127

4. La maieutica orientativa. Ovvero la metodologia maieutica al servizio della consulenza orientativa <i>Filippo Sani</i>	159
5. Autoefficacia nelle life skills, career adaptability e competenze scolastiche: uno studio esplorativo <i>Elisabetta Sagone, Marcella Nucifora, Simona Maria Frischetto, Chiara Imbrogliera, Maria Luisa Indiana, Gaetana De Francisci, Maria Violetta Brundo</i>	191
6. Cosa pensano gli/le adolescenti del lavoro dignitoso e dell'inclusione? Uno studio qualitativo <i>Andrea Zammitti, Giuseppina Agosta, Carmela Ferlito, Oriana Maria Todaro, Alfio Caruso, Teresa Taibi, Daniela Catania</i>	227
APPROFONDIMENTI	253
1. Orientamento e ricerca di senso <i>Daniela Pavoncello</i>	255
2. Nuovi scenari per le politiche di orientamento <i>Anna Grimaldi, Anna Ancora</i>	263
RECENSIONI	271
1. Recensione del libro "Orientamento e consulenza di carriera: la soddisfazione lavorativa" <i>Cristina Castelli</i>	273

3. QUALITY ASSURANCE: FRAMEWORK OF INDICATORS AND EVALUATION MODELS FOR CAREER GUIDANCE

di Concetta Fonzo*, Enric Serradel-Lopez**

Abstract: *Based on the already explored domains of guidance, the literature shows how to get informed about new research and developments in quality assurance and evidence-base in career and guidance-related interventions. The current work was situated within the devolved theories about quality (Plant, 2004; Sultana, 2012) and indicators (Hooley, 2014) for effective career guidance provision. A large body of research has been conducted to show how to analyse the quality of guidance and manage measures for ensuring the quality of lifelong guidance services. The study focused primarily, though not exclusively, upon research findings from European quality assurance models and frameworks aimed at identifying, gathering and analysing quality indicators for different guidance providers. Accordingly, the paper focuses on the lessons learned from the research findings designed to inform and consolidate professionals' understanding and articulation of what constitutes effective guidance-related services.*

Abstract: *Sulla base degli ambiti dell'orientamento già esplorati, la letteratura mostra come informarsi sulle nuove ricerche e sugli sviluppi della*

* Economist, sociologist, expert in Education, Training and Guidance policies and systems in Europe. PhD student in Education and ICT at the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, concetta@uoc.edu.

** Economist, Associate Dean of Emerging Programmes, Transfer and University-Business Relations and Professor at the Economics and Business Studies Department at the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya. PhD in Business Management from the University of Barcelona. Director of the Management & eLearning (MeL) research group, eserradell@uoc.edu.

garanzia della qualità e delle evidenze degli interventi inerenti alla carriera e all'orientamento. Il presente lavoro si è collocato all'interno delle teorie devolute alla garanzia della qualità (Plant, 2004; Sultana, 2012) e agli indicatori (Hooley, 2014) per un'efficace erogazione di orientamento. È stato realizzato un ampio corpus di indagini che intende dimostrare come analizzare la qualità nell'orientamento e gestire le misure per la garanzia della qualità dei servizi di orientamento permanente. Lo studio si è concentrato principalmente, ma non esclusivamente, sui risultati della ricerca provenienti da modelli e quadri europei per la garanzia della qualità, volti a identificare, raccogliere e analizzare indicatori di qualità per diversi erogatori di servizi di orientamento. Il documento, dunque, illustra le lezioni apprese attraverso i risultati di una ricerca progettata per informare e consolidare, la comprensione e l'articolazione da parte dei professionisti del settore, di ciò che costituisce servizi di orientamento efficaci.

Keywords: career guidance, quality assurance, quality indicators, evidence-base, evaluation.

Parole chiave: orientamento, assicurazione di qualità, indicatori di qualità, evidenze, valutazione.

1. Introduction

In complex, globalised, competence-based and work-driven economies, the increased prolongment of the period of active employment requires individuals to adapt in order to remain employed (Forrier & Sels, 2003) in front of the necessary changes (Fugate & Kinicki, 2008), safeguarding their employability (Fugate *et al.*, 2004; McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005; Williams *et al.*, 2015) and career. Consequently, career guidance and guidance-related services (Bezanson & Kellett, 2001; Capogna, 2011) play a crucial role, and their relevance is no longer limited to the transition phases – such as those from school to the

world of work –, as their importance is confined within a continuous process, guaranteeing a lifelong support to people.

Based on the above context, it is not by coincidence that, in European policy documents, the guidance refers “*to a continuous process that enables citizens at any age and at any point in their lives to identify their capacities, competences and interests, to make educational, training and occupational decisions and to manage their individual life paths in learning, work and other settings in which those capacities and competences are learned and/or used. Guidance covers a range of individual and collective activities relating to information-giving, counselling, competence assessment, support, and the teaching of decision-making and career management skills* (Council of the European Union, 2008)”. Within such a definition, career guidance in Europe has the strategic function to equip people with those life skills needed to manage educational and occupational pathways (Sultana, 2010), but also to provide a set of interventions – through career guidance services – aimed at supporting people throughout life, when and where it is needed. These interventions might include services in schools, universities and colleges, training institutions, public employment services, companies, the voluntary/community sector as well as the private sector (OECD, 2004; Sultana & Watts, 2006; EU Council, 2008; Cedefop, 2004, 2008b, 2011; ELGPN, 2012).

The European Council’s Resolutions on Lifelong Guidance (Council of the European Union, 2004; 2008) defined not only the concepts of “career guidance” and “career management skills” but also provided a definition for “quality” and “quality assurance” needed by guidance services to be characterised by high-quality standards and effectiveness (Plant, 2001; 2004; OECD, 2004, Watts, 2007) for the end-users of these services.

Starting from the consideration that although progress

has been made (Sultana, 2011; 2012; ELGPN, 2015; Cedefop, 2020), literature and policy reviews show how more efforts are needed in order to improve the quality of guidance provision (Cedefop, 2020; 2021), by adopting and implementing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms aimed at guaranteeing the impact of career guidance services and their accountability for further developments in lifelong guidance policies, as well as in connected policies such as those related to education, training, employment and inclusion.

The Council Resolutions stressed the need to introduce and consolidate appropriate mechanisms that facilitate the attainment of the highest possible quality in career information, advice and services for all individuals (Cedefop, 2004). In particular, the 2008 Resolution went further, defining a specific policy priority area dedicated to the development of quality assurance in the guidance field. Moreover, it indicated some of the ways in which progress could be made to attain higher quality. These ways include the tailoring and personalisation of guidance services to suit the individuals' specific needs, the delivery of services by trained and further trained practitioners, the development of instruments that measure the effectiveness and impact of the services and actions provided as well as the development of quality standards for career guidance provisions (ELGPN, 2012; 2015a; 2015b).

All these actions, aimed at guaranteeing quality in guidance interventions, were also described in the literature by scholars and researchers of the field (Plant, 2001; 2004; 2011; Sultana, 2011; 2012; Watts, 2007; 2009; 2014; Cedefop, 2009; 2021), as fundamental elements for the effectiveness of career guidance services.

With regards to quality assurance in career guidance, it should be mentioned that the European Lifelong Guidance Policy

Network (well-known as ELGPN) produced, at the European level, an extensive *corpus* of resources for the development of quality and evidence-based approaches in the field of guidance. As one of the main outcomes of its activities, the ELGPN elaborated a glossary¹ to provide a common set of definitions for lifelong guidance policy development and related guidance terminology. Based on the terms and the definitions elaborated by the European Policy network, quality assurance includes:

activities involving planning, implementation, evaluation, reporting, and quality improvement, implemented to ensure that guidance activities (content of programmes, design, assessment and validation of outcomes, etc.) meet the quality requirements expected by stakeholders (ELGPN, 2012, pp. 28).

The ELGPN glossary also provides the definitions of “quality indicators” as “*formally recognised figure(s) or ratio(s) used as yardsticks to judge and assess quality performance*”; while “quality standard” is considered as

«technical specifications which are measurable and have been drawn up by consensus and approved by an organisation with recognised and relevant expertise at regional, national or international levels. The purpose of quality standards is optimisation of input and/or output of guidance. The standard(s) that an organisation sets for all of its key business operations and that help clarify what an organisation expects of its employees in delivering these operations or a client can expect when using the service” and “quality system” is referred as “organisational structure, procedures, processes, and resources needed to implement quality management. The quality system provides the framework for planning, implementing, and assessing services provided

¹ The ELGPN glossary is fully available online at the following website address: www.elgpn.eu/glossary.

and for carrying out required quality assurance and quality control» (ELGPN, 2012, pp. 29).

Moreover, among the different terms and definitions linked to quality and quality-connected issues, the ELGPN included the one related to a “common quality-assurance framework” considered as a “*set of common principles, guidelines, criteria and tools adopted by a group at a local, regional, national or international level in order to develop and assure quality in guidance delivery and in relation to the qualification of guidance practitioners*” (ELGPN, 2012, pp. 16). These definitions are based on the literature review carried out for the purpose of the current contribution aimed at fostering a discussion about quality assurance and quality-related themes in career guidance.

Despite the contextualisation and definitions provided by supranational organizations (European Council, 2004; 2008; ELGPN, 2012; 2015), quality in career guidance is a complex and contested concept (Sultana, 2012). Over the years, researchers and experts developed guidelines and criteria (Plant, 2001; 2011; Sultana, 2012) through which they tried to support the development of quality assurance mechanisms in guidance provision, but they always underlined the complexity of the guidance field and the related quality assurance issues (Sultana, 2012; Hooley, 2014), and the variety of variables to be taken into consideration when the quality of a provision, a complex provision – like career guidance but also education and training –, needs to be analysed and evaluated. This complexity is not only due to the difficult definition of the domain of career guidance (Cedefop, 2004) but also to its intangible and multidimensional aspects, which are difficult to define, describe, collect, analyse, report and consequently monitor and evaluate in a quality assurance perspective. Difficulties are obviously linked to the variability that

exists in career guidance provision in different settings and for its different target groups (Hooley at all, 2018).

To ensure quality, career guidance provision can be organised according to three different approaches, namely quality assurance models, which can be defined as: administrative-centred, practitioner-centred and user-centred (Sultana, 2012). Each of these approaches includes advantages and limitations, and the combination of these approaches depends on the context in which such a combination is applied (Cedefop, 2011). Later, these approaches were further explored and new and more articulated quality assurance approaches in career guidance have been generated (Hooley at all, 2018).

From an administrative-centred point of view, quality assurance in career guidance is connected, on one side, to the development of national and sub-national standards as well as accreditation devices and processes at both career guidance services and practitioners' levels and, on the other side, through standards and accreditation processes, to monitoring and evaluation mechanisms which are finalised to assessing and providing evidence on the impact of policies, organizations, programmes and interventions. Therefore, worldwide reviews report on national and, often, governmental developments of common sets of standards for services as well as frameworks for practitioners' competences, within which career guidance services have framed their accreditation procedures (Watts, 2007).

To carry out the monitoring and evaluation activities that bring effective career guidance, tools from educational, social and administrative sciences, such as design data-collection methods and tools, are used and developed to support organizations in tracking and increasing their effectiveness. Obviously, there are some differences between the activities included in monitoring as opposed to evaluation (Harrison *et al.*, 2022). Monitoring tends to

focus on the single and progressive operations of a career guidance programme or service, using the continuous collection of both quantitative and qualitative data (OECD, 2003) considering, for example, a career guidance programme provided by a school, university or public employment service. They might monitor their programme by collecting data on the number of users attending the programme per day/week/month or observe interventions to ensure they are used as intended.

Evaluation, however, focuses on larger-scale assessments of a career guidance programme or service, looking at their effectiveness in having a positive impact on the people it's trying to help, often measured over longer periods of time.

More in general, a full assessment of a programme or service requires an *ex-ante* evaluation for each programme and service to improve the quality of its design before delivery, an *in itinere* evaluation during the implementation of the programme or service and an *ex-post* evaluation by taking into consideration the beginning and ending of a provision, the growth and decline of the activities and actions, and all the other elements connected to quality, quality-related or other aspects of the programme or service.

Ex-post is the standard evaluation practice for career guidance programmes or services, relying on proven results. In fact, evaluations often happen after a career guidance provision has already been implemented. In the above example, the school, university or public employment service might conduct an evaluation by investigating whether the career guidance programme or service improved users' career management skills, increased their education and training choices or improved their employment chances and so on (Hughes & Gration, 2009a; 2009b).

2. Quality assurance in career guidance across Europe

In Europe, international and national authorities – namely Ministries and Agencies – and Governments had a relevant role in fostering the development of standards and quality assurance mechanisms within career guidance policies, systems, and services (Watts, 2014; Cedefop, 2008; 2020; ELGPN, 2012, ILO, 2021). These actors also contributed to highlighting the importance of quality assurance mechanisms and policies and its measures for career guidance services and provisions (Cedefop, 2020; ELGPN, 2015).

Moreover, the New Public Management ideology contributed to a general trend towards introducing quality assurance approaches across all public services, guidance services included (Sultana, 2012). The consequences related to the introduction of quality assurance measures were linked to the “value for money” philosophy. Philosophy that went in the direction of monitoring, checking and assessing public spending on guidance policies and services among the other public interventions, like those related to education and employment policies (OECD, 2021). Therefore, quality assurance is a key issue both from the perspective of the end-users and for reasons of efficiency and accountability in the use of public funds (Cedefop, 2008; 2020).

Reviewing the lifelong guidance systems existing in Europe², a heterogeneous picture emerges, with relevant

² The overview provided in this contribution includes the main results of an extensive review process, carried out from 2018 to 2023, about the lifelong guidance policies and systems adopted by European Countries. Using as main sources of information the Euroguidance database on National Guidance Systems (<https://euroguidance.eu/guidance-systems-and-practice/national-guidance-systems>) and Cedefop’s online data set on Lifelong Guidance Systems

differences between Countries (Barnes *et al.*, 2020), investing more and more in quality assurance policies and measures from a national to a regional and local point of view.

Besides the existence of a huge variety of quality assurance devices (manly accreditations, licensing, standards, and labels) for career guidance, in principle, all the different European guidance providers have their own quality assurance systems in place, mostly using certification systems (Austria) or regional and national standards (Germany, Italy). These systems and standards are different, based on providing guidance in education, training or employment sectors.

Often, in compulsory education, career guidance is provided by schools or guidance centres and services placed in schools, and quality falls under the national and general education evaluation system, where the education inspectorate plays a key role (Belgium-Flandres). Thus, guidance is part of an inspection and monitoring process, and the inspection team usually involves not only school representatives but also the end-users of the services.

On the other side, within the public employment services (Austria, Germany, Italy), common minimum standards for career guidance services providers have been developed (Borbély-Pecze *et al.*, 2011) and adopted at national and central level (Sultana *et al.*, 2006).

Main standards are usually defined for both the career guidance providers – understood as organizations and institutes – and the career guidance professionals (Bulgaria). In both cases, guidance providers and professionals, the standards used are use standards based on well-defined quality criteria and indicators.

When it comes to the professional standards of guidance

(<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/country-reports/inventory-lifelong-guidance-systems-and-practices>).

professionals, they usually refer to the European competence framework (Cedefop *et al.*, 2021). Additionally, to guarantee high standards and quality of the guidance services provided, along with relevant higher education degrees, career guidance professionals usually hold qualified education and training backgrounds (France).

Practitioners employed at both public and private career guidance centres are generally required to have significant multidisciplinary competences (Denmark, Italy, Malta), participating frequently in in-service training aimed at re-skilling and up-skilling their guidance specialists' competences.

Not all European Countries have an official and recognised professional profile for their guidance practitioners, but all invest heavily in the professionalism of those that work in the guidance field (Cedefop, 2009).

In some Countries, certification of the guidance practitioners' qualification is a preparatory action for the development of the career guidance practitioner professional profile (Greece).

European and National competence frameworks for guidance practitioners have been developed (Cedefop, 2009) also to provide courses and programmes that suit the initial and continuing training of guidance personnel in line with their further career and continuous professional development needs (Cedefop *et al.*, 2021). Additionally, identifying, validating and certifying staff competences is an increasingly common trend in Europe and abroad. In some cases, such procedures are used to accredit practitioners who may not have formal qualifications – such as a diploma or a degree.

Quality standards for all guidance services and providers are usually established at the national level (Finland, Italy, United Kingdom – England) and used as a basis for evaluating of both

services and providers as well as for staff training or re-training (France).

Sometimes, regional or local authorities adopt and use their own career guidance standards, followed up at the regional and local level only (Finland).

Moreover, in relation to quality assurance in career guidance, all over Europe, a significant role is played by career guidance associations and networks – with both a transnational and/or national dimension – created as communities of practices that support and endorse the activities carried out by their guidance practitioners. These associations promote the use of quality assurance model and frameworks for their associated guidance professionals as well as professional standards, practices of mutual learning and codes of ethics, which, even if not legally institutionalised, are generally followed by the guidance's activities in their everyday professional practice.

In the specific cases of Ireland and Germany, also a National Guidance Forum has been established. These national mechanisms are directly involved in developing quality assurance and evidence frameworks, providing guidelines and principles to assure quality for all their guidance services at the national level.

Common in the European context is also the adoption by career guidance providers of self-assessment (internal control) procedures (Bulgaria, Italy) – which can be or cannot be part of the accreditation process – in fact, each guidance provider can perform an ongoing assessment of its activity, following its internal procedures. This internal self-assessment can also be combined with external evaluation carried out by experts and professional evaluators, such as inspectors. A combination can bring a mixed or blended approach to internal and external evaluation of career guidance providers. In other words, the concrete design, implementation and evaluation of quality

assurance mechanisms and their assessment depends on the guidance provider.

Furthermore, with the aim to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness and quality of their services, many European Countries make regular use of user satisfaction surveys (Denmark, Estonia, Finland). The user satisfaction surveys include the collection of feedback from users like students in upper secondary education, vocational education and training pathways as well as young people and adults not in formal education and training or not in employment.

In conclusion, the analysis and comparison of the guidance systems in Europe and the information and data gathered from the quality assurance measures adopted by European countries show that, along with a multiplicity of quality assurance devices, national authorities and providers should develop tools suitable for the continuous monitoring of the development of guidance needs, provisions and resources as well as their efficiency and quality.

Moreover, the evidence from the literature reviews carried out. The updates on the provision and structure of the guidance services in Europe, provided through the “Inventory of lifelong guidance systems and practices” elaborated by Cedefop, confirm how there are few if any comprehensive quality assurance systems that set out to assure quality in the delivery of guidance services by drawing on the full range of strategies in the three approaches: administrative, practitioner and user-centred, defined as relevant for the effective implementation of career guidance services.

Likewise, the current state of knowledge suggests that where quality assurance mechanisms and measures are being implemented in career guidance systems across Europe, the most commonly used approach to ensure quality is the administrative-centred one. This approach, combined with a centralised

approach, or the so-called top-down approach, is appealing in countries where decentralisation has led to variable standards of service delivery across regions. In such contexts, national policy frameworks, including national guidelines, standards or targets, are seen as a means to ensure more equitable provision.

Apart from the approaches (administrative, practitioner and user-centred), the massive use of quality management and control contributed to a shift in the organization underpinning the provision of guidance services, which paid more and more attention to the users' empowerment and satisfaction. Users' empowerment and satisfaction became key elements in the design of services in parallel with a tendency for the professionalization of guidance practitioners. This professionalization led practitioners to establish occupational identity and recognition (Cedefop, 2009), through the structuring of entry into the profession, for example, the establishing of qualification routes and licensure and the articulation of formal standards, competences, training and codes of practice (Cedefop *et al.*, 2021).

3. From quality assurance to frameworks of indicators and evaluation models: a best practice

Concerning the effectiveness and impact of career guidance provision, the need to define and propose a reliable, adaptable and complete mechanism or system for quality assurance in career guidance has persistently emerged in literature (Plant, 2001; 2004; Sultana, 2012; ELGPN, 2012; 2015; Cedefop *et al.*, 2020; Harrison *et al.*, 2022).

Moving from a theoretical perspective to a more practical one, over the last decades, in Europe and beyond, a large number of projects and research projects were carried out, within the well-

known Erasmus+ Programme, dedicated to lifelong learning, the educational, professional and personal development of people in education, training, youth and sport, with the aim of developing tools and methods for the enhancement of all the Education sectors covered by the Programme, such as: school education, higher education, vocational education and training, adult education and youth.

For the dissemination of the Erasmus+ projects results and outcomes, the Programme promoters use different tools, among which are included publications, social channels and websites, as well as the Erasmus+ Projects Results Platform³. Through the latter, the information and data about the completed and ongoing European projects, from 2013 until today, are stored, visible and accessible. The Erasmus+ projects platform allows to search results within a wide vast database that provides search results filtered by several filters.

More in detail, projects can be searched by keyword, key essential action, year, country, topic, type of results and so on. Searches can be saved and constantly updated on the most recent projects, according to pre-defined criteria. Good practice projects – which have been identified in terms of policy relevance, impact, and communication potential – are highlighted in the platform.

Conducting a search on the Erasmus+ projects included in Key Action 2 dedicated to “Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices” and searching by the topic “quality assurance”, a total of 342 projects appears. But considering only those projects that obtained the label of “good practice” the number of total projects decreases to 78. Moreover, for the purpose of the present contribution, focusing only on those with

³ For details and outcomes about the European projects funded under the Erasmus+ Programme, the following website is available: <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/projects>.

a partner organisation from Italy, a total of 35 projects are displayed. From Of these 35 projects, only a few of them are specifically dedicated to quality assurance in career guidance.

In synthesis, the projects which focused on quality assurance related to career guidance were only two: the “Keep in pact” and the “Keyway” projects. “Keep in pact” stands for “keep innovation in multi-partnership cooperation in lifelong career guidance services⁴”. The main objectives of this project were to upskill the function of multi-partnership cooperation in lifelong career guidance and disseminate an innovative ecosystem approach of multi-partnership towards stakeholders.

“Keyway” is the abbreviation for “Keyway: connecting guidance services to key impact indicators⁵” which is a project that connected guidance organisations and services to key critical performance and impact indicators.

Even if both projects are relevant for the improvement of lifelong guidance services, the project that provides an important essential contribution to the reflection on quality assurance in relation to guidelines, standards and frameworks of indicators and evaluation for career guidance, is the second one.

Keyway developed a set of tools for guidance organizations and institutions to measure the impact and results of their guidance services, supporting the evaluation and evidence-based reform and design of guidance policies and services in Europe. Based on desk research and consensus-building methodologies, the project partnership, which included partners from Germany, Greece, Italy and Spain, carried out research activities aimed at defining “Key Indicators of Performance and Impact (hereafter

⁴ Further information about the project is available at: <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/projects/search/details/2019-1-FR01-KA202-063068>.

⁵ More details about the project are available at <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/projects/search/details/2016-1-ES01-KA201-025515>.

KPIs)". The KPIs offer guidance providers the needed tools to monitor, evaluate and valorise their services they provide. To form a prioritized list of KPIs, the project partnership involved experts and practitioners in the field of academic and career guidance through an online expert-building consensus-building survey. The final list of KPIs is stored in an electronic database, available online at www.keywayproject.eu/indicators. Moreover, in order to support the guidance services on how to use and implement the KPIs, the project developed also developed a methodological guide.

The keyway framework of key essential performance and impact indicators defined and developed by the European project consortium, is relevant not only from an operatorial and empirical point of view but also from a methodological and theoretical one. Inspired by the ELGPN quality-assurance and evidence-based framework (Hooley, 2014; ELGPN, 2015) as well as other research findings and outcomes, the keyway system of indicators identifies two main career guidance impact areas: individual and societal, also defining indicators for guidance services more in general.

From both a coherence coherent and comprehensive perspective, the keyway framework of indicators provides a theoretical sense to the ELGPN work and supports. It supports the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in terms of impact assessment of the guidance interventions.

In other order to show how the framework of indicators can support the impact assessment of guidance, there are three main components: the first one which is related to the background/context definition of the guidance practice – for each of the practices selected for evaluation of performance and impact; the second that refers to practical operation, as the definition of how things happen on the ground; and, the last one which is linked to the overall assessment – organisational and individual benefits, as well as challenges and successes in different forms of

guidance provisions.

As the added value of a framework with Key Indicators of Performance and Impact is confirmed, the strategic issues still to consider and further investigate in relation to quality guidance services delivered, by the providers themselves or in co-operation with others – taking also into account resource constraints and pressures for cost-efficiency – comprise: the ways in which quality and impact indicators can help to strengthen the personalisation of the services and their capacity to meet both the needs of their end-users and the goals and objectives of the organisation/centre providing guidance; the assessment of e-services (distance/remote provision against traditional in presence delivery) in relation to face-to-face services; the need to improve career guidance professionals' competences in relation with regard to the use of the framework of indicators, the data analysis methods and reporting techniques; the need to identify gaps in performance data and impact research that need to be filled; and, the roles that these indicators can play in relation to wider broader quality and quality-related issues.

In conclusion, the map or framework of indicators is a powerful toolbox with an enormous potential as it has the potential to support the adoption of an impact evaluation approach. However, the need to develop a knowledge base on their implementation and assessment is still required. Furthermore, the evaluation of outcomes and impacts is not an easy task. The development and contribution to an evaluation process imply different competences by different actors involved. And these competences require to be developed in appropriate training and integrated by cooperation between institutions.

In particular, impact evaluation requests time, specific competences and good coordination. For the assessment of the quality of career guidance providers, experts and researchers are

aware that the evaluation of impacts needs suitable resources and careful planning. Finally, for the successful use of the frameworks of indicators, the involvement of different stakeholders – like practitioners, managers and experts – is also essential.

4. Conclusions

A qualitative study, based on mixed research methods, was carried out through three phases aimed at: reviewing the literature about quality assurance definitions and theories in the field of career guidance; studying the European lifelong guidance systems and their quality assurance mechanisms and tools; and, gathering the transnational projects, within the framework of the Erasmus+ Programme, and the European initiatives focusing on quality frameworks and indicators.

One of the first and main primary outcomes of the whole research is about the limited implementation of holistic and integrated quality assurance frameworks and evaluation models, for career guidance, at both system and provider level.

As a matter of fact, even if quality assurance approaches were developed at different levels (policy, system and service/provider) few countries across Europe have introduced comprehensive quality assurance systems for career guidance in general (Plant, 2011, Cedefop 2009, 2021) while the quality measures for career services can be considered still under an implementation and improvement phase (Cedefop, 2021).

Due to the decentralised and fragmented structure of the national systems, including the provision of services and systems of career guidance, in many cases, it is difficult to define and present an overall view of policy on quality assurance in the career guidance area. As evidence from the reviews shows, quality

assurance measures and approaches in guidance provision can be better identified by focusing on quality assurance instruments in education and in other related sectors rather than concentrating and converging only on career guidance.

In a European and pan-European dimension, the quality assurance approaches and models that are being used in career guidance services are summarized and synthesized by relevant international literature and literature reviews (Plant, 2001, 2004; Hughes & Gration, 2009a; Sultana, 2012;2023; ELGPN, 2012; Holley, 2014; Watts, 2014; Cedefop, 2020).

Based on the main outcomes of the whole research, carried out reviewing the quality assurance approaches and mechanisms in guidance across diverse countries, the limited implementation of specific and dedicated quality assurance systems for career guidance is linked to the need still and further to explore the research field of quality assurance and evaluation, from a multidimensional and interdisciplinary perspective. In fact, even if quality assurance and its assessment are approached and faced by lifelong guidance policies and system systems all over Europe, on one side, there is still a real lack of systematic monitoring of the policies, systems and provisions and, on the other hand, there is a poor evaluation of the services available and the quality management and control in place.

The main difficulties encountered in relation with quality assurance in career guidance are still connected to the lack of frameworks for defining quality in a variety of contexts and settings, which have a degree of emphasis implicitly placed on different objectives and purposes. Understandings Understanding quality as a purely administrative task, activity or fulfilment that prepares the evaluated organisation, service or programme, to be formally checked, will likely frame quality in terms of basic fundamental approach, reducing also the formative part of the

monitoring and evaluation process. At the same time, conceptualising the effectiveness of a career guidance intervention as a key critical mechanism for social change will shape the understanding and measurement of quality, leading to improvements of in the provisions and future development plans.

Moreover, since career guidance provision is provided by a range of providers from the education, training and employment to community-based organisations and to employers, each of which operates within a distinct resourcing and structural framework, the definition of an overall, universal and general set of quality indicators and a unique evaluation model will also be of low success and impact.

In a multi-actor, multi-sector, multi-level dimension like that in which career guidance provision is placed, monitoring, evaluating and assuring quality requires multiple frameworks and processes that are useful for and applicable to a very broad comprehensive range of contexts and services.

Hence, even if quality assurance in career guidance and its related issues are conceptualised in different ways across different countries and practical situations, a common denominator across Europe is needed and can be represented by the indicator-based approaches, as a predominated approach to quality within the career guidance as well as other fields.

Quality assurance in guidance but also in other sectors – such as education, training, employment and so on – is traditionally understood as a measurement and standardisation measure. While, on one side, there are obvious risks in standardisation, especially in the guidance field where the nature of the service would be undermined, also affecting the quality itself, on the other, for the purposes of evaluating and improving, it is necessary to have references to start from and guidelines to follow.

So, based on the current state of play in quality assurance and indicator-based approaches in Europe, monitoring and evaluation of career guidance systems and services require the improvement of improving existing methodological approaches.

Last but not least, the results from the research carried out show the different ways in which quality assurance can be approached, moving monitoring and evaluation of guidance provision from an administrative-centred and user-centred to a more provider-centred approach. The analysed context helps highlight how is limited is the investment in projects and initiatives addressed to training and quality activities, about quality assurance methodologies related to career guidance, addressed to guidance professionals.

In conclusion, it is clear from the information and data available that only a few frameworks of indicators exist, mainly defined for a theoretical and scientific scope, and little evidence is available about the extent to which these quality assurance tools are really used and implemented in career guidance.

All in all, the lifelong guidance systems in Europe put into place restricted quality assurance practices. These practices are limited in several ways. First, they tend to be confined to the single providers or services in a country, and rarely, if ever apply across guidance provision, integrated in both the education and employment sectors. Second, they usually adopt a few mechanisms to ensure effective adequate data and information gathering among the systems/providers/services that use quality assurance mechanisms; while the coordination between sectors and targets is not integrated, and this makes coherent monitoring of approaches to quality assurance in guidance difficult. Third, the quality assurance measures commonly in place do not comprehensively target the whole range of guidance users. And, finally, they tend not to focus on quality as such, or on the

continuous improvement process of quality (in a quality cycle perspective) but rather deal with quality assurance procedures as part of an overall range of administrative and organisational activities (considering quality management and control as one element among others in a set of responsibilities that the guidance providers are accountable for).

Various European systems for quality assurance and quality standards in place include service providers that apply the quality standards developed by national coordination mechanism mechanisms (as for example, a National Guidance Forum or a similar structure). But, often, no binding national quality frameworks exist for lifelong guidance provision covering all dimensions and service providers.

The added value of a national coordination mechanism is important essential not only to monitor quality and quality assurance in career guidance regularly by checking whether the career guidance providers meet the established requirements (included in guidelines, standards or principles), a central structure such as a National Guidance Forum, plays a key role also in identifying appropriate unified and universal approaches which should underpin all the guidance service and form the basis on which quality is assessed. A centralised coordination unit or body could also support both an integrated approach to quality assurance processes and tools, used in guidance and similar fields, avoiding overlapping and redundancy of procedures, and individual ownership and responsibility of the providers – public and private – in terms of guidance provisions.

Hence, since the existence of quality assurance protocols and devices does not necessarily guarantee that guidance providers and their practitioners will use them, a framework improving harmonisation and coordination among the quality assurance measures and tools – existing in guidance and related

fields – as well as the definition of data gathering and analysis procedures for monitoring and evaluating quality and effectiveness of guidance, could be supportive. This framework should be defined or driven by a national and regional legislation or a strategy and supported by local networks or communities of guidance providers and practitioners. The legislation or strategy should set up clear principles, rules or procedures and systematically help the definition of a data data-gathering and analysis system. Good quality assurance mechanisms should not be based on voluntary and random base, and/or the goodwill of a few guidance providers or practitioners, but institutionalised, with fixed principles common to all the involved actors and stakeholders.

A final critical concern in relation to about quality assurance in career guidance, in particular in relation with regard to an administrative-centred approach, is related to the recognition that quality is not a bureaucratic, neutral and only quantitative concept but rather a multidimensional, interdisciplinary and “human” one. Therefore, the limits and concerns of research aimed at deepening the understanding of quality are related to what goes beyond the quantitative data. Since careerCareer guidance services are full of elements that need qualitative analysis to be highlighted, such as, for example, a strategic vision of lifelong guidance systems, the evaluation of the results but above all of the processes, and in particular, the attention to a holistic and user-centred approach.

References

Barnes, S-A., Bimrose, J., & Brown, A. (2020), Lifelong guidance policy and practice in the EU: trends, challenges and opportunities:

final report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

Bezanson, L., & Kellett, R. (2001), Integrating career information and guidance services at a local level. Paper prepared for the OECD Career Guidance Policy Review.

Borbély-Pecze, T., and & Watts, A. G. (2011), European public employment services and lifelong guidance: analytical paper. Brussels: DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion in collaboration with GHK Limited / Budapest Institute.

Capogna, S. (2011), University guidance services and support in the transition from education to work. Italian Journal of Sociology of Education, 1, 2011: 140-171.

CEDEFOP [European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training] (2011), Working and Ageing: Guidance and Counselling for Mature Learners. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

CEDEFOP [European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training] (2009), Professionalising career guidance practitioner competences and qualification routes in Europe (Cedefop panorama series 164). Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

CEDEFOP [European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training] (2008a).), Career Development at Work: A Review of Career Guidance to Support People in Employment (Cedefop Panorama series 151). Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

CEDEFOP [European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training] (2008b), From policy to practice: a systemic change to lifelong guidance in Europe (Cedefop Panorama series 149). Luxembourg. Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

CEDEFOP [European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training] (2004), Guidance policies in the knowledge society. Trends, challenges and responses across Europe. A Cedefop synthesis report. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

CEDEFOP [European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training] (2011), Lifelong Guidance across Europe: Reviewing Policy Progress and Future Prospects. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

CEDEFOP *et al.* (2021), Digital transitions in lifelong guidance: rethinking careers practitioner professionalism: a Careers Net expert collection. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Cedefop working paper, No 2.

OECD; UNESCO (2020), Career guidance policy and practice in the pandemic: results of a joint international survey – June to August 2020. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

Council of the European Union (2004), Draft Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on Strengthening policies, systems and practices in the field of guidance throughout life in Europe, Brussels, 18 May 2004, 9286/04, EDUC 109, SOC 234.

Council of the European Union (2008), Council resolution on better integrating lifelong guidance into lifelong learning strategies: 2905th Education, Youth and Culture Council meeting, Brussels, 21 November 2008.

ELGPN [European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network] (2012), European Lifelong Guidance Policies: Progress Report 2011-12. Jyväskylä, Finland: ELGPN.

ELGPN [European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network] (2015a), The guidelines for policies and systems development for lifelong guidance: a reference framework for the EU and for the Commission. ELGPN Tools, No 6. University of Jyväskylä, Finland.

ELGPN [European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network] (2015b), Strengthening the quality assurance and evidence-base of lifelong guidance. ELGPN Tools, No 5. University of Jyväskylä, Finland.

ELGPN [European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network] (2016), Quality-assurance and evidence-base (QAE) framework. ELGPN Tools, No 1 (excerpt). University of Jyväskylä, Finland.

Forrier, A., & Sels, L. (2003), The concept employability: A complex mosaic. *International Journal of Human Resources Development and Management*, 3, 102-124.

Fugate, M., & Kinicki, A.J. (2008), A dispositional approach to employability: development of a measure and test of implication for employee reactions to organizational change. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 81, 503-527.

Fugate, M., Kinicki, A.J., & Ashforth, B.E. (2004), Employability: A psycho-social construct, its dimensions, and applications. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 65, 14-38.

Harrison, C., Villalba-Garcia, E. and & Alan Brown, A. (2022), *Towards European standards for monitoring and evaluation of lifelong guidance systems and services: Vol. 1*. Luxembourg: Publications Office. Cedefop working paper, No 9.

Hooley, T. (2014), The evidence base on lifelong guidance. a guide to key findings for effective policy and practice. ELGPN Tools, No 3. University of Jyväskylä, Finland.

Hooley, T., and & Rice, S. (2018), Ensuring quality in career guidance: a critical review. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, Vol. 47, No 4, pp. 472-486.

Hooley, T., Dodd V. (2015), The economic benefits of career guidance. UK: University of Derby & Careers England.

Hooley, T., Marriott, J., & Sampson, J. P. (2011), Fostering college and career readiness: How career development activities in school's impact on graduation rates and students' life success. Derby: International Centre for Guidance Studies, University of Derby.

Hughes, D, Gration, G. (2009a), Evidence and Impact: Careers and Guidance-related Interventions: Introduction to an Online Professional Resource. Research paper, CfBT Education Trust.

Hughes, D, Gration, G. (2009b), Literature review of research on the impact of careers and guidance-related interventions, CfBT Education Trust.

Hughes, D., *et al.* (2002), The economic benefits of guidance. Derby: International Centre for Guidance Studies, UK: University of Derby.

ILO and ETF (2021), Developing national career development systems: pathways to enhance lifelong guidance, career education and career development support for workers. International Labour office and European training foundation.

McQuaid, Ronald R. & Lindsay, Colin. (2005), The Concept of Employability. *Urban Studies*. 42. 197-219.

OECD (2003), Outcomes from career information and guidance services, OECD Publishing, Paris.

OECD (2004), Career Guidance and Public Policy: Bridging the Gap, OECD Publishing, Paris.

OECD (2021), Career Guidance for Adults in a Changing World of Work, Getting Skills Right, OECD Publishing, Paris.

Plant, P. (2001), Quality in career guidance. (Paper prepared for an OECD review of policies for information, guidance and counselling services.).

Plant, P. (2004), Quality in career guidance: Issues and methods. *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance*, 4(2-3), 141-157.

Plant, P. (2011), Quality assurance and evidence in career guidance in Europe: Counting what is measured or measuring what counts? *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance*, 12, 91-104.

Robertson, Peter P.J., Tristram Hooley, T., Phil McCash, F. (eds) (2021), *The Oxford Handbook of Career Development* (2021; online ed., Oxford Academic, 9 July 2020).

Sultana, R. G. (2010), *Career Guidance and Social Inclusion: A Challenge for Europe*. *Australian Journal of Career Development*, 19(1), 18-23.

Sultana, R. G. (2011), *Learning career management skills in Europe: a critical review*. *Journal of Education and Work*, Vol. 2, No 25, pp. 1-24.

Sultana, R. G. (2012), *Quality matters: ensuring high standards in career guidance services*. *Career Designing: Research and Counselling*, 1(1), 46-67.

Sultana, R. G., & Watts, A. G. (2006a), *Career guidance in public employment services across Europe*. *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance*, 6(1), 29–46.

Sultana, R.G., & Watts, A.G. (2006b), *Career Guidance in Europe's Public Employment Services: Trends and Challenges*. Brussels: Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, European Commission.

Sultana, R.G. (2023), *Lifelong Career Guidance: Between Autonomy and Solidarity*. In: Evans, K., Lee, W.O., Markowitsch, J., Zukas, M. (eds) *Third International Handbook of Lifelong Learning*. Springer International Handbooks of Education. Springer, Cham.

Sultana, Ronald R.G. (2018), *Enhancing the Quality of Career Guidance in Secondary Schools: A Handbook*.

Watts, A., and & Fretwell, D.H. (2003), Policy strategies for designing career information and guidance systems in middle-income and transition economies. Washington D.C.

Watts, A.G. (2007), Career Services: a Review in an International Perspective. Wellington, New Zealand: Career Services.

Watts, A.G. (2009), Careers Wales: a Review in an International Perspective. Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.

Watts, A.G. (2014), Cross-national reviews of career guidance systems: overview and reflections. Journal of the National Institute for Career Education and Counselling, Vol. 32, No 1, pp. 4-14.

Watts, A.G., and & Sultana, R.G. (2004), Career guidance policies in 37 countries: Contrasts and common themes. International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance, 4: 105 – 122. Worldbank.

Williams, S., Dodd, L.J., Steele, C., & Randall, R. (2015), A systematic review of current understandings of employability, Journal of education and work, 1-25.