A Network in Search for Sustainability

EVALUATION OF THE EUROGUIDANCE NETWORK (NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTRES FOR VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE, NRCVG) DURING THE YEARS 1998 - 2003. EUROPEAN COMMISSION – DG EAC.

Timo Spangar, Robert Arnkil, Pekka Rissanen, Teresa Teppo, Social Development Co & Raimo Vuorinen, University of Jyväskylä

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

FIGURES

TABLES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The evaluation task

The external evaluation of the Euroguidance Network (National Resource Centres for Vocational Guidance, NRCVG) had a two-fold task: first, to assess the performance of the Network and its added value for promoting mobility by producing quality information for the guidance community on educational information, and enhancing the development of the guidance systems of the Network member states, and second, on the basis of assessing the current performance of the Network recommendations for its future development should be proposed.

The evaluation questions for achieving the evaluation goals were rephrased – reflecting the questions set in the Tender specifications - as follows:

1. What is the added value of Euroguidance Network in promoting international mobility of citizens and in promoting European dimension in guidance and counselling? The sub-questions for analysing the Network's added value are

1) Do the outputs of the Network and Centres, their publications, information distribution methods and other services contribute to enhancing mobility and awareness of the European dimension in guidance and counselling?
2) Are the Network activities valid from the perspective of the needs of the guidance community?
3) Do the Centres reach their target groups?
4) Does the network work effectively enough to meet the challenges of answering adequately to questions 1-3? What is the inner capability the Network?

Regarding the improvement and future aspects of the Network, the following evaluation question guided the evaluation process:

2) How can the position and management of the Network be improved? The included sub-questions were:

1) *What are good practices at the Network level?* The Network level questions include the question of how should the Network as a 'net-work' be managed, what advantages or disadvantages would there be if Euroguidance Network became more institutionalised at the EU level, and what policy areas or a mix of them seem the most relevant ones for the Network to be linked with? (mobility vs/and guidance, policies for recognition of working skills, policies for life-long learning or the future developments of European Employment Strategy, for example).
2) *What are good practices in the Centres' activities to act proactively in their national environment?* How capable and through which mechanisms the Centres able to achieve solid position their own countries?
   3) What good practices can be identified in individual themes and activities? What good practices can be detected regarding meeting the needs of the client groups, publishing publications, organising training, quality management mechanisms, finances, for example.[1]

2. Overall assessment

---

[1] Spangar, T., Rissanen, P., Arnkil, R., Pitkänen, S. & Vuorinen, R. Euroguidance Network Evaluation. Inception report, Tampere, Finland 31.102003. Unpublished Report.

Euroguidance Netwok is about 'enhancing mobility' through the dissemination of information on international training opportunities and, in particular, advancing counselling and guidance. The analysis of the developmental pathway of the Network as well as the country visits and surveys included in the evaluation indicate that the policy status of the Network has bee ambivalent. It seems that today there is a need for clarifying the Network's role in the guidance community, mobility issues as well as defining the close links with the guidance community as the key information distribution channel making the Euroguidance Network a very specific one among other information networks. The links with the development of the guidance policies creates a sound background for the further development of the Network. The future improvement of the Network's position in the guidance policies seem to lie in the next generation of Leonardo Programme and in inventing the Network's role in the growing recognition of the political importance of guidance, reflected in the Resolution adopted by the EU Education Ministers in May 2004, for example.

The overall assessment of the Centres' performance is that their efforts have been quite productive. With the support from the Euroguidance Network and having only modest personnel and financial resources they have been able to provide their target groups with a variety of products and services, which are appreciated by their clients and are given recognition by the national authorities. It is obvious that the Centres efforts have contributed in a meaningful way to promoting awareness of the European dimension within the guidance community and among guidance and educational professionals at large.

The Euroguidance Network is characterised by enthusiasm and spirit of internationalism in the National Centres' staff. Whatever the future of the Network is the spirit of the Network should be fostered and encouraged. The Euroguidance Network may be seen as a community of "mobility practitioners" and the nature of the network should be taken into account while improving its management. The Euroguidance network should be perceived as a learning network where management is very much about enhancing learning between the Centres and the "top" level both in the national context as well as in Brussels.

The main result of the evaluation is that the Network's major capabilities lie, to a large extent, in the national Centres ability to operate wisely in their national contexts. In managing to do that, the Centres also have impact on policy making. The Centres vary regarding their positions in the national contexts. The key factors playing decisive role seem to be the level of complexity of guidance environment and the developmental phase of the guidance community. Depending on those variables the Centres face different challenges. The country visits made resulted in discerning ' relative balance', 'refinement', 'moderate challenge', 'big challenge', and 'ambiguity' as basic strategic positions of the Centres in those countries putting the Centres into different positions regarding the future steps to be taken. Thus, the complexity of the Euroguidance Network may now be seen as an outcome of the varying guidance environment and varying developmental degree of the guidance community rather than an outcome of their organisational position of management structures as such.

Meeting the Terms of reference of the Euroguidance Network

In general, the Network may be seen to have fulfilled the goals of the Terms of Reference regarding its functions as information disseminator on learning and training opportunities. The information dissemination is carried out through close links with the guidance community allowing the Network at the same time to introduce international dimension to the development of the national guidance systems. Thus, the Network has also succeeded in fostering the awareness and practical guidance knowledge of the "European dimension" seen as its vital task in the Terms of Reference. (Detailed analysis in chapter 5.1.1).

Efficiency and effectiveness of the Network

Our general conclusion is that the Euroguidance Network, taken as a whole, has fulfilled its objectives in an efficient and effective way. With rather limited resources, the Centres have produced good products, reached multiplier effects and contributed to building the guidance community in Europe. The issues of effectiveness and efficiency are discussed in detail in chapter 5.1.1. -5.1.5.

3. Evaluation results

The assessment of the performance of the Euroguidance Network indicates quite positive and good results of the Network as a whole and it is concluded that the Network has been successful in promoting the European dimension in producing quality information. The specific feature of the Network is its close links with the guidance community. The results of the assessment of the Network's performance may be summarised as follows:

<table>
<tr>
<td colspan="2">Evaluation of the performance of the Euroguidance Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation questions</td>
<td>Analysis and recommendations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main question 1. What is the added value of Euroguidance Network in promoting international mobility of citizens and in promoting European dimension in guidance and counselling?</td>
<td>Analysis: The Euroguidance Network advances the mobility of European citizens by disseminating mainly educational information on learning opportunities in other countries. The Network has succeeded in this task in particular through establishing close contacts with the guidance community in each country. The advancing of mobility is characterised by "mobility information through guidance community" approach.
The added value of the Euroguidance Network in promoting European dimension in guidance and counselling has been in introducing the international mobility issues and international guidance perspectives in the national guidance systems. The national Centres' roles vary in this respect. In the new Network Member States the Euroguidance Centres' roles have been essential in building up the national guidance infrastructure. In the "old" Network Member States the national Centres have enhanced the awareness of the international dimension of guidance of the citizens and international learning opportunities. Chapter 5.2. (The main question 1).

Recommendation 1: The Euroguidance Network's achievements should be sustained and developed further by developing it as a learning network, providing it with a more stable position in the European life-long guidance policy context and by clarifying further its key tasks regarding information dissemination, mobility, and guidance. By consequence, the Euroguidance Network's role among the other European Networks should also be clarified further.</td>
</tr>
</table>

Sub-question 1.1. *Do the outputs of the Network and Centres, their publications, information distribution methods and other services contribute to enhancing mobility and awareness of the European dimension in guidance and counselling?*	**Analysis**: The outcomes of the observation of support the actualisation of the Network's mission. The products and services are commonly known among the guidance community and other target groups. Also the customers and the national authorities assess them as useful. Especially the centres' electronic information provisions but also printed materials as well as seminars and workshops are regarded as useful by the national authorities. The key aspect of the Network's positive achievements lie in the Centres' capacity to build close contacts with the guidance community that affords the Centres fruitful and relatively direct contacts with the client groups. Chapter 5.2. (Sub-question 1.1.).

Recommendation 2: The Centres' and the Network's, as a whole, capacity of sustaining and developing further contacts with the guidance community should be fostered as a pre-condition for successful information dissemination also in the future. The National Centres should be supported by developing further all-European information dissemination like Ploteus and encouraged to develop products and services appropriate in each national context. |
| **Sub-question 1.2**. *Are the Network activities valid from the perspective of the needs of the guidance community?* | **Analysis:** According to the evaluation findings the Ploteus portal, the Centres' own home pages as well as the other products and services of the Centres are known to the customers and they consider them as useful for their work. The activities of the national Centres and Euroguidance network as a whole are regarded valid and important for the guidance community. The customers predict also a clear growth in need of international information dissemination of educational systems as well as training and working opportunities, particularly in electronic form. In a more detail chapter 5.2. (Sub-question 1.2).

Recommendation 3. The current good assessment by the customers should be sustained and developed further by, on one hand, taking care of the quality of the information also in the future, and on the other hand, by developing client feedback mechanisms in a still more systematic way. |
| **Sub-question 1.3**. *Do the Centres reach their target groups?* | **Analysis**: According to the evaluation observations the Centres have succeeded quite well in reaching their main target groups, the guidance counsellors being the main target group. Also the networking capability of the Centres may be deemed successful. Chapter 5.2. (Sub-question 1.3).

Recommendation 4. The strength of the Euroguidance Network is that it has a clearly identifiable target group, the guidance community, |

	reaching it quite well. The current state of things should be sustained and developed further and the sensitivity of the Network for new possible target groups should be enhanced as the growing needs of educational, training, and labour market information, the growing need for deeper co-operation with other networks and the growing needs for co-operation between the different policy fields and authorities will probably indicate the arise of new relevant target groups.
Sub-question 1.4. *Does the Network work effectively enough to meet the challenges of answering adequately to questions 1-3? What is the inner capability of the Network?*	**Analysis:** The evaluation conclusion is that the Euroguidance Network, taken as a whole, has fulfilled its objectives in an efficient and effective way. With rather limited resources, the Centres have produced good products, reached multiplier effects and contributed to building the guidance community in Europe. Chapter 5.2. (Sub-question 1.4). **Recommendation 5.** There are growing needs related to information on international mobility as well as promoting the European dimension in guidance. To be able to work effectively for these aims also in the future, the Network should carefully analyse the possible needs for focusing its operations instead of broadening of their scope. In order to work effectively also in the future the position of the Euroguidance Network should be made clearer at the policy making level, its status among the other information networks should be clarified more deeply, its core tasks and concepts regarding mobility, information, and guidance should be "re-invented", the management structures within the EU should be reinforced, the management procedures should support the development of the Euroguidance network as a learning network, the common information products should be developed further, and the links and the feedback mechanisms with the target groups should be developed in a more systematic way.

The second main evaluation question was directed towards assessing the Network's position and its improvement. The evaluation results are summarised as follows:

Evaluation of the improvement and future development of the Euroguidance Network	
Evaluation questions	**Analysis and recommendations**
Main question 2. *How can the position and management of the Network be improved?*	**Analysis**: The Euroguidance Network has succeeded well in producing products and services on mobility and in introducing the European dimension in the guidance systems. However, the

	recognition and also the visibility of the Network have been rather weak. This calls for improvement at the policy making level in positioning the Network in a more strategic way among the other information networks and in policy making ore generally. There is an obvious need for stronger strategic management of the Network. The stronger management should, however, take into account the nature of the Network as a community of practice avoiding the threat of over-managing it. Chapter 5.3. (Main question 2). **Recommendations:** 6. **Clarifying and strengthening the network position on EU-level.** 7. **Strengthening the possibilities for "management by learning", open coordination, peer reviews, benchlearning.** 8. **Making a Learning Network strategy for the Network in collaboration with the Centres.** 9. **Establishing better strategic synergy of the networks close to each other at the European as well as the national level.** 10. **More stable and adequate personnel resources needed.** 11. **Continuous further education needed to keep up with the required personnel skills.** 12. **Clarifying the operative position of the Centres with the other networks.** 13. **Clarifying the main roles of the network: guidance, information, mobility.** 14. **Spelling out the strategic next steps in each national context.** 15. **Strengthening thematic, regional, cross-border, cluster and other forms of sub-networking.** Chapter 5.3. (Main question 2) in more detail.
Sub-question 2.1. *What are good practices at the Network level?* The Network level questions include the question of how should the Network as a 'net-work' be managed, what advantages or disadvantages would there be if Euroguidance Network became more institutionalised	**Analysis**: Most often identified good practices are: *Regular meetings of the Network* regarded as important for mutual exchange of ideas and as opportunities for strengthening networking with the other Centres and on a personal level as well. *Improved Network management* in Brussels linked especially with the current Network manager. The common *Ploteus portal* has indicated a good practice and operated as a joint platform for the

at the EU level, and what policy areas or a mix of them seem the most relevant ones for the Network to be linked with? (mobility vs/and guidance, policies for recognition of working skills, policies for life-long learning or the future developments of European Employment Strategy, for example).	whole Network. The mere existence of *internal Webboard* of the Network was seen as a good practice as an exchange forum of information. Other significant and repeated good practices at the Network level were *Academia exchange programme* seen as very important opportunity to advance the awareness of international mobility. Also *thematic groups* and *"cross-border" co-operation* stood out as good practices. Chapter 5.3. (Sub-question 2.1). **Recommendation 16**. As the complexity of the environment the Centres are working is growing the interaction and communication dimensions in the Network should be fostered further. The task of the Brussels management as well as the national authorities is to support the Network mechanisms strengthening the Network as a learning platform for exchange of information, experiences, and good practices.
Sub-question 2.2. *What are good practices in the Centres' activities to act proactively in their national environment?* How capable and through which mechanisms the Centres able to achieve solid position their own countries?	**Analysis**: According to the evaluation findings the national Centres each have good practices of national Web solutions and dissemination of information in various forms. The Centres' links with the guidance community seem to lie on solid bases. The position and visibility vary according to the national situations. The policy making impact of the Centres varies also from one country to another. The general conclusion is that the national Centres are able to act proactively in their national environment if they have good contacts and co-operation with the organisation and structures above them, that is ministries and other central authorities, with the client groups through links with the guidance community or directly, and with other players in the field, the other networks and partners. Chapter 5.3. (Sub-question 2.2). **Recommendation 17**: The national Centres' good practices in their capability to act proactively in their national environment should be supported by the Brussels management as well as by the management of the national Centres themselves. The good practice at the national level should be seen as developing the Centres' role in a balanced way regarding the structures above and links with the clients (vertically) and the partners and other players in the field (horizontally) rather than seen as a group of single products and services.
Sub-question 2.3. *What good practices can be identified in individual themes and activities?* What good practices can be detected regarding meeting the needs of the client groups, publishing publications, organising training, quality	**Analysis:** In most cases the individual good practices are linked with certain information products in electronic or printed form. There also good practices regarding producing training modules, organising seminars or other forms of co-operation. There is room for improvement in the coverage of client feedback mechanisms. The variation of the products and services at the

| management mechanisms, finances, for example. | national level is wide. However, this variation has proven fruitful affording the national Centres to develop their own "service packages" reflecting their national environment and context. The role of the EU efforts, like Ploteus, has been to support the national efforts and introducing the European perspective in the national efforts. Chapter 5.3. (Sub-question 2.3). |
| | **Recommendation 18**: The development of the national services provided by the Centres should be promoted as a joint effort of the EU and national Centres also in the future. The approach could be described as advancing diversity and unity simultaneously. Furthermore, direct mutual learning mechanisms should be enhanced to enable the Centres to learn from each other. |

Regarding the improvement aspect of the Network it is concluded that the Network entails various good practices that may be used as tolls for developing the Network also in the future.

4. Recommendations in order of priority

From the strategic point of view the evaluators' recommendations may be presented in the following order.

Strengthening the possibilities for "management by learning", open coordination, peer reviews, benchlearning

There is an overall task to strengthen the Network as a learning network. A model can be drawn from the Peer Review process of open coordination of the DG Employment and Social Affairs[2] (http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/employment_strategy/peer_en.htm). We recommend that a similar procedure, in a condensed form, *mutatis mutandis*, is adopted for the benchlearning process of the EG-network.

Making a Learning Network strategy for the Network in collaboration with the Centres

We recommend that the Commission is active, in collaboration with the Centres and national authorities, in drawing up a "Learning network strategy" for the EG-network, addressing the diversity of needs and strategic next steps to be taken in the different countries, and making an explicit plan of developing different "learning spaces" for the network.

Strengthening the resources of the Network and developing its allocation strategy

---

[2] The objective of the EU Peer Review is to promote the identification and exchange of good practices in employment policies, and the potential for their successful transfer to other Member States. The basic idea is that it is likely that a Member State can learn from the experiences of other countries, which may have already found answers to similar problems. The actual Peer Review meeting includes an intensive one day evaluation of the relevant policy, and possibly a site visit. The country hosting the review presents the good practice, assisted by an independent employment policy expert. Member States interested in the evaluation of the practice take part in the Peer Review as "peer countries". Normally between 3 and 5 peer countries represented by governmental officials take part in the Peer Review. Each peer country is also assisted by an independent policy expert in the field.

We recommend that the resources of the Network should be strengthened on the Commission level. The Network also needs to develop a resource allocation strategy reflecting more closely the different situations in the different countries. This could be done by a combination of a basic grant plus special grants and extra benchlearning support from the Commission. The national authorities should also need to take a close look into their investment in building the multipliers, the guidance community in particular and in connection to this, their level and forms of support to the Euroguidance Centres.

Establishing better strategic synergy of the networks close to each other at the European as well as the national level

The positions and tasks of the different (and emerging) networks need to be assessed and clarified from a strategic point of view.

Strengthening thematic, regional, cross-border, cluster and other forms of sub-networking

The Network can survive only as a learning network, and good "learning spaces" need to be developed and sustained. This is a joint task of the Commission and the other levels. There are somewhat more resources needed on the Commission level to handle this.

Clarifying the operative position of the Centres with the other networks

There are several other networks "surrounding" the EG-network. There is plenty of need to clarify these relations in terms of division of labour, connections and operative cooperation. This is a joint task of all levels of the network.

Spelling out the strategic next steps in each national context

We recommend that the Centres study the evaluation report critically, and draw up their own assessment about the critical tasks they have in their context, identifying their main strengths and weaknesses, and drawing up a working plan for the next strategic steps in their context. These plans should be studied by the commission, feedback given, and discussions held in appropriate workshops along the way.

Clarifying and strengthening the network position on EU-level

The Network has so far survived in a rather ambivalent position. This position needs to be clarified and strengthened. It seems that the realisation of the plans of the new programme period could establish this, and we are in favour of such clarification and sustainability.

Clarifying the main roles of the network: guidance, information, mobility

The main vehicle of influence of the network are the multipliers, and working with the guidance community. This strategic task and link needs to be emphasised and good practices spelled out and disseminated in a benchlearning process. This is a task of all levels, but the Commission needs to highlight this in the new programme period.

More stable and adequate personnel resources needed

In many instances the Centres are operating with minimal resources, and part time personnel. The enthusiasm and diligent networking of the personnel has compensated this, but needs to be looked into in the different contexts. This needs to be looked into by national authorities in particular.

Continuous further education needed to keep up with the required personnel skills

The skills and knowledge of the staff seems to be, in general terms, on an adequate level. This needs to be secured, however, in the face of rising complexity on tasks, and especially working with the guidance community. This is a collaboration task for the centres, national authorities and the Commission.

Developing practical operations of the Centres

There are some more detailed aspects of the everyday running of the Euroguidance Network that still can be improved although the relatively positive overall picture of its current activities.

A. The coverage of systematic client feedback and quality mechanisms could be improved.
B. The monitoring of the electronic information channels like the websites is still in the process of making in many countries. Although a challenging task, monitoring of who really are the clients, how many use the services, and how interaction and feedback may be gathered from them is vitally important for the future development of the services.
C. The reporting systems of annual working plans and other documents common to the Network should be developed further.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Euroguidance Network (Network of National Resource Centres for Vocational Guidance) was established by the European Commission in 1992 – 1993 under the umbrella of the Petra programme for enhancing information exchange on international learning opportunities and the different educational systems as well as for promoting the European dimension in counselling of the citizens and among guidance professionals. Since 1994 the Network has operated within the Leonardo da Vinci programme. The network has emerged in sequences including now, in addition to the EU Member States also the EEA and CEE countries. Currently, the Euroguidance network consists of 31 countries and 65 national centres. Individual NRCVG represent the various Ministries of Education, Training, Labour and Youth across their respective countries.

In the Terms of Reference for the Network five different sets of goals are set for the Network. Three of them address the issue of promoting the European dimension in educational system and the guidance systems by developing co-operation of the different guidance systems in the participating EU-EEA countries. Two other goals perceive the Network's task lying in promoting educational mobility by producing and disseminating good quality information on educational opportunities.[3]

The Network is also one vehicle in implementing the wider goals identified in The Commission's Communication on lifelong learning (November 2001), Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality[4], which highlighted building blocks for developing and implementing lifelong learning strategies cross-sectoral networks at national level. Career guidance is a transversal theme across the building blocks and is a priority area for action at European and national levels and the Network and the Centres provide guidance professionals seminars, international conferences, exchange programmes for guidance practitioners, training opportunities and other forums for increasing networking between the countries and within each country. Recently production of the content of Ploteus, the European portal on learning opportunities has been the Euroguidance network's main responsibilities.

In April 2003 the DG Education and Culture set out a Tender of the evaluation of the Euroguidance Network. The goal of the evaluation was perceived in the Tender Specifications twofold: first, to assess the work done and the current activities of the Network, and second, to give recommendations for the future development of the Network on the basis of assessing the past and the present of the Network.[5]

The present paper constitutes the final report of the evaluation exercise carried out by the evaluation team organised by Social Development Co, chosen as the external evaluator of the Euroguidance Network. The structure of the report follows the evaluation task reflecting also the report guidelines in the Tender Specifications. First, the evaluation questions, the evaluation methodology, and the different components used will be described in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 assesses the current activities and operations of the Euroguidance Network in the light of the surveys and seven country visits made. The specific nature of the Euroguidance network as a basis for considerations about the future prospects in the light of the

---

[3] European Commission. DG Education and Culture: Leonardo da Vinci. Second Phase (2000-2006). National Resource Centres for Vocational Guidance. Annual Working Plan 2002-2003. Terms of Reference.

[4] COM(2001) 678.21.11.2001. *Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality. Communication from the Commission.*
http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/lll/life/communication/com_en.pdf

[5] European Commission. DG Education and Culture. Specifications Applicable to the Invitation to Tender EAC/31/03. Brussels, April 2003.

developmental path of the Network, in the context of other networks and current policy developments is also analysed in Chapter 3. These discussions are elaborated further in Chapter 4 with reflections on the Euroguidance Network's key features and its nature as a network, as a "community of practice". The issues concerning the management and governance of such communities are also discussed in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 summarises the evaluation results answering the evaluation questions on the current performance of the Network and its future perspectives. Chapter 6 summarises the evaluators' recommendations in the order of their significance.

The final report aims at being a condensed presentation of the key findings of the evaluation as advised in the Tender Specifications. By implication, the condensed main text is followed by more detailed annexes of the different components of the evaluation effort. It should also be reminded that the evaluation task sets the focus of the evaluation on Network as a whole, not on specific operations or on individual Centres of the Network.

2. EVALUATION QUESTIONS AND THE METHODOLOGY USED

2.1. Evaluation questions

The Tender Specifications defined four questions for the evaluation of the Euroguidance Network:

> 1) The quality of the outputs and their correspondence with the set objective, taking into account the resources given to them *(To what extent does the scope of the output respond to the set objectives? Does their quantity/quality seem appropriate?)*;
>
> 2) The relevance of the activities to the needs of the guidance community (*Have the needs of the target group been analysed, and if so, how? To what extent do the existing products and services correspond to those needs? Do products correspond to the needs expressed by guidance counsellors in general? Is customer feedback being collected and used in continuous development of services and products?)*
>
> 3) The extent to which the network reaches the public of guidance counsellors *(Do the Centres have a satisfactory dissemination capacity? Is their institutional position sufficiently visible? Are their products and activities known by the target group?)*
>
> 4) The effectiveness in the methods of working within the network *(To what extent is the level of exchanges and communication within the network satisfactory? Is the current organisation of work within the network effective? Can the evaluators formulate suggestions to improve the working methods and the management of the network?)*

The Specifications pointed out that also the Centres' relationships and positions to the other networks should be addressed and that the structural differences between the Centres as well as the policy developments in the field of education and training should be taken into account in the evaluation.

Having discussed with the Steering Group of the evaluation, the Social Development evaluation team further clarified the evaluation questions into two main questions and the sub-questions as follows:

1. What is the added value of Euroguidance Network in promoting international mobility of citizens and in promoting European dimension in guidance and counselling?

The sub-questions for analysing the Network's added value are
> 1) Do the outputs of the Network and Centres, their publications, information distribution methods and other services contribute to enhancing mobility and awareness of the European dimension in guidance and counselling?
> 2) Are the Network activities valid from the perspective of the needs of the guidance community?
> 3) Do the Centres reach their target groups?
> 4) Does the network work effectively enough to meet the challenges of answering adequately to questions 1-3? What is the inner capability of the Network?

2. If the question of the added value gets a positive answer, *how can the position and management of the Network be improved?*

1) *What are good practices at the Network level?* The Network level questions include the question of how should the Network as a 'net-work' be managed, what advantages or disadvantages would there be if Euroguidance Network became more institutionalised at the EU level, and what policy areas or a mix of them seem the most relevant ones for the Network to be linked with? (mobility vs/and guidance, policies for recognition of working skills, policies for life-long learning or the future developments of European Employment Strategy, for example).

2) *What are good practices in the Centres' activities to act proactively in their national environment?* How capable and through which mechanisms the Centres able to achieve solid position their own countries?

3) *What good practices can be identified in individual themes and activities?* What good practices can be detected regarding meeting the needs of the client groups, publishing publications, organising training, quality management mechanisms, finances, for example.[6]

The evaluation report uses the evaluation data to assess these two main questions and the sub-questions included.

2.2. Evaluation methodology

The evaluation of the Euroguidance Network has been a challenging task. The networks are always complex entities[7] calling forth multi-dimensional methodological approach to the subject. The essence of the networks cannot be reached by one-dimensional or approach or by any single method.

The evaluation team developed its evaluation methodology with three main questions in mind. First, the evaluation should be holistic by its nature covering all the levels of the EG Network and its operations and activities as fully as possible keeping in mind the need for holistic interpretations. Second, the evaluation task was regarded to include both the analysis of the developmental path ("lessons to be learned") and the Networks present performance as well as the future challenges of the Network. Third, the complexity of the evaluation task of the EG Network called for interactive nature of the evaluation process reflecting the more general shift in the evaluation discourse towards more reflective and dialogic evaluation interaction in complex network and multi-stakeholder settings in particular.

The need for holism was met by developing the "360 degree" approach to the EG Network as a whole and analysing also the individual Centres accordingly. The "360 degree" approach means that any given organisation or its unit is seen as including except its own inner structure and activities also structures linked with its targets and customers as well as management structures above (the vertical axis). Except vertical dimension the organisations have partners or competitors operating in the same field. This is called the horizontal dimension. The questionnaires were structured reflecting the "360 degree" constellation. Also

---

[6] Spangar, T., Rissanen, P., Arnkil, R., Pitkänen, S. & Vuorinen, R. Euroguidance Network Evaluation. Inception report, Tampere, Finland 31.10. 2003. Unpublished Report.

[7] Kickert, W., J., M., Klijn, H-E, Koppenjan, J.F.M. (1997). Managing complex networks. Strategies for the public sector. London: Sage.

the seven country visits, the interviews and the workshops during the country visits were organised according to the 360 degree methodology.

> In a nutshell, the "360-degree *dialogues*" are workshops where the evaluators (two at a time) act as facilitators in a dialogue workshop. The participants will be, along the 'vertical dimension' the Centre customers and front-line staff as well as the assistant staff and the management level. The 'horizontal dimension' will be invited also to attend the workshop. That is, the partners the Centres are working with and representatives of other organisations working in the same field or in closely related fields. The constellation of the vertical and horizontal dimensions of the Centres constitutes the "360-degree" approach.

The developmental approach was met by producing a separate analysis of the developmental path of the EG Network. Questions on the history of the Centres as well as the future prospects were included in the questionnaires. The emphasis on the future was taken into account in the "future dialogue" workshops organised in the countries visited:

> The "360-degree dialogue" is an assessment of the developmental path and the near future of the Centre. It includes also the "future dimension" as an integral part of it. The future dimension is assessed by interviewing each level of participants (e.g. front-line workers, managers) in rounds. The participants are asked to move in their minds to the future (e.g. to the year 2006) and memorise back to the present how things with Centre have evolved. The instruction contains the idea that the development has been successful and the participants are asked how it became possible from their perspective.

The request for dialogue and interactive approach was met by arranging the country visits in a dialogic manner, providing the evaluation steering group with the possibility to comment the draft versions of the questionnaires, the country visit programmes, and by presenting a work-in-progress paper at the mid-term seminar in March 2004 in Brussels, for example.

The evaluation effort has been a process where the role of the evaluation team and its continuous reflections has been decisive for the outcome of the evaluation. The team created its initial conception of the Network through the process of creating the bid, by participating in the Network meeting in Berne in September 2003 and by preparing in the Inception report. The initial conception of the Network was checked against the empirical observations, the main methods having been the country visits and the three surveys. The evaluation process has been a continuous shift from initial conceptions to empirical observations and revising the conceptualisations of the Network and back to new empirical observations. Shotter[8] calls this kind of back-and-forth continuous movement between interpretations and empirical observations "two-way-interactive mode of investigation".

In all, the evaluation methodology may be called "Emergent Dialogue Evaluation"[9]. The Emergent Dialogue Evaluation approach is developed for evaluating organisations and policy-making constellations characterised by multi-stakeholder and complex network structures. Emergent Dialogue Evaluation is an integrated approach drawing on realist, constructivist, evidence based and knowledge management approaches in evaluation and has been developed and tested in practice in several major evaluations over the years.[10]

---

[8] Shotter, J. (1992). "Getting in touch": The meta-methodology of a postmodern science of mental life. In Kvale, S. (Ed.). Psychology and Postmodernism. London: Sage.
[9] Arnkil, R., Spangar, T., Nieminen, J., Rissanen, P., Kaakinen, J. (2002). Emergent evaluation and learning in multi-stakeholder settings. Seville. 5th Biennial Conference of the EES.
[10] Arnkil, R & Spangar, T. Does information communicate? Evaluation of the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work. http://agency.osha.eu.int/publications/other/.

"Emergent" refers to the core nature of these constellations describing their non-linear and often unpredictable, emergent development. "Dialogue" refers to the fact recent years have witnessed a proliferation of dialogic, participatory and "empowering" approaches in research, consultation and also evaluation. There is a need in organisations and network for structured dialogues in order to enhance the communication within the networks as well as between the networks and the stakeholders.

The Emergent Dialogue Evaluation approach is a reflective and reflexive interpretation process aiming at thorough, "thick", description and assessment of the evaluation subject. The interpretations develop phase-by-phase manner into a deeper understanding the subject, reaching finally a "saturation point". The present report describes the "saturation point" reached by the evaluation team. It aims at telling the reasons for the interpretations and conclusions as openly as possible following thus Mishler's[11] account of the good practice in an interpretive study.

The main evaluation methods have been the country visits (seven countries and their EG Centres were visited), three surveys for the Centres themselves, the client groups (mostly guidance counsellors and educational professionals), and the national authorities. Also the key management staff and EU administrators in Brussels were interviewed. A mid-term seminar was organised for the Network Members and national authorities in Brussels in March 2004. Furthermore, the Centres' annual reports and annual working plans, as well as relevant policy documents, having been documented at the relevant points in the text, have been analysed as bases for the interpretations and reflections.

The evaluation task being two-fold the perspectives on the present as well as on the future were integrated in all the methods used. The three questionnaires all included questions assessing the current activities of the Network as well as question about its possible future development. The country visits were two-day visits the first day assessing the present situation through interviews carried out individually or in groups. The second day of the country visit included the future dialogue workshop with the main focus on the future and the developmental path towards it.

---

[11] Mishler, E.G. (1990). Validation in inquiry-guided research: The role of exemplars in narrative studies. Harward Educational Review, 60 (4), 415-442.

3. ASSESSMENT OF THE PERFORMANCE THE EUROGUIDANCE NETWORK

The present chapter lays out the foundations for assessing the themes relevant for answering the first main evaluation question of the added value of the Euroguidance Network. The assessment is based on summarising the results of the three surveys – i.e. questionnaires addressed to the Centres themselves, to their client groups and to the national authorities - used in the evaluation.[12] The surveys were carried out as e-mail questionnaires, which covered the main aspects of the mission and activities as well as the future perspectives of the national Centres and the Euroguidance network. The chapter summarises also the main observations of the seven country visits to the national Centres. The survey results and the observations of the country visits lay the background for discussing the EG Networks activities in relation to the Terms of Reference regulating its operations as well as summarising the answers to the first evaluation question.

3.1. The Centres', their clients' and national authorities' perspectives on the Euroguidance Network

3.1.1 Self-assessment of the national Centres of their current activities

Altogether 35 Centres replied to the survey the turnout being 97 percent. Only the Centre in Luxemburg decided not to return the questionnaire. The Centre in Switzerland was among the centres replying to the survey, however, they were excluded from further analysis while Switzerland and SOL have only a observer status in the network. This means that finally altogether 34 centres were included in the analysis.

The extension of the Euroguidance network to the Central and Eastern European Countries started officially in the 1998/99. In order to determine whether there are differences between the old and new members some comparative analyses were carried out breaking the sample in two categories according to the Centres' integration phase into the network. Those centres which have recently joined the Euroguidance network are operating in the following countries: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic and Slovenia. Except for the candidate countries, Bulgaria and Romania, the rest of these new members of Euroguidance network joined the EU on May 1st 2004.

The sample is too small to allow any reliable in-depth quantitative analysis – *in statistical terms* - to be carried out. However, baring this limitation in mind, some comparisons between the old and the new members of the network have been made.

Organisational position

In Table 2 the organisational position of the national centers is introduced. Considering the sample as a whole, close links with ministries appear to be the most common status of the Centers and the Ministries of Education appear most frequently as the hosting organization for them followed by the Ministries of Labour. More than 4/5 of the centers function either as departments of these ministries or as autonomous institutions under them, nine percent of the Centres being hosted jointly by the two ministries.

---

[12] Only the main outcomes of the statistical analysis of survey data are introduced in this Chapter; additional results as well as the questionnaires are presented in Appendix 1.

Table 1. Organisational position of the national Centres

	Old member in the network	New member in the network	Total
a department of Ministry of education	4	1	5
an autonomous institution under Ministry of education	7	4	11
a department of the Ministry of Labour	0	2	2
an autonomous institution under the Ministry of Labour	4	2	6
a department of some other Ministry	2	0	2
some other form of organisation	2	3	5
an autonomous institution under ministry of labour &education	2	1	3
Total	21	13	34

An additional six percent of the Centres work under some other ministries and the option "some other form of organization" was selected by 15 percent of them. Comparison between the old and the new member centres presents a couple of interesting differences; among the old members the Ministries of Education dominate as hosting organisation whereas in the new member countries the role of the Ministries of Labour and the non-governmental organisations is more pronounced in this respect. In general it appears that non-governmental organizations or agencies as hosting organizations are quite rare among the national Centers.

Size and human resources

The size of the Centres measured as the number of personnel varies between one and 75. The human resources of the Centres do not seem to follow the size of the population of the hosting countries. The majority of the Centres are rather small, a half of them employing less than five persons. A more detailed picture is presented in table 2 below.

Table 2. Number of personnel at the Centres

Persons	Frequency	Percent
1-2	5	15
3-4	12	35
5-6	7	21
7-8	7	21
9-10	2	6
-75	1	3
Total	34	100

It appears to be typical for the Centres that they employ mostly part-time personnel. There are only two Centres employing entirely full-time personnel, approximately 3/5 of the Centres employ both part-time and full-time personnel, and almost 2/5 of them rely totally on part-time employees. (Refer also to Appendix 1, Table 2.)

Educational and professional background of the personnel

Most of the national centres gave a very detailed description of the educational and professional background of their personnel. Approximately two thirds of the Centres employ at least one person with a qualification in education or pedagogy having either a tertiary degree in education or a diploma in guidance and counselling. Another common background is a degree in psychology. At least one third of the national centres employ one or two psychologist. All of them have previous working experience as vocational counsellors in private or public institutions or they have done research in the field of vocational education and counselling.

There are also a great number of people with a degree in social sciences working in the national centres. Most of them have work experience in the field of education or in employment services. Some of the Centres employ also librarians. In addition to the guidance and educational professionals the Centres employ also administrative and supporting staff. These employees include accountants, information specialist responsible for maintenance and the development of IT applications, and secretaries.

In conclusion it is justified to state that the personnel of the Centres is highly qualified both regarding their educational background and their working experience in the field of education and training and to certain extend also the field of guidance.

Products and services

One of the evaluation questions was focused on mapping out the variety of products and services the Centres provide and assessing their importance. The results of the Centres' self-assessment are presented in Figure 1. The top tree products or services are in rank order internet websites/portals, replying to enquiries, and publications and reports. Increased use of information and communication technologies by the Centres has been reported also in previous evaluations[13]. However, the surveys conducted for this evaluation suggest that over a rather short period internet websites and portals have surpassed the other forms of electronic provision in popularity (e.g. cd-roms, email-lists, online databases). Observations made during the country visits further confirm this trend. Nevertheless, also publications and reports are still regarded as essential products. Perhaps surprisingly, journals and organising international placements have only a marginal role in the Centres' portfolio as compared to the other products and services.

---

[13] E.g. the Centres' self-evaluation conducted by the Commission a few years ago.

Figure 1: The Centres' self-assessment of the importance of their products and services[14]
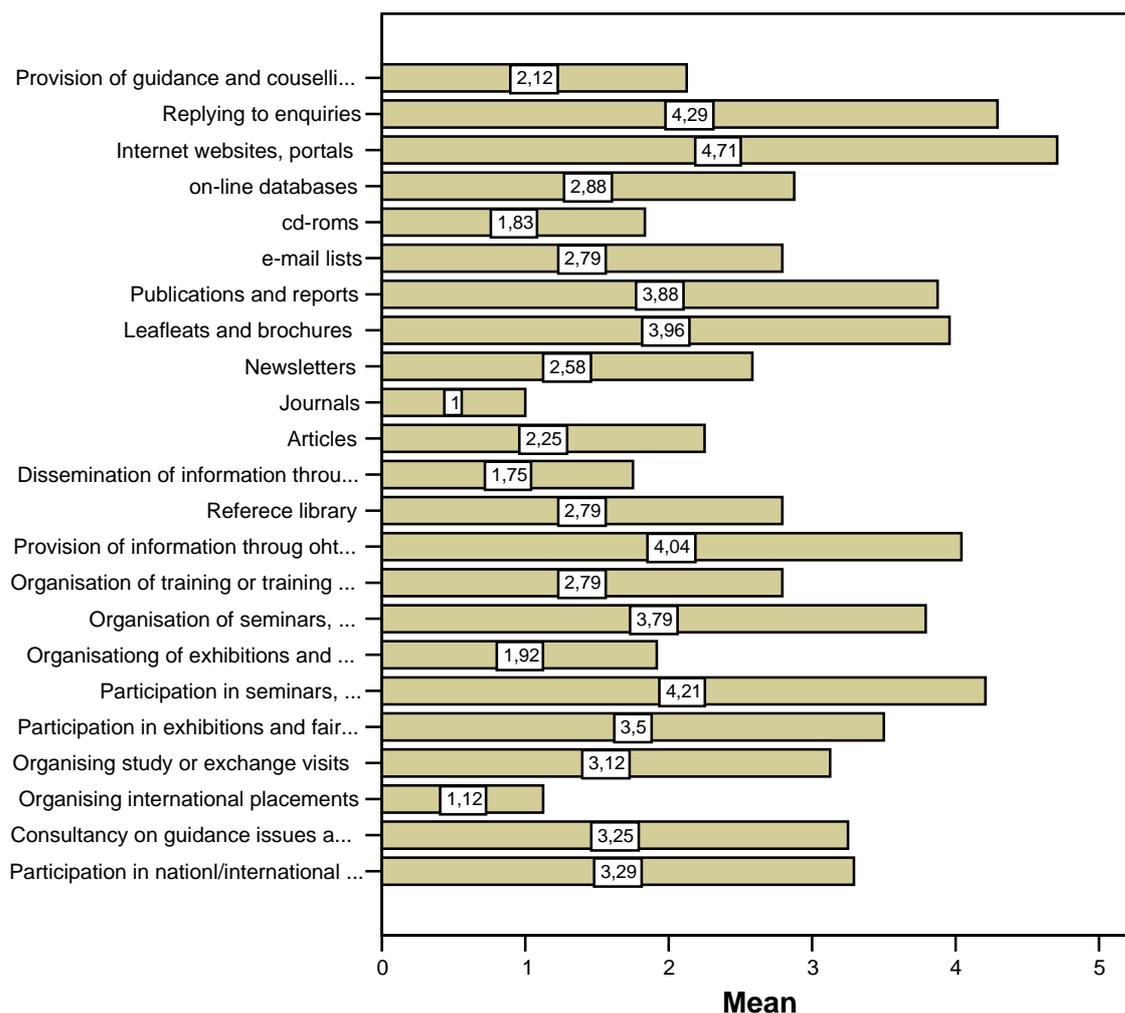
The above figures indicate that the Centres' portfolio of products and services corresponds well with their objectives as they have been defined in the Terms of Reference for the NRCVG network. The promotion of European dimension in education and guidance as well as the development of guidance provisions and information functions occupy the central stage in the operations of the National Centres, whereas the direct promotion of international mobility (e.g. international placements) plays only a marginal role in their activities.

A comparison of the importance of the various products and services was carried out between the old and new members of the network; the results are presented in the following Table**.**

---

[14]   The scale used in measuring the importance: 5= very important … 1=marginal.

Table 3. Importance of the products and services - a comparison of old and new members.

	Old members in the network	New members in the network
	Mean	**Mean**
Provision of guidance and couselling service	2,35	2,17
Replying to enquiries	4,05	4,31
Internet websites, portals	4,55	4,85
on-line databases	2,79	2,15
cd-roms	1,68	2,69
e-mail lists	2,83	3,08
Publications and reports	4	4,25
Leafleats and brochures	3,8	4,25
Newsletters	2,74	2,83
Journals	1,22	1,25
Articles	2	2,92
Dissemination of information throug other means	1,6	2,55
Referece library	2,67	2,77
Provision of information throug ohter means	3,95	3,85
Organisation of training or training modules as a part of training programmes	3,25	2
Organisation of seminars, conferences, workshops and meetings	3,45	4,54
Organisationg of exhibitions and career fairs	2	1,85
Participation in seminars, conferences, workshops and meetings	4	4,33
Participation in exhibitions and fairs of other organisations	3,45	3,54
Organising study or exchange visits	3,7	2,85
Organising international placements	1,68	0,83
Consultancy on guidance issues at national/European level	3,5	3,46
Participation in national/international projects	3,25	3,77

(Scale: 5=very important … 1=marginal)

No major differences appear between the old and the new members. However, the old member Centres place more importance than their new partners on 'organisation of training or training modules as a part of training programmes' and 'organisation of study or exchange visits', whereas the new member Centres regard higher 'organisation of seminars, conferences, workshops and meetings'. These are the only statically significant differences between the old and the new members of the Euroguidance network. These differences do, however, not appear as consistent trends within each sub-group. During the country visits it was observed, for instance, that in the new member countries there are Centres, where internet based provisions are more advanced and more widely utilized by customers and target groups than in some of the old member countries.

Customers

The Centres regard guidance counsellors by far as their most important target group followed by national and local authorities, and students and pupils and their parents. Other national and private institutions as well as the other European networks come far behind in importance.

Table 4. Mentioned as one of three most important target groups

Guidance counsellors	27	79 %
National and local authorities	15	44 %
Students, pupils and parents	11	32 %
Educational professionals	9	26 %
Educational institutions	8	24 %
Guidance and counselling org	7	21 %
Individual citizens	6	18 %
Employment services	6	18 %
Other European networks	5	15 %
Other public institutions	1	3 %
Other national private institutions	1	3 %
Other target groups	1	3 %

There is a clear unanimity among the Centres in the old and the new member countries on the position of guidance counsellors as the most important target group. Yet, in relation to other target groups some differences between the new and old member Centres appear. In comparison students and their parents and individual citizens gain more momentum in the old member centres whereas in the new member Centres national and local authorities and educational institutes are regarded higher on the ladder of importance. (Refer to Appendix 1, Table 3.)

These groups and institutions can also be regarded as the main multipliers and mediating structures between the Centres and the end users of their services. The awareness of the Centres' existence and services among these groups is crucial for the Centres to be successful in fulfilling their mission. According to their own assessment, the Centres have been rather successful in reaching the most important targets groups. The figures reflecting the importance of various target groups and the successfulness in reaching them are presented in the following table.

Table 5. Importance of the target groups and successfulness in reaching them.

Target group	Importance	Successfulness
Guidance counsellors	4,70	4,13
Educational professionals	3,63	3,39
Students, pupils and their parents	3,53	3,60
Individual citizens	2,88	3,00
National and local authorities	4,03	4,00
Employment services	3,73	3,68
Educational and training institutions	3,79	3,52
Guidance and counselling organisations	4,10	4,25
Other national public institutions	3,19	3,22
Other national private institutions	1,86	2,24
Other European networks/organisations	4,00	3,92
Other target groups	2,88	3,67

(Scale: 5=very important / very successful … 1=marginal / not reached at all)

The figures reflect the Centres' experience that they have been quite successful in reaching their most important targets groups[15]

Methods used for gathering information on customer satisfaction

In a previous evaluation of the national Centres[16] it appeared that only a minority of the Centres have conducted some form of systematic customer needs or customer satisfaction analysis. The outcome of this survey speaks the same language; the responses indicate that only six the Centres, which responded to this survey (6/34), have carried out actual customer satisfaction surveys. Some of the Centres carry them out on regular basis, others just occasionally.

The most common method to gather information on customer satisfaction is questionnaires or evaluation forms completed by the customers. This method is used for collecting feedback from participants particularly in seminars, conferences, meetings or trainings organised by the centres. Beside these methods most of the Centres receive feedback also through less formal channels.

A variety of ways of using the results of the customer needs and satisfaction information were reported. However, only few concrete examples of the systematic utilisation of this type of feedback information were encountered among the 34 Centres. (For more details refer to Appendix 1.)

Funding

Besides human resources discussed above, sufficient funding is essential for the Centres to be able to perform their functions. The Centres were asked to report the financial resources allocated to them, including financial support from the European Commission as well as national funding and support from other sources. While making comparisons on the budget information, it must be taken into consideration that some of the Centres reported their annual budget while the others their budget for 1,5 year period. Furthermore, there were also Centres, which did not specify the time period they were referring to. The reliability and comparability of these figures is further reduced by the fact that many of the Centres also carry out other functions besides EG activities and only few of them had, in their response, specified the share of their budget allocated for EG function.

According to the survey responses the Centres' financial resources vary from EUR 15 000 to EUR 1 259 900. The average budget of the old member Centres was approximately EUR 385 000, while in the new member Centres it was EUR 104 000. The variation of the funding from the Commission does not reach the same proportions; during the fiscal year 1 July 2002 – 30 June 2003 the Commission's direct funding to individual Centres varied from EUR 60 000 to EUR 87 928. A half of the Centres assessed the funding received from the European Commission and that from national authorities equally important. The rest consider funding from national sources more important than the support from the European Commission.

The overall picture of the Centres' allocation of finances to different operations is presented in Table 6 below. Wages and other personnel costs are by far the most essential expenses. However, among Centres these costs vary from 19 percent to 95 percent suggesting that there are very significant differences between the Centres in their way of organising their operations.

---

[15] These figures reflect the Centres' self-assessment, and since only very few of them have organised systematic follow-up or monitoring of their activities or exercise systematic needs analysis, critical reading of the figures is due. However, also the national authorities assessed this aspect of the centres' activities, and their feedback gives further support to the self-assessment results introduced here (refer to Tables 9 – 11).

[16] E.g. the Centres' self-evaluation conducted by the Commission a few years ago.

Table 6. Allocation of the Centres to different operations.

Operations/costs	%
Wages and other personnel costs	53
Marketing and public relations	8
Products and services	18
electronic materials	*(27)*
printed materials	*(59)*
other products and services	*(14)*
Other activities and operations of the Centre	12
Other costs	9
Total	100

It is rather surprising that on an average the Centres use only approximately 1/5 of their finances on products and services. Printed materials constitute the major share of these costs and less than 1/3 is allocated to electronic materials and services. Based on the assessment of the importance of different types of products and services, discussed above, it would seem justified to expect that a higher proportion of finances would be allocated to products and services, in particular, the electronic services. A couple of further and somewhat speculative comments might be justified. Firstly, it is quite likely that a part of wages and other personnel costs are actually spend on developing products and services, however, it has not been indicated in our data. Secondly, the comparative share of the cost allocated to different types of products and services might partially reflect the cost-efficiency aspect of organising services; it is justified to assume that the modern IT and internet based solutions provide the Centres with more cost-efficient ways of information distribution than the traditional printed materials.[17]

The Centres were also invited to pass an assessment of the cost-effectiveness of their operations. According to their self-assessment the situation is quite good in this respect (mean 4,19 and sd= 0,76 on the scale: 5=excellent … 1=poor).

Best practices and success stories

One of the most important evaluation questions was as to "what is the added value of Euroguidance Network?" In perspective for answering this question the Centres were asked to identify and describe the most important best practices they have developed both at the national and international level. Such themes as best practices in products and services, reaching target groups and quality management as well as networking at national and international level were considered. Many important experiences were cited by the Centres, however, with only very few references to concrete or new best practices. The success stories introduced by the Centres bring some further illumination and validation to the picture on the main aspects of the Centres' operations. The importance of the Euroguidance Network is stressed on several occasions. A detailed presentation of the analysis of best practices and success stories is included in Appendix 1.

---

[17] Besides the questionnaire data the annual reports and other such documents have been analysed for the discussion on funding the Centres' operations and allocation of finances. There are many problems concerning the reliability and comparability of the available data caused, for instance, by the differences in accounting practices. Thus, readers are invited to exercise due critical mind while considering the information and interpretations presented here.

Turning points in the development of the Centre and the Euroguidance Network

The Centres frequently refer to the different phases of the Euroguidance network as turning points having had impact also on the national Centres' development. The most recent change in this respect is the new contact persons in the Commission, which has strengthened the support for the network.

Each enlargement process was also cited as critical incidence having importance for and changing the co-ordination within the network. Institutional or organisational changes in the position of the national Centre were often described as critical turning points. Furthermore, the changes at the national policy level have had critical impact on the development of the national Centre. In their responses the Centres often refer to the increased awareness for educational guidance counselling issues. This aspect was emphasised especially by the Centres in the new or candidate countries, where the centres are actively involved in the development of guidance systems.

The fast development of information technology and the new IT solutions are listed among the most important factors in the development of the Euroguidance network and in activities of the national Centres. The introduction of internet and email has greatly improved the networking capacity of the centres and created new opportunities for co-operation with different stakeholders and new target groups.

Taking the Euroguidance network as a whole, the launching of Ploteus -portal is regarded among the most important turning points. The Centres consider that besides improving information dissemination across borders, the introduction of Ploteus has strengthened the status of the network among national authorities and guidance practitioners as well as within the other European networks. (For further details refer to Appendix 1.)

Future perspectives

When asked to identify some key aspects regarding the future development within the forthcoming 2-3 years the Centres presented a number of ideas concerning both the national Centre and Euroguidance Network as a whole. At the national level two themes seem to dominate; improvements in guidance and counselling are given a high priority as the main aspects of the centres' future development and particularly in the new member countries the importance of the development and extension of co-operation with national authorities is underlined.

Strengthened communication and collaboration at regional and national level within the area of guidance and counselling enjoys high priority in the Centres future plans. In particular, this means networking with guidance professionals and also developing closer links to educational institutions. Developing counselling methods and practical tools for the daily use of guidance practitioners is another aspect of the measures aiming at improved guidance and counselling in the future. Some Centres also wish to participate in organising training for guidance counsellors. Finally, awareness raising among guidance practitioners on the issues concerning international mobility is considered as an essential task in the future.

The Centres place essential importance on the strengthening of the European dimension and the Euroguidance Network as a whole. These aims can be achieved through the promotion of the competences and outputs of the network at national and international level and through increased networking between the national Centres. The Centres have gained good experience of Ploteus-portal, which is regarded as a unifying network product. The proposal of enlarging Ploteus in the direction of an official database for educational possibilities was also put forward and improving the links with other European networks was also considered to be an important aspect in the future development of the Euroguidance network. (For further details refer to Appendix 1.)

3.1.2. The Centres' current activities assessed by their customers

The second questionnaire, aiming at providing information on the familiarity and usefulness of the Centres' services and products, was addressed to the customers of the national Centres. Guidance community, educational and training institutions and employment services as well as the professionals working in these organisations were considered as the Centres' most important customer groups. These organisations function as multipliers or as mediating organisations through which the final beneficiaries, that is students, pupils and their parents and individual citizens receive information on European opportunities. It was our judgement that the representatives of the essential multipliers are in the best position of passing an informed and learned assessment on the Centres' activities, and in order for them to be able to do this the persons actually responding to the questionnaire had to have an active contact with the Centre they were invited to assess. [18]

The questionnaire was mailed to persons named by the national Centres in the survey, addressed to them. Approximately 250 questionnaires were sent to the customers of 32 Centres. Persons representing the customers of 29 national Centres replied and altogether 105 completed questionnaires were returned, thus, the turnout being 42 percent.[19] Almost a half of the respondents (45%) are guidance counsellors and 1/5 of them educational professionals. The occupational and organisational background of the remaining 1/3 of the respondents varies a lot, the representatives of national or local authorities being the largest sub-group in this category followed by employment services and representatives of the other European networks. (Refer to Appendix 1, Tables 4 and 5.)

The questionnaire included questions concerning the activities of the Centre in general and also questions, which were focused on particular products and serviced specified by each national Centre. The questions covered also the future perspectives. (For the questionnaire refer to Appendix 1.)

The overall "grade" which the Centres get for their performance from their customers is "good", the mean value being 3,86 on the scale 1 to 5 (5= excellent ...1=poor). The customers also report that they are fairly well informed about the activities of their national Centre (mean 3,88 on the scale: 5= very well informed … 1= hardly at all).

Product and services

There seems to be a great consensus between the Centres and their customers on the importance of the products and services.[20] It appears that in order of importance the customers rank high internet websites and on-line databases, publications and reports produced by the Centre as well as organisation and participation in seminars, conferences, workshops and meetings. Furthermore, consultancy on guidance

---

[18] This sampling strategy does, of course, not follow the guidelines of proper survey logic. However, it should be made clear here that this evaluation is based on the triangulation of a variety of methods and materials and that customer survey is only one of many sources of information, which the evaluation results rely on. For instance, cross-checking the results of the customer survey with the assessment by the representatives of the national authorities we can expect to reach fairly reliable (although not strictly in statistical terms) picture of the state of affairs under consideration. Before drawing the final conclusions the survey results have been validated further with the interviews and observations made during the country visits.

[19] It is worth of noticing that 14 persons refused to reply the most common argument being that the organisation, which they represent, does not consider itself to be a customer but rather a co-ordination partner of the national Centre. Also some of the persons, who did contribute to the survey, wanted to emphasise this same aspect.

[20] The similarity of the profiles can be seen while comparing the numbers in Figure 1 – the Centres' self-assessment - and Figure 2 – clients' assessment.

issues at national and European level is considered to be an important task for the Centres. It is interesting to consider that although the Centres in their self-assessment regarded organising study and exchange visits and international placements as rather marginal aspect of their activities, the customers' appreciation of these services is noticeable. On the customers' list the lowers scores of importance fall on cd -roms, journals and reference library. These observations seem to suggest that in the clients' world a shift from the more traditional towards the new internet based methods is in progress.

Figure 2. Importance of products and services.[21]
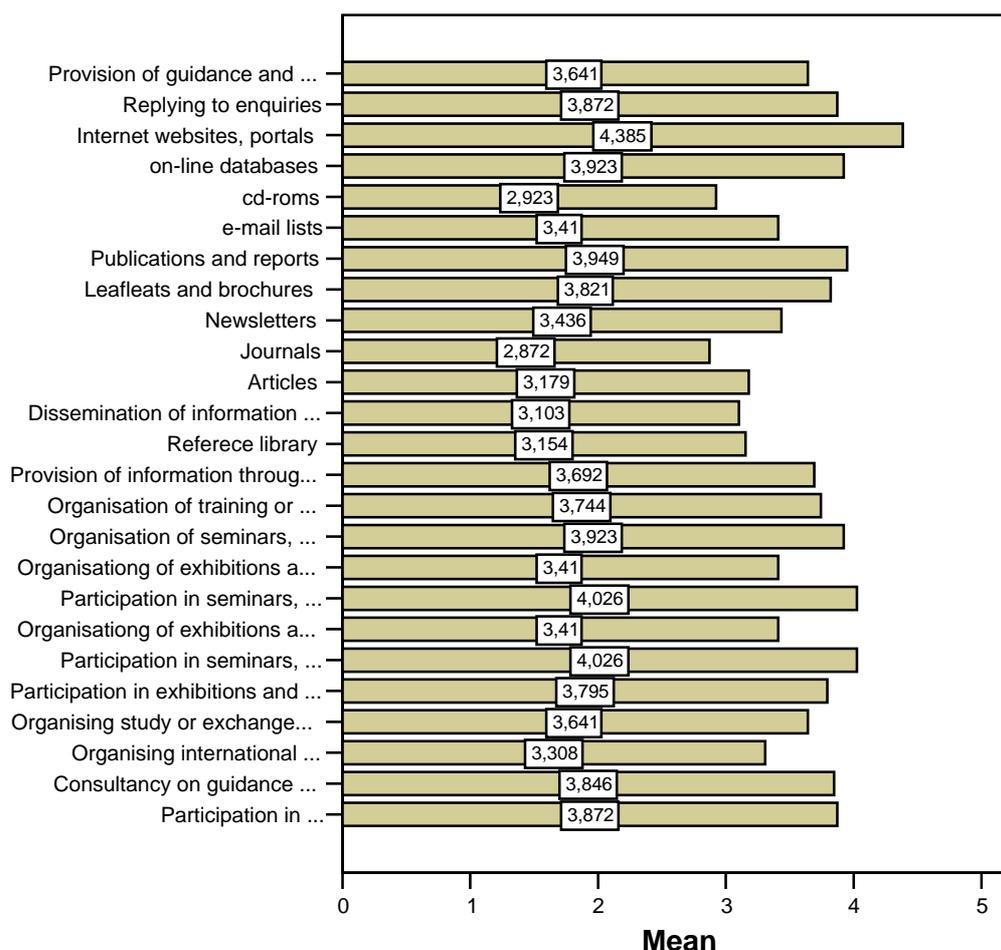
Internet websites, the Centres' publications and reports as well as leaflets and brochures produced by the Centres are the most frequently used products among customers; 70 % of the respondents use internet websites and portals on regular basis and a half of them also read the Centres' publication and reports regularly. Leaflets and brochures are read regularly by 2/5 of the respondents.

Country specific products and services

In the survey addressed to the national Centres, they were invited to specify their main products and services for the assessment by their customers. Every one of the Centres referred to Ploteus –portal as one of their most important services and also the Centres'

---

[21] The scale used in measuring the importance: 5=very important …. 1=marginal.

homepages were commonly included on this list. However, a wide variety appears with the rest of the specified products and services. While considering the list provided by the national Centre the customers were asked to assess the familiarity and usefulness of a specific product and also indicate how regularly they use it.

a) Ploteus

The results of the customer survey are very pleasing; 88 percent of respondents are familiar with the Ploteus –portal, and almost every one of those customers, who are familiar with it, also have used it at least occasionally, many of them even regularly. An interesting observation is that among guidance counsellors the frequency of regular users is quit high; 1/3 of them have used Ploteus on regularly basis. Customers also seem to appreciate the usefulness of Ploteus. The majority of them (60%) assess Ploteus to be important or very important for their work while only 14 percent of them consider the usefulness of Ploteus as marginal or rather marginal in this respect.

b) Other products and services

The products, which the customers are most familiar with, are the Centres' own homepages. Almost every one of the respondents (97%) is familiar with and 56 percent of them visit the homepage of their national Centre regularly. Those who visit the homepages regularly also consider it to be very important for them and their work (mean 4,49 on the scale 1 to 5). Only 10 percent of the respondents consider the usefulness of the homepage of their national Centre to be rather marginal or marginal.

The great variety that occurs among the rest of the specified products and services makes their comparison rather problematic. Nevertheless, it seems justified to state that those products and services are fairly well known among the Centres' customers. For all the items included in the list of particular products and services the familiarity level is ¾ of the customers or even more. Although the share of regular users is not as high as with internet application and Ploteus-portal, yet it is approximately 40 percent of the respondents. Customers' assessment of the usefulness of these products and services is at the same level as the usefulness of Ploteus-portal and internet homepages of the Centre.

Overlapping of the products and services

Besides the Euroguidance network there is a plenty other European networks and producers providing information on and dealing with the issues related to education, training and working opportunities in Europe. It seems to be fairly common among the customers of the national Centres that they also use products or services provided by some other organisation than the Euroguidance network; 48 percent of all the respondents and approximately 2/3 of guidance counsellors have taken advantage of this opportunity. (For further details refer to Appendix 1, Table 6.)

Those customers, who have used similar products or services, referred most frequently to internet websites and databases as well as publications and reports, however, only in few cases they mention the specific website or publication. National ministries or local authorities are often named as providers of these 'alternative' products and services, and references are also made to the other European networks, such as Eurodesk, Eures and NRP.

A great majority of customers (66 %) consider the alternative products and services to be equally useful as compared to the ones of the national Centre and Euroguidance network. However, there is a considerable group of respondents (26 %) assessing the alternative products and services to be more useful and only a small minority (8%) regarding them less useful. Furthermore, it appears that all of those respondents who consider the alternative products to be more useful are guidance counsellors, which suggest that approximately a half of this group, perhaps the most important target group of the Centres, express their greater appreciation for the alternative products and services.

Future perspectives

As the closing part of the customer survey, an analysis was carried out on the needs for information and the appropriate means of information dissemination in the future. A variety of aspects of the European dimension and mobility issues were considered. The main outcomes are presented below.

  a) Need for the information on mobility related themes

A tendency of growing need for information can be expected on all aspects of mobility, as the figures in Table 7 indicate. In the customers' predictions, information on training and working opportunities in Europe scores particularly high.

Table 7. Share of the respondents predicting the growth of the need for information in the future.

Need for information on:	%
Educational systems throughout the Europe	69
Training opportunities throughout the Europe	80
Working opportunities throughout the Europe	79
Counselling methods	66

Only a quarter of the respondents referred to other themes or matters than those already mentioned above. However, it is worth mentioning that particularly the customers of the new members of Euroguidance network emphasize the need of the qualification requirements for counsellors and quality of guidance systems as an essential issue. Information on guidance and counselling on the internet as well as information on multi-cultural issues were also mentioned. Finally, the respondents predict the need for the information on the recognition of diplomas to grow in the future.

  b) Methods used in providing information

The fast development of different kinds of internet applications over the past few years has changed dramatically the nature of information dissemination. This development has obviously been recognised by the Centres' customers; 78 percent of them predict the need for the electronic provision to grow also in the future while only 41 percent believe that the need for information in printed form would increase any further. The majority of customers (64%) recognise also a growing need for training/ training modules. In particular, the educational professionals emphasise these methods.

Table 8. Share of the respondents predicting the growth of the need for the following methods.

	%
Electronic provision of information	78
Provision of information in printed form	39
Seminars, meetings, conferences	48
Training/ training modules	64

Besides the above methods only few other means of information dissemination were mentioned. Yet, more extensive use of public media and a greater need for study or exchange visits were proposed.

3.1.3. National authorities' point of view

The third survey was addressed to the national authorities. E-mail questionnaires were sent to the participants of the Euroguidance network spring 2004 meeting in Brussels as well as to the representatives of national ministries named by the Centres. Altogether 27 countries were represented in the sample and 21 respondents from 16 countries returned a completed questionnaire. Among these countries are eleven old and fife new members of the Euroguidance network. More than 4/5 of the respondents represent the Ministries of Education or other educational authorities at national level and the remaining 14 percent are representatives of the Ministries of Labour.

European dimension in national policy

The core aspects of the mission of the Euroguidance network seem to enjoy quite high recognition in the national policies of the member countries. The representatives of national authorities were invited to assess the importance of the three specific themes reflecting the mission of the Euroguidance network. These themes were: "promotion of European dimension in guidance services", "promotion of international mobility", and "dissemination of information on educational and labour market opportunities in Europe".

All of these three themes are assessed to be relevant for the national policies.[22] Dissemination of information on education and labour market opportunities was considered to be the most important of the three themes; 71 percent of the respondents consider it to be important or very important within national policy. Promotion of European dimension in guidance services was ranked second with 62 percent of the respondents regarding it important or very important, and the promotion of international mobility following closely the other two themes with 57 percent rating. There seems to be a broad consensus on the importance of these themes as a part of national policies, since only single respondents considered them to be marginal or rather marginal in this respect.

Many of the Centres seem to be quite influential on the national policymaking scene since 62 % of the national authorities assess the activities of the Centres having had noticeable impact on national policy making. The development of national guidance strategy and the reform in guidance systems are just two concrete examples of the areas of influence. (For further details refer to Appendix 1.)

Assessment of the national resource centres performance

The overall assessment by the national authorities of the performance of the national Centre in their country is quite positive; ¾ of the respondents considered the performances of the Centres as good or excellent.[23] Despite the positive feedback on their performance, many representatives of the national authorities (62%) would like to support some changes in the organisational position as well as the objectives and tasks of the Centres. The main trend of the suggested changes points towards a broader scope of the Centres' responsibilities both on the domestic front and at the international scene. At home the Centres are expected to take greater and more active role in the development of guidance provisions and methods and the guidance community besides concentrating on information dissemination. Furthermore, many respondents are indicating a need for the strengthening of coordination between different networks both at home and internationally.

---

[22] Statistics of the ratings: "Dissemination of information on education and labour market opportunities" (mean 3,81 and sd 1,03); "Promotion of European dimension in guidance services" (mean 3,62 and sd= 1,11); "Promotion of international mobility" (mean 3,62 and sd= 0,97). The scale used in measuring: 5=very important … 1=marginal.
[23] On the scale 1-5 (*5=excellent…1=poor)* the mean value for all the Centres is 3,74 (sd= 0,99).

Stakeholder and target group relations

The national authorities assessment is also quite positive regarding the visibility of the Centres among their main stakeholders and target groups, and the recognition they receive from these groups. In these respects the Centres' rapport with guidance counsellors and guidance community seems to be particularly good; altogether 4/5 of respondents consider that the national Centres have been successful or very successful in getting recognition from this client group. The situation is not as good with educational and training institutions and some critical concern is quite justified considering the Centres' visibility among students, pupils and their parents. (Refer to Tables 9 and 10)

Table 9. The Centres' visibility among their stakeholders and target groups.

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Share of Option 5 and 4 %
Guidance counsellors and guidance community	3,81	1,07	67
National authorities	3,38	1,11	52
Educational and training institutions	3,33	1,11	48
Students, pupils and their parents	2,62	0,92	14

(Scale: 5=very good, 4=good, 3= in between, 2= satisfactory, 1=poor)

Table 10. The Centres' successfulness in getting recognition from their stakeholders and target groups.

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Share of Options 5 and 4 %
Guidance counsellors and guidance community	3,95	1,11	81
National authorities	3,33	1,11	52
Educational and training institutions	3,14	1,1	43
Students, pupils and their parents	2,95	1,2	29

(Scale: 5=very successful, 4=successful, 3= in between, 2= satisfactory,1=poor)

Public employment services and working life in general were mentioned in four questionnaires as other stakeholder and client groups. According to these responses the visibility of the national Centres is good among these target groups and the Centres also receive recognition from them.

The national authorities assessment of the Centres' successfulness in reaching their main target groups follows the above lines. On an average the rating of the successfulness is "good" except for students and their parents. The Centres' successfulness in creating active contacts with the guidance community is regarded particularly positively by the national authorities.

Table 11. The Centres' successfulness in reaching their target groups.

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Share of Options 5 and 4 %
Guidance counsellors and guidance community	3,86	1,1	76
National authorities	3,38	1,07	52
Educational and training institutions	3,24	1,17	52
Students, pupils and their parents	2,71	1,14	19

(Scale: 5=very successful, 4=successful, 3= in between, 2= satisfactory,1=poor)

In some responses working life including the public employment services and employers were mentioned as other important target groups and stakeholders, and the respondents' assessment was once again very good.

In this evaluation the guidance community has been regarded as an essential – perhaps the most important – multiplier organisation of the Euroguidance network. It is the assessment of the national authorities that the Centres have been very successful both in reaching this client group and getting recognition from it. Bearing in mind the somewhat lower achievement with the other client groups and client organisations, it is justified to conclude that the Centres are on the right track and as far as their client organisation relations are concerned they have a good foundation for a positive future development.

The Centres' activities, products and services

As mentioned above, the national authorities gave good overall assessment on the performance of the National Centres. The national authorities regard the production and dissemination of information on work, study and training opportunities by far as the most important function of the Euroguidance network and the National Centres. In this respect the authorities expectations are fully in line with the Terms of Reference of the NRCVG network.

Table 12. The Centres' activities in order of importance assessed by national authorities.

	The most important option %	The second important option %	The third important option %
Producing and providing information on work, study and training opportunities in Europe	71	24	5
Developing guidance and/or counselling services	19	48	33
Promoting international mobility	10	29	62

The Centres' successfulness in performing various functions receives positive feedback from the national authorities. In particular, the success with producing and promoting information on working, study and training opportunities gets very positive recognition; ¾ of the respondents give the rating successful or very successful to the Centres on this function. In rank order developing guidance and counselling services reach the second place followed by promotion of international mobility as the least important one of the three main aspects of the Centres' operations studied in this survey.

Table 13. The Centres' successfulness in performing various functions

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Share of Options 5 and 4 %
Producing and providing information on work, study and training opportunities	4,05	0,97	74
Promoting international mobility	3,45	1,19	60
Developing guidance and/or counselling services	3,21	1,08	42

(Scale: 5=very successful, 4=successful, 3= in between, 2= satisfactory,1=poor)

Regarding the Centres' products and services the national authorities consider the usefulness of electronic information provision very positively; 86 percent of the respondents give rating good or very good to the Centres' electronic products and services. Also the other forms of information dissemination get positive feedback, whereas the usefulness of training and training modules is not as highly appreciated among the national authorities as the information provisions.

Table 14. Usefulness of the Centres' products and services assessed by national authorities.

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Share of Options 5 and 4 %
Electronic provision of information	4,19	0,98	86
Information in printed form	3,90	1,30	67
Seminars, meetings, conferences	3,65	1,13	60
Training/ training modulus	2,89	0,145	33

(Scale: 5=very good, 4=good, 3= in between, 2= satisfactory, 1=poor)

Throughout the three surveys one trend seems to surface; the Centres, their customers and the national authorities regard the information function as the most important task of the Centres. Having approached this matter from different angles we are able to conclude that the Centres have also been quite successful in performing this function. The Centres have produced a variety of information materials – both in printed form and as electronic provisions. There obviously is some variation in the quality of the materials but their overall

usefulness is assessed very positively both by customers and the national authorities. All parties seem to be unanimous of the current shift from the printed materials to internet based solutions; these solutions are regarded as very useful and an efficient way of disseminating information.[24]

Performance of the Euroguidance network and its relationship to other European networks

A great majority of the representatives of the national authorities (81 %) recognise the importance of the Euroguidance network.[25] However, the share of those who assess the network having been successful in fulfilling its mission is smaller (60%).[26] The national authorities regard the exchange of information, good practices and new methods in the field of guidance to be the main added value of the Euroguidance network from the national point of view**.** Particularly important has the network's impact been in raising the awareness of the European dimension in the field of guidance and counselling and within the guidance community.

The Euroguidance network and the Centres as its national units get funding from a variety sources the main financing coming from Leonardo da Vinci –programme. In their opinion on the sufficiency of the present financial resources of the network, the national authorities are sharply divided 53 percent of them considering the financial resources to be sufficient or even very sufficient while 47 percent of the representatives regard the resources to be rather scarce.

While passing a judgement on the right role and place of the Euroguidance network, its connections with the other European networks ought to be analysed.[27] National authorities widely share the opinion that the networks overlap. However, majority of them consider that overlapping has not weakened the recognition or the position of the Euroguidance network. Eurodice and Enic-Naric are most frequently referred to as the ones with problems of overlap, but also Eures, Eurodesk and NRP, Refernet as well as even some national organisations were mentioned in this context. (For more detail refer to Appendix 1.)

The overlapping of the networks is considered not to cause any major problems since every network has its specific mission and characteristics. For instance, Euroguidance network is the only one dealing with guidance issues. As medicine to the overlap problem the national authorities recommend more centralised coordination of the networks.

---

[24] During the country visits also these aspects of the Centres' activities were analysed. These observations give further support to the above conclusion. It should be added here that there seem to be observable differences between the Centres in their enthusiasm and pro activeness towards utilizing and developing the internet based solutions.
[25] Mean value of the importance of the network is 4,2 on scale 5=very important … 1=marginal, sd= 0,873.
[26] Mean value for the successfulness of the Network in fulfilling its mission is 3,6 on scale 5=very successful..1=poor, sd= 0,93.
[27] This theme will be discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 3.3.

Table 15. The possible future options for the Euroguidance network - recommendations of the national authorities.

	The most preferred option %	The second preferred option %	The third preferred option %
Euroguidance and the other networks should have a steering umbrella organisation	60	30	10
Euroguidance should retain its autonomous position in relation to the other networks	35	30	35
The activities of the Euroguidance network and the other networks should be integrated	5	40	55

Among the national authorities, the most favoured option for the Euroguidance network is that it should have a semi-autonomous position under a common policymaking and steering umbrella organisation with the other networks. The total integration of the networks receives hardly any support from the national authorities.

3.1.4. Closing remarks

Three surveys were carried out as e-mail questionnaires in order for getting information and feedback from the national resource centres and their clients as well as from national authorities. The outcome of these surveys has been presented and briefly discussed on the preceding pages. The overall picture that emerges from this data on the performance of the national Centres and the Euroguidance network as a whole is rather positive and, furthermore, the triangulation of the three sets of data produces an outcome indicating that there is a great consensus on most aspects of the Centres' mission and activities between the Centres, their clients and the national authorities.

In the inception report, two main evaluation questions with a set of sub-questions were defined for this exercise. The first one of the questions was formulated as: *What is the added value of Euroguidance Network in promoting international mobility of citizens and in promoting European dimension in guidance and counselling?*

The national Centres regard guidance counsellors by far as the most important client group followed by national and local authorities and educational and training institutions. These groups and institutions can also be regarded as the main multipliers and mediating structures between the centres and the end users of their services. The awareness of the centres' existence and services among these groups is crucial for them to be successful in fulfilling their mission. According to their own assessment, the centres have been quite successful in reaching their most important targets groups. This point of view is supported also by the national authorities' survey and the client survey.

One of the main outcomes of the three surveys is that promotion of European dimension as well as the guidance development and information functions in general occupy the central stage in the operations of the national centres, whereas the direct promotion of international mobility plays only a marginal role in their activities. Further elaboration suggests that this picture also corresponds closely with the national authorities assessment of the importance of these issues within the national policies. As policy perspectives, the dissemination of information and promotion of European dimension in guidance services is given priority over enhancing international mobility.

These functions are enhanced through a number of different types of products and services. According to the national Centres, the top four products or services they provide are internet websites/portals, replying to enquiries as well as publications and reports, and participation in seminars and conferences. Increased use of information and communication technologies by the Centres has been reported already in previous evaluations. However, the surveys conducted for this evaluation seem to suggest that over a rather short period internet solutions and websites have surpassed in popularity the other electronic provision. Nevertheless, also printed materials are still regarded as essential products.

The great majority of the Centres' customers are familiar with Ploteus portal and, in particular, with the centres' own homepages. The clients also highly appreciate the usefulness of these products, in particular, the centres' homepages and the links they provide.

The other types of products and services also enjoy an extensive familiarity among the centres' target groups. Their overall usefulness is recognised and their regular users assess them as very useful. Besides the products and services of the national centres, majority of the centres' customers are familiar with and use similar resources provided by other producers. In comparison the usefulness of the national Centres' products and services is assessed extensively as equal to the alternative products and services.

As far as the usefulness issue is concerned, the feedback from the national authorities is in line with the clients' experience. In particular, the Centres' electronic information services but also printed materials as well as seminars and workshops are regarded as useful by the national authorities. These assessments have been further validated in the meetings and interviews with the representatives of clients, stakeholders, partners, and national authorities, which were conducted as elements of the country case studies.

As a conclusion of the surveys it may be state that the operations of the national Centres are in line with the aims of Euroguidance network as presented in the annual working plan for years 2001 – 2002 (Terms of Reference). Through the triangulation based on a variety of sources of information we have been able to create a picture suggesting that the efforts of the national Centres have been productive. The variety of types of products and services provided by them are appreciated by their clients and are given full recognition by the national authorities. It seems obvious that on the national level the added value of the Euroguidance Network lies here; with the support of the network the national resource Centres have been able to provide their main clients with such information services which have both met their vital needs and promoted awareness of the European dimension within the guidance community and among guidance and educational professionals.

The surveys have brought some perspectives also to the issues concerning the Euroguidance network as a whole. These themes, touched in a preliminary manner in this chapter, will be discussed more thoroughly in the forthcoming chapter 3.3.

3.2. Euroguidance Network in the light of country visits

Country visits were conducted via two-day visits by two evaluators to each country. First day was devoted to key person interviews, individuals and teams. The main themes on the first day were the organisational arrangements, performance and products of the EG-Centre. The second day was devoted to the future of the Centre and Euroguidence efforts, and this was explored via a future dialogue workshop. The team(s) of the Centre(s) and representatives of key stakeholders and partners were invited to a one-day workshop. Typical participants besides the Centre team were representatives from the Boards, Ministries, collaboration partners and the guidance community.

The evaluators acted as facilitators of a discussion, where the future of the Centre and the Network was explored by asking two basic questions from the participants:

(1) Suppose we move into the future, two years from now, and the Centre has developed successfully from your point of view. Could you tell what has happened?

(2) What were your worries about the development of the Centre two years ago (i.e. in fact the day the workshop was taking place), and what helped to alleviate those worries?

The future workshops were very well received in the case-countries. It was an opportunity to explore the future, to get to know the perspectives of others, and in many instances it was the first time such a crowd gathered to discuss the Euroguidance Centre and the Network. The very clear enthusiasm on this method indicated to us that such dialogue workshops and benchlearning could be used fruitfully in the Network in the future.

Besides the country visits, also material of the Centres were studied, plus the survey material.

3.2.1. Purpose of the country visits

The country visits were aiming neither at an exhaustive description and analysis of the countries, nor a comparison of performance as such. Rather, they act here as a basis for developing the evaluation hypothesis and understanding of the functioning of the Euroguidance network. A country-level performance comparison proper goes beyond the assignment and resources of this evaluation.[28] The Tender Specifications for the evaluation regard the nature of the country visits as providing the evaluators with an opportunity to familiarise with the everyday work of the Network[29].

A number of countries were selected for country visits to help to understand the realities and challenges of the Network. The countries selected were Germany, UK, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Finland, and Estonia.

On the basis of the history of the EG-network, earlier materials of the Network and the Questionnaire used by the evaluators, it was quite evident that the societal contexts, complexity of structures and development levels of guidance systems and thus the challenges and relevant next steps differ from country to country.

The selection of country visits aimed at capturing, at least in relative terms, this *divergence* of guidance contexts and challenges within the EU. In our sample there are also old and new member states, and big and small countries from each group. By analysing the country visits, the evaluators arrived at five *analytical types*, where EG-centres operate. The truth of the matter is more complex, to be sure, but even this limited exercise can be helpful in understanding some of the fundamental differences of the situations facing the Centres, and helping to clarify the role the Network vis-à-vis the different situations. Understanding the differences can also be helpful in avoiding oversimplified conclusions about effectiveness and efficiency. Probably comparing effectiveness and efficiency between countries/centres which have a similar situation, i.e. using them as *control pairs* could be useful in the future, in order to keep some major background variables, like the development level of multipliers and the guidance community, in relative terms, constant.

---

[28] Recent concrete country description by OECD refer to http://www.oecd.org/EN/links_abstract/ and by CEDEFOP refer to
http://www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/Projects_Networks/Guidance/Career_Guidance_survey/.
[29] European Commission. DG Education and Culture. Specifications Applicable to the Invitation to Tender EAC/31/03. Brussels, April 2003.

Germany represents a "multi-Centre" organisation (and a federal state) of Euroguidance country network. In terms of size, structures, players, cultures, current issues and future, Germany represents a complex "guidance environment". In terms of the development level of the guidance systems (infrastructure, multipliers, guidance community, professionalism), Germany represents a high level of development.

United Kingdom represents a case of an outsourced Centre, and like Germany, in terms of size, structures, players, cultures, current issues and future, UK represents a complex guidance environment. In terms of the development level of the guidance systems, UK represents a high, although fragmented, level of development.

Ireland is an example where there are different Centres for labour market administration and educational administration. In terms of complexity, Ireland represents a moderately complex environment for guidance. In terms of the development level of the guidance systems, Ireland represents a moderately high level of development.

The Centre of *Italy* has undergone a major change quite recently, and is re-orienting its efforts. In terms of size, structures, players, cultures, current issues and future, Italy represents a complex guidance environment. In terms of the development level of the guidance systems, Italy represents a moderate, although fragmented, level of development.

Poland constitutes an example of a big country to become a Member Sate of the EU. In terms of size, structures, players, cultures, current issues and future, Poland represents a complex guidance environment. In terms of the development level of the guidance systems, Poland represents a moderate, although fragmented, level of development.

Finland's Euroguidance Centre was established within already existing organisation, the Centre of International Mobility (CIMO). In terms of size, structures, players, cultures, current issues and future, Finland represents low complexity as a guidance environment. In terms of the development level of the guidance systems, Finland represents a high level of development.

Estonia constitutes an example of small CEE countries In terms of size, structures, players, cultures, issues and the future, Estonia represents low complexity as a guidance environment. In terms of the development level of the guidance systems, Estonia represents a low but rapidly developing level of development.

3.2.2. Environment and tasks of the national Centres

The role and position of the Centres is rather complex to depict. In order to gain a clearer understanding, and to simplify matters we have used a "360-degree" model to depict the tasks and the environment of Euroguidance centres (consider Figure 3.).

This model was also used in the interviews and dialogue workshops in the country visits, and serves as a basis for the summary of them in table 15. The summaries of the country visits are presented in the ANNEX.

Setting the Centre in the middle (1), in grey, we can distinguish upwards the dimension of management and governance (2). In terms of management and governance there is a board, steering the centre (or centres) and typically the Ministries of education and labour involved with the policy making and steering of the centre(s). In management and governance, there is also the EU, the whole network dimension.

Moving towards the tasks (3), downwards in the picture of the centre, we can distinguish the information dissemination task, mobility promotion task and guidance community development tasks, exercised mostly via multipliers (4), e.g. school guidance, public employment services, private providers and the non-formal community. The multiplier level is the most important aspect of the network. Then, we have the end users (5), students and their parents as well as job seekers and employed adults.

The centres do not work alone, there is, to the left and right of the Centre in the picture, the horizontal dimension, represented by domestic partners (6), transnational partners (7) and other information networks (8), e.g. networks like ENIC, NARIC, EURES, etc.

Finally, there is the evolution (9) of the Centre: the developmental path, present dynamics and the relevant next step the centre needs to take in its context. (Refer to Figure 3.)

Figure 3. Tasks and environment of the national Centres

2. Management and Governance

| M of Education | M of Labour | EU |

Board

6. Domestic partners

1. **EG-centre**

8. Other info networks

7. Transnational partners

3. Tasks

| Info | Mobility | Development |

4. Multipliers

| Schools | PES | Private | Non-formal |

5. End users

| Students | Jobseekers | Employed adults |

9. Evolution → Dynamics → Relevant next step
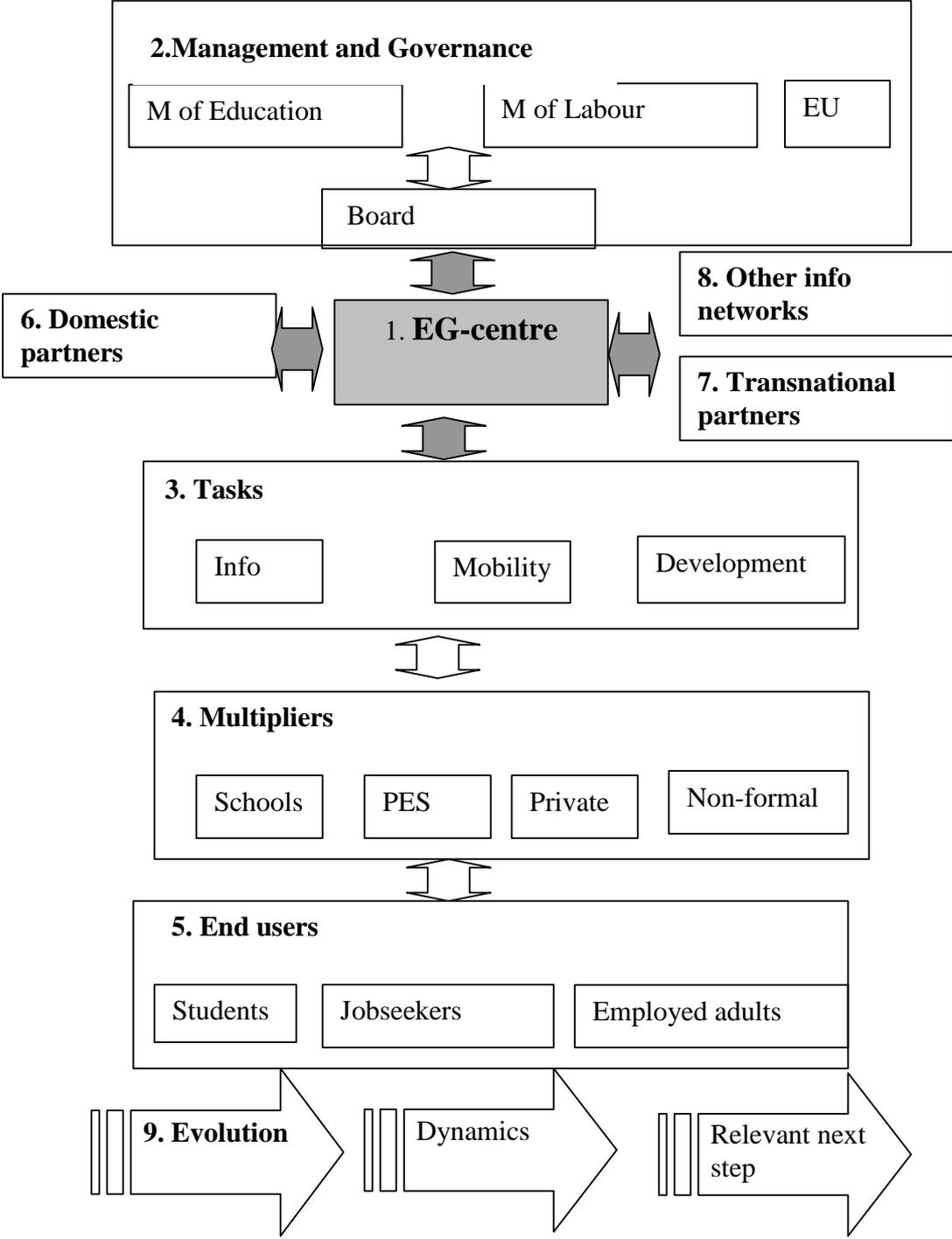
In relation to these key dimensions, the situations of the centres in the visited countries is summarised in Table 15. The summaries of the country visits are in the ANNEX.

Table 16. Summary of country visits against key dimensions

Country/ position of NRC	Context	Multipliers, Guidance community and infrastructure	Emphasis, customers, products and mechanism	Partners and learning	Capability/ proactivity	European Dimension	Dynamics and Relevant next step
Estonia/ Within a foundation	Small new EU-country, low complexity, Russian minority, new challenges	Building phase, new start NRC-Proactive role in building guidance infrastructure	Building infra & GC Working "with the field", ID, good ICT, development of guidance, information, mobility programmes	Close cooperation with other networks, learning from EU (Ireland, Germany, Baltic, Scandinavia). Deepening co-operation with the counsellors' association.	Enthusiasm, active and broad networking. Relatively strong position in policy making.	Looking for good solutions, mobility issues rising. The significance of Academia programme big.	National bodies taking responsibility on guidance development. Building up integrated guidance system at regional level.
Poland, two centres under two ministries	Large new EU-country, mid-complexity (regions), high UE, new challenges	Building phase, using many existing resources NRC-Proactive role in building guidance infrastructure	Building infra & GC mobility (high unemployment), ID,	Cooperation of MOL & MED systems, learning from EU, Germany. Scientific community active. The counsellors' association proactive in developing the guidance community. Country of numerous joint projects with other European countries.	Enthusiasm, active and broad networking Relatively strong position in policy making.	Looking for good solutions, mobility issues rising	Building integration and cooperation in guidance by creating national guidance forum, improving regional reach for better social inclusion.
UK/ Contractor	Populous country, different parts (England, Scotland, Wales, N-Ireland), highly	Guidance "outsourced", long traditions, changes	ID, mobility	Active partner in the EU-network	Weak on policy level	Challenge to rise interest in EU mobility	Establishing a clearer role in terms of national guidance policy context

	complex environment,						
Germany	Large country, high complexity, federal state.	Integration of EG and EURES	ID, direct customer contacts, mobility issue rising	Strong emphasis of MOL	Central government initiative	Internal and external mobility issues	Transition phase
Ireland MOL and MED centres	Small country, rather low complexity, mobility challenges	"Middle-stage" development phase of infra and GC. Integration of guidance systems.	Further development of multipliers, IS, good ICT	Cooperation and integration of MOL&MED and GC	Enthusiasm, active and broad networking. Proactivity in creating guidance forum.	Active partner in the EU network. Academia exchange programme wide.	New phase in GC development, forums in making.
Finland, NRC in MED international unit	Small country, low complexity	Highly developed infra & GC	ID,development of cooperation in infra and GC, regional reach	Broadening cooperation	Enthusiasm, growing networking	Active partner in the EU network	Finding a "deeper" role (multicultural guidance?). Improving regional EG activities.
Italy NRC in MOL subunit	Large country, high complexity, regions, fragmentation, North-South issues	Overcoming fragmentation and increasing cooperation in the infra and GC	Getting hold of multipliers, IS, mobility, North-South issues	Building a network of partners	Transition phase, enthusiasm	Interest in networking on EU level	Transferring know-how from former stage to new, establishing the new centre

Abbreviations: NRC= national resource centre, Infra= National infrastructure for guidance (multipliers), GC= Guidance community, ID=Information dissemination, ICT= Information and communication technology, MOL=Ministry of Labour, MED=Ministry of Education, UE= unemployment

3.2.3. Analysing the national Centres' situations

Mapping out the situation of the case countries, we can summarise the variety of positions, contexts, relations to multipliers, partners and the European dimension, as well as the relevant next steps in the countries in the following way (figure 4).

Plotting the situations in the different case countries against the complexity of the guidance environment and the development level of the guidance system, we can distinguish five different basic strategic "situations" of the respective EG-centres:

It seems that in Ireland the level of complexity (moderate) and guidance system (moderate) are, in relative terms, in relative balance. Complexity will increase for Ireland, but probably not in a vast amount. The relevant next strategic step the EG-centre(s) can be described as sustaining and consolidating this development. The EG-centre plays a proactive role in contributing to guidance system development. Let us call this a "relative balance", and use it as a "benchmark" for the other situations.

Finland represents a case where the guidance systems are very well established in a low complexity environment. The complexity will not rise considerably in the coming years. The EG-centre gives a contribution to guidance system development, but the actual development is done by well established regular and institutional players. There is only a need to fine-tune the position and role of the EG-centre. Let us call this situation "refinement".

Estonia, a new EU country has both a low level of complexity, and a rather low, but rapidly developing guidance system. The role of the EG-centre has been seminal in this development. Let us call this situation a "moderate challenge" for the EG-centre, since it will be playing this rather broad role in the near future, until the national systems are established, and thus the task is rather complex.

For Poland, also a new EU country, this challenge is somewhat similar to Estonia, but much more challenging because of the higher level of complexity. Poland is in a better position in terms of the development level of the guidance community, but this development is fragmented. Let us call this situation for the EG-centre a "big challenge".

Likewise, Italy is also facing a big challenge. The environment is complex, and will rise in complexity (for instance due to immigration). The rising role of regions will also pose a challenge. There is a challenging transition period for the Centre going on, where the Centre has been moved both geographically and institutionally. The developmental level of the guidance systems is moderately good, but fragmented.

The situations of UK and Germany are rather difficult to map out, and they are different from each other. Both are operating in a complex environment (and growing in complexity), and with well developed, if fragmented (especially in UK) guidance systems. Germany has undergone a major change in the positioning of the Euroguidance systems in connection with EURES (together with the major changes going on in the Labour Administration (Bundesagentur). This transition was just going on at the time of the evaluation, and the results of it remain to unfold. In the UK the Centre is the only example of a private provider. It seems that in the highly complex environment and fragmented guidance systems, the Centre has a very complex task to position itself, especially to the policy making dimension. We call these situations "ambiguous", understanding that it does not capture the whole complexity and also the differences of these countries.

Figure 4. Situations of EG-centres in the case countries

Complexity of "guidance environment" (complexity of structures, players, issues, cultures, mobility, etc.

Italy
UK
Germany

"Big challenge"
"Ambiguity"

Poland

"Big challenge"

Ireland

"Balance"

Estonia

"Moderate challenge"

Finland

"Refinement"

Development level of guidance system (infrastructure, multipliers, guidance community, professionalism
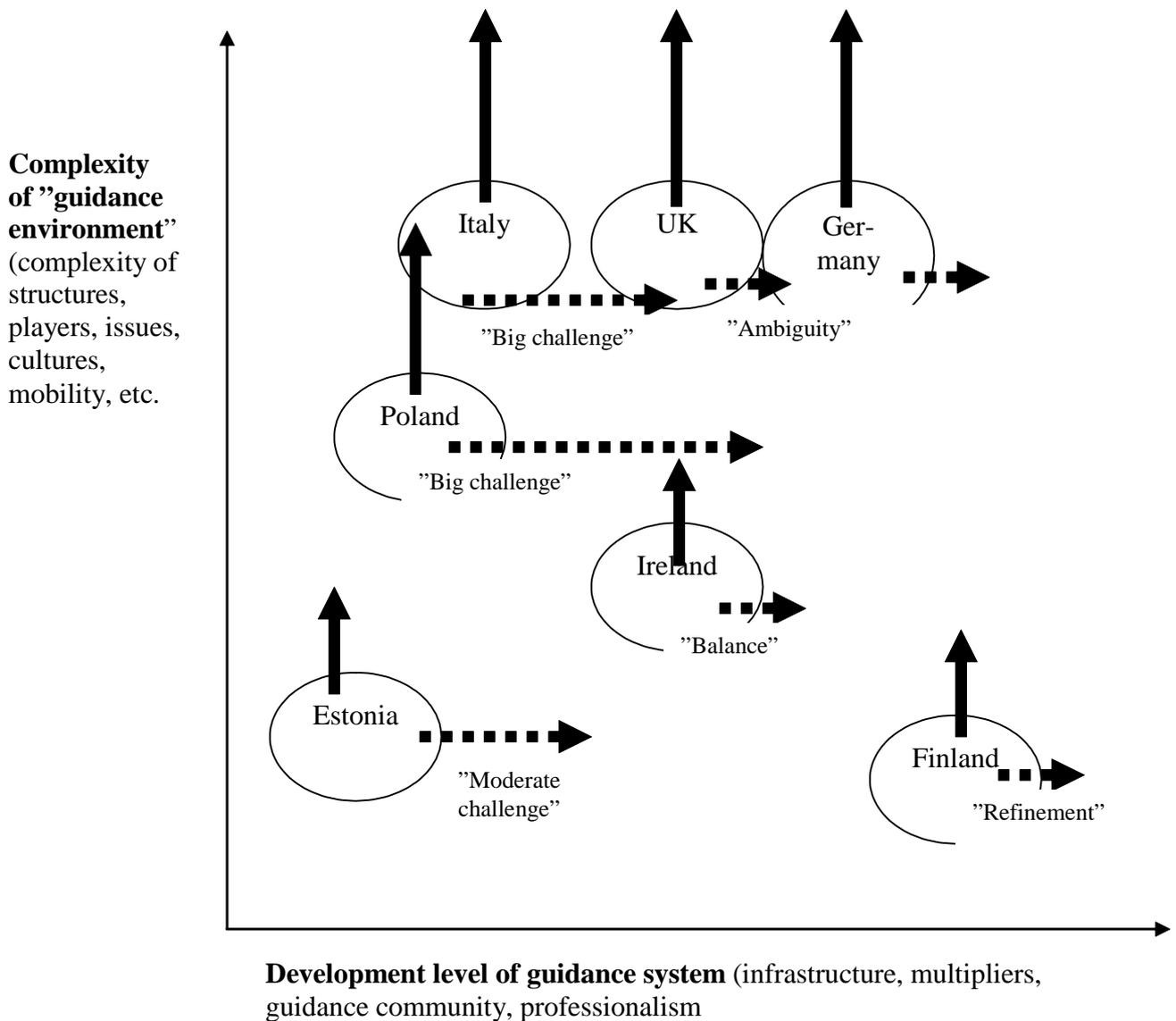
The upward arrow indicates the probable future shift in complexity and the dashed line to the right indicates the needed shift in guidance systems

3.2.4. Conclusions on the country visits

As it was depicted in Figure 3, the national Centres have to position themselves in a "360-degree" context, where the main impact is delivered via *multipliers* (especially the guidance community). So addressing this mechanism successfully constitutes good practice. There is plenty of evidence that the Centres are aware of this and are working with it. Horizontal partnering is another key to success, and the Centres display plenty of evidence of acting as promoters of horizontal cooperation in guidance issues and guidance community development, going in many instances clearly beyond a narrow understanding of the tasks of the Centres.

Typically the ministries of education and labour are most involved with the EG establishment and steering of the Centres, and sometimes there are two centres operating under the two ministries. It is impossible to draw any conclusions about what here constitutes the best arrangement, since the situations and possibilities differ, but clearly, establishing a well operating whole, and good cooperation between two centres, or more in the case of multi-centre establishments, constitutes good practice.

It is clear on the basis of the country visits that the situations, possibilities and relevant next steps in the countries differ considerably. Although the visits cannot be regarded as exhaustive or representative of the whole complexity of the issue on EU-level, the analysis serves to highlight the need for the network to be able to *contain and manage* such divergence in the future.

The country visits show that generally speaking, in terms fulfilling their terms of reference, the centres are performing well. The efficiency in using the resources, in terms of products, activities and pro-activeness of staff, does not seem to differ to a great extent. Rather, the centres can be characterised as quite efficient in this sense.

The linchpin for reaching results (effects) effectively is the developmental level of the guidance community and multipliers. There is no way the EG centres, with their limited resources, can reach good results without a well functioning multiplier level. So if the multiplier level is still under construction, the main task of the centre is to participate in establishing it, as is the case in Estonia or in terms of overcoming fragmentation, in Italy. This makes it quite relative to make judgements about the effectiveness and efficiency of the Centres. Probably comparing effectiveness and efficiency between *analytical types*, i.e. using them as *control pairs* could be useful in the future, in order to keep some major background variables, like the development level of multipliers and the guidance community, in relative terms, constant.

In relation to the complexity of tasks, even in low complexity cases, the resources of the Centres are small, and in highly complex environments, coupled with a fragmented guidance community (multipliers), the resources are quite minimal in relation to the challenges.

In order to promote the purposes of the Network, it is sufficient for the Finnish centre, working in a low complexity environment and a well established multiplier level, to display a "normal" level of activity and efficiency, as it does, in order to reach quite good results. The efforts can be geared towards maintaining the good situation and refining it.

The situation is quite different in for instance Italy or Poland. In relation to the resources, the complexity of the environment and fragmentation of the multiplier level in Italy clearly is huge task, and in order to reach good effects, the centre needs to display a very good level of activity and efficiency. Because of the transition period going on in Italy, it is impossible to make any precise judgements on the effectiveness or efficiency, but the country visit seems to indicate an awareness of these challenges.

We have identified five basic (analytical) strategic situations on the basis of the country visits. By *relative balance*, we refer to a situation, illustrated by Ireland, where it seems that the complexity of context and efforts, especially with multipliers, seem to be in a relative balance.
The Centre needs "normal" support form the EU-level in order to maintain the good track.

Refinement, is a situation where there exists a well developed multiplier level and the centre is performing normally, illustrated by Finland.

A moderate challenge is the case when there is a low/moderate complexity environment and a need to develop the multiplier level, as illustrated by Estonia.

A big challenge is the case when there is a complex environment and a considerable need to develop the multiplier level, either in terms of building the infrastructure (Poland) or overcoming fragmentation (Italy). Strong support, in terms of benchlearning, an probably other resources, too, is needed.

The situation can also be *ambiguous,* due to big ongoing changes (Germany), fragmentation or search of role of the Euroguidance efforts and players (Great Britain).

Should the situation of the Centre be reflected somehow in the allocation of resources and support from the Commission, the network and national authorities? So that Centres in a more difficult situation would get for instance front-loaded support in terms of resources and other support? This is of course a complex matter, but we think the situations could be reflected in resource allocation. Perhaps a sensible basis would be combination of a basic grant plus special grants, and extra benchlearning support from the Network and Commission. The national authorities should also be more aware of the challenges, because there rest the decisive resources to build the multipliers etc.

Table 17. Analytical types of situations and needs of Euroguidance Centres

Situation	Characteristics	Role of the Network as a whole in the future
Relative balance	Developmental stage of guidance infrastucture, but relative balance of complexity and guidance system development	Need of normal support and exchange to maintain good development
Refinement	Well established infrastructure in guidance system development	Need of support for fine-tuning and refinement
Moderate challenge	Need to develop guidance systems as a whole, role of EG-centre proactive in this process	Need for "benchlearning" support for the EG-centre, support for other guidance players through other means
Big Challenge	Very strong need to develop guidance systems as a whole, role of EG-centre proactive in this process	Need for strong "benchlearning" support for the EG-centre, support for other guidance players through other means
Ambiguity	A complex situation either in terms of transition, fragmentation, search for role or other aspects	Need for cooperation in clarifying, stabilizing and developing the position of the EG-centre(s) in the countries

4. ANALYTICAL CONCEPTS OF EVALUATING THE EUROGUIDANCE NETWORK

The analyses above indicated that the Centres do not differ as much as what was expected according to the structures they organise themselves. However, they do vary reflecting the national contexts as was clearly seen in the country case studies. The case studies suggest that besides structural and functional differences the Euroguidance Centres at the national level have different kinds of challenges ahead. If we assume, and it is our country visit observation, that the complexity of the mobility and guidance environment varies form one country to another, the challenges are different for each country. The message from the country visits may be reframed according to how complex the environment for each Centre is and how well established is the guidance community of each Centre or country. The "complexity" and "how well established" are of course parameters that can be expressed only in relative terms.

In order to clarify further the key aspects and nature of the Network as a basis for detecting its core features and reflections for its possible future development the key concepts underlying the Network's activities, its nature as a learning community and the implications for the management and governance of the Network need further elaboration.

4.1. Key concepts of the Euroguidance Network

The key concepts and themes characterising the EG Network are 'guidance', 'mobility', and 'information'. According to our observation at the Network meetings and during the country visits the discourse within the Network often addresses the concepts on a rather general level. The discourse around the concepts and the relations between them seem somewhat vague and ambiguous. For further clarification of the key goals and activities of the Network it would be fruitful to analyse and develop them further or even "re-invent" them.

Regarding 'guidance' the current Network practice indicates that contacts with the guidance community constitute the cornerstone of the Network. The EG Network is not, however, about guidance in general. The roles of the national Centres vary regarding the guidance community. The new Network Members like Poland and Estonia play a crucial role building up the guidance community in their countries while in the other countries visited the guidance systems are more established with longer traditions. The EG Centres in those countries do not have the general guidance community building function. It seems probable that as soon as the new Network member states develop their own guidance system on a more solid base the role of the national EG Centres will decrease or change into a kind of bridge-building role within the guidance system.

The different roles of the National Centres in the national guidance community development create a challenge for elaborating the Network's common understanding of the concept of 'guidance' within the Euroguidance Network context and should be discussed in detail. While in the new Network Member States the national Centres' roles are relatively strong the Centres' role in the "old" countries is more ambiguous and in need for further elaboration. This has also been recognised by the Centres themselves. For example, Cimo of Finland has been very proactive in introducing and advancing "multi-cultural counselling" in the Finnish guidance community. *From the whole Network perspective one suggestion might be that the role of the Euroguidance Network in the guidance community could be seen as promoting "mobility guidance" for guidance counsellors and citizens.* The re-definition of the "guidance role" of the EG Network would clarify the Network's role in the guidance community bringing into the guidance community a new area of guidance where guidance for citizens would address the specific issues and concerns they have in preparing for moving from one country to another or in adjusting themselves for living in a new country.

"Mobility counselling" would also possibly create a link between national and transnational guidance as the citizens in each Member State face similar problems also in having to move within their own country for another education or a job.

Regarding 'mobility' it also may be detected that the EG Centres do not have the resources to take care of "mobility in general". Rather, the task of the Network is to convey "mobility information" for those who have decided to get "mobile". It seems to us that also the roles of the National Centres in each country as well as the whole Network's role in advancing mobility in Europe should be discussed and clarified further. The country visits made showed clearly that the issue of mobility is a very ambivalent and ambiguous one in each country. While the EG Centres' staff saw that there should be more mobility in Europe the common finding was that people are not always willing enough to leave for another country for an education or a job. While most of the countries want to have skilled labour force from other countries none of them wants to give their own skilled and educated labour force to other countries. It seems also quite obvious that the national migration policies are today only in the process of making causing policy ambiguitys at the national level affecting thus also the context where national Centres are working in. The debates about mobility take today place, for an important part, in the context of the ageing of the labour force and the increasing need of labour force in the European economies. Thus, the significance of the mobility policies in Europe will grow in importance. *For the future development of the Euroguidance Network it is vitally important to find its own role in mobility reflecting its goals and resources.*

Regarding 'information' the 'differentia specifica' of the EG Network is that it has close contacts with the guidance community and the citizens as well as wide network of multipliers. This is a clear advantage for the EG Network providing it sensitive contacts with the end users and enabling the meaningfulness of the information disseminated. *The EG Network is about (mainly educational) mobility information through guidance.*

The analysis above should be taken as the evaluators suggestions for clarifying the key concepts of the Euroguidance Network. However, it seems that as the guidance community context is different in each Member State of the Network and currently under strong re-structuring in the whole Europe the EG Network should now stay keenly tuned with the latest developments of the guidance community. The same applies also to the issues of mobility and information dissemination. *For the future development it is now the right time to "re-invent" these basic concepts within the Network.*

4.2. The Euroguidance Network as a community of practice

The nature of the networks is different from ordinary organisations. This has become also quite evident during the evaluation of the Euroguidance network. The network has fairly scarce personnel resources but what seems a very important feature is that the staff members of the Centres are enthusiastic about their work. The enthusiasm seems one of the key factors for successful networking. An experienced member of the Network wrote to the evaluators:

> "And the 5-10 lines about why I am so enthusiastic about my job: Basically, I still find my job very interesting ... because it gives me the possibility to get involved in a very wide range of activities and because it is my experience that most of what I do is useful to other people. E.g when I hold further training courses for ... guidance counsellors and help them make sense of the enormous amount of mobility-related information on the Internet and I can see signs of relief and "revelation" as we move along! Or when I can help a young person concretize what he/she wants to do abroad and then help him/her find the relevant information and contact persons in order to move on. Or when I organise the Academia programme for a group of foreign guidance counsellors and at the end of the week they tell me that it has been a great week, both professionally and personally, that they have learned

a lot both about the ... guidance system but also about their own because it has really been put into perspective, and that being part of an international group for a week has been a real "eye-opener". That's another way of "making the way" for mobility in the future, as I think these guidance counsellors will be more open towards possibilities in other countries. On top of this, the close ties to my Euroguidance colleagues also mean a lot, both professionally and personally. I know that I can count on their help if I need it."

The short but rich description of an experienced Euroguidance "activist" reflects some interesting features of the Euroguidance Network. The Euroguidance work is perceived as helpful and useful for the clients (the counsellors) and the most rewarding part of the work is the personal contact with the clients helping them to "make sense of the mobility information" or regarding an individual client to help him/her to find out what "he/she wants to do abroad". The experienced EG staff member also emphasises the helpfulness for the counsellors to be part of an international experience. It is also noteworthy that the vignette emphasises the close personal ties between the Euroguidance colleagues.

The networks, where the network members emphasise the shared interest and their personal relationships in particular, have been called "communities of practice".[30] Wenger & al (ibid.) define the community of practice as a community of people where people share the same concerns, problem statements and passions. In communities practice the members relate to each other on a regular basis and help each other in problem solving by sharing information and mutual advice. This is a valid description of the Euroguidance Network according to the evaluation experiences in the Network meetings, the country visits and within the interviews made.

The committed individuals of any network as a community of practice enhance the productivity of the network. Network as a community of practice bears some important implications. Most of all, Wenger & al. remind that the communities of practice cannot and should not be "overmanaged". Rather, they should be "elicited", "facilitated", "supported", and "fostered" but not managed in the traditional sense. Thus, the Euroguidance Network seen now perhaps as a "community of practice of international mobility and guidance facilitators" the Network faces the challenge of not becoming "overmanaged" in a situation where more sustainable position in the policy field, in the EU administration, and economically is longed for by the Centres themselves as well as by some of the national authorities and some EU administrators.

4.3. The Euroguidance Network, management and governance

As stated above managing networks is a different business from managing organisations. Managing networks is very much about facilitation, mediation, brokerage and learning. You do not "steer" networks in a traditional sense, rather, you try to provide a good instrumental, interactive and institutional framework, where proactive networking can develop and flourish.[31]

Simplifying a complex matter, we can distinguish three basic management and governance perspectives – and respective methodological approaches.[32] The mainstream is the *rational strategic choice* model, which relies heavily on rational planning, top-down processes, clearly spelt out strategies and favouring a uniform culture. This approach puts a lot of emphasis on realising a vision and task and following rules and directives.

---

[30] Wenger, E. (1998). Communities of practice. Learning, meaning, and identity. USA: Cambridge University Press.; Wenger, E., McDermott, R. & Snyder, W.M. (2002). Cultivating communities of practice. A guide to managing knowledge. USA: Harward Business School Press.

[31] Kickert, W., J., M., Klijn, H-E, Koppenjan, J.F.M. (1997). Managing complex networks. Strategies for the public sector. London: Sage.

[32] Stacey, R.D. (2003) Strategic Management and Organisational Dynamics – The Challenge of Complexity. Prentice Hall. London.

This model has been challenged by what can be called the *learning organisation* perspective, which emphasises bottom up-processes, the quality of learning in organisations/ networks, and favours diversity. In the learning approach, much emphasis is put on creating good "learning spaces" for different actors and organisations, vertically and horizontally, to rapidly adopt good practices and disseminate them.

This approach has been taken a step further in approaches emphasising *proactive everyday responses*, where the actors in organisations/ networks, in a flexible and creative way, re-shape and re-invent the activity and methods to suit the particular contexts and challenges. In this approach, much emphasis is put on creating a favourable framework for everyday communication and practical (tacit) knowledge, and favouring diversity.

The reality of management and governance is today of course a mixture of these perspectives. We can, nevertheless, ask, against all the findings in this evaluation, what could be a suitable emphasis in managing and governing the Euroguidance network?

The Network has been, as it has been pointed out in the historical analysis, so far in a weak position in the EU, in terms of policies and management. Also the resources for management have been minimal. Despite this state of affairs, the network has, to a surprising degree, survived in a complex EU-level, and complex and turbulent national contexts. This can be very mach attributed to the pro-activeness, creativity and enthusiasm of the people constituting the network.

So, going back to the management and governance concepts, there has been a great degree of proactive everyday response in the development of the Network so far. It is very much about spontaneous and opportunist development, in a positive sense.

The question at this point is, can the favourable development of the Network be sustained on this basis, or should it be modified somehow?

The findings point to a need to strengthen the position of the network on the central policy level (and also on the national level in some countries). Also the network could be strengthened by investing in learning within the network and as a network, i.e. to strengthen the "learning spaces" in the network (exchange of officials, country visits, thematic working groups, good practice workshops and seminars, etc.).

5. EVALUATION RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

Relying on the analyses of the surveys, the country visit observations, the elaboration of the Centres' national positions and challenges as well as the key concepts and nature of the Network an overall picture of the Euroguidance Network in the light of Terms of Reference may be given. The problematic and complex issue of the effectiveness and efficiency is also discussed on the basis of evaluation findings and by making some comparisons with the NARIC evaluation, which is a network in some respects similar to the Euroguidance Network. The evaluation questions on the performance and improvement or the future of the Euroguidance Network are answered. Answering each evaluation question is done through analytic observations and assessments. Each answer to the evaluation question is followed by relevant recommendation.

5.1. General overview

5.1.1. Meeting the Terms of reference of the Euroguidance Network

In the Terms of Reference five different sets of goals are set for the Network. Three of them address the issue of promoting the European dimension in educational system and the guidance systems by developing co-operation of the different guidance systems in the participating EU-EEA countries. Two other goals perceive the Network's task lying in promoting educational mobility by producing and disseminating good quality information on educational opportunities

Euroguidance Netwok is about 'enhancing mobility' through the dissemination of information on international training opportunities the guidance community as its key information distribution channel. The close contacts with the guidance community make the Euroguidance Network a very specific network among other information networks. The analysis of the developmental path of the Network as well as the country visits and surveys included in the evaluation indicate that the policy status of the Network has been ambivalent. There is an obvious need for strengthening the status of the Network in the policy making both nationally ant at European level. The links with the development of the guidance policies create currently the soundest background for the further development of the Network. The future improvement of the Network's position in the guidance policies seem to lie in the next generation of Leonardo Programme and in inventing the Network's role in the growing recognition of the political importance of guidance, reflected, for example, in the Resolution adopted by the EU Education Ministers in May 2004. The evaluation indicated that the Network may strengthen its position in the policy fields of guidance and counselling and mobility by clarifying its special role in these fields.

The overall assessment of the Centres' performance is that their efforts have been quite successful in terms of the quantity of products and networking capacity. With the support from the Euroguidance Network and having only modest personnel and financial resources they have been able to provide their target groups with a variety of products and services, which are appreciated by their clients and given recognition by the national authorities. It is obvious that the Centres' efforts have contributed in a meaningful way to promoting awareness of the European dimension within the guidance community and among guidance and educational professionals at large.

The Euroguidance Network is characterised by enthusiasm and spirit of internationalism among the National Centres' staff. Whatever the future of the Network is the spirit of the Network should be fostered and encouraged. The Euroguidance Network may be seen as a community of "mobility practitioners" and the nature of the network should be taken into account while improving its management. The Euroguidance network should be perceived as a learning network where management is very much about enhancing mutual learning between the Centres and the "top" level both in the national context as well as in Brussels.

The main result of the evaluation is that the Network's major capabilities lie, to a large extent, in the national Centres ability to operate wisely in their national contexts. In managing to do that, the Centres also have impact on policy making. The Centres vary regarding their positions in the national contexts. The key factors playing decisive role seem to be the level of complexity of guidance environment and the developmental phase of the guidance community. Depending on those variables the Centres face different challenges. The country visits resulted in discerning ' relative balance', 'refinement', 'moderate challenge', 'big challenge', and 'ambiguity' as basic strategic positions of the Centres in those countries putting the Centres into different positions regarding the future steps to be taken. Thus, the complexity of the Euroguidance Network may now be seen as an outcome of the varying guidance environment and varying developmental degree of the guidance community rather than an outcome of their organisational position or management structures as such. This conclusion is one of the key findings of the current evaluation effort.

In general, the Network may be seen to have fulfilled the goals of the Terms of Reference regarding its functions as information disseminator on learning and training opportunities. The information dissemination is carried out through close links with the guidance community allowing the Network at the same time to introduce international dimension to the development of the national guidance systems. Thus, the Network has also succeeded in fostering the awareness and practical guidance knowledge of the "European dimension" seen as its vital task in the Terms of Reference.

The future strengthening of the Network will depend strategically on its capacity to sustain more stable political status and of the development of its management structures supporting the mutual learning aspects within the Network as well as its capacity to keep up and develop its links with the guidance community, and sustaining the current rather good quality of its products and services. What comes to the Terms of Reference and their possible revisions perhaps tasks concerning policy impacts could be added to the future possible revisions as greater visibility and greater policy impact are called for both by the Centres themselves as well as some of the client groups, EU administrators, and national authorities. This should, however, be done without laying too heavy burden on the Network with its limited resources.

5.1.2. Efficiency and effectiveness of the Network

Our general conclusion is that the Euroguidance Network, taken as a whole, has fulfilled its objectives in an efficient and effective way. With rather limited resources, the Centres have produced good products, reached multiplier effects and contributed to building the guidance community in Europe.

This general conclusion needs some elaboration, however, due to the complexity of the evaluation subject and the huge differences in the contexts of the different centres. The key to making judgements on effectiveness and efficiency is *effectiveness* in achieving the objectives of the EG-network stated in the Terms of Reference. In a meaningful sense there cannot be efficiency without effectiveness. The results of the questionnaires, interviews and country visits support the conclusion that effects, in accordance with the TOR of the Network, have been achieved.

One might ask: Could the same effects have been reached with fewer inputs? Or could the same inputs have reached better effects? Or would there be a possibility of increasing effects by increasing inputs, or would there be a diminishing rate of results? Because of the complexity of the Network and the different situations in the countries, these questions are hard to answer.

As a whole, we conclude that the network has achieved quite good results with limited resources; *probably* the same effects would *not* have been reached with fewer inputs. The same inputs *might* have reached better results in the case of a higher level of and better contact with multipliers in some countries. Again, with more input, one *might* expect more effects, *provided* the multiplier level and contact are in shape.

5.1.3. Efficiency and effectiveness and the different situations in the countries

A comparison proper between the efficiency and effectiveness of the countries is not a task of the evaluation. Nevertheless, because of the big differences of contexts, some analysis about the nature and problems of efficiency and effectiveness is due.

The resources provided by the Commission are limited in comparison to the complexity of tasks, and there is only a small variance between the grants, which cannot in any linear way reflect the variance of the size and complexity of countries. In the background information of the Terms of Reference of the evaluation it is stated that "*each centre receives a grant from Commission and the national authorities (normally on a 50-50 cofunding basis; the total amount varying between 90 000 – 200.000, depending on the size of the country and on the national cofunding.*"[33]

The information on the nationally provided resources is to a great extent fragmentary, incommensurable and interpreted in different ways. This is due to the complexity of cooperative structures, different time-periods used for reporting, part-time work and dividing work-time between EG- and other tasks not clearly spelled out in their reports. All this renders any precise judgement on the actual input impossible.

In global terms, we conclude that even with the shortcomings and gaps of information, the resources of the Centres can be considered rather limited.

The linchpin in reaching results with limited resources is reaching a multiplier effect, particularly the guidance community. In the background information of the Terms of Reference of the evaluation it is stated that "*given the limited size of the funding, and therefore, the limited capability of providing a front line information service, it is very important that that each Centre has a capability of generating an effect on a wide range of information providers who may pass on the information to final users. Centres should therefore have contacts with national networks of guidance counsellors, with national authorities and a wide range of stakeholders.*"

We have stated above that the three surveys have produced evidence, supported by the country visits that the Network is quite well geared to addressing the multipliers, in particulr, the guidance community.

However, as the country visit analysis illustrates, the situations in terms of the developmental level of the guidance community, networks and multipliers – the "infrastructure" of guidance – in the different countries differ to some extremes. This makes it very difficult to judge the efficiency and effectiveness in reaching the multiplier level in any commensurable way.

In the case of some countries, like Finland, well established multipliers have been around for a long time, and the EG-Centre only has to exploit this favourable situation. In others, the building (Estonia) or rebuilding (Poland) the multipliers has just commenced. In the case of Italy, the centre is facing quite a formidable fragmentation, and in Germany and UK, the complexity of the working environments poses huge tasks. So the relevant next steps, to reach better effects and efficiency, in the different countries, vary, as does the need for support from the Commission and the Network as a whole. We identified a range from *refinement* to a *big challenge* via the country visits, as an analytical tool to gauge the situations in the different countries.

The above discussion leads us to ask: should the situation of the Centre be reflected somehow in the allocation of resources and support from the Commission, the network and national authorities so that Centres in a more difficult situation would get for instance front-loaded support in terms of resources and other support? This is of course a complex matter, and there are many variables and policy aspects to consider. But it makes sense that the situations should be reflected in terms

---

[33] Service Contract nr. 2003-3262 001/001 of the Evaluation of the Euroguidance Network.

of resources and support. Perhaps a sensible basis would be combination of a basic grant plus special grants, and extra bench learning support from the Network and Commission. The national authorities should also be made more aware of the challenges, because there rest the decisive resources for building the multipliers.

5.1.4. Effectiveness and efficiency of network management

In terms of overall management and governance, provided by the Commission, the Network has also operated with limited resources. The position of the Network, in terms of policies and programmes has been weak and ambivalent. The feedback from the Centres on the performance of management is positive. Operating from such a weak position in a complex task, the rather minimal management can be judged to be quite effective and efficient so far. This is probably due to a combination of proactive and enthusiastic input from the centres and collaboration with the Commission. This will probably not be sufficient in the future, however. The rising importance of the guidance theme in Europe, rising complexity of guidance environments, the great variance of situations between countries, increased by the new member countries, and thus a great need for dissemination of good practices and mutual learning, calls for more resources to the management of the Network

5.1.5. Comparison with NARIC

There is no directly comparable Network in the EU, against which the performance of the Euroguidance Network could be judged or benchmarked. In order to gain some understanding on the overall performance of the Euroguidance Network, we have used the evaluation of the NARIC network (National Academic Recognition Information Centres)[34] as a reference point to make some judgements on this issue. There are some similarities in the task, position, mandate and structure of the two networks, but there are also considerable differences.

According to the external evaluation, there were a set of problems identified in the effectiveness and efficiency of NARIC. To start with, the resources of NARIC were considered small, and the position within policies and programmes in EU/Socrates, weak. This resembles the situation of Euroguidance, but the situation seemed worse. The mandate, visibility and identity of NARIC needed quite a considerable amount of clarification. The impression is, that the situation of Euroguidance was better on this account. The network activities of NARIC were considered to be moderately effective and cost-efficient, whereas the variable national efforts were not, or needed clarification. Variation in the national mandates and activities of NARIC was, overall, an issue. Again, the situation of Euroguidance seems better. The use of EU policy guidelines, the planning cycle, exchange of good practices and ability to anticipate new trends and exchange good practices were criticized in the NARIC evaluation, and there were recommendations to clarify and strengthen these aspects. There are needs to strengthen the Euroguidance network in terms of learning, too, but the planning cycles, terms of reference and learning seem to be clearly in better shape in Euroguidance.

Even with the reservations of the difficulties to make any precise comparisons between these two networks, it seems that there is no single aspect of Euroguidance that seems to function *worse* than NARIC, and in many points Euroguidance seems to perform equally or better than NARIC. From this we conclude a careful observation that at least in comparison to a somewhat similar network within EU, the situation of Euroguidance is better and it performs better. This observation of course does not warrant a strong conclusion about the performance of Euroguidance, but is is in any case a positive indication.

---

[34] External Evaluation of the Network of National Acedemic Recognition Information Centres (NARIC). Final Report. Pragmatic Network of Individual European Consultants. August 2002.

5.2. Specific conclusions on the performance of the Euroguidance Network and recommendations for improving the performance

The analysis below follows the order and logic of the evaluation questions presented in Chapter 2 describing the evaluation questions and the evaluation methodology used.

Main question 1. *What is the added value of Euroguidance Network in promoting international mobility of citizens and in promoting European dimension in guidance and counselling?*

Analysis and assessment

The added value of the Euroguidance Network in advancing the mobility of European citizens is in disseminating information mainly on learning opportunities in other European countries. The Network has succeeded in performing this task, in particular, through establishing close contacts with the guidance community in each country. The advancing of mobility is characterised by "mobility information through guidance community" approach. The information dissemination through networking and close contacts with the multipliers constitutes the specific feature of the Euroguidance Network among the other European information networks.

The added value of the Euroguidance Network in promoting European dimension in guidance and counselling has been reached through introducing the international mobility issues and international guidance perspectives into the national guidance systems. It is justified to assess that the Network has succeeded in fulfilling this task. The national Centres' roles, however, vary to a great extent in what comes to their significance in building and developing the national guidance systems. In the new Network Member States the Euroguidance Centres' roles have been quite essential in building up the national guidance infrastructure while in the "old" Network Member States the national Centres have played the role of enhancing the awareness of the international dimension of guidance of the citizens and international learning opportunities.

Recommendations

1. The Euroguidance Network's achievements should be sustained and developed further by developing it as a learning network, providing it with a more stable position in the European life-long guidance policy context and by clarifying further its key tasks regarding information dissemination, mobility, and guidance. By consequence, the Euroguidance Network's role among the other European Networks should also be clarified further.

Sub-question 1.1. *Do the outputs of the Network and Centres, their publications, information distribution methods and other services contribute to enhancing mobility and awareness of the European dimension in guidance and counselling?*

Analysis and assessment

The outcome of the surveys conducted for this evaluation and country visits is that the Centres' and the Network's products and services support the actualisation of the Network's mission. The products and services are commonly known among the guidance community and within other target groups. Also the customers and the national authorities assess them useful. Especially the centres' electronic information provisions and also printed materials as well as seminars and workshops are regarded useful.

The key aspect of the Network's positive achievements lie in the Centres' capacity to build close contacts with the guidance community that affords the Centres fruitful and relatively direct contacts with the client groups.

Recommendations

2. The Centres' and the Network's, as a whole, capacity of sustaining and developing further contacts with the guidance community should be fostered as a pre-condition for successful information dissemination also in the future. The National Centres should be supported by developing further all-European information dissemination like Ploteus and encouraged to develop products and services appropriate in each national context.

Sub-question 1.2. *Are the Network activities valid from the perspective of the needs of the guidance community?*

Analysis and assessment

According to the customer survey the Ploteus portal, The Centres' own home pages as well as the other products and services of the Centres are known to the customers and they regard them as useful for their work although they use at the same time also services produced by other service providers. Thus, it may be concluded that the activities of the national Centres and Euroguidance network as a whole are considered valid and important for the guidance community. Also the country visits confirm the general conclusion through the fact that the customer groups present in the interviews and workshops were able to identify information services in electronic and printed form as well as training modules and international exchange of professionals, for example, useful for their everyday work. The customers predicted also a clear growth in need of international information dissemination of educational systems as well as training and working opportunities. The customers assessed that the need for information especially in electronic form is growing.

Recommendations

3. The current good assessment by the customers should be sustained and developed further by, on one hand, taking care of the quality of information also in the future, and on the other hand, by developing client feedback mechanisms in more systematic way than presently.

Sub-question 1.3. *Do the Centres reach their target groups?*

Analysis and assessment:

All three surveys and also country visits support the assessment that the Centres have succeeded quite well in reaching their main target groups, of which the guidance counsellors are clearly the main target group, and they have also been successful in fostering network relations with essential stakeholders and partners.

Recommendations

4. The strength of the Euroguidance Network is that it has a clearly identifiable target group, the guidance community, reaching it quite well. While the current state of things should be sustained and developed further the sensitivity of the Network for new possible target groups should be enhanced as the growing needs of educational, training, and labour market information, the growing need for deeper co-operation with other networks and the growing needs for co-operation between the different policy fields and authorities will probably indicate the rise of new relevant target groups.

Sub-question 1.4. *Does the Network work effectively enough to meet the challenges of answering adequately to questions 1-3? What is the inner capability of the Network?*

Analysis and assessment

The general conclusion is that the Euroguidance Network, taken as a whole, has fulfilled its objectives in an efficient and effective way. With rather limited resources, the Centres have produced good products, reached multiplier effects and contributed to building the guidance community in Europe.

Recommendations

5. There are growing needs related to information on international mobility as well as promoting the European dimension in guidance. To be able to work effectively for these aims also in the future, the Network should carefully analyse the possible needs for focusing its operations instead of broadening of their scope. In order to work effectively also in the future the position of the Euroguidance Network should be made clearer at the policy making level, its status among the other information networks should be clarified more deeply, its core tasks and concepts regarding mobility, information, and guidance should be "re-invented", the management structures within the EU should be reinforced, the management procedures should support the development of the Euroguidance network as a learning network, the common information products should be developed further, and the links and the feedback mechanisms with the target groups should be developed in more systematic way.

5.3. Specific conclusions for the management and future development of the Euroguidance Network

Regarding the second part of the evaluations task, that is, answering questions concerning the possible future of the Network and improving the capability of the Network, the analyses carried out afford the following overall assessment.

Main question 2. *How can the position and management of the Network be improved?*

Analysis and assessment

The main assessment of the current evaluation is that the Euroguidance Network has succeeded well in producing products and services on mobility and in introducing the European dimension in the guidance systems. However, the recognition and also the visibility of the Network have been rather weak. This calls for improvement at the policymaking level in positioning the Network in a more strategic way among the other information networks and in policy making in general. There is an obvious need for stronger strategic management of the Network. The stronger management should, however, take into account the nature of the Network as a community of practice avoiding the threat of over-managing it.

Recommendations

The following remarks summarise our key recommendations for developing the Euroguidance Network in the future.

6. Clarifying and strengthening the network position on EU-level

The Network has so far survived in a rather ambivalent position. This position needs to be clarified and strengthened. It seems that the realisation of the plans of the new programme period could establish this, and we are in favour of such clarification and sustainability.

7. Strengthening the possibilities for "management by learning", open coordination, peer reviews, benchlearning

There is an overall task to strengthen the Network as a learning network. A model can be drawn from the Peer Review process of open coordination of the DG Employment and Social Affairs. We recommend that a similar procedure, in a condensed form, *mutatis mutandis*, is adopted for the benchlearning process of the EG-network.

8. Making a Learning Network strategy for the Network in collaboration with the Centres

We recommend that the Commission is active, in collaboration with the Centres and national authorities, in drawing up a "Learning network strategy" for the EG-network, addressing the diversity of needs and strategic next steps to be taken in the different countries, and making an explicit plan of developing different "learning spaces" for the network.

9. Establishing better strategic synergy of the networks close to each other at the European as well as the national level

The positions and tasks of the different (and emerging) networks need to be assessed and clarified from a strategic point of view.

10. More stable and adequate personnel resources needed

In many instances the Centres are operating with minimal resources, and part time personnel. The enthusiasm and diligent networking of the personnel has compensated this, but needs to be looked into in the different contexts. This needs to be looked into by national authorities in particular.

11. Continuous further education needed to keep up with the required personnel skills

The skills and knowledge of the staff seems to be, in general terms, on an adequate level. This needs to be secured, however, in the face of rising complexity on tasks, and especially working with the guidance community. This is a collaboration task for the centres, national authorities and the Commission.

12. Clarifying the operative position of the Centres with the other networks

There are several other networks "surrounding" the EG-network. There is plenty of need to clarify these relations in terms of division of labour, connections and operative cooperation. This is a joint task of all levels of the network.

13. Clarifying the main roles of the network: guidance, information, mobility

The main vehicle of influence of the network are the multipliers, and working with the guidance community. This strategic task and link needs to be emphasised and good practices spelled out and disseminated in a benchlearning process. This is a task of all levels, but the Commission needs to highlight this in the new programme period.

14. Spelling out the strategic next steps in each national context

We recommend that the Centres study the evaluation report critically, and draw up their own assessment about the critical tasks they have in their context, identifying their main strengths and weaknesses, and drawing up a working plan for the next strategic steps in their context. These plans should be studied by the commission, feedback given, and discussions held in appropriate workshops along the way.

15. Strengthening thematic, regional, cross-border, cluster and other forms of sub-networking

The Network can survive only as a learning network, and good "learning spaces" need to be developed and sustained. This is a joint task of the Commission and the other levels. There are somewhat more resources needed on the Commission level to handle this.

Sub-questions of the second main question concern good practices at the different levels of the Network. The subsequent analysis follows the logic of these questions.

Sub-question 2.1. *What are good practices at the Network level?*

Analysis and assessment

When asked to identify good practices at the Network level the respondents of the surveys as well as the participants of the country visit interviews and workshops identified the following subjects: *Regular meetings of the Network* regarded as important for mutual exchange of ideas and as opportunities for strengthening networking with the other Centres and on a personal level as well. *Improved Network management* in Brussels linked especially with the current Network manager and her significance in introducing more solid management procedures and in gaining better recognition of the Network on the "in-house" level in Brussels.

The common *Ploteus portal* has proved to be a good practice and it has operated as a joint platform for the whole Network. The existence of the internal Webboard of the Network as such was regarded as a good practice as it allows fast exchange of information between the Network members. At the same time, however, it should be developed more in direction of a discussion forum. Other significant and repeatedly mentioned good practices at the Network level were *Academia exchange programme* seen as very important opportunity to advance the awareness of international mobility through personal experience of the professionals. Also thematic groups and "cross-border" co-operation were mentioned often as good practices.

The good practices at the Network level are all closely linked with the different ways of enhancing interaction and communication among the Centres and between Brussels and the Centres. This indicates that the most significant aspect of the Euroguidance Network are those practices that enable the increased mutual communication as a basis for the Network's everyday work.

Recommendations

16. As the complexity of the environment the Centres are working is growing the interaction and communication dimensions in the Network should be fostered further. The task of the Brussels management as well as the national authorities is to support the Network mechanisms strengthening the Network as a learning platform for exchange of information, experiences, and good practices.

Sub-question 2.2. *What are good practices in the Centres' activities to act proactively in their national environment*

Analysis and assessment

As seen in the survey results and confirmed during the country visits the national Centres each have good practices of national Web solutions and dissemination of information in various forms. The Centres' links with the guidance community seem to rest on a solid bases. The position and visibility vary according to the national situations. The policy making impact of the Centres varies also from one country to another.

The general conclusion is that the national Centres are able to act proactively in their national environment if they have good contacts and co-operation with the organisation and structures above them, that is ministries and other central authorities, with the client groups through links with the guidance community or directly, and with other players in the filed, the other networks and partners.

Recommendations

17. The national Centres' good practices in their capability to act proactively in their national environment should be supported by the Brussels management as well as by the management of the national Centres themselves. The good practice at the national level should be seen as developing the Centres' role in a balanced way regarding the structures above and links with the clients (vertically) and the partners and other players in the field (horizontally) rather than seen as a group of single products and services.

Sub-question 2.3. *What good practices can be identified in individual themes and activities?*

Analysis and assessment

The national Centres are, according to the surveys and country visits, able to name good practices in each country. Mostly they are related to certain information products in electronic or printed form. There also good practices regarding producing training modules, organising seminars or other forms of co-operation. There is room for improvement in the coverage of client feedback mechanisms.

The variation of the products and services at the national level is huge. However, it is exactly the possibility for this variation that has proven fruitful affording the national Centres to develop their own "service packages" reflecting their national environment and context. The role of the EU efforts, like Ploteus, has been to support the national efforts and introducing the European perspective in the national efforts.

Recommendations

18. The development of the national services provided by the Centres should be promoted as a joint effort of the EU and national Centres also in the future. The approach could be described as advancing diversity and unity simultaneously. Furthermore, direct mutual learning mechanisms should be enhanced to enable the Centres to learn from each other.

6. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclusions and evaluation observations introduced in the previous chapter were presented as answers to the evaluation questions. The current concluding chapter of the evaluation summarises in a condensed manner the evaluators' recommendations in order of their strategic significance for the future development of the Euroguidance Network.

Strengthening the possibilities for "management by learning", open coordination, peer reviews, benchlearning

There is an overall task to strengthen the Network as a learning network. A model can be drawn from the Peer Review process of open coordination of the DG Employment and Social Affairs. We recommend that a similar procedure, in a condensed form, *mutatis mutandis*, is adopted for the benchlearning process of the EG-network.

Making a Learning Network strategy for the Network in collaboration with the Centres

We recommend that the Commission is active, in collaboration with the Centres and national authorities, in drawing up a "Learning network strategy" for the EG-network, addressing the diversity of needs and strategic next steps to be taken in the different countries, and making an explicit plan of developing different "learning spaces" for the network.

Strengthening the resources of the Network and developing its allocation strategy

We recommend that the resources of the Network should be strengthened on the Commission level. The Network also needs to develop a resource allocation strategy reflecting more closely the different situations in the different countries. This could be done by a combination of a basic grant plus special grants and extra benchlearning support from the Commission. The national authorities should also need to take a close look into their investment in building the multipliers, the guidance community in particular and in connection to this, their level and forms of support to the Euroguidance Centres.

Establishing better strategic synergy of the networks close to each other at the European as well as the national level

The positions and tasks of the different (and emerging) networks need to be assessed and clarified from a strategic point of view.

Strengthening thematic, regional, cross-border, cluster and other forms of sub-networking

The Network can survive only as a learning network, and good "learning spaces" need to be developed and sustained. This is a joint task of the Commission and the other levels. There are somewhat more resources needed on the Commission level to handle this.

Clarifying the operative position of the Centres with the other networks

There are several other networks "surrounding" the EG-network. There is plenty of need to clarify these relations in terms of division of labour, connections and operative cooperation. This is a joint task of all levels of the network.

Spelling out the strategic next steps in each national context

We recommend that the Centres study the evaluation report critically, and draw up their own assessment about the critical tasks they have in their context, identifying their main strengths and weaknesses, and drawing up a working plan for the next strategic steps in their context. These plans should be studied by the commission, feedback given, and discussions held in appropriate workshops along the way.

Clarifying and strengthening the network position on EU-level

The Network has so far survived in a rather ambivalent position. This position needs to be clarified and strengthened. It seems that the realisation of the plans of the new programme period could establish this, and we are in favour of such clarification and sustainability.

Clarifying the main roles of the network: guidance, information, mobility

The main vehicle of influence of the network are the multipliers, and working with the guidance community. This strategic task and link needs to be emphasised and good practices spelled out and disseminated in a benchlearning process. This is a task of all levels, but the Commission needs to highlight this in the new programme period.

More stable and adequate personnel resources needed

In many instances the Centres are operating with minimal resources, and part time personnel. The enthusiasm and diligent networking of the personnel has compensated this, but needs to be looked into in the different contexts. This needs to be looked into by national authorities in particular.

Continuous further education needed to keep up with the required personnel skills

The skills and knowledge of the staff seems to be, in general terms, on an adequate level. This needs to be secured, however, in the face of rising complexity on tasks, and especially working with the guidance community. This is a collaboration task for the centres, national authorities and the Commission.

Developing practical operations of the Centres

There are some more detailed aspects of the everyday running of the Euroguidance Network that still can be improved although the relatively positive overall picture of its current activities.

A. The coverage of systematic client feedback and quality mechanisms could be improved.
B. The monitoring of the electronic information channels like the websites is still in the process of making in many countries. Although a challenging task, monitoring of who really are the clients, how many persons use the services, and how interaction and feedback may be gathered from them is vitally important for the future development of the services.
C. The reporting systems of annual working plans and other documents common to the Network should be developed further.

REFERENCES

Arnkil, R & Spangar, T. Does information communicate? Evaluation of the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work. http://agency.osha.eu.int/publications/other/.

Arnkil, R., Spangar, T., Nieminen, J., Rissanen, P., Kaakinen, J. (2002). Emergent evaluation and learning in multi-stakeholder settings. Seville. 5th Biennial Conference of the EES.

Centre for International Mobility CIMO. (1997) Guidance in Europe. Evaluation and Future Prospects –seminar. Helsinki, Finland, 3- 4 March 1997. Seminar Report.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION. THE NEW GENERATION OF COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMMES AFTER 2006. COM(2004) 156 final. 9.3.2004.

Draft Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the Member States meeting within the Council on Strengthening Policies, Systems and Practices in the field of Guidance throughout life in Europe. COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION. 9286/04. EDUC 109. SOC 109. 18 May 2004.

"EDUCATION & TRAINING 2010" THE SUCCESS OF THE LISBON STRATEGY HINGES ON URGENT REFORMS. (Draft joint interim report on the implementation of the detailed work programme on the follow-up of the objectives of education and training systems in Europe). COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION. COM(2003) 685 final 11.11.2003.

European Commission. DG Education and Culture: Leonardo da Vinci. Second Phase (2000-2006). National Resource Centres for Vocational Guidance. Annual Working Plan 2002-2003. Terms of Reference.

European Commission. DG Education and Culture. Specifications Applicable to the Invitation to Tender EAC/31/03. Brussels, April 2003.

External Evaluation of the Network of National Acedemic Recognition Information Centres (NARIC). Final Report. Pragmatic Network of Individual European Consultants. August 2002.

Fränzl, N. & Launikari, M. (Eds.) (2000) Euroguidance Annual Synthesis Report. 1.7.1998 - 30.6.1999. Retrieved, April, 12. 2004. from: http://www.euroguidance.org.uk/english/networkactivities/ASR.htm.

Joint Employment Report 2002. COM(2002) 621 of 13 November 2002.

Kickert, W., J., M., Klijn, H-E, Koppenjan, J.F.M. (1997). Managing complex networks. Strategies for the public sector. London: Sage.

Launikari, M. (Ed.) (2003) Euroguidance Annual Synthesis Report 2001 – 2002.
McCarthy, J. (1997) Activities of National Resource Centres for Guidance. Survey Results. A paper Prepared for EU Working Party on the Development of the National Resource Centres.

Mishler, E.G. (1990). Validation in inquiry-guided research: The role of exemplars in narrative studies. Harward Educational Review, 60 (4), 415-442.

Shotter, J. (1992). "Getting in touch": The meta-methodology of a postmodern science of mental life. In Kvale, S. (Ed.). Psychology and Postmodernism. London: Sage.

Spangar, T., Rissanen, P., Arnkil, R., Pitkänen, S. & Vuorinen, R. Euroguidance Network Evaluation. Inception report, Tampere, Finland 31.102003. Unpublished Report.

Stacey, R.D. (2003) Strategic Management and Organisational Dynamics – The Challenge of Complexity. Prentice Hall. London.

Wenger, E. (1998). Communities of practice. Learning, meaning, and identity. USA: Cambridge University Press.; Wenger, E., McDermott, R. & Snyder, W.M. (2002). Cultivating communities of practice. A guide to managing knowledge. USA: Harward Business School Press.

APPENDIX 1. TERMS OF REFERENCE OF NRCVG NETWORK

EUROPEAN COMMISSION
Directorate-General for Education and Culture

Vocational training

LEONARDO DA VINCI
Second Phase (2000–2006)

NATIONAL RESOURCES CENTRES FOR VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE

Annual Working Plan 2002 – 2003

Terms of Reference

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

The Council Decision of 26 April 1999 establishing the second phase of an action programme for the implementation of a European Community vocational training policy (the Leonardo da Vinci Programme[35]) stipulates that, to attain the objectives set out in Article 2 of the Decision, Community support is available, among other, for the transnational network of National Resources Centres for vocational guidance[36].

The framework of objectives of Leonardo da Vinci (Article 2 of the Decision)
The objectives are as follows:

(a) improve the skills and competences of people, especially young people, in initial vocational training at all levels; this may be achieved inter alia through work-linked vocational training and apprenticeship with a view to promoting employability and facilitating vocational integration and reintegration;

(b) improve the quality of, and access to, continuing vocational training and the life-long acquisition of skills and competences with a view to increasing and developing adaptability, particularly in order to consolidate technological and organisational change;

innovative counselling and guidance approaches are of particular importance for the fulfilment of the objectives set out in (a) and (b) and shall be given support;

(c) promote and reinforce the contribution of vocational training to the process of innovation, with a view to improving competitiveness and entrepreneurship, also in view of new employment possibilities; special attention shall be paid in this respect to fostering cooperation between vocational training institutions, including universities, and undertakings, particularly SMEs.

The objectives of the transnational network of National Resources Centres for vocational guidance
The NRCVG objectives are as follows:

1. Developing the European dimension in the national systems of educational and vocational guidance and counselling, together with the authorities responsible for the provision of transnational guidance services in each country.

2. Promoting the European dimension in education and training in close cooperation with national systems of educational and vocational guidance and counselling in the participating countries.

3. Contributing to mobility in education and training by providing quality information to relevant target groups on:

(a) education and training opportunities;
(b) opportunities for work experience placements;

---

[35] Council decision of 26 April 1999 establishing the second phase of the Community vocational training action programme 'Leonardo da Vinci'. O.J. L 146 of 11/6/99, p. 33.
[36] Annex 1, Community actions and measures, Point 7: Accompanying measures.

(c) the Community Initiatives and Programmes;
(d) pathways to occupations and careers;
(e) the legal framework for mobility;

in the EU – EEA Member States and the associated countries.

4. Contributing to the exchange of quality information on:

(a) education and training systems in the EU – EEA Member States and the associated countries;
(b) vocational and educational guidance systems in the EU – EEA Member States and the associated countries;
(c) qualifications and skills.

5. Promoting mutual awareness and co-operation between guidance services in the different EU – EEA Members States and in the associated countries in terms of working methods and dissemination of innovative practices.

Nature of the support to the NRCVG network

The support to the transnational network of National Resources Centres for vocational guidance (NRCVG) takes the form of operating grants – one contract per country – allocated to the organisations designated by the national competent authorities as the contractual counterpart of the Commission.

For the sake of effectiveness, in some countries the relevant action may be carried out by more than one body, reflecting national operational environments and needs; such bodies may be subcontractors, or hold with the contracting organisation any other relationship under the national law, provided that this does not produce any situation of incompatibility or conflict with the contract between the contracting organisation and the Commission. The concerned bodies will set up the suitable co-ordination arrangements, so that these terms of reference are satisfied on a national basis.

The Community funding for the period July 2002-June 2003 amounts to a maximum amount per country as indicated in the table in annex. The grant is allocated with respect of the principle of co-financing, after the approval of an Annual Working Plan (AWP). The Community funding may cover up to 50% of the eligible costs (cf. § V below).

If necessary, when the structure designated as NRCVG performs also other tasks, national authorities have to distinguish clearly, when establishing the grant request, between the functions of the NRCVG covered by the grant and other functions.

Tasks of the NRCVG

The grant given by the Commission aims to support, for each participating country the following tasks, of the NRCVG:

- Collecting, producing and disseminating quality information about education and training opportunities.

- Suppporting the development of the **European portal on learning opportunities.** For the period 2002-2003, the NRCVGs will have the task of feeding the portal with adequate information.

In detail, the task for the NRCVGs will include:

- identification of appropriate information resources available on the Web, concerning learning opportunities (compulsory education, VET, higher education, adult education), practical information, national education and training systems, international exchanges, documentation centres, contacts. Specific guidelines on the type of resources to be selected will be provided to the Centres;

- classification of the above-mentioned resources via a dedicated software, provided by the Commission to the Centres;

- production of texts for the portal as appropriate, for instance: information on the the education and training systems, reports on relevant experiences, news, etc.;

- maintenance of the links: check the validity of the links on a regular basis

- Promoting co-operation between the various actors in the field of guidance and counselling at national and transnational level, and contributing to the awareness on European opportunities in the field of education and training among guidance counsellors through concrete activities.

- Contributing to the development of the transnational network of NRCVGs, also through the implementation of communication, information and support activities (documentation, directories, web sites, network seminars, information events at European level etc.).

- Contributing to the dissemination and/or valorisation of innovative guidance projects developed under Leonardo da Vinci (first and second phase), and any other Community programme or initiative.

Eligible costs

The Community funding may cover the following costs – only if related to the tasks mentioned in section IV:

– Staff costs;

– Travel and subsistence costs (for participation in conferences, visits, training etc.);

– Costs in connection with conferences and seminars;

– Publications, dissemination and information costs (including translation costs for publications, also online);

– Operating costs (including rental of office space, data processing and overhead costs such as office equipment, telephone, office supplies, mailing);

Procedures/Accountability

The NRCVGs shall present annually:

a) an Annual Working Plan and a budget;

b) an Annual Activity Report (that may be presented as a unique document by the network) and a financial report.

For details on the structure of these documents, see Section VII.

The grant will be paid under the following modalities:

– a first payment of 80 % of the amount payable within 60 days of the signature of the contract by both parties;

– the balance within 60 days after approval by the Commission of the annual report and financial report.

Nature of the documents to be produced
NRCVG Annual Working Plan (AWP)

Each country running a NRCVG prepares the AWP according to the common guidelines for presentation set out below, reflecting the above framework of objectives, while at the same time taking account of national needs, policies and strategies, and outlining the arrangements for implementation.

Each country prepares one AWP, giving the relevant information when the activities are carried out by more than one body.

The AWP is submitted by the 30th April to the European Commission for examination and approval. The approved AWP is the basis for the allocation of the grant and the evaluation of the action implemented.

The AWP should respect the following structure:

(1)   Objectives

(2)   Target groups/Customers

(3)   Methods

(4)   Activities

(5)   Management and Resources

(6)   Evaluation

Annual Report

Within a maximum of two months after the end of the contract the contractor will send the Commission the Annual Report and the financial statement.

The Annual Report should be elaborated according to the following structure:

(1)   Objectives of the NRCVG for the considered period

(2)   Working methods and management of the Centre

(3)   Activities undertaken during the year at national level

(4)   Activities at transnational level, including at network level

(5)   Evaluation of the activities vs. objectives

Each Centre must consider that the national annual Report will be inserted into an Annual Synthesis Report that will be elaborated at network level.

**Breakdown of grant for the National Resources Centres EUR 15 –
Contractual period 1 July 2002 - 30 June 2003**

total

	total
B	**69.602**
DK	**69.078**
D	**87.928**
EL	**68.904**
E	**79.681**
F	**83.619**
IRL	**66.714**
I	**83.139**
L	**60.000**
NL	**70.686**
A	**70.166**
P	**68.694**
FIN	**68.488**
S	**70.088**
UK	**83.213**

EEA and preaccession	**60.000**

PLEASE NOTE: Some additional funding (about 200 000 for the whole network) may be made available in reason of max 20 000 per Centre, to cover demonstrated needs related to the implementation of the portal.

APPENDIX 2. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON THE RESULTS OF THE THREE SURVEYS AND THE QUESTIONNAIRES

1. Additional information on the self-assessment of the Centres on their current activities

Details of the organisational position of the Centres

In Ireland the FAS reports to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, who provide funding and issue policy guidelines relating training and the role of the Public Employment Service nationally. In Belgium the Centre for German speaking community is located to the Department of Education, Employment and European programs.

The option "some other form of organization" was selected by the following national Centres: Czech Republic, Lithuania, the Netherlands and Slovak Republic and United Kingdom. Lithuania NRCVG was established in 1998 together with Lithuanian LEONARDO National Agency co-operating with Lithuanian Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Crafts. Also in the Netherlands the Centre is part of the Dutch national agency of Leonardo da Vinci. CINOP, the host foundation of the national agency, works in projects for the Dutch government and the European Commission. In Czech Republic the Centre is a department of a public benefit organisation National Training Fund. In Slovak republic the Centre is located in the non-governmental non-profit institution working under contract with Ministry of Education. In UK Careers Europe is a private, not for profit organisation. Centre was created as a joint initiative between Careers Bradford and central government. Centre act as a national resource centre for all UK guidance services.

Size and human resources

It seems to be typical for the Centres that they employ part-time personnel as the figures in the table below indicate. Only the Centres in Latvia and Iceland employ only full-time workers. Almost 2/5 of the Centres rely totally on part-time personnel. 77 % of those centres, which have only part-time personnel, have 1-4 workers. The exception is Germany, where 75 part-time workers have been employed in 24 centres. However, the situation in Germany will change when the new European Competence Centres will be created. After this organisational change all staff will be working full-time for the "European Service"

Almost 3/5 of the centres employ both part-time and full-time personnel. However, half of these Centres have no more 1 or 2 full-time workers.

Table 18. Share of full-time and part-time personnel at the national Centres

	Frequency	Percent
both part-time and full-time personnel	19	56
only full-time personnel	2	6
only part-time personnel	13	38
Total	34	100

Customers

The figures indicating the importance of the various target groups as the customers of national resource Centres are presented in Table 6. In this observation the importance of the guidance and counselling organisations and other European networks/organisations using scale 1-5 (5=very important ... 1= marginal) is regarded to be higher than in table presented above.

Table 19. Importance of the various target groups.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Guidance counsellors	33	4,7	0,92
Guidance and counselling organisations	31	4,1	1,19
National and local authorities	33	4,03	1,19
Other European networks/organisations	28	4	1,12
Educational and training institutions	33	3,79	1,32
Employment services	33	3,73	1,28
Educational professionals	32	3,63	1,13
Students, pupils and their parents	32	3,53	1,32
Other national public institutions	26	3,19	1,42
Individual citizens	32	2,88	1,41
Other target groups	8	2,88	2,10
Other national private institutions	21	1,86	1,20

(**Scale: 5=very important … 1=marginal**)

Those Centres, which did not include guidance counsellors to their main target groups, mentioned instead, for instance, students, individual citizens and guidance organisations.

Regarding the target groups some, however, not very meaningful differences between the new and old member Centres appear. In comparison students and their parents and individual citizens gain more momentum in the old member centres whereas in the new member Centres national and local authorities and educational institutes are regarded higher on the ladder of importance.

Table 20. Importance of the target groups - comparing old and new member centres

	Old members in the network	New members in the network
Guidance counsellors	4,65	4,77
Educational professionals	3,42	3,92
Students, pupils and their parents	3,79	3,15
Individual citizens	3,21	2,38
National and local authorities	3,75	4,46
Employment services	3,65	3,85
Educational and training institutions	3,40	4,38
Guidance and counselling organisations	3,83	4,46
Other national public institutions	2,71	3,75
Other national private institutions	2,09	1,60
Other European networks/organisations	3,88	4,18
Other target groups	2,75	3,00

(**Scale: 5=very important … 1=marginal**)

According to their own assessment the Centres have been rather successful in reaching their most important targets groups. There are no significant differences between the new and old member centres in their assessments in this respect.

Methods used for gathering information on customer satisfaction

A concrete example is the self-assessment chart used in Romania as an evaluation tool for the counselling units and the practitioners working in these units. Both charts contain a category of indicators to assess customer satisfaction.

Examples of less formal methods: They hear comments on their products or services via email, phone, fax or letters as well as directly face to face from clients visiting the office or participating in events organised by the centres. Continuing co-operation with the guidance and counselling community was also mentioned as one way to evaluate the activities of the Centre and to monitor customer satisfaction. In addition, customer satisfaction is monitored through statistical data. Centres keep record on a number of participants in events organised by them and they monitor the number of visitors on their website. Finally, the number of distributed publications and further requests for the materials provided by the Centre are used as indicators of customer satisfaction. .

Examples of the utilisation of the results of the customer need and satisfaction surveys: The cases of Finland, Ireland and Portugal can be taken as examples of meaningful utilisation of customer feedback. In Finland the survey results have been used for providing information on the role of guidance practitioners in distributing information and advising young people about opportunities for international mobility. In Ireland recommendations, in particular the marketing and public relation strategies for European activities have been made on the basis of survey results. Also actions based on these recommendations have been implemented. The national Centre in Portugal is planning to actualise a survey in order to evaluate the quality of their products.

Best practices and success stories

One of the most important evaluation questions was as to "what is the added value of Euroguidance Network?" The Centres' responses covered such themes as products and services, reaching target groups and quality management as well as networking at national and international level were considered. The success stories introduced by the Centres bring some further illumination and validation to the picture on the main operations of the Centres' operations. Here is a detailed presentation of the analysis of best practices and success stories.

   1) *Products and services*

The "best practices" cited in this category can be grouped in the following three main sub-categories:

   a) Production and provision of information in printed form

Most Centres produce own brochures or booklets on education and/or working opportunities home and abroad. Some Centres have also produced a publication or a series of publications addressed to the guidance community.

   b) Electronic provision of information

Electronic means of provision of information have also a significant role. In addition to the Centres' own websites online databases (e.g. Ploteus) were mention as "best practice".

   c) Development of methods for counselling

Some Centres have made a contribution in developing the methods and systems for guidance and counselling. Also publications about guidance related issues have been produced.

2) Reaching target groups/clients

Electronic provision of information distribution is very much to the forefront in reaching the target groups/clients. In spite of the raise of electronic means printed material is still used widely. This confirms the findings presented above. The third central method in reaching target groups is the organisation of or participation in national events (career fairs, exhibitions).

3) Quality management

A wide range of responses to this question was received. Two main subjects which rose above the others were a) the regular consultation with guidance community at national level and b) customer satisfaction. Information on customer satisfaction is usually collected through questionnaires.

However, it should be mentioned that this question was addressed only by very few respondents, which might be interpreted as an indication of poorly developed monitoring, customer feedback and quality management systems at national resource Centres. Observations made during country visits render further support to this "hypothesis".

4) Networking at national level

A small range of "best practices" falling into this category was encountered. According to the responses, "best practices" in networking at national level have been composed of contacts and cooperation both with guidance community and national authorities. The most frequently cited national authorities are employment offices and authorities in education and vocational training.

The most frequently method used in keeping in contact with above associated partners is email but also meetings and seminars were mentioned.

5) Networking at international level

A diversified range of methods was mentioned as "best practice" for networking at international level. Common to all these methods is a connection to Euroguidance network at some level. Cooperation with other NRCVGs is regarded very important by the Centres. In this context the common Euroguidance web-board was often cited as "best practice".

Also project cooperation was frequently mentioned. Meetings and conferences as well as study visits at own Centre and in other European counties have also been experienced as "best practice" in networking at international level.

Success stories at national level

The national centres were asked to describe the three most important "success stories" where they have succeeded in bringing added value at national level. The results of the analysis are presented below.

A wide range of responses was received to this question. The national success stories can be grouped in the following three categories.

    a) Dissemination of information in electronic and printed form

Promotion of Ploteus-portal (Portal on Learning Opportunities throughout Europe) has been regarded as one of the success stories at European level. Launching of the Ploteus portal has brought publicity for the centres, which is considered as a positive effect.

Beside this work done with the Ploteus national centres have created own databases. For example the Spanish NRCVG has designed and carried out a nation-wide interactive "*Portal on Information and Guidance*", Orient@ Portal, which provides information on three main areas: 1) education and training activities, 2) professions/occupations and 3) employment opportunities.

b) Networking at national level

Networking of the different actors in the field of guidance is regarded as a one of the main success stories at national level. Most typically the networking is done through seminars and other activities, but some of the centres have even set up a network or a forum for this purpose. The essential value gained from networking is dissemination of information and material on guidance issues, but also the better changes to effect on guidance policy at national level.

A good example in this sense is Malta where has been created Guidance forum which consist of representatives of stakeholders. This forum works in collaboration with the working group devising the national guidance policy.

c) Promotion of European dimension

The centres have made an effort to increase an awareness of the European dimension in guidance and counselling and according to their responses they have also attain success in it. However, only very few concrete examples were given in this context, but according to the responses a promotion of the common European CV has reinforced European dimension also at national level.

Success stories at international level

The national centres were asked to describe three most important "success stories" where they according to their opinion have really succeeded in bringing added value at European and/or international level.

Respondents have named Ploteus –portal as a "success story" most frequently. Over one third of the national centres (37%) consider that the development of Ploteus-portal has brought added value at European level. Most of the centres did not state arguments for their standpoints, but few comments were put forward. For example the development of a common European product and service has been seen as a positive result. Ploteus –portal has also brought new customers for the centres, both foreign and domestic. Beside the Ploteus also the ESTIA ICT platform was still mentioned among the "success stories".

Organisation and/or participation in international conferences have brought added value at European level according to the respondents. Especially the congresses of The International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance (IAEVG), which is the worldwide counsellors' association, were often mentioned.

The Academia programme, being implemented as part of the wider Leonardo da Vinci Programme, relates to exchange and training of guidance practitioners. It offers training courses lasting one or two weeks to European guidance counsellors and aims to develop and expand their skills with the acquisition of professional experience in the countries participating.

Among the respondents the Academia programme is seen as an excellent opportunity for guidance practitioners familiarise themselves with methods and techniques used by their colleagues in other countries, and hence improve and re-evaluate their own daily practices. Exchanges of guidance practitioners have also helped to develop an awareness and enthusiasm for the European Dimension in guidance.

Beside the Academia exchange programme, centres consider study visits, which they have hosted or made by themselves as "success stories" at European level. During the study visits to the other Centres participants have shared their experience, expertise and best practices and thus improved their knowledge of the national and European educational and guidance and systems.

Critical turning points in the development of the Centre

The centres were asked to describe the most important changes, turning points or critical incidents in the development of their Centre. The different phases on the development path of the network were frequently referred in the answers. According to the responses each enlargement process has been an important change for co-ordination of the network. The most recent change in this sense is the new contact people in commission, which has strengthen the support for the network. These referred changes in the position of the Euroguidance network under PETRA and Leonardo da Vinci programmes are described with more details in Appendix 2.

Institutional or organisational changes in the position of the national Centre were often described as critical turning points. For example in Netherlands after the change of the host organisation the centre has emphasized more on dissemination of the information rather than research and pilot projects as they did in the past. In Austria the Euroguidance Centre has been commissioned with the task of operating as the National Reference Point. During the year 2004 there have been significant changes in organisational structure of the national centres in Denmark, Germany and Italy.

Scarce budget and personnel resources were often sited to have been critical incidents in the development of the Centre. Especially the delays in the payment of the grants have caused centres significant difficulties in their activities.

The fast development of new information technology solution is seen as one of the most important factor in the development of the Euroguidance network and in activities of the national Centres.
According to the responses the introduction of internet and email has greatly improved the networking of the centres. It has also provided new co-operation opportunities to different stakeholders working in the field of guidance. Dissemination of information in electronic form has also broadened the target group of the centres.

The launch of Ploteus -portal is one of the most frequently referred turningpoint in the development of the Euroguidance network. According to the responses the launch of Ploteus has strengthened the status of the network within national authorities, other European networks and organisations as well as guidance practitioners.

The changes in the policy level within the countries have effect on the development of the national Centre. In their responses Centres often refer to the increased awareness for educational guidance counselling issues. This aspect was emphasised especially in the responses of the centres in new or candidate countries, where the centres are involved in the development of guidance system.

Also new reforms in educational policies are expected to create new challenges to the activities of the centres. For example in Finland new curriculum in comprehensive and upper secondary schools include international studying and training issues to be become compulsory components of guidance and counselling.

Future perspectives

Centres were asked to evaluate and identify some key aspects regarding the future development of the Centre and Euroguidance Network as a whole within the forthcoming 2-3 years. The results of the content analysis of the responses are introduced below.

a) Counselling and guidance

According to the responses the themes related to counselling and guidance have a high priority as one of the main aspects of the centres' future development.

The Centres plan to participate more actively in development and establishment of communication and collaboration within area of guidance and counselling at regional and national level. Particularly this means networking of guidance professionals but also development of closer links to the educational institutions.

Another aspect related to counselling and guidance is the Centres' wish to put more emphasis on the development and strengthening of counselling methods and practical tools for the daily work of guidance practitioners. In concrete manner this means such tools and materials as the development of various types of exercises, materials or web-based tools to be used in career education were mentioned. In this context development and promotion of distance counselling and multicultural counselling were mentioned.

Some centres wish to participate also in training measures for guidance counsellors. Also a request for the certification of qualifications of guidance practitioners was put forward in this context.

In order to raise guidance practitioners awareness about the themes related to the mobility and internationalisation, the experience gained through exchange visits has turn out to be very efficient mean as was already stated in Centres' success stories at national level. Some of the centres wish that the mobility of guidance practitioners through programmes funded by the European Commission will become recognised as a task of the Euroguidance network.

b) Extension of co-operation with national authorities

The responses to the survey highlight the difference between the old and new member Centres in terms of their relationship to the national authorities. In the new member Centres the development and extension of co-operation with national authorities is experienced to be one the main aspects in their future perspectives. As a result of extended co-operation with national authorities Centres wish to make their own work more effective and visible in the future.

In Slovakia the Centre will try to constitute National guidance forum with involvement of policy makers, guidance providers, target groups and social partners. Also in Malta the strengthening of the link between the Euroguidance forum to the working group developing national guidance policy was mentioned to be an important aspect in the future.

The extension of co-operation with national authorities was identified as a key theme within Centres in old member countries in the previous phase of Centres history. In this context the Centres in new member countries seem to be following the developmental path already experienced by the Centres in old member countries.

c) The future of the Euroguidance network

The Centres place importance on the future development of the network. The most important aspect in this sense is to secure the future existence of the network after year 2006. The strengthening of the network itself is regarded possible through the promotion of the competences and outputs of the network at national and international level.

Some Centres also put special emphasis on the European dimension in their responses. The promotion of the benefits of European and international collaboration for education and training as well as the development of guidance systems were emphasized as a part of European dimension.

Stronger networking among NRCVGs on project and initiatives is also wished for. In this context Centres have gained good experience on Ploteus-portal, which was mentioned as a unified network product. The proposal of enlarging Ploteus in the direction of an official database for educational possibilities was also put forward.

An interesting feature in the future development of the network is also Romania's wish to create a Balkan league of NRCVGs to ensure regional cooperation. In Nordic-Baltic centres the regional co-operation network has already been created.

In general the Centres wish to maintain the high quality of their products and services also in the future. The centres also emphasized the relevance of assisting each other in seeking out the information on education and training.

Improvement of the links initiated with other European networks was also considered to be one important aspect in the future development of the Euroguidance network. Thus the overlapping of the activities of the networks could be avoided and already developed resources and "best practices" could be shared more efficiently.

2. Additional information on the client survey

The second questionnaire was addressed to the customers of the national Centres. The questionnaire was sent to the customers named by each Centre in the first survey, which was addressed to the national resource Centres. Approximately 250 questionnaires were sent to the customers of 32 Centres. The customers of two Centres were not included to the sample, due to missing contact information or late arrival of the questionnaire, when it was no more possible to carry out the survey. Altogether 105 completed questionnaires were returned by the deadline. This represent about 42 % survey turnout. The respondents represent customers of 29 Centres. The number of completed questionnaires varies from 1 to 9 per Centre, average being four replies per Centre.

Background information

The questionnaire was sent to customer named by the Centres. This aspect must be taken into a consideration while interpreting the survey results. First of all, e.g. individual citizens as well as students, pupils and their parents belong to the one of the most important target groups of many Centres as was found out in the survey addressed to the national Centres. Reaching of these specific target groups by email would not have been possible. This means that these important customers could not be included to the survey.

Secondly, it is justified to suppose that the customers named by the Centres, are those, who know the Centre and its activities fairly well. Thus, assessment passed by more marginal customer groups as well as customers using products and services only occasionally are likely to be excluded.

However, the most important customer groups of the Centres, guidance counsellors and educational professionals, have contributed to the evaluation. 45 % of the respondents are guidance counsellors by their occupational background.

Table 21. Occupational background of the respondents

	Frequency	Percent
Guidance counsellor	47	45
Educational professional	22	21
Some other	36	34
Total	105	100

The occupational and organisational background of those respondents who did not belong to the group of guidance counsellors or educational professionals varies a lot. 30 % of them represent national or local authority and 24% employment services. Among these respondents are also some representatives of some other European networks.

Table 22. Organisational background of the respondents

	Frequency	Percent
National or local authority	22	22,4
Employment services	14	14,3
Educational institutions or guidance and counselling organisation	37	37,8
Other national public or private institutions	12	12,2
Other European network or organisation	6	6,1
Some other	7	7,1
Total	98	100,0

Guidance counsellors being the biggest group of the respondents, it is no surprise that one third of the respondents represent educational institution of guidance and counselling organisation. Seven respondents did not indicate their organisational background.

Product and services

The customers of the national Centres were asked to assess the importance of the products and services provided by their national Centre as well as to indicate how often they use these particular products and services. Internet websites and on-line databases, publications and reports produced by the centre as well as organisation and participation in seminars, conferences, workshops and meetings are ranked high in order of importance. Also consultancy on guidance issues at national and European level is considered to be an important aspect in the Centres activities in general. The three least important products and services for them are cd -roms, journals and reference library. This result implies to a growing importance of the new methods in provision of information.

There are some differences in the assessments of the importance of specific services between occupational groups. Educational professionals consider exhibitions and career affairs organised by the national Centre to be more important for them and their work than the other groups. Those respondents representing some other occupational groups than guidance counsellors and educational professionals regard the importance of the organisation of seminars and participation in seminars to be more important than the other occupational groups.

The least used products and services provided by the Centres are reference library and organisation of international placements and study visits. Small share of those respondents, who have used the Centre's service to organise international placements and study visits, is understandable in relation to the total number of applicants and positions available for example in Academia- programme.

Overlapping of the products and services

With question number 6, the usage of the products and services of other providers was asked from the customers of the Euroguidance network.

According to the responses 48 % of respondents have used similar products or services provided by some other organisation than Euroguidance network. About 2/3 of the Guidance counsellors have used the products and services of the other organisations while the comparable share in other occupational groups is just about one third. The difference is statistically significant.

Table 23. Usage of the products and services of some other provide than the Euroguidance network

Using products of other providers	Guidance councellor	Educational professional	Some other	Total
Yes	65	32	35	47
No	35	68	65	53
Total	100 (N=43)	100 (N=22)	100 (N=34)	100 (N=99)

Perhaps surprisingly only 1/3 of the representatives of other national or private institutions and other European networks and organisations have used products provided by some other organisation than the Euroguidance network.

Those respondents, who have used similar products or services, referred most frequently to internet websites and databases as well as publications and reports, which have been provided by some other organisation than the national Centres or Euroguidance Network. However, only in few cases they named the specific website or publication. As a provider of these other products and services were often named national ministries or local authorities, but also the other European networks, such as Eurodesk, Eures and NRP.

66 % of the respondents consider the other products and services they have used to be equally useful as the products and services provided by the national Centres. 26 % consider them to be more useful and 8% less useful. Those respondents who consider the other products to be more useful were all guidance counsellors. In comparison of the usefulness between products and services provided by the Centres and some other organisation, the representatives of national authorities, educational institutions and other national public or private institutions considered the other products to be less useful.

Future perspectives

a) Need for the information on mobility related themes

80 % of the respondents assess the need for the information on the training opportunities throughout the Europe to grow in the future. 90 % those respondents, who represent some other occupational group than guidance counsellors or educational professionals, estimate the need to be bigger, while 1/3 of the guidance counsellors assess the need to stay at present level.

Other relevant theme, on which information is needed more than presently, is the working opportunities in Europe. Need for the information on working opportunities is estimated to grow in all occupational groups.

68 % of the respondents assess the information about educational systems throughout the Europe to be needed more than presently. However, among the educational professionals the need for this kind of information is not as high as in other occupational groups, but also they assess the need to grow. 67 % of the respondents estimate the need for information on counselling methods to be higher in the future than presently. Especially among the guidance counsellors the need for this kind of information is estimated to increase more than among the other occupational groups.

Only quarter of the respondents had specified needs for information on other themes or matters than those already mentioned. Especially the customers of the new members Centres emphasize the need for the qualification requirements for counsellors and quality of guidance systems. Information on guidance and counselling on the internet was also wished for as well as information on multi-cultural issues. The respondents also assess the need for the information on the recognition of diplomas to be needed more than presently.

However, these answers do not allow us to drawn a conclusion that it would be precisely the Euroguidance network, which should provide the information on above themes.

c) Methods in providing information

The recent fast development of different kind of information technology based applications has changed dramatically the nature of dissemination of information. 78% of the respondents assess the need for the electronic provision of information to grow also in the future. Instead only 41 % assess the need for the information in printed form to increase any further. 64 % of the respondents assess that training/ training modules will be needed more than presently. Especially the educational professionals consider need for this kind of methods in provision of information on guidance issues to increase in the future. 48 % of the respondents estimate the need for the seminars, meetings and conferences to grow furthermore.

Other matters

Other matters, which respondents wanted to bring to the evaluators attention, varied from some very critical comments to the acknowledgements to the Centres. Some of the respondents also commented their own position in relation to the national Centre in this context. It is reasonable to put forward some of the comments also here.

Some customers of the Centres, which have join the Euroguidance network recently, wanted to pay attention to the low developmental level of the guidance and counselling systems in their home countries. According to the customers' comments these new member Centres of the Euroguidance network have worked actively to promote guidance and counselling issues in their countries. One customer of the Romanian Centre emphasised also the added value, which changing experience with other countries has been brought in developing a better system of career counselling and guidance.

The old and new member Centres have been active in creating networks in the field of guidance. However, the customers pointed out that a need for closer co-operation between the different actors in the field of guidance still exist. Attention was also paid to the number of information networks and quantity of information available. Integration of the networks was suggested in order to receive stronger support from the European Commission, and the scarce human resources of the national Centres have been noticed also among the customers.

3. Additional information on the survey of national authorities

The third survey was addressed to the national authorities. The questionnaires were sent to participants of Euroguidance meeting in Brussels as well as to the representatives of national ministries named by the Centres. Altogether the questionnaire was sent to national authorities in 27 countries. Three countries were excluded while there was no contact information available to their national authorities. Switzerland was excluded, because SOL has a status of observer in the network and they are not included in the official evaluation.

Completed questionnaires were received from 21 respondents from 16 countries by the deadline. This represents a 41 % overall response rate.

In table 7 the organisational position of the respondents is presented. More than 4/5 of the national authorities responded to the survey represent the Ministry of Education. This survey turnout is in relation to the organisational position of the Centres, while more than 57 % of the Centres function either as departments or as autonomous institutions under the Ministry of Education. There were two respondents, who name their organisational position to be some other than a representative of ministry. Those respondents represent National Board of Education in Finland and in Norway. The National Board of Education operates in both countries under the Ministry of Education, so in this study they have been included to the same category with representatives of Ministry of education. The rest of the surveys' respondents are representatives of the Ministry of Labour.

Table 24. Organisational position of the respondents

	Frequency	Percent
a representative of Ministry of Education	18	86
a representative of Ministry of Labour	3	14
Total	21	100

Impact on policymaking

The respondents representing Latvian, Lithuanian and Danish national authorities assess the activities of their national Centre to have a profound impact on national policy. In Lithuania the Centre has an impact in development of National vocational guidance strategy, in creation of local networks, in production and dissemination of guidance material and in-service training of guidance counsellors. In Latvia Ministry of Education and Science has nominate the Centre for development of the National programme and National project for raising the quality of career guidance and vocational counselling in educational system in Latvia. Due to the proposals and active advocacy of the Centre acquiring basic skills and knowledge in vocational guidance and counselling have been included in he National teachers' qualification standards.

In Danish respondent was already looking forward in the future in his answer. The position of the Euroguidance Centre will change after an establishment of a new international agency under the Ministry of Education by the end of 2004. This new national unit will have responsibility for implementing the reform in guidance systems and is obviously expected to have a profound impact on policy making in the future.

Altogether 62 % of the respondents consider that the organisational position of the Centre should be developed. The suggested changes and arguments were mainly in line with the coming organisational changes in Denmark. There the new international agency will encompass the

national agency of all EU and other mobility programmes, the National centre for recognition of foreign qualification, activities of Eurydice and Euroguidance. Increased cooperation with international networks is expected to bring synergy advantages. Beside establishment of a new international agency for different information networks, the national Centre's possibility to operate as Europass agency was put forward by some respondents. Also a closer coordination with Refernet was suggested.

The Centres' performance

The national authorities gave good overall assessment for the performance of the national Centre in their country. Using scale 1-5 (*5= exellent..1=poor)* the mean value for the performance of the Centre was 3,74, sd= 0,99). 74 % of the respondents considered performances of the Centre to be good or excellent.

Table 25. The Centres' successfulness in performing various functions.
(Scale: 5=very successful, 4=successful, 3= in between, 2= satisfactory,1=poor)

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Share of Options 5 and 4 %
Producing and providing information on work, study and training opportunities	4,05	0,97	74
Promoting international mobility	3,45	1,19	60
Developing guidance and/or counselling services	3,21	1,08	42

Good practices

The representatives of the national authorities make a number of suggestions for examples of good practices. These suggestions seem to bring further support and validation to issues already discussed in chapter 3.1.3. of this report.

Publications and on-line electronic databases provided by the national Centre were identified as "best practices" in category *products and services* (17 responses in total)*.* In addition to the dissemination of information in printed and electronic form also seminars, conferences and other meetings with national authorities as well as guidance counsellors were considered as "good practices" in r*eaching target groups/clients* (14 responses)*.*

Only few respondents gave any concrete examples of "best practices" in *networking at national level* (13 respenses). In stead the importance of the work, which the national centres have done in networking with different stakeholders working in the field of guidance, was underlined in the answers. Seminars and conferences were cited as a concrete example of "best practices" in networking. In Finland the meetings of National Advisory Group of the Centre have foster networking at national level.

Exchange and study visits organised by the national Centre were identified as "best practice" in *networking at international level* (12 responses)*.* Also the development of Ploteus -portal was mentioned in this context. Nordic-Baltic co-operation network was distinguished by Latvian and Lithuanian national authorities in this context.

Performance of the Euroguidance network and its relationship to other European networks

In the fourth part of the questionnaire the national authorities were asked to assess the activities of the Euroguidance network and also Euroguidance network's relationship to other networks providing information on the themes related to education, training and mobility. Also the possible future perspectives of the networks were covered.

81 % of the respondents consider the importance of the Euroguidance network to be very important or important. The national authorities mean value of the importance of the network is 4,2 using scale 1-5 (5=very important..1=marginal). sd= 0,873

Mean value for the successfulness of the Network in fulfilling its mission was 3,6 in using scale 1-5 (5=very successful..1=poor, sd= 0,93). According to the 60 % of the respondents the network has been very successful or successful.

The question concerning the sufficiency of present financial resources of the Euroguidance divides the respondents. 53 % of the respondents consider the financial resources to be very sufficient or sufficient while 47 % regard them to be rather scarce.

The national authorities regard the exchange of information, good practices and new methods in the field of guidance to be *added value of the Euroguidance network form the national point of view*.
The activities of the Euroguidance network have raised the awareness of European dimension in the field of guidance and counselling (16 responses).

In Europe there are several networks providing information on the themes related to education, training and mobility. The national authorities were asked to assess to what extend to the activities of the Euroguidance network overlap with other networks. According to the 80 % of the respondents networks overlap with each other somewhat or lot. 56 % of the respondents assess that overlapping of the networks has not weakened the recognition or position of Euroguidance network, while 44% of respondent consider that the overlapping has weakened the recognition of Euroguidance network.

Eurodice and Enic-Naric were mentioned most frequently when the respondents were ask to name networks, which operate mostly in the same field with the Euroguidance network. However, also Eures, Eurodesk and NRP, Refernet as well as some national organisations were mentioned in the answers.

Questionnaire for National Resource Centres for Vocational Guidance (NRCVGs)

Dear Madame/Sir

Social Development Company from Finland has been assigned to carry out an independent external evaluation of the Euroguidance Network. The present questionnaire is directed to the Euroguidance Centres themselves constituting the first questionnaire of the three surveys in total. The other two questionnaires will be addressed to the client groups and the stakeholders.

The goal of the present questionnaire is to map out the services and products of the Centres both in quantitative and qualitative terms as well as self-evaluation of the Centres' operations as a whole. The Centres are also asked to identify their most important client groups as a basis for the second survey.

Social Development Company wishes to thank already in advance the Centres for their valuable contribution to the evaluation in making the work of the Centres more visible and potentially recognisable.

Please, respond by e-mail teresa.teppo@sosiaalikehitys.com.

Background information

1. Please, give here the name of your Centre
_____

2. What is the organisational position of your Centre? Is your Centre (please, tick the right option)…	
… a department of Ministry of education	
… an autonomous institution under the Ministry of Education	
… a department of the Ministry of Labour	
… an autonomous institution under the Ministry of Labour	
… a department of some other ministry, please specify	
… an autonomous institution of some other ministry, please specify	
… some other form of organisation (e.g. foundation, private business), please specify	

	Full-time	Part-time
3a. The number of personnel at your Centre		
3b. The educational and professional background of your personnel (field of education, the level of educational achievement or degree / work experience – field and number of years). Please, indicate the number of persons in each category.		

Products and services

4. Please, assess the importance of the products and services of your Centre and identify the most important products and services during the years 1998-2003 (the evaluation assignment covers the five-year period of the Network)?		
	Assessment of the importance of the product or service, using the scale 1-5. 5= very important … … 1= marginal **0=does not exist**	Please, name or describe below the most important products and/or services.
Provision of guidance and/or counselling service		
Replying to enquiries		
Electronic provisions of information		
internet web sites, portals		
on-line databases		
cd-roms		
e-mail lists		
Provisions of information in printed form		
publications and reports		
leaflets and brochures		
Newsletters		
Journals		
articles		
Dissemination of information through other media (e.g. television, radio)		
Reference library		
Provision of information through other means (e.g. networking)		
Organisation of training or training modules as a part of training programmes		
Organisation of seminars, conferences, workshops and meetings		
Organisation of exhibitions and career fairs		
Participation in seminars, conferences, workshops and meetings		
Participation in exhibitions and fairs of other organisations		
Organising study or exchange visits		
Organising international placements		
Consultancy on guidance issues at national / European level		

Participation in national / international projects (pilot, research projects etc.)		
Other products and activities, please specify		

Customers

5. Please, assess the importance and size of your target groups as well as your success in reaching them.

Target group description	Please, asses the importance of the target group using the scale 1-5; 5=very important … … 1=marginal	The three most important target groups for your Centre, please, tick.	Please, estimate the size of each target group relevant to your Centre	How successful have you, in your opinion, been in reaching the target groups? Use the scale 1-5; 5=very successful … … 1=the group has not been reached at all
guidance counsellors				
educational professionals				
students, pupils and their parents				
individual citizens				
national and local authorities				
employment services				
educational and training institutions				
guidance and counselling organisations				
other national public institutions, please specify				
other national private institutions, please specify				
other European networks/organisations, please specify				
other target groups, please specify				

6. What are the methods your Centre has used for gathering information on customer satisfaction?

7. Please name the five most important products or services that your Centre produces and describe briefly how the feedback on them is gathered.	
The identification of the product and service	**Describe the main features of gathering the feedback**
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

Funding

8. What are the financial resources of the centre (total, including financial support from the Commission, national and other funding) EUR _____

9. What is the most important funding source of your Centre? _____

10. Please, assess the share of different operations/costs in your budget.	
	The share (%)
Wages and other personnel costs	
Marketing and public relations	
Products and services	
electronic materials	(…)
printed materials	(…)
other forms of products and services	(…)
I. **Other activities and operations of the Centre**	
Other costs, please describe briefly	
In total	**100 %**

11. Please, assess using the scale 1-5 the financial cost-effectiveness of your Centre. (5 = excellent … 1 = poor.)
Rating (1-5)_____

Best practices

12. Please, identify the most important "best practices" your Centre has developed.	
	Please, describe briefly and in as a concrete manner as possible the best practise
Products or services	
Reaching target groups/clients	

Quality management	
Networking at national level	
Networking at international level	
Other products, services, or activities? Please, specify.	

13. Please, describe briefly three most important "success stories" of your Centre; where have you really succeeded in bringing added value at national level?	
1	
2	
3	

14. Please, describe briefly three most important international "success stories" of your Centre; where have you really succeeded in bringing added value at European and/or international level.	
1	
2	
3	

15. Please, describe briefly and in as a concrete manner as possible what have been the most important changes, turning points or critical incidents in the development of your Centre (e.g. in terms of objectives, services and products, national or European/international positioning)?

16. What will be, in your point of view, the next steps in your future development in the forthcoming 2-3 years?

17. Please, identify 10 most important national client groups and organisations of your Centre and give their contact information (contact person and her/his e-mail address)
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10

Other matters you would like to bring to the attention of the external evaluator:

Thank you very much for your time and effort!

Questionnaire for the Customers of the National Resource Centres for Vocational Guidance (NRCVG)

_____

Dear Madame/Sir

Social Development Company from Finland has been assigned to carry out an independent external evaluation of the network of National Resource Centres for Vocational Guidance (Euroguidance network).

The national Centres act as a link between the guidance services of a number of European countries, exchanging information about work, study and training opportunities throughout Europe. The **XX** in is part of Euroguidance network

The goal of the questionnaire is to provide information to the evaluators about the familiarity and usefulness of the services and products provided by the national Centre.

The information submitted through this questionnaire, i.e. your answers will be dealt with _strict confidentiality._ Only the research team of Social Development Company will have an access to the returned questionnaires. The researchers will process the information and report the results in such way that no individual responses or persons can be identified.

Social Development Company wishes to thank you in advance for your valuable contribution to this evaluation.

Please, respond by email teresa.teppo@sosiaalikehitys.com by **March, 31st 2004.**

Background Information

1. What is your a) occupational and b) organisational background? Please mark with (x) the right options	
a) Occupational background	
guidance counsellor	
educational professional	
other, please specify	
b) Representative of	
national or local authority	
employment services	
educational and training institution	
guidance and counselling organisation	
other national public institution	
other national private institution	
other European networks or organisation	
other, please specify	

2. Please, assess the importance of the following products and services for you and your work. Please indicate also how regularly have you used product or service concerned.		
Products and services of the national centre *Please note, that your national centre may not provide all of these products or services*	**Please, assess the importance of the product or service using scale 1-5 (5=very important ….1=marginal)**	**Please, indicate how regularly have you used the product or service.** **1= I have never used it** **2= I have used it occasionally** **3= I use it regularly**
Provision of guidance and/or counselling service		
Replying to enquiries		
Electronic provisions of information		
internet web sites, portals		
on-line databases		
cd-roms		
e-mail lists		
Provisions of information in printed form		
publications and reports		
leaflets and brochures		
Newsletters		
Journals		
articles		
Dissemination of information through other media (e.g. television, radio)		
Reference library		
Provision of information through other means (e.g. networking)		
Organisation of training or training modules as a part of training programmes		
Organisation of seminars, conferences, workshops and meetings		
Organisation of exhibitions and career fairs		
Participation in seminars, conferences, workshops and meetings		
Participation in exhibitions and fairs of other organisations		
Organising study or exchange visits		
Organising international placements		
Consultancy on guidance issues at national / European level		
Participation in national / international projects (pilot, research projects etc.)		
Other products and activities, please specify		

3. Please, assess the following specific product or services provided by the XX.				
Product or service	**Are you familiar with the product or service? Please, mark with X the right option.**		**How regularly have you used the product or service? 1=never 2=occasionally 3=regularly**	**Please, assess the usefulness of the product or service for you and your work using scale 1-5 (5=very important ..1= marginal)**
	Yes	**No**		
1. Ploteus- portal (http://europa.eu.int/ploteus)				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				

4. How well are you informed about the activities of the national Centre? Please use scale 1-5. (5=very well…1= hardly at all)	

5. Please give your overall assessment of the activities of the national Centre using scale 1-5 (5= excellent…1=poor)	

6. Have you used similar products or services as mentioned above in question number 3, which have been provided by *some other organisation* than XX? (1= Yes, 2= No)	
If yes, Please specify the products or services	
If yes, Please specify the organisation(s)	
If yes, please assess the usefulness of these products and services compared to the products and services of the national centre using scale 1-3 (3 =more useful, 2= equally useful, 1=less useful)	

7. Please, assess the need for the information on the following themes in the future using scale 1-3. 3= will be needed more than presently 2= will be needed in the same extend as presently 1= will be needed less than presently	
a) information on educational systems throughout Europe	
b) information on training opportunities throughout Europe	
c) information on working opportunities throughout Europe	
d) information on counselling methods	
e) information on other themes or matters, please specify	

8. Please, assess the need for the following methods providing information on above themes and guidance issues in the future using scale 1-3 3= will be needed more than presently 2= will be needed in the same extend as presently 1= will be needed less than presently	
a) electronic provision of information (e.g. internet, email, databases)	
b) provision of information in printed form (e.g. books, publications, brochures)	
c) seminars, meeting, conferences	
d) training/ training modules	
e) other, please specify	

9. Other matters you would like to bring to the attention of the external evaluator:

Thank you very much for your time and effort!

Questionnaire for the national authorities of the National Resource Centres for the Vocational Guidance (NRCVG)

_____

Dear Madame/Sir

Social Development Company from Finland has been assigned to carry out an independent external evaluation of the network of National Resource Centres for Vocational Guidance (Euroguidance network).

Euroguidance network promotes international mobility of people throughout Europe. The national Centres act as a link between the guidance services of a number of European countries, exchanging information about work, study and training opportunities throughout Europe.

The goal of the questionnaire is to provide information to the evaluators about the national authorities' perspective on the added value of the Centres and their products as well as about the Centres' position in the national guidance and mobility policy system.

The information submitted through this questionnaire, i.e. your answers will be dealt with *strict confidentiality.* Only the research team of Social Development Company will have an access to the returned questionnaires. The researchers will process the information and report the results in such way that no individual responses or persons can be identified.

Social Development Company wishes to thank you in advance for your valuable contribution to this evaluation.

Please, respond by email teresa.teppo@sosiaalikehitys.com by May, 12th 2004.

_____

 I Background information

1. What is your organisational position? **Please tick (X) the right option.**	
a) a representative of Ministry of Education	
b) a representative of Ministry of Labour	
c) some other, please specify	

II National policy

2. Please assess the importance of the following themes as a part of national policies (such as labour market and education policy) in your country. **Please use the scale 1- 5** **(5= very important, 4= important, 3= in between, 2= rather marginal, 1= marginal)**	
a) Promotion of European dimension in guidance services	
b) Promotion of international mobility	
c) Dissemination of information on educational and labour market opportunities in Europe	

3. Please rank the above options in order of importance. (1=the most important, 2= the second most important etc.)	
a) Promotion of European dimension in guidance services	
b) Promotion of international mobility	
c) Dissemination of information on educational and labour market opportunities in Europe	

III National resource Centre

4. Please assess the visibility of the national Centres in your country among the following stakeholders and client groups. Please use the scale 1- 5. (5= very good, 4=good, 3= in between, 2= satisfactory,1=poor)	
a) Guidance counsellors and guidance community	
b) National authorities	
c) Educational and training institutions	
d) Students, pupils and their parents	
e) Other groups, please specify	

5. Please assess how successful the Centres have been in getting recognition from the following stakeholders and client groups? Please use the scale 1- 5. (5= very successful, 4=successful, 3= in between, 2= satisfactory,1=poor)	
a) Guidance counsellors and guidance community	
b) National authorities	
c) Educational and training institutions	
d) Students, pupils and their parents	
e) Other groups, please specify	

6. Please assess how successful the Centres have been in reaching the following stakeholders and client groups? Please use the scale 1- 5. (5= very successful, 4=successful, 3= in between, 2= satisfactory,1=poor)	
a) Guidance counsellors and guidance community	
b) National authorities	
c) Educational and training institutions	
d) Students, pupils and their parents	
e) Other groups, please specify	

7. Please give your overall assessment of the performance of the national Centres in your country. Please use the scale 1- 5. (5= excellent, 4= good, 3= in between, 2= satisfactory, 1= poor)	

8. Please assess how successful the national Centres in your country have been in the following aspects of their operations. Please use the scale 1- 5. (5= very successful, 4=successful, 3= in between, 2= satisfactory,1=poor)	
a) Producing and providing information on work, study and training opportunities in Europe	
b) Promoting international mobility	
c) Developing guidance and/or counselling services	
d) Other, please specify	

9. Please rank the above options in order of importance. (1= the most important, 2= the second important, etc.)	
a) Producing and providing information on work, study and training opportunities in Europe	
b) Promoting international mobility	
c) Developing guidance and/or counselling services	
d) Other, please specify	

10. Please assess the usefulness of the products/services provided by the national Centres in your country. Please use the scale 1- 5. (5= very good, 4=good, 3= in between, 2= satisfactory,1=poor)	
a) Electronic provision of information (e.g. internet, email, databases)	
b) Information in printed form (e.g. books, publications, brochures)	
c) Seminars, meetings, conferences	
d) Training/ training modules	
e) Other, please specify	

11. Please identify and describe briefly the most important "good practices" the national Centres in your country have developed?	
Products and services	
Reaching target groups/clients	
Networking at national level	
Networking at international level	
Other, please specify	

12. Please assess the influence of the activities of the Centres on the national policy making. Please tick (X) one option.	
The Centres have had	
a) a profound impact on national policy making	
b) some impact on national policy making	
c) only marginal impact on national policy making	

13. If you ticked option a (a profound impact), please describe briefly in which way it has taken place?

14. Please indicate your opinion about the future organisational position of the national Centres in your country. Please tick (X) one option.	
a) There is no need to change the present organisational position	
b) The organisational position of the national Centres should be developed. Please describe briefly how.	

IV Euroguidance Network

15. Please assess the importance of the Euroguidance network. Please use the scale 1- 5. (5=very important, 4= important , 3=in between, 2=rather marginal,1= marginal)	

16. Please assess how successful Euroguidance network has been in fulfilling its mission? Please use the scale 1- 5 (5= very successful, 4=successful, 3= in between, 2= satisfactory,1=poor)	

17. Please describe briefly what is the added value of the Euroguidance network from the national point of view (i.e. for your country)?	

18. Please assess the sufficiency of present financial resources of the Euroguidance network. Please use the scale 1- 3. (3=very sufficient, 2=sufficient, 1=rather scarce)	

Euroguidance network's relationship to other networks

In Europe there are several networks (e.g. Enic-Naric, Eurydice, Eurodesk, Eures, Refernet) providing information on the themes related to the education, training and mobility.

19. Please assess to what extend do the activities of the Euroguidance network overlap with other networks? **Please use the scale 1- 3.** (3=a lot, 2= somewhat, 1= not at all)	

20. If you ticked option 3 or 2, please assess has the overlapping of the networks weakened the recognition and position of the Euroguidance network? Please use the scale 1- 3. (3= a lot, 2= somewhat, 1= not at all)	

21. According to your experience, which of the other networks operate mostly in the same field with the Euroguidance network?	

22. Considering the future perspectives of the Euroguidance network, please mark the following thesis in order of preference with numbers 1- 4. **(1= the most preferred, 2=the second preferred etc.)**	
a) Euroguidance Network should retain its autonomous position in relation to the other networks	
b) The activities of the Euroguidance network and the other networks should be integrated	
c) Euroguidance network and the other networks should have a semi-autonomous position under a common policy making and steering umbrella organisation.	
d) Some other solution, please specify	
23. Other matters you would like to bring to the attention of the external evaluator:	

Thank you very much for your time and effort!

APPENDIX 3. THE EVOLUTION OF THE EUROGUIDANCE NETWORK

1. First steps under Action III of the PETRA programme

The National Resource Centres for Vocational Guidance NRCVG were set up by the Commission in 1992-1993 under Action III of the PETRA programme. Action III provided Community support for national vocational guidance and training systems as well as for Community cooperation on counselling (Fränzl & Launikari, 2000). The NRCVGs were meant to offer a way of exchanging information on national training systems and training opportunities in the European Union, particularly with the perspective of mobility. Since the start, therefore, the role of the Centres has been to gather and/or produce information about education and training in Europe, in order to put them at the disposal of the guidance community. In the planning phase of the Centres there was also a goal to establish national focal points within each member states to facilitate collaborative projects at Community level, particularly in relation to Action II. However it was recognised that some Centres were structurally in a stronger position to do this than others. Development projects were organised on the following three cooperation themes:

(i)   introducing new information technologies into guidance systems;
(ii)   giving the business sector and the social partners a bigger role in vocational guidance;
(iii)   cooperation in the development of quality in counselling (methods, contents, tools and materials) and implementation of new approaches.

During the first years of the network this separate strand enabled the network to become established in the context of the varying levels of development of national guidance systems in Member States.

From the beginning the network had a guidance orientation but as it was programme based it had to contribute to the aims and objectives of the programme. The same seems to apply also to the Networks' position under the Leonardo da Vinci programme. The decision on the location of the centre was given to the governments and therefore the location of it became a battle ground at national level between education and labour ministries. Only in some countries there was a joint Centre established. The lack of joint Centres and decisions setting it up within the LDV agencies seem to have weakened its original thrust. An agency based Centre has expectations based on the program not so much on national guidance policies. Additionally, agency based Centres have not been eligible partners in program based pilot projects.

2. First years under the Leonardo da Vinci programme (1995 – 1998)

After the conclusion of the Petra programme, the Centres were supported as « accompanying structures » within the first phase of the Leonardo da Vinci programme, which started in 1994. From 1995, the NRCVGs were funded under the Leonardo da Vinci programme (first phase, 1995-1999), which was established to implement a Community vocational training policy. Though the relevant Council Decision (94/819/EC) does not mention the NRCVGs or the network itself, the common framework of objectives (Art. 3) included the development of the European dimension in vocational guidance and of vocational guidance facilities with a view to providing every individual with the opportunity to receive lifelong high-quality vocational guidance. It was then possible to fund the NRCVGs under the support measures (Strand IV) in their capacity as "appropriate structures and mechanisms". (Fränzl & Launikari, 2000; McCarthy, 1997)

Under the Leonardo da Vinci Programme this network was extended to include the new EU Member States (Finland, Sweden and Austria) and two EEA countries (Norway and Iceland). These new countries established their own National Resource Centres for Guidance during the period 1995-1997. At that point the goals of these Centres under the Leonardo da Vinci Programme were three- fold:

- to provide concrete expression to Articles 126 & 127 of the Maastricht Treaty by exchanging vocational information on education and training opportunities between Member States of the EU;
- to provide a European dimension to the national system of careers information and guidance;
- to complement the activities of the Leonardo da Vinci Programme National Co-ordination Units through advisory, information and support services mainly related to transnational education, training and work opportunities.

The National Resource Centres under the Leonardo da Vinci Programme became under contract to the Leonardo da Vinci National Co-ordination Units. However, apart from ensuring that the minimal requirements i.e. grant application, work plan, annual report had been followed, there was no evident management of the network. The first initiative to address the issues of management and development of the service were undertaken by the Centres themselves at a meeting in Madrid in May 1996. Following the meeting, the European Commission set up a Working Party comprised of representatives of the National Centres of Spain, Italy, Finland, Ireland and Belgium to advance proposals on the future development of the National Resource Centres. The Working Party conducted two surveys completed by the Irish and Finnish representatives to examine the range of activities the NRCVGs were engaged in and possible future developments for the Network.

According to the results of these two evaluations, which were presented at the network seminar entitled "Guidance in Europe and Future Prospects" in Finland in March 1997, during the first years there was a very high degree of unanimity of the Centres in terms of the services they provide, the types of information sought from them, the categories of users, and the methodologies and products. The similarity in methods and products of the Centres suggested that users in Member States were receiving common treatment and that there was little variation in the content of this treatment between Member States (McCarthy, 1997).

The main users of the services of the Centres were individuals - from student to adult/parent - and organizations, both national e.g. training institutions, and transnational e.g. EURES, LEONARDO NCUs. Most of the information requests dealt with by the Centres focused on courses in vocational, technical and higher education and training. A natural companion of these was information sought on the equivalence, comparability, and recognition of qualifications and employment opportunities. The methods and products used by the Centres to assist the transnational mobility of users were quite traditional: telephone, fax and printed materials. There was a high degree of emphasis on individual advice/counselling. There was also a strong pro-active approach in bringing the services of the Centre to the attention of the public: careers fairs, networking with relevant agencies, and use of national media. At that time the newer information and communications technologies were used by almost half of the Centres (McCarthy, 1997).

The results indicated construct and content validity to their operations i.e. the Centres had a common interpretation of their mission and role. However, according to the evaluation results there were some varieties in the profiles of individual Centres. One group of the Centres were carrying out the common mission of the NRCVG network, but their facilities, technical standard of equipment and low number of personnel restricted their opportunities

to concentrate on large-scale evaluation of their operation. These Centres did not necessarily possess the sufficient resources for systematic national and transnational development work in the field of guidance either. The position of some of these Centres, nationally and on European level, was still in some ways unestablished, as were their activities.

A second group of the Centres implemented the common mission of the network, and their facilities, technical standard of equipment and number of personnel were of average level quantitatively. The Centres participated in and contributed actively to the development of national and transnational activities. The self-evaluation and strategic development were somewhat unorganized, which made their profile slightly ambiguous both nationally and Europe-wide. In general, the operation of the Centres was relatively well-established, versatile and of even quality.

A third group of the Centres fulfilled the common mission of the network, and their facilities, technical standard of equipment and number of personnel were, in quantity, on level above the average. The Centres were a part of a larger national agency and/or a consortium, which provided them with good opportunities to improve their standard of facilities and equipment. The Centres directed resources into development work both nationally and transnationally. They organized national training programmes, produced material, and carried out surveys on issues concerning their field of operation, when needed. Self-evaluation and strategic planning were a part of the long-term development of these Centres. They had undertaken specific development measures on the basis of results received from evaluation projects. (Guidance in Europe, 1997.)

As a whole, the transition from PETRA to Leonardo da Vinci at an operational level seemed to be mainly very smooth at Member State level which itself is a reflection of the value that national governments placed on the work of the Centres. Additionally, the new Member States had benefited from observation of a range of existing operational models of Centres in different Member States.

Management of the NRCVGs was one of the key issues discussed in the 1997 network seminar. At operational level, the Centres managed their affairs according to their own institutional location and internal structures, with the Commission (DGXXII) letters of 23rd May and 29th May 1995 acting as guides to actions and activities. However, the reporting procedures to the national authorities varied as also their degree of involvement at operational level. It seemed at that time that neither the Commission nor the NCUs possessed the capacity and the expertise to manage the network. Since the establishment of the network in 1992, there had never been any evaluative feedback from the Commission and the NCUs on foot of workplans and annual reports submitted (McCarthy, 1997). The use of the NCUs by the Commission offered some protection of its rights to the Commission but is no substitute for planned development and management of the service. The benign role of the NCUs had enabled the Centres to continue to exist but not to develop. The work within the framework of the Leonardo Vinci Programme seemed to promote a dilemma to the network. On the other hand it gave a mission to the network, on the other hand it diminished the status of the network, because the Centres were already acting in more wider context while promoting transnational mobility in education and training. During this period the other and also currently existing dilemma related to the balance of the network activities and pilot projects became more and more visible.

The seminar "Guidance in Europe and Future Prospects" brought up useful information on the position of the Centres. The Centres seemed to have a shared understanding of their mission and that they strive to fulfil that mission as well as possible with the resources available. The biggest differences between the Centres were found in areas concerning the scope and versatility of operation, strategic planning and the integration of evaluation into development work.

The seminar also drew up an operational specification for the Centres, which included for example, the mission statement, values, customers, minimum standards for the NRCVG operation, competencies of the personnel, and network support activities. Additionally, a number of valuable ideas and suggestions for the further development of the NRCVG network were brought up at the seminar. The most important task was to build a solid structural foundation, and effective means for coordination, follow-up and evaluation for the network. The seminar suggested that the network should work in clusters, and that specific body, a Technical Development Committee (TDC), which would have representatives from both the Centres and the Commission, should be established to answer for the monitoring of the quality of activities.

During this period the Internet had significant added value in solving one of the key problems of the network. During the first years of the Centres there were attempts to develop common databases on educational opportunities within the member states. However, due to differences in cultures and languages, national financial constraints, and dissimilar training/education systems they did not succeed at that time. After the evolution of the Internet some of the pilots (e.g. On The Move) of that time came accessible on the web. This phase was also the platform for ESTIA –portal, which provided a common framework for presenting relevant information on each member state.

3. Shift from individual Centres to a network 1998 - 1999

The evolution starting in Madrid conference in 1996 from individual centres to a network became more concrete and visible in the network seminars in 1998 – 1999. In addition to the fulfilment of the goals set by the Commission this two year period seemed to solve partly the questions related to the management of the network. In February 1998 all the NRCVGs (National Resource Centres for Guidance) in the network were invited to a working seminar in Söderhamn, Sweden, in order to prepare a Charter for the network and to discuss the future of the NRCGs. The seminar was arranged by the European Commission, DG XXII in co-operation with the Swedish EU Programme Office. As a result of this seminar, a temporary TDC was nominated to complete the charter with the Commission representatives. Additionally, the following minor working groups (clusters) were set up to deal with specific tasks of interest for the use of the whole network (Fränzl & Launikari, 2000).

Common report format and evaluation. This working group focused on the development of common guidelines to be used by each NRCVG regarding the Annual Action Plan (AAP) for the grant request and the Annual Action Report (AAR) for the financial report to the European Commission in order to standardise the application and reporting procedures. The guidelines had already been established and were now used by all Centres, both for re-affirming the common identity of the Centres and for contributing as much as possible to the simplification of procedures in the European Commission by enabling the representatives in charge to deal with NRCVG documents more easily. Before these frameworks it was hard to get comprehensive data on the network activities besides the individual transnational pilot project documents. One key goal of these common report formats was to promote the transparency of the network.

The ESTIA ICT Platform. The work of this cluster was built upon the outcome of the ESTIA pilot and multiplier projects under Leonardo da Vinci programme. In this project, an internet homepage was created with the aim of providing useful information about education, professions and labour market issues in Europe. The project partners involved created national websites, following a common structure of links to existing web pages relevant to these themes. The task of the working group was to create an additional entrance to the ESTIA homepage, the 'ICT Platform', which was to be used as the exclusive communication platform for the network as well as for providing information on the network for the public. Since February 2000 the platform has been available on the internet and is actively used by NRCVG representatives.

Pilot Projects. Here, a survey on the Centres' involvement in international projects was carried out. The aim of this study was to make available an overview of project activities in the field of educational and vocational guidance. These activities aimed to support the Centres in identifying possibilities for challenging project ideas for the future as well as practices worth multiplying and further elaborating or building upon existing outcomes and know-how.

Welcoming of the New Member States. The main focus in setting up this cluster was the association of the CEE countries within the LdV programme, the activities of founding NRCVGs in these countries and the possible network contribution and support for integrating the new members into the network.

The cluster activities contributed to finding new approaches and strategies for further development of the NRCVG network itself (Fränz & Launikari, 2000). More regular contacts with colleagues working for the NRCVG network for exchanging information and experiences were considered increasingly important for the future success of the network by several Centres. The strategic work continued in network seminars in October 1998 in Bologna, Italy and in May 1999 in Nurenberg, Germany. During the Bologna seminar the network established the permanent Technical Development Committee responsible for facilitating the information flow between the network and the European Commission. In addition of the quality of the network the focus on the strategic development was on the extension of the network and the status of the Centres in the second phase of the Leonardo da Vinci programme. Additionally, a decision was taken to create a network logo and promotion material. The ESTIA ICT Platform was accepted as the NRCVG network's website.

The extension of the NRCVG network to the Central and Eastern European Countries started officially in the 1998/99 contractual period. However, only the Czech Republic (1.1.-30.6.1999) and the Slovak Republic (1.7.1998-30.6.1999) had a contract with the European Commission at this time. All the other CEE countries (Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, and Slovenia) were taking measures to designate an NRCVG with Phare funds or with financial support from the European Training Foundation ETF in 1998/99. These new Centres participated the network seminar for the first time in Bologna. (Fränzl & Launikari, 2000)

By the next conference in Nurenberg, in May 1999, the Centers were encouraged to improve their cooperation with the Member States' representatives in the Leonardo da Vinci committee and inform them about the activities of the NRCVG network. By that time it had become clear that the network would be mentioned explicitly in the Leonardo da Vinci II decision and thus would have a legal basis within the Leonardo II framework. Therefore it was stressed that the principles and ideas already formulated in the past should be followed up and developed further in the future. One of the key issues at the Nuremberg conference was the discussion of new approaches to lifelong guidance and the tasks of the NRCVGs on the way to the next millennium:

- strengthening the European dimension in guidance services
- renewing guidance methods and tools and contributing to redefining the ever-changing occupational profile of guidance practitioners
- the expansion and support of guidance initiatives in business and industry
- investigating the link between guidance and occupational integration.

By the end of this phase, the plans for marketing activities were formulated. At the Nuremberg conference, a decision on a common name for the network was taken, ensuring that the Centres will be seen as part of a European-wide network - the Euroguidance network – by single users as well as by all relevant bodies, institutions and organisations in Europe. In the same context, the work on a common network brochure was continued, as well as the development of a network strategy for the future. (Fränzl & Launikari, 2000)

4. Euroguidance network activities under the Leonardo da Vinci II Programme

The documentation of the Euroguidance network overall activities improved significantly after 1999. For example, there are two excellent Annual Synthesis Reports available. The first report is covering the years 1998 – 1999 and the second one covers the 12-month period from July 2001 until June 2002 and is based on the Annual Action Reports of the individual Euroguidance Centres in 31 European countries. This report was produced by a small working group set up by the European Commission in September 2002. The main aim of presenting these documents was to raise awareness of the work and achievements of the Euroguidance network among the national and European authorities funding, monitoring and evaluating the network's performance. In addition to this, the working group charged to prepare guidelines for the future marketing strategy of the Euroguidance network. These Annual Synthesis Reports include comprehensive details of the evolution and main products of the network, so the following paragraphs high light only some key strategic issues. (Fränzl & Launikari, 2000; Launikari, 2003.)

Within the Leonardo da Vinci II Programme the Euroguidance network reached a more stable status and a legal basis. The Council Decision of 26 April 1999 establishing the second phase of the Community vocational training action programme Leonardo da Vinci (2000-2006) states that Community support is available also for "the Transnational Network of National Resource Centres for Vocational Guidance" (point 7, "Accompanying measures"). The Decision also stresses the relevance of "innovative counselling and guidance approaches" in relation to the programme's objectives, and envisages special support for – among other things – the development of "European arrangements for vocational guidance".

At a higher level, and in a wider context, the rationale for the activities of the NRCVG network is provided by the Treaty establishing the European Community (as amended by the Treaty of Amsterdam), stipulating that measures aimed at promoting the European dimension in education and training have to be supported and developed further. The following paragraphs and sub-sections are particularly relevant in this regard: Article 150 (ex Article 127), paragraph 2, sub-sections 3 and 5, stating that Community action shall be aimed at:

− facilitating access to vocational training and encouraging mobility of instructors and trainees and particularly young people;

− developing exchanges of information and experience on issues common to the training systems of the Member States."

According to the responses to the questionnaire sent to the Network in January 2004 the importance of the Centres have gradually recognised by national authorities. For example, in some new member states the Centres have been able to have a strong role in developing national guidance policies. Additionally, the recent development in the management of the network gives more time to each Centre to meet the overall goals of the network on national level. (Launikari, 2003)

During this phase the network seminars acted as a significant tool for the internal communication among the Centres. For example in September 2002 the annual network conference "Mobility in Europe. Challenges for the Euroguidance Network." was focusing on the following topics:
- key initiatives at European level and their relevance to the Euroguidance Network
- good practices and discussions on arising fields of activity at network level
- network visibility at European and national level
- key ideas for the future Euroguidance Network strategy

The seminar hosted also working groups which were focusing on the development of the network strategies and the more effective use of the ICT platform. The seminar was also discussing on the network role in the development and the maintenance of the portal PLOTEUS.

The development of the Euroguidance Network may be summarised in the following table.

Table 26. The developmental path of the Euroguidance Network

Developmental phases of Euroguidance Network	Main achievements	Emerging challenges and dilemmas
Action III in Petra programme	* Establishment of the network * First definitions of the mission statement	* Location of the Centres on the national level? * Balance between guidance and programme activities?
Leonardo da Vinci Programme I, 1995-1998	* Operational specification for the Centres * Adaptation of the Internet-based technology by means of pilot projects * First attempts to strengthen the management of the network	* Weak feedback mechanisms? * Management of the network? * Variation of the roles on national level?
From individual Centres to a network 1998 – 1999	* Strengthening the management of the network (AAP, AAR, TCD, Clusters) * Welcoming of the new member states * Virtual Platform * Network strategy * Production of materials and training modules	* Need for more sustainable status as a network? * Balance with pilot projects and tasks on the national level?
Euroguidance under Leonardo da Vinci II Programme	* Ploteus portal * Legal basis and more structured network activities * Stronger status of the Centres on national level * Improved management within the Commission	* Role of the network? * Relationship with parallel agencies? * Linkages with guidance policies and guidance communities?

As a whole, the development path of the network shows some fundamental questions throughout the four previously described phases. Firstly, the legal basis and position of the network in terms of the different programmes and policies on the European level has been thin. (European dimension in guidance, Life long learning, development of vocational education and training and the employment strategies). Due to this the position and the management of the network have been unstable within the European Union level. Secondly, this dilemma has given the Centres the opportunity to develop the management of the network with proactive bottom-up strategy and by means of self evaluations, surveys, working clusters and technical working groups. The network meeting in Berne showed that some of the fundamental questions have sustained from the very beginning of the network in the early 1990's and have absorbed some part of the potentials of the network. It seems also that these same questions - *location of the Centres on national level, balance between guidance and programme activities, balance between pilot projects and network activities, need for a more sustainable status as a network, for example* - need to be solved within certain time frames over and over again, especially in the transition phases of the different EU programmes.

References

Centre for International Mobility CIMO. (1997) Guidance in Europe. Evaluation and Future Prospects –seminar. Helsinki, Finland, 3- 4 March 1997. Seminar Report

Fränzl, N. & Launikari, M. (Eds.) (2000) Euroguidance Annual Synthesis Report. 1.7.1998 - 30.6.1999. Retrieved, April, 12. 2004. from:
http://www.euroguidance.org.uk/english/networkactivities/ASR.htm

Launikari, M. (Ed.) (2003) Euroguidance Annual Synthesis Report 2001 – 2002.

McCarthy, J. (1997) Activities of National Resource Centres for Guidance. Survey Results. A paper Prepared for EU Working Party on the Development of the National Resource Centres.

APPENDIX 4. REPORTS ON THE COUNTRY VISITS

Estonia

Date: November 24.-25.2003

The visit and the centre

The interviews and the future dialogue workshop took place at the national Centre's premises in Tallinn. Administratively the Centre is located in Foundation VET Reform, which shares the responsibility for the development of vocational education in Estonia and is also widely involved with the management and implementation of a number of EU funded programmes.[37] The Centre reports to the Ministry of Education, however, in the steering group of the NRC also the Ministry of Social Affairs / National Labour Board is represented together with representatives of a range of non-governmental stakeholders.

The first day of the visit was devoted to key person interviews and the second day for a future dialogue workshop. Video conferencing arrangements were applied in order to make it possible for the representatives of the Ministry of Education to participate in the workshop. Besides the staff of the NRC a wide range of representatives of the ministries, client organisations and partners were interviewed and participated in the multi-stakeholder workshop – in total 19 persons. The visit as a whole was well organised and made it possible for the evaluators to get an overview of the Estonian situation and gather the necessary information for the purpose of this evaluation exercise in an efficient way.

The Estonian Centre had a five years' history behind. The Centre commenced its operations in September 1998 and, by the time of our visit, its position within the foundation and in Estonia as a whole was comfortably established. Taking into consideration of the very broad scope of its responsibilities the Centre has to cope with very limited financial and human resources. Nevertheless, the performance of the Centre in terms of network building, information dissemination – both in printed and electronic form – and as a forerunner in guidance development issues is impressive.

Key themes in interviews and workshops

Since regaining independence Estonia has undergone dramatic changes. In the course of the all-encompassing transition process also the guidance system and provisions have met with great difficulties. Currently the rebuilding and modernisation process is in progress. However, an acute lack of resources, both financial and human resources makes this process painful. In this process the NRC has been an active partner sharing, for instance, the responsibility of initiating and organising training for guidance professionals. The NRC's scope of activities and responsibilities has grown to exceed the limits of its resources, and a need for returning to a more focused mission is very actual and has also been recognised by the Centre and its stakeholders.

Coping with the particular problems connected with the opportunity of the large Russian speaking minority having access to guidance counselling and mobility information are acute and have not been resolved.

The Estonian NRC has close contacts with the policy level agencies and active cooperation with the other European networks. The Centre gets very positive feedback from its customers for the very valuable and useful materials and information services the Centre provides as well as for the training opportunities it has organised for guidance professionals. The Centre's staff regard the EG

---

[37] Since our visit the name and judicial position of the foundation has changed.

network contacts and support invaluable as a source of ideas, inspiration and information. In this respect the importance of ACADEMIA programme was also emphasised.

Observations

The Estonian NRC has been coping with enormous challenges. Taking into consideration the limited resources the NRC has performed well and contributed greatly to the development of the guidance provisions in the country. Estonia is a rather small country with less complexity than many of the bigger member countries. Therefore it seems justified to characterize the Estonian situation as a *moderate challenge*, as it has been discussed in chapter 3.2.3. (analysing the national Centres' situations).

The following key challenges were identified for the Centre:
1) Contributing to the building of a unified and nation wide guidance system (the Centre is, of course, not the main actor in this process)
2) Strengthening network contacts nationally and internationally – liaisoning between these networks
3) Keeping up to date with IT and internet based systems
4) Contributing to the development of educational and training programmes together with established training institutions such as universities.

* * * *

United Kingdom

Date: January 8.-9.2004

The visit and the centre

The visit was hosted by Careers Europe, which is one of the oldest members of the Euroguidance network. The Centre was established in 1992 and it is situated in Bradford, Yorkshire. Judicially the Centre is a part of a private company producing careers counselling services for the surrounding region. Careers Europe is the only NRC in the UK serving England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland and having careers services as its main customers.

The key person interviews and the future workshop were carried out at the Centre's premises. Besides the management and the staff of the NRCs representatives of client organisations and partners were present, and a representative of the government department responsible for careers guidance issues was interviewed. In total 13 persons participated in the interviews and the future workshop.

Key themes in interviews and workshops

The Centre's operational environment is rather complex. Each part of the UK has developed its own system for careers counselling services and currently the system in England is undergoing a rather fundamental change. Furthermore, in the UK the international mobility issues are more versatile than in other member countries. Insular mentality makes it rather difficult to "market" the European dimension with continental Europe in focus; the Trans-Atlantic connection and even global dimensions are often regarded more actual. The strategy of Careers Europe has been to focus on information dissemination and promoting the European dimension in education and (youth) employment services. The Centre has not assumed any broader role in for instance, being proactive in taking initiatives for the development of the guidance community or organising training or other such activities going beyond the articulated focus of information dissemination. Within the Euroguidance network, Careers Europe has taken some special responsibilities and has been

actively organising joint projects with other NRCs. The Centre's contacts with the other European networks have not been very active and it has not been very active in fostering the contacts to policy making either. It is fair to say, that being judicially a private firm "lobbying" with policy issues and broadening the scope of activities beyond the signed contract would, of course, not be the job of centre.

Careers Europe has been successful in accessing its customers and its products and services have been well received. However, during the interviews a particular issue concerning out-dated methods of information dissemination was brought up by a representative of one of the main customers. The Centre has relied on printed material and cd-roms, while some of the customers are already operating in the internet world. The UK guidance services have directed their efforts primarily to young people, mostly students at various educational institutes and young job seekers at the job centres. Currently and towards the future the need of adult population for life long guidance are growing rapidly.

It was the opinion of both the personnel of the Centre and its customers that the Centre has benefited from its participation in the Euroguidance network. Performing the domestic service functions would not be possible without the access to the EG information source and without being able to contact in real time colleagues in the other European countries.

Observations

The UK is a big country divided in four separate countries each having organised their government and public services in different ways. There are also reorganising processes in progress, particularly in England, concerning the way of organising both the guidance and employment services. These processes cause some concerns and uncertainties also for the NRC and its future strategy. It is for the reasons discussed above that we have identified the UK situation as a *ambiguity*, as it has been discussed in chapter 3.2.3. (analysing the national Centres' situations).

The following key challenges were identified in the discussions during the two-day country visit:

1) Strengthening the contacts to policy making and with the guidance community.
2) Taking advantage of the internet based solutions in information dissemination within the UK.
3) Together with partners working in this field getting active in developing the life long guidance provisions.

* * * *

Poland

Date: January 19.-20.2004

The visit and the centres

Poland is the biggest one of the new EU member countries with vast opportunities for future development. In Poland there are two NRCs, one the labour sector reporting to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the other one on the education sector reporting to the Ministry of National Education. In the Euroguidance network Poland has participated since July 1999.

The key person interviews during the first day of the visit were carried out in different locations separately for each sector, and the future dialogue workshop was a joint event for both sectors and Centres. Representatives of the ministries were interview and they also participated actively in the future dialogue. Besides them the staff of the NRCs and a wide range of persons representing the

Centres' customers and partners attended the two-day exercise. There was also "an integration dinner" organised for the participants in order for them to meet with their colleagues across the sectoral boundaries. The visit as a whole was well organised and made it possible for the evaluators to get an overview of the situation in Poland and gather the necessary information for the purpose of this evaluation exercise. In total 32 persons participated in the interviews and the future workshop.

Poland has been living through a political and economic transition for the past quarter of a century and experiencing many dramatic changes as a part of the transition process. Regarding guidance provisions these changes have, however, not let into a collapse of the existing system; the ongoing multi-dimensional modernisation process is building on the foundation, whose history dates back to times before the transition begun. Nevertheless, there still are a number of challenges to be resolved on the way to well functioning guidance system.

Key themes in interviews and workshops

The interviews were contacted following the 360-degree format. It seems that the NRCs' management relations to the two ministries are functional and the Centres get the necessary support for their activities. The network of client organisations is very versatile. The Centres seem to have an active rapport with their customers and the customers gave positive feedback to the Centres' products and information services. However, on the education sector there is an identified problem with reaching the vocational education institutes. There seems to be also an active dialogue between the Centres and those universities, which have been pioneering on guidance field. Besides information material on international opportunities and mobility the Centres have together with researchers developed other types material for the support of counsellors' work.

The Polish NRCs have greatly benefited from their participation in Euroguidance network. The network has provided the Polish partners with access to the European information networks and an invaluable opportunity for learning from the experience of the old member countries ("bench learning").

Observations

In European context Poland is a big country with population of approximately 40 million. The guidance environment in Poland is rather complex due to, for instance, the complexity of the hierarchical system of government and administration and the ongoing processes of modernisation. Regarding the guidance issues the Polish situation has been identified as a *big challenge*, as it has been discussed in chapter 3.2.3. (analysing the national Centres' situations).

The following key challenges were identified in the discussions during the two-day country visit:

1) Building and strengthening integration within guidance system
2) Strengthening cooperation within guidance community and between the two sectors and two NRCs
3) Implementation of career's education throughout the education system (including vocational education)
4) Maintaining and strengthening international network contacts
5) Modernising the information dissemination system and increasing its efficiency - internet based solutions
6) Together with universities developing counselling methods to meet the current and future needs – life long guidance

*   *   *   *

Germany

Date: February 12.-13.2004

The visit and the Centre

The country visit to Germany was made the 12th – the 13th of February 2004. The Centre visited was located in Frankfurt. It was at the time one of more than 20 individual Centres in Germany. The first day of the visit consisted of interviewing the manger of the Centre, the regional manager of the labour administration and two employees of the Centre. The second day was dedicated to observing the everyday work within the Centre. The German Centres are each responsible for certain countries for the Euroguidance activities. The Frankfurt Centre was responsible contacts with Spain. It is also noteworthy that German Centres have direct client contacts with the citizens.

Key themes in the interviews

The German Centres are situated in the labour administration. At the time of visit the German Euroguidance structure was under re-construction and the staff did not actually know what the German structure will look like. However, they waited for the new structure in a positive mood as it was seen as a way strengthening the position of the Euroguidance services in Germany.

The German solution was clarified later. The new structure consists of 15 regional services plus one "Europe Service". The aim is to integrate now 4 different services and networks in Germany: Euroguidance, Eures, Counselling on Mobility and ZAV. Thus, Germany is putting the emphasis on strengthening in a strategic way the different European services under one roof. This is done mainly within the labour administration and in close links with national employment policies and European Employment Strategy. One of the reasons for the reform obviously is that better resources are searched for in this way. The staff will mainly work on full-time basis while at the time of the visit Euroguidance activities constituted about 50 % of their work.

The German interviewees saw the status of mobility and the "European dimension" in policy making as ambivalent. There were also concerns regarding the reform of the German PES that it would indicate a decrease in personal services for the clients, time for personal guidance for example, and thus also affect negatively for the context where the EG staff will work in the future.

While Germany has traditionally employed foreign labour to a great extent the attitude towards international mobility seemed somewhat ambivalent. There are considerable integration problems regarding immigrants. Within the labour administration the international mobility did not seem to be the problem number one. Instead, it was assessed that the internal mobility is a bigger problem.

Observations

In all, Germany is a large EU country with highly complex environment. The complexity is even strengthened by the federal structure of the country meaning greater challenges in integrating national policies with the autonomous regions (Länder). It is also likely that the issue of mobility will rise in importance in the future due to the immigration on one hand and the international character of the German economy.

What comes to the Euroguidance activities Germany has been an active partner within the Network, it has the emphasis clearly in the labour administration and labour market policies and it is in a transition phase where the outcomes of the "German solution" remain to be seen but even as such calling for discussion and debates within the Network about the ways the Centres can improve their strategic position in their own countries.

As the German situation seems rather challenging in terms of the complexity of the environment and the transition period going on we have called the German situation 'ambiguity' where there is a need for stabilising and clarifying the role of the EG Centres also in the future.

<center>*   *   *   *</center>

Ireland

Date: March 15.-16.2004

The visit and the centre(s)

Country visit to Ireland took place 15. – 16.3.2004 in Dublin. There are two Euroguidence centres in Ireland – Euroguidance (Education) at the National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE), operating under the Ministry of Education, and Euroguidance based at FÁS (the State Training and Employment Authority, with responsibility to the labour market sector, operating under the Ministry of trade and Employment, Department of Enterprise. Both centres were visited and interviewed. Both centres work under contract for LÉARGAS, the national Leonardo-programme centre (Léargas is Ireland's National Agency for the management of National, European and International co-operation programmes). The first day was devoted to key person interviews and the second day for a multi-stakeholder dialogue workshop. Participants in the interviews included the key personnel of both the Centres, policy making level, the guidance community and users, altogether 20 persons.

Key themes in interviews and workshops

In Ireland a strategic aim is to have a seamless service in terms of guidance from children to adults. This means more efforts in primary schools, links to non-formal systems, like youthreach, and adult education.

Multipliers: The Centres collaborate closely, making most of the division of labour and diversity, with no major problems identified to a two-centre structure. The focus of efforts of both centres are on the multiplier-level, where information, good practices (including a handbook on guidance) are provided. The material produced by the centres is of a high standard.

European dimension: The Irish Centres commented positively the possibilities of learning within the EG-network. Ireland has been active not only within its own country in the guidance theme, but also in the EG-network in terms of best-practice exchange and the European dimension, and promoting the guidance –theme in Europe in general. The Centres have been active in spreading knowledge about the European dimension and mobility in Ireland to labour administration personnel and educational centres.

A common forum for guidance development: A working group has been preparing a common guidance forum for the guidance community. In the interviews and the dialogue workshop it became evident that the Centres can play a useful role in developing a forum for the guidance community for further development.

Observations

The Irish centres were operating in a moderately complex societal environment and a fairly well established guidance-community and multiplier environment, although much of it is still in a development stage. The efforts of the centres were directed towards networking and building this infrastructure, which seems to be in balance with the situation. This is why the Irish case was identified by the evaluators as representing a *relative balance* in chapter 3.2.3. (analysing the national Centres' situations).

The Irish centres seemed to be well established, with enthusiastic and pro-active personnel. The visit was well arranged. The responsible people for running the Centres plus representatives of a key set of stakeholders were present, and the interviews and the dialogue workshop were conducted in an open atmosphere. The future workshop dialogue on the second day was greeted with interest, which we also take as an indication of a good potential of the Centre(s) and their collaborative network.

* * * *

Finland

Date: April 13.-14.2004

The visit and the Centre

The country visit to the Finnish Euroguidance Centre was made the 13th – 14th of April 2004. The first day of the visit was dedicated to the interviews of the Euroguidance staff, the administartors and the partners according to the "360 degree constellation". Altogether 16 persons were interviewed. The second day consisted of the future dialogue workshop. Altogether 16 persons took actively part in the workshop.

The Centre for International Mobility CIMO, an expert and service organisation operating under the Finnish Ministry of Education, acts as the Euroguidance Centre in Finland. The Euroguidance Centre is placed in CIMO's Information services unit. The director of CIMO has the overall responsibility for the activities of Euroguidance team. CIMO acts as the national agency of the Socrates and Youth programmes of the European Union and administrates the mobility measures of the Leonardo da Vinci programmes. CIMO also coordinates a wide range of other international scholarship, mobility and training programmes. In addition to the Euroguidance network, CIMO also belongs to the youth information network Eurodesk. CIMO as the Finnish Euroguidance Centre is co-financed nationally by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour.

Key themes in the interviews and the workshop

The Euroguidance Network was seen primarily as an information exchange network working in the context of guidance. The role of the Centre is seen mainly as information management. The relevant educational and other information is disseminated through close contact with school counsellors and employment officers. Cimo has close contacts with Ministries of Education and Labour.

While the stakeholders, the central level administrators and the client group representatives highly appreciated the products and services Cimo has produced the common theme in the interviews was how to reach better the client groups in different parts of Finland. The challenge of building a more permanent network of "co-ordinators" at the regional level was seen as one of the key challenges in promoting international awareness among the citizens of all age groups and across

The theme of the Euroguidance Network's possible future role in the guidance community was lively debated and reflected upon. Cimo has been very active in introducing multi-cultural counselling in the guidance system and that might characterise the Euroguidance Network's role more generally. On the other hand, also other concepts for clarifying the issue was put forward: the concepts of 'international counselling' or 'transnational counselling'.

The issue of the possible future policy position and co-operation with the other networks was also lively debated in the group interview of the representatives of the neighbouring networks (Eures, Enic, Eurydice) and programmes (Socrates, Leonardo). While, in general, the clarification of the position of the EG Network was welcomed (in the future generation Leonardo Programme, for example) the general attitude was that there is a clear need for better co-ordination and co-operation between the policies and the different networks. However, particularly at the national level the Member States should have the last say how they want to organise the needed co-ordination and co-operation.

Observations

Finland has well established guidance system where both the educational system and the labour administration have a permanent guidance system. Cimo is thus in a rather advanced position to make full use of this multiplier network. The labour administration with its nationwide and regionally covering agency network is relatively "easier" to reach than the regionally more diverse educational system.

Cimo has been a very active partner in the EG Network and nationally it has achieved very much appreciated status among the client groups that was clearly presented in the interviews and the workshop. The electronic services but also different forms booklets and leaflets are widely used by the clients. Cimo also has through its information services direct contacts with the clients enabling continuous client feedback.

It seems that the key next steps and challenges in developing the Euroguidance Network in Finland lie mainly in deepening the Centre's role in the guidance community, improving cross-sectoral networking and improving the regional level of its operations.

As the Finnish guidance system may be deemed rather well established with long traditions Cimo is in a relatively good position and it can "fine-tune" its operations in the future.

* * * *

Italy

Date: April 22.-23.2004

The visit and the centre(s)

Country visit to Italy took place at the Centres´ premises in Benevento. Administratively and physically the Italian Centre is located in Instituto per lo Sviluppo della Formazione dei Lavoratori (ISFOL), which manages and evaluates for instance EU programmes, including Leonardo. The Centre reports both to the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Education.

The first day was devoted to key person interviews and the second day for a multi-stakeholder dialogue workshop. The participants in interviews and the workshop were representatives of the old (Bologna) and new (Benevento) Centre, the Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Education, Universities and the guidance community and the Region, altogether 15 persons.

The Italian Centre was in the middle of a transition period. The Centre in Benevento was a new establishment, since March 2004. Formerly there were two national Centres in Italy, one in Bologna in ASLA and the other centre in Naples at Fondazione IDIS. The centre in Benevento now had a new manager and staff, and one of the key challenges was to accomplish an as smooth as possible transition. The background for the change had to do with a need to establish a better link between policy making and guidance and between education and labour authorities. Also a regional de-centralisation policy (moving a centre from the North to the South of Italy) was behind the change. The new Centre in Benevento is continuing the work done by its predecessors; the new centre has access to the materials developed by them and as a part of the transition process contacts with the network of customers and multipliers is being reactivated. At the time of our country visit cooperation arrangements between the Benevento centre and ASLA were being negotiated. It is vital for a smooth transition that the Benevento centre will have an access to the experience and expertise of ASLA in the EG matters.

Key themes in interviews and workshops

The new centre regards working with the guidance community and multipliers as the key challenge. In the interviews and the dialogue the key challenges in the Italian context were identified to rotate very much around the fragmentation of guidance provisions and efforts in Italy. There are big differences between regions and within regions in terms of the developmental level of guidance networks. On top of this, the regions exercise more powers now than previously, so it is possible that different regions will pursue different models in terms of establishing guidance systems. This will require active negotiations and contact to the Regions. There are a lot of players in the guidance field, some well established, some in a developmental stage but one cannot, as yet, identify a clear cut "multiplier level" to work with. The next relevant step in Italy is, in fact, the build-up and stabilisation of a nation wide multiplier-infrastructure. An essential part of this construction work is to overcome the Italian north-south divide. The new centre is expected to create forums for an active dialogue with the guidance community. Strengthening the contacts with the top policy level agencies, such as the ministries, appeared as another strategic challenge. The development of a functional internet based information dissemination system was discussed as a more practical current challenge.

Observations

The Italian centre, on top of a challenging transition period, in a strategic sense is working in a fairly developed, but a fragmentary and complex environment, and this fragmentation is likely to continue. Taking into consideration the limited resources the EG-centres have, the Italian situation can be identified as a *big challenge in a complex environment*, as it has been characterised in chapter 3.2.3. (analysing the national Centres' situations).

At the dialogue-workshop the following key challenges were identified for the Centre:
1) Strengthening the policy dimension in the Centres' guidance efforts
2) Keeping up to date with IT-systems
3) Establishing network contacts to the guidance community – the Centre could act as a forum for this
4) Working with the South-North dimension, also in mobility
5) Establishing "best practice" exchange links to the Euroguidance-network on the EU-level, and participating in thematic work of Euroguidance development

The visit as a whole was well arranged and the key people responsible for the running of the Centre, both from the operational and policy level were present. There were a few representatives from the guidance community and users of EG-services, but to a limited amount. The interviews and the workshop were run in an open and mutually interested atmosphere. The evaluators had also an opportunity to acquaint with the information materials used in EG context and get feed back from the users on their usefulness. The staff of the Centre seemed enthusiastic and pro-active, and willing to promote the EG-efforts in a collaborative and creative way. The future workshop dialogue on the second day was greeted with enthusiasm, which the evaluators took as an indication of a good potential of the Centre.

*   *   *   *