

Final Evaluation Report

Guidance in the Workplace Project



Education and Culture

Project Partners

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www.guidanceintheworkplace.eu

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Introduction

The Guidance in the Workplace Project is a Leonardo transfer of innovation project. The initial project was called Guidance Merger. Guidance counselling for adults is traditionally seen as assisting individuals to take decisions for career enhancement or personal learning. Guidance in the workplace can in addition to this be seen as a method for companies and public organisations to improve their practices and lifelong learning of the collective. Many employers strive for a learning organisation to meet competition from others and to be innovative. Yet another perspective is the societal – to facilitate lifelong learning for all adults throughout the European Union. This perspective is becoming more in focus. Links between the jobs offered and the education system becomes less transparent when specialisation of work life continues. Figure 1 shows how guidance in the workplace services can be seen from these three perspectives on lifelong learning. Guidance services at the workplace can support all of these perspectives.

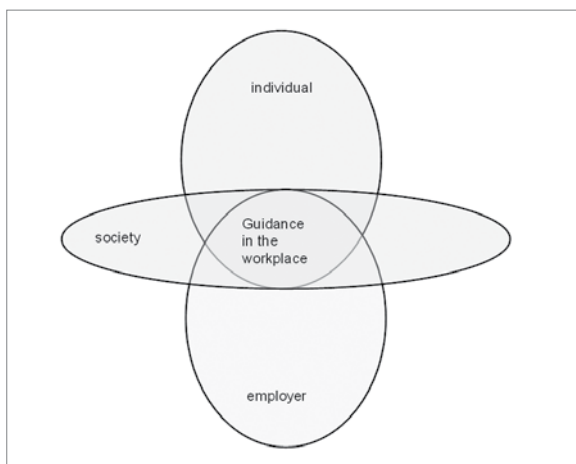


Figure 1. Three perspectives on lifelong learning

How then can guidance in the workplace services be offered? What further training for guidance counsellors is needed? And, how do we make a transfer of innovation projects like this sustainable so that the development of services continues after the project has ended? These were questions asked within the Guidance in the Workplace Project. We have not found all of the answers, but hope to give you some in this and other reports that have been written during the project.

These are the three main assumptions which have been taken into account before the start of the Guidance in the Workplace Project. They are the same as for the prior Guidance Merger Project, namely:

- That guidance can make a major contribution to the development of lifelong learning for those within employment by encouraging those in employment to take up learning opportunities
- That guidance is not always easily accessible to those in employment as for example to those who are unemployed
- For advice and guidance to make a contribution to the development of lifelong learning within employment, it is essential that advice and guidance is not provided in isolation

Conclusions from three prior evaluation reports

In three prior evaluation reports for the Guidance in the Workplace Project, we have followed the partner's efforts to find organisations to co-operate with in order to get into workplaces, so that guidance in the workplace for staff members can be offered. To be able to give services to those in employment it is essential to work together with employers. This was undoubtedly also shown in the Guidance Merger project.

The conditions and historical background in each country are far from similar. Legislation and other structures differ. The organisations that own the project are different, with different aims and strategies. What services they offer to companies and how they do it must be in line with their business strategies or overall aims. Furthermore, the aims or business strategies of the organisations the partners work with (the 'door openers') also need to fit into the scheme. If they do not, it is most likely that, the guidance in the workplace will not be offered by them in the future. In some countries it is very difficult to find such partners. Equally the employers' standpoints differ in the five countries, but also locally. Some are very reluctant to let other organisations in. Some are very far away from seeing that advice and guidance for employers can be useful for the company too.

To find partners to co-operate with and to find and show employers that they will benefit from guidance for their employees, was thought likely to be one of the most difficult part of making guidance in the workplace happen. Moreover finding partners and companies does not mean instant success. The counsellors and advice givers work-

ing to provide the services will now have two interests to keep in mind, both that of the employer and that of the employee. Therefore the training that is offered to the advice and guidance providers in the Guidance in the Workplace project needs to have both of these focal points. Furthermore the training wants to be relevant for the participants and in line with the service providing organisation's strategies or aims. Consequently each partner had to adjust the training to their specific preconditions and context. This and more could be read about the work done in the five partners in three prior evaluation reports. These reports have been slightly rearranged to fit into four different topics. They are to be found on the project web site: www.guidanceintheworkplace.eu.

The Report

The final evaluation report for a Leonardo transfer of innovation project called Guidance in the Workplace. The report includes information about the five partners that have participated in the transnational project, partner case studies and results from a questionnaire for national project co-ordinators. The case studies and results from the questionnaire were discussed at the final partner conference which took place in Bologna, Italy. The participants at the Bologna meeting were asked to contribute to the discussion and analysis of the work that has been done within the trans-national and the national projects. The joint analysis is presented throughout the report. We hope that this will give the reader an idea of what has been done throughout the project and show how transfer of innovation has been made from partners. There are three prior evaluation reports on guidance in the workplace. There is also a report on the training of guidance counsellors and other advice givers. All of this and more can be found at the project web site www.guidanceintheworkplace.eu.

An Interactive Approach

In the Guidance in the Workplace Project the Ongoing Project Evaluation, or Learning Evaluation (Svensson, Brulin, Jansson & Sjöberg), has an interactive approach (Aagaard Nielsen & Svensson 2006). Research has been done together with and not on the participants. It would not have been possible to evaluate the work in five countries using traditional research methodology. The ambition was to involve the participants, mainly project partners, as co-researchers, exploring their own work – guided by questions from the evaluator, person in charge of trans-national training modules and the trans-national project co-ordinator. The strategy was to get a perspective from “inside” the project work. To ensure validity it was important to lift discussions where critique of method and results came to the surface. We arranged for such joint learning during partner meetings. The partners, guidance counsellors, representatives from co-operating organisations and other participants were all engaged to take part in the analysis of the data together with the evaluator and trans-national coordinator.

Part of the partner meetings were organised as seminars where different results, practices and phases of the development work were discussed and analyzed. This was also a way to integrate the dissemination of results from the Guidance Merger project with the development of services and training within the transfer of innovation project, Guidance in the Workplace. The discussions often started with the immediate experiences of the participants. The ambition was then to further develop the immediate understanding to a more analytical level and at the same time learn from other partners. The evaluator made summaries of these discussions that were sent to the partners for comments.

At the first partner meeting the participants were asked to present their own organisations and the national system in connection to offering work life guidance and advice in general. Prior to the initial meeting the partners were asked to do research into their national system. What organisations offer advice and guidance for adults? Is it possible to engage any of these organisations in the project? At the second meeting there were discussions about anchoring the project work within partners own organisations and the co-operating organisations. At the third meeting the research discussed were about the training of counsellors. Prior to the fourth meeting all partners had made case studies. The aim was to capture the perspectives of employers, employees, guidance counsellors and other advice givers and that of representatives from the other organisations which some of the partners work with. We had seen, from the Guidance Merger project, that these perspectives differ. All of the above mentioned research was presented in separate evaluation reports, together forming a series.

Data collection methods

Like all prior evaluation reports, this report is built on the partners own research prior to partner meetings. Questions were sent out beforehand by the evaluator or trans-national project co-ordinator. For this final report eleven case studies were made; including interviews with guidance counsellors and representatives from organisations that the partners have co-operated with to get in to the places of work. The case studies were conducted by the partners themselves, three in Romania, three in Slovenia, three in France and one each in Sweden and Italy who are “old” partners. Notes taken by the evaluator at partner meeting/training sessions and email correspondence between evaluator, co-ordinator and partners has also been one way of collecting data. Furthermore a web based questionnaire was sent out by the evaluator and answered by partners in September 2009.

In addition to this the national projects have made other data collections for national use. The results from these have not as such been reported on trans-national level. However this research has undoubtedly helped in making joint analysis during the partner meetings.

The project partners

There have been five partners in the Guidance in the Workplace Project. The Swedish partner and the Italian partner were “old partners” from the Leonardo project called Guidance Merger. In the Guidance in the Workplace Project they were to transfer innovation to the new partners in France, Romania and Slovenia, but innovation has also been transferred from “new” partners to other, new and old, partners.

All partners have very different settings. The Swedish partner, CFL, is a regional learning centre which has been giving guidance in workplaces for years, the Italian partner, ASTER; do not give guidance in workplaces. They have somewhat changed their business strategy since the last project (Guidance Merger). They do no longer work directly with companies but remain in contact with partners that do and with partners that have opportunity to disseminate project results on national level. The Slovenian institute SIAE (Slovenian institute of adult education) has a wide range of services; one includes training of guidance counsellors in 14 public regional guidance offices, covering the entire country. The Romanian partner, SOROS, is a local learning centre offering a variety of training and educational courses for individuals and companies. The French partner, CIBC, provides services for individuals preparing for validation and accreditation of prior experience and learning. They are now moving away from being publicly financed into a more uncertain future of an independent company.

The five participating partners have organised training for guidance counsellors and advice givers. One of the major aims of the transnational project was to assist in the planning of the training and give ideas for content or curriculum. The training has been done differently in each country. The topics differ in part but are the same in part. The target groups for the training also differ. This is off course due to the local context. Another essential reason for the different approaches is that it has been important for the partners to build on something that already exists, and that there should be a chance to further build on this in the future. Guidance in the workplace cannot be seen as an isolated phenomenon. This was one of the conclusions from Guidance Merger. There is a separate report on the training of guidance counsellors and other advice givers. It is available on the project website (www.guidanceintheworkplace.eu).

Worth noting, before exploring what was said, is that while the Swedish, French, Slovenian and Italian partners have focused on medium sized, the Romanian partner has given services to small businesses. Sweden and France used their own (in house) guidance counsellors, Slovenia used a network of counsellors that they usually provide training for, Romania used counsellors from a local employment agency and Italy instead trained HR-staff to provide services within their own companies. This reflects the traditions and historical backgrounds in each country, but also the contacts the partner organizations previously had with other organisations.

This is a short introduction to the partners, the work they have done and the training of guidance counsellors that have been organised. This section also depicts some of the earlier analysis of the work that was made by the partners. We begin with the new partners.

France

In the project CIBC has chosen to work with companies with more than 50 employees that are well represented in their region. The companies are in businesses such as food processing, catering, hotel and building businesses. They have approached companies by phone. The Human Relations department in each company was asked to answer a questionnaire and they were then offered the service. Initially three companies accepted to work with CIBC. Those who did not at that time want to take on the offer all gave the same reason. Because of the economical situation their main concern was their production and the overall survival of the company. Training and guidance is a long term commitment and the companies' expressed that their main concern was with short term problems in production due to the current worldwide financial crisis. A few companies said that they may have need for CIBC services for one or two members of staff, but not for the company as a whole.

One of the companies that took an interest is Herta. They are mainly interested in the skills audit (the part of the skills audit which aims to stress some abilities and to help staff find their own abilities in themselves). This has been carried out by the CIBC. The aim was to find the most suitable diploma, should the member of staff need to validate his or her knowledge and skills. France has a system for skills audit and evaluation of prior work and education for individuals (APEL). It is financed through taxes paid by companies. The system was fully explained during a partner meeting and it was part of the training that took place for them along with other participants at the meeting which took place in Arras, the home town of the French partner CIBC.

The second organization that wanted the services offered by CIBC, Conseil du pas-de Calais (which is a public organisation), wants support for the employees who are interested in APEL. CIBC makes visits before the member of staff files their request for APEL. The whole APEL procedure is explained to staff members by a counsellor from CIBC. Applications from staff members for APEL have been submitted. The support from CIBC will go on further into the validation process, should any staff member's application be accepted begin his or her APEL. The CIBC staff thinks that the success in the private company is most likely due to the fact that the proposal from CIBC matched the company policy at the time when CIBC offered an opportunity for the company to take part in the Guidance in the Workplace project. Another factor for success is believed to be that participation in the project is free of charge.

The French partner feels that giving advice and guidance in workplaces would be easier if the law was changed. Now, an employer cannot demand to see the results of a skills audit for an individual member of staff, even if the initiative came from the employer. An employer is not likely to pay for something he will not be able to see results from. The fact that there are different funds depending on whose initiative the APEL is is also considered a hindering factor. Even if activities that are listed on the company training plan are covered in part with public funds, costs must be calculated by the employer. Often the funds that can be retrieved externally will not cover the real cost. Another hindering factor, the CIBC staff mentioned, is that in France the skills audit sometimes has a bad ring to it with many employers. The Skills audit is often used by employees in France who would like to change work places.

When CIBC in Arras contacted companies to enquire if they were interested in Guidance in the workplace services that CIBC could offer, CIBC used a questionnaire that they will develop further. Other CIBC's in the region will contact companies and use the same type of questionnaire. For them to be able to do so, training was needed. Counsellors who will take part in the training answered a set of questions about their own skills and knowledge and CIBC strategies. Training modules were then made in keeping with the lack of skills and knowledge identified in the questionnaires. This was offered to CIBC staff in the region.

Romania

SOROS is a learning centre for adults. To ensure long term effects at SOROS, and to further the benefits for the companies, development has been made to make SOROS more of a demand responsive learning centre. Information has been gathered and benchmarking has been made. The Swedish partner, CFL is one of the benchmarked organizations, taking part in a project called 3 M (Learning centres as Motors, Mediators and Meeting places). SOROS feel that guidance in the workplace would be more attractive for employers if more demand responsive courses could be created. SOROS has teamed up with the Harghita County Employment Agency. Eight companies

have been approached. Personal contacts proved to be important to be able to reach companies. SOROS has offered guidance in three companies.

Most of the approached companies are in the tourist sector. SOROS staff considers these types of companies to be more open to change which is why they were approached first. Face to face discussions and an informal approach proved to be more successful than the previous attempt to reach companies by formal letters and emails. The contacts were made with company owners directly. When making contacts, emphasis was made on the experiences other companies had had. One of the examples used was from the study visit in Sweden in the Guidance in the Workplace project, in September 2008. The first meeting with the employer was an open discussion, without pressure on the company to participate. The aim was to show benefits like better skilled or qualified workers and long term stability on the market.

SOROS offered Guidance training in modules of twelve hours for two days, during a weekend. It was not possible to offer training during work days as. It was more convenient for the participants to participate at the training in the weekend, otherwise they would have needed some days off from their workplace. The participants of the training were guidance professionals/advisers and human resource professionals from private employment agencies. A representative of the Employment Agency Miercurea Ciuc was also participating in the training. To be eligible the participants produced a letter of intent, showing that they were genuinely interested in the topic and they also submitted a CV, showing that they are qualified.

There were four main items of training[1]. The first was to highlight good practice in other European countries. This included guidance in the workplace and skills audit. More value was added to the training to attract the participants to take part on weekends. In the training there were elements about flexibility in times of financial crisis and elements to show how companies can find work with flexibility instead of letting people go when profits are down.

The second training session was about legal and organizational framework on national and EU level concerning training and guidance. There are some state institutions that have funds to provide this, but these funds are seldom used. Companies are unaware of these possibilities. Romanian legislation is similar to the French, but the general feeling is that it does not work well. Companies have the time, but no or little funds for training.

The third session consisted of methodology of guidance in the workplace provided by the other Guidance in the Workplace Project partners. The final session was on the risk and the benefits both on behalf of the employer and the employee. The methods used throughout the training sessions were interactive with experienced based and reflective learning. The aim for the training was for the participants to acquire knowledge in guiding techniques, atypical employment, legislation and communication.

Slovenia

Before introducing guidance in the workplace to employers, the Slovenian Chamber of Commerce and Industry was approached by the Slovenian partner, SIAE. The chamber was asked to write an introductory letter, explaining the intentions of the SIAE and inviting the companies to be involved in the project. SIAE staff has found that the chamber is well renowned in Slovenia and projects initiated by them often are received well by companies.

When selecting the companies, the SIAE searched for companies that were in trades or business areas with staff with low level of formal education and training. Companies with less than 250 employees were eligible to take part in the project. They also looked for companies where staff members have had very little or no training and continuing education. The companies were also selected based on an initial interview and an active decision from the employer to participate in the project.

In each of the three Slovenian regions taking part in the project, contacts have been made with 2-4 companies. More companies are interested in guidance in the workplace than the amount of companies that can be offered the services in the Guidance in the Workplace project. However, the plan is to come back and offer guidance at a later stage, when more counsellors have had training. Guidance in the workplace within the project scheme was given

to three companies in three regions and a fourth company was given information, but not the full support that is offered to the others.

The trade union ZSSS is a promoter of Guidance in the Workplace. There is an agreement to continue to work together in the three regions after the Guidance in the Workplace project has finished. One official from ZSSS attended the meeting in Arras, January 2009. He expressed that union representatives are very motivated. Guidance in the workplace is important also in the trade union work; in the future but also now in times of crisis. It can be an opportunity to save the jobs if staff gets training now. A new law in Slovenia provides funds for companies that want to cut working hours from 40 to 36 hours per week. Negotiating it, the ZSSS came up with the idea to use those funds for training staff instead.

The contacts made with ZSSS were made well in advance, and the guidance in the workplace has been planned together. The guidance was given by union representatives on a regional level together with guidance counsellors from regional guidance centres for adult education which operate in 14 Slovenian regions. The centres provide guidance and counselling for adults and connect education providers and guidance in the area. The SIAE has developed the unified concept of guiding centres and continues to monitor and develop guidance activities in them. Working together, the union representatives gave information and the counsellors gave more in depth advice and guidance in the workplaces.

The Slovenian partner believes that the SIAE:s contact with ZSSS has been strengthened through the Guidance in the Workplace project. The two organizations have worked together before, but the cooperation is now more formalized. The state institution and the trade union both express that guidance in the workplace is important, but for different reasons. Lifelong learning gives richer opportunities for union members to advance in their carriers, but it may also lead to higher salaries if employees can take on more responsibilities. The main aim for SIAE is to promote lifelong learning. The two organizations can also see benefits for the employers; with better trained staff productivity can increase and profits can go up. As the ZSSS official put it: 'we all have the same goal but for different reasons, and we can only succeed if we work together'.

SIAE in conjunction with ZSSS offered three days of training in workshops for trade union representatives and for guidance counsellors. In between the workshops the participants were expected to study to prepare for the next session. In total the training was 72 hours (24 hours in workshops and 48 hours of self study – mentored and monitored by the SIAE).

There were two main training objectives. The first was to familiarize the counsellors and union representatives with the importance of lifelong learning for the employees (from the point of view of the employees, companies and the society as a whole). There was emphasis on the importance of life-wide learning (learning for work, personal development, and active citizenship). During these processes it was important to promote learning about the characteristics and needs of the selected target group – the employees.

The second training objective was to familiarize the counsellors and union representatives with the importance of carrying out guidance for lifelong learning and career development in the broadest sense (career as a life) at workplace. The second training objective included the training of counsellors and union representatives for the (different) tasks they will have in connection to guidance for lifelong learning at the workplace – according to the prepared plan. It also involved planning, executing, monitoring and evaluating the guidance in the workplace.

The three modules consisted of:

- Guidance in the workplace in the context of lifelong-learning of the employees
- Procedures to recognise the already acquired knowledge and experience (compare APEL or skills audit)
- Preparation of the plan for guidance in the workplace in the selected company.

In addition to this the Slovenian partners made a study visit to CIBC.

Sweden

CFL is a partner from the “old” Guidance Merger project. Although giving advice and counselling in the workplace is a part of the CFL strategy for cooperation with companies in the region, counsellors at CFL have found it more difficult to offer advice in companies during the worldwide financial crisis which escalated in the midst of the Guidance in the Workplace Project.

As a learning centre, CFL has more than guidance in the workplace to offer the workplaces. Different training and courses for employers are one of those things; cooperation with companies that take on trainees from other courses at CFL (for unemployed or others) is also important. CFL can validate employees’ skills and knowledge. This has in the past been one way to get into the workplace, to be able to offer guidance and training of company staff.

CFL carries on developing the work that they do on a daily bases as part of their strategy. They constantly seek cooperation with companies in the region. Since giving guidance in the workplace is part of the daily work for some of the guidance counsellors and vocational teachers at the CFL learning centre there was no planned training – apart from the training sessions provided by the other partner countries in the Guidance in the Workplace project. Any training of new colleagues, who are to be involved in new projects at companies, is carried out in an informal way, focusing on the topics needed. However training of enablers within companies (i. e. company staff members who help with on the spot training) is done in a more formal way. During the Guidance in the Workplace Project, the project has been described, as has the daily work with guidance and other activities in companies in the region, in meetings with guidance counsellors’ networks.

Italy

ASTER is also one of the ‘old’ partners who contributed to the Guidance Merger project. They have, throughout the Guidance in the Workplace project, explained that guidance in workplaces is not commonplace in Italy. Since the Guidance Merger Project ASTER:s business strategy has changed and they have re-organized their organisation’s work in a way that they no longer are in direct contact with companies themselves.

In Italy guidance and counselling from an external partner is by tradition only done when companies need support with outplacements. Only authorized persons can give this service. Furthermore, the employment agencies only work with unemployed individuals except for outplacements. Therefore ASTER has decided that the project result from Guidance Merger and the training visits in Guidance in the Workplace will be disseminated but not tried out in practice during the Guidance in the Workplace project. By disseminating project result and involving human relations staff in companies and employment office staff, ASTER sees a way to evoke a future interest for guidance in the workplace.

Consequently training for counsellors was offered to companies included in a database of contacts for training and placement activities. This was possible via contacts with the STOA business school¹ and ISFOL² – a national body dealing with training for workers. The training was conducted in two modules, eight hours per session and person. Contacts were made with human resource managers in the companies³ and secondly with managers of Temporary Work Agencies that have continuous relationship with companies. The main aim of the training was to develop guidance competences in the workplace. Furthermore it was an opportunity for companies in different economic sectors and of different sizes to share reflection and to benchmark. The training included the development of key competences such as innovation management, creativity, self-evaluation and project development. The

¹ **STOA’ BUSINESS SCHOOL** organises Master MBA and thereby has contacts with a network of managers and human resources consultants.

² **ISFOL** is a national body that has developed several studies on guidance on the subject of training of workers.

³ Azienda Napoletana, Gruppo Engineering, Unilever, Unicredit, Eurotranciatura Holding Industriale, Almaviva conatc spa CRM, Scinicariello shipping, Edixioni Simone, Eurotanciatura.

methodological aspects of guidance in the workplace and the tools were discussed, including how to manage career development. A model example was studied. In all, there were 30 people from the following sectors: Temporary Agency Work; mechanic sector, consultancy services, insurance sector, association onlus, bank sector, services for import-export, medical sector and ICT. At the training sessions, HR Managers of small and medium enterprises participated, as well as managers of Temporary Work Agencies, and workers of Public Employment Services and Guidance Professionals.

The case studies

The fact that all partners are different types of organisations operating at different levels or sectors of society; and that they because of this have different possibilities of making an impact in their countries or regions, does not take away the possibility for others to learn from their success and from their moments of struggle. These are their case studies. Employers, employees, advice givers and counsellors have been interviewed to give their view on guidance in the work place in general and in their company. In Slovenia, where the SIAE has been co-operating with a trade union to reach in to the companies, interviews have been made with a representative from the trade union. The case study section of the report begins with the “new” partners and end with the “old” partners from the Guidance Merg-er Project. The original case studies have been edited slightly; some are shortened as parts have been abbreviated.

The Romanian case study

Soros Educational Centre is an adult education institution. Its Guidance in the Workplace project team made an agreement with the Harghita County Employment Agency to work with the Centre within the GWIP project to provide the guidance ‘know-how’. The position at the county employment agency as a counsellor includes offering information about the labour market, the training opportunities, skills audit, and offering advice and guidance to the unemployed people on how to find a job, including for example how to make the most out of a job interview. The interviewed guidance counsellor has participated in the training for the advice givers’ organized by Soros Educational Centre. She contributed to defining the content of the training program to a certain extent by filling out a questionnaire about potential areas of interest and training needs of advice givers.

The guidance counsellor from the county employment agency thinks that she will be able to use the training in her work especially when companies cannot find enough employees, or the best trained employees. The training within the Guidance in the workplace project has given her tools to give information/advice on existing opportunities and methods. In terms of future trainings she would like to see conflict management and more practical methods of guidance.

A representative from The Harghita County Employment Agency participated in all the visits taken to companies where advice and information has been offered. She considers that since one of the major tasks of the employment agency is the guidance of active or inactive workforce, GIWP is a service which would be useful. Furthermore she believes that it would have better results if managers of the companies could/want to participate in different trainings about human resource management, conflict management etc. In Romania, this type of service has not been introduced yet as a free of charge (or contra cost) public service. It is mostly private companies or multinational companies that offer GIWP. There are not yet funds allocated for guidance in the workplace service, however public institutions can apply for funding through projects.

According to the representative from the Harghita County Employment Agency it would be helpful, if at the end of the Guidance in the Workplace Project a handbook would be written about what the specialists think the GIWP service should be in the future, in order to promote it in those countries where this service doesn’t exist yet or is not implemented widely. She thinks that the most positive outcome from the GIWP were on the one hand the testing of some GIWP methods, on the other hand promoting the idea of GWIP, and sharing experience with specialist from different countries to develop this service.

The companies visited (with the purpose of giving advice at the workplace) by the representative of Harghita County Employment Agency) and the local project manager from Soros Educational Center are from the tourist sector. Usu-

ally these companies do not have an 'in house' guidance counsellor or advice giver, and the issues related to HR development are mostly handled by the owner/manager of the company.

Since the employment agency had a long term contact with some of the companies visited it was easier approaching the management and persuading them about the fact that they will only have advantages after the GWIP. One of the companies visited is a 3 star pension in the centre of Miercurea Ciuc. The company was approached through the long term contact between its manager and the Harghita County Employment Agency. The manager (and also the owner) of the pension was interviewed in person at the pension. He considers himself to be an open minded person, who is aware of the importance of employees' training in order to assure the company's long term success. Therefore he provides regular short, rather informal, trainings for its staff. His interest in participating in the GWIP project was to increase the staff's positive attitude towards continuous personal and professional self-development.

The owner also took part in the guidance counselling session for the staff. He considered the major problem of HR management to be the employees' mentality and lack of self-determination. He found the idea of guidance really good, which could be a long term solution for some of the problems related to employees' attitude and professional development. In the same time he expressed his opinion about the lack of quality trainings for his employees in the region. He showed interest for participating in projects where these trainings are offered free of charge, and guidance as well.

Nine employees (waiters, cook, receptionists, and cleaner) of the company took part in the group counselling session conducted by a representative from the county employment agency. Most of the staff (former or actual students of Soros Educational Center) was in general open to the idea of trainings but some were also satisfied with their current situation, and it was not obvious how much effort they would make for self-development if the pension wouldn't offer them any training.

Many of them agreed on the importance of professional and self-development and they were listening to the employment agency representative's advice with interest. They asked questions about possible training opportunities in the town related to their profession. Furthermore they shared their personal experiences about autonomous learning in their everyday life or on learning in a structured way (courses).

The major problem for the staff in general was the financing of trainings (most of the trainings cost more than the employee's one month salary). They liked the way they were approached in the guidance in the workplace project and they took part in the guidance with interest. The staff participated in the counselling was also offered individual guidance (self-knowledge issues, etc.) but this was not compulsory. None of them has signed up for individual guidance when this is written.

The guidance counsellor used methods related to group psychology, role playing, and problem solving methods. She then offered general information and emphasized the major importance of lifelong learning. The company's management seemed very flexible and open to new ideas, consequently the support was assured and helpful in the process of guidance/dialogue with the staff. The management considered asking for guidance in the workplace service if it can be requested/offered regularly.

The second company is similarly a restaurant. The administrator who is not the owner of the restaurant was interviewed in person. The staff is taking part regularly in trainings organized by an external training institution. These trainings are compulsory and their content is prepared by the management of the company. Though the administrator considered the level of employees' qualification appropriate, he is very positive about their continuous training.

Two employees (waiters) took part in the group counselling session. One of them was open to the idea of training and self-development; the other one did not seem to be motivated for extra effort. They were also offered individual guidance (self-knowledge, etc.) but none of them has requested this yet.

The advice providing session took one hour. The advice giver (from the county employment agency) offered general information and emphasized the major importance of lifelong learning, and provided specific information about possibilities of professional trainings in the region. She tried to create an interest for guidance in the workplace

among the employees by raising awareness towards the importance of continuing education, of mentality/attitude change concerning their job (the more efficient they are the more likely they can keep their jobs and/or to be appreciated). Since the issue of the staff's continuous training has been handled by the management of the company the guidance in the workplace service was not received with open arms. The employees felt that the training they needed was already provided by the employer.

The third Romanian case is related to a 3 star hotel. The company was approached via the contact between its manager and both the Harghita County Employment Agency and the Soros Educational Center Foundation. The manager was interviewed in person at the hotel. She has spent several years out of the country, working in the field of tourism, and she is familiar with tourist related services, perhaps more than the average professionals in the town of Miercurea-Ciuc. She is, according to herself, goal oriented and aware of the importance of employees' training in order to assure the company's long term success. The company has serious problems with personnel recruitment (finding qualified staff) and with keeping the staff long term.

At the beginning the manager was quite sceptical towards guidance counselling, she was especially worried if this service is offered free of charge or not. When she was informed that it is gratis and is about testing some guidance models with her staff she saw the advantages of it, namely to promote the importance of continuous personal and professional development of employees. A meeting with one representative from SOROS and one from the county employment agency and staff then took place although the manager warned that employees would probably not be willing or interested in attending any further training, although they would need these.

Four employees (waiter, cook, receptionist, and cleaner) of the hotel participated in the group counselling session. They all seemed curious about the offered guidance. They agreed on the idea of continuous professional and self-development and that this would also have a positive impact on the hotels' development. This would, consequently, create positive effect on the appreciation of the staff, their salaries, etc. However, the meeting turned in to something else than intended by the counsellors. The employers talked about the lack of appreciation they felt from the employer, the low salaries and the impossibility of taking course or training. They could not take time off and they cannot afford to pay for courses themselves. The hotel owner would not pay for training or help paying fees. Overall the staff showed appreciation for the guidance and wanted more advice in positive conflict management, but they were at conflict with management at the time of the counselling session. This made it difficult for the counsellor to continue working in the particular company.

From the advice giver's point of view the most difficult part was persuading the companies to participate in the testing of guidance in the work place, and to face situations when there was an obvious (long term) conflict between the management and employees. She now sees that it would have been wise to offer a separate guidance especially for people responsible for HR development and the management to make them aware of the importance of the human resources at their company.

The French case study

In the French case study one of the companies is a large food processing industry. It is a private company processing sausages and cooked pork meats. In the company it was agreed that the CIBC's provision of services was to analyse in detail some workstations (supply chain operators, industrial butchers), in the workplace, in observing the employees working, questioning them about their jobs and interviewing their managers. The main aim was to establish a competence referential so that the company could get knowledge of these specific workstations to get a concrete format to be helped during its recruitments or internal employees' transfers. In addition to this aim, it was also the opportunity to identify the relevant diploma for each job, regarding the competences and skills analysis led by CIBC's counsellors in the workplace. After that step, an APEL request could possibly be filed by the employees. In the near future this company has a project to analyse, in detail, each work station in order to create a "workstation index card" in which all the skills, abilities and competences requested by each job in the company will be inventoried. These reference tables will be useful for internal mobility and further recruitments. As a skills audit and competences assessment expert, CIBC will be able to carry out this mission.

The second company is a small association which cares about the old or disabled people, providing them help at home (auxiliary nurses, housekeeping etc.). In this association, CIBC intervened to inform the employees about APEL (process, interest, duration etc.). Following this collective information session, four employees decided to contact CIBC to be supported in their APEL request (skills and competences analysis, motivation expression, choice of the relevant diploma, support for filling in the application forms, assistance, counselling and coaching during the whole process, from the file sending to the board of examiners' decision). The company is one of CIBC's faithful partners and a further collaboration is possible. Here, the system is different, as a public body, the council often launches some "call for tender" in the field of education, guidance, training, counselling, and advice giving. The CIBC will support another group of childminders in their APEL process in 2010.

The third company is a public council which is a regional authority on different fields (roads, education, vocational training, employment, and environment). Here, CIBC intervened to inform specific employees, chosen by the council, about APEL. Following this collective information session, 20 child minders decided to contact CIBC to be supported in their APEL request (skills and competences analysis, motivation expression, choice of the relevant diploma, support for filling in the application forms, assistance, counselling and coaching during the whole process, since the file sending to the board of examiners' decision). The company is a small association which limits their opportunities. Consequently, for the moment, a further collaboration is not foreseen. Nevertheless, CIBC has discussed what they could do in the guidance field, and as they were satisfied by the work made within the guidance in the work place project it is possible that future services could be provided.

Thanks to the Guidance in the Workplace Project, all these companies have discovered the APEL main interests:

- Cheap way of developing and recognizing the employees' qualifications
- Interesting tool in order to show some recognition to the employees' abilities
- To help the employees gain self confidence by getting a certification or a diploma
- To better protect the employees against unemployment as skills and competences are recognized in a diploma.

For the French partner CIBC, The Guidance in the Workplace Project was a very interesting opportunity, because it was linked to CIBC development strategy. Indeed, as a former public organization, year by year, CIBC must become more and more independent (especially on the financial issues). Therefore, we have to open the doors of the companies to offer guidance in the workplace. The CIBC were already in touch with the employers and the main companies of the Region, but the GIWP project was a great opportunity to improve and develop presence in the workplace and in the "world of the companies".

Furthermore, it appeared as a relevant way of improving the CIBC image: "closer to the companies". It permitted the CIBC to learn from other European countries (study visits, exchange of practices) and we have learnt more about our way of working; it was important for us to wonder how good the CIBC system or way of working was, and what we could do to improve it. In explaining our working to the other partners, it permitted the CIBC to realize that their system was not perfect or as one member of staff put it; "We didn't work so much with national partners during the project, but each time we could, we talked about the project and guidance with them. "The main thing was that the CIBC has taken time to find some solutions and ask ourselves the good questions which helped us to better know our own organization and our partners" (CIBC member of staff).

At the CIBC everyone agreed that guidance in the workplace could be an interesting possibility to develop guidance and training (and change the employees' and employers' mind). Nevertheless, our partners prefer to stay prudent with such a kind of system, and they recommend guidance in the workplace as an added possibility but not the only one. They seem against a generalization of guidance in the workplace especially to save a certain independence of the guidance counsellor (to not to be "manipulated" by the employer) and to help the employee to be more talkative about his own wills, opinions, interests, plans, career. And for that reason the staff at CIBC concluded that it seems important to keep a neutral place to provide guidance and counselling. Therefore, in some cases, the workplace is not the best place for the guidance.

The staff at the CIBC was interested in the project, especially seeing that the guidance was very important in other European countries too. They think that this kind of project could be a good way to change the mind of some employers about the guidance and training issues, showing them that it is not only a mandatory and legal thing. It could also be a good promotion of the guidance, counselling and training benefits towards to the employers and employees.

The CIBC guidance counsellors' view of guidance in the work place

According to the guidance counsellors at CIBC who has answered a questionnaire, guidance in the workplace (especially the one given in the framework of the Guidance in the Workplace Project) was very interesting and that this has helped them to get a better idea of the employers' and employees' point of view, about guidance and about CIBC's provisions of services.

During the counselling work at the companies some felt that it was a good way to realize, from inside the company (inside the concrete and relevant place), the different kind of expectations and difficulties that the companies and employees could have when encountering the guidance and training issues. This especially concerns the fact of directly being in touch with the employees and employers, in the place where they need guidance and training. It was a very good point and it seems to improve the quality and the efficiency of their work" (CIBC staff member). It has, according to the questionnaire, seemed to the counsellors that the employees were more motivated and concerned by the guidance in their workplace. Inside the company, the environment seems (to the employees) to be more favourable to talk about the guidance and training issues. Indeed, they are at work, so, they are in good conditions to think about their career. Guidance is not as easily accessible on the staff's free time and it presupposes a direct purpose or will to get counselling. Guidance in the work place is a good opportunity to answer directly and instantaneously to the employees' questions and information needs, the guidance counsellors thought.

In the perspective to keep on working with the companies, the fact to come out to the companies' premises so that the counsellor could meet directly with the manager or the person who can take the decisions about guidance and training is a good idea. The counsellors felt more useful in the workplace, their action appeared more concrete and reactive. It seems that without the CIBC counsellors' visit in the work place; most of the employees would not ever get the guidance and information they have received in the framework of the GIWP Project.

As a direct result of the guidance in the work place project in Arras 24 people decided to get involved in an APEL process (supported by CIBC) and no one gave up. Without the CIBC intervention (in the framework of the guidance in the workplace project), these people would probably not have decided to file an APEL request. Furthermore the Guidance in the Work Place Project was a good opportunity to remind the employees (and employers) of the CIBC activities aimed at enhancing lifelong learning and one of the counsellors say: "It was great to communicate in the same place, with employees and their employers" (CIBC staff).

In each company, the CIBC tried to get a balance between the employees and employers' interests. Employers got a free of charge guidance for their employees and the employees got some answers to their questions, a guidance counsellor has listened to them, so they felt recognized and satisfied. No conflicts with management appeared and the CIBC staff found it easy to communicate with the companies' management.

However there were also difficulties during the process of giving guidance in the work place. It was sometimes difficult to keep all the employees motivated during the guidance process and it was necessary to reassure them from the beginning (to explain well to them what was going to happen during the process, focussing on the advantages and benefits they could have from the guidance services). Furthermore APEL is complicated and it is not easy to explain what it is in simple words. Counsellors had to be very concise because inside the company time is scarce. The counsellors only got a couple of hours to explain everything, and to try to convince both parts (employers / employees) of the advantages of guidance and APEL. At times it was difficult to encourage interaction / dialogue between the counsellor and the audience and it was difficult to get close ties, to start a confidence relationship with the employer in the short time allotted. The counsellors were mindful of respecting the compa-

nies' rules and were careful to not disappoint the employers and employees. Sometimes it was difficult to meet the person in charge of training and guidance inside the company (overbooked agendas, unavailability etc.) but this could be handled with a bit of patience.

The CIBC staff came up with some suggestions for improvement of the services provided. It could be easier to send an information leaflet (about CIBC and the guidance activities) before going to the company, so that the latter better know CIBC. Getting more informed about the company, before going inside it will be helpful. To try to systematically keep in touch with the company where guidance had been provided and to develop an interactive communication and information transmission between the counsellors team are other areas of improvement for the CIBC.

Counsellors focussed on the benefits that employees could take from the guidance intervention to get the employees interested in guidance and training issues. They informed about the good points for a further vocational insertion or labour market come back and the personal recognition and valuation. Counsellors stressed the fact that guidance and training is a public right, like the right to vote, so it's important to use it.

Some difficulties encountered with the employees: Especially with some not motivated employees who did not see the benefit of guidance because of their "employee status". For a few employees, guidance was not interesting when they have a job; it becomes relevant only when you are unemployed. However, most of the employees slowly changed their point of views after the counsellors' presentation of the good points of guidance. This difficulty was a good opportunity to deal with this topic; it permitted the CIBC to show that guidance concerns everybody, even the employed people.

The CIBC staff found that even if the employees became more favourable talking about guidance in their workplace, they are more talkative in a neutral external place regarding all the "personal and confidential" issues. For instance, to talk about their long-term plans (move to another region, change of job, leave the company, and apply for more responsibilities); employees prefer to deal with these issues in an external centre, where professional secrecy could be more easily respected. Thus, the CIBC staff agreed with the fact that guidance and training is a lifelong process that must adapt itself to the environment evolution, and the modifications of the legal, economical and social contexts.

The role of the guidance counsellor

According the counsellors, their main role is to inform, give advice and listen to the individuals guided, without forgetting to always update the information they give. They also think to have a role in the creation of innovative tools or methods, so they must be involved in program content building. Now, after the training they attended, counsellors feel more confident to go towards to the employers and they think that the advice and guidance that they generally give now is more relevant and linked with the field reality of the places of work. They also know more about the different CIBC provisions of services and the different companies settled in the region.

If the counsellors could get other trainings, they would like to attend a training course about "communication skills" or about data processing and Software (PowerPoint)" to feel more comfortable with oral and numeric communication aids, or an upgrading course about the employees' training rights.

About guidance in the workplace, the counsellors are sure that there is still a lot of work in that field, in France. They agree to say that this is a new concept, everyone is starting to be interested in guidance in the workplace, but it is still needs improvements. The counsellors have made an interesting observation during their intervention in the workplace: it seems that employees who are close to a trade union are more informed about their guidance and training rights and opportunities.

Employers view

In general, the different employers interviewed are favourable to the guidance in the workplace, but to their mind, this is a strategic point that they wish to lead by their own. Guidance is a part of their future Human Resources Projects and it is not an easy decision to decide to "subcontract" it to an external organization.

To improve the current French system, it seems essential to the employers to clarify the different roles of the numerous organizations involved in the guidance and training issues in France. More communication about guidance and training, and less papers and administrative tasks are also expected. However After having introduced them the GIWP project, the employers that participated show an interest in and were glad to have been offered to be part of the project. They all found the CIBC's intervention very useful, flexible and easy to access. According to them, it is only a matter of money that prevents them from developing guidance in the workplace. In the case they could get a budget in the field of guidance, they won't hesitate to contact CIBC. The main reasons for the three companies to accept guidance in the work place by CIBC are:

- The provision of services was free of charge
- CIBC has offered something interesting in the field of guidance and training
- It was a good way to test guidance in the workplace without a long term involvement
- It was a good opportunity to show to the employees that the company takes care of their vocational future
- As this is a crisis period, companies prefer to focus on the production and the financial sustainability of the company rather than the guidance. However, they know that guidance and training will be a strategic issue when the crisis is over.

In the future the employers all say that they would want a further project to create, develop or launch something in the field of guidance or training. They think this is important to develop the employees' competences so as to permit them to be able to move inside the company. Guidance in the workplace is a part of these companies future strategy. Year by year, their "training plans" are more and more completed by some guidance and counselling actions. To their mind, guidance is essential for valuing the employees' skills, for increasing their educational level or their vocational qualifications and for thinking about the evolution of the different workstations inside the company.

The employees know that guidance can benefit to them, directly with an improvement and development of their competences or permitting to them to get a progressive career path. Indirectly, this promotes sustainability of their company in the future.

Employees view

Questions have been asked to all the employees who have received guidance or advices from CIBC in the framework of the project. Employees got a good opinion of the GIWP Project, because according to them, "it's great to see that professionals who deal with guidance and training across Europe exists" company employee). They feel motivated by a solidarity feeling shared with all the European countries' employees. Some saw the project as an employees' rights protector. Furthermore, most employees felt important and were glad that someone showed interest in their activities. They appreciated the CIBC counsellors' intervention, because they were sensitive to the fact that some counsellors came out to their workplace to observe and interview them. By seeing the results, employees felt valued; they have realized all the activities they are used to do and all the skills they have.

It is obvious that most of the employees informed or guided in the framework of GIWP project will keep a very good memory of the project. Indeed, they probably would not ever have gotten the information, advice, and guidance or support without the Guidance in the Work Place Project. All the interviewed employees were satisfied with the CIBC intervention. Some other employees said that they preferred to attend collective guidance courses, with the colleagues from the same workstation. They felt more motivated, the atmosphere was friendlier, and they could exchange and discuss with other employees who understand them.

Other employees suggested adding the possibility to go on with the guidance at home (exercises, tests, documentation, questionnaires to fill in etc.). This could be done by using telecommunication systems (E-learning, CD-ROM, memory sticks, internet, etc.).

To the employees' mind, CIBC's main usefulness was to help them to identify their skills, abilities, qualities, competences, and to manage to describe them with the precise and relevant words (something that is indispensable to

write a CV or fill in an APEL request, for example). It was also an opportunity to forget, for a while, the daily routine of the job, and to think seriously about their vocational future, during a dedicated time space.

Throughout the guidance in the workplace, employees said that it was both a personal and vocational experience. They learnt a lot about their vocational skills or plans, but they also learnt many things about themselves (personality, personal quality, plans for the future, private life and so on). Furthermore the employees expected to get higher salary once they had completed a training course or an APEL.

Employees said that it was very good to get some support from their employer during this guidance in the workplace, so that they could attend CIBC intervention, being concentrated on the task and in a spirit a freedom. Employees were allowed to leave their workstation each time it was necessary. This included information, CIBC presentations, and interviews. Employers were interested in what the employees did with CIBC, they answered questions, were supportive and they tried to find solutions to make time on the planning sheets to permit to the employees to leave their workstation. Thanks to the employers support, guidance in the workplace became very flexible since employees could leave their workstation to be interviewed by CIBC counsellors, and then go back to their jobs. Employees saw the impact and good points of an external guidance organization, like CIBC intervention and according to the interviewed employees they do want their company keep on collaborating with such organizations CIBC is.

The Slovenian case study

Introduction

In Slovenia three mid-sized companies (mid-sized being 50 to 250 employees) from three different regions (Obalno-kraška, Dolenjska, Podravje) and three different fields were selected for guidance activities:

- water management - providing drinking water for three coastal municipalities (Rižanski vodovod Koper),
- project engineering and the implementation of mechanical and electrical installations in the construction industry (Kovinotehna MKI Novo mesto),
- manufacturing of sanitary technology (Geberit – Sanitarna tehnika, Ruše).

The three companies have 514 employees altogether. The following participated in the activities of guidance in the workplace:

- 5 counsellors from three adult education guidance centres – Koper, Novo mesto, Maribor,
- 4 union representatives from the three selected companies,
- 3 HR managers from the selected companies and two HR employees from one of the three companies.

All of them answered to the evaluation questionnaires.

In all three companies, about 50 employees participated in different forms of counselling and guidance; a total of 10 % of all the employees altogether. Among them, 31 employees who participated in the programme of individual guidance responded to the evaluation questionnaire about the results and effects the GWP had for them; their responses are presented below.

The role of the counsellors

Course of GiWP activities in Novo mesto

In the company Kovinotehna MKI Novo mesto the guidance was carried out by one counsellor from the Novo mesto regional guidance centre. Following the initial consult and the agreement from the management and the union in the company, the guidance activities took place between the beginning of May 2009 and mid-June 2009, in cooperation with:

- the HR manager of the company,
- the ZSSS union representative in the company and
- one counsellor from the Guidance Centre Novo mesto.

After the prior analysis of the educational needs of the company employees (with one questionnaire for all three companies that took part in the GiWP project), the counsellor from the Guidance Centre Novo mesto and the HR manager charted concrete activities of guidance in the workplace. The union representative was kept informed throughout this process, but could not be more actively involved due to the nature of his work as a site manager.

The course of the action was as follows:

- Schedule: every other Thursday between 13:30 and 15:30;
- Place: company boardroom (individual counselling); company canteen (group counselling);
- Methods of work: individual guidance interview; group counselling: presentations, or lectures and workshops;
- Course of activities: 6-week execution plan was prepared in advance and only changed for one of the group counselling sessions that was supposed to be off-site, but was instead carried out in the company canteen, following the wishes of the HR department.

16 employees participated in individual counselling, which was a viable number considering the planned hours of counselling. The counsellor was present in the company for six weeks and completed 19 contact counselling hours (2 hours per week on the average).

The counsellor pointed out that guidance in the workplace had the following three benefits, or results, for the company:

1. informing and counselling about the possibilities to reach a higher level of education;
2. informing and counselling about formal and informal types of education connected to the employees' work or their interest outside of work (leisure time activities, etc.);
3. raising awareness of the employees about the lifelong learning and the possibilities for study in their local environment free of charge.

There were no conflicts between the interest of the employees and those of the company management. The counsellor estimates that she had sufficient support during the GWP activities in the selected company. She believes that, considering the positive experience in the selected company, she doesn't need further training at the moment. However, she added that if the activity expanded to other companies in the environment, a lot of work will be necessary in the field of encouragement and motivation among the employees who will take part in the counselling. In the selected company, the HR manager's role in this process was instrumental.

She estimated that enough supporting materials were prepared during the training process, and that the support given by the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education during the GWP process was also sufficient. She emphasised in particular how glad she was to be a part of a project group, as she gained new knowledge, skills and connections, which was good for her profession skills, and also personal development.

To conclude, let us emphasise that the counsellor had an extremely positive experience of cooperation with the HR manager and all participating employees. The action plan was prepared according to the company needs and was coordinated in advance with the HR department and the union representative.

The counsellor recommends that the established concept of guidance in the workplace continue, as she is certain that expansion and recognition of this activity to other local companies will be essential, especially those that hit by recession that left their employees in even more need of free information, and also free education.

Course of GiWP activities in Koper

At the Rižanski vodovod Koper the guidance process was carried out by two counsellors from the Guidance Centre Koper. After the prior discussion and agreement from the management and the union in the company, the guidance in the workplace took place from the beginning of May 2009 until the end of June 2009 in cooperation with:

- the manager of the HR and legal department in the company,
- union representative of the ZSSS in the company and
- two counsellors from the Guidance Centre Koper.

After a prior analysis of the education needs of the employees (with a unified questionnaire used for all three companies included into the Guidance in the Workplace Project) the counsellors from the Guidance Centre Koper together with the union representative charted the following activities:

- introductory presentation of what guidance in the workplace will offer to employees and
- individual guidance sessions with interested employees.

6 employees joined individual counselling, which was an appropriate amount for the planned number of guidance hours. In the period between May and the end of June, the counsellors were present in the company for 6 weeks, or 13,5 hours (on the average 2 hours per week).

Both counsellors emphasised what were, for them, most positive results of the guidance at workplace:

1. To inform the employees about the possibilities of education and its financing, of which they were not aware;
2. To introduce the guidance centre and counsellors to the company and the workers and explained what they can gain from them;
3. The HR department knows that they can continue to consult the guidance centre in all questions relating information of employee education, which leaves the HR more time to carry out its other tasks.

Both counsellors believe that they were given enough information, knowledge and support materials to carry out concrete guidance activities at workplace. However, in the future they would add the following themes: establishing and maintaining contacts with the company management, business communication and negotiations.

The counsellors also discussed the possibility of continuing the cooperation with the company. The guidance centre will inform the union representative about the calls that might be interesting for the company employees (e. g. financing the education). In addition, the counsellors invited the employees to come for consultations at the Guidance Centre whenever required.

At the same time both believe that the Guidance Centre must continue working with companies. They recommend organising »flexible guidance« inside companies – the counsellor would go to the company that would invite her or him. One of the counsellors felt that the doors of the companies might be more open for the counsellors if there were a wider national campaign planned and carried out (and supported by the unions) to promote the role and importance of guidance at workplace.

Based on the responses of both counsellors it would be necessary to allocate more time to initial informing and motivating of the employees in order to get them enroll the activities of guidance at workplace. They believe that the union representative should play a bigger role. Several ways of informing the employees should be used. Certainly we must pay special attention to this during further development of guidance in the workplace approaches (and include them into training).

It is certainly worth supporting the recommendation of one of the counsellors that the doors of the companies might be more open for the counsellors if there were a wider national campaign planned and carried out (and supported by the unions) to promote the role and importance of guidance in the workplace.

Course of GiWP activities in Ruše

In Geberit Ruše the guidance was carried out by two counsellors from the Guidance Centre Maribor. After the prior discussion and agreement from the management and the union in the company, the guidance in the workplace took place in July 2009, and one workshop in August 2009 in cooperation with:

- 3 employees from the HR department in the company,
- 2 union representatives of the ZSSS in the company and
- 2 counsellors from the Guidance Centre Maribor.

After a prior analysis of the education needs of the employees (with a unified questionnaire used for all three companies included into the Guidance in the Workplace Project) the counsellors from the Guidance centre Maribor together with the union representative charted the following activities:

- In cooperation with the department for employee development the day for guidance activities was decided to be once a week, on Monday between 13:00 and 15:00. It was interesting that the HR department offered the union office for the activity without any prompting.
- They prepared a brief written notice about the guidance visits that the HR department conveyed to the employees.
- In the first place, they offered individual counselling distributed into several consecutive visits.
- On the incentive of the counsellors, a group guidance – a workshop “Conveying practical skills in the workplace” – was organised for group leaders and foremen.

13 employees joined individual counselling (nine filled in the questionnaire, and 19 attended group guidance, which was viable considering planned extent of guidance. The counsellors were present in the company for four weeks, 2 hours per week.

Both counsellors pointed out that due to the time constraints (two companies refused to participate) there was not enough time dedicated to the promoting and more detailed presentation of the contents of the activities to the HR employees, management, and the employees in the companies. They also believe that more intensive cooperation with the union representatives is necessary, especially as they were both very supportive of the project, but there wasn't enough time.

Both counsellors pointed out the following three most positive results of the guidance in the workplace:

1. the employees would otherwise not know that such guidance activity exists; in case of the companies it is most useful for the HR department, that can in future use the services of the adult education guidance centre on the basis of personal ties created during the project;
2. informing about and concrete training for applying to the calls for tenders connected to the possibilities of co-funding education; the company has a chance to be guided/informed in the future about all possibilities of applying to tenders both for the company and the individuals;
3. the possibility of getting information on different areas of education in their working environment; in most extreme cases, the company can ask the adult education guidance centres for help in education itself (for example, execution of a workshop) or organisational help/ a contact for any kind of education.

The counsellors also talked about the possibility to continue the cooperation with the company, for example, providing help when they apply for the funds from the “Knowledge makes dreams come true” project in autumn (deadline for applications is 11 Sept. 2009). Other activities are still open; especially the possibility of connecting the company to the guidance centre's dislocated unit in Ruše, where the employees can anyhow see the counsellor whenever they need to (she is in the office there twice a month, every first and third Monday between 9:00 and 12:00).

For conclusion, all five counsellors confirmed that the union representative was an important partner in performing the GWP activities and felt that cooperation with the HR departments was necessary to perform GWP activities.

All five counsellors enjoyed working on the project, because it brought a new approach in availability of guidance for the employees who are increasingly a group at risk in small and mid-sized companies when it comes to the possibilities of education and training.

And all five counsellors recommend that the guidance in the workplace continue and expand to other companies and other regions, especially to the companies that were hit by recession which means the employees are in even more need of free information, and also free education.

It is certainly worth supporting the suggestion of one of the counsellors, who felt that the doors of the companies would be more open for the counsellors if a wider national campaign were carried out by the unions, informing the interested parties about the role and importance of guidance in the workplace.

All five counsellors felt they were given enough information, knowledge and supporting materials during their train-

ing to carry out concrete activities of guidance in the workplace. They didn't miss any support during the project itself, in other words, the support provided by the SIAE was sufficient.

The role of the union representatives

Four union representatives were included in preparation and execution of the GWP activities, two from one company and one for each remaining company. Only two in fact took part in the training (as Geberit Ruše with its two reps was only selected after the training was completed).

The representative from Rižanski vodovo Koper emphasised primarily two positive results of GiWP:

- gaining additional knowledge and
- achieving a higher level of professional education.

The union representatives from Geberit Ruše emphasised primarily two positive results of guidance in the workplace:

- the interest of the company to provide education for its employees and
- GWP is carried out during working hours ("the selected location in the company means that the employees don't have to use their free time to attend").

All of them support the continuation on guidance in the workplace. They emphasized:

- to continue work with the counsellors from the guidance centre to provide the employees with the possibility of guidance in the workplace;
- they recognised guidance in the workplace to be an important activity for informing employees and enabling them to participate in education;
- the answer of one of them indicates that it would certainly be important for the continuing cooperation to allow them enough time for them to participate in GWP.

The counsellors also see the union representative in the role of a direct informant and motivator of her/his co-workers. And SIAE and ZSSS also emphasize:

- it's essential to keep strengthening the role of the union representative as someone who motivates and supports the employees who enter education and training/informs them about the possibilities;
- additional training is necessary for this role;
- regional representatives of the ZSSS union should be even more involved in the approach to the companies and promotion of guidance in the workplace and lifelong learning of the employees – especially for the companies where the union isn't (well) organised or the union rep needs more support from the "outside".

Employees' opinion

The analysis looked into the questionnaires of the 31 employees who participated in the individual counselling in the selected three companies. In the Geberit company, 19 participants were also involved in the group counselling. We can therefore say that around 50 people participated in different forms of informing and guidance in all three companies, which means a total of 10 % of the employees of the three selected companies.

Below we present the analysis of the answers of the 31 employees, collected with the help of a unified questionnaire, in three groups: general data about the participants, then the analysis of the guidance process, and in the end the possibilities of guidance in the workplace in future.

General data

The jobs of the employees who filled in the questionnaire had were very different, given the differences in the selected companies, but even within the selected companies they differed greatly and it was rare two have two employees with the same job, for example withsmiths, riggers, technologists.

The majority of the participants in guidance were male – 25, which means 80 %, while 6 participants were women. The age of the participants differed (Table 2); most of them were from the age groups between 31 and 40, and 41 to 50 – 9 participants in each. They were followed by younger participants, aged between 21 and 30, and those older than 51.

In terms of the completed level of education, the majority of the participants had a completed general or second level vocational secondary school – 14, followed by those with a completed vocational secondary school and primary school. The education levels of the participants are in the table below.

Table: Participants and their level of completed education

Education	Number	%
Primary school	3	9,7
Lower vocational secondary school (2 years)	1	3,2
Vocational secondary school	6	19,4
General and vocational secondary school (4 years)	14	45,2
Post-secondary school before 1994 (2 years)	1	3,2
Post-secondary school after 1994 (2 years)	2	6,4
Post-secondary (4 years)	2	6,4
College	2	6,4
Total	31	100

Source: documentation of the Guidance in the workplace 2 project, ACS/SIAE, 2009

Guidance process

In continuation, the participants described the course of their guidance process, **what prompted their decision to visit the counsellor**. Their responses were similar and can be divided into the following categories:

- finishing school/education;
- study help;
- workplace required additional knowledge;
- decision to continue education;
- desire for additional knowledge;
- desire for a higher level of formal education;
- desire for perfecting skills in different areas.

Further, we were interested if the participants gained something by the informing and guidance in the workplace. The vast majority, 29 (93,5 %) replied they did, two replied they didn't. The participants that answered yes, gave the following reasons for their replies:

Table: What did the participants gain by information and guidance?

	Number
I obtained new information about the educational possibilities connected to my work	16
I obtained new information about the educational possibilities outside the interest of my work	13
Counsellor helped me prepare a concrete plan for my future educations	2
Other	3
Total	34

Source: documentation of the Guidance in the workplace 2 project, ACS/SIAE, 2009

To the question whether the guidance was accessible to them, they overwhelmingly (28 replies – 90,3 %) replied affirmative. Two participants replied negative, one did not reply.

We asked the participants whether their immediate superior supported their participation in the guidance in the workplace. 15 responses were affirmative, 7 participants said their superior didn't support them, while 9 responded that their superior was not aware of the possibility to enter the guidance.

When asked whether enough time was allowed for participation in the guidance in the workplace process, almost all participants – 30 – replied affirmative, while one did not reply.

23 participants – 74, 2 % of those asked – replied that they could combine their own interest with the interest of the company management. Six replied they couldn't, two did not respond. The reasons, why the two interests could not be accommodated are listed below.

- I am only a couple of years away from retirement.
- Since there was no contact with the superiors, and no incentive.
- It was not the interest of the management, but my own to gain as much knowledge as possible in this field.
- For my job my existing knowledge is perfectly adequate, there is no need to gain the type of knowledge I'm interested in.
- Our talks have not yet come this far.
- Due to the specifics of the desired knowledge and the specifics of my workplace.

Possibility of guidance in the workplace in the future

To the question whether they felt it was sensible to have guidance in the workplace permanently guaranteed in future, 20 participants replied affirmative; this is 64,5 %, two participants replied negative and seven didn't know.

More than three quarters of the participants believe that the company should continue to cooperate with the counsellors from the guidance centre. One participant answered "no", and six with "don't know".

We asked the participants whether they would take part in guidance for education outside their company (for example in a guidance centre or in another organisation). Three quarters (74,2 %) responded that they would, four would not, and 4 didn't know.

The majority, 29 of the 31 employees, would recommend counselling for education to people close to them – relatives, friends, colleagues, which shows the positive experience with the guidance carried out in their workplace in their company.

Conclusion

Although in one of the company has paid special and systematic attention to the development of the employees (especially in the last couple of years), the HR manager pointed out three benefits the company achieved with the GiWP activities:

- they encouraged the employees to think and get educated,
- a group lecture in the company,
- participation of colleagues in free education.

The HR manager also said that participating in the project made her even more aware that her colleagues needed constant encouragement and facilitation of education, and also that guidance in the workplace falls in line with her company's strategy of employee training. All this shows that even in a company that already pays special attention to the development of employees, guidance for education and training organised by an "external, specially trained counsellor" in cooperation with the company representatives can bring new ideas and incentives for continuing employee education and training.

The replies of the 16 employees who took part in individual counselling also show that they all benefited from guidance in the workplace, either from the aspect of educational needs that are necessitated by the workplace, or the aspect of their own need for further development and growth. The majority – 93,75 % – found guidance in the workplace to be a positive experience and would take advantage of in the future as well : via continuation of cooperation with the counsellors from the guidance centre, by joining guidance in the workplace, or by joining a guidance programme outside the company. 87,5 % of the participating employees would recommend such guidance for education to their family members and friends, which further confirms their positive experience with guidance in the workplace.

In the second company has already given a lot of attention to the development of the employees, but, as they say themselves, it was not done in a sufficiently systematic way and did not cater for the different needs of the employees. Therefore the experience with their participation in the GiWP project was a positive one for the HR department employees, both participating union representatives, and all participating employees.

When the activities were completed, the HR department employees listed the following benefits the company had by entering the GiWP project:

- the employees could get information about different education possibilities,
- interest of the employees in education increased,
- new educational contacts were established,
- new information about education was obtained,
- the company will be able to save money for education by learning about the possibilities for co-founding of employee education by the state – for example, project *Znanje uresničuje sanje* (Knowledge makes dreams come true).

Everybody also expressed interest in continuing the cooperation with the counsellors from guidance centre, who in any case plan to continue their activities – in agreement with the company – as a part of the work of the guidance centre at the dislocated unit (a counsellor is available twice a month, every first and third Monday between 9:00 and 12:00).

In the third company we got the confirmation for what we notice in the majority of mid-sized companies in Slovenia: there are not enough people employed to systematically and holistically take care of the development and education of the employees. Therefore the outside help from trained professionals, who introduce the employees to different education and training options using the guidance at work approach; options connected to the needs of the workplace, and also the needs connected to individual growth and development.

HR manager listed two benefits for the employees who participated in the GiWP project:

- their motivation for education,
- informing about education possibilities.

In all three companies was confirmed that the approach of guidance in workplace can usefully combine cooperation of experts from three different fields, each one of them with her or his own role and tasks that complement each other: HR manager (or another HR officer), union representative as the representative of the employees, and the counsellor from the adult education guidance centre.

It also became clear that any employee who joins the guidance in the workplace has different needs and that dictates the variety in approaches and duration of guidance at workplace (our recommendation to the counsellors was 4 to 6 weeks – depending on the prior analysis of the company’s needs for education and training; for the purpose of this analysis we prepared a unified questionnaire and trained counsellors and union representative how to use it).

Considering the findings on the project level, in the future we will pay special attention to the following:

- before entering the company the counsellors must be trained to use different approaches and methods;
- it’s necessary to plan the course of the guidance at workplace for different timeframes and determine the criteria that help with the time-planning for the project;
- during the preparation of the concrete plan for guidance at workplace project (which also needs a certain time), the tasks must be distributed among the key partners (in our case, the HR manager, union representatives and counsellor) and allocate enough time for each of these tasks.

It would also be good to think about the so called “flexible guidance” for companies, which means that the counsellor enters the company when the latter calls him or her – with the prior knowledge of what the company and the employees need.

Regarding the role of the union representative in guidance at workplace we can only confirm that the decision was the right one, because the counsellor, who comes into the company from the outside, needs a link inside the company, a mediator between herself and the employees in order to establish the cooperation as fast as possible. However, union representatives certainly need to be additionally trained for this role, as it is new to them and the employees. In this context we believe that, in view of the manner of the ZSSS organisation in Slovenia, the union representatives in companies could have greater support in regional representatives. As the union reps from the “outside” they would have an easier time establishing connection with the management of the companies and thus support the work of the union (and counsellors) within the company. It is therefore worth considering including the regional ZSSS reps even more into the further development of guidance at workplace. This will help them fulfil their mission, stated as the priority tasks of the union and their representatives in the field of workers’ education:

- cooperation with the company managers in preparation of education and training policy,
- counsel the workers’ councils,
- encourage the workers to participate in education,
- use their activities to encourage greater awareness about the importance of education and training – lifelong learning,
- continue their own education for work in this area,
- cooperate with other experts in the field of education and human resources in the company and outside,
- adopt stances and decisions when necessary by the nature of the issue or problem of workers (preventing education, reimbursement of education expenses, conditions for education – working hours, leave, etc.)
- participate in the procedures for asserting the right of the workers from education.

In order to optimise the work of everyone it would pay to support the suggestion of the counsellors to organise a wider national campaign for the promotion of importance and implementation of guidance at workplace as an effective approach for better information of employers and employees about the importance of continuous education

and training and opening more possibilities for the employees to take part in them, especially those with lower levels of education. The opportunities that also help to maintain the competitive edge of the market also help employees' personal fulfilment (of those that can be motivated for learning). This follows the European goals stated in the Communiqué for Adult Education, It is never too late to learn (2006) and Action plan on Adult learning, It is always a good time to learn (2007).

Both documents emphasise the concern for development of quality opportunities for additional training for less educated employees, especially seniors, where Action plan explicitly gives incentive for raising the possibility for adults to »advance one degree« – to earn a qualification that is at least one degree higher of the one they presently have. It also adds that it is informing and guidance that play an important role in motivating and reaching out to adult groups that are to participate in continuous education to earn a qualification higher than the one presently held. (2007:8). Guidance at workplace contributes to both: informing about the existing possibilities and motivating to take advantage of them.

And all partners see the SIAE (Slovenian Institute for Adult Education) and the ZSSS (Slovenia's largest union association – Association of free trade unions) in the role of motivator and supporter of guidance in the workplace activities nation-wide. And also national and regional employer associations, because they can be out important partner in opening doors to the company managements.

The Swedish case study

In Sweden the only places to find guidance and counselling work including both general studies and vocational education/training is in the facilities provided by municipalities. The Swedish partner, the learning centre, CFL is such a facility. CFL has worked with the mapping of skills and competences for individuals, providing guidance in the work place and offering vocational education (and general education) and training for employees in companies. But their main task is to provide guidance, give courses and vocational courses to all adult citizens of the municipality. This includes unemployed people and immigrants as well as those in employment.

Interviews with HR-representatives in large companies have shown that guidance in the workplace is all according to the wishes of those companies and that the combination of assisting individuals and companies has been successful. Giving advice and counselling, without being able to offer courses or training (or suggest other education/training providers) is likely to decrease the value of giving guidance in the workplace, the company management says. This is why a learning centre is a good partner. However, the company managements find that there are a few restraining factors despite the overall successful CFL work scheme. One such restraining factor is the available time for training and education.

When the guidance in the workplace started in one company the trade union representative was very reluctant. There were many discussions, and there was a fear, that the guidance and counselling was a start of a major replacement scheme. Today, the situation is different and the validation processes for the staff was carried out, and is carried out with no complaints from the trade union representatives who gradually has seen what can be gained for the individual employee as well as for the company.

The co-operation with especially one large industry in the area has lead to a new joint endeavour. The company was in the need of recruiting new staff as well as seeking guidance for the already existing staff; this lead to a trainee project where both objects could be achieved. The project led to recruiting new staff, both from within and outside the premises. Thanks to this new project, employees within the company had a chance or further education and training and could change positions or better their careers within the company. One examples of this is a construction worker who received counselling at the work place. He was provided education and training at CFL ,with the company's help, and is working as a production manager at the same company today. Other examples are how staff has broadened their skills and now are able to do more jobs or master more workstations. Some employees that had been planning to leave the company instead received further training and they are now still employed, working with new, more advanced tasks and processes.

In the process, the guidance counsellors at CFL find the validation of former skills and competences useful. This can also lessen the amount of time an employer needs to achieve his or her diploma or course credits. The guidance counsellors at CFL feel that this is very important also because employers feel that time is limited. “It is always difficult to plan time for guidance in the workplace, but it is still something we very much want to continue working with”, says a Human Relation manager at a paper mill. “We want to do this, even though I feel that it is the individual that benefits the most from the counselling” (human relation manager at a paper mill).

The guidance counsellors' work

The advice and guidance centre at the CFL learning centre is run by the municipal of Söderhamn. There are two guidance counsellors, one assistant, one vocational teacher and a manager at the centre.

The advice and guidance provided at CFL follows the same procedures whether it is done within their own premises or at a work place. When mapping the clients' or employee's skills and competences everything is looked at, from secondary and upper secondary school, to work tasks and separate courses and training. Then questions about personal interests and plans for the future are addressed. After this there is the question of what can be validated and what new courses or training are needed to achieve the individual's goals for the future.

Since the daily work of guidance counsellors is to guide individuals in remembering and placing previous learning in sequence there is currently no need for additional training for the counsellors. All professional vocational guidance counsellors have a specialized university degree in Sweden. This is why Sweden choose not to organize formal training within the project themselves, but instead concentrated on helping other partners see possibilities as well as difficulties in giving guidance in the workplace. The guidance counsellors working at CFL have the qualifications and the training needed in their work, both on their own premises and when performing them at places of work. One of the tools they use is the “life line”. It is a simple tool. A line is drawn on a piece of paper. Years and months are noted on the line and the individual being guided starts to talk about their life and what they have done during the years. One of the guidance counsellors working at CFL finds it very similar to work with clients whether it is in the work place or at the CFL office. One difference is that there needs to be a good relationship with the employer. In fact, one of the CFL staff says “If we go out to a company, we usually have about an hour with a client and I have prepared myself for the meeting. Here at the office, people are often lining up to see me and I have to hurry up so that the other will not have to wait too long” (CFL staff)

Unfortunately the economic situation has forced the guidance counsellors to turn their interest to the unemployed who come to the learning centre for advice and guidance in large numbers. There is, at the moment not enough time for the guidance counsellors to seek out new companies to co-operate with, to give guidance to employers and offer courses and training. However the guidance counsellors wish to continue to look up new companies as soon as they are given possibilities. They are awaiting a strategy from the centres management on how to be able to continue their work finding new companies to offer services to. The companies which already have been contacted and where a relationship has been established continue asking for services from CFL. These services are also given. These services are mostly one on one advice and guidance at the centre, but occasionally also specially made courses or training for companies. The employees of the companies where CFL has been, or is working also come directly to the centre for guidance since they now know about it through contacts made at their work place. One guidance counsellor says that:

“The best thing with guidance in the workplace is the opportunity for us to help people who would like to change work tasks [within or outside their current position] so that they feel better about themselves. Likewise, to be able to help people to validate and get certificates for their true skill and knowledge has been great” (Guidance counsellor).

On the most part guidance in the workplace has run smoothly. The employer has understood that CFL has been working on behalf of the individuals and not for the company, something the trade union representatives also saw after a while, although some were reluctant to in the beginning. A CFL counsellor remembers one incident where the employer had second thoughts. This concerned an individual that was aiming at becoming a black smith spe-

cialized in horses and to consequently leave the company. He would have continued on his set path, with or without the advice from the counsellors. The fact that he would leave the company anyway, and that this was not a result of the counselling had to be explained by the counsellor to the employer. There are also other instances when the outcome has been the opposite, where employees have stayed on, instead of leaving. One such example is a blue collar worker who wanted to continue his education and move in to office work. By mapping his skills and competences, validating and then offering courses, first at secondary level and then at university level CFL could help him achieve his goals while still staying on at the company. He now works in the office at that same company.

The Italian case study

In Italy, like OECD countries, there is a constant link between the issue of lifelong learning and life long career guidance, so institution and government plan a lot of career guidance actions towards young people or disadvantaged workers, whilst there is a lack of initiatives addressed to temporary or open ended employees. This kind of worker needs support too, in order to find out or to build up new opportunities and new incentive in a more and more complex labour market. According to this situation it has to change the aims and the final goals of career guidance or counselling or coaching actions in the workplace, from a passive support to an active promotion of the work. Career guidance is a lifelong support that helps workers in development life-long professional project through the lifelong learning action.

In the framework of Guidance in the Workplace Project, the team work realised some seminar activities in order to transfer the knowledge about the different procedures through which they can be offered guidance in the enterprises. During the training days, the participants had the opportunity to experiment with the technologies and methodologies of Career Coaching. At the seminar, HR Managers of big companies, as well as small and medium enterprises participated, as well as managers of Temporary Work Agencies, and workers of Public Employment Services and Guidance Professionals.

Afterwards, from all of the participants, seven HR Managers were selected to be interviewed who were more representative of the number of employees, company profile and sector. Outside of the seven companies who participated in the seminar, three other HR Managers from Unilever, Unicredit, and Eurotranciatura, who had not participated in the seminar, were interviewed in order to complete and integrate the results.

The sample of the companies that were interviewed was all large companies, with numbers of employees being no fewer than 80, both public and private, engaging in production and services. The chosen companies were in equal number Italian and foreign.

The choice of interviewing only companies of a medium to large size was dictated from the observation that came forth in preceding research made by the same group that there could be present a sensibility in career orientation in a company that has a formal HR structure that presents itself as a partner in the companies' different departments.

Those interviewed were invited to respond to a semi-structured questionnaire composed of three sections:

- The importance of career guidance in a company
- Interest and level of participation in seminars
- Strategies of growth of the human resource area in a company

The importance of career guidance in a company

The first section named "The activity of career guidance in the place of work in general" has the objective of investigating the typologies, the activities and the instruments of guidance and development in the companies interviewed. Those interviewed supported the role of the HR division to implement a clear strategy of career coaching, defined and supported by specific tools and programs. To the end of sustaining the individuals during the selection process and in phases of job changing or simply for professional growth, through activities of an informative type and suggested by a close analysis of needs with the sharing of the participants themselves, therefore guaranteeing

the development of the “person” and of the “professional.” It becomes apparent that these interventions cannot be casual or “special projects,” but must instead be part of the Human Resource policy of the company.

Particularly delicate and interesting to analyze is the third questions “What should change, in terms of organization and philosophy, to activate or implement the activity of guidance in the workplace most accessibly in the company?” The major obstacle in the development of a policy of career guidance in a company is represented by the impossible nature of calculating, for each activity, economic indicators such as ROI, Return on Investment, similar to what happens in the training. All of that which is difficult to account for in terms of economic/financial return. Other obstacles are the lack of specialized personnel in attendance. Generally, the aid is entrusted to the HR Department, while the development of specific competencies is the responsibilities of the various department managers. The skills of an HR Manager are different, even if they are close to those of career coaching.

Interest and level of participation in training seminars

The second section had the objective of verifying the motivation and interest in participating in the training seminars. In fact, the first question explicitly asked “*Why did you participate in the seminar and what were your principle motivations?*” The greater part of those interviewed demonstrated interest in the highly innovative theme which responded to the organizational changes which ask for a lot of attention in the development of human resources. The larger part of those interviewed declared that they had an interest in broadening their knowledge on the subject and above all, improving their own professional capacities on the subject and identifying ways of application in their own companies. Interchange, listening and participation were the major draw during these days which were lived positively due in large part to the stimulating and social climate.

The second question “*Do you think that the seminar was useful for your company? How so?*” had the objective of probing the subjects discussed. The subjects discussed were programmed internally in the project with the purpose of allowing them to be experimental and applicable in the environment of the company. The participants said that there was a substantial aligning between the anticipated training needs and those that were satisfied. The knowledge and awareness of certain tools for improving levels of performance of the workers in the company become strategic for guidance in work quality and for the continual improvement in the performance of the person.

Particularly stimulating was the third question “*What would render possible the introduction of the career guidance activity in your company?*” The larger part of those interviewed sustain that the development internally within a company regarding career coaching can be successful only with formal and specific HR policies and processes, sustained by a satisfactory organizational climate. On the other side, the perception that the workers process with respect to their own organization and represent the background on which they delineate their true work satisfaction is measured by their degree of participation and belonging in the company structure. The activity of career coaching can be promoted therefore, only internally in an organizational structure that puts the person as a resource at the centre and gives adequate training in these roles.

Also indicated is the opportunity to benefit from ad hoc financing for the development of said activities. It should be underlined, that in Italy, through inter-professional funds, it is possible to take advantage of funding for training with the scope of improving professional competencies of the workers and to allow them to be used in other contexts. Internally in the training modules, it is foreseen that there will be a balancing of the competencies to this end.

Finally, the fourth question “*What do you think the most interesting contribution of the seminar was?*” For what concerns the relevant contributions discussed during the seminars we notice the theme more or less unexplored in the professional world. Particularly interesting and stimulating was the active participation in the laboratory moments in which the participants could personally experiment the interactive dynamics that come about in interpersonal relationships, even though they were simulated and guided. The quality of the relationships inside of organizations plays a strong role in the degree of satisfaction of work evidenced by two variables: the entity of the relationship and its functionality. In the first case, we must consider with whom the relationship is developed, and therefore the degree of similarity (cultural, interests, values, styles of behaviour, etc.) that renders social interaction in the workplace more fulfilling. In the second case, we reference instead what is done or if the satisfaction is connected

to what is asked and what the people effectively do, that the person responds with expected behaviour. These two variables seem to have a significant weight in the interaction between workers and colleagues, but also in the relationships with superiors and subordinates.

Strategies of growth in the area of human resources in a company

It is interesting to analyze the third section of the interview relative to Strategies of growth in the area of human resources of a company of those interviewed. The questions offered the possibility to inquire as to the degree and level of participation of the employees in the development policies and on the strategies and plans of company training that foresee ways of training and development of careers internally to the companies interviewed.

From the first question *“Do you feel that your organization will start or will continue to implement a system of career training?”* we register parity between the companies that are starting to implement the activity of career coaching and those that are far away from embracing the philosophy. We must underline however that from the interviews, we were able to register certain distrust and a regression with respect to previous research in which had emerged that similar development policies we prevalently geared toward managers and in some case newly graduated employees with great potential for growth. The reason for this “regression” is surely found in the strong constriction of budgets dedicated to development policies of personnel that all companies have been subject to in this period of economic crisis.

The second and third questions had the objective of investigating the level and quality of efficiency of the diverse tools used in HR policies: *“What service/activity (coaching, mentoring, initial training etc) do you find useful and/or efficient for development in the area of HR?”*

The companies interviewed underlined the importance and the usefulness of the coaching and mentoring activities. The importance of the necessary skills in performing effective career coaching was also underlined.

The last question was an open question regarding training and it is very interesting to underline that, almost in complete agreement, those interviewed underlined how career training is not only a tool for bridging the gap between ability and the aspiration of those who are entering into the working world, but is a system that allows participants to find their way, among many available ones, and to do so many times in their lives: lifelong learning and lifelong guidance become therefore, a continuum. Interesting is the observation that judges over a long period of time activities of this type *“...not only a competitive stimulus for the company, but also a characteristic of attraction/retention of human resources of value.”*

Conclusions

From these analyses emerge the following questions on the subject of training and that continue the bases for some recommendations, in particular:

Training can no longer be considered only a tool for employability through the realization of training services in support of the first occupation, but it must also know how to pursue strategies for the permanent development of competencies for all the citizens, that in the logic of the marketplace of employment they know how to gather and invest in the professionalism and productiveness of continual growth;

- training can produce a notable contribution to the development of learning for working encouraging them to access training opportunities;
- it is essential that the guidance and training are provided in a continual fashion to supply an effective contribution to the development of learning of workers;
- the tools utilized in the processes/services of training need to be able to encourage processes of empowerment, of sustaining the construction of decisions and choices, of project skills, through listening, information and training;
- it is necessary to interpret the role of the HR function, how they develop, motivate, and better the human capital of a company with the objective of not only the company's performance but also of self-efficacy that

if on one side it can bring them out of the company of origin, can represent a tool of contrast, at the risk of excluding in moments, like that which we are living currently, of great change that brings us to a sudden obsolescence of competencies of an individual;

- career training activities cannot be assimilable neither in evaluation activities, even if, in some cases it can hold true and appropriate phases of assessment, and neither of activities of selection of personnel, meaning that it is not a tool of measurement and testing of the competencies and potential in function of the occupation of a determined job from predefined characteristics;
- a good selector must be a good trainer, just as they need to be a good HR manager.

In Italy, the processes of career development in many companies are not clear and that which is made available is only done so to college graduates and managers. There is no clear strategy to sustain the development of a career for the majority of employees. This cannot have negative repercussions on the policies active in sustaining employability. Employability is the capacity to find and conserve the place of work and consequently establishes an essential dimension of active citizenship, but it is also the premise of improving the competitiveness of a “Sistema Paese.” A model so constructed requires a rethinking, not only of the offer of training but also of the question. Employability, as well as an active citizenship, asks for new updated and appropriate knowledge and competencies.

The challenge is the creation of a system of training and development of professionalism (analysts, training, and programmers of specific activities for training, tutors, mentors, coaches, evaluators, managers, and system animators) able to contribute to the growth of an integrated local economic-productive system.

Impact, Sustainability, future work and lessons learned

This section of the report shows the answers from the questionnaire that was sent to partners in August 2009. However before the results are presented we feel there is need of a short discussion on the subject of sustainability of project work – what do we mean and what are preconditions for sustainable development work? One of the aims for the learning evaluation has been to discuss what the pre-conditions for sustainable development are and whether or not a project like this can give such impact that it will be sustainable. This will be further discussed in the concluding remarks.

Sustainable development work

To sustain something is to “keep up the strength” or to “keep in existence over a long period of time” (Longman dictionary of contemporary English). The concept of sustainability was first established in regard to environmental issues. It has since been broadened to include also social and economical sustainability (Docherty, Kira & Shani 2008). It is in the latter sense we discuss sustainability here. Sustainability of externally financed project work has been questioned. In fact some reports have been very discouraging, saying that most of the project work has seized to exist shortly after the external funding was gone (ITPS A2004:028, RiR-rapport 2005:6). Sustainability can be seen in a static way – to keep things as they are or as they were planned from the beginning. Sustainability can also be seen as a sustained development process. That is that the development work sustains itself, reproducing resources and constantly engaging in processes to further develop methods and take care of results from previous development work (Docherty et. al. 2008). It is in this sense we talk about sustainability.

Important preconditions for a project enabling long-term effects, that the project leads into sustainable development work, were highlighted in a Swedish research project with 18 participating development projects entitled “Knowledge Development and Sustainability” (Svensson et al. 2007). The authors of a book describing the 18 projects discuss structures and processes in development projects and how preconditions for sustainability can be identified in them. The ideas have since been developed and a model for sustainable development work has been created together with participants in a large scale national program aimed at changing work places (Halvarsson & Sandberg-Öhman 2009).

If development work is to be sustainable, a carefully thought-through project organisation and a coherent project idea are necessary, i.e. a structure that provides clarity and context (cf. Docherty et. al. 2008). For an adaptation to local preconditions to be possible, the project’s structure needs to connect with the development work processes in terms of learning and participation within the project. Top management of the organisations that are to take care of and further develop project results and methods need to be actively interested in the project. Thus, creating long-term effects of a development work requires more than an efficient project management (Svensson & von Otter 2001). A project organisation can be analysed on the basis of different functions and areas of responsibility in a development project (see figure 2). The functions are concerned with owning; steering and leading (or managing) projects. Active owners in involved organisations support and place demands on steering facilities, which then does the same with the project management. Preconditions are thus created for those taking part in a development work to act where the frames and scope for action interconnect. It is the participants who test ideas, make changes and give feedback to the project management, steering facilities and owner. Who the owner is differ depending on organisation. They can be top management, or in public organisations politicians or high officials. But, it is the steering facilities in

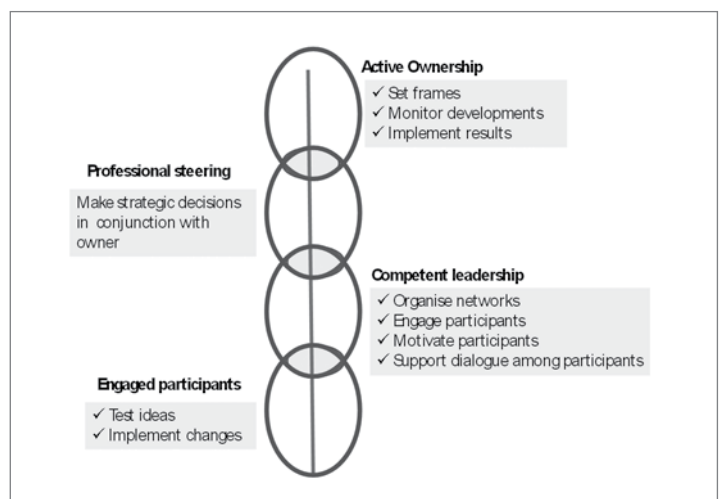


Figure 2. Organising sustainable development work

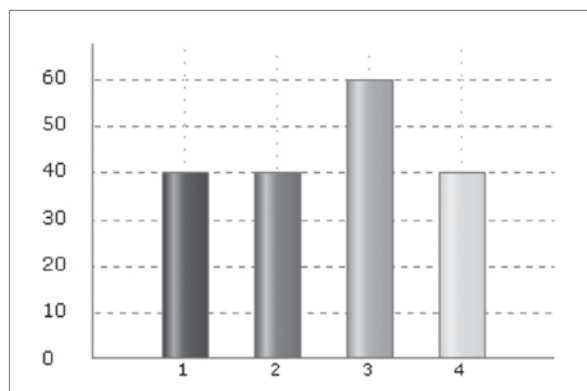
conjunction with the owner who have the tools and power to keep the development process going after the formal project has ended. The lack of an active ownership and a professional steering of development work is probably the most important reason for a lack of sustainability (Svensson et al. 2007).

Sustainable development work based on a project is however not only about structures and ongoing processes. It is also about initial results and impact from the work being done. Without results and development of new work practices or methods, no project will lead to sustainable development work. Therefore the next section, showing the results from the questionnaire sent out to the partners, start with issues regarding impact.

Impact

We start by showing how the partners (all five) categorize their work. They were asked whether it was local, regional (one region), regional (two or more regions), or national. These are their answers:

How would you categorize your work in the GIWP-project? (In percent, more than one answer possible)



1. local
2. regional (one region)
3. regional (two or more regions)
4. national

The figures are given in percent and more than one answer is possible. Both the old partners categorized themselves as regional. Italy said their work to be in two or more regions and Sweden in one region only. France named their work as local, regional and national and Romania local and regional. Slovenia categorized their work as regional (two or more regions) and national. The partners then went on to answer questions

about impact; nationally, regionally and locally. These are their comments.

What impact/effect can you see nationally from your work?

"I think the main impact is the changing of the minds. Indeed, guidance in the workplace project is a good way of communicating about the possibilities to inform, guide and advice employees on their workplace. So, the fact to talk about the project or ask some questions about this field, is a good point because we make all the different stakeholders on the guidance and training, think about the guidance possibilities and their current practice. About the training, thanks to our CIBC National and regional network, we have been the starting point of all the CIBC strategies to go towards to the companies to make some guidance in the workplace. Our participation in this project can be a good example and argument to convince of our guidance activity in the workplace." (France)

"Since we provided guidance in the workplace locally and only the training activities included more regions in the country (participants in the training were from 3 regions, Harghita, Covasna, Bihor) we cannot really talk about impact on national level. The Harghita County Employment Agency (involved in the project) is an institution that functions on county level and they are also member of a national network of Employment Agencies, so if they will use the information and knowledge got within this project in their daily work they would be in the position to make these accessible on national level for those interested." (Romania)

"We have seen an increasing cooperation between companies and guidance providers during the last years and the previous project, Guidance merger and this one has been important for this development." (Sweden)

"We have worked nationally and regionally. To develop and implement guidance in the workplace in the selected companies we have cooperated with two networks:

- *at the national level with the Association of Free Trade Unions of Slovenia (Zveza svobodnih sindikatov Slovenije - ZSSS), who also provided a written statement of support when we applied for the project,*

- and at the regional level with three regional trade union unit of ZSSS and with three regional guidance centres for adult education - Koper, Maribor, Novo mesto.

So the results of the project could have impact at the national and regional level. Regarding the training programme at SIAE as a national Institute for Adult Education we will keep on the topics from this training programme.” (Slovenia).

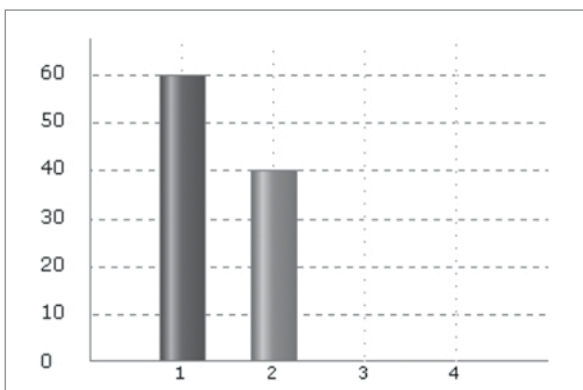
“Promotional activities at national level are done by Aster, ISFOL (Institute for the Development of Vocational Training of employees) and Sto (Institute of Studies for the Management and Business Management).

The project can have a dual impact:

1. at operating plan: we involved some workers/professionals from single company;
2. at system level: we involved ISFOL that in Italy deals with VET.” (Italy)

However, there are only two projects that have answered that the Guidance in the Workplace Project has made an impact on their national VET-system. This is Sweden and Italy. In this lies also the impact of the initial Guidance Merger project, with the follow up – the transfer of innovation project, Guidance in the Workplace.

Impact on national VET- system (in percent)



1. Not at all (Slovenia, France, Romania)
2. Yes partially (Italy, Sweden)

“We have seen a growing acceptance of both APL and workplace based VET in Sweden the past years- the guidance providers have been important for this and the good results from the local work in Söderhamn is well known in Sweden – evidence for this is a high number of study visits to our learning centre and presentations in national conferences.” (Sweden)

“The activities carried out with Guidance in the Workplace project can have an impact on our national VET system because we involved an expert from ISFOL that in Italy is the Institute for the Development of Vocational Training of employees “ (Italy)

Furthermore, regarding regional impact, Romania and Sweden say:

“Since the idea of guidance in the WP is very new in the country amongst small companies and institutions, a significantly longer period is needed to make this service “accepted”, “needed” and “useful” both from the point of view of company’s management and employees.” (Romania)

“The Guidance Merger 1 and The Guidance in the Workplace Project have been important to develop a new role for guidance officers - a more active role, working close together with employers and a combination of new tools-like APL and workplace based training-together with more traditional tools like career planning, labour market information also.” (Sweden)

And the local impact is commented as follows:

“Locally, it could be a new possibility to communicate about VET, in addition to all we already do in that field.” (France)

“Since the idea of guidance in the WP is very new in the country amongst small companies and institutions (especially from rural and underdeveloped areas), a significantly longer period is needed to make this service “accepted”, “needed” and “useful” both from the point of view of companies management and employees. Despite the above mentioned, during the advise giving activities we met managers really interested in this service and who would be willing to “use” it on long term especially when these would be free of charge. (in our case it was of course a sort of testing)” (Romania)

Accreditation plans

“The work has been selected by the DG Employment as one of 50 best practices in EU, the only example from Sweden of cooperation between VET/guidance providers and SME:s.” (Sweden)

When we made inquiries about accreditation plans Sweden mentioned that the Guidance in the Workplace Project has been chosen as one of fifty best practices. However the question of accreditation is also about getting formal accreditation of courses or other activities related to the project. Here are some more answers about future accreditation plans.

“First, we launch a strategic action plan towards the companies to suggest to them our provisions of services. Then, the 3 case studies we got, took place well, and so, it allows us to keep these 3 companies as new eventual clients, for further collaborations (for example, we are going to launch some new provisions of services towards the seniors employees, and thanks to GIWP Project, we can contact them about this topic)” (France)

“Accreditation of a training course for guidance counsellors.” (Romania)

“The results from the project have already been included in 2 new projects, one coordinated by a Hungarian labour market board and one coordinated by an Italian training provider. In both projects partners from several EU countries participate and the results from Guidance merger 2 will continue to inspire guidance providers in Europe to work more active and in cooperation with SME: s.” (Sweden)

“Accreditation of a training course for guidance counsellors.” (Italy)

Continued training of advice givers and guidance counsellors

One of the major aims of the transfer of innovation project is to test and evaluate training needed for guidance counsellors and other advice givers to be able to give guidance in work places. This has been done differently in each country. The new partners found it necessary to adjust the training to local and national structures, but some modules have been the same. Italy, an old partner, provided training to counsellors, but not within their own organisation. Furthermore, Sweden is an old partner who provides guidance in the workplace on a regular basis. They found it not necessary to additionally train their counsellors, and saw the training at the trans-national meetings sufficient for their needs at the moment. (However they do inform counsellors and management of other learning centres about their work in different networks). More facts about how the training was done are presented in a separate report on www.guidanceintheworkplace.eu. These are ideas and plans on how to continue training counsellors and other advice givers for guidance in the workplace.

How will you (or other organizations) continue to train advisers or guidance counsellors in GIWP?

“Now our staff members are trained for the companies approach, they are able to train the other counsellors about all the things we learnt during the project. We can expect some success in our further “commercial” approaches towards the companies, so GIWP will continue.” (France)

“As stated before Soros Educational Center has a long term plan for accrediting a training course for advisers or guidance counsellors. This will depend also on the interest of the target group for such courses (this being in direct relation with the country’s economic development).” (Romania)

“We will try to continue with guidance in the workplace in co-operation with The Association of Free Trade Unions of Slovenia (ZSSS) and with the network of 14 guidance centres. So we also plan to continue with the training programme for the counsellors and for the trade union representative. With ZSSS we have already discussed to have separate training for regional trade union representatives and for the union representatives in the companies.” (Slovenia)

“The CFL participates in several guidance networks and will continue to give information to guidance providers about our results.” (Sweden)

“Stoà has submitted a project proposal in the framework of Lifelong Learning programme(transfer of the innovation) of guidance in the workplace project. The project was approved and it will begin in the next months. The trainer in guidance in the workplace project, has developed some material.

ISFOL likely use some results and/or products of this project.” (Italy)

Continued work with guidance in the workplace

The four countries that have answered questions about continuing guidance in the workplace services; all have different plans. This is what they answered.

How will you (or other organizations) keep working with guidance in the workplace?

“With new companies as clients, we will be able to offer them some guidance in the workplace. More we will work with it, more the minds will change, more it will become “common” and more we will appear as “experts” with a long experience in the field of the guidance in the workplace.” (France)

“The Harghita County Employment Agency (involved actively in the GIWP project on behalf of Soros Educational Center) has started cooperation with CIBC, Arras. During the study visit made by the CIBC staff in Miercurea-Ciuc, the Employment Agency’s staff have got different models for professional guidance from CIBC which they are going to use” (Romania).

“Today this is a part of our daily activity and it will continue and hopefully grow - it’s all a win-win situation, the guidance unit works together with the employers and that makes it possible to support employees with information about training and APL possibilities and to arrange workplace based training for unemployed.” (Sweden)

“We try to put the topic of guidance in the workplace in the scheme of Ministry of Work, Family and Social Affair. We have started to do this. Our national partner from ZSSS, has already talked with them and proposed this for the next year. And we have also proposed this at the national co-ordination group for career guidance in Slovenia which operate at the Ministry of Education and Sport (in this group the GIWP project leader is a representative for adult education area)” (Slovenia).

Organizing to achieve sustainable development work

Early on in the trans-national project the emphasis was on building networks and anchoring the work in the partners own organisations as well as in their partner’s organisations. Emphasis was put on informing individuals with steering functions or at top level (owners) about the work being done in the Guidance in the Workplace Project. This is why we have asked questions about these things. Furthermore we asked if other organisations had shown an interest in giving guidance in the workplace in the future.

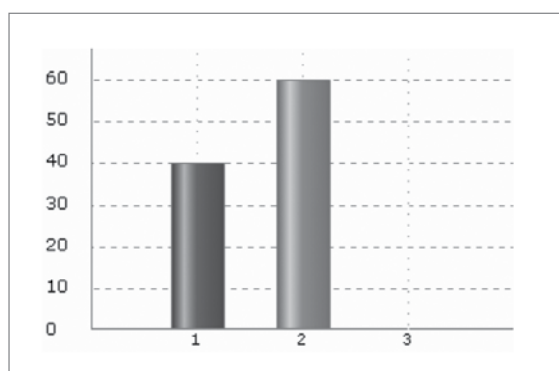
In my organisation:	Yes, absolutely ■	Yes, at least in part ■	No, only to some extent ■	No, not at all ■	I do not know ■
8 Top management has set up a strategy to enable continued work on training for GIWP	2 (40%)	1 (20%)	0 (0%)	2 (40%)	0 (0%)
7 Top management has set up a strategy to enable continued work on GIWP	2 (40%)	1 (20%)	0 (0%)	2 (40%)	0 (0%)
6 I am supported fully by my superiors in the GIWP-project	4 (80%)	1 (20%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
5 I have on numerous occasions discussed and/or solved problems concerning GIWP with top management	1 (20%)	1 (20%)	3 (60%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
4 Top management is interested in the training of counsellors for GIWP	2 (40%)	2 (40%)	1 (20%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
3 Top management regularly inquires about the GIWP-project	3 (60%)	1 (20%)	1 (20%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
2 We inform all staff about the GIWP-project on a regular basis	3 (60%)	1 (20%)	1 (20%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
1 Those working with the project are fully committed to find a way to continue GIWP activities	3 (60%)	0 (0%)	1 (20%)	1 (20%)	0 (0%)

Comment: *“There is a big interest especially for the workplace based training - this is a way to arrange training for people for a lower cost than more traditional VET provided by schools - this is one of several reasons why it is very interesting for top management people. The cooperation with SME: s is also important for the public organizations - to bridge the gap between us is important for politicians and top management people.” (Sweden)*

The answers reflect that there are two organizations that do not have future plans to continue the actual guidance in the workplace services. However their respective national partners will to some extent continue to use methods learned in the Guidance in the Workplace Project or to promote guidance in the workplace on a national level.

When it comes to changing policies and structures in the VET-system, politicians are important. Although it was not emphasized in the Guidance in the Workplace project that partners should try to influence, we wanted to ask the question if this had been done or not.

Our work in the GIWP-project has influenced politicians or policy makers to take action: (in percent answers from four countries)



1 Yes (Slovenia, Sweden)

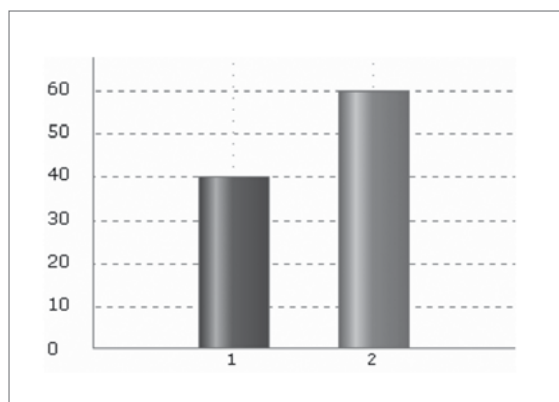
2 No (France, Romania, Italy)

Comments:

“We try to put the topic of guidance in the workplace in the future scheme/policy of Ministry of work and labour.” (Slovenia)

“Workplace based training is fully accepted. APL is a part of the national strategy and an important issue for the new agency for higher VET. There are of course several reasons for this but the important role of guidance providers in APL has been highlighted by the Guidance merger project.” (Sweden)

Have any other organizations, except the ones you are working with now, shown an interest to give guidance in the workplace?



1 No (Romania, France)

2 Yes (Sweden, Slovenia, Italy)

“There is an interest of the National Chamber of Commerce and Industry to support and recommend guidance in the workplace as one of the possible approach for opening access to lifelong learning for employees”. (Slovenia)

“About 50 municipalities in Sweden has made study visits to Söderhamn and the project has been presented in several national, regional, local conferences - maybe more about the original Guidance merger project than the TOI Guidance merger 2 - the GM 2(Guidance in the Workplace) is more intended to be a transfer of results to other countries.” (Sweden)

“Following the interviews realised for the Italian case study, we have a positive answer from:

- Edizioni Simone (Publishing house);

- Mediacom;

- Unilever;

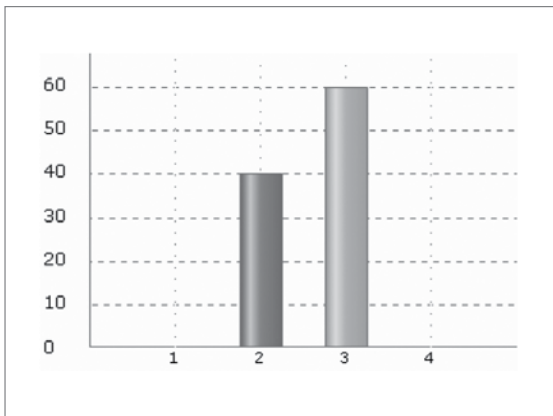
- Unicredit (there are already some skills, perhaps the company will invest more in this area).

Some organisations wish to have services of guidance in the workplace.” (Italy)

The last comment, from Italy, reflects the strategy of close co-operation with HR-management in businesses instead of liaising with other external counsellors and advice givers.

The question “Do you now have an organization (a structure with or without co-operating partner) that will be capable of continuing the guidance in the workplace and the training of advisors and guidance counsellors?” was put to the partners. Romania answered that they do not, and they do not have the intention to continue guidance in the workplace services. Slovenia, Sweden and France say that the structure now is stable and that they will continue developing the services, with or without partners. Italy says that partners will continue the work, but that the structure is still unstable. It is also worth noting that three of five partners stated that; were it not for the transnational Guidance in the Workplace Project they would not have been working to provide the services. Among those who have answered that they would not provide the guidance services in the workplace is Slovenia, who now has a firm structure and future plans to continue offering the services national wide.

Would you have been working to provide guidance in the workplace regardless of this transnational project? (In percent; answers from four countries)



- 2 Yes, probably (Sweden, France)
- 3 No, probably not (Slovenia, Romania, Italy)

Lessons learned

That learning has taken place throughout the project is evident. Opportunities to learn has been organized both in trans-national meetings, at study visits and while working with training of counsellors and giving services to employers and employees. We asked about the most important things partners had learned from other countries and from their own work. It is also important for those who have planned the transnational work to learn what could have been done differently.

Please mention three things you would have done differently if you were to do the project all over again.

- *Communicate about the project since the very beginning*
- *We couldn't know, but the financial crisis didn't help us so much...*
- *Thanks to an earlier commitment of our partner on the project we could have organized more dissemination events (maybe nationally)" (France)*

"We have to start to work with the companies earlier. And to plan more time for guidance in the workplace in some companies. We think that it will be better to have partly a separate training for counsellors and trade union representatives. " (Slovenia)

"It is always difficult to find the best way for dissemination - there is a lot of projects going on in EU and to make your voice heard is not always that easy - maybe we should have worked more with the dissemination plan - you can never reach a perfect plan for that." (Sweden)

What are the most important things you have learned from other international partners?

From Sweden: Their concrete experiences in the previous project »Guidance Merger«.

From France: The concept and concrete approaches of the » skills audit«.

From England –(during our study visit Leonardo da Vinci Mobility - in Leeds in June 2008): How important the role of the trade union representatives is for motivating employees for lifelong learning”. (Slovenia)

“The different way of approaching the companies according to the country for example, the importance given to the trade unions in Slovenia).Some tips to be heard by important stakeholders (letters to the Chamber of commerce...) A better knowledge of the different systems (training, networking...)” (France)

“We got insight into different (and well functioning) guidance systems that are set up according to the national VET systems and financed mostly from state funds. The importance and advantages of guidance in the WP in HR development” (Romania)

“That despite the big differences between us and the situation for guidance providers there is still a lot to learn from each other. There is also an increasing awareness in many countries that professional guidance is important to strengthen lifelong learning in the EU and to increase mobility, both social and geographical in Europe.” (Sweden)

What are the most important things you have learned from national partner organizations?

“Some advise giving methodologies.” (Romania)

“From trade union - ZSSS: The way how to find the contact with the companies – employers and employees.

From Guidance centres: That we have to develop different approaches for guidance activities in the workplace – regarding different needs of the employees in different companies; we will work on this in further development of the guidance in the workplace.” (Slovenia)

In retrospect, is there anything the persons co-ordinating and evaluating the project should have done differently?

I am not long enough involved in this project to be able to judge this field.

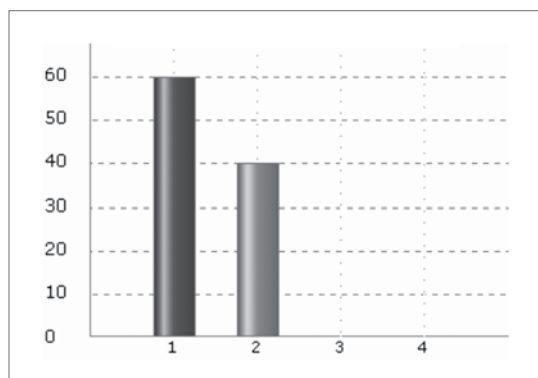
As a new comer, I have gotten all the advice, information and explanations I needed, so to my mind I don't see what they could have done differently.” (France)

“The guidance in the WP methodologies was mentioned quite frequently. Since in Romania this service is less known (in some sectors is totally unknown) we have expressed from the beginning of the project our wish to get more practical information related to this issue (some very concrete ways and methods of GIWP). Maybe it would have been more efficient if this information would have been offered earlier during the project period.” (Romania)

“Maybe just to suggest us to start to work with the companies earlier - regarding the experiences from previous project.” (Slovenia)

“They have done a good job.” (Sweden)

Finally; for you personally - overall, the transnational project has been:



- 1 A good experience (3 partners)
- 2 A fairly good experience (2 partners)
- 3 A fairly poor experience
- 4 A bad experience

Reflections from the final conference

The discussion at the final conference circled around the service providing organisations and finding the right partners to co-operate with, the employer perspective, counsellors' role and the training needed. Flexibility was a word frequently used. Something the participants also came back to more than once was that guidance is turning in to a more commercial task than that of traditional counselling work. By that they meant two things. One was that counsellors needed to become more "business interested" in order to understand company needs and conditions. The other meaning was that counselling itself might have to become more commercial or at least that organisations providing the services must become more aware of possibilities to market themselves. Furthermore there were discussions about the importance of national structures that can support lifelong learning and enable guidance in the workplace.

Flexible guidance counsellors with a strategy

It is the individuals' perspective that traditionally is the guidance counsellors' prime focus. This is not something the counsellors believe they should or want to change. However working inside the company premises the need for flexibility and sensitiveness for the demands of the workplace is important. Time is limited and it is important not to disturb production more than necessary and always in dialogue with the employer.

The work of counsellors should allow them to work both on company premises and "in office". Most guidance counsellors work with unemployed people or those who are in the educational system. This is something that often is hindering. The counsellors' day is filled with scheduled appointments and it is close to impossible for single counsellors to move towards guidance in the workplace on their own accord. To give such services this has to be a strategy or an aim for the whole organisation; whether giving advice and counselling is its sole purpose or if it is only a part of organisation activities.

To offer guidance in the workplace services, a change of attitude both in the organisations offering advice and guidance, but also in some cases of the guidance counsellor is needed. It is not always easy for guidance counsellors to take commercial or employer perspectives into account. Balancing the work to promote lifelong learning for individuals in employment and employer needs is a difficult task for those who are accustomed to working with individuals only; often with methods that are quite similar from one client to another. Trust has to be built not only with the individual receiving advice and guidance but also with the employer. However, once on the companies premises the counsellors taking part in the Guidance in the Workplace Project on most part found the work rewarding. They report that they have learned more about work life than when working "in office". That the guidance counsellor must be flexible was agreed on during the conference. They need to listen to the employer and adjust to their needs. Although adjusting to the employer is imperative, the guidance counsellors feel that having the individual employees' perspective is something that they do not want to lose. The guidance counsellors' goal is to promote lifelong learning in the wider sense – that is, beyond the employer's needs.

Flexible training with a strategy for counsellors

One reflection at the final conference was that it is important to provide updated training. Times are changing and the importance of lifelong learning is more evident now than before but so is the commercialisation of many services that used to be publically funded. The traditional roles of guidance counsellors need to be expanded and a project like Guidance in the Workplace play an important role. There is both a question of motivating guidance counsellors and of giving the appropriate training to enable them to meet employers and their employees. There is no single, universal, method or training. Methods and training are dependent on the guidance counsellors' organisation's strategies and on the size, type and business strategies of the companies they are to approach. It was agreed on that it is better for each country to have different models for training that coincide with the national structures, culture and historical background of both companies and organisations providing guidance. Most partners want to develop the training modules further. It was considered a good idea to create a "bank" of joint training modules to pick from and to access ideas from. These ideas can inspire others to make their own training modules to fit into their own context.

The formal training of or education for professional guidance counsellors is currently very different in the respective countries. Sweden has a special three year university course that all professional municipality counsellors must take (this does not apply to the staff giving advice and guidance in local employment agencies run by the state). The other countries have many different entrances to becoming a guidance counsellor. However, the partners all agreed on that there is a need for university courses that also take in the perspective of guidance in the workplace.

Flexible employers with a strategy

To be able to give services for those in employment *“you have to find an employer to tell you his needs”* (representative from the Slovenian chamber of commerce). No employer will let an external counsellor in, without having ensured that the whole scheme is beneficial for the company as a whole. This can prove tricky as *“some companies see the Guidance in the Workplace Project as competition”* (project partner). The competition is between the companies own HR-department and the external guidance. In those companies that have an HR-department, close co-operation is needed. In fact, one of the partners, Italy, thinks that in their country it is very difficult for an external counsellor to get in to the workplace and therefore they prefer to train the HR-staff instead – skipping the external counselling all together. This is however not the case in the other countries. In Slovenia for example they have turned to other external partners to try to open doors into companies and their HR-departments. The chamber of commerce is well renowned among most Slovenian companies. A letter of intent from the chamber proved very effective. This is one example of how initial trust can be created, between employers, their HR-departments and the counselling organisation.

However, no letter of intent, can open doors to companies if the employer cannot see the benefit from giving the employees guidance. There has to be an underlying strategy for guidance in the workplace on behalf of the company. The company might be in need of re-organisation, in need of better qualified staff or there might be another reason why guidance in the workplace is appropriate. The guidance counsellor must be prepared to discuss and understand these underlying strategies for the guidance to be successful from an employer perspective.

Flexible home organisation with a strategy

It is not only the companies that need to have a strategy and a vision for their work. The organisation providing the services, whether it be as professional guidance counsellors or other advice givers, require a strategy for their work that is aligned with such services. The French partner CIBC has described how they in the midst of the Guidance in the Workplace Project lost their public funding. Being flexible enough, guidance in the workplace turned out to be one of the new strategies for survival not only for the local office participating in the transnational project but for CIBC:s in the whole region. For other partners, the home organisations business strategy or overall aim proved not to be sufficient enough to allow guidance in the workplace to be a natural part of the organisation. These partners instead formed alliances with other organisations that could perform the services.

Another reason for teaming up with partners is to find *“door openers”*. The partners that had teamed up with other organisations for this reason described that such co-operation sometimes can be challenging. It is not always that decisions at on high levels of an organisation is understood or accepted at the level were the actual work is being done. One lesson learned is the need for good communication abilities in and flexibility of all involved parties.

Flexible national systems

At the final conference it was clearly shown that the five partners have different starting points, in terms of inherent strategies of their own organisations and their co-operating organisations, but also in terms of potential influence on national front. How national structures could be changed differ from country to country, depending on size and how the existing structures are built. No one structure is the same. It was suggested that new legislation may be needed in some countries to enable guidance in the workplace on a large scale. One hindering factor is that there are different budgets for unemployed people and for those employed. The fact that training and education is too expensive for employers to seek in some countries is also hindering. Why should an individual engage in guidance activities, when there is no chance of training or further education anyway? This is where either the employer or the state/region can step in.

The Romanian partners call for the need for the building of institutions throughout Romania and the need for building partnerships. As a small regional learning centre there is little they can do to make an impact on national system level. Their co-operating partner – the employment agency – has a better chance of doing so in their national network. The French partner would also like to see an institutional change. There is a need for a long term goal to incorporate guidance in the workplace in the national system for validation and accreditation of prior experience and learning. In Italy there is a need to create more awareness so that the system eventually can be influenced. This the Italian partner hopes can be done by their Guidance in the Workplace Project co-operating partners. In Sweden nearly all guidance counselling for those that are not unemployed is done by the municipalities (except guidance and counselling at universities for students). They form networks and so do the public organisations that offer guidance. It is mainly via these networks the system can be influenced.

In the process of changing practice and institutions, there is in future work perhaps less need for identifying tools for guidance in the workplace and more need for identifying the roles and functions for guidance counsellors. Is the role of the guidance counsellor to aid unemployed people and students only, or should the role be extended? Once the role is redefined, the training can be made appropriate for that role.

Did they do what they were supposed to do?

Did the national and transnational projects do what they set out to do? The question of impact has already been discussed above. But what about the aims and objectives? The overall aim of the Guidance in the Workplace Project was to, by increasing availability of advice and guidance to those in employment, also increase access to lifelong learning opportunities for individuals. There were three main objectives. The first and major aim was to further develop the career guidance available to those in employment in the three new partner countries. The second objective was to add value to the original work in Guidance Merger by transferring innovation between partner countries. The third objective was to add value to the project by transferring innovation between partners about how guidance counsellors can further their role by offering validation and the accreditation of prior learning within the workplace. The first two training events, which took place in Sweden and France, addressed the issues of validation and accreditation and the French system has been more carefully examined by the new partners at study visits.

How were the first and the second objective met? Alliances with co-operating partners have been made in three countries, after careful search for potential partners. The other partners considered themselves strong enough to deliver the services themselves all through the project. During the ongoing evaluation critical questions have been asked – are you on the right track? Have you found the right partners? Who else can assist you? What type of additional training do your guidance counsellors need? Will this project lead to sustainable development work or not? The partner's case studies show that all the partners have tackled the challenge to give guidance in the workplace. The case studies also inexplicitly show that the partners have differing possibilities to offer guidance and to influence national structures. None the less they have all developed and given guidance in the workplace services. The old partners, Italy and Sweden, have done so in a prior project and the partners from Romania, Slovenia, France and Sweden in the Guidance in the Workplace project. Training modules for guidance counsellors have been created. Partners have formed their own training and they have offered it to guidance counsellors and other advice givers. Furthermore shared models for training have been delivered so that others who would like to develop guidance in the workplace can use them. However it is not advisable that these models are seen as universal instructions. They can only serve as ideas and advice, which have to be carefully altered to fit into national context and strategies or the organisations set out to give the services.

Overall the prior evaluation reports, the case studies and the questionnaire show that the transnational project and the national projects have done what they set out to do. Naturally some things could have been done differently and better, they always can. The time frame is one such factor. Some partners would have preferred to start giving the actual services sooner. Building networks took too much time, even though this was also regarded important. The training of guidance counsellors too came late into the program. These are lessons learned to take in account in the next development work scheme for guidance in the workplace.

Concluding reflections

Transferring innovation from one partner country to another is not a matter of just showing what others have done or telling them what to do. Not if you want project results and methods to be further developed and lead to sustainable development work. To promote long term effects, to render a project work sustainable, there has to be more than just plain showing and telling. There are many important questions to be asked by any organisation embarking on the journey to provide guidance in the workplace services. The following first two questions are perhaps the most important. How does the development work fit into our business strategy or overall aim and what would be the best way to organise the work so that we make sure it does? We believe that careful investigation into the project owner's own organisation and any other organisations that cooperate to provide the services is needed. How do the strategies or overall aim for these organisations fit into the guidance in the workplace scheme? Then we can ask other questions like: Can we find support or door openers, to get into places of work, elsewhere? How will we train counsellors? What structures work with us and what work against us? How can we make this into a win – win situation for employee, employer and us?

Finally: We have seen how transfer of innovation can be made from a, with European measures, small regional learning centre (CFL), engaged in workplace guidance to an entire country, Slovenia. They are on route; well into further development work to make guidance in the workplace a national strategy using networks of guidance counsellors and co-operation with the chamber of commerce and a national trade union. Off course they had a good starting position with a national institute as project owners. We have also seen how this project have been a major input for changing business strategies for a organisation, the French partner, that once was publically financed and now has to fully support itself. Guidance in the workplace will also keep happening in Sweden, both at CFL and in other learning centres. In Romania and Italy there perhaps needs to be some more change of attitude from employers and change in national structures. Help from legislators may prove important; just as work that builds more transparent national systems could be.

As we see it, there are two different directions of dealing with national structures through legislation to improve possibilities for guidance for those in employment at their places of work. One direction is to make training and education more accessible for individuals, i.e. make it less expensive and easier for employers to take time off for learning. For example, in Sweden employees can take a leave of absence if they wish to continue their studies. This is regulated by law. Access to training and education for employees is likely to increase employees' motivation and demand for taking part in guidance activities. The other direction is to place demands on employers to provide training for employees. This can increase a demand from employers for guidance services. This is also likely to increase employees' interest in taking part in guidance activities at the work place.

Validation or accreditation of prior learning experiences is something that works very differently in each country. It is only France that has an extended system for this. Further work on building systems for this is needed in many countries. Once a fully transparent and accepted system for validation and accreditation of prior experience and learning is in place; from a societal perspective, the importance for public and private organisations to provide guidance in the workplace is likely to increase.

Guidance in the workplace can be seen as a tool for bringing lifelong learning in a societal perspective, in an employer perspective and from the individual's perspective together. However, the role of guidance counsellors simply is not likely to change overnight. For guidance counsellors to see people in employment as clients we feel there is need for both structural changes and perhaps changes in employer and employee attitudes. For these changes to happen, disseminating project results like this is important.

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