

**COHERENCE, CO-OPERATION AND QUALITY  
IN GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING - IEAVG**  
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The International Conference on educational and vocational guidance, organized by the University of Jyväskylä in co-operation with the Finnish Ministry of Education and the Finnish Ministry of Employment and the Economy, provided the opportunity to discuss on the planning, development and implementation of counselling services in the higher education and vocational training sectors.

The University of Jyväskylä, Centre of Excellence in adult education and founder of the National Education Research Department, hosted the conference and more than 400 practitioners coming from over 40 countries.

Teachers, researchers and psychologists met each other from 3 to 5 June in Jyväskylä to share good practices and case study concerning ICT application in web-based guidance services and the methodological approaches used with people into different age brackets.

During the conference, the role of the counsellor at the institutional level was analysed, underlining the need to officially recognize this professional profile in several countries such as Italy, Germany, Denmark and Ireland.

In this concern, a research project carried out by the University of Limerick (Ireland), aimed to ensure that postgraduates at the Faculty of Education and Professional Studies, were offered the opportunity to put into practice their skills through the creation of two guidance counsellor education programmes.

Over the three-day meeting, the possibility to optimize and make guidance services more efficient through networking actions involving both universities and institutions was discussed.

Moreover, the debate focused on several crucial themes such as guidance in higher education, career choice and career development, and the shortage of students' and workers' mobility within the EU countries.

In particular, during the special session dedicated to the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP), the latest initiatives undertaken at the EC level to support individual learning pathways were largely illustrated.

The elaboration of the EQF (European Qualifications Framework) and the ECVET (European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training) tools, intends to enhance and promote the individual lifelong geographical and professional mobility. Both disposals have the objective of fostering the transfer and recognition process of the learning outcomes and the acquired professional skills.

In this regard, the research project carried out by several Dutch professors concerning the relationship between the learning environment and the related career competencies, showed that career-directed guidance at school as well as a practice-based learning environment contribute to career skills development of students.

As regards the institutional collaboration field, the University of Joensuu (Finland) stressed the importance of promoting a greater cooperation among the different organisations involved in the sector, also through the use of digital technologies, with the aim to improve their work and performance in the educational and counselling service supply.

Since the development of high quality guidance provision is a priority for all citizens, the local system is called to coordinate and valorise guidance resources through an efficient networking model aimed to share information, facilitate common experiences and create new professional knowledge for organizations and practitioners.

These are the basis on which a research project realized by the Local Authority of the Province of Grosseto (Italy) relies. Such project, which involves most of the institutions and organizations engaged in the field of guidance at a local level, such as employment offices, schools, training agencies and public authorities, aims to develop a student-oriented guidance system based on a lifelong perspective and quality standards. In particular the project objective is to develop a useful methodology to define common priorities and cope emerging local problems. The participatory action research includes the creation of several work groups composed of researchers in charge of detecting the stakeholders' priorities, analyzing changes and looking for adequate solutions and strategies. The main tools used are interviews, narrative materials such as notes and diary of counselling, and a cooperative e-learning platform.

This approach intends to promote a strong interaction between theory and practice, through the development of contents and a new knowledge for researchers and guidance practitioners.

The role of networking in guidance development was deeply discussed during the intervention of Dr. Erno HHyvönen from the University of Jyväskylä, who presented four national projects aimed to provide information, advice and guidance services for adult education. The projects, funded by the ESF - European Social Fund in 2008, have the common objective of improving the quality of services through the cooperation among different guidance centres and the organization of workshops and regional meetings for the sharing of good practices and case study.

In this context, another important experience was the initiative launched by a Nordic network (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden) and funded by the NAAL (Norwegian Association for Adult Learning) on effectiveness and quality in guidance for adults. The study builds on recent international evaluations of guidance policy development and consists in the analysis of the existing Quality Assurance mechanisms in the Nordic Countries and in the description of the future challenges based on the findings. Such analysis phase will be followed by the drafting of recommendations for further steps on national level in the respective countries.

The use of ICT in guidance is the base on which the project *The Real Game 2.1 Digital Edition* has been developed. The project, realized by the National Life/Work Centre (Canada), includes the creation of an online game accessible 24/7, allowing students to become the main actors of simulations and role-playing and to choose and “live” the future they prefer.

XCASCAiD Ltd. (United Kingdom), leader company for supplying careers software within the UK, and Regione Friuli Venezia Giulia, realized the first version of S.OR.PRENDO, a CD ROM which contains detailed information on 350 career opportunities throughout the Italian region. The project, financed by the EU INTERREG programme, has represented an innovative and useful source of information for all unemployed citizens who were given the chance to better acknowledge the professional context of their geographical area.

Università degli Studi Marconi took part in the event by presenting the paper: *“Effective use of educational and vocational*

*guidance services in distance education: the USGM experience from Italy*". During the dedicated session, the USGM model based on pre, intra and post-academic guidance services as well as on the research application carried out in the field of artificial intelligence and virtual tutoring was illustrated.

Such a model was largely appreciated both for its theoretical basis and for the practical use of digital technologies in the supply of educational and professional guidance services.