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PANORAMA

Career development at work

A review of career guidance
to support people in employment



Cedefop

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to support people in employment

Cedefop Panorama series; 151

Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2008

The **European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training** (Cedefop) is the European Union's reference Centre for vocational education and training. We provide information on and analyses of vocational education and training systems, policies, research and practice. Cedefop was established in 1975 by Council Regulation (EEC) No 337/75.

Europe 123
GR-57001 Thessaloniki (Pylea)

Postal Address:
PO Box 22427
GR-55102 Thessaloniki

Tel. (30) 23 10 49 01 11
Fax (30) 23 10 49 00 20
E-mail: info@cedefop.europa.eu
Homepage: www.cedefop.europa.eu

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Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2008

ISBN 978-92-896-0519-9
ISSN 1562-6180

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Printed in Belgium

Foreword

The Lisbon agenda for growth and jobs requires that citizens are equipped to manage labour market changes more effectively, are given opportunities to develop their skills, and gain access to information, advice and guidance to handle their careers. If the shift to a knowledge economy is to be accompanied by greater social cohesion, a key question is how to empower adults to make appropriate and well-informed learning and career choices. Since the Resolution on Lifelong Guidance of the EU Council of Education Ministers (Council of the European Union, 2004), much has been achieved in the Member States in improving access to career guidance and quality of provision. However, as shown by international reviews, only a tiny proportion of the workforce in Europe has access to some form of guidance. To support lifelong learning and active participation in the labour market, career guidance services need to be further developed and offered to employed people.

What types of career guidance services are available to employed adults in the EU and who provides them? What are the main gaps and challenges in providing guidance for the employed? What lessons could be drawn from the success stories implemented in different national contexts? *Career development at work* provides a preliminary overview of guidance provision in the workplace that will need to be completed and updated in the years to come. The report does not intend to provide a comprehensive guide to services available, but rather a flavour of the types of career development opportunities that have been set up by the social partners, guidance providers, public employment services, national and European projects and multinational companies, in 11 European countries.

The provision of career guidance is a shared responsibility for the social partners, public authorities and individuals, and requires partnership building among stakeholders. On 25-26 June 2007, Cedefop held a conference on career guidance delivery for employed people, bringing together 117 participants from 26 countries, representing a broad range of stakeholders, such as policy-makers, social partners, guidance providers, researchers, as well as the European Commission's Directorates-General for Education and Culture, Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, and the European Parliament. The conference showed much innovative provision and called for increased synergies in areas such as quality assurance, evidence-based policy-making, financing, the contributions of validation of learning to guidance, and strategic partnerships. Much is still to be done to broaden access to guidance for employed adults.

In cooperation with key stakeholders at national and European level, Cedefop is committed to encourage further reflection and development of guidance and employment, through progress review, analysis of practices and mutual learning. By drawing attention to main trends and highlighting the most crucial challenges in this innovative and rapidly evolving field, this first record of practices aims to stimulate a debate about how best to deliver career development services for people in employment.

Aviana Bulgarelli, Director

Acknowledgements

This Cedefop report is the result of a team effort and reflects the contributions of experts and practitioners working on career development issues, who proposed examples of innovative and interesting practice. At Cedefop, Rocío Lardinois, was the project manager responsible for the overall supervision of the publication.

Cedefop would like to acknowledge the contribution of Charles Jackson of the National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling (NICEC) who drafted the report ⁽¹⁾ along with his colleagues Ruth Hawthorn, Lesley Haughton, Leigh Henderson and Jackie Sadler. Cedefop also thanks Wendy Hirsh and Tony Watts from NICEC for their helpful comments.

Special thanks go to Christine Nychas and Caroline White for their technical support in the preparation of this publication.

⁽¹⁾ The work was carried out under Cedefop's service contract No 2006-0011/RP/B/JMC/CGS/008/05.

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Executive summary

The research

This report presents the findings from a research study that set out to review the range of career guidance provision that supports workforce development across the EU-25 Member States and to identify innovative or ‘best practice’ provision. The report includes 35 case studies and these provide accounts of practice by employers, trade unions and the public sector as well as other intermediary organisations, such as outplacement consultancies, professional associations and industry sector bodies.

This research builds on the series of studies carried out by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the World Bank and the European Training Foundation which identified employed people as one of the groups in the population least likely to have access to guidance provision.

The need for career development support for people in work

More effective guidance will assist the development of a knowledge economy and benefit individuals, employers and society at large. Effective career development support is important not only for individuals but also for the organisations that employ them. For both of them it is part of a strategy of achieving resilience to handle change more effectively.

Governments also benefit from facilitating career development, both to support the development of a knowledge economy and to avoid the consequences of some people being excluded from having careers in any meaningful sense.

Employer provision

This review suggests that there are no clear processes for career development inside many organisations and that what provision there is, is often only focused on key talent groups such as graduates and managers. It is assumed that other employees will get help and advice from their line manager and informally. It is also assumed that normal training and job filling processes give them the access and information they need about job opportunities.

Effective career support by employers to their employees in the workplace meets both business and individual needs. It will only be sustainable if the mutual benefit is clear to both parties. Paying attention to career development is particularly important as the workforce becomes increasingly diverse: the performance of all employees matters to the company as well as to the individuals.

The role of intermediaries

Changing economic circumstances and new technology are changing the ways people look for work, both inside and outside organisations. This has given rise to an increasing range of intermediary organisations offering some forms of career guidance alongside their other activities. Trade unions, for example, have become major players and key lessons from the trade union case studies include:

- their reliance on volunteers for successful delivery of face-to-face based services;
- the importance of training for these volunteers;
- the need for coordination and support to underpin both the initial development of services and their evolution and maintenance (e.g. to recruit and train future volunteers, provide and update resources).

Trade union activity shows the importance of advice and guidance as a critical activity prior to engaging in learning or development. The perceived credibility and trust that trade union members have in their colleagues providing these services has also been an important factor in their success.

The growth of much private-sector provision has depended on the increased use of the Internet which is the first port of call for many individuals looking for information and advice on careers and employment issues, just as it is in many other areas. Its widespread use has resulted in the blurring of boundaries between career support and recruitment activities, with recruitment websites and the career section of company websites increasingly offering some hints and tips on job seeking, and sometimes other forms of self-help career support as well.

The Internet has also facilitated the growth of peer support through the development of virtual community websites. This is effectively an extension of social networking but also draws on the fact that people already working in a particular field are an excellent source of information. As labour markets become more complex, the need for highly specific information on career and recruitment is increasing. The role of virtual community websites and other forms of informal career support is likely to become more significant.

The major role of specialist consultancies and research organisations in developing services offered by others is also frequently overlooked. Short-term funding is often used for development work but continuing support is also needed if material is not to become obsolete and information out of date.

The role of public policy

Few public employment services (PESs) cater for employed adults to any significant extent but other publicly-funded careers services do offer services targeted at employed adults and employers. Employed people form only a small proportion of the clients of most PESs within the EU. However, both in France with the *bilan de compétences* provision and in the UK with Learndirect, two models of provision have been developed that have a substantial proportion of employed people among their clients. It is also clear that the AMS (Swedish National Labour Market Board) website has extensive reach. Many other initiatives, however, have been focused on the low-skilled and, in particular, on engaging them in learning. Recognition and accreditation of prior learning (APL) has been a significant issue for several of these projects.

Several case studies describe public sector initiatives with small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Many SMEs are unable or unwilling to fund effective career development support. They, and the community in which they are located, benefit from regional and local coordination and cooperation in developing and delivering support designed to meet specific local or sector needs.

Key messages

Three main conclusions from this research have important implications for the future development of policy and practice:

- the lack of an effective strategy for providing career development support to the majority of the employed workforce;
- the increasing role for intermediary organisations in the provision of career development support;
- the importance of individuals being able to acquire the skills necessary for successful career management.

Lack of understanding of the business and economic case for more effective career development support is also critical. The key message for employers is that helping their employees and managers use and develop the talents and skills of their workforce will attract and retain a more skilled and more highly-motivated workforce, and lead to their employees being better utilised and more productive.

This research has also shown how many of the issues challenging the development of more effective career support for employed people are common to all providers. Successful career development practice has been hindered by:

- lack of continuity in funding or lack of will and support;
- differences in terminology and use of language between career guidance professionals and HR professionals;
- lack of understanding of how internal labour markets operate inside organisations;
- many individuals lacking the specialist labour market knowledge and skills required for effective career management.

The major trend in guidance provision is the move towards self-help strategies for the provision of guidance services. It is clear that these technologies offer cost-effective ways to deliver career development support, especially to employed people.

As sources of information and advice proliferate, the challenge of evaluating the quality of the information and advice that is available increases. Many of the players who provide information and advice on the Internet have vested interests, and users of information need to recognise that this partiality may limit the usefulness of advice or information.

Key learning points that emerge from the research are:

- (a) partnership working is easiest when parties have clearly defined mutual interests;
- (b) market opportunities for intermediaries are dependent on them finding market niches in which to operate. There does not currently seem to be a market in economic terms of employed adults willing to pay for personalised career support;
- (c) marketing the benefits of career development support has been a significant activity and cost for some initiatives, but key to their success as many individuals are not aware that they need career development support or that it might benefit them;
- (d) service development depends on a range of specialist support from organisations not directly involved in providing services. These organisations provide specialist expertise on activities such as training, development of resources, branding and marketing of services, and setting professional standards.

This report makes it clear that much remains to be done to deliver the best career development support to people in employment. Governments and social partners need to explore ways of working together effectively. The case studies in this report describe much innovative provision. One challenge is to make more people aware of what can be achieved.

1. Introduction

This report presents the findings from a review of guidance initiatives for employed people conducted by the UK-based National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling (NICEC) for the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop). The study set out to examine the range of career guidance provision that supports workforce development across the EU-25 Member States and to identify innovative or ‘best practice’ provision. The focus is on how career development support (career guidance for workforce development) is provided to employed workers.

This research builds on the series of studies carried out by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the World Bank and the European Training Foundation which are summarised in the three key reviews (OECD, 2004; Cedefop, Sultana 2004; Watts and Fretwell, 2004). The Cedefop report points out that high quality information and career guidance supports three EU policy objectives: constructing a competitive, knowledge-based economy, advancing active employment and welfare policies and enhancing social inclusion. While the contribution of career guidance to public policy goals is increasingly widely acknowledged, the review identified employed people as one of the groups in the population least likely to have access to guidance provision.

There are two main reasons for paying attention to the career development issues of employed people: one is for people and businesses to realise their full potential, and the other is to enable people and businesses to manage change in the structure of employment opportunities. As well as making people aware of learning, work, civic and leisure opportunities, career guidance helps to build confidence and empower individuals.

In this introductory section, the role of career development and its importance for individuals, for employers and for governments is examined. Then the European economic context and employment trends are briefly considered. Finally, the approach to the study and the structure of the rest of the report is outlined.

1.1. The role of career development

The EU vision of being the foremost knowledge economy (the Lisbon agenda) by 2010 will depend on how people are prepared to enter the labour market, the opportunities they are given to develop their skills, and, particularly, how they obtain the information, advice and guidance necessary to develop and manage their careers. This is especially important if the transformation to a knowledge economy is to be accompanied by greater social cohesion.

Organisations need to realise that positive career development for their workforce is a way of helping to attract and retain the best people: by recognising and responding to the needs of individual employees they will get the best out of them. More effective guidance will assist the development of a knowledge economy and benefit individuals, employers and society at large. It will, however, require a cultural shift in management behaviour in organisations towards self-management (Hackman, 1986).

Understanding how to motivate employees, and knowledge workers in particular, is likely to be a critical factor for organisational success. Paying attention to the career development of individuals will be vital not only for skill development but also to help motivate superior performance at work by giving people a clearer sense of direction and purpose. This will mean that career professionals will need to think in new ways about how they:

- (a) organise and provide career support;
- (b) work effectively with partners from other professional groups;
- (c) use informal career support mechanisms;
- (d) equip managers and others to give career support more effectively.

At the same time, if the EU is to improve social inclusion, it needs to ensure that more employment opportunities are created for groups currently disadvantaged in the labour market, and that these groups are supported in their career development. As will be seen from the case studies, many of the initiatives that have been, or are being, put in place are focused on these groups.

1.2. The importance of career and career development

Career development has strong implications for individuals, employers and governments.

1.2.1. Individuals

Changes in the way work is structured and organised, together with the growth of the knowledge-based economy, will require a reconceptualisation of what a career means to people (Arnold and Jackson, 1997). For much of the 20th century, the term ‘career’ was used primarily to describe the occupational choice and work history of managers and professionals. It was often linked to ideas of progression up an organisational hierarchy. While many people continue to pursue this kind of organisational career, many others will be leading very different working lives. In the future it will be important to develop a more inclusive model that supports the learning and development of all those participating in the EU economy of the 21st century.

‘Career’ is a multifaceted concept. It can be about meaning, sense of purpose and direction. It also includes ideas of progression and development both at work and at a personal level. In this way, it embraces ideas about lifelong learning as well as skill development. It is also concerned with people’s futures – the skills they want to develop, what they want to achieve at work and as a person – as well as their future employability in a rapidly changing labour market. New career concepts, such as the portfolio career (Handy, 1989) – when someone has more than one job (paid or unpaid) – and the boundaryless career (Arthur, 1994) – pursuing a career across traditional boundaries, such as across organisations (i.e. not within a single organisation), or across functional or job boundaries – recognise that career has a subjective component: the sense that people make of their own career, their personal histories, and the skills, attitudes and beliefs that they have acquired. These concepts are also in part a response to, and recognition of, the fact that professionals and specialists – knowledge workers – may pursue their careers somewhat differently from other groups and are often more loyal to their professional community than to their current employer. For example, they may be more motivated by the intrinsic interest and challenge of their work, and may be more prepared to change employer for professional development. However, these changes apply equally to people who are not knowledge workers. The new, more inclusive, model of a career ‘recognises both the changed objective realities in which (all) careers are being developed and also the universality of people’s intense involvement with the subjective aspects of their career’ (Arnold and Jackson, 1997).

1.2.2. Employers

Effective career development support is important not only for individuals but also for the organisations that employ them. For both of them it is part of a strategy of achieving resilience to handle change more effectively. The business argument, as Hirsh and Jackson (2004) point out, is that careers are also:

- (a) how higher-level and business-specific skills and knowledge are acquired, through employees undertaking a sequence of work experiences which progressively improve those skills. Key writers on careers in organisations see careers and learning as inextricably linked (Schein, 1978; Hall, 1976);
- (b) how skills and knowledge are deployed and spread within organisations by employees moving from one job to another, in response to where they are needed. Such deployment and knowledge-sharing is critical to organisational flexibility;
- (c) career movement is how culture and values – the ‘glue’ of the organisation – are transmitted, and how personal networks are extended and strengthened. Corporate culture and networks are often key to rapid and effective action;
- (d) career development is a major tool for attracting, motivating and retaining good quality employees. Purcell, J. et al. (2003) found that providing career opportunities is one of 11 key practices which influence organisational performance.

Career skills are important for both employees and employers, along with the career education to acquire those skills (Tamkin and Hillage, 1999). Employees need career management skills to navigate the labour market. Employers who have more skilful employees can expect them to navigate their internal labour markets more effectively and for these employees to be more aware of the need to keep their skills relevant.

1.2.3. Governments

There is also an important role for governments in facilitating career development, not only to support the development of a knowledge economy but also to avoid the consequences of some people being excluded from having careers in any meaningful sense.

Recognising that everyone potentially has a career and that, as a consequence, everyone has career development needs, means that attention must be paid to how career development is best supported. The communiqué from the Third international symposium on career development and public policy held in Sydney in April 2006 identified that career development supports workforce development⁽²⁾ in three ways:

- (a) workforce preparation: how the career development of young people is supported prior to their entry into the labour market;
- (b) workforce adaptability and sustainability: how career development support is provided to employed workers;
- (c) workforce reintegration: how career development support is provided to adults as they move in and out of the labour market and between employers.

The communiqué from the symposium noted that ‘In many developed countries, a major current deficiency is adequate career development support for existing workers. There is an important role for public policy in encouraging and supporting employers in providing career development services for their employees and assuring access to career development services in the wider community’.

Understanding the role of public policy in providing career guidance to support existing workers requires a good appreciation of how employers provide career development support, who the main players are in the provision of career development support, recent developments in the delivery of career support, the changing pattern of employment opportunities and the increasingly specialised labour markets in which many careers are being pursued.

The communiqué provides a rationale for this report and for its focus on how career development support is provided to existing workers. Its recommendations, however, need to be understood in the context of economic and employment trends in the EU, the development of the knowledge economy and people’s changing expectations.

⁽²⁾ ‘Workforce development’ is a term with several possible meanings. This report focuses on the definition by Jacobs and Hawley (forthcoming); ‘the coordination of public and private sector policies and programs that provides individuals with the opportunity for a sustainable livelihood and helps organisations to achieve exemplary goals, consistent with the societal context’.

1.3. The development of the knowledge economy

Developing more effective career support for employed workers requires an understanding of the changing employment context. The latest economic forecasts from the European Commission (2006a) report stronger economic and employment growth in 2006, expected to continue in 2007 and 2008. They suggest that, in the EU as a whole, seven million new jobs will be created over the period 2006-2008 which will help increase the employment rate from 63.75 % in 2005 to 65.5 % in 2008, while at same time reducing unemployment from a peak of more than 9 % of the labour force in 2004 to 7.3 % in 2008. *Employment in Europe 2005* (European Commission, 2005) noted that economic activity rates were lower for younger and older workers and for the low-skilled, which partially explains why these groups are the focus of many government initiatives. At this time, it was estimated that just over half the inactive population was low-skilled, but with considerable variation between countries.

The EU has an overall employment rate ⁽³⁾ target of 70 % for 2010, with separate targets of 60 % for women and 50 % for older people (aged 55 plus). While some countries have already met some or all of these targets, others still have some way to go. This led to the decision to relaunch the Lisbon strategy in March 2005 with a focus on growth and employment, including a set of eight ‘employment guidelines’ that advocate a lifecycle approach to work.

It is widely recognised that the structure of European employment is being transformed both by technological change and by economic globalisation. As a result there has been a dramatic increase in international trade and investment flows over the past decade. Coupled with the demographic changes caused by the ageing population in many European countries, this has resulted in major challenges for some sectors of the economy. The view of several recent labour market reviews (e.g. Moynagh and Worsley, 2005; Dychtwald et al., 2006) is that one of the main challenges facing advanced economies is a shortage of highly skilled people. This is especially important in the light of the EU vision of becoming the foremost knowledge economy in the world (the Lisbon agenda) which is estimated to require, for instance, approximately 700 000 additional researchers across the EU ⁽⁴⁾. Effective deployment of scarce resources is likely to place a premium on effective career development and appropriate career support.

⁽³⁾ Employment rate is defined as the percentage of working age population in work.

⁽⁴⁾ European Commission (2003). COM(2003)226 final and SEC(2003)489 of 30.04.03. See also European Commission (2003). COM(2003)436 final which notes that these are orders of magnitude, the precise results depending on hypotheses retained. There were about 1.6 million researchers in Member States and acceding countries in 2000.

1.3.1. The scope and extent of the knowledge economy

The knowledge economy is usually defined, and most easily measured, by looking at the number of people employed in high to medium technology industry and business services (Eurostat, 2005). Health and education are also usually defined as part of the knowledge economy. Using the Eurostat definitions, Brinkley and Lee (2006) report that in 2005 just over 40 % of the labour force of the EU-15 Member States were employed in knowledge-based industries, with 35 % in knowledge-based services and just under 7 % in high to medium tech manufacturing. High tech manufacturing accounted for just over 1 % of total employment (see Table 1).

Table 1: Percentage of total EU-15 employment in knowledge industries in 2005

	% of total employment
Technology-based manufacturing	6.9
High-tech manufacturing	1.1
Medium-tech manufacturing	5.8
Market services	15.3
High-tech services	3.5
Financial services	3.2
Business/communications	8.6
Health, education, cultural	19.4
All technology and knowledge-based employment	41.5

Source: Brinkley and Lee, 2006.

Most important, Brinkley and Lee point out that most of the new jobs across the EU-15 have come from the expansion of knowledge-based industries. Employment in knowledge-based industries in the EU-15 increased by 24 % from 1995 to 2005, while in the rest of economy, employment increased by just under 6 %. Growth in knowledge-based industries exceeded that of the rest of the economy in all EU-15 countries; overall, the knowledge-based economy generated 2.5 times as many jobs as the rest of the economy between 1995 and 2005. Nevertheless, the developing knowledge economy is affecting all industries (Brinkley and Lee, 2006) and more people are becoming knowledge workers. This trend applies in all advanced economies. However, once again EU-15 figures hide considerable variation between countries. This reflects both the varying balance between industry sectors (e.g. manufacturing versus services) in different countries and also rates of restructuring within individual economies. Despite this employment growth, rates of R&D spending in Europe are not expected to hit the 3 % Lisbon target. Lack of investment is seen as limiting the economic benefits from the knowledge economy. Brinkley and Lee argue that, compared to the US, Europe has failed to invest sufficiently in R&D, ICT software and higher education.

1.3.2. Importance of knowledge workers and their career needs

While not all those working in sectors defined as part of the knowledge economy will be knowledge workers, and many knowledge workers may be employed in other sectors, there is little doubt that many of the new jobs being created in the European economy will be for knowledge workers; that is, people performing tasks demanding expertise and judgement. As Hirsh (2006) points out, knowledge workers are essential to business performance in many sectors, in three main ways: they are the main deliverers of the core service of the organisation, they develop core products and services, and/or they provide effective business support services to the organisation. Knowledge workers are seen as crucial to much business innovation (Roberts and Fusfield, 1988).

Employment in knowledge-based sectors of the economy is outpacing employment growth elsewhere. Communicating the complex changes taking place in the economy requires the availability of high-quality and specialised labour market information. Knowledge workers are looking to develop their careers in increasingly specialised and complex labour markets. Much of the information they will require to manage their careers is not routinely available. Accordingly, a challenge for workers wishing to enter or develop their careers in these labour markets is to acquire both the skills and the information necessary to manage their careers. This includes the ability to research and acquire detailed labour market knowledge. As Jackson (1996) pointed out, failure to understand how a specialised labour market operates can be a significant barrier to successful labour market participation, even to those with the formal qualifications required.

Labour market information also always lags behind changes in work, so new fields are the least well described. The tacit knowledge of people working in those areas becomes a critical resource for people wishing to move into one of these new areas of work. One example would be young people trying to get into what was, then, the new field of web design in the 1990s. They had to generate their own information via contacts and personal networking.

1.4. Impact of changing expectations on career assumptions

While the European workforce of the future will be older as a result of demographic changes, it will also contain more women and be better educated. It is also likely that migration both within the EU and from outside the EU will continue to have a significant impact. At the same time, there may be skill shortages and large numbers of low-skilled workers may continue to face difficulties in the labour market as new employment opportunities are created for skilled workers. The increasingly diverse workforce will result in much more diverse employment expectations and aspirations. In the future, these will affect the shape of careers as much as changes in business, technology and globalisation. There will be interaction between the demographic changes known to be taking place in the labour market – more older workers, greater female participation, increased migration – and changes in social expectations resulting from higher levels of education and changes in lifestyle. These include people entering the labour market later, women having children later and needing to combine work and family, and dual-career couples having to manage the demands of two careers.

As Hirsh and Jackson (2004) point out, rigid career assumptions about what kinds of people have access to what types of jobs at what ages will not be sustainable. There is likely to be pressure on employers to respond by developing more flexible career and employment opportunities. Employers would be rewarded by greater employee commitment and the ability to retain scarce skills. Flexible career management is about continuously adjusting the work that individuals undertake over time to meet changing business needs. This can include flexibility about the time and place of work (e.g. flexitime, opportunities to do some work from home), and also flexibility over mobility, the pace of career progression and offering a variety of career paths. This helps to meet employee expectations of achieving better work-life balance but also makes effective use of available technology to achieve more environmentally sustainable employment outcomes.

1.5. Objectives of the study

The aim of this review is to document the approaches taken to career guidance provision to support workforce development (taken here to mean guidance for people who are in employment) in the EU Member States. The research has two main objectives; examining the range of career advice and guidance provided to employed adults both inside and outside the workplace, as well as identifying innovative or best practice provision (5).

The main focus is to develop an understanding of the range of career guidance in the workplace. Examples of career guidance provided to employed adults outside the workplace are also considered, but omit guidance provision by PESs which is already well described in existing reports (see, for example, Cedefop, Sultana, 2004; Sultana and Watts, 2005). Examples of practice being put in place by a range of intermediary organisations, such as trade unions, outplacement and career coaching consultancies are also included. The recent evaluation report on the *Framework of actions for the lifelong development of competencies and qualifications* (ETUC/UNICE/UEAPME, 2006) also highlights initiatives in the EU Member States to inform, support and provide guidance. The impact of the increasingly diverse range of career support provided by these and other intermediary organisations should not be underestimated.

This study has attempted to present a balanced picture that gives a flavour of the range of provision available but, at the same time, seeks to identify best practice within and across sectors; however, it has been difficult to generate detailed case studies of practice in companies, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). In general, discussions with respondents have suggested that the broad approach adopted within companies to career development issues does not vary greatly between countries, although there is considerable variation between organisations. Whether this conclusion would be reframed by a more detailed study is unclear: there may be important cultural and other differences which influence the detailed nature of what is provided in different countries, but the resources available have not allowed any detailed exploration.

⁵) Cedefop, Sultana (2004) points out that the notion of best practice has normative connotations and that successful practice depends heavily on context.

As well as information about innovative provision for case studies from key informants, several existing case studies from previous research have also been included. Because several of these studies have been conducted in the UK, the country's perspectives are given some prominence in the first section of the report. Many of these examples from employers are, however, from multinational companies who tend to have a global approach to career development issues. Nevertheless, in the sections of the report where the role of intermediaries and publicly-funded provision are discussed, the sources of information are more diverse. The report also adopts a thematic approach to some issues, such as the role of trade unions in providing career guidance in the workplace and the development of e-guidance activities.

1.6. Structure of the report

The report starts with a review of the approaches being taken by employers on their own account (i.e. without any intervention from public policy). This is followed by a discussion of the approaches increasingly being taken by a range of intermediaries that work with individuals and/or employers (and sometimes both). The main intermediary organisations are trade unions and private providers of career guidance services (mainly providers of outplacement and career coaching services). The role of peer support and, in particular, the development of web-based virtual communities are discussed. Other types of organisation, such as recruitment consultancies, professional associations and sector bodies, may also provide some career development support alongside their mainstream activities and examples of initiatives being introduced are included.

The next section of the report reviews how publicly-funded services provide support to employed people and also their role in developing and supporting services provided by others. It includes examples of how PESs and other publicly-funded career guidance initiatives are working directly with employed people as well as examples of services being provided to employers.

The final section of the report summarises the main findings. Each section includes several case studies to illustrate the range and type of provision that exists. Some case studies are quite detailed because the examples themselves are a valuable source of information on practice. Key messages from the case studies are the fragility of much provision for employed workers and the uneven focus of the groups for whom services are provided.

2. Employer practice

This section reviews how employers approach the provision of career development opportunities. There is considerable variation between organisations in terms of the range and extent of such support; the factors that shape provision and also how practice in organisations has evolved in recent years are explored. This is important in understanding the range and purpose of the interventions that organisations typically put in place and also in understanding how the public sector and other parties, notably intermediaries such as trade unions, can develop services both in partnership with employers and to complement those that employers are putting in place. The models used in the analysis presented draw largely on existing research on UK-based companies, many of which are multinational (see Figure 1). The case studies included in this section demonstrate the relevance of these models to employers in other Member States. There are also other published sources of case studies. For example, Hirsh and Jackson (2004) in their review of how careers are managed in large companies include 11 case studies from the UK on aspects of career management practice; Bysshe (2006) also includes several employer case studies in his recent report for the UK Learning and Skills Council.

First, an overview of the range of current provision is presented. This is followed by a series of case studies from several countries that illustrate the range and diversity of current practice. The next two sections look at how the focus of career development provision varies and some of the differences between large and small employers. Some key messages about employer practice are summarised in Table 2, before going on to examine some of these key issues in greater detail. The final section summarises the chapter.

2.1. Overview of workplace guidance provision

For many employees, the formal provision of workplace guidance or career support is patchy at best. While some employers have put in place initiatives to encourage learning and development, far fewer have embedded processes to deliver career advice and support to significant proportions of their employees.

Human resource (HR) professionals in the UK who responded to the survey on Managing employee careers (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development – CIPD, 2003) reported that only a quarter of organisations had a strategy for career development for all staff and only a third felt that senior management was committed to career management activities. In reality, it seems fewer organisations have some provision of guidance than say they have a strategy. Strategies are often very general, more rhetoric than reality, e.g. ‘we develop the potential of our employees’. However, a range of provision that is made by employers has been identified.

Where there are initiatives or programmes of activity, these are usually focused on key groups of employees, such as graduates or people pursuing professional recognition (e.g. accountancy qualifications, chartered engineering status), or managers on fast-track development programmes. If anything, the focus on these ‘talent’ groups and talent management as an activity focusing on developing managers and leaders has increased. Some organisations are starting to stress the role of managers as coaches and mentors as well as leaders, while others are hiring external coaches to support these key employees. As a consequence, the divide between the ‘haves’ and the ‘have nots’ has sharpened in recent years.

For most other employees, the only formal process for discussing their career and development is likely to be the performance appraisal process. However, in practice, although most organisations now have a formal appraisal process, it can be weak (e.g. the extent of compliance inside an organisation is variable) and is often overloaded in terms of content, with a major focus on managing performance. As a result it is frequently difficult for individuals to address career issues adequately via the appraisal process, although this is not always true as Case study 3 illustrates.

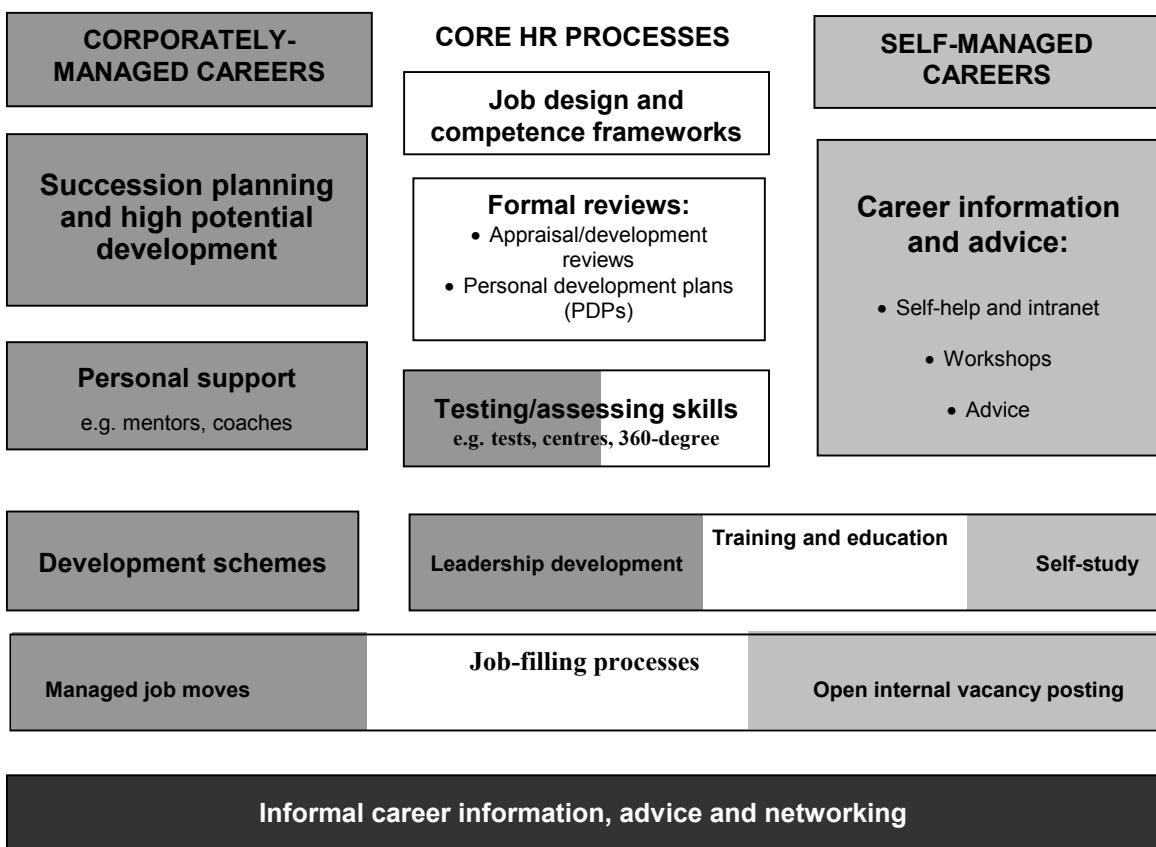
A few organisations have introduced a range of practices to support the self-management of careers. The practices themselves are relatively simple and straightforward (see Figure 2), with the most recent innovation being to use the company intranet as a source of information and advice. Sometimes this includes self-help assessment and learning activities to support career development, usually electronic versions of paper-based self-help materials.

Another recent initiative likely to have an impact on how career support is provided in some large organisations is the introduction of HR call centres, where HR services are located remotely using a shared services model. Lloyds TSB (a UK bank) for example, has introduced such a model where, among other things, employees can obtain a self-help career planning package via an HR call centre (Hirsh and Jackson, 2004).

These types of provision correspond to the categories identified by Hirsh (2003) who distinguishes three broad ways that career support is delivered inside organisations (see Figure 1):

- (a) corporately-managed career processes such as succession planning and high-potential development;
- (b) career support delivered through core HR processes such as appraisal;
- (c) support for self-managed careers, through such activities as the use of self-help and e-guidance materials.

Figure 1: Some processes used in career development



Source: Adapted from Hirsh, 2003.

Existing practice, therefore, usually assumes that most employees will take prime responsibility for managing their own careers with some support from their line manager. The only support that most companies provide is through the core HR processes, which exist in all but the smallest of businesses. These are primarily designed for performance management and to support the operation of an efficient internal labour market. In these circumstances, most employees have to get much of their career support via informal processes and personal networking.

One other related practice that many large organisations have introduced over the last decade is open internal job advertising: that is, the advertising of almost all job vacancies and promotion opportunities to existing employees. While this undoubtedly has benefits, without some career advice and guidance, it is often difficult for individuals to know which of these jobs they should be applying for. Open internal job advertising may also discourage developmental job moves where an individual is placed in a job primarily to gain experience or for development reasons. Developmental job moves, which can imply preferential treatment for a certain job applicant who might even be encouraged to apply for a particular job, are hard to implement in a competitive process where there will be a preference to appoint the best person, often someone who has already demonstrated their ability to do the job. The interest of the company is likely to come before the career development of the individual employee unless it is part of a developmental HR strategy.

Some organisations will provide additional support to help individuals manage their careers more effectively (see the right-hand shaded side of Figure 1) but there is little information available either on the extent of such provision or on the take-up of any initiatives by employees. The best provision would include the opportunity to get individual advice, either from a specialist or a trained volunteer, access to self-help materials (usually via an organisation's intranet) and additional support, such as access to a career workshop (for example, Case study 2).

While such initiatives are likely to benefit those employees who are aware of and make use of them, the difficulty in assessing their impact often means that they are vulnerable either to cuts or to becoming obsolete quite rapidly through lack of updating. Where initiatives have been put in place, they have often been initiated by individuals (e.g. an HR manager) with a commitment to improve the career support available inside their organisation. As a result, such initiatives, even in large organisations, can be vulnerable to personnel changes.

The left-hand side of Figure 1 details some of the activities that many large employers have in place for key groups in their workforce. These activities are primarily designed to ensure/reassure organisations that their supply of talent for senior/key positions is sufficient in terms of both quality and quantity. Where they do focus on development and career support, they typically use intensive and tailored interventions focused on individuals or small groups. As a result, they are usually resource-intensive, with high costs in both time and money.

Reality for most employees, therefore, is that they either have to rely on career support from their line managers, delivered formally through an appraisal process, or on informal support processes from a range of sources (their line manager, previous managers, work colleagues, informal mentors, friends and family, etc.). Either way, the result is often limited, partial or inadequate advice, although there is evidence that effective career advice can be delivered via such informal processes (Hirsh et al, 2001). One challenge is to make this informal advice more effective.

2.2. Case studies

The following case studies illustrate how some organisations support career development and how the model outlined above describes current practice. Some of the case studies focus only on one specific initiative that an organisation has introduced.

The first case study is from a medium-sized company in Germany.

Case study 1: Range of processes to address career development in a German company

This medium-sized German company, which operates internationally, has several processes in place to address career development. These include:

- (a) recruitment: jobs are advertised internally on the intranet. Psychological tests and interviews undertaken during the recruitment process may be administered by an external organisation (the company also works with outplacement companies.);
- (b) performance review: this is organised by the HR department for all employees and takes place in the first quarter of the year. It is based on an annual discussion between the employee and their line manager. Goal setting, performance, qualification and development actions and career perspectives are covered in the discussions, and documented on a form, which from 2007 will be common for the organisation globally. Work experience or work shadowing for employees may be arranged as a result of performance review. Internal and external leadership training programmes for individuals may be organised, based on the performance review or a psychological assessment (e.g. in Europe there is a three-module programme run over a period of 16 months with a group of 12 participants);
- (c) succession planning: this is a yearly process targeted at management and key positions to manage job moves within the company. HR and regional and global managers are involved in the process. Managers identify individuals with potential for career progression and recommend actions to develop these staff and also possible future career options for them. Outcomes arising from this process can include: promotion; development actions for further growth; work experience or work shadowing; job moves within the company; or work placements abroad. When a talented individual in a department, who the company would like to develop further, is identified, an assessment is undertaken. This might consist of 360 degree feedback ⁽⁶⁾, psychological tests and an interview, and would be administered by an external company;
- (d) coaching programmes: a coaching programme may be put in place for an individual following performance review or succession planning or after a psychological assessment. The company works with external coaches.

Source: NICEC.

⁽⁶⁾ 360 degree feedback is a method that gives employees the opportunity to receive performance feedback from supervisors, peers and colleagues. The purpose is to help individuals understand their strengths and weaknesses and to contribute insights into aspects of their work needing professional development.

The second case study describes how Nokia, the Finnish telecommunications company, has introduced career workshops open to all employees. This is one of several processes that the company uses to foster career development.

Case study 2: Career development at Nokia

In 2005 HR at Nokia developed and introduced a short career development workshop, which is open to all employees. The workshop covers what career development can mean to individuals, the career landscape at Nokia, understanding career drivers, and planning a 70/20/10 development approach to reach these career goals. (A 70/20/10 approach to development is one where 70 % of development occurs through projects/work experience, 20 % through coaching/mentoring and 10 % through training.) This was a global project. The workshop was developed centrally and the career development materials introduced and walked through during learning network calls with the HR community. Following this, the materials were made available to regional HR teams via the Nokia intranet. Regional HR teams were trained to teach and increase the effectiveness of the workshop.

Each workshop is run by the local HR team in the company region, adapting and customising the workshop content for their locality as necessary and inviting a locally respected employee to give their own ‘career story’ during the session to bring illustrate many of the points. Each region is expected to offer the workshop at least twice a year. As well as setting up train-the-trainer sessions to deliver the workshop, the central HR team also runs follow-up sessions to find out about local trainers’ experience of running the workshop and to share this experience within the HR community. Feedback on the workshops has been positive; a major outcome has been greater awareness of the importance of career development.

The workshop builds on the existing personal development plan (PDP), which is an integral part of the investing in people (IIP) performance management system. Nokia attaches a great deal of importance to every employee having a high-quality PDP, the writing of which is seen as a shared responsibility between a manager and the employee.

To measure progress in this area, Nokia benchmarks employees’ satisfaction with career development through its annual employee survey, which has questions specifically related to employee development. This enables the company to look at trends over time.

Source: http://www.nokia.com/link?cid=EDITORIAL_4387

While many appraisal processes focus on performance management, the third case study illustrates how one local government organisation in the UK is successfully using appraisal to foster learning and development.

Case study 3: Positive benefits from a developmental approach to appraisal

The Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames, a UK local government organisation, has an appraisal process that focuses on identifying the training and development needs of staff.

The Borough also conducts a biennial staff survey. In 2003, it found that only 61 % of respondents to the survey had had an appraisal in the last 12 months, while 77 % reported that management encouraged training. However, 84 % of those respondents who had an appraisal in the last 12 months reported that management encouraged them to train, compared to 72 % of those who had an appraisal in the last two years, and only 50 % of those who had not had an appraisal in the last two years.

Recognising the positive benefits from its appraisal process, there was an initiative to ensure that appraisals were carried out more regularly. In the 2005 survey, it was found that the number of survey respondents who had had an appraisal in the last 12 months had increased to 86 % and the proportion reporting that management encouraged training had increased to 84 %.

In contrast to many organisations which have seen declining levels of job satisfaction, the Royal Borough of Kingston has seen the proportion of survey respondents saying that they are satisfied or very satisfied overall with their current job increasing from 61 % in 2001 and 63 % in 2003 to 69 % in 2005.

Source: based on surveys by Kingston University for the Royal Borough of Kingston.

The next case study is of practice in Italy and is based on interviews carried out specifically for this report with six HR Directors from medium-large organisations. The case study aims to give an overview of practice in these organisations.

Case study 4: Career development in Italian companies

Generally speaking, most of the companies interviewed plan training and specific support for new employees as soon as they start their employment. Initial training needs are assessed to help the employee adapt to their role. In particular, the employee's general competences (managerial, communications, interpersonal relations) and the technical skills demanded by the specific requirements of their job role are identified along with the further requirements and priorities of the companies. In some cases the company organises a *bilan de compétences* (see Section 4.1) and assessment at the time employees enter the company.

Most of the companies interviewed also provide coaching activities to support and facilitate the integration of employees into their new roles in the company.

Career opportunities in most of these companies often depend on the employees' constructive attitude and autonomous initiatives. The assumption of responsibilities, leadership, flexibility, focus on business results, sharing business objectives, and commitment to developing business, are positive attributes that influence a company's decisions about career development and promotion opportunities.

Human resources (HR) career development policies are generally applied to all employees, though, in practice, the main benefits are usually reserved for top management. In some cases, new graduates with good potential are able to take advantage of these policies. The delivery of career development activities is usually the responsibility of the HR department, while the development of specific competences is the responsibility of area/department managers. The HR department is usually responsible for training and career development for all employee groups.

In Italy some companies are planning internal programmes for the development of their employees (e.g. L'Oréal), while others, even large ones (such as Doria) use external consultants. This appears to depend on the management structure and varies, even in some international contexts, depending on the company's owners.

The autonomy of line managers in managing human resources varies enormously. The distinctive element that emerges from this analysis is the company's strategy to identify talent promptly and then support these people in their development by monitoring their professional careers. Retention policies can be seen alongside wage and training policies as procedures for performance improvement. Responsibility for implementation is generally shared with top management.

Specific qualifications are not normally required to carry out activities associated with HR development, though, in some cases, a preferential job title is given.

In contrast to quality assurance procedures in external guidance services, systems for evaluation and monitoring of in-company HR activities do not exist. This is a critical point, since it is not possible to plan a quality system to guarantee continuous improvement of service.

Self-managed learning programmes are very rare inside these companies, although some have developed self-managed learning programmes for safety at work and foreign language training. The involvement of external resources in self-managed learning activities is non-existent. Effectiveness and efficiency measurement indicators for this were not found. One company (Fenice) used balanced score cards.

Six personnel directors of medium-large companies in the industrial (five) and public services sectors (one) were interviewed, using a questionnaire devised by the NICEC research team. The following companies were interviewed:

- (a) Fiat: Pomigliano (Naples), Italian company, industrial sector, car company;
- (b) Doria: Italian company, industrial sector, canning and food processing company;

- (c) Arin: Italian company, public services sector, rubbish collection company;
- (d) Ansaldo: Italian company, industrial sector, construction industry;
- (e) L'Oréal: foreign company, industrial sector, cosmetics industry.
- (f) Fenice S.P.A.: foreign company, industrial sector, company of the EDF (*Électricité de France*) group that provides environmental and energy services to industry. It is a European leader in outsourcing production unit environmental and energy activities and services.

Source: Daniela Pavoncello (Isfol, researcher) and Daniela De Gregorio (Stoà, project manager).

The next case study describes career development practice in Krka a medium-sized pharmaceutical company based in Slovenia.

Case study 5: Staff career development in Krka, Slovenia

Krka is one of the top generic pharmaceutical companies in Europe, selling its products in 70 countries. Products include prescription pharmaceuticals, self-medication, cosmetic and animal health products. The Company is penetrating western markets as well as nurturing its traditional ones, from Vladivostok to Dublin.

At the end of September 2006 the company had 5 596 employees. Knowledge, experience and motivation of employees are of vital importance for Krka's growth. The company plans new recruit training, integration into the workplace, plus personal and professional development. However, the emphasis is on developing and promoting management and specialist staff internally, though development support is available to all staff. This policy raises staff motivation and loyalty. Krka recognises the importance of creating a positive working environment that combines performance with satisfaction and good interpersonal relations. More than one third of employees are university graduates or have accomplished advanced or higher professional qualifications.

Krka's career development support includes:

- (a) information about jobs inside Krka on its intranet;
- (b) personal advice, guidance and counselling about career/job opportunities provided by HR advisors;
- (c) psychometric testing with personal feedback and guidance;
- (d) information about learning and development opportunities on Krka's intranet and printed materials in Krka's library, including books, videos, audio CDs, questionnaires, and information about jobs;
- (e) the career development element of Krka's appraisal interviews,
- (f) Krka's management leadership school.

Staff development is delivered by advisors from the company's human resources division, supported by line managers. External consultancies and specialists are employed to deliver training as necessary. Each HR advisor specialises in a certain division within Krka (e.g. marketing, sales, R&D, production). They work in teams when dealing with cross-division career changes. HR advisors conduct career development interviews and the annual education planning process. Line managers undertake the appraisal interviews. Other services (including information, psychometric testing, career counselling and guidance) are provided at the employee's initiative. Career development services can be provided at the initiative of an employee (20 %), their superior (40 %) or their HR advisor (40 %). HR advisors are professionally qualified in human resource management and have counselling and/or psychology qualifications.

The quality and results of career development services are assessed through an annual questionnaire, supported by a significant level of feedback from users. Beneficiary satisfaction is very high. In most cases, when looking for people for managerial positions, the company can find suitable employees with the required knowledge, skills and motivation within Krka.

Source: Simona Torkar-Flajnik, Krka.

In general, the case studies show the diversity of current practice across companies but also illustrate how some specific initiatives can result in positive outcomes. They also confirm the general applicability of the scheme (see Figure 1) for describing career development practice by employing organisations in different countries.

2.3. Focus of provision

Much employer-based career support is targeted at specific groups of employees, with the most intensive career support focused on what employers define as high-value or talent groups (e.g. graduates, managers, etc.) or is designed to address specific skill shortages.

2.3.1. Tackling inequality

A much smaller number of employers have introduced training and development programmes targeted at disadvantaged groups. Even when they have introduced such programmes, they have usually been concerned with identifying relatively small numbers of individuals for accelerated development to meet equal-opportunities objectives (i.e. getting more women/people from ethnic-minority backgrounds into management/senior positions). For example, the London Metropolitan Police Service developed a female and ethnic minority detective training programme (FemDTP) that takes female and ethnic-minority inspectors and chief inspectors (i.e. middle managers) working in other branches of the police service and puts them through a 12-month tailored development programme. On successful completion of the programme, participants are able to apply for jobs as detective inspectors or detective chief

inspectors in the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) (Hirsh and Jackson, 2004). Case study 22 is another example of an initiative that develops disadvantaged groups. While the impact of such schemes in numbers may be quite small, more organisations are recognising that their workforce needs to reflect the population of the communities in which they operate so that such initiatives can send important messages about an organisation.

2.3.2. Outplacement

Many large employers also routinely offer outplacement support when they make people redundant, whatever their skill level or position in the company. Once again, however, the level of such support is often related to the seniority of the people being made redundant, with more intensive and personalised forms of career support being offered to higher-ranking employees and less intensive (e.g. facilitation of self-help) being offered to other employees. The role of outplacement companies is discussed in more detail in Section 3.3.

2.3.3. Current or future focus

There is also frequent tension between whether development is focused on the individual's current job or their future career. The first of these has a simpler business case than the second. Much activity is currently job-focused rather than addressing longer-term development.

2.4. Large versus small employers

While the range and diversity of practice for career management in large organisations is fairly well documented, much less is known about practice in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). In very small organisations, it is probably safe to assume that most HR issues are handled quite informally, which is acceptable where it works but can severely disadvantage employees otherwise. This does not mean that SMEs are not professional or effective in this area. They often employ people who have worked for large employers and who will, as a result, have experience of HR practice in large companies even if they do not employ an HR professional. SMEs may also have the opportunity to be more flexible in job design (e.g. creating jobs around individuals). However, SMEs are almost certainly more diverse in how they handle career issues than larger employers. They are also frequently more concerned about losing people. If they develop people, there may not always be a job in the company for the resultant enhanced skills. However, such development may provide an opportunity to grow the business.

Practice in SMEs, even more so than in many larger organisations, will often be critically dependent on the initiative of one or two individuals. If the HR manager/director or managing director values learning and development, or recognises the importance of career support to employees in terms of meeting medium to long-term business objectives, some support may be provided. This is, in principle, no different from the department manager or head of a business unit/professional group in a larger business developing their own initiatives to provide career support to employees in their area of the business. The extent of such initiatives should not be underestimated. It often means that the central HR function of a large employer has only a partial picture of the range and diversity of career support available to employees in different parts of the organisation.

It should also be recognised that career development is typically more of an issue in some types of business, and in some areas of large companies, than others. For example, it is likely that employees in organisations comprising predominantly professional, technical or managerial groups are more likely to value career and professional development opportunities and to expect their career development needs to be addressed than employees in some other sectors.

Many initiatives by intermediary organisations are targeted at SMEs as are several publicly-funded initiatives (see Sections 3 and 4). The issue of how best to provide career development support to people working in SMEs is a significant challenge requiring cooperation between employers, social partners and governments and is discussed further in Section 5. Funding for career development support is also a challenge in many SMEs.

2.5. Key issues

In this section, several key issues that affect provision of career development support by employers are reviewed. Paying attention to career development is part of the response employers need to make to the changing expectations of employees (see Section 1.3) as well as to changing business and economic circumstances. These are some of the most significant messages emerging from this review of employer practice:

- (a) access to career advice and guidance in the workplace is limited for most employees, although some examples of good practice exist. Most support is targeted at key talent groups, while most other employees are expected to take responsibility for their own career development;
- (b) much career support is delivered informally by managers, work colleagues, family and friends;
- (c) intranet and telephone-based advice and information are being introduced by some large organisations. This is often linked to HR call centres;

- (d) provision in SMEs is more likely to be informal and dependent on the enthusiasm/commitment of individual managers. Even in large organisations, a committed manager may develop local initiatives in their department/part of the business. Where initiatives are critically dependent on a single individual, they are vulnerable to personnel changes;
- (e) lack of clarity and confusion about objectives may hinder the development of career support in many organisations. Having a framework that sets clear purposes for career development activity can be helpful in shaping the interventions necessary for effective career support;
- (f) failure to articulate a strong business case for career development activity can hinder the development of a coherent career development strategy;
- (g) few organisations take a proactive approach to the provision of career support ahead of career transitions and/or at key career stages;
- (h) there has been little formal evaluation of employer-provided career support.

2.5.1. Language and terminology

The first key issue that affects dialogue between people inside companies with responsibility for career development and career professionals (who mainly work in the public sector), is the different language and terminology used in discussing career issues. In particular, the terms ‘career guidance’ or ‘career advice’ are rarely used by HR professionals or line managers to describe the processes of career support used inside organisations. Instead, they are much more likely to use the terms ‘career management’ or ‘career development’ to describe these processes. ‘Corporately-managed career processes’ are often referred to as ‘talent management’ in the HR profession. These represent differences not just in the language used to describe processes but also in the specific meaning attached to these terms. Critical issues concern the focus of activities – whether they are for the benefit of both parties (individual and organisation) or only one (individual or organisation) – and also the independence of the activity.

‘Career guidance’ and ‘career advice’ are usually seen as both independent and primarily benefiting the individual, even though it may be recognised that there are societal benefits and possibly also benefits for employers from these activities. In contrast, career development at work and talent management in particular, are usually seen as benefiting both the individual and their employer. Research into the nature of effective career discussions at work (Hirsh et al., 2001) showed that effective career support was most often seen as impartial (i.e. independent) even though given by someone employed by the organisation.

It would be naïve to claim that career development processes are never used by employers to coerce employees into a particular course of action, but it is clear that such a strategy is likely to have only a short-term pay-off. Real career development has a longer-term payoff for individuals and the organisation through such outcomes as better relationships, improved skills, and more confident negotiation about the future. It is a strategy for eliciting commitment to the organisation, i.e. going the extra mile to achieve superior performance.

The issue for organisations and the people they employ is to create effective partnerships. In the literature on stakeholding, effective stakeholder engagement is about creating ‘win-win’ situations for organisations and their stakeholders (Partridge et al., 2005). Successful partnerships create value for both parties. Similarly, it can be argued that effective employee engagement requires companies to work in partnership with their employees and that this will result in benefits for both parties. In this context, it is clear that career development activities will only be effective and sustainable if they lead to benefits (i.e. create value) for both the individual and their employer. Activities that only benefit one party are unlikely to be sustainable in the longer term.

2.5.2. Lack of clarity of objectives and benefits

Linked to these issues is the lack of clarity about the objectives of career support to employees. For employers (both public and private sector), issues that concern them include:

- (a) who benefits: the individual or their employer? Career development can be seen as a perk for employees, but some employers fear it might encourage people to leave;
- (b) some employers may fear that if they develop high-quality services (similar to those for high fliers), they will be overwhelmed by demand and it will be very costly;
- (c) there is a risk of not reaching the right target audience, i.e. people who need to develop (e.g. employees who have reached a plateau in their career or who are facing a major job change); rather, services will be used primarily by people who are already managing their careers effectively.

Employers have also found it difficult to implement successfully low-cost self-help approaches to career support. This may partly be a result of not having a framework around which to structure career development activity (see below) and can easily result in a piecemeal set of initiatives that fail to meet either employee or the needs of the business.

Employees are also sometimes suspicious of employer-led initiatives in this area. They may pick up on scepticism about employers’ motives in providing career support (often echoing concerns from guidance professionals who predominantly work in the public sector). The key concern is about the independence of career advice and support provided by employers; there is suspicion that it might be partial, biased or otherwise incomplete and, as a consequence, that it is employer- rather than client-centred. Similarly, employers may be concerned that employees will only tell them what they think they want to hear. High levels of trust are needed before employees will be confident about revealing all their likes or dislikes, etc. There are misperceptions: on the employee side that career advice is ‘all about persuading me to take a job that I don’t really want to do’; and on the employer side that it is all about endless spending on career development and training unrelated to business needs and priorities, or raising unrealistic expectations among employees that will lead to frustration and/or even encourage people to leave. These tend to undermine commitment to the provision of career support and are long-standing issues. Hall (1986) noted tensions between the extent to which different types of career intervention provide information (e.g. about job opportunities,

employee strengths and weaknesses) to the employer or the employee, and also the extent to which they can be used to influence either the employee or the employer. Career support, particularly in employment settings, involves the exchange of information and power in any such exchange is not always equal.

Most employees will see through advice that is exclusively employer-centred and most employers realise that putting someone in a job they do not want is short-sighted. Research on effective career discussions (Hirsh et al, 2001) suggested that employees were often pleasantly surprised when senior managers took an employee-centred view. They concluded that there was a widespread recognition that effective career support is independent of a business agenda and focused on the employee's best interests. Understanding the business context, however, is critical to understanding the range of possible career opportunities and to the tactical implementation of career plans. Recognising there is a business agenda is an essential element of individual career planning⁽⁷⁾.

The issue of who benefits from career interventions inside organisations is illustrated by the example of the Nationwide Building Society (a UK mutually owned financial services organisation), which has quantified the economic benefit it receives. 'Nationwide tracks how well it is seen as delivering on its career promise, and how this indicator moves against employee satisfaction, commitment and retention. Three-quarters of Nationwide staff say they have the opportunity for personal development and growth compared with under a third in the companies against which they benchmark. Lower than average staff turnover for the financial sector is estimated to save over GBP 8 million a year' (Hirsh and Jackson, 2004, p. 15).

2.5.3. A scheme for structuring career development activity

Being clear about the underlying purposes of career development activities is also important for ensuring that a suitable range of career interventions are put in place. Hirsh et al (1995) suggest that there are five purposes, which apply equally to the individual and the organisation:

- (a) assessment: activities to provide the individual and organisation with the opportunity to learn about the individual's strengths, weaknesses, interests, etc.;
- (b) career options: activities to assist individuals' and their managers' understanding of current and future career and job options;
- (c) action planning: planning of specific, concrete, time-based learning activities by individuals and organisations;
- (d) skill development: activities to promote or deliver skill development;
- (e) vacancy filling: activities designed to manage the internal labour market in line with business needs and organisational culture.

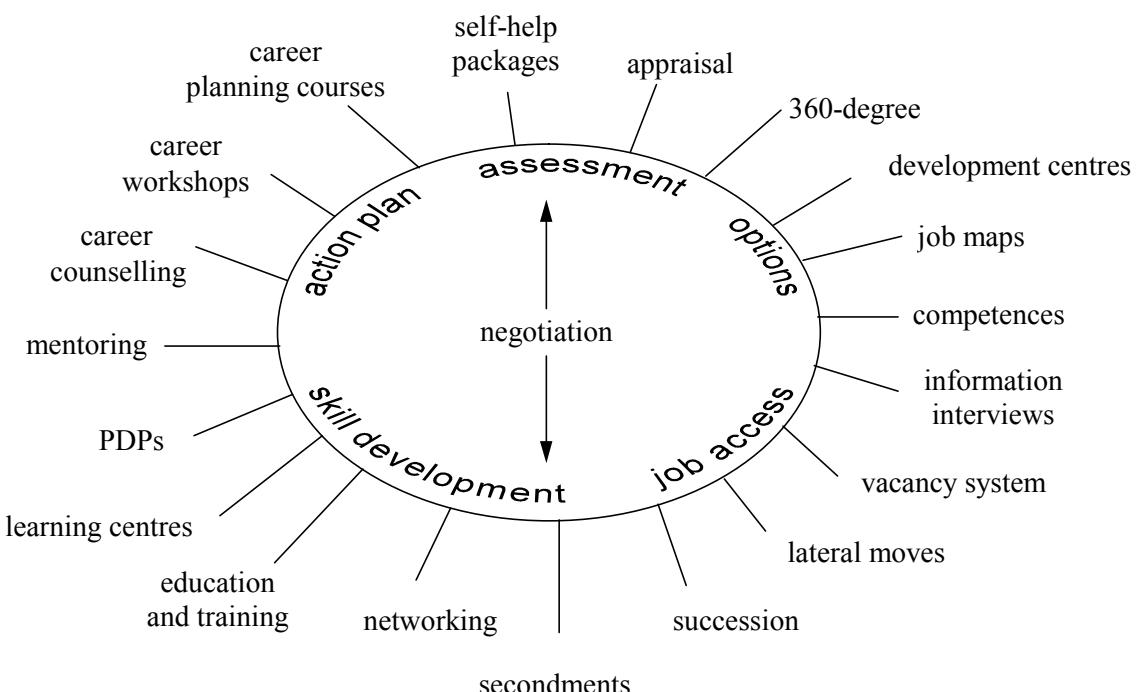
⁽⁷⁾ There are many similarities between the provision of career advice and guidance inside organisations and the provision in small states (Sultana, 2006). Issues that are similar include concerns about impartiality and familiarity. These may compromise confidentiality but may also offer certain benefits, such as the ability to tailor job and work opportunities to individuals which, as already noted, can happen more easily in SMEs.

Organisations can use a wide variety of processes to deliver these objectives (see Figure 2) ⁽⁸⁾. Although the activities themselves are designed to support career development, their successful implementation in a particular organisation may not be straightforward, since their effectiveness requires a favourable cultural context that supports meaningful negotiation between the individual and the employer. However, the methods for designing and structuring most career development activities are well understood (see, for example, Jackson, 1990; Arnold, 1997). The key issue is putting together a coherent set of interventions that address each of the five underlying objectives.

The range and extent of activities needed by small organisations is likely to be less than those required by large organisations. In small (and some large) organisations, some career development activities may have to be resourced by external suppliers (see Section 3.3), but others can be successfully handled informally if there is a sufficiently high level of trust and openness. In small organisations a well-chosen but simpler set of activities can be used to deliver against these five objectives.

Even large organisations will not need all these processes but they do need to ensure that there are activities to address each of these objectives.

Figure 2: The functions of career development processes



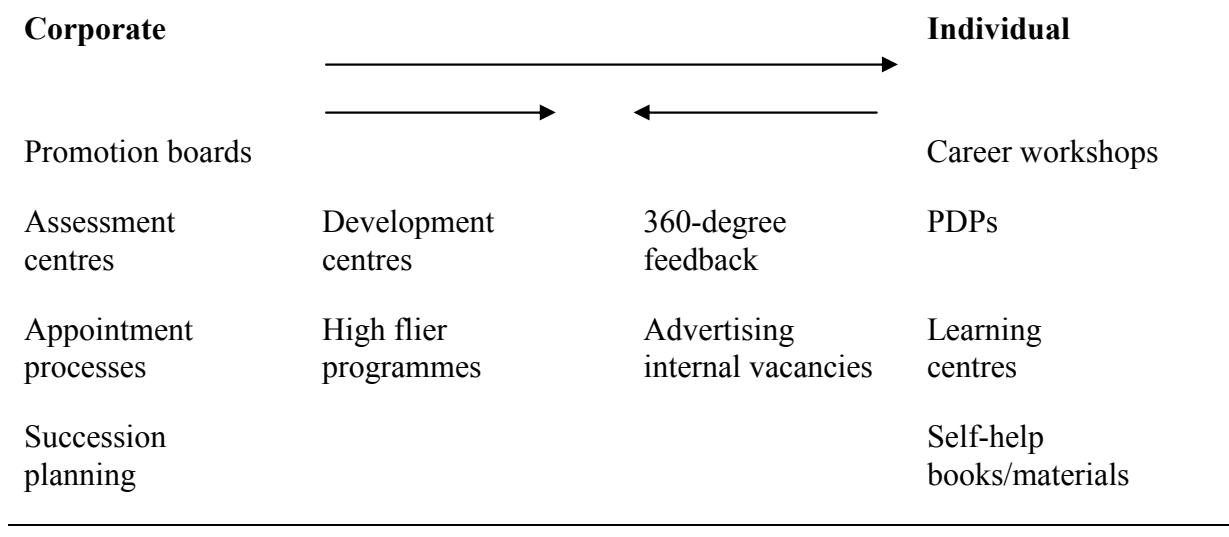
Source: Hirsh and Jackson, 1996.

⁸⁾ Another framework is the Canadian blueprint for life/work designs (www.blueprint4life.ca/blueprint/home.cfm/lang/1) which provides a common framework of client needs as well as criteria for assessing the effectiveness of interventions and recording client progress. Such a framework shows the strong links between career development and the learning and development agenda within an organisation.

2.5.4. Positioning

Employer interest in the provision of career support also appears to change with the economy, the success or failure of an individual business, and demand for labour in specialist labour markets. When a business is successful, or is in a strong economy, or faces a competitive labour market, there is likely to be more interest in providing career support and development initiatives as part of a broader HR strategy for attracting and retaining employees. In a recession, or when an organisation is trying to cope with a difficult trading or business environment affecting a particular sector, such initiatives may seem a luxury, especially if an employer is obliged to freeze recruitment or even make people redundant. Only a few employers realise that in such circumstances a proactive approach to career development can reap dividends by helping to ensure that key talent at all levels in an organisation is retained and developed. For example, in the early 1990s several employers in the UK had experimented with initiatives to support self-managed careers. In the ensuing recession, many backtracked, and messages such as ‘There are no careers any more’ became commonplace. Hirsh and Jackson (1996) documented the repositioning that took place and identified a best practice scheme that emphasised shared ownership (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: The repositioning of career development activities



Source: Hirsh and Jackson, 1996.

Traditional career management processes (the left-hand side of Figure 3) had mainly been designed to generate information about people for the organisation to use. They aimed to assess people for jobs, identify talented people and reassure employers about numbers and quality of people available. The new processes designed to support self-managed careers (the right-hand side of Figure 3) had tended to provide information to people directly, but often provided no information to the organisation unless the individual decided to share it. As Figure 3 illustrates, a degree of convergence took place with changes in key elements of the process. For example:

- (a) succession planning became a more open process (recognising that employers can no longer force people to take jobs);
- (b) development centres replaced assessment centres for some internal promotions. Newer processes, such as personal development plans (PDPs) and 360-degree feedback, were introduced to give more systematic feedback on performance;
- (c) advertising internal vacancies became the norm for most internal jobs (but not all). This involves the exchange of information, with the organisation providing information about job opportunities by advertising them, but individuals also providing information to the organisation by whether or not they apply for particular jobs and thereby signalling interest and career intentions;
- (d) competence frameworks provided a bridge between corporate needs and individual development through making clear the skills and experience needed. This enabled an individual to focus their own development to meet the organisation's requirements.

Ironically, some employers have introduced more internal career support following major redundancy programmes. Often this has been as a result of using outplacement services to support redundant employees and then realising that there is a need and a benefit in offering similar support to their remaining employees.

Several research studies (e.g. Purcell et al, 2003; Guest et al, 2000) have suggested that a range of HR policies and practices, including training and career development opportunities, are required to deliver the levels of employee engagement that bring about superior performance at work. These studies underscore the need for organisations to take a strategic approach to career development. The implication is that training and career development contribute to individual motivation, and also that effective implementation of HR policies influences employee attitudes and behaviour. Other research (Robinson et al., 2004) has argued that a key precursor of employee engagement is feeling valued and involved. Paying attention to the career development issues of employees is an important way for employers to demonstrate that they value their employees.

2.5.5. When is career support needed?

Focused career support for key talent groups can be considered as part of an overall people-management strategy. As such, it is more likely to be delivered in a proactive manner ahead of major career transitions or at certain career stages (e.g. after entry on a graduate training programme).

There is often less thought given to when other employees need career support. At worst, provision is only reactive i.e. when someone has a major career problem, rather than proactive and educational in its rationale. Best practice aims to get people to think about career issues ahead of time. This is not to say that people should not be given career support when they have a major career issue but rather to emphasise that employers would almost always benefit from giving some thought as to how best to facilitate a more proactive approach to careers being pursued by employees. This is strongly linked to the concept of employability (ensuring one will be employable in the future) and equipping people with the skills they need to manage their careers effectively (Kanter, 1989; Kidd and Killeen, 1992; Jackson, 1996).

2.5.6. Who gives career support?

For key talent groups, career support is usually coordinated by dedicated HR specialists, by heads of a business function or, perhaps, by designated professional mentors. Sometimes additional specialist advice and support is delivered by external career coaches or occupational psychologists. Such support may be provided as a follow-up to participation in a development centre or training programme, for example.

Mentoring and coaching are terms that are sometimes used interchangeably. Mentoring can be either informal (sometimes called ‘classic’ mentoring) or formal (sometimes called ‘assigned’ mentoring). Classic mentoring is a voluntary activity and involves a relationship between an older person and a younger one that has both career and psychosocial functions. Career functions might include: sponsorship, coaching, protection, exposure, and challenging work. Psychosocial functions include: role modelling, counselling, acceptance and confirmation, and friendship. Many organisations have introduced formal mentoring programmes where selected employees are allocated mentors, while others have tried to encourage informal mentoring. Sometimes formal mentoring programmes have been introduced to address equal opportunity concerns that some groups might be excluded from informal mentoring opportunities. Other organisations have introduced peer mentoring, for example, where new employees are ‘mentored’ by an employee who joined the company a year earlier. Coaching is primarily designed to focus on skill development and behaviour change to deliver improved performance. Much coaching aims to improve the performance and leadership skills of managers. Most coaches are brought in from outside an organisation, although some employers are starting to emphasise the coaching role of managers in relation to the employees that work for them and contrast this to other roles that managers have as leaders, managers and mentors. Some careers professionals have labelled the work they do as ‘career coaching’ or as ‘career/life coaching’. This may reflect an approach that emphasises the importance of career management skills or simply be a rebranding of their work.

For most other employees, it tends to be assumed that the individual's line manager is capable of delivering career support. This view is supported by research evidence (MORI, 2005; Felstead et al. 2005) which has found that line managers take a major role in providing both career and other forms of support, and that people cite their line manager as the person they are most likely to turn to for careers advice. In reality, however, much career support is also provided to employees via informal routes. Few organisations have yet developed methods to equip people to give this kind of support, although short training interventions have been developed ⁽⁹⁾. Hirsh et al. (2001) in their research on the nature of discussions about career development found that the key to an effective career discussion was a high level of trust between the participants, combined with challenge and information-giving. Effective discussions gave employees a better sense of direction, increased self-awareness and more confidence. They also led to concrete actions. A later study (Hirsh et al., 2004) interviewed employees who said they had at some time had a manager who 'developed' them. Managers who were effective developers created a climate of openness within their teams and encouraged informal discussions about work issues. These managers were reported as being close to employees and their work, and giving them focused coaching and access to work experiences.

Another study (Winter and Jackson, 2004) asked over 700 high-performing employees in a small sample of large (mostly global) organisations to comment on the conversations they had at work which had impact on them. It found that they were not always getting the types of conversations they most needed. About half of the conversations having the greatest impact were performance-related, and about half of these took place in appraisals. By contrast, only about a quarter of high-impact conversations were development-related, and less than a quarter of these took place in appraisals. The lack of development conversations was a major source of dissatisfaction, which also correlated with intention to leave. The big conversation gap in relation to development was about career development rather than about skills and training for the current job. Issues related to work-life balance were not being effectively addressed. Finally, 40 % of respondents had an issue about work which they wanted to discuss but were not doing so. These respondents were nearly three times more likely than other respondents to be planning to leave the organisation in the next twelve months. The study concluded that good dialogue rests on trust and can, in turn, lead to engagement that improves performance. These series of studies all indicate the importance of informal career support to employees and should encourage other employers to develop interventions to improve the quality of this type of support. New roles concerned with the provision of career advice and guidance are also emerging in some organisations, for example with the delivery of career advice and support via a company intranet or from an HR call centre. This raises important issues about how best to identify and train people for these roles.

⁽⁹⁾ One example is the toolkit available on the CIPD website:
<http://www.cipd.co.uk/subjects/lrnanddev/careermand/tools.htm>

2.5.7. Quality standards and evaluating of effectiveness

Few organisations employ professionally qualified career counsellors, although in the UK a few have had their internal provision accredited by the matrix quality standard (see Case study 6).

As the range of provision increases, issues of how to train people for career support roles are emerging. Attempts to address this include the professional standards of the Association of Career Professionals International (ACPI) and the Institute of Career Certification International (ICCI) career certification (see Section 3.3). Better training will be required but whether formal accreditation and clearer professional standards will be the best way forward is unclear. It could be argued that it might stifle innovation and slow down the introduction of more varied forms of career support; on the other hand, it could provide a stronger professional base for such development, particularly if it includes substantial attention to competence in developing support networks and systems and in direct service delivery.

There is also little formal evaluation of career support/interventions in organisations. A few small-scale studies have been conducted, but most go little further than measuring employees' satisfaction with the support they have received. This is not altogether surprising. Most organisations accept that there is a strong business case for supporting the career development of their key talent groups. They may also feel that there is already sufficient evidence for the effectiveness of career interventions in other settings (e.g. education) to justify their use more generally with employees.

Case study 6: The UK matrix standard

The matrix standard is a UK quality framework for delivering information, advice or guidance on learning and work. It was launched in 2002, replacing the earlier national quality standards for learning and work ⁽¹⁰⁾. In December 2006 over 1 600 UK organisations were accredited to the standard, a mixture of agencies that provide guidance to clients, and of employers providing guidance to their own staff. The former included careers services (publicly- and privately-funded), educational institutions in the FE and HE sectors, training agencies, voluntary organisations (national, as well as ones serving local community groups) and membership bodies such as sector skills councils and trade unions. End-users include those in employment as well as those seeking training or work. Employers that have achieved the matrix standard include large public organisations (such as public health providers, prisons, local authorities) and private companies both large and small.

⁽¹⁰⁾ These had been introduced in 1997 to ensure that the information, advice and guidance services funded by the Government were of a high quality. The matrix standard offered greater flexibility than the original standards and could be used in a wider range of organisations (Henderson, 2006).

The matrix standard consists of eight elements, focused on service delivery and service management. For each there are criteria which strike a balance between being open enough to apply to the full range of organisations but precise enough to establish the required standard:

(a) delivery:

- (i) people are made aware of the service and how to engage with it;
- (ii) people's use of the service is defined and understood;
- (iii) people are provided with access to information and support in using it;
- (iv) people are supported in exploring options and making choices.

(b) management:

- (i) service delivery is planned and maintained;
- (ii) staff competence and support given are sufficient to deliver the service;
- (iii) feedback on the quality of the service is obtained;
- (iv) continuous quality improvement is ensured through monitoring, evaluation and action.

Progress towards achieving the standard is described as the matrix 'journey' and consists of eight stages that involve review of the organisation's own practices, assessment, and then continuous quality improvement. After three years, accredited organisations are offered an accreditation review, which they must pass to be entitled to continue to use the quality mark.

Three examples of organisations that have been awarded the matrix standard are described below.

Rolls Royce was the first manufacturing company to achieve accreditation, in 2002, for services to its own staff. Its resource centres plus employ 14 permanent staff (managers, coordinators and advisers with a HR background), and also contract with two large consultancies to provide a pool of around 90 consultants to deal with fluctuations in demand and requests for training or specialist careers support. The centres were originally set up to help staff facing redundancy (at a time when the aerospace industry as a whole was in difficulties). Business improved in 2003-04 and the company began to focus on recruitment. Resource centre services are now focused on filling vacancies from within the organisation and developing the talent of existing employees. By the time of the matrix accreditation review in 2005, the structure and purpose of the service had changed radically but the standards and the process of the 'matrix journey' helped ensure that the new role was provided at the approved standard (¹¹).

Penna plc, a company offering an outplacement service, was accredited in 2003. A regional manager commented that the most positive impact of the matrix journey was its contribution to 'Penna's culture of continuous improvement at a time when the outplacement market has never been tougher. The process has helped the organisation to think differently about client feedback,

¹¹) http://www.matrixstandard.com/about/casestudy_details.php?id=812

and how it can be used as a valuable resource to inform future planning and strategy. The organisation already had manual systems in place to gather client views from across all offices nationally, but with the help of their matrix adviser they have introduced a more effective e-based mechanism to share good practice and translate client feedback into intelligence to improve the service' (¹²).

Each year matrix makes excellence awards to particularly successful organisations that have achieved accreditation. In 2006 winners included a trade union organisation, Unionlearn, in the northwest of England (see Case study 7). This is one of six regional centres that among other things support affiliate unions and their union learning representatives (ULRs). It aims to raise demand for learning, especially among workers with low skills levels. In 2002 it achieved accreditation for both its internal guidance services (to its own staff) and its external services (to union members). In 2005 it underwent an accreditation review and retained the matrix quality mark, and in 2006 this was followed by an excellence award. The regional learning centres coordinator identified good communication as a factor in their success and said that using the matrix standard had encouraged them to listen to members and project workers, and act on feedback. This included seeking feedback on what would help project workers encourage members to engage in learning. As a result they have introduced training and qualifications in careers work (up to national vocational qualification (NVQ) level 4). 'Each ULR now has their own personal development plan, and one-to-one support backed up with an electronic system which acts as a central database for tracking the progress of each ULR in their development, and for flagging up courses attended, monitoring learning needs and logging their feedback about the service' (¹³).

Source: case studies drawn from information on the matrix website (<http://www.matrixstandard.com>)

2.6. Summary

A core business reason for paying attention to career development issues is to manage an uncertain future more effectively. Being proactive and thinking ahead of time is part of a strategy for achieving resilience in the face of uncertainty. It applies as much to business strategy as to individuals. It is also part of the response to a more diverse workforce and a recognition that the performance of all employees matters. However, it is apparent that there are often no clear processes for career development inside many organisations. It is assumed that employees will get help and advice from managers and informally. It is also assumed that normal training and job filling processes give them the access and information they need about job opportunities.

(¹²) http://www.matrixstandard.com/about/casestudy_details.php?id=730

(¹³) http://www.matrixstandard.com/about/casestudy_details.php?id=812

This review suggests that employers need to recognise that if they do not provide career support to their employees, their employees will increasingly be able to look for it elsewhere. In a more competitive labour market, employers also run the real risk that valuable employees will be actively targeted and may seek alternative career opportunities, especially if they do not feel their present employer is concerned about their future career.

Effective career support by employers to their employees in the workplace is about meeting both business and individual needs. It will only be sustainable if it is seen to benefit both parties. Nevertheless, it is apparent that career support is also provided increasingly to employed people by intermediary organisations. Some initiatives enhance or complement employer provision, while others compete with it to varying degrees. These new and developing forms of provision will have a major impact not only on employed people but also on other groups, such as young people entering the labour market for the first time, and people not in employment but looking for work. The role of these intermediary organisations in the provision of career support is explored in the next section of the report.

3. The role of intermediaries

Career development support in the workplace may be provided by the employer, a PES or a publicly-funded careers service. Employers purchase services both from external providers and from a large number of types of intermediary organisation that also provide support. Some do this directly by offering services to individuals and others still work primarily with or for employers. In niche labour markets, such as acting and sport, agents are employed to negotiate contracts on behalf of their clients but frequently agents also advise clients how best to pursue their careers. This is one example of how the boundaries between different activities can be blurred.

Changing economic circumstances and new technology are transforming the ways people look for work, both inside and outside organisations. This has given rise to an increasing range of intermediary organisations offering some form of career guidance alongside their other activities. These include:

- (a) trade unions,
- (b) other social partners, such as chambers of commerce,
- (c) outplacement/coaching consultancies,
- (d) self-help and peer support,
- (e) professional bodies/associations and industry sector bodies,
- (f) recruitment consultancies, including specialist agencies increasingly targeting particular sectors or groups within the workforce.

While much of this activity is ICT-based (e.g. using the Internet to provide access to self-assessment tools or using e-mails to answer career questions), other initiatives are delivered face-to-face either to individuals or groups (e.g. via workshops).

Some of these organisations provide career support as an ancillary activity alongside recruitment advice or recruitment advertising; some do this on an international basis. As specialised labour market knowledge becomes more important, there is an increasing role not only for specialist information providers but also for other types of organisation, such as professional bodies and associations.

The range of case studies presented in this chapter is extremely varied, to make clear the very diverse range of potential sources of career development support. Many of the case studies do not describe provision that can be considered as mainstream in any way, as much of this provision is not designed for general application. On the contrary, there seems to be a growing market for tailored sources of information and support.

Many issues that affect the delivery of career guidance inside organisations can also affect the delivery of support from intermediaries (e.g. independence, quality). This section reviews how the different types of intermediary organisations identified are delivering career development support. There are also professional practice issues that arise in career support provided by intermediary organisations: these will be discussed in more detail in the final sections of the report.

3.1. Trade unions

Trade unions as a social partner have a major role in employment policy within the EU and hence in the provision of career guidance. Several case studies of trade union-led initiatives are presented, many funded directly or indirectly by the EU and/or by national governments. First, the trade unions' role in workplace learning and guidance activities are explored.

3.1.1. Why it is important for trade unions to have a role

Learning, training and skills development are an important commodity for collective bargaining. Unions can work with employers to tackle their joint priorities of addressing national and regional skills shortages, and skill development and training needs, thus improving productivity. They can do this in several ways, for example through negotiations with employers offering more by way of training (an extension of collective bargaining to include development). They can act directly to offer advice which may be more purely in the interests of the employee (the employee advocate at individual and local level) and encourage employees to take up more learning opportunities than they would otherwise through being a strong advocate of lifelong learning in the workplace (a more strategic and cultural role).

The case studies suggest that a bottom-up approach, involving trade unions in negotiating and cooperating with employers, government, other social partners, and other agencies, may be more effective for:

- (a) developing a culture of lifelong learning in the workplace;
- (b) improving access and overcoming barriers to learning and training, to competence and qualifications, to guidance, and to progression at work, particularly for traditionally excluded or disadvantaged groups in the workforce (e.g. part-time and low-paid workers, migrants, ethnic minorities, women, older workers);
- (c) providing outreach services to those who cannot or will not use conventional services or disclose learning or training needs to managers;
- (d) increasing individual confidence, motivation and self-esteem, raising awareness of opportunities, discovering potential and ability to articulate needs and aspirations;
- (e) assisting workers to deal with change, sectoral and organisational restructuring, redundancy, unemployment or retirement, and for developing a concept of career as well as transferable skills to increase employability;
- (f) promoting the use of ICT-based learning and guidance;
- (g) brokering and setting up flexible workplace learning opportunities;
- (h) attracting new members to the trade union movement, including young people.

The role of trade union umbrella organisations with affiliated unions has also been important in initiating, coordinating and negotiating funding to develop this area of work. This is an issue to which will be discussed further in Section 5.

3.1.2. Issues affecting trade union involvement of in learning and skills and in career guidance

It has not been easy to locate and communicate with contacts in trade unions that have an overview of the role of unions in each EU country. In most countries, it appears that unions' direct involvement in delivering guidance in the workplace is limited, though unions may be represented on committees and have some influence on public policy in this field.

Factors which influence the degree of involvement include:

- (a) government policy and legislation:
 - (i) role of social partners in policy making and in the development of occupational standards, competences, qualifications and training programmes;
 - (ii) location of the operational aspects of the welfare insurance/benefits system;
 - (iii) centrality of lifelong learning agenda;
 - (iv) individual and collective entitlement to guidance (in context of employee rights).
- (b) economic background:
 - (i) labour market conditions;
 - (ii) changing working patterns;
 - (iii) the number of SMEs and non-unionised workplaces;
- (c) trade union traditions in that country:
 - (i) degree to which workplaces are unionised;
 - (ii) degree of modernisation of the trade union agenda;
 - (iii) sectoral differences and differences in the membership of trade unions;
 - (iv) sources of sustainable funding for union activity;
 - (v) the internal structure of unions e.g. whether they are centralised or devolved, and whether the national umbrella organisations have capacity to support the development of an advisory capacity;
 - (vi) extent of access to ICT in trade unions;
- (d) education and vocational guidance infrastructure:
 - (i) infrastructure for adult learning and adult guidance;
 - (ii) awareness among guidance agencies of the actual and potential role of trade unions;

(e) employment practice:

- (i) the existence of incentives for employers to take an interest in personal development planning;
- (ii) paid time off to learn or train, and for activists to carry out their role;
- (iii) whether there is a prevalent concept of managing one's own learning and development;
- (iv) employer and employee attitudes;
- (v) methods of targeting specific groups in the workforce;
- (vi) perceived links between learning and skills on the one hand, and productivity, health and safety, and other key areas on the other.

3.1.3. How a role is being defined for trade union activists

In some countries a role is developing for a new kind of trade union activist, with a variety of descriptions: learning representatives; education ambassadors; near-by and Learntrust representatives; personal development consultants; competence pilots; and career counsellors' assistants. These are usually volunteers, often from groups who would not traditionally come forward to take on such roles. They provide a range of impartial front-line services to union members during working hours, including peer guidance and learning support. They also negotiate and work with employers to provide access to learning opportunities.

In countries where the role of these activists is being developed, training courses, support mechanisms and resources are provided. Training courses may include skills in identifying needs and supporting learning, handling information networking and signposting, as well as promoting access to other services.

The following selection of seven case studies describes some of the most significant developments. Developments are advanced in the UK where union learning representatives (ULRs) have been active since 2000 when the first ULRs were trained and accredited. The first case study describes how the Trades Union Congress (TUC) unionlearn is developing information, advice and guidance services in England. Project work is also underway in Denmark, Germany, Spain, the Netherlands, Poland, Finland, and Sweden. Note that most of these cases, studies of trade union initiatives have been written by people directly involved in them.

Case study 7: The TUC unionlearn ‘network model’ for the delivery of information, advice and guidance (IAG) services in England

TUC unionlearn in England is currently developing a strategy to support the delivery of information, advice and guidance services to union learners. This development work is funded with support from the EU Equal programme. The network model builds on good practice in the TUC regions and in affiliated unions.

The role of the union learning representative (ULR) is central to the model, in supporting, coaching, mentoring and signposting learners in the workplace. ULRs are voluntary union representatives who negotiate with employers to promote learning in the workplace. ULRs have recently responded to a consultation about a draft set of skills needed to deliver effective front-line support for learners and to signpost more specialist services when necessary. Most of the 300 ULRs who have responded think that these skills are both appropriate for the ULR role and that it will benefit learners if ULRs develop them. Many ULRs are already using these skills in their work. This skillset (see Figure 4) is not a comprehensive list of the roles and skills of the ULR; they carry out many other responsibilities in the workplace and use a range of skills, particularly in negotiating learning agreements with employers. This list identifies the specific skills needed for supporting individual learners, and forms the basis of a new training programme for ULRs.

The successful implementation of the model depends on input from a range of agencies which can offer appropriate information, advice and guidance services to union learners. Some of these agencies offer services to learners as part of their provision of training or other learning; for others, the delivery of IAG is their main purpose. The network includes specialist providers who can help union learners and support ULRs through face-to-face services, Internet and e-mail services and telephone helplines. Agencies involved include: the unionlearn website (www.unionlearn.org.uk); the Learndirect advice website, helpline and learning centres; unionlearn-endorsed learning centres; other workplace and union learning centres; other learning providers; government-funded adult guidance services; employers; and sector skills councils (SSCs). These links ensure a sound and comprehensive information and resource base for ULRs and union learners.

Explicit quality standards will define the service that union learners can expect of these partners. The main reference point for quality assurance is the matrix quality standard (see Case study 6 in Section 2). Guidelines will be produced for union learners about what to expect of their ULR or of other agents in the network.

Research is currently being undertaken to ensure that the model and strategy are appropriate for unions and union learners. The unionlearn project team have been talking to union learners about how they prefer to have services delivered, to union learning representatives (ULRs) and union learning project workers about the role and skills of ULRs and about what resources they will need to support their work, and to IAG providers about the support they can offer in the workplace. This research is taking place in the context of the UK Government’s information, advice and guidance (IAG) review, which will influence the development of services for adults.

The next step is to develop a range of resources to support the model: unionlearn ‘climbing frames’ (an online resource to assist ULRs in their work with learners); training and development programmes for ULRs; print and web-based materials to support learners, which can be customised by individual unions; and simple materials for learners, which again can be customised by unions.

ULR skills for supporting learners

Acting as a role model or mentor
Encouraging and motivating learners
Helping learners to gain confidence
Building trust and rapport with learners
Being a sounding board
Giving feedback to learners
Challenging unrealistic ideas
Speaking up or advocating for learners
Promoting equality and diversity

Making a contract
Listening actively
Asking questions
Identifying learning needs
Preparing individual or group sessions
Addressing barriers to learning
Helping learners to set goals and targets
Helping learners to plan what to do next
Helping learners to review their progress and plans
Celebrating and building on achievement

Making contacts and networking
Using resources, databases and the Internet to find information
Interpreting and understanding information
Providing information to learners
Helping learners to find and select information themselves
Signposting learners to other sources of information or support
Storing information
Updating information

Helping learners to record information
Helping learners to keep a record of their plans and progress
Following up
Providing continuing support

Identifying limitations of own role
Managing own time
Delegating tasks to others
Reflecting on own practice
Planning own learning and development
Working to principles (confidentiality, impartiality)
Complying with legislation

Source: <http://www.unionlearn.org.uk> or contact: Joe Fearnehough (Jfearnehough@tuc.org.uk), Lesley Haughton (l.haughton@ntlworld.com), or Sally Hughes (sally.hughes.info@btinternetInternet.com).

The next case study describes a project carried out by SAK, a Finnish trade union, under the national adult education initiative (Noste) programme, which is coordinated by the Ministry of Education in Finland.

Case study 8: National adult education initiative (Noste) and union activities in Finland

Noste was launched by the Finnish government as a five-year programme (2003 – 2007). Its aim is to raise adult education levels to meet the changing challenges of working life, and to provide better opportunities for a longer working career. Education equality is also a key motivation. The target group consists mainly of those working adults age 30-59 that have not completed any formal qualification after compulsory schooling. The focus of Noste has been vocational education and training to complete vocational degrees but Noste has also provided new opportunities for educational and personal guidance and counselling as well as supplementary all-round learning opportunities (such as completing upper-secondary studies or studying individual subjects). The European computer driving license, for example, is part of the programme. Studies are virtually free of charge, with only a EUR 50.50 fee charged for a vocational qualification.

Noste has been supported politically by tripartite cooperation (employers' organisations, trade unions and government). The Noste programme has also introduced a new element, called 'searching work', into adult education and training. This includes a wide range of activities provided not only by learning providers but also by trade unions. It was always apparent that the target group for Noste would be challenging to motivate, but even finding out where these adults are has proved difficult. Part of the special additional finance included in the annual state budget was reserved for this purpose.

As part of the Noste programme in 2003 the Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions (SAK) started its own project. SAK is the largest of the three confederations in Finland with about 1 million members. Most of the adults in the target group of Noste are members of one of SAK's affiliated unions. Many of these workers have not been through mainstream adult education and training. According to SAK research, only 28 % of their members had taken part in in-service training during the past 12 months, whereas the average percentage in Finland has been over 50 %. In Finland participation by highly educated people in in-service training is almost three times higher than for less well-educated groups.

SAK, with its local and regional organisations and affiliated unions, has developed an additional 'searching work' element into the Noste programme and has also provided information and guidance about the learning opportunities within Noste. The key actions have been:

- (a) to search for those workers who would be entitled to study in Noste;
- (b) to give general and special information about adult education and training possibilities;
- (c) to motivate the target group to use the Noste 'special offer';

- (d) to motivate employers to disseminate information and give support to worker education and training;
- (e) to make trade union organisations more aware of the importance of learning;
- (f) to encourage closer cooperation between learning institutions and workplaces.

The main aim has been to activate the whole network of trade union organisations, from the union offices to individual work places, with a focus on the local level. SAK has also trained 600 ‘competence pilots’ – union activists who are interested in motivating workers to make use of learning opportunities – as union learning representatives. Most of their activity is related to information and personal guidance. A competence pilot is a peer worker and a guide. Active pilots have been able to start education and training in cooperation with the employer and adult education institutions. They are identified as the link between workplaces and educational institutions. Some of the competence pilots have widened their work to cover all local or regional union organisations. Competence pilots are volunteers who do not have a legal status in labour law or an official role in collective agreements, so it is important that they enjoy good cooperation with shop-stewards who have the formal status to negotiate with employers. Neither do competence pilots have the right to use working time for this ‘searching work’ and guidance. For the one-third of the pilots who are also working as shop stewards or health and safety representatives, the situation is better.

SAK has provided materials on adult education and training (including a short handbook) for competence pilots and union officials; SAK and its unions have also published articles for union newspapers. Some regional seminars have been arranged where competence pilots, union officials and teachers have met to look at how to achieve better cooperation between training institutions and workplaces and also to disseminate good practice.

Source: case study prepared by Markku Liljestrom from SAK.

The next case study describes a course organised by trade unions in the Czech Republic as part of a Leonardo da Vinci-funded project. Although it is not known whether the course resulted in long-term action, the approach is relevant to this report. Some of the lessons learnt, especially those related to the difficulty of engaging employers and workers, are particularly significant.

Case study 9: Trade union personal development consultants in the Czech Republic

A trade union-organised course for personal development consultants was run in Brno, the capital of the South Moravian region, in 2002, as part of the Leonardo da Vinci-funded project, Vocational guidance for lower-paid workers (workplace guidance).

The modular distance learning course was jointly developed and provided by the Akademie Jana Amose Komenského, the largest adult education and training network in the Czech Republic, on behalf of the South Moravian association of trade unions. The association financed the course, provided facilities and selected the participants. Both organisations agreed to DHV CR (a local consultancy based in the Czech Republic) cooperation and evaluation of the course as a workplace guidance pilot project.

In 2002, the South Moravian Region represented 9 % of the country's territory and 11 % of the country's population (1.13 million). Brno, the second largest city in the Czech Republic, is the centre of the region, with a concentration of industry, administrative, cultural and educational institutions, including two universities. Metal industry, electro-engineering, ironworks, textiles, rubber, cement, energy, food and wine production are the main industrial sectors in the region. In the south, the region borders on Austria and Slovakia.

At the time, the role of trade unions in delivering vocational guidance to employees in the Czech Republic was very weak. The South Moravian Association of Trade Unions was one of the few institutions in the Czech Republic to become aware of the need to improve the access of lower-paid workers to guidance, and of the potential role the trade unions might play in this. Even though the course addressed somewhat broader needs as well, the principal idea was to train trade union officials or union members in how to assist workers across the different sectors of the economy in the region.

Twelve trade union officials or members participated in the course. The course objectives were to develop knowledge and skills in learning, working with people, using information and communication technology, and orientation to the world of work and employment. The work of the course participants involved individual self-study and work with distance learning texts, consultations with the tutors, seminars that included group work, development of a final case study, and workplace guidance assignments.

The assignments covered topics such as:

- (a) needs assessment of workplace guidance in a company or sector of industry;
- (b) attitude of employers towards workplace guidance for low paid workers;
- (c) applicability of workplace guidance methods used in some other EU countries;
- (d) possibilities of cooperation with labour office information and guidance centres;
- (e) workplace guidance in companies undergoing restructuring, and in SMEs;
- (f) workplace guidance targeted at ethnic minorities;
- (g) promotion and dissemination of workplace guidance.

The following main lessons were learnt from the pilot:

- (a) a trade union policy and more emphasis on low-paid workers are needed;
- (b) guidance can lead to better pay by increasing self-confidence and awareness of the value of one's work;
- (c) employers are perceived as indifferent, or opposed, to workplace guidance (management can be a barrier to the personal development of workers due to fear of losing their workers and to their interest in maintaining low pay);
- (d) workers are not necessarily motivated by career development: some are happy with what they have as long as they can maintain their employment (even if some employers support education and training of employees, interest from workers can be low).

The following recommendations were made:

- (a) employers and trade unions should be encouraged to adopt their own workplace guidance policies and to provide simple, flexible, targeted and practical (needs-based) guidance to lower-paid workers, starting with their awareness and motivation;
- (b) partner cooperation should be promoted between employers and trade unions in this area, but also involving other actors, such as public administration, employment services, local governments, municipalities and NGOs: resource networks for workplace guidance should be developed;
- (c) methods of guidance normally provided to the unemployed should be extended to lower-paid workers by bringing these methods to the workplace, pilot testing, evaluating and adapting them to the needs of this target group;
- (d) a better system of continuing education and training involving feasible pathways to higher qualification, recognition and certification of lower levels of qualification, accreditation of non-traditional learning, incentives and appropriate legal and financial frameworks should be created.

Source: adapted from *Workplace guidance*: <http://www.gla.ac.uk/wg/pilotcze.htm>.

The next case study describes two EU-funded projects in Germany which are adapting the UK model of union learning representatives. One project works with SMEs and the other with the steel maker Arcelor across plants in four countries.

*Case study 10: Fostering lifelong learning through trade union activists on the shop floor
(two EU projects in Germany)*

The Sozialforschungstelle Dortmund (SFS), one of Germany's largest research centres in industrial relations, has been working with trade unions on workplace learning for several years. In two EU-funded projects based on a common concept but taking place in different settings, trade union activists engage in lifelong learning on the shop floor. They are trained to play a key role in developing a learning culture among their immediate colleagues. One project is with small and medium enterprises (SMEs) around Dortmund; the other in the second largest steel producer in the world, Arcelor. The projects are adapted from the UK's union learning representatives (see Case study 7) which have legal recognition and government funding and resources. This particular initiative intends to move recent union positions, such as the European metalworkers' federation's 'First common demand for the individual right for training', down to worker level.

The idea of trade union learning representatives is seen as a fitting response to the contemporary knowledge-based world of work. It is thought that this approach could attract a new type of member for unions, those who rely on continuous learning to maintain career opportunities and a high level of employability. 'Near-by representatives' or 'LearnTrust-representatives' are people who come from the employee's immediate field of experience and who can convey a positive view of learning and training. They form the basis for a culture actively promoting training at work and are closely linked with trade union structures on the shop floor. They also stand out as a result of their particular involvement in issues that affect other workers. The degree of trust that results from their direct proximity can help to overcome the fears and barriers often connected with learning and the acquisition of qualifications. Because they share their colleagues' experiences and concerns, they can act as a role model and also provide trusted advice and support. This bottom-up approach can strengthen links on the shop floor between trade unions, works councils, management and personnel departments.

The Near-by representatives are recruited in negotiation with unions and personnel and line management. A three-module training course is being piloted. The first module, Identification and role taking, provides basic information about the role and responsibilities, the union approach to learning and training, and methods and instruments for first steps in talking about learning. The second module, How to do counselling, provides information on trade union education, training opportunities offered by the employer and regional training offers, and also develops practical skills in supporting a colleague. The third, Evaluation and controlling, looks at how to decide what has worked and what to change.

The new role of the learning representatives can also help to counter a range of negative concepts about responsibility for training which often undermine both employees and their representatives:

Lifelong learning is a neo-liberal concept for exploiting workers!	<i>Maybe, but clever workers are better off in that game.</i>
Only the employer is responsible for training!	<i>No! Everyone should care about competences for a better employability.</i>
Our company already offers a lot of training opportunities!	<i>Very good. Let's promote them for all groups of employees.</i>
Everyone who seeks a qualification gets it!	<i>Many colleagues fear learning due to negative experiences. Support them!</i>
Trade unions have problems recruiting young people!	<i>Access to qualifications is the keystone for attracting them to unions.</i>
Trade unions need training on trade union issues!	<i>Yes! Knowing about training issues is a union's core function in the future.</i>
It's a German approach: we don't have the resources!	<i>No. It is a European approach to developing a common framework for specific systems.</i>

(a) Regional SME project

This was set up in cooperation with the local office of the Confederation of German Trade Unions (*Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund* - DGB) and the affiliated trade unions in SMEs in different sectors. Many SMEs do not have a systematic approach to offering opportunities for employees to develop their skills and gain qualifications. Training is often only offered as an adjustment of skills from a very narrow perspective. Certain groups of employees, such as part-time or unskilled workers, are frequently excluded from training opportunities. The project aimed to fill these gaps by providing a supporting structure for both employees and personnel departments. However, the SME context was problematic in terms of trade union resources and possibilities. Membership was low, and many employers had a fear of trade union activities. Therefore the approach of the project was to consider the company's competence requirements to encourage involvement, and to integrate the approach into the local union policy.

The project operates in the context of a new collective agreement on training for the metal sector in North-Rhine-Westphalia. Employees are entitled to an annual consultation about their individual need for training and about appropriate measures to meet that need. Companies are obliged to produce an annual training report, to develop an annual training concept and to discuss it with the works council. This agreement provides the opportunity to make training a core issue in trade union policies at plant level. IG Metall, a leading German trades union, is now campaigning to ensure that this agreement will be used by employees. This requires that individual needs, aspirations and learning and work history are taken into account, giving individual needs counselling about training issues and support to reach the appropriate qualification levels. Here learning representatives can assist in taking the collective agreement beyond its formal character.

(b) The Arcelor project

This operates on the same basis of a trade union activist but in a totally different environment. On the initiative of the IG Metall representatives at the Bremen steel plant, joint funding arrangements have been made using the EU Social Dialogue budget. The consortium consists of ten trade unions from four sites; local management is also involved. The project is supported by the European metalworkers' federation and fits in with their learning activities (see above). Four Arcelor sites in Belgium, Germany, Spain and Luxembourg are involved in the project, with a total of 20 000 employees. There are between five and 15 Near-by representatives operating in each of the four main sites. At all four, different targets have been identified: preparing colleagues for interviews with group leaders; monitoring the quality of training; identifying training needs; and transfer of trade union know-how to young people. In addition to the plant activities, the project has facilitated transnational communication among workers (and trade union activists) in the same company, enabling them to contribute to Arcelor's centralised HR policies. In November 2006, 40 Near-by representatives met in Elewijt near Brussels to exchange experiences from the project and to discuss common action as trade union activists on the shop floor.

Source: *case study prepared by Daniel Tech of Sozialforschungsstelle, Dortmund, Germany.*

The next case study describes two more projects being undertaken by the German Trade Union Confederation (DGB) to support the career development of workers.

Case study 11: The life and work project

Between 2002 and 2005, the Department for Education and Qualification of the executive board of the DGB undertook a project entitled LeA (*Leben und Arbeiten* (Life and work)). This was conceived as a response to the changes required of employees in a more dynamic business environment, arising from globalisation and the use of information technology. Examples include increased complexity in the workplace, increased outsourcing and use of 'non-core' employees, and the transition from an industrial to a knowledge society. The project was carried out by involving trade unions, companies and political representatives of vocational training. The goal was 'to develop an employee-oriented, high quality and concrete guidance service under the title Training coaching' (Bildungscoaching) (¹⁴).

The project sought to enhance the capacity of low-skilled and middle-skilled workers to plan their career progression with reference to future competence demands and to develop and trial training coaching both within companies themselves and between companies. The training coaching approach linked particularly to further vocational education and training, which is

¹⁴) Quoted from the final report of the LeA career advice and qualification project (2006)

seen as crucial in supporting career advancement and ensuring that companies retained a competitive edge. The focus was on counselling about qualifications and learning, not only with regard to skills but also taking account of the increasing importance of personal and social competences.

Following on from the Life and work project, in 2005 the DGB launched the project Counselling offensive in the skilled crafts sector (*Beratungsoffensive Handwerk - BoHa*) in recognition of the need to support small and medium-sized enterprises in the skilled crafts sector, and their employees, in lifelong learning. While chambers of trade and vocational training centres already offered a diverse range of guidance and counselling services, a systematic approach to training for counsellors was lacking. The project, therefore, aims to develop and trial modular in-service vocational training both for the counsellors working in the chambers of trades and in educational institutions active in the skilled crafts sector, as well as for other groups such as apprenticeship instructors in guilds.

Source: Confederation of German trade unions, http://www.dgb-boha.de/material/projekt_lea/ and <http://www.dgb-boha.de/>

The next case study from Denmark describes guidance corners, which were initiated by *Kvindeligt Arbejderforbund* (KAD, the national union of women workers) and were evaluated as part of the EU-funded Leonardo da Vinci Vocational guidance for lower-paid workers project. The concept of guidance corners has been taken further in Iceland on the basis of Danish experience and they have developed 10 nationwide LLL/Outreach guidance centres, based on industrial agreements.

Case study 12: Trade union guidance corners in Denmark

‘It made all the difference that guidance came to me, in the workplace, at a critical time of my life’. (Female worker in interview)

Kvindeligt Arbejderforbund (KAD) developed initiatives in peer guidance, similar to those in the UK. KAD was a trade union for women only (now merged with others) mainly for those with few formal qualifications and low pay in different industries and in the service sector. Their attitudes towards participation in continuing education or training were mostly utilitarian, so that guidance was mainly linked to periods of unemployment (e.g. guidance on unemployment benefit rules and regulations). Trade unions, via their administrative role in the unemployment insurance fund (a specifically Danish initiative) offer personal, social, economic, educational and vocational guidance to those members requesting it. This includes more socially oriented guidance by a social worker but is only available within office hours. Although convenient for unemployed members, it was less so for women in hourly paid employment who found it difficult to travel to a KAD office to seek guidance within working hours. KAD therefore attempted several approaches to guidance activities to overcome some of these barriers by reaching out to its members in their workplaces.

First, some members, known as spearheads (*Spydspidser*) attempted peer-guidance activities after being briefed on the concept of guidance. In some cases, they were local shop stewards with close contact with the KAD membership. This approach failed due to lack of knowledge among the Spearheads of the range of education and funding options. A higher degree of professionalism was necessary for peer-based activities to succeed so KAD established guidance corners (*Vejledningshjørner*) in the canteen or resting areas of several major and medium-sized companies. Slightly different guidance corner models were in operation, depending on the initiators (RUE, 2001). A case study from Ringkøbing Amt (county) in western Denmark illuminates the main features of this type of initiative.

The guidance corner concept is simple: a trade union representative offers person-to-person guidance in a corner of a workplace assembly room, using pamphlets about education or training with a portable computer containing guidance and information programmes. This provides members with information on adult education options plus opportunities for discussion, questions and reflection on their current situation. Initially, such visits were conducted by KAD every two weeks in an open consultation mode, with a permanent exhibition of current training and education available, including rules on the funding for education leave. This, however, did not meet the actual needs of the female membership. First, they did not show interest in the pamphlets offered on training or education to any significant degree. Second, few women in work requested guidance spontaneously, failing to see how it might benefit them. The concept of guidance was somewhat blurred, and, in their minds, mostly aimed at unemployed people. Third, working in self-governing groups, as is the case in the high-tech company Bang and Olufsen, puts economic pressure on all members of the group. This limits their willingness to visit the guidance corner since leaving work for guidance would penalise the whole group.

Visits to guidance corners are now conducted every six weeks and take place by appointment during working hours, including day or night shifts. In some enterprises, guidance corners are now established permanently, whilst others are more ad-hoc and mobile. KAD sees this type of activity as a mainstream member service and part of a long-term strategy to upgrade its members' skills through formal, informal and non-formal education and training. An important part of this strategy is proactive guidance of an outreach nature that promotes the concept of lifelong learning in the workplace. Interestingly, KAD does not restrict the availability of these guidance corner services to its female membership, so some men also benefit from a guidance service that was primarily aimed at women.

A good example of the use of guidance corners involved the workers in an electronics production line. These were mostly unskilled females, although two had previously held skilled posts in dentistry. Prior to an anticipated closure as production moved to China, the VUC (adult education centre) established a guidance corner in the plant, prompted by KAD, as a preventive outreach guidance measure. The corner offered workers access to information from pamphlets, computer databases and, most important, a guidance professional from VUC, sometimes supplemented by an employment counsellor from the public employment service (AF). After an introductory collective information session, the guidance corner was (wo)manned for individual guidance appointments over a period of three months. It was used

repeatedly by many of the female workers who, though they were very satisfied with the guidance it offered, expressed some initial resistance and hesitation: ‘What is this guidance, anyway? What has it got for me? I just want a job, and I don’t need guidance to find one. Just give me a job’.

These women had witnessed previous closures of sections of the plant so they could anticipate what the experience would involve. Yet, when it came to facing redundancy, feelings of uncertainty and apprehension were common: ‘What now? Why me?’ Some came to doubt their skills and employability. In this situation, most of them argued, they did not find the extra capacity to investigate new options, either educationally or in terms of employment. Family commitments and long working days meant that the opening hours of unemployment insurance offices or the public employment service were unsuitable for them. Although still employed, they needed to redirect themselves. Guidance, for most of them, was an alien concept that they would not have accessed on their own. Even guidance offered at street level, in the shape of one-stop-centres (known in Danish as *Vejledningshuse*, i.e. guidance houses) was not seen as a real alternative to guidance offered to them in the workplace. This made all the difference:

‘It took away my anxiety to be able to speak to someone who listened and took an interest in me. One who saw possibilities and supported my aspirations. I needed this sort of gentle kick. The guidance corner also provided valuable information. If information was not readily available, the guidance counsellor just found it for me before our next appointment. I might have been able to find some of this information on my own, but I did not know where to look. The supportive personal guidance element, however, was the most important part to me.’

In retrospect, the users valued the proactive and supportive approach of the guidance corner concept. Evidently, the informational aspect of the corner was important, but the personal guidance and counselling component was seen as the key factor. Repeated personal contact with a professional career guidance counsellor was crucial as guidance is a learning process. In many cases, the female workers were offered IT supported guidance, such as Internet sites or the databases of career guidance software packages. This IT-based input, however, was not used to any significant degree: the users preferred to communicate with a person. It was unimportant to them which organisation offered this kind of personal support - the adult education centre (VUC), the trade union, the employment service, or a combination of these - as long as the person was a professional guidance counsellor.

As a direct result of the guidance corner activities two of the users decided to return to education, from which they planned to move from imminent redundancy in manufacturing to more promising prospects in the healthcare sector. Until then, they had not seen further education as a plausible option for them, feeling marginalised in terms of training and education. They had focused on the financial barriers and the difficulties of being a mature learner, rather than new options for personal and professional development. One stated:

‘Getting fired turned out to be quite a gift for me, really. It forced me to see new avenues. Having used the guidance corner, I could realise an old dream which had been buried for while. Before, in school, I was a quiet girl and often had nothing to say. Now, as a mature student, I talk all the time and my fellow students listen to me as the experienced one. Such a change’.

Others were still redundant and looking for jobs.

This guidance corner was subsequently moved from the factory floor to the canteen to make it more accessible. The local trade union representative explained the importance of raising the educational awareness of the unskilled women: ‘It is crucial that people with little formal education have easy access to guidance. If not, they will just choose the narrow training options that they know already’. Clearly, in this case, the guidance corner approach helped to promote social inclusion.

Source: case study written by Peter Plant, and included in *On the shop floor: guidance in the workplace* (Plant, P. Danish University of Education 2006). Based on examples from Workplace guidance, <http://www.gla.ac.uk/wg/pilotdke.htm>.

Two further examples of trade union practice in Denmark are described in the next case study.

Case study 13: Danish trade unions and guidance: tradition and renewal

Danish trade unions have a long tradition of engaging with education and training. They have been active as social partners in initial vocational education (VET) and in continuing vocational training (CVET) as well as in adult education, where they have worked practically, as well as politically. Trade unionists have been involved in identifying future needs for qualifications and in both the planning and marketing of courses. The unemployment services in Denmark have also worked closely with trade unions; most trade unions have taken a role in education guidance and counselling for unemployed members. Practical guidance and counselling has a long history within the Danish trade unions.

Over the last decade the discussion in Denmark about what kind of services the trade unions should provide for their members has increased. There has been an increasing effort made towards providing services within a broader concept of work-related subjects (e.g. working environment, work-life balance, competence development) and some unions have deliberately picked guidance and counselling as a core element in the services they wanted to develop further for their members. Traditionally, guidance and counselling in a trade union framework has been primarily a job for the local branches/offices of the different national trade unions, mainly using traditional personal face-to-face guidance and counselling.

Among trade union members there is a broad spectrum of motivation for lifelong learning – and therefore of starting points for guidance and counselling – ranging from the low-skilled, to employees ‘at risk’, to members who want personal development/fulfilment or career development for new positions in their current or a new job. This also reflects the great variety of situations members find themselves in, from those experiencing (positive) new challenges in an existing job and good learning opportunities, to those facing absolutely no challenges and no learning opportunities at work.

In recent years some Danish trade unions have seen ICT as a tool for providing existing and new services for their members. Two examples of this are presented, with different approaches to the context in which guidance and counselling can be delivered, as well as very different technological approaches. The case studies provide examples of web-based guidance and counselling from two very different trade unions.

(a) HK's *Min Karriereplan*

HK is the Danish trade union for employees within commercial and clerical work in both the private and the public sectors. It has 360 000 members of whom 75 % are female. The concept is called *Min Karriereplan* (my career plan). The aim is to provide individual members with a tool to plan their careers in a broad sense, and especially in relation to competence development. The tool aims to offer much more than planning courses for the individual; users can also request a telephone-based guidance session. *Min Karriereplan* was developed by two private consultancy companies and finished in 2006 and has since been available for all members of HK through their website. HK is currently evaluating use of the tool.

The tool works as follows. When you log in (as a member) you can choose to start my career plan. When you start you can choose to have a 'guide', a person with a voice who gives you advice how to use the different tools at each individual step in the career plan. You can choose between guides with different characteristics, and hence choose to be given different kind of examples as you work. The career plan consists of four different areas - 'I can', 'I want to', 'the demands', and 'I will' - and in each of the areas there are several templates where you can list your own special subjects. It is possible, for example, for a person to list several special subjects, give them a priority from low to high, and link this to comments on their preferred way of learning the given subject ('learningstyle' or 'S').

(b) The electricians jobmultimeter

Dansk Elektriker Forbund (the electricians' union) is a traditional trade based union for skilled workers who are electricians. It has 30 000 members, nearly all of whom are male.

Jobmultimeter is an invented word but close to the vocabulary of an electrician and with a graphical presentation close to one of their traditional, professional tools. The jobmultimeter started as a tool called the individual competence assessment – developed in cooperation with a private consultancy company – and is now a tool for all members, central to the daily services that the trade union provides for its members. The tool has several features that link it much more to defined areas of work and competences than is the case for HK's my careerplan. Within the jobmultimeter, members can have:

- (a) continuous monitoring of their competences –professional, general and personal – automatically related to the developments in demands in the labour market;
- (b) a planning tool for continuing vocational training;
- (c) a tool to calculate their 'market value' (for wage negotiations) and how to improve this;
- (d) a tool for jobseeking/job-match processes.

As a basis for the rest of the programme, users start with a fairly detailed listing of their current competences, especially the professional kind (*faglige kompetencer*) but also general and personal. From this they can get an automatic warning (by mail) if some of their competences are about to become out of date (e.g. if they have competences in specific analogue-based telephone systems and there is a technological development towards

digitalisation). This kind of technological development is very common and can have a considerable impact on the demand for qualifications. Based on the listing of the current competences, and registrations/predictions of future demands, users can get an overview of the available courses in Denmark. They can then choose the number of courses that they will participate in and create their own individualised course plan.

All the trade unions collect statistics on wages, based on individual data. In the case of the electricians' union, these data can then be linked to the description of competences in the jobmultimeter. In this way it is possible to collect empirical data on the relationship between individual combinations of skills/competences and wages so that users can then compare their individual wage with the average wage.

The user is, therefore, able to receive a meter-like presentation in a grid, where the vertical axis shows different kinds of professional skills/competences, and the horizontal axis has three different categories:

- (a) your competences in relation to the average in your geographical area;
- (b) your competences in relation to the average nationally;
- (c) your wage in relation to the national average (in Danish *kroner* per hour).

Source: case study written by Anders Vind, Trade Union Advisor, LO (Danish Confederation of Trade Unions). <http://www.invers.net/job>

3.1.4. Lessons from trade union experience

Some success factors from trade union case studies are the reliance on volunteers for the successful delivery of face-to-face based services, the importance of training for these volunteers and the need for coordination and support to underpin not only the initial development of services but also their evolution and maintenance (e.g. to recruit and train future volunteers, provide and update resources). Much trade union activity has been linked to skill development for less skilled workers but it also shows the importance of advice and guidance as a key activity prior to engaging in learning or development. The success of these initiatives has also been partly related to the perceived credibility and trust that trade union members have in their colleagues providing the service. The range of trade union initiatives also illustrates how a multiplicity of approaches can be required to get people to engage in career development activities. Delivering intervention in locations where participants feel comfortable or where it is convenient and practical for them to engage, has been a critical factor in the success of some of these initiatives (e.g. guidance corners).

While existing projects are often quite small-scale or in particular industries, the TUC unionlearn project in England has had government backing. There is little evidence that trade unions are raising guidance-related issues in collective bargaining but several of the initiatives have been developed in cooperation with employers and/or works councils. However, the regional SME project (see Case study 10) has benefited from a new collective agreement in North-Rhine-Westphalia giving workers a training entitlement. It remains to be seen to what extent employees will take advantage of the agreement.

The sustainability of many trade union initiatives is likely to be dependent on their continuing to receive funding for essential coordination and support activities, such as training and providing specialist resources, even though they rely on volunteers for much of their service delivery. While trade unions make use of ICT in ways similar to other providers, these ICT-based initiatives will also need continued funding to make sure they are kept up-to-date.

The recent evaluation report on the ‘Framework of actions for the lifelong development of competences and qualifications’ (ETUC/UNICE/ UEAPME, 2006) noted that ‘Developing lifelong learning therefore remains an essential priority if Europe is to become the most competitive knowledge-based economy and society in the world’ (p. 11). However, it also pointed out that ‘Fewer actions were taken under priority 3 (information, support and guidance) and several countries acknowledge that more has to be done to spread tailored information and raise motivation for competence development from the part of both companies and workers’ (p. 10). There appears a continuing need for social partners to get more actively involved in developing career support to employed people.

There are strong parallels between the issues facing trade unions becoming involved in the provision of career support and increasing the effectiveness of informal and non-specialist forms of career development support. These will be discussed further in Section 5.

3.2. Chambers of commerce

In several countries, the chambers of commerce (economic chambers) play a significant role in labour market issues related to career guidance. One example of how chambers of commerce operate in this area is provided by the following example from Austria. A striking feature of this case study is the breadth of services offered. They are not only work-related but include psychotherapy and personal development support.

Case study 14: Chambers of commerce in Austria

In Austria, career information and guidance is provided by the social partners, especially by the chambers of commerce in the provinces and in regional offices. The chambers provide many career-related services, not only for their members (employers and companies) such as information about courses, but more broadly for young people searching for placements for apprenticeships and for employees looking for education and training, especially that provided by the *Wirtschaftsförderungsinstitut*, the biggest institute for vocational (adult) education and training in Austria.

The BIWI (*Berufsinformationszentrum der Wirtschaftskammer Wien*) is an example of the career-related services available. Provided by the Vienna Economic Chamber in cooperation with the Apprenticeship Centre, this service assists those who need help with career decisions. In the provinces, the *Lehrlingsstellen* (apprenticeship centres) of the economic chambers offer information and advice on finding an appropriate apprenticeship, in coordination with the Economic Chamber and the Institute for Economic Development.

The Economic Chamber, one of the social partners in Austria, has information centres across the country and the website includes contact details for the chamber's career and educational guidance advisers. Members are offered a range of guidance and coaching services including:

- (a) guidance, such as lifelong guidance for adults and for career crises;
- (b) job search, including developing individual job search plans;
- (c) guidance and psychotherapy, including parental guidance, psychotherapy for young people and adults, and family guidance);
- (d) personal development, such as educational guidance and motivational training).

The website offers members information about career guidance including:

- (a) what career guidance is and what it can do for members;
- (b) where it is available and who delivers it, for example life coaches;
- (c) how it can be delivered, including by telephone and through the Internet, identifying the advantages of anonymity;
- (d) information about the *Verband fur Berufs und Bildungsberatung* (VBB) (Association for Career and Educational Guidance) one of the associations to which career practitioners in Austria belong;
- (e) the principles and ethics to which career practitioners work.

The site also links into a broader range of options relating to where career advice can be found, for example, through other websites, for specific groups such as women and immigrants; through the Vienna Chamber for Workers and through the *Arbeitsmarktservice*.

Source: <http://www.biwi.at>.

Other countries where chambers of commerce also take a role, sometimes brokering links between trade unions and employers, include Germany, Spain, France, Luxembourg and Portugal. In some cases, however, their initiatives are primarily aimed at young people entering the labour market.

3.3. Outplacement/coaching consultancies

3.3.1. Range of provision

Outplacement – the provision of career support to people who are being made redundant from an organisation – has been a major area of activity for private providers of careers services for many years. This kind of provision is based on two different needs for employers:

- (a) the ability to outsource the bulk provision of outplacement when sites are closed or organisations go through major restructuring. Employers feel more comfortable with this being provided by an external supplier and have peak demands they could not possibly resource;
- (b) more in-depth services sometimes required for valuable individuals in difficulty or for high potential or high skilled individuals whom organisations wish to retain and develop.

Recently, there has been some restructuring of businesses in this area, with several major national companies becoming part of multinational businesses. At the same time, mergers are taking place and partnership agreements are being set up at national or European level. There are now several major multinational outplacement consultancies that operate on a global basis with offices in several European countries. However, alongside these multinational businesses, there are also other companies that operate primarily in a single country, as well as a large number of smaller businesses and freelance professionals operating in this area.

Many of these companies combine work in outplacement with work in related fields such as recruitment, coaching and assessment, and position themselves as HR consulting businesses. They generally offer a portfolio of services in which the main customer is the employer on behalf of staff, but which can also be used by individuals. Several are offshoots of management consultancy businesses, and many famous names are subsidiary companies of other famous names. Where they offer a service to individuals, it is generally targeted at better-qualified and senior employees. Services to employers often focus on outplacement, though maximising the potential of an existing workforce ('talent management') and career coaching are also commonly offered. These companies can combine in a range of ways for business reasons but, in so doing, give clients the benefit of international contacts and service standards. At the same time, some public sector careers organisations are starting to offer outplacement and HR consulting services to companies (see Sections 4.4 and 4.5).

It is apparent that many outplacement companies are repositioning themselves as organisations that can offer consulting services on aspects of HR practice ranging from talent management, leadership development and coaching to supporting organisational change. For example, Right Management (formerly RightCoutts) worked with the British Council to create a positive environment for planned changes to the organisation by educating staff to manage change on a personal level. Here too, as with the trade unions, online career management tools are proving effective.

Case study 15: Right Management's work with the British Council

The British Council, with 218 offices in 109 countries, is a world-leading agency for cultural relations, forging links between people in the UK and other countries. As part of the British Council's '2010 strategy', the organisation wanted to unleash the potential and creativity of its staff and radically change the way in which they worked.

The global spread of the Council's staff is such that individual career consultancy was impossible, so Right Management developed a bespoke online career management tool that:

- (a) integrated existing HR initiatives and interventions, and enabled staff to think about their careers within a rapidly changing environment;
- (b) reflected the culture and diversity of the organisation as well as being easily accessible to all 8 000 staff across the world;
- (c) met the needs of all levels of employees.

The tool allowed staff to take control of their own careers by examining personal goals and exploring the relationship between the individual and their employer. The aim was to encourage and support a more proactive approach to personal development and career issues by staff.

Since its launch in February 2005, the site has received an average of 950 visits per month. The tool has helped individuals to build greater career awareness and to align their needs with those of the organisation.

Partnership working between Right Management and the British Council was a critical success factor. Workshops and a pilot phase were used to ensure that the tool was tackling key issues associated with the change and to make the launch successful. This was also linked to a phased communication strategy to build momentum behind the initiative.

Source: Right Management, <http://www.right.com/>

Outplacement and coaching consultancies offer career advice, help and services to individuals, teams and organisations. Individuals are helped to seek promotion in their present company, deal with redundancy (writing CVs, interview techniques), look for a career change (including going freelance or self-employed), resolve problems at work including stress, and achieve a better work/life balance. Outplacement and coaching consultancies may contract with a company or with individuals to provide such help, and it may be delivered through group sessions or sessions for individuals. It can include personality profiling and psychometric testing, or it might take the form of career coaching or other personal help.

Consistent with the emerging pattern for organisations that act as intermediaries in workplace career development, websites are an important part of their services. Sites serve as a marketing tool but also contain self-help support and helpful links to other complementary sites including a recruitment agency, a specialist graduate recruitment site, job advertisements collected from local and national newspapers, alternative careers, business know-how and news and career resources.

3.3.2. Quality assurance: industry self-regulation.

Both entitlements to service and quality standards are ways for governments to foster standards for career guidance provision. Where there are quality standards, they may be voluntary or mandatory. The matrix quality standard in the UK (see Case study 6) is one example of such a government-funded initiative which has set a benchmark for provision. However, professional bodies, such as the Association of Career firms in Europe, that represents the interest of European outplacement industry, and Career Professionals International, also set standards and will often certify training programmes for guidance professionals.

Members of the association of Career Firms in Europe (<http://www.aocfi.org/>) must be ‘trained career counsellors/consultants committed to advising people about appropriate career decisions and achieving new long term positions in work’ and it requires its member companies to adhere to a code of conduct and ethics.

It is also possible for individuals to ‘find a careers services expert’ in their own country through the website. Together with the Association of Career Firms International (ACFI, with members in 19 EU Member States), the Association of Career Professionals International (ACP International) sponsors the Institute of Career Certification International (ICC International, www.careercertification.org). ICC International enables professionals to work towards certification based on a competence framework. Applicants are supported by an existing ICC International fellow through post, e-mail or telephone towards certification at practitioner, fellow practitioner, or fellow manager level. The following case study provides an example of professional standards.

Case study 16: Codes of ethical standards for career firms

The Association of Career Professionals International is an organisation of career specialists working in small practices as well as large firms, mainly in the private sector. It was founded in 1989 and now has more than 2 000 members in more than 30 countries. There are regional groups in Europe, North and South America, Africa and Asia Pacific, with chapters at national and local levels. European Member States with chapters include Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Spain, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Austria, Sweden and the UK (there is also one in Switzerland). Members provide services for employers such as career management for staff, outplacement, assessments, coaching, talent retention or organisational consulting. They also offer services to individuals, including work search or career management strategies, personal and professional growth and career change, entrepreneurial or retirement options.

ACP International members are bound by a code of ethical standards, which provide an insight into the nature of this professional group:

‘All Members of the Association of Career Professionals International shall:

- (a) continuously improve their professional skills, competency and knowledge to provide the highest quality of service to organisations and individual clients;
- (b) comply with all laws, statutes and regulations affecting business practices and service relationships;
- (c) fully disclose any potential conflict of interest that may arise in the course of their professional practice;
- (d) report any illegal acts by their employers, peers or business partners to appropriate authorities;
- (e) clearly define the services which they offer, and ensure these services are within their knowledge and abilities. Members must recognise their boundaries of competence and provide only those services and use only those tools, techniques and materials for which they are qualified by education, training or experience;
- (f) in marketing services, describe factually and neither claim, misrepresent nor imply professional qualifications exceeding those possessed, nor knowingly cannot be delivered;
- (g) administer and/or interpret only those assessment instruments for which they have appropriate qualifications;
- (h) release assessment results to third parties, where applicable, only after obtaining written permission from the individual client;
- (i) maintain confidentiality by disclosing to each individual client that general progress updates may be provided to a sponsoring organisation (at their request); however, such reports would be generic in nature, and no personal or confidential information will be provided;
- (j) take reasonable action to inform potentially vulnerable third parties and/or responsible authorities when conditions indicate that there is a clear and imminent danger to the client, sponsor or others. Ideally, this will be done with the individual client’s knowledge or permission, but if necessary, without;
- (k) offer no payment to employees of sponsoring organisations for referrals, nor accept inappropriate gifts;
- (l) refrain from supporting, assisting, participating in, and/or benefiting from the violation of these Standards’.

Source: <http://www.acpinternational.org/about/ethics.html>

The private sector supply of outplacement and career coaching has been expanding in recent years. This reflects both the continuous ‘churn’ in the labour market, where many people are made redundant even when the market is expanding, and the growing requirement for people-development and, in particular, the need to equip managers to develop people better. This latter need would appear to have fuelled the recent demand for coaching. However, it should be noted that, yet again, much of this activity is skewed towards the highly skilled or ‘talent’ groups, reflecting employers’ concerns and focus on investing in these groups.

The industry is made up of a small number of large international companies, plus a significant number of national companies, some of whom work in partnership with companies in related fields, and a very large number of small companies and independent practitioners. At all these levels there has been a trend for diversification, with providers now increasingly offering career coaching services alongside traditional outplacement activity; some of the largest businesses have now positioned themselves as HR consulting businesses rather than just as outplacement consultancies.

3.4. Self-help and peer support

Self-help books and educational materials have been widely available for many years. The most well-known is probably *What color is your parachute?* which was first published in 1972 and is updated annually (latest edition: Bolles, 2006). Much self-help material is now available on the Internet. However, more recently, peer-support websites have started to develop. These virtual community websites are places where a group of people go to communicate or share information via the Internet. Some are targeted at specific groups of people – young people or women are two frequent examples – or at particular occupational fields. They are perhaps a response to the fact that people trust their peers or ‘people like me’ as much as they trust doctors or academics (Edelman, 2006). In some specialist occupational areas, such as medicine, research has also found that more experienced peers (i.e. those in the next stage of training) were rated the most useful source of careers advice and guidance, ahead of senior doctors (Jackson et al, 2003). The extent to which informal or non-professional sources of career support are used is often underestimated. In many specialist labour markets, the best source of information about many aspects of recruitment and careers will be people already working in the particular field. Social networks may aim to do more than just provide information and can create employment opportunities via networking. For example, IQONS (www.iqons.com) is a new online fashion community that aims to have the same impact on fashion as MySpace had on music. It is a free platform where anyone involved or interested in work related to fashion can connect, show their work and start their own alternative networks.

Two examples of virtual community websites targeted at women are described below.

Case study 17: Femity

Femity is a virtual community running in Germany as a private but not-for-profit initiative. It aims to support career guidance for working women via experience exchange, learning by role models and mentoring. Femity, as other virtual communities, is based on the principle that there is a great pool of knowledge, experience and competence within a virtual community. It therefore runs on the basis of ‘give and take’.

The website seeks to provide extensive information and contacts to help women with their career development and progression, and is aimed at German-speaking women working in Austria, Germany and Switzerland both employees and the self-employed. It enables them to network and exchange knowledge and experience. The site provides an up-to-date information service about business and career matters. All articles relating to topics such as family and career, time management, setting up business, and so on, at the homepage are accessible by everyone (in an ‘open room’).

There are separate forums for exploring professional life, career, further education and job search; there are articles and the opportunity for women to post their own comments or questions. The exchange within the forums is useable only by registered members (registration is by e-mail and password), so that exchanges between members are happening in a ‘closed and protected room’. Some registered members are qualified careers counsellors and coaches. These members may respond to comments/questions and give hints, ideas, information etc., and are, in effect, offering a kind of voluntary career counselling. Registered members who are careers counsellors or coaches can advertise the services they offer at the ‘marketplace’ (*Marktplatz*) and obtain new clients in this way. Similarly members can post requests for help with career planning: for example, on 6 December 2006, a request was posted for help in finding a coach in the Dusseldorf area.

Registration for the site is free, with charges for additional services such as advertising of services (e.g. seminars). The site started in 2001, developed from a non-profit-making project initiated by Pia Bohlen-Mayen. By 2006, there were over 9 000 members.

Source: <http://www.femity.net>

Case study 18: Women's careers counselling (WCC) community

Career counselling via communities for women during their professional reorientation was a Leonardo da Vinci-funded transnational project, based on the principle of counselling via virtual communities, with 12 partners in eight European countries. The aim was to develop a Europe-wide concept for the career counselling of women who are thinking about their career path.

A multi-language Internet community platform was developed which included a counselling centre. The principal features of the platform included member profiles, discussion forums, inter-member message function, a member search engine, contact lists, an editorial area for publishing of articles, a repository and a counselling centre. On registration, basic information about the user was collected including their job background and areas of potential interest. At the point of requesting counselling support, more detailed information was gathered such as number and age of children, current and/or aspired professional situation. The project had a wide range of qualified counsellors with a range of differing expertise at its disposal.

The project produced a manual to support the work of counsellors, describing the distinctive characteristics of online counselling, the Women's career counselling (WCC) community model and practices (see Figure 4). The project took international standards of quality and ethics into account, such as those of the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance (IAEVG).

The Women's career counselling community identified specific issues of online counselling, which differ markedly from more traditional forms. First, job counselling via communities at WCC means the use of a complex and networked system of counselling within country-specific virtual communities. It therefore went far beyond ordinary counselling by phone or chat, by stimulating active networking, experience exchange and empowerment through examples of excellence within the existing network. The virtual community offered topic- and target-group-specific information, as well as initiating knowledge and learning processes and fostering information and knowledge management. Second the use of gender-sensitive approaches was a success factor. The experience of this project suggests that women form a more homogeneous virtual community than men. Some argue that women are more communicatively socialised and therefore appreciate what a virtual community offers. More often than not, communities are organised according to topics and not gender. Men can dominate communication in real life when the two sexes meet in mixed communities. Women may keep to the background in heterogeneous groups, whereas men seem less inhibited to communicate or write extensively.

The target groups across the project were women in the process of professional reorientation during and after raising their families, women aiming at job advancement and further qualifications in jobs and companies, and women who wanted to become, or already were, self-employed. The groups varied between countries and different projects where more than one was located in a Member State.

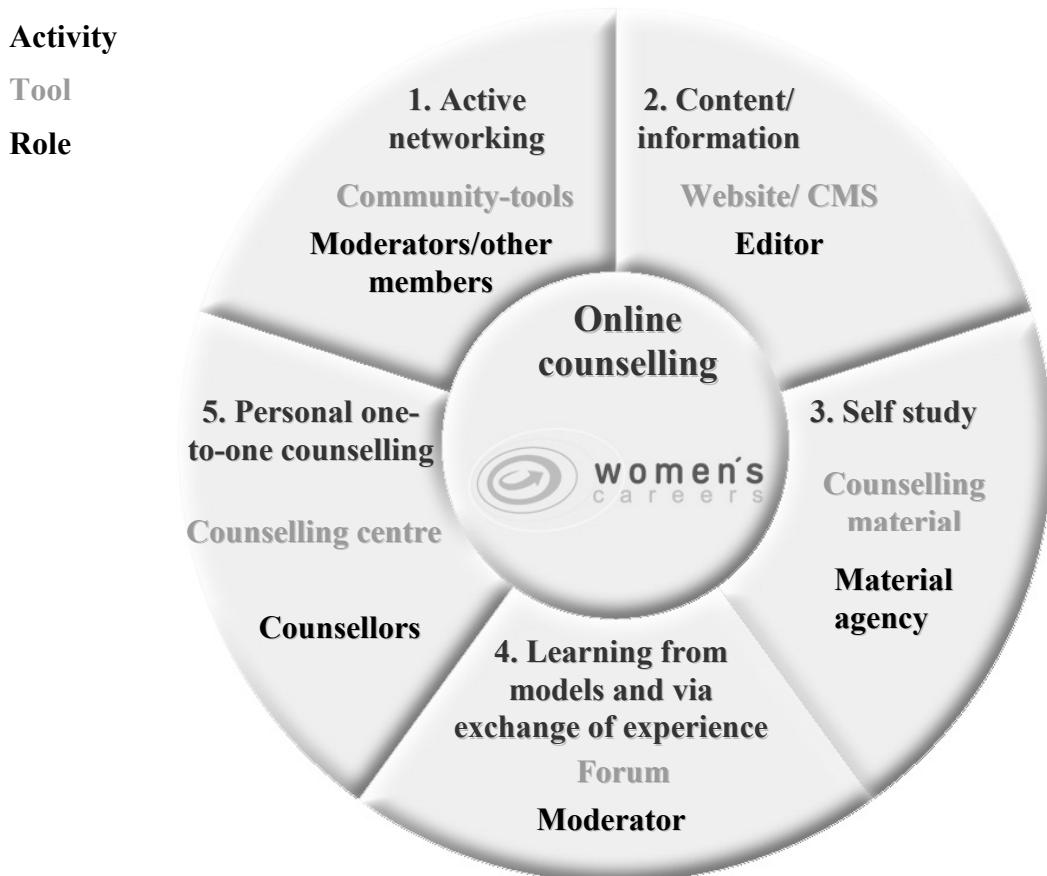
A heterogeneous group in Germany and Austria included some highly qualified women. All were interested in opportunities for further education and job application tips. A common theme was the impact of bringing up a family on career development or return to paid employment. The French community comprised a majority of high achievers pursuing an international professional career. In Sweden, the largest group were skilled and experienced women from industry who were seeking further education or a change in employment. Some were from remote areas trying to access the labour market via distance learning and counselling. Finally, the Irish community agency focused primarily on unskilled mothers – and other women – who wanted to gain a professional qualification. Women in further education who were looking for a job were also within the priority group.

Counselling approaches varied according to national target groups. However, the structure of the process was similar. The project model provided for a forum moderator, career consultants in the counselling centre and counsellor mentoring, both by nominated, experienced counsellors and by peers (see Figure 5).

As of March 2006, 3 200 women from the four countries involved at that stage were registered with the Women's career community website, of whom about 200 were seeking individual counselling in a protected area via the site. The French, Swedish and Irish communities were closed at the end of the Leonardo da Vinci funding period. In Germany and Austria the project continues through Equal programme funding. Experience has shown that the counselling centre element of the site is of the highest value to users who tend to leave after their immediate issues have been resolved.

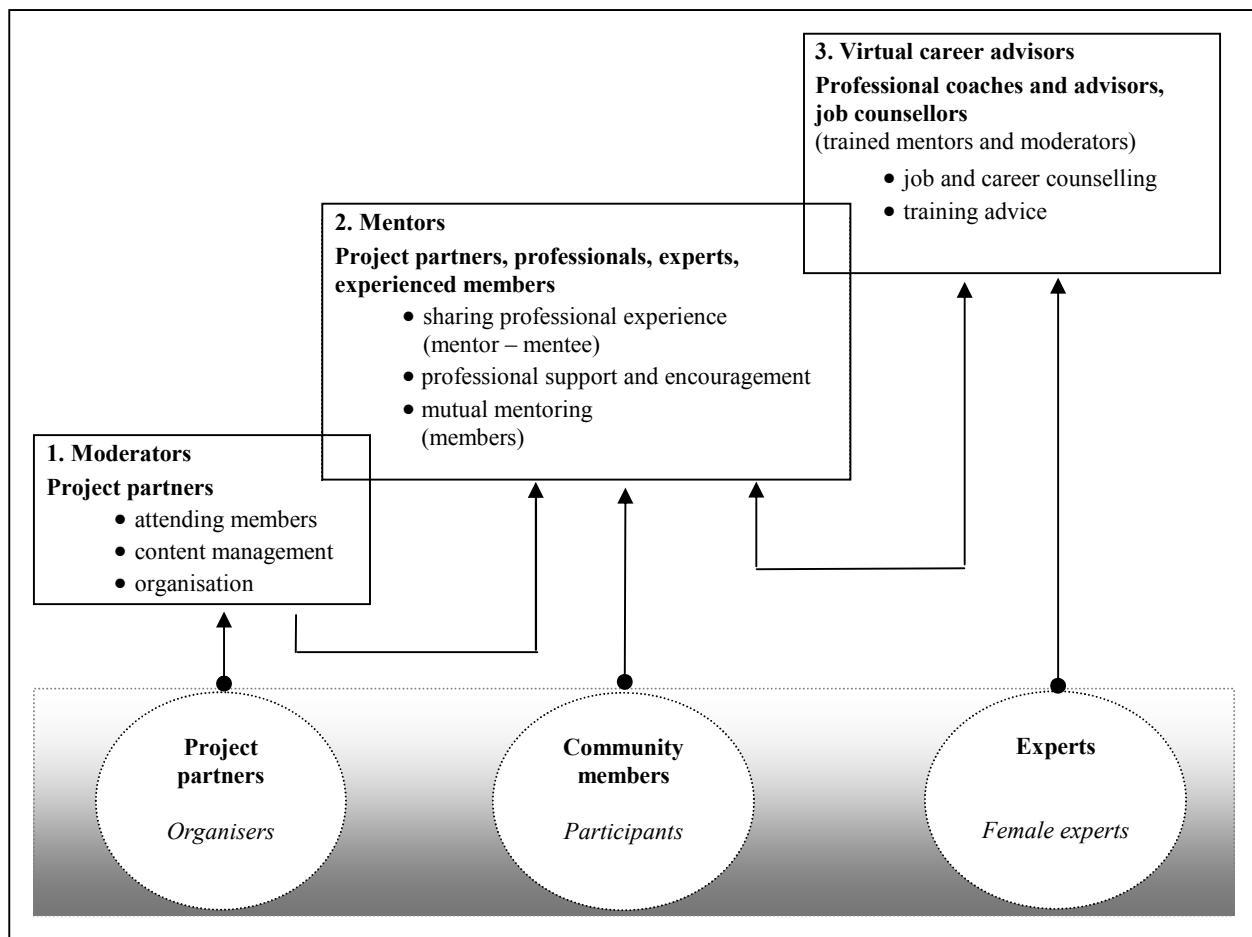
Source: <http://www.womens-careers.info/base/page/index.php>

Figure 4: Online counselling at WCC model



Source: <http://www.womens-careers.info/base/page/index.php>

Figure 5: How the WCC community's support system is structured



Source: <http://www.womens-careers.info/base/page/index.php>

Other peer support initiatives have been directed at young people and aim to help them find work. One UK-based site, Future Foundations, is a coaching and mentoring organisation run for young people by young people, including those in the early stages of their career. It aims to empower young people to find a career and lifestyle that they want and to help them make it happen, through information and support events, seminars, coaching and mentoring, and placement schemes (www.future-foundations.co.uk). Services are aimed at school-leavers, students and graduates. Future Foundations also run the ‘Sparkle Network’, a peer support network for people in the early stages of their career.

At one level these websites are just an extension of social networking such as that offered by sites such as MySpace (which incidentally has a jobs section) or Friends Reunited. However, with their specific focus on employment and career issues and, in some cases, the offer of services (e.g. training or coaching) as well as marketing opportunities for third parties, they also offer tailored support. Although sites such as the Women’s careers counselling community, have developed with government/EU funding, others are the result of private initiatives. While it is difficult to know at this stage how sustainable individual sites are, Femity has been running for five years, while IQONS was launched early in 2007. Even if some of these sites disappear, it seems very likely that other similar ones will take their place. Other potential sources of support include university and college alumni networks. Many universities, for example, have some sort of alumni network and some are starting to use these as a resource for their current students. There is the possibility of these being extended to form a virtual community network.

3.5. Professional associations and sector bodies

Professional organisations have published regular bulletins with job advertisements for a long time. While many continue to exist as print media, many are now also available on the professional associations’ websites and can be seen as part of the rapid spread of e-recruitment. Professional associations and sector bodies are often the definitive source of information on training and professional requirements associated with a particular professional career route. They are, therefore, a key information source not only for career professionals but also for individuals. However, they do represent different constituencies. Professional bodies mostly serve the interests of individual members, while sector bodies mostly serve the interests of powerful employers within that sector.

While some information on training or careers in the particular professional area will normally be publicly available on these websites, other information (e.g. job adverts) may only be available to members in a members-only section. Many professions also now have requirements for continuous professional development (CPD) and for some of them the provision of training is a discrete area of business activity. Providing information about training is, therefore, not always an activity in which they are disinterested. Elsewhere initiatives to provide career guidance have been joint efforts between the social partners. One

such initiative is described in the next case study, which describes the range of services offered by the Association for Executive Employment (*L'association pour l'emploi des cadres* - APEC) in France.

Case study 19: The Association for Executive Employment (L'association pour l'emploi des cadres - APEC)

The Association for Executive Employment (APEC) was established by the social partners in France in 1966, to improve the operation of the executive employment market. The organisation has 45 centres distributed throughout the country, and works with 870 associates of whom 640 are recruitment and career management specialists. 400 000 executives and 25 000 companies use the services of APEC. Executives are able to find out about the services offered by APEC through the customer relations centre, which will advise them and refer them to APEC's consultants. APEC develops specific services for employers and executives. The association offers advice on executive recruitment to operational managers as well as human resources specialists. Services available to employers include increasing understanding of the executive job market; helping them to identify the competences they require, and putting them in contact with candidates matching their vacant posts. APEC also works with executives and top management at an international level in their search for employment at each stage of their professional lives, by helping them to assess their competences (including undertaking a *bilan de compétences*) and any deficiencies. They identify any areas where it might be worth canvassing and help them orchestrate their job search.

The APEC website (www.apec.fr) set up in 1998, includes over 11 000 job offers for executives and recent graduates and offers detailed information and advice to registered users. It covers areas such as the executive job market and the companies which recruit executives, choosing to train and work abroad.

In 2006 APEC launched a new personalised online information and advice service. Executives, including those domiciled outside France, can post CVs, develop a career plan, and search for vacancies online. Users need to create an APEC account, which allows for personal management of their job search, with APEC consultants available for customised guidance and support for career development. Job offers can be received via e-mail. Up to three versions of the CV can be created and saved in pdf or word formats. Personalised information can be sent to registered users covering specific regions and occupational sectors.

Source: the Association for Executive Employment (APEC, Association pour l'emploi des cadres).

In the UK there are 25 sector skills councils (SSCs): these are employer-led, independent organisations that cover a specific occupational sector. Their four key goals are to reduce skills gaps and shortages, improve productivity, business and public service performance, increase opportunities to boost the skills and productivity of everyone in the sector's workforce and improve learning supply including apprenticeships, higher education and national occupational standards (NOS).

Sector skills councils provide a focal point for employers to express the skills and productivity needs for their sector. They are able to collect information on where employers are experiencing skills gaps and shortages and can pass this on to individuals and career guidance professionals. They provide labour market information for careers advisers through the National Guidance Research Forum website (www.guidance-research.org/future-trends/). All SSCs are licensed by central government together with the devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Together, the SSCs cover approximately 85 % of the UK workforce.

Skillset is the SSC for the broadcast, film, video, interactive media and photo-imaging sector. The following case study concentrates on Skillset's service to individuals already working in the sector, though they also advise people considering joining it. The Skillset information, advice and guidance (IAG) project, working with 11 other SSCs, has resulted in a close working relationship between TUC unionlearn (see Case study 7) and the SSCs. A memorandum of understanding is being developed between TUC unionlearn and the SSCs, as well as a work plan for cooperation on information advising guidance in the future.

Case study 20: Guidance provided by Skillset

Skillset provides sector-specific information, advice and guidance (IAG) in two ways: to careers advisers through an e-mail enquiry service and workshops; and direct to individuals⁽¹⁵⁾.

Advice to individuals is available in three ways:

- (a) by telephone: a free helpline is available through Learndirect. This focuses on entry routes and initial training. Specific helplines are also available in Scotland and Wales;
- (b) by e-mail: this service is open to all within the European Union and is free;
- (c) face-to-face: this service is provided by freelancers in the industry who are trained as careers advisors. There is a charge for some individual services, though through subsidies from other organisations the services are half price to trade union members, and free throughout Wales (up until end of March 2007).

The services are available at three levels:

- (a) stage one is for new entrants with less than two years of experience. A one-hour session costs GBP 30 (with specific subsidies for some groups as explained above, and for people on low incomes). Users complete a detailed form in advance of the interview.
- (b) stage two is a more in-depth discussion for more experienced practitioners. Client and interviewer are carefully matched. A one-and-a-half-hour session costs GBP 60 (subsidies apply), which includes up to two hours preparation by the advisor before the appointment.

⁽¹⁵⁾ Skillset also managed a project involving 11 other SSCs to develop ways for SSCs to work more effectively as providers of labour market information to careers advisers for young people and adults (for existing employees and new entrants to the relevant industry) (Graver et al., 2006).

- (c) follow-up is a one-and-a-half-hour session for clients who have completed one of the earlier stages. They check progress against the action plan they made in that first session, reassess their situation and, if necessary, adapt the plan. This session costs GBP 30.

Skillset also runs career workshops, often on behalf of employers, training providers or other partner organisations. These can include self-marketing and networking for professionals, as well as career planning for students and new entrants.

Source: Ann Mason and colleagues at Skillset, <http://www.skillset.org/careers/services/>.

In the Netherlands, some sectors have developed sectoral training structures based on training levy (O&O) funds from employers and employees. Such structures are particularly important in the case of small and medium-sized organisations, which often lack the infrastructure to develop training policies of their own. The schemes may include access to some limited sector-specific guidance from training officers. There are also examples of sectoral initiatives targeted at older workers. One example is a project based at the National Centre for Innovation of Education and Training in the Netherlands (CINOP). This is an initiative by employers and industries that allows one or more employees to leap from one employer in one sector to an employer in another sector. The idea of a sectoral bridge allows the initiators to bridge the gap that opens up for older employees between their current job and a new job in a different sector. This case study describes one successful pilot. Other pilots have been set up on a comparable basis.

Case study 21: Sectoral bridges: intersectoral mobility career project construction and infrastructure

During 2004-05, a project was carried out in the construction and infrastructure sector in the Netherlands with the support of CINOP. In it, career development and education were linked by sector. Employers and employees supported the project. The link was shaped by ‘trajectory’ advisors trained especially for the purpose. They worked from ‘one-stop shops’ (see Case study 30) in different regions.

Even though this was a sectoral initiative, it still counts as an example for intersectoral mobility as the construction industry covers a broad range of activities such as commercial and industrial building, road building and hydraulic engineering, scaffolding, etc. As a result, outflow to a different part of the sector often has the same impact as outflow to a job outside the sector. Moreover, the approach also explicitly included the possibility of outflow to a different sector.

The experiences with the pilot were so positive that the construction and infrastructure sector has decided to turn the ‘one-stop shops’ of trajectory advisors into a structural national facility. New trajectory advisors are being recruited and trained. Other industries are currently also starting comparable pilots.

Source: van Dun, 2006.

The next case study describes an initiative to develop senior management in the education sector in England. Government subsidies have been used to attract under-represented groups (e.g. black and minority ethnic groups, people with disabilities) to use the services of the centre for excellence in leadership (CEL).

Case study 22: The centre for excellence in leadership (CEL)

The CEL was launched in 2003 to develop world-class leadership in the English post-compulsory education and training sector. This sector includes further education colleges, training and work-based learning providers, adult and community providers, offender learning, specialist colleges and voluntary organisations (but not universities). CEL's remit is to foster and support leadership improvement, reform, transformation, sustainability and quality improvement. To date over 450 organisations have made use of its services.

CEL's provision includes its career development service (CDS) which provides career development workshops, career coaching, psychometric testing, practical guidance and information to help leaders at all levels to reach their full potential. CDS also offers consultancy to organisations over their career development and management strategies, talent management and succession planning, restructuring and change management. The CDS manager and team work with a group of specialist career coaches and workshop facilitators. Their work is tailored to the sector, and CDS has underpinned its expertise by conducting research into the career paths of leaders in the sector.

The government offers subsidies to encourage use of these services by under-represented groups, such as black and minority ethnic groups and people with disabilities. These subsidies are 100 % for people working in the public sector, 50 % for those in the work-based and adult and community sectors, and 25 % for people from specialist independent colleges. This system has been successful in attracting participants from the targeted groups.

The CDS also provides a careers element for other CEL activities, to encourage participants to consider career coaching as a way of helping them put what they have learnt on the programme into context and consider the implications for their own career development. CDS provides a similar input to the work-shadowing scheme run by the further education sector body, the Association of Colleges.

Source: case study based on information provided by Ann Ruthven, Career development service manager, Centre for excellence in leadership, January 2007.

3.6. Specialised sources of information and expertise

The need for increasingly specialised labour market information has been stressed at several points in this report. The next case study provides one example of how a specialised need for labour market information is being met. It describes Expertise in labour mobility (ELM), a specialist consultancy based in the Netherlands that advises businesses and individuals about international labour mobility.

Case study 23: Expertise in labour mobility (ELM)

ELM is a knowledge and training-based consultancy specialising in international labour mobility questions. Based in the Netherlands, it has an international network of country experts, who research local labour market issues. ELM works with both businesses and individuals. Its services include:

- (a) research on international labour mobility issues;
- (b) workshops for students, for example, *Looking for work around the globe*;
- (c) in-company training courses, for example, ‘*Making expatriation work*’;
- (d) a series of guides on *Looking for work in ...*, that covers job-hunting practices and cultural management differences in over 40 countries;
- (e) publications on the international labour market;
- (f) consultancy services aimed at companies about international work issues.

Expertise in labour mobility aims to be a one-stop-shop for all international mobility questions that companies may have when entering a new market, ranging from regional labour market insights to taxation legislation and from cultural matters to HR related issues.

For individuals, ELM offers personalised career consultations as well as training workshops and advice on managing cultural differences.

Source: <http://www.labourmobility.com>

At the same time specialist organisations have also emerged with expertise in particular guidance techniques. There are several specialist consultancies working to supply ICT-based interventions. The next case study provides information about CareerStorm a specialist consultancy based in Finland. It is an example of how one company has developed products for use in several settings and by a range of providers from large organisations to career guidance professionals and private companies.

Case study 24: CareerStorm

CareerStorm Ltd, based in Finland, has specialised in designing web-based career tools since 1998. The CareerStorm team has developed a range of interactive career services for online career portals, e.g. Monster.com (14 European countries and Canada), Career innovation company (UK) and contributed to the initial design of Finland's leading recruitment website *Helsingin Sanomat* (Finland). Through the online portals, CareerStorm tools were available to all Internet users.

In 2003 the team launched the CareerStorm Navigator™, a web-based tool for career/life development. The tool is exclusively administered by career professionals, who are available to support the individuals using it in a variety of contexts. Consultants use it to provide career services to organisations (e.g. career management programmes, leadership development, outplacement). In larger organisations, specialists use the tool to facilitate internal programmes (e.g. competence and leadership development, internal recruitment, women returning to paid work). Private coaches use the tool to support their work with individual clients and organisations. Higher education institutions use the tool to facilitate career development among personnel and students.

Source: CareerStorm: <http://www.careerstorm.com/>

There are a large number of other specialist consultancies operating in this area whose role in the development of services should not be underestimated. In the UK, for example, providers include specialist career consultancies, such as Career Horizons (www.careerhorizons.net) or the Signposter programme (www.signposterprogramme.co.uk), which allows users to develop an intelligent e-portfolio and provides a gateway to information on all levels of learning, work and lifestyle. No doubt there are other similar specialist organisations in other European countries.

3.7. Summary

The range and type of intermediary organisations that offer some form of career support to individuals have been increasing. The rapid expansion of provision has undoubtedly been fuelled to a considerable degree by increased Internet access and reduced costs of market entry offered by the Internet.

These intermediary organisations have a variety of reasons for offering career support and the focus of their activity also varies. Trade unions, for example, have focused predominantly on getting their members to engage in learning activities but are now starting to see links between this activity and career development. This has resulted in several initiatives to provide advice and guidance to their members. While much of their activity has focused on the lower-skilled, some initiatives are more akin to professional updating. Given the way unions are often industry- or skill-based, provision of information and advice is often targeted at a particular sector or professional group. Many trade union initiatives have relied on volunteers. There are

issues not just in finding time to carry out such a role, but also in locating this activity within professional structures, defining the limitations of it, and addressing training and CPD needs.

The growth of much private-sector provision has also depended on the increased use of the Internet. The Internet is the first port of call for many individuals looking for information and advice on careers and employment issues. The widespread use of the Internet has resulted in the blurring of boundaries between career support and recruitment activities, with recruitment websites and the career section of company websites increasingly offering, as a minimum, hints and tips on job seeking, and sometimes other forms of self-help career support as well. The Internet has also facilitated the growth of peer support through the development of virtual community websites. This can be seen as an extension of social networking but also draws on the fact that an excellent source of information about many aspects of recruitment and careers in any career area will be people already working in that particular field. As labour markets become more complex, the need for highly specific information on career and recruitment is likely to increase. The role of virtual community websites and other forms of informal career support may become more significant.

The major role of specialist consultancies and research organisations in developing services offered by others is also frequently neglected. Short-term funding is often used for development work but continuing support is also needed if material is not to become obsolete and information out of date. As sources of information and advice proliferate, the challenge of evaluating the quality of available information and advice increases. Many of the players who provide information and advice on the Internet have vested interests, and users of information need to recognise that this partiality may limit the usefulness of advice or information. This is also one reason why the provision of training to union volunteers has been a significant aspect of several of these initiatives.

Various sources of funding have been used to develop the initiatives described in the case studies. Many of the trade union initiatives have had government or EU support. In some cases, this might be seen as blurring the distinction between intermediary and public services. The next section of the report looks at public-sector provision.

4. The role of public policy

The purpose of this section is to review how publicly-funded services provide support to employed people and also their contribution to the development and support of services provided by others. The coverage of publicly-funded services also includes some projects that are wholly or partly funded by the EU through one of its programmes.

Much government activity positions career guidance as one activity within a broader programme aimed at achieving other policy objectives, such as reducing unemployment, encouraging lifelong learning, or promoting social inclusion. This is similar to the way that some intermediaries involved in recruitment see offering career development support as a useful ancillary activity. One consequence is that career guidance may only be seen as of secondary importance in delivering these policy objectives. Whether responsibility for career guidance falls under education or employment departments can also have an effect on provision.

Both the OECD and Cedefop synthesis reports (OECD, 2004; Cedefop, Sultana, 2004) note the gap in service provision for employed adults, a finding that was reiterated in the most recent survey of PESs by the European Commission Directorate-General Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (Sultana and Watts, 2005). Few PESs cater for employed adults to any significant extent. In some countries, people in employment fall outside the remit of the PESs, while in others they make up only a small percentage of clients using PESs. In some countries where the service is notionally open to all, Cedefop, Sultana (2004) notes that the stigma attached to using the service is seen as discouraging many employed people from making use of them. This stigma is almost certainly increased when the PES is also the main controller of unemployment-related benefits. In other cases, it is primarily resource restrictions that limit the range of services that PESs can offer to employed people. Moves to self-service modes of delivery have partly been driven by the need to extend the range of clients that PESs can assist and, in some cases, this does extend facilities to people in employment.

However, other publicly-funded careers services do offer services targeted at employed adults and employers. There are also relevant initiatives funded by national governments and the EU. First, examples of the services being provided are reviewed. The aim is not to give a comprehensive guide to services available but rather a flavour of the type of initiatives that exist. There are several initiatives linked to encouraging participation in continuing education and training, particularly among the low skilled, while others have been targeted at people working in SMEs. Some initiatives have targeted both these areas. In several countries guidance services are also looking at the accreditation of prior learning (APL). These initiatives are reviewed in the first section of this chapter before examination of the increased use of telephone helplines and ICT-based provision as ways of providing services to employed adults.

Subsequent sections of the chapter review work being carried out directly with employers. Much of the focus for this activity is work with SMEs. Outplacement support provided by PES is looked at briefly in the second of these two sections. In the penultimate section the role of government in developing career support for employed people is briefly reviewed, while the final section summarises the key findings.

4.1. Examples of publicly-funded service provision for employed adults

One of the most well-established and long-running examples of services providing career guidance to adults are *Centres interinstitutionnels de bilan de compétence* (CIBC) in France. Their development is reviewed and a case study presented illustrating current practice as well as recent developments in service provision. The model of the CIBC has been adopted in several other European countries (see Section 4.1.2), although some reviewers have noted that take-up of the scheme had been lower than expected (Bartlett et al., 2000, pp. 86-87; Gendron, 2001) partly because it was initially targeted at workers with a low level of skills. However, around 40 % of those currently undertaking *bilans de compétences* in France are employees.

4.1.1. Development of the CIBC in France

In France career guidance for employed adults was first really addressed between 1970 and 1975. Until then the economic system was generally based on employees working their way upwards in the same occupational sector, often in the same organisation. Career progression was dependent on acquiring new knowledge and gaining further expertise related to one's first profession.

Since the end of the 1960s the structure of the world of work had been changing with the evolution in production techniques requiring more highly qualified staff. Together with the crisis in energy supply this led to an immediate employment crisis, unemployment and restructuring. Longer term this was to introduce a permanent change in the employment market, with strong development of the service sector and faster and shorter economic cycles.

As a response to this, in 1970-71 France introduced the first policies to recognise and validate prior knowledge and also created a legal apparatus for continuing vocational development, requiring companies to devote the equivalent 1 % of their total salary bill to training costs. Thus the state generated a system of continuing training and development. This also brought about an important change in how 'career' was seen, gradually transforming from the concept of undertaking one's entire career in the same company to the logic of having a career trajectory and, more recently, to the concept of 'career navigation'. In the context of the new economic order, with skills shortages and unemployment requiring mechanisms to enable the workforce to adapt to changes in technology and working conditions, and with the new right to training, the demand for career guidance increased rapidly. To enable workers to evolve, they needed the opportunity to recognise their professional skills and knowledge and to make relevant choices. Therefore the employment ministry put in place an outline of what was later to become the *bilan de compétences* (¹⁶), creating 10 experimental centres in 1985 and bringing together staff from several public services. This interinstitutional approach gradually

¹⁶) There is no direct translation in English of *bilan de compétences*. In the *Ressources Humaines Français/anglais et Anglais/français* dictionary, the *bilan de compétences* is defined as follows: 'in collaboration with an external management consultant, an in-depth analysis by an employee of his/her motivations, skills and professional experience, with a view to reconsidering or redefining his/her future career objectives'.

led to the development of independent, permanent specialist teams and extensive knowledge and know-how in adult guidance.

In 1989, following substantial growth, the state was led to perpetuate the initial experience and create the brand of *Centres interinstitutionnels de bilan de compétence* (CIBC). Thus the *bilan de compétences* provision was created through a network initiated by the French employment ministry between 1985 and 1989, and this national network now includes 110 CIBC centres. Their establishment in every département was recommended, so that by December 1991, when the right to the bilan de compétence was recognised in the employment code and a legal definition of the provision agreed, every département had at least one, and sometimes several approved centres, guaranteeing the quality and effectiveness of the provision.

Case study 25: The bilan de compétences provision available in France

The *bilan de compétence* centres are managed by administrators representing the state (the employment and national education ministries), employees' trade unions (CFDT, etc.), employers' associations, consular chambers (the Chamber of Commerce and Industry; trade chamber) and representatives from organisations in the economic, employment, work and training environments. The social partners are involved in decisions taken in areas such as recruitment, training and promotion, as well as in strategic planning, covering issues such as the development of the provision. They also have a role in ensuring that the career counsellors are kept up-to-date about changes in the labour market, so that the advice given to clients is informed by these developments. About 1 500 people are employed in the network of 110 CIBC and the network accounts for about 60 % of this provision in France. These centres aim to allow interested parties to analyse their professional competences, as well as their aptitudes and motivations, in order to develop a career trajectory and plan and, if appropriate, a training plan.

The centres in the field are managed locally but controlled by the Ministry of Employment. As not-for-profit organisations, the CIBCs are formed into networks at regional and national level, thus facilitating joint actions and enabling initiatives, approaches, and good practice developed by one centre to spread across the network. Apart from this specialist network, the majority of advice functions managed by HR specialists working in recruitment in the private sector, plus training offered in management and coaching, may also include the offer of a *bilan de compétences* type provision, mainly for executives.

(a) The services offered

The centres are not directly financed by the state but need to sell their provision. Users can receive funding from three sources, depending on their status: finance from public bodies; payments from the insurance funds for training; or through payment from the employer. The law has ensured that clients, be they employees or job seekers, are entitled to certain safeguards. The assessment is a voluntary process and each client signs an agreement; failure to participate cannot be used as a reason for dismissal. The voluntary nature of the provision is seen as a requirement to ensure that the client really becomes the protagonist in the

development of their career. The work is undertaken in a neutral location, away from trainers or human resource departments, and confidentiality is guaranteed.

The assessment is an individualised process, undertaken face-to-face and lasting between nine and 24 hours, distributed over about a month. This is structured in an initial phase to welcome and discuss the approach to be taken, an investigation phase, during which the results of analyses are undertaken and brought together to develop effective strategies for action, and a final phase which includes an oral summary and the production of a report, which remains the property of the client.

Three main approaches are used:

- (a) individual interviews: which form the main part of the 24 hours (the maximum length of the time available at the centre);
- (b) small group work: often known as workshops. Groups of six to eight people can be put to work on certain themes; or take tests; or start to undertake their own research (in which case they are briefed on all the resources available to them by a counsellor, including, for example, CDs and the Internet);
- (c) individual work: in addition to work undertaken at the centre, clients will undertake their own research. This is estimated to take about 24 hours on average. A plan is prepared with the career counsellor, who helps to select resources to assist the client in their research.

Detailed results are brought together in a *portfeuille de compétences*. The assessment aims to be more than a stocktaking exercise; it also creates the conditions for a career plan to emerge and for individuals to make judgements about the realism of their choice and to build action plans.

For more than ten years, the network of CIBC has been producing tens of thousands of *bilans de compétences* each year. The service is open to all those who have left the education system – whatever their age, sex, level or status – whether they come themselves, or are referred by the public services, employers or trade unions. The process allows individuals to take stock of their situation and allows them to develop a career trajectory and plan, with or without training, improve the effectiveness of their job search, understand better the difficulties found in work, validate their professional knowledge and skills and work out strategies for action.

For the state, the assessment process provides a useful tool to help workers adapt to changes in the employment market. The centres also have a second purpose: to provide a national resource in relation to guidance for adults.

Employees number 40 % of those undertaking *bilans de compétences*. Their needs are fairly diverse but their main goals are:

- (a) to change jobs and reinvent themselves;
- (b) to develop inside – or outside - the company;
- (c) to choose further training;
- (d) to face up to a problem in their work (a management problem or difficulty with their employer);

- (e) for self-improvement, i.e. to improve an aspect of the competences used in their work and to create their own work (i.e. move into self-employment).

Employers can suggest a *bilan de compétences* to their employees; this is a useful tool for managing human resources. It allows them, for example, to be more certain about the decisions they are taking in relation to promotions, training, redeployment. The *bilan* enables them to measure the gaps between the knowledge and skills of their employees and the requirements of the jobs. Companies can obtain an exact snapshot of the human resources in relation to their competences, aptitudes and motivations. The *bilan* can also help companies to redeploy effectively those staff deemed medically unfit or adapt work stations to different types of handicap. The *bilan* paves the way for customised support to help address change in modernising working methods and to build up competence development strategies adapted to the company's objectives and constraints.

The state and social partners have created a new law allowing the employed to benefit from 20 hours of training yearly. In January 2007, in Savoy, the employment ministry, all the trade unions, and employers' organisations signed an agreement stating that the network would be the main mechanism for developing use of this law. They discussed the provision required to achieve this, which includes undertaking *bilan de compétences* and also short interventions relating to career management, training and advice. The services will be offered internally to employees by all the employer associations and employees' trade unions.

Source: Centres interinstitutionnels de bilans de compétences, <http://www.cibc.net/>

4.1.2. Adaptations in other countries

The social partners have supported dissemination of the work of the *bilan de compétences* centres through international collaborative work under European Union programmes and the approach has been extended to other countries (Belgium, the Czech Republic and Switzerland) as a mechanism for enhancing worker mobility. There has also been unofficial development of the model in Italy and, in 2006, work started with the employment ministry of Employment and the social partners in Bulgaria to create a network of career guidance centres.

Similar models are being introduced elsewhere. For example, in late 2004 the Centre for Work and Income (CWI) in the Netherlands opened four competence test centres (CTC) in their local offices (Van Deursen and Janssen, 2006). This small-scale pilot by the CWI offered unemployed jobseekers the possibility of mapping their personal competences, following which the decision was made in mid-2005 to increase the number of locations. Setting up competence test centres in CWI offices in all large communities started early in 2006 with the aim of having a network of 120 centres by the end of 2006. However, these centres seem only to cater for unemployed jobseekers at present.

4.1.3. Other examples of services offering career guidance

Several PESs offer career guidance services to employed adults, as Case study 26 from the Flemish Public Employment Service (VDAB) makes clear. However, elsewhere some PESs do not advertise or promote the entitlement to services because of fear that they would be overused (OECD, 2004, p. 69).

Case study 26: VDAB career guidance services

The VDAB provides career guidance to clients when appropriate; this includes services to employed people, including for non-native speakers who can receive ‘customised integration guidance’. It also has a comprehensive website. The VDAB now outsources most of its services and is a commissioning body which has contracted out career guidance services to a partner organisation. In this way VDAB provides career guidance to employees through one-to-one personal coaching, or through group sessions; these are normally eight sessions of 1.5 hours each. The VDAB service package of up to 12 hours costs a maximum of EU-R 50. Candidates can pay for the service using training vouchers.

The organisation also offers career guidance in-company; here the service is centred on ensuring that the employee is centred effectively within the needs of the company (see Case study 33).

Source: VDAB, <http://www.VDAB.be/>

4.2. Helplines and ICT-based services

The advent of call-centre and web-based services is transforming many aspects of public services. Nowhere is this more true than in the case of PESs and the provision of career guidance. Just as ICT-based services are being used in companies and by an increasing range of private providers (see Section 3), so they have been adopted rapidly over the past 10 years by the public sector.

Sultana and Watts (2005) documented this major shift by PES to self-help services. They noted that the few countries that had not yet started developments in this area planned to do so. They categorised developments as follows:

- (a) self- and career-exploration packages (e.g. Austria, Belgium-VDAB, Estonia, Ireland, Lithuania);
- (b) web-based job-search facilities (e.g. Estonia, Ireland);
- (c) web-based registration (e.g. Denmark, Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands);
- (d) the use of call-centre technology (e.g. Belgium-VDAB, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Slovenia, Sweden).

Reasons for the shift to self-service included catering for rising numbers of clients. In some cases, this was because of rising unemployment but elsewhere because successful marketing had generated new clients. The development of self-service models has also allowed PES to target at-risk client groups with more intensive and personalised forms of support. Often this has been accompanied by redesign of the PES office space and the tiering of services to accommodate these new ways of working.

The next case study describes the work of AMS (Swedish National Labour Market Board) as one example of such an initiative.

Case study 27: AMS (Swedish National Labour Market Board): eServices for jobseekers, employers and their businesses

The Swedish National Labour Market Board (AMS) launched the Vacancy Bank where all vacancies reported to the employment offices in Sweden were published on the web in 1995. Following its immediate success, further Internet based services were launched in the following years. By 1998 it was clear that a large proportion of AMS employment services could be provided electronically to enable self-service via the web. A special Internet Division was established at AMS, with the strategic objective of developing labour market related services on the web, to enhance their services to citizens and companies, make the labour market more transparent and effective, and reallocate personnel resources from information/matching to the general public, to providing more substantial help to the unemployed in need of more long-term support.

Currently, around 40 people work on developing and maintaining the website, with an annual budget of around six million euro. Today, the AMS website contains a wide variety of services:

- (a) the Vacancy Bank, containing all vacancies reported to the employment services. Employers may register their vacancies themselves directly on the website, or transfer vacancies automatically from their internal databases. The vacancies registered by AMS staff for companies are also posted. Today, 50 % of the vacancies are posted by self-registration or automatic transfer; the goal is to reach 80 %.
- (b) the Jobseeker's Bank, where jobseekers may post their CVs on the web, and recruiters may search for candidates;
- (c) an educational database, containing information on college and university education in Sweden, which is updated daily. In partnership with universities and schools in Sweden, AMS have recently developed an XML-based standard, which will make it possible to transfer educational information automatically.
- (d) a database containing updated information on most occupations, with information on job content, educational alternatives, salaries etc. Text-based information is often combined with short films, interviews and articles;

- (e) an Artists Bank, containing an Internet gallery where examples of the work of 1 500 professional painters and photographers are presented to improve their chances of getting commissions;
- (f) a database containing information about performing artists (actors, dancers, entertainers etc), to improve their chances of getting work;
- (g) extensive information on labour market conditions in different parts of the country, with reports, statistics etc.;
- (h) contact information for the 400 local employment offices around the country and information on the local activities they provide.

The AMS website is one of the largest in Sweden, with about 600 000 individual users each month, or 250 000 visits a day. On a yearly basis, AMS estimate that about 1.5 to 2 million people use the website, a considerable achievement in a country of nine million people.

Source: <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/Other/UNPAN022030.pdf>

In the Netherlands, the government also sees itself having a role in making career information accessible and in stimulating self-help. For this reason it has set up the portal www.opleidingenberoep.nl. There is also the www.werk.nl website, developed by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, which includes a database of projected labour-market demand in some 2 500 occupations linked to related education and training routes. In addition, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science in the Netherlands is developing a website on educational opportunities.

Another example of call centre and web-based technology being used successfully in the public sector is Learndirect which has been operating in the UK since 1998 (for an outline of its development, in the broader context of the use of telephone helplines in career guidance, (Watts and Dent, 2002). In this case, a web database forms the basis for one-to-one advice and guidance over the telephone (an e-mail service is also under development). Research has been conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of guidance delivered by Learndirect over the telephone (Page et al., 2007). It concluded ‘the telephone guidance trial has shown there is demand for telephone guidance, that telephone guidance is feasible on a large scale, can be provided cost effectively, and that service users are satisfied and experience a range of positive outcomes’.

One feature of this service has been the high level of publicity invested in it; as a consequence, it has a higher profile than other provision for adults. The UK government’s Leitch Review of Skills (2006) has recommended developing a new universal careers service for England that would bring together current separate sources of advice. Recognising the success of Learndirect, it has recommended that this service should operate under ‘the already successful and well-known Learndirect brand’. The next case study describes the range of services currently offered by Learndirect.

Case study 28: The Learndirect service in the UK

Learndirect advice is a telephone service operating throughout the UK. It offers help at three levels: information on training and courses, advice on funding options and local childcare, and in-depth sessions on career development opportunities. These are all accessed through a single telephone number, and are free to the user. It is supported by a web-based service through which users can search for a course from a database of over 900 000 entries, search for an exam venue for a self-study course, view over 700 job profiles, get help and advice on funding, childcare, and other practical issues, match skills and interests with suitable jobs and e-mail a Learndirect advisor.

Learndirect also offers online training packages, for individuals who want to improve computer skills, languages and other work-related skills, and also to employers to improve the skills of their workforce; this includes the option of working towards a degree in partnership with a university. However, the advice service is impartial, and does not promote or favour this learning provision.

As well as English, information and advice is available in Farsi, French, Gujarati, Polish, Punjabi, Somali, Sylheti, Urdu and Welsh.

Learndirect conducts regular and systematic marketing to attract callers using radio and television advertising.

The service was founded in 1998 and since then has delivered more than 30 million advice sessions on the phone and via the web. In the year ending July 2006, 50 % of the 858 247 information and advice service users were employed either full- or part-time or self-employed, and in the year ending December 2006, 37 % of the 78 240 users of the in-depth guidance service were in employment.

Source: Watts and Dent, 2002, <http://www.learndirect.co.uk/>

4.3. Initiatives to promote learning

Many initiatives have been introduced primarily to promote learning. Usually such initiatives have been designed to promote social inclusion and have been targeted to some degree towards socially excluded or low skill groups. However, although they focus on learning, they often incorporate significant guidance elements. Some are linked to adult or vocational education institutions. There may often be the opportunity to offer career guidance when employed adults participate in continuing education. In Austria, federal centres for the promotion of adult education are legally obliged to inform and counsel adults, while adult learners can access education-based services.

Case study 29 describes an initiative to promote lifelong learning in Germany which has been partly funded through the European Social Fund.

Case study 29: Developing learning regions in Germany

International comparative studies indicate that Germany has not been as successful as others in exploiting the talents of all its population. The country is taking steps to promote lifelong learning to combat social exclusion and unemployment by creating the structural conditions to open up access to the world of learning. Ideas emanating from the Federal Ministry of Education and Research Action Programme ‘Lifelong learning for all’ and the recommendations of the *Forum Bildung* (training forum) focus on the following:

- (a) strengthening learners’ personal responsibility and self-management;
- (b) motivating disadvantaged groups that are currently less involved in education;
- (c) strengthening relationships between all education sectors;
- (d) cooperation between education providers and users;
- (e) improving the quality, quantity, and structure of the curriculum offered.

Cooperation and networking among learning providers are seen as crucial to creating new provision and structures to respond to the need for flexibility and customisation. This is promoted by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research within its programme Learning regions – providing support for networks, which is the largest single measure in Germany concerning the general structural conditions for lifelong learning at federal and state level. The objective is to bring together important players from different education sectors to develop new offers for lifelong learning within the scope of a regional strategy.

As with all lifelong learning programmes and initiatives, the federal and state governments and social partners cooperate in selecting the projects to be promoted and deciding on programme development principles.

In 2006, 71 networks were in place. While the development of the networks has often been initiated by an adult education centre, chambers of commerce, institutions of higher education and business development societies have also often been crucial to providing the impetus to establish these. Important concepts within the programme are sustainability and sharing effective practice through programme-wide thematic networks, which include lifelong guidance, particularly counselling about learning and qualifications and increasing transparency, and the involvement of, and cooperation with, small and medium-sized enterprises.

The state promotes dissemination between the regions and ensures that the initiatives interlock with their own measures to ensure coherence.

The programme Learning regions – providing support for networks, interrelates with several other initiatives. These include:

- (a) the joint projects at the federal and state level (*Bund-Länder-Verbundprojekte*): Further education passport (*Weiterbildungspass*) - Certifying informal learning, and Learning-oriented qualification approval in further education, within the scope of the model programme Lifelong learning of the *Bund-Länder Commission* for Educational Planning and Research Promotion (BLK);
- (b) the *Infoweb Weiterbildung*, an Internet database which has developed information standards and a meta search tool for all further education databases;
- (c) the further education test of the consumer organisation *Stiftung Warentest*;
- (d) the programme School-industry/working life;
- (e) a guidance project within the scope of the initiative Utilisation of globally available knowledge for initial and continuing training and innovation processes.

A broad range of partners has been brought together at regional level including companies, chambers of commerce, trade unions, business development organisations and cultural and sociocultural institutions as well as providers of learning opportunities. It was expected that each network would develop their own strategy, based on their region's characteristics and situation. Cooperation is bringing both increases in participation in learning and economies of scale, for example, in relation to joint marketing, virtual learning and the networking of learning locations. The trust, collaborative activities and new ideas arising from this cooperation are helping to develop a learning culture, and can be of particular benefit to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Source: NICEC.

Both the individual and society benefit from investments in competence promotion and expenditures in lifelong learning. In combination with the development of networks and supporting structures, these are the central components of an overall system of lifelong learning that is being implemented at a European level.

Another initiative in the Netherlands is to set up one-stop-shops to promote learning while working, one element of which is accreditation of prior learning (APL); this is also being explored in Denmark.

Case study 30: The one-stop-shop idea for learning while working

To increase the accessibility of working and learning, one-stop-shops are being set up throughout the Netherlands. The objective of the Learning and Working project is to stimulate and support employers, employees, citizens, business, educational institutes, centres for work and income, local authorities and all parties concerned to enable lifelong learning. The project is a joint initiative of the Ministries of Education, Culture and Science and Social Affairs and Employment.

The project has two starting points. First, it is important for citizens to learn throughout their lives to be able to work in the knowledge economy and society. Second, citizens can have a learning career as well as a working career and these two will continually alternate and strengthen one another. The original plan was to have 20 active regional one-stop-shops spread across the country by October 2007. They will be supported by extensive regional networks consisting of educational institutes, centres for work and income, and chambers of commerce. Arrangements have been made to increase demand by making companies (and their employees) aware of the importance of continuous and simultaneous learning and working.

Each advisor has an overview of local opportunities to cash in competences and work experience (APL), and offers guidance about possible additional schooling, learning while working projects or tailor-made schooling. Every employee, employer, jobseeker or person with a career request can come to one of the shops and will be referred to the right place with suitable guidance.

Source: Maes (2006).

4.4. Combating gender segregation in the labour market

One of the four pillars of the European employment strategy is ‘equal opportunities for women and men’ through decreasing gender gaps and, in particular, developing new approaches to opening up a wider choice of non-traditional occupations and managerial positions to women, where the latter continue to be under-represented.

In 2006, several Equal projects were launched to assist women interested in entering male dominated industries. In recognition of the need for continuing support to enable them to achieve their goals, there is also a focus on providing help and advice once the women are in the workplace. Research into gender segregation is also being undertaken in some cases, for example in relation to the labour market in regions in the Netherlands and among companies in the Nord-Rhein Westfalen region of Germany.

Case study 31 provides some elements of information on two projects being undertaken with EU Equal funding that focus on combating gender discrimination.

Case study 31: EU Equal projects to combat gender segregation

(a) The Glass wall (the Netherlands)

The Glass wall (*de glazen muur*) is a project in the Netherlands designed to address the segregation of the labour market into ‘male’ and ‘female’ occupations. Some 80 girls and women at different life stages are being mentored to support their choice of a career with a male image, such as in logistics, accountancy and personal security.

(b) Futura (Germany)

Futura (*Frauen, Unternehmen, Technik und regionaler Arbeitsmarkt*): Women, enterprises, technology and regional labour market is a regional development partnership (DP), located in North-West Westphalia. Futura is collaborating with several women’s networks and organisations, corporate associations, chambers of commerce and crafts as well as experts at local, regional and national level.

The Futura project in Germany includes several subprojects, half of which are working in the Ruhr-Area, half in more rural locations. One of these pilots, Fit for future, focuses on improving prospects for female apprentices in male dominated industries, supporting them through the transition into work. Once in the workplace, apprentices attend workshops, receive coaching and individual counselling to increase their self-esteem. They are also prepared for examinations and helped to deal with any conflict with superiors or colleagues. Contact with other female apprentices has helped to reduce isolation. Despite some initial scepticism from the participating enterprises, positive feedback has been received from both apprentices and employers.

Source: <http://www.glazenmuur.nl/> and <http://www.bbs-ahaus.de/>

These projects may be small in scale but, if successful, may provide models for improving career guidance, support and mentoring in the workplace to facilitate career progression for non-traditional workers.

4.5. Examples of publicly-funded services for employers

Several initiatives have been developed by governments (either at regional or national level), with EU funding, with the support of national or regional PES, to deliver services to employers that include career guidance. To what extent employers are contributing to the payment for these services is not always clear. Although some of these initiatives may not seem to involve guidance, they are about delivering career development in the workplace.

Other initiatives tend to focus mainly on training, as in the UK government's Train to Gain service for employers (¹⁷) run by the Learning and Skills Council in England. This offers free workplace training, including wage compensation to small employers, for skills training up to school leaver level as well as for some designated higher vocational training programmes. It is seen as a demand-led programme that builds on the previous Employer training pilots initiative in which 30 000 employers and 250 000 employees had participated by March 2006.

An initiative in the Steiermark region of Austria that worked with SMEs illustrates the provision of services to employers. It shows the fragility of certain career development services, as the project was discontinued due to lack of funding. The career coaches delivered support and also acted as brokers for other education and training interventions.

Case study 32: Career Coaching in the Steiermark region of Austria

Career Coaching was an initiative in Steiermark in Austria that focused on promoting professional continuing education and training in companies. The project started in 2000 and was financed by the regional government as part of a regional qualification and employment programme, which finished at the end of 2003: there were no financial resources in the next period to continue the initiative. The project arose from recognition of the difficulties faced by SMEs in accessing appropriate education and opportunities:

- (a) lack of time and access to specialist expertise and knowledge to find suitable training;
- (b) lack of customisation, with education opportunities being aligned to the needs of big business;
- (c) lack of clarity particularly regarding the time required for the transfer of knowledge into the workplace and for evaluation of the completed professional development project.

In four districts of Steiermark in Austria, network employees worked as career coaches, advising and supporting very small, as well as small and medium companies (SMEs) and their employees on education and training matters. They also facilitated taking appropriate training and development measures. Initially there were four regional network employees, housed in education institutions, but by 2003 this had increased to six full-time workers. A key part of the regional network employees' role was to develop active contacts in each area, where either definite or potential demand for education and training was to be found, and to bring together companies and education institutes, social partners etc., as well as provide coaching, counselling and guidance.

The meta-goal of Career Coaching was promoting professional continuing development by assisting companies with all their questions about education, providing information about, and the arrangement of, educational opportunities and further developing the adult curriculum in Styria.

¹⁷) www.taintogain.gov.uk/What+Is+Train+To+Gain/

A diversity of structures was established in the four districts, so the measures taken and the results achieved were different. Each region was organised according to the underlying strategy, activities and results, with starting points based on previous experience. The career coaches worked in the following ways:

- (a) networking: establishing new contacts with the main players in the region (in trade and industry, the labour market, and educational institutions) and raising awareness of the project. The regional careers coaches established contact with educational institutions to obtain an overview of the education landscape. In their role as independent providers of a service relating to further education, they prepared a transparent and comprehensive offer for employers. Thus a speedy and, above all, goal-orientated supply of, and demand for, training occurred. Where a standard type of provision was not available in one area, career coaches encouraged regional transfer or initiated collaborative training with several SMEs. This took account of the critical point that, for smaller companies, training was often not tailored to their needs;
- (b) engaging companies: building relationships to provide the right guidance. The main focus of the work in each area was based on the business needs of regional employers and their fellow workers. The focus of the project was decided in the course of needs analysis and individual discussions;
- (c) providing intensive assistance for the companies (with ‘after care’ and evaluation of the measures arranged): Career Coaching focused on the employer. After initial discussions, a tailored performance package was put together. Where an employer had a clear idea of the training required, the career coach supported the employer or employees in their search for the best training. If a training requirement arose which was not covered, the career coaches worked together with the educational institutions to organise goal-orientated measures. Where there was a need for further development, but this was not clearly defined, the career coaches worked on a training plan.

After successful training, maintaining the relationship with companies was also an essential part of the work. Client evaluation of the Career Coaching initiative also contributed to improvement in training provision, to the extent that the supply of training was brought in line with demand.

The following are examples of the work undertaken to support hairdressers and joiners:

- (a) in Grobming-Ennstal, through a meeting with the regional master of the guild, the career coach was able to identify a strong existing network (for passing on information and joint activities). As in many of the smallest companies, finance was an issue, although the interest was enormous. At the instigation of the career coach, a tailored 'EURO course' was devised for this group covering all of Styria;
- (b) in Grobming-Ennstal, joiners were invited to a meeting about developing joint training opportunities. As a result several companies agreed to appear on the Internet as a group. Thereafter a company adviser was given the task of designing an advertising strategy.

Source: Peter Härtel, *Steirische Volkswirtschaftliche Gesellschaft*

This case study highlights the importance of public/government funding for initiatives that target SMEs. Such funding can be delivered on a regional basis (as in this example) or nationally. Either way there would appear to be considerable economies of scale from delivering support in this way. While large companies might be expected to develop and fund their own initiatives, many SMEs will lack both the resources and expertise to develop the range of initiatives necessary.

Case study 33 describes work done by the Flemish Public Employment Service (VDAB) for a small company in Belgium. It also shows how external support is often needed by small companies, just as it is by large ones, when an organisation wishes to restructure all or part of its operations.

Case study 33: Cooperation between VDAB's career advice service and CV Ltd

CV Ltd is a Belgian production company within the meat processing industry and was the first Belgian meat company to obtain ISO-9002 quality certification. The family company is an SME and employs 45 people. VDAB's intervention was spread over a period of five months in 2005 and consisted of nine process guidance days and 13 employee career guidance actions. CV wanted to enhance the company's efficiency on a short-term basis, through automation and by enhancing the efficiency of each individual department. They wanted to achieve a higher day-objective without affecting the quality standards. A first action was to merge two departments. This merger required a redefinition of the tasks performed by both the management and the collaborators. It also had an impact on the division of labour and on collaboration within the team. The goal of VDAB's career advice services was to help this transition succeed, and was concerned with the impact that this reorganisation would have on management and the employee jobs. Individual employees were supported in carrying out their job in a way that was required by the new work forms as soon as possible.

A needs analysis was undertaken through selective interviews with management about the definition and the goals of the project. Two central themes emerged during the interviews (at company level): lack of clarity about responsibilities and competences, and inadequate communication lines. Specific guidance support was defined for managers, to enable them to map their own strengths and weaknesses, clarify how these influence their current and future roles and refine responsibilities and competences through the clarification of job descriptions.

Individual guidance interviews established each individual's personal contribution to the success of the project and achievement of objectives. This resulted in an individual action plan including specific plans (e.g. training courses) and improvement proposals (at an individual level). Individual action plans were discussed within the company and integrated in the business plan. Proposals affecting several people were addressed through targeted consultation with those involved (start of the improvement in communication).

Awareness-raising activities and shop-floor guidance were then prepared for workers in consultation with immediate managers (exploring how the workers could be made more aware of their personal contribution in the achievement of the objectives). Reflection opportunities (individual and/or in a group) for workers in each participating department resulted in action plans with individual and group targets (e.g. training needs). Individual development plans were integrated within the business plan. The project team discussed and evaluated the changes and changed job contents with company management.

The project enabled the company to clarify the future perspective and the objectives of the reorganisation, and hence the roles and responsibilities of the leading executives. It raised awareness about the change processes, providing the basis for developing PDP and planning training actions and for reinforcing communication between the leaders and the employees in the light of the common objectives.

Source: Eddie Donders, VDAB, <http://www.VDAB.be/>

The guidance merger project, funded under the Leonardo da Vinci programme EU, outlined in case study 34 describes examples of work being done with local employers in one municipality in Sweden. It extended an adult education initiative Equal project to provide educational and career guidance to employees working in small local companies.

Case study 34: The guidance merger project in Sweden: a model for guidance work by intermediaries in companies

Söderhamn is a municipality in east central Sweden with a traditional industrial base in timber and associated manufacturing. The municipality covers a large rural area as well as the town itself. The economy is now redeveloping around small technology companies. A new large adult learning centre (CFL) was opened in 2002, with a team of 80 staff including guidance counsellors, researchers and marketing specialists, and subject lecturers. During the five-year national adult education initiative (AEI) that preceded the opening of the CFL, the local education authority developed a town-centre adult guidance service in partnership with the public employment service (Hawthorn, 2003). The work of that service was incorporated into the new CFL and it continues to work closely with other agencies (including the Jobcentre, the benefits office and the university) throughout the municipality to coordinate and promote lifelong learning activities (Svensson et al. 2006, p. 10).

A Leonardo da Vinci programme between 2002 and 2006 called the guidance merger project provided funding for the CFL to develop and pilot a process whereby an external guidance agency could work with local companies of various sizes and types of business to provide careers guidance for employees, in their own workplace. The model involved three stages:

- (a) establishing a relationship with the employer:
 - (i) an external consultant or a guidance worker explains the guidance service to the employer, often in connection with an existing learning programme;
 - (ii) the guidance worker meets with staff at the workplace to explain the scheme.
- (b) developing a long-term relationship with the staff:
 - (i) guidance materials are introduced, produced or adapted for each type of company with its tradition and specific culture in mind;
 - (ii) the guidance worker establishes a relationship with HR managers and the staff over time.
- (c) integrating guidance in the continuing training and professional development of the company:
 - (i) the approach is embedded for continuing development.

A team from the CFL piloted this approach with a range of companies in Söderhamn. The environment was particularly favourable as the town had a high level of unionisation and successful experience of negotiated activities (although the unions had not hitherto been proactive in developing training). Also, workplace learning was already being developed with funding from the Equal programme, and the LdV focus on guidance sat neatly with the Equal objectives. The following examples of how individuals and companies benefited are taken from the project report.

Company 1 was a small manufacturing firm operating in a highly competitive market where high quality production was essential. Three workers and the owner took part in the pilot. Two of the workers decided not to pursue any education or training but the third did decide on further training: his job involved more responsibility and he had more self-confidence. Unlike the other two he had clear objectives for his future personal and professional life. The owner also opted for further learning, in his case to improve his French to improve communication with customers.

Company 2 sold spare parts to industry. Two of the managers were approached: one was positive, the other not initially convinced of its usefulness. A meeting was arranged with all the employees for the guidance workers to present the project and their role in it. This was not initially a great success: no-one asked questions and the employees were hesitant (on reflection the project team decided they could have been clearer and more direct). However, individual counselling was offered at the work place for about 45 minutes with each employee, then repeated on two other occasions. Counselling with one salesman led to a decision to take up a university course. A 27-year-old worker with a more routine job was at

first sceptical about further study because of the extra work on top of his job, but he decided at the first guidance session to finish upper secondary school. He had his second session at the CFL (adult learning centre) to get help to apply for this. His third session followed after he had been studying for almost a year: he wanted advice about how to continue his education afterwards. A young woman in an administrative role also sought guidance for help with applications for university. She was already positive about further formal education, partly because she had been part of an in-house training programme. The manager saw the pilot as a success and particularly appreciated the use of a skills inventory, the planning of study, the continuing dialogue with staff during training, and the later evaluation of what had been learnt.

Company 3 manufactured machines for sawmills, a world leader in the complex machinery needed in an integrated production system. Management was positive towards the programme from the outset. One manager came to the CFL together with two employees for the initial discussion. Offered a range of options, the management were inclined to university level courses but agreed that the guidance should continue with the employees individually. One employee opted for courses at upper secondary level in preparation for university studies, and then later received support with an application for a university course in logistics. Guidance was also offered to young trainees in this company.

Company 4 was a pulp mill factory with 200 employees and an urgent need for skill development: at the time of the project a large proportion of the workforce was approaching retirement and it takes between six months to a year for a new recruit to learn the job properly. Initial training for pulp production is at upper secondary level and includes educational subjects (Swedish, English, mathematics, physics and chemistry) as well as work environment and health, management and control of production etc. Recruitment was combined with training, although not all trainees were employed at the end of the course. At the time of the project they were developing a group of ten trainees (all had previously been unemployed). These worked full time on a shift schedule, studying mainly by distance learning but also through group work and tutorials. This arrangement also allowed existing staff to be released for training. Trainees had a group session with the guidance worker a few weeks into their training, and later each had an individual session in which one activity was accreditation of their prior experience and learning. The ambition was to make the trainees employable in the pulp industry: three-quarters of this cohort were in fact employed directly by the company.

The pilots demonstrated the need for:

- (a) dialogue with both the employers and the employees;
- (b) flexibility of approach;
- (c) guidance that is accessible and carried out over time (permitting a learning process with the opportunity to develop an interest in guidance and education);
- (d) the integration of guidance with learning;

- (e) the importance of creating an equal relationship towards employees in a secure setting (in one case initial contact involved the employee giving the external guidance worker a tour of the company, explaining the production process. In that way the guidance worker's incompetence in technical matters made the relationship more equal);
- (f) sensitivity over where the guidance was offered (in one case, employees became silent when the owner-manager was present).

Source: Hawthorn (2003) and Svensson et al. (2006).

In Italy, the reform of public service bodies has resulted in the PES being devolved to the regions and with, consequently, different structures and approaches at local level. Case study 35 describes how the public guidance centre in Reggio Emilia (Polaris) worked with a local company. This work was also reported as part of the Guidance merger project.

Case study 35: Guidance merger project in Italy: work by Polaris with Comet

Comet is a world leading company in the manufacture of pumps for agriculture. The project, called Rubik, was externally financed and organised on a national scale. It permitted the company to experiment in developing tools for competence analysis as the basis for a training pathway.

One problem in Italy is lack of awareness among companies of the potential benefits of guidance for businesses and individuals workers and the absence of supportive structures at local and regional levels. This project made it possible for the company to get support from a public guidance centre in Reggio Emilia (Polaris). With this external support the company was able to develop a more innovative way of organising learning, taking a more long-term perspective. This included job rotation, training placements, and an apprenticeship system. The internal work was organised through cooperation between the HR manager and each department head in the company.

This case study illustrates how the employers' interest in guidance can be reached through a project with a focus on learning and organisational change.

Source: Svensson et al. (2006).

Case study 36 describes how Highlands and Islands enterprise and Careers Scotland, publicly-funded all-age careers services in Scotland, are working in partnership with a specialist team from the University of Liverpool. The case study is another example of partnership working.

Case study 36: Building capability: example of partnership working

Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE), through Careers Scotland and the Windmills team from the Graduate into Employment Unit at the University of Liverpool, are developing services built around the Windmills approach. This was a programme developed at the University of Liverpool (www.gieu.co.uk/windmills_programme/intro.asp#organisations), and

aims to foster career resilience by enabling individuals to manage their careers effectively and to adapt their decision-making to changing life circumstances. The aim is to facilitate the delivery of an innovative and creative range of Windmills resources and approaches to individuals and organisations across the Highlands and Islands, a large but sparsely populated area of the UK.

Currently the focus is on setting up the partnership and building the capability to deliver services. Key accomplishments so far include:

- (a) appointment of a Windmills project development manager at Careers Scotland HIE;
- (b) dual branding of Windmills materials (online and hard copy);
- (c) developing the capacity of staff and partners to deliver Windmills in a variety of settings – in workplaces, communities, Careers Scotland centres. There are 38 Windmills champions in the Careers Scotland HIE area;
- (d) rolling out the programme to at least eight major employing organisations;
- (e) supporting at least one pilot programme in each local enterprise company locality;
- (f) windmills online resources to be freely accessed via Learning works, the HIE network's online training and learning resource.

Source: <http://www.windmillsonline.co.uk/cshie.html>

As seen in the abovementioned examples, the aim of the partnership arrangement is not only to ensure longer-term sustainability but also to enable the approach to be customised and tailored to meet local needs.

4.6. Development of services

In addition to being a direct supplier of career support for people in employment, governments may also take a role in the development of services by others. This could take several forms:

- (a) contracting with private providers to deliver services;
- (b) provision of vouchers to allow clients to purchase services;
- (c) partnership arrangements;
- (d) initiatives to open up the market for guidance;
- (e) regulating and quality-assuring service provision;
- (f) setting entitlements.

While the first two of these are primarily about funding arrangements, they are often accompanied by expectations of both innovation and reducing costs. They may also stimulate existing private providers to extend and develop their services.

Partnerships, in this case, are about the public sector working together with private providers to deliver services. Governments can also create markets in other ways, for example, by giving tax breaks to employers for training. Several of the case studies in this chapter provide examples of partnership working.

Once some sort of market in guidance services has been created there is also a key role for governments to regulate and to quality assure it, that is, to make sure that services meet certain standards and that the consumers and purchasers (individuals, employers, and others) are receiving services that meet accepted quality standards. Governments can also set levels of service entitlement.

In general, governments are usually only relatively minor players in delivering career development support to people in employment. Much of their activity has focused on services to young people entering the labour market, to unemployed people, and to other disadvantaged groups, such as older workers, the low-skilled, refugees and women returning to work.

Governments may also provide a safety net of provision in sectors where the private sector does not offer affordable services. Offering outplacement support to workers being made redundant when their employer is not able to fund private provision would be an example. Several examples of work with SMEs may fall into this category. In several countries, there is an entitlement to outplacement support, although the extent of provision may vary. For example, in Belgium all employees in Flanders aged over 45 who are made redundant are entitled to the benefits of an outplacement programme, whereas in Brussels and Wallonia, there is a right to outplacement support at the employer's expense, consisting of up to 60 hours of a job reclassification programme spread out over a maximum period of 12 months. There is some involvement of PES or publicly-funded careers services in the provision of career support to people being made redundant in several other countries. In some cases these public sector offerings are in competition with private sector provision (see Section 3.3). However, in other cases it is more likely that without a public sector offering, employees would not receive any, or only receive very limited, outplacement support.

In the following two sections further information on partnership arrangements for career guidance and financial support is provided.

4.6.1. Funding

As far as overall funding of guidance activity is concerned, Cedefop, Sultana (2004) noted that the most common trend was to see governments devolving funding to regions, although one or two countries have centralised funding. Neither approach has necessarily led to an improvement in services. Often the reverse was the case with devolution of funding, for example, leading to lack of coordination and costly overlap in service provision. In some cases, Sultana observed that responsibility was devolved without the matching funds for implementation.

The other trend was for governments to outsource provision, particularly guidance provision within their PES. Some countries have also introduced voucher provision, where clients are given vouchers to pay for services. Individual learning accounts, where governments make some funding available to individuals to pay some, or all, of the cost of training courses is another alternative. The first use of individual learning accounts was abandoned in England, but there are still schemes in Scotland and Wales and the principle is now proposed again for England in the Leitch Review of Skills (2006). Other countries have preferred to contract directly with providers of services. Elsewhere, funding for services may be provided via training levies (i.e. by employers) and delivered to employees as some form of entitlement (i.e. a certain number of days for training each year). Much of the *bilan de compétences* work in France is funded in this way (see Case study 25).

Most government funding would appear to be focused on supporting training and one issue is whether support for career advice and guidance is considered to fall within funding ring-fenced for training. From the case studies, it would appear that very often funding for guidance for individuals has been provided using funding sources that are notionally earmarked for training purposes.

Government and EU funding has also been critical for the development of services by some intermediaries. Many of the initiatives involving trade unions have been partly funded under the EU Equal programme which promotes social inclusion. EU funding has also underpinned some of the initiatives in the public sector. Most of the initiatives that have been funded in this way have focused on the lower skilled and aim to address lifelong learning issues more broadly as well as specific work-related upskilling. One concern is that funding for many of these projects may only be short-term. The work of the career coaches in Austria (Case study 32) had to be discontinued when funding was not renewed. Another concern is that limited or short-term funding may be provided for the development of new services but that it is assumed that the running of the service will be supported from existing budgets.

4.6.2. Partnerships

The essence of successful partnership working is that both partners gain from the relationship. Partnerships can take several forms. For example, Learndirect in the UK operates in a partnership with its supplier of call-centres, Broadcasting Support Services. Some organisations that are specialist suppliers, for example ICT-based services may offer their expertise and services to a variety of providers in both the public and private sector.

Partnerships, especially with governments, can also create opportunities for suppliers of services to expand the range and diversity of services they offer to the private sector. Government contracts may cover a significant proportion of the provider's overhead or development costs so that the marginal cost of developing new services is reduced.

The Government can also act as a strategic leader. With guidance services the first task is often to get cooperation between government departments or agencies, education and employment, in particular.

The Cedefop, Sultana study (2004) identifies four levels of cooperation:

- (a) within government between relevant departments and agencies;
- (b) cross-sectoral cooperation through forums at a national level with key government and stakeholder representatives as well as partners involved in service provision;
- (c) cooperation through similar forums at regional or local level;
- (d) cooperation at an EU level between Member States and in the work of the European Commission.

Sultana and Watts (2005) describe the collaborative arrangements that various PES have developed for service delivery. These include partnerships with education, with the labour market sector and with the community, as well as other government departments. They also identify the key areas where PES collaborate. These include information sharing (e.g. labour market data), sharing tools and resources, and sharing expertise and joint activities, ranging from joint participation in European-funded projects to attending careers fairs.

One focus of recent EU research has been moves to develop national forums for guidance. These have been concerned with encouraging collaboration between government departments and also between government and other stakeholders in developing and planning career guidance services. One of these projects, the EU joint actions project MEDSUI produced a report *Collaboration in the provision of career guidance services* (2006) with nine examples of initiatives ranging from partnerships at a local level to setting up national associations. These form part of a response to changed employment realities and the realisation that much existing guidance provision is fragmented.

Another initiative in the Netherlands involves the Centres for work and income. They are located in prominent high street locations and have plans to place a range of services in the centres including private organisations, such as temporary job agencies. In England, there are also several examples of individual trade unions being involved in local information, advice and guidance (IAG) partnerships, the providers and coordinators of services in a locality. Sector skills councils in the UK (see Section 3.5) have also worked in partnership with trade unions (see Case study 7). The role of partnership working in several of the case studies has already been discussed. The tradition of social partners working together has underpinned many of the initiatives described in this report. A key lesson is that partnerships have to be built and this takes time, staffing and resources.

4.7. Summary

At one level the picture presented in the past has been that the public sector does not offer a great deal of career development support to employed workers. Employed people form only a small proportion of the clients of most PES within the EU. However, both in France with the *bilan de compétences* provision and in the UK with Learndirect, two models of provision have been developed that have a substantial proportion of employed people among their clients. It is also clear that the AMS website in Sweden has a most extensive reach. Many other initiatives, however, have been focused on the low-skilled and, in particular, on engaging them in learning. This activity is undoubtedly important when it is estimated that there are 72 million low-skilled workers in Europe making up about one-third of the workforce (Eurostat, 2004). Recognition and accreditation of prior learning (APL) has been a significant issue for several of these projects. A number of other countries are also investigating mechanisms for this.

There is also clearly a need for initiatives that are aimed at SMEs and several case studies describe public sector initiatives with these companies. Before they could deliver effective intervention, many have had to put considerable energy and effort into establishing a relationship with the owners/managers of the SMEs and with the employees in the companies who were often either suspicious of the intent of the project or unaware of how they might benefit from it. Some of these initiatives have aimed to provide career development support but others have been more concerned with change management. They have, however, clearly focused on career development of the workforce even though they have not always been about providing career guidance to individuals. In some cases their impact has been through giving managers the skills to handle people-development issues and/or to manage change more effectively. Although many of these initiatives appear to have been successful, this has not necessarily guaranteed continued funding. Many are also restricted to specific localities or regions. It is hard, therefore, to be confident about the extent of the reach of programmes such as those described here.

The next section of the report reviews its main findings on the career development support provided to people in employment and attempt to identify key lessons from this compilation of practices.

5. Main findings

In this section the key findings from the research are summarised. The intention is to suggest how issues are interlinked and to set out a summary of the main messages.

There are three main conclusions from this research that have important implications for the future development of policy and practice. These are the:

- (a) lack of an effective strategy for providing career development support to the majority of the employed workforce;
- (b) increasing role for intermediary organisations in providing career development support;
- (c) importance of individuals being able to acquire the skills necessary for successful career management.

We start by reviewing the most significant challenge: this is lack of effective career development support for the majority of the employed workforce. Developing a better understanding of the business and economic case for career guidance is a key part of addressing this challenge. However, there are other factors that have hindered progress. After first reviewing the overall challenge, the next two sections discuss these issues.

Identification of key factors affecting the delivery of effective support, is followed by a summary of the nature of the existing provision of career development support and discussion of trends in the way it is being provided to people in employment. The diverse range of sources of support that are available to people are frequently not recognised in current discussions about policy and practice.

In increasingly specialised labour markets, the possession of career management skills and detailed labour market knowledge will also become more critical for ensuring successful labour market participation. Most people will have to be self-reliant much of the time and this makes it important to embed opportunities to acquire the skills for effective career management within career interventions.

In the final sections of the chapter, some key lessons that emerge from the research and go on to discuss possible ways forward are identified.

5.1. The challenge

The central paradox is that, while employers tend to focus their career development effort on what they identify as ‘talent’ groups – managers, future leaders, people with scarce skills (all groups that are in high demand in the labour market) – governments have understandably tended to focus their efforts on people who are unemployed or economically inactive for some reason (e.g. have a disability), or those in employment who have low skills or are disadvantaged in the labour market. Of course, certain groups, such as older workers, may

indeed be more vulnerable to changes taking place in the labour market and it is appropriate that they are the focus of attention. It is not surprising that the focus of much government-funded activity is on the desire to reduce certain economic costs (e.g. social security payments, unemployment benefit payments) and address certain social concerns (e.g. social exclusion).

Similarly, companies explain their focus on the career development of a small number of employees either as the allocation of scarce resources or as a clearly defined business benefit. A small number of companies have put in place some career development support for the whole workforce but, even here, there is usually a two-tier system where key groups receive an enhanced level of career support (see Section 2.1). When companies buy in support (e.g. career coaching, outplacement), the level of support is also usually skewed towards these high talent groups. Such efforts recognise that motivation and sense of direction are important in eliciting superior performance and commitment from key employees but run the risk of creating a two-tier ‘them and us’ culture within an organisation as well as possibly missing latent talent that could be available to the company.

The net result of current activity, by governments and employers, is that the career development of the bulk of the workforce is largely ignored. Yet the challenge of moving into a knowledge economy together with current demographic trends, implies that managing change effectively, both at organisational and individual level, will become increasingly important. It will also challenge assumptions about the ages at which people can develop and who can access particular types of work. Improving career development support is also relevant to EU policies on efficiency and equity in education and training (European Commission, 2006b).

It further appears that the focus of career development interventions is often short-term and on the acquisition of formal qualifications or skill development for the current job. This seems to reflect concerns about low levels of skills in certain sections of the labour force rather than about skill development across the labour force as a whole. It also assumes that formal learning and qualifications are a key measure of workforce skill levels and, consequently, are one of the most important outcomes for career development interventions. There are tensions between seeing career development as a legitimate agenda in its own right and career development being subordinate to other, possibly more narrowly focused, ones. It seems, therefore, that the case for career development at work, something which is critical in a knowledge-based economy, is currently only being addressed in an incomplete and partial way.

5.2. The business and economic case

For employers, the main challenge would seem to be building a business case for supporting more effective career support. Many employers recognise the need to offer development opportunities and career support to key talent groups. Although resource-intensive, this is manageable because the numbers involved are comparatively small.

Employers seem to find it more difficult to justify offering career support to all their employees. This may be because they are only prepared to allocate modest levels of support and effort to this activity and lack confidence that such a small level of resource will make a significant difference if spread thinly. Hirsh (2006) has identified four propositions of how career development specialists are able to help employers (see Figure 6). An underpinning rationale for this is to give organisations and their employees the resilience to handle change more effectively. The key message for employers is that helping their employees and managers use and develop the talents and skills of their workforce will attract and retain a more skilled and more highly motivated workforce, and lead to the workforce being better utilised and also to one that is more productive.

There are also issues about how career development practice is integrated within HR inside an organisation. Particularly critical is the link between performance appraisal processes and career development but there is also a need to integrate any form of career development support with other HR processes in the organisation, especially learning and job filling/deployment (see Figure 1).

Career development has been found to be a significant factor in attracting, motivating and retaining good-quality employees (see Section 1.2). As human capital becomes more important, there is a strong argument for businesses to pay more attention to career development. However, employers need to adopt an approach that is realistic in scope and sustainable for the long term. This means making effective use of ICT-based support and sources of informal advice and support.

For governments there is both an economic and a social case for career guidance. Supporting the career development of people in employment is, however, inextricably linked to supporting the career development of adults in and out of the labour market, and in making transitions between jobs in different enterprises. Meeting the Lisbon agenda of the EU becoming the foremost knowledge economy in the world requires recognition of the synergy between these two strands of guidance activity (see Figure 6); the career development support provided to adults as they move in and out of the labour market and between employers (right-hand side of the figure) and the career development support provided to employed workers (left-hand side of the figure). At present there is often a disconnection between what government is focused on (increased labour-market participation of unemployed and disadvantaged groups, the right-hand side) and the concerns of the employed workforce (skills and career development, the left-hand side).

It is important to realise that the economic argument for guidance is as much about improving productivity in work as it is about increasing labour market participation. Similarly, the social benefits are realised as much through greater job satisfaction and quality of working life as through social inclusion.

One issue for governments is to what extent people in employment should be entitled to publicly-funded support and the form that such entitlement might take. In France, employees can access the *bilan de compétences* scheme using funding from the insurance fund for training. The recent Leitch report in the UK has suggested that people should be able to have a free skills health check. In several other countries training vouchers can be used to purchase career guidance.

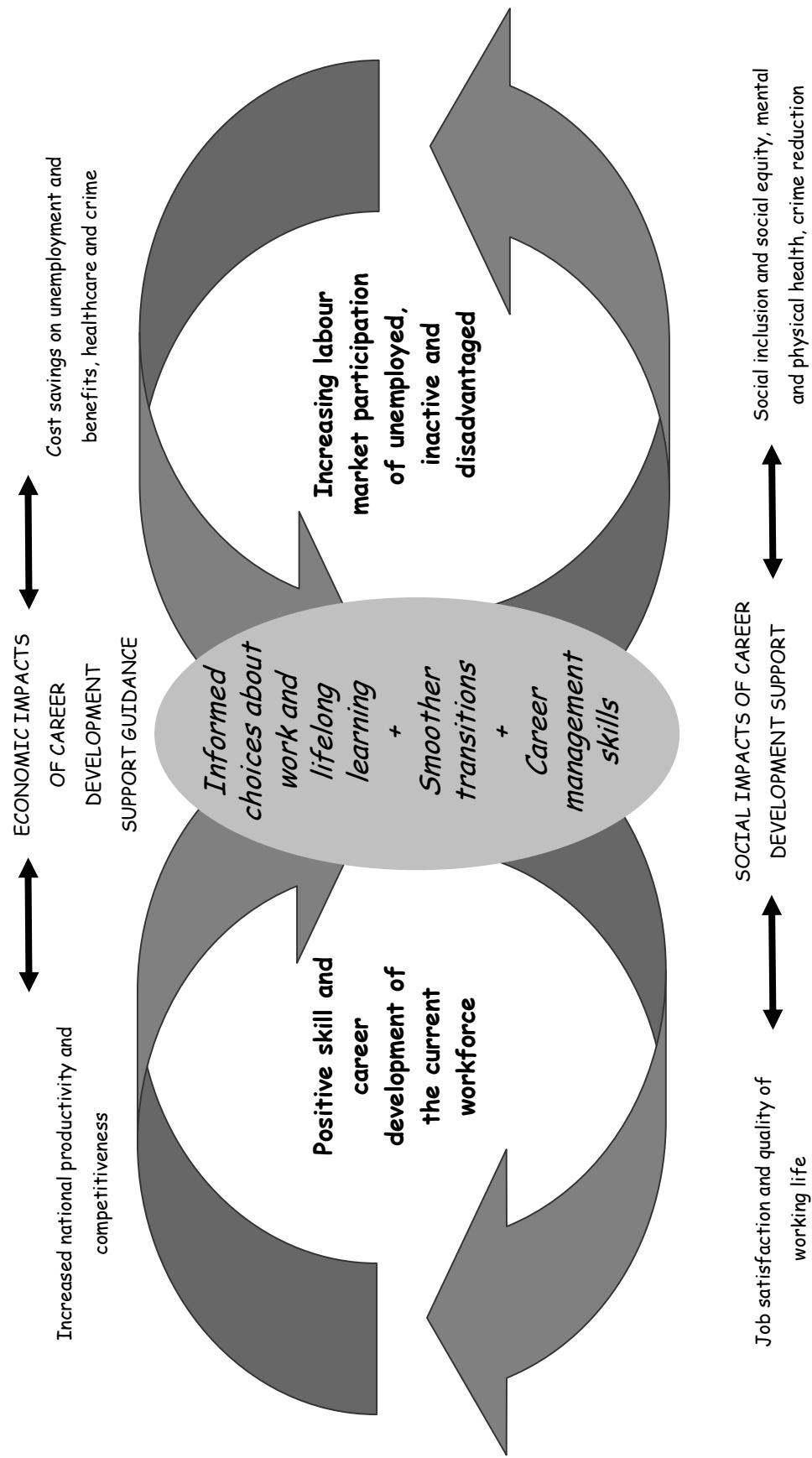
The role of government is both to complement existing employer provision, by providing direct support to individuals, and to encourage and support employers to offer more effective career development support internally. However, several of the case studies presented in this report have been particularly successful because they were developed locally with close involvement of key stakeholders. There is a need to encourage such innovative provision that responds to local needs. It is unlikely that effective career development support can be provided to employed workers without government involvement. Governments do, however, need to work with the social partners. The government's role could, take several forms:

- (a) government-supported adult guidance services: such services may be funded directly, for example, Learndirect in the UK, or indirectly, for example, CIBC in France. Such services should have an all-inclusive remit, that is, be open to everyone, although they might offer additional/more intensive support to some priority groups;
- (b) targeted initiatives supported by public funding: people working in many SMEs, people employed in some geographically remote regions and certain industry sectors are likely to need additional levels of support beyond that provided by adult guidance services. Several of the case studies, for example, describe services delivered by sector bodies and trade unions. There are also several successful initiatives in specific localities that are targeted at SMEs. Many SMEs are unable or unwilling to fund effective career development support. They, and the community in which they are located, benefit from regional and local coordination and cooperation in developing and delivering support designed to meet specific local or sector needs;
- (c) guidance infrastructure: developing quality standards for guidance activities, training volunteers, building and sustaining networks, researching effectiveness and pumping-priming innovation in service delivery are all critical activities that need support and funding. Governments clearly have a role in providing some of this support and are well-placed to initiate and lead such developments.

Underpinning this is the need to recognise that career development support will only be sustainable in employment settings if it delivers value to both the individual and the employer.

Hirsh (2006) noted that career development helps employees understand how to identify and access work roles which suit them well and opportunities for improving their skills and developing their potential. Employees who are both happy in their choice of work and feel the organisation is developing them, are better motivated, more productive and more able and willing to take on more challenging work. Even if not aiming for career progression in conventional terms, career development helps employees to respond more positively to change within their job or in the organisation structure. Receiving this kind of career support also encourages employees to develop the skills and understanding to manage their own choices about work and learning more effectively in future. Better career management skills make employees more self-aware, more interested in how the organisation's needs are changing, more self-reliant in keeping their skills up-to-date and responding to changes at work. Developing the workforce is about more than just training for the current job. Career paths and training also need to keep pace with changing business needs.

Figure 6: Economic and social impact of career development support



Source: Hirsh, 2006.

5.3. Factors affecting provision

Communicating the business and economic case for paying attention to the career development of people in employment is a major challenge to the sustainability of initiatives. Successful career development practice has also been hindered by a range of other factors.

Lack of continuity in funding or lack of will and support has often led to promising initiatives being discontinued. This has affected initiatives in the public sector as well as by employers and intermediaries. Many initiatives in the public sector or provided by social partners have only received short-term funding. There is also evidence that initiatives by employers are similarly prone to abrupt changes dictated by economic circumstances or business priorities. This lack of continuity in support is a prime cause of the fragility and weakness of many interventions designed to bolster career development. For example, relationships which have been carefully built up over time can easily be shattered by the sudden withdrawal of a service.

Differences in terminology and use of language between career guidance professionals mainly working in the public sector and HR professionals working in companies can inhibit successful collaboration in this area. There can also be tensions between employers who are interested in providing career development within the context of their organisation and career guidance professionals who do not see their interventions for a client as being properly confined in this way. This is both about differences in ways of working and different underlying perspectives on the purpose of career development activities. At present, there does not seem to be a suitable arena for the diverse professional groups involved in career development support to meet and discuss such issues.

Many of the issues that Sultana (2006) identified as affecting the provision of career guidance in a small state apply to career development support in an employer's internal labour market. Handling one's familiarity successfully inside an organisation presents challenges and can make openness and candour difficult. On the other hand, it can make it easier to know who to speak to and facilitate informal support through networking. The quality of personal relationships can be extremely important. Inside organisations, information about job opportunities may be available and/or known about before a post is formally advertised (and posts may also be tailored to a known candidate). Just as in small states, one role for career development interventions inside organisations is to empower individuals who do not have effective personal networks; this is especially important in relation to equality of opportunity.

The increasing importance of knowledge work means that the labour market is becoming both more complex and more specialised. Lack of understanding of how the labour market operates can be a major barrier to participation (especially, but not exclusively, for new entrants and job changers). A particular challenge for guidance professionals is to help people acquire the detailed labour market knowledge and career management skills that they require. Online sector-specific information sources are one possible way to address this and to help individuals build their social capital.

Another major challenge is deciding both what career development support should be delivered to people in employment and how. This is about the rationale for services – a coaching or a counselling model, for example – and deciding what is best done inside organisations and what externally. One generic model is to have a two-tiered approach starting with self-service or informal means of support, but backed up by more in-depth support from experts, possibly in a call-centre. This creates new roles for career professionals as trainers of these volunteers and as coordinators of services. It will also put a premium on having a clear rationale for guidance activities. Using interventions to help individuals acquire the skills they need to manage their careers will become more important. Increasingly, this will include equipping more people to generate the labour market information they require i.e. how jobs are obtained in a specific work area, what are the entry-level jobs, what qualifications and experience are required, etc. It is hard to sell the importance of career development to governments, employers or individuals, when it is unclear precisely what service is being offered. This may explain why there often appears to be little pressure from employed people as a group for better support for career development.

5.4. The state of existing provision

Table 2 summarises the nature of existing provision for people in employment from the main providers identified in this research. The table looks at the target groups of different forms of provision, the focus of the activity carried out by different providers, the sustainability of interventions and other issues relevant to a particular provider of support. The table can only be indicative of where the balance of provision lies. One of the characteristics of what career support is provided to people in employment is the multiplicity of sources from which that support is potentially available. Consequently, it is both difficult and risky to make generalisations about overall levels of career development support.

New technology has been a significant factor in opening up not only new ways of delivering services but also in bringing new players into the market. This has considerable implications for policy and practice. For many people (not only those in employment), the Internet is likely to be the first port of call when they need career support. Much more career support is likely to be provided via informal means (e.g. social networks) and by volunteers (e.g. fellow trade unionists, work colleagues). There are a variety of reasons for this: trust and credibility are two particularly important ones.

Table 2: Factors affecting career development activity

Providers	Target groups	Focus of activity	Sustainability	Other issues
Large employers	Highly skilled 'talent' groups. Rest of workforce (sometimes)	Leadership/career development of talent groups. Development for current job.	Commitment to supporting the wider workforce often variable. Concerns about employability cyclical.	Opportunity to make more use of informal support and ICT-based self-help materials. Rarely involve guidance professionals (except for outplacement).
SMEs	Variable. More likely to focus on key people, areas of skill shortage or where economic development a priority.	Focus likely to vary with need.	Often dependent on external support.	Fear of people leaving can be a factor limiting development activity. Access to SMEs can be difficult.
Trade unions	Many initiatives target the less skilled or focus on those at risk of unemployment. Some target moderate- to high-skill groups.	Main focus on engaging people in learning. More now focusing on career development.	Availability or continuity of funding can be an issue. Initiatives targeted at the less skilled often supported by EU Equal or governments.	Involvement of employers critical for success and increases sustainability. Role for EU/governments in promoting social partnership.
Outplacement/ coaching consultancies	Level of support depends on ability to pay. So provision favours higher-skilled.	Job placement. Leadership development/ coaching.	Usually engaged by large employers.	Greater use of ICT and self-help materials may extend range of support.
Self-help/peer support	Favours moderate- to high-skill groups who are more able to participate in these activities.	Networking and information sharing.	Some initiatives have received start-up funding but continuity a problem. Often depends on goodwill/energy of participants and key individuals.	Partnership and start-up funding might stimulate development.
Professional bodies/ associations	Mainly focused on professional/high-skill groups.	Valuable source of specialised information. Limited range of support. Mainly ICT-based but some printed material. Some establish networks of members to advise others.	Provision of information on entry routes and qualification requirements tends to be sustained. More active advisory services less embedded.	May have a role in certification. Often have CPD requirements. Not always an impartial source of information.
Recruitment consultancies/ temporary work agencies	Focus on high-skill groups and certain employment sectors.	Significant source of specialist labour market information in some sectors. Information on job application process valuable to new/returnees to the labour market. Temporary work assignments provide opportunity to gain work experience in a new area. Some offer training as well as work placements.	If adds value to candidates and results in better placements.	Use of ICT and self-help materials may extend range of support.
PES	Most focus on less skilled. In some cases employed people excluded from service. Some starting to work with employers, especially SMEs.	Job placement. Formal learning. Increasing use of self-service/ ICT.	Strong economic and social case for social inclusion.	Ability to cater for highly-skilled groups or to provide specialised labour market information, without partnerships with sectoral agencies, may be questionable. Often have a poor image with employers and employed adults due to current focus on low skilled/unemployed.
Publicly funded careers services	Have tended to focus on less skilled. Some starting to work with employers, especially SMEs.	Skill review. Formal learning. Increasing use of self-service/ICT.	Funding for services to employed people and for work with employers often uncertain. Some national funding models offer access to long-term support (e.g. employer training levies).	Ability to cater for highly skilled groups or to provide specialised labour market information, without partnerships with sectoral agencies, sometimes questionable.

It is important also to distinguish between the good-practice provision described in many of the case studies and the provision that is typically available to someone in employment. Someone in receipt of high-quality career development support is very much the exception rather than the rule. People find it difficult to get the support they need. Nor is it the case that people are necessarily more likely to get support when they are in the greatest difficulty. It is more likely that, if they are in receipt of support, it is partial – designed to address some career development issues rather than others – and may not be set up to refer them to other sources of help.

Nevertheless, although there is a major challenge to design and build effective services both inside and outside organisations, there is also a need as part of this process to build in links between services. Referral is not only needed between the levels of provision that might be offered by a single provider, for example, in a work setting from the company intranet to the HR call centre, or in a PES from self-service provision to a guidance professional. Partnership working requires effective networking across providers so that individuals can be properly referred from an initial point of contact to the most useful and relevant source of support.

There is also a need to navigate skilfully the different interest groups involved (e.g. public services and employers) in partnership working. This requires a thoughtful policy and skilled workers to implement it. The case studies which have involved partnership working have shown how considerable energy and time has to be invested in developing and building the relationship between partners.

What is also striking about many of the issues and trends that affect the provision of career development support is that they apply regardless of the sort of organisation that is providing the service. There are strong parallels between the experiences of employers, PESs and intermediary organisations in terms of the challenges they face.

5.5. Trends in guidance provision for employed adults

If there is a key trend in the development of guidance provision, it is the move towards self-help strategies. This is true as much in PES provision – where, as Sultana and Watts (2006) point out, there has been a major shift to self-service provision, as in provision by employers and in education where many of these self-help services have been pioneered. There have been considerable developments since the OECD report (2004) commented that the potential of ICT and call centre technology had not yet been fully realised. It is becoming increasingly clear that these technologies offer cost-effective ways to deliver career development support, especially to employed people, as several case studies show.

This is possible because of developments in ICT, which is being used extensively by PES, other public sector careers services, employers and others as a vehicle for delivering career development support. Similar web-based offerings are also being made available by employers, by recruitment agencies/websites, virtual communities and professional

associations. In fact the thrust in the use of ICT is similar regardless of the provider. Sultana and Watts note four ways that ICT is being used by PES:

- (a) the development of self- and career-exploration packages,
- (b) web-based job search facilities,
- (c) web-based registration for job seekers (including CVs),
- (d) call-centre technology to access information and counselling.

Clearly self-help requiring the client to work on their own using the Internet is different from the client taking the first step to getting more in-depth career advice by making a telephone call. ICT-based provision is now probably the dominant model for providing career information, advice and guidance to the employed. The case studies suggest that ICT and websites, in particular, can be used to raise awareness of guidance services and to facilitate peer support as well as for the delivery of career and labour market information and self-help materials.

The fact that there is a significant private-sector presence, with both recruitment agencies and websites, and also specialist providers offering web-based services, can be taken as one indication that there is a market for these kinds of services and also of unmet demand for career advice and support from people in employment. However, it should be noted that there is little current evidence of many individuals paying to use these services. Rather, their use of such services tends to be funded either by employers or the agencies themselves; sometimes, in the case of recruitment agencies, this is to attract candidates to register with them.

There would appear to be three main concerns about the multiplicity of ICT-based service offerings:

- (a) quality of services: quality of service is variable and cost of entry into this market, while high for research-based comprehensive and tiered products, is quite low for other more limited products;
- (b) complexity of information needs: many employed adults pursue their careers in very specialised labour markets and require highly specific labour market information to support their career decision-making. There is a role for sector-specific initiatives (see Case study 13);
- (c) access: individuals with a low level of computing skills or access may be excluded from using these services. In some countries bandwidth limitations and cost of Internet access may restrict the range of resources that can be accessed (OECD, 2004).

Many ICT-based initiatives have also been developed for stand-alone use (OECD, 2004). This is true both in the public sector and for much private-sector provision. However, these services will not necessarily meet all of a client's needs, and opportunities for referral are often limited.

Call centre technology is being used successfully both in the public sector and by companies to offer more in-depth guidance and support. It is important as an innovation because it promotes easy access to support and has much greater potential reach than many more conventional models of guidance. While it might seem that such approaches can only deliver a highly structured guidance intervention, they appear to have been quite popular with clients and several companies are using call centre technology not only for routine HR management but also as one way to provide more in-depth career support. The experience of Learndirect in the UK also contradicts the common assumption that call centre technology can only offer a limited guidance intervention.

This links to a second issue in relation to career development support for employed adults and to self-service models of provision in particular. They tend to assume that users of such services already have the skills required to manage their careers effectively. While some e-guidance materials may have modules designed to impart, or support people in acquiring, the skills needed for career management, others simply use relatively crude matching or searching capabilities.

Alongside the emergence of self-service/self-help provision, there continue to be other forms of career intervention. Personalised services are offered both by PES and by employers but in both cases they are frequently targeted at specific groups. Employers are increasingly using coaching models to deliver professional and management development as well as career support to highly valued employees, while PES and other guidance providers tend to use more traditional guidance approaches based on interviewing or counselling (often time-limited) with groups regarded as being ‘in need’.

Courses and workshops to deliver career support have been extensively adopted in education but have also been used by PES and employers. Job clubs are one well-known example for the unemployed but career workshops have also been used by employers both to improve career planning and to develop career management skills (see Case study 2). One distinct advantage of such group-based activities is that they encourage peer support. Small group work is one component of the CIBC programme (see Case study 25).

Once providers offer a range of services there is also an issue about how clients are directed to the most appropriate level for their needs. Often it is simply by referral from one level to another. However, there have been experiments with screening in terms of readiness for decision-making. Research by Sampson et al. (1999) allocates people to one of three levels of readiness. Those judged to have a high level of readiness are referred initially to self-help services; those judged to have a moderate level of readiness might be offered limited staff assistance, such as advice on how to make best use of the available resources; while those with a low level of readiness might be offered more in-depth assistance. Sampson et al. estimated that between 10 % and 50 % might need in-depth support (depending on the population). There is also the separate, but related, issue of ensuring that people are referred to the most appropriate source of support (see Section 5.4) regardless of their initial point of contact.

The final trend in provision that builds on the value of peer support is recognition of the importance of informal career support. This is a particular feature of some trade-union-initiated activities (see Section 3). There is evidence that people rely on peers and work colleagues for much information and advice. In organisations, there is also a frequent assumption that an individual's manager has the ability to provide the advice and information that individuals need to manage their careers. While this assumption may be questionable, ignoring the impact of such sources of career support is unrealistic. A better strategy may be to think about how the quality of such informal networks can be enhanced and individuals made aware of how to use them more effectively. There is the opportunity for career professionals to play a significant role in training, supporting and coordinating these informal networks.

5.6. Lessons

While there are some large scale programmes, such as the *bilan de compétences* in France and Learndirect in the UK, which have the potential to deliver significant levels of career development support to people in employment, many other initiatives are much smaller in scale. This does not mean they are not valuable or important. They may be the most appropriate way to deliver services in some settings (e.g. SMEs), in certain locations, or for some individuals. Initiatives by trade unions, for example, are a promising way of delivering career support in the workplace and have the potential to deliver on a large scale. There will also always be a role for specialist providers, such as outplacement and coaching consultancies, and the need for specialised labour market information will only increase. Diversity in provision, along with partnership, is the best way of achieving resilience and to cope with change. Different agencies should cooperate rather than compete with each other.

There are also other significant issues, such as whether employed people should have an entitlement to some degree of career development support. If so, what form should that entitlement take? How useful would activities such as periodic skill audits or psychological assessment be to people? While some of these issues are policy issues for governments or employers, there are several key learning points that emerge from the research.

Partnership working is easiest when parties have clearly defined mutual interests. The lifelong learning agenda has been easiest for unions, employers and governments to work together on, as it is most clearly of interest to all parties. Outplacement is also an area where collaboration is relatively easy as employers will pay some, or all, of the costs and unions clearly wish their members to get new jobs. When it comes to advice to employed adults about obtaining work or career progression, there are sometimes tensions: guidance which may lead to employees leaving their present employment and finding better jobs elsewhere may put unions and employers at odds.

Intermediaries who are running guidance as a business need to find market niches in which to operate. Much guidance sits on the back of the major demands for recruitment services, where the fee for filling a job provides the revenue stream. Outplacement is a market in itself

(usually employer funded) but with big peaks and troughs of volume. The more specialised business of giving career development support to the employed works because suppliers, often self-employed specialists, only need small volumes and the day-rate for such work is high and usually financed by employers. There does not yet seem to be a market in economic terms for provision of personalised career support to the majority of employed adults.

It is often not clear to individuals in employment that they need career development or that it will benefit them. Several of the case studies indicate that considerable persistence is needed to build up a relationship with both employers and employees. Having convenient access in non-threatening locations may be a key factor for some groups. Essentially this means taking the time and making the effort to understand the concerns of the key stakeholders involved. Marketing has been both a significant activity and cost for some initiatives. The importance of marketing in increasing take-up has probably been underestimated, and there may be a key role for government in marketing the advantages of career planning per se, to encourage individuals to look for it in the form and location most appropriate to them. This research has also indicated the multiplicity of sources of career development support for people in employment. There is a need to make more people aware of the range of sources of career support available, as well as their strengths and weaknesses.

Service delivery has often depended on additional specialist support. There is a need for overarching or enabling bodies to support people on the front line in a variety of ways. These include training, development of resources, branding and marketing of services, and setting professional standards. A variety of types of organisation have a role to play: professional associations for guidance workers, educational institutions that train them, national and regional organisations of employers or trade unions, sectoral organisations, PES, etc. It is clear that a range of expertise is required and that no one profession or organisation has a monopoly on that expertise. It is important to recognise the role of these bodies as enabling factors in the development of effective services. Once again, collaboration is crucial.

5.7. The way forward

While considerable progress has been made across the EU in improving access to guidance and the quality of guidance systems, since the EU Council Resolution on Lifelong Guidance in 2004, significant challenges remain. Findings from this review of experience across the EU member countries support the conclusion that a major current deficiency is adequate career development support for existing workers. A knowledge-based economy needs to make good use of the skills and potential of its citizens. There is, therefore, a need to strike a balance between targeted initiatives for particular groups and some effective level of career development support for everyone.

5.7.1. Who benefits from career development?

More effective career development at work will assist the development of a knowledge economy and benefit individuals, employers and society at large. This is an argument for costs to be shared between individuals, employers and governments.

Many employers pay for career development support. First, they frequently pay for coaching, assessment and development support for individuals from key talent groups (e.g. senior managers, etc.). Second, they also regularly pay for advice and support on learning and development activities. Third, they usually fund outplacement activity.

The willingness of individuals to pay for career development support is less clear. Some initiatives have charged individuals, although such services are often subsidised to some degree. Some individuals who need the most extensive support will not be able to fund it but it would be short-sighted to limit their access to support. Some countries have used training levies to fund services. Another option is to give individuals an entitlement to funding through training vouchers or learning accounts. This is seen as one way of moving from a supply-led approach to demand-led one and for governments to stimulate the market.

5.7.2. Guidance professionals need to build bridges and links to other professional groups

The research has indicated that career development support does not just come from guidance professionals. There is a need for guidance professionals and the professional associations that represent them to build bridges and links to other professional groups that advise employers on strategic HR issues and/or deliver support to individuals and their managers on HR development. As far as career development at work is concerned, the issue is as much about strengthening ties between the diverse set of professional groups involved in delivering career development activities as strengthening the role of existing groups or establishing new ones where they do not exist. There are also new roles for career and HR professionals as the trainers, coordinators and supporters of people who give career support on an informal basis.

5.7.3. The case for career guidance for the employed needs to be communicated effectively

The arguments for paying more attention to career development are particularly relevant to the debate about how to develop a knowledge economy. Lack of clarity about the role and contribution of career development support is illustrated by discontinuities in service provision and confusion over language and terminology. This has undoubtedly hampered the development of provision. The challenge is as much one of communication as one of the form or development of provision. While there is clearly a significant gap in the provision of career development support for people in employment, service development requires agreement by the key stakeholders – governments, employers and social partners – on how best to approach an issue that is so central to the EU's future economic development.

This review has presented a diverse range of case studies of effective career development support. They indicate that there is no one right way of providing career support to the employed. They do, however, indicate that sustained and focused effort is required to make a difference. Such examples of good and innovative practice cannot simply be transferred from one country to another or from one organisation to another. Ideas and practices need to be adapted to local circumstances. Such adaptation needs to be based on a detailed understanding of how the initiatives were initially developed and have subsequently evolved. Even good practice requires time to become embedded.

This report shows that much remains to be done to deliver the best career development support to people in employment. Development of a strategy requires effective dialogue and the engagement of governments, employers and other social partners as well as subject experts. The case studies in this report describe much innovative provision. The challenge is to make more people aware of what can be achieved to broaden career guidance provision for the employed.

List of abbreviations

ACFI	Association of Career Firms International
ACP International	Association of Career Professionals International
AEI	adult education initiative
AMS	<i>Arbetsförmedlingen</i> (Swedish National Labour Market Board)
APEC	<i>L'association pour l'Emploi des cadres</i> (Association for Executive Employment)
AF	public employment service
APL	recognition and accreditation of prior learning
AMS	<i>Arbetsförmedlingen</i> (Swedish National Labour Market Board)
BIWI	<i>Berufsinformationszentrum der Wirtschaftskammer Wien</i> (career information centre of the Economic Chamber Vienna)
Cedefop	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
CEL	Centre for excellence in leadership
CDS	Career Development Service
CIBC	<i>Centres interinstitutionnels de bilan de compétence</i>
CID	Criminal Investigation Department
CINOP	<i>Centrum voor Innovatie van Opleidingen</i> (National Centre for Innovation of Education and Training in the Netherlands)
CIPD	Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
CFDT	<i>Confédération Française Démocratique du Travail</i> (French Democratic Confederation of Labour)
CFL	adult learning centre
CPD	continuous professional development
CTC	competence test centre
CWI	Centre for Work and Income
DHV CR	consultancy based in the Czech Republic
DGB	<i>Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund</i> (German Trade Unions Confederation)
DP	development partnership
EDF	<i>Électricité de France</i>
ELM	expertise in labour mobility. Knowledge provider on international work issues.
EMF	European Metalworkers' Federation

Futura	<i>Frauen, Unternehmen, Technik und regionaler Arbeitsmarkt</i> (meaning women, enterprises, technology and regional labour market)
HIE	Highlands and Islands Enterprise
HK	<i>Handels- og Kontorfunktionærernes Forbund</i> (the Union of Commercial and Clerical Employees in Denmark)
HR	human resources
IAEVG	International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance
IAG	information, advice and guidance
ICC International	Institute of Career Certification International
IIP	Investors in People
IQONS	online fashion community
KAD	<i>Kvindeligt Arbejderforbund</i> (the Women Workers' Union)
LHH	Lee Hecht Harrison
NICEC	National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling
NOS	national occupational standards
Noste	national adult education initiative
NVQ	national vocational qualification
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PDP	Personal development plan
PES	public employment services
PDPs	personal development plans
R&D	research and development
SAK	<i>Suomen Ammattiiltojen Keskusjärjestö</i> (Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions)
SFS	<i>Sozialforschungstelle Dortmund</i> (Central Scientific Institute of the University of Dortmund)
SMEs	small and medium sized enterprises
SSCs	sector skills councils
TUC	Trades Union Congress
ULRs	union learning representatives
VDAB	<i>Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling en Beroepsopleiding</i> (Flemish Public Employment Service)
VUC	adult education centre in Denmark

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Annex 1: Methodology

This study has primarily drawn on two sources of information. Existing reports from previous Cedefop research studies, OECD / World Bank / Cedefop / ETF questionnaires and country reports, including the resulting synthesis reports, and other published material from individual Member States, have been used to inform the research context and to generate an overall picture of provision across individual Member States. In addition, informants have provided more detailed case studies of both innovative and best-practice work as well as accounts of the types of career support that individual employees might experience.

Identifying potential informants was a major component of the first stage of the project. Informants were identified from a range of sources:

- (a) members of the European Commission's expert group on lifelong guidance;
- (b) the Euroguidance network;
- (c) participants at the 'International symposium on career development and public policy' held in Sydney in April 2006;
- (d) NICEC and international fellows;
- (e) existing personal contacts (e.g. from involvement in previous European research projects).

Initial contacts have often suggested further people to contact. A list of all the people who have contributed to the research is included in Annex 2.

This work has been supplemented by library and Internet-based research to collect the most recent information and reports. Many respondents have also indicated websites that provide additional information and/or reports.

Annex 2: List of contributors

Australia

Col McCowan Queensland University of Technology

Austria

Eva Baloch-Kaloinaov	Euroguidance network
Peter Härtel	Steirische Volkswirtschaftliche Gesellschaft
Gudrun Nachtschatt	Arbeitsmarktservice Österreich
Rainer Remsing	ÖGB
Karin Schweiger	Institute for Research on Qualifications and Training of the Austrian Economy (IBW)
Julia Zdrahal-Urbaneck	Institute for Research on Qualifications and Training of the Austrian Economy (IBW)
Helmut Zelloth	European Training Foundation

Belgium

Isabelle Barthès	European Metalworkers' Federation
Piet Cosemans	VDAB
Andree Debrulle	ACV-CSC
Eddy Donders	VDAB
Ralf Drachenberg	UEAPME
Sonja Kohnenmergen	Fédération des Entreprises de Belgique
Dominique Lorent	Euroguidance network
Eddy Vercammen	VDAB
Wiebke Warneck	European Trade Union Institute for Research

Canada

Mark Venning Association of career professionals international

Cyprus

Antonis Kafouros Euroguidance network
Nicos Nicolaou SEK trade union school

Czech Republic

Zuzana Freibergova Head of Guidance Services Support Unit
Dyma Svec Akses

Denmark

Tina Brinchmann-Jensen	LO Storkbenhavn
Thomas Q. Christensen	Confederation of Danish Employers
Lisbeth Jacobsen	Vuskontakt
Christa If Jensen	Guidance expert
Michael Kell	Guidance expert
Inge Langberg Kjaer	Head of Section, Sirius
Peter Plant	Danish University of Education

Bo Ravn	UU-Nordvestjylland
Henrik Schilder	CEEP
Rie Thomsen	Danish University of Education
Anders Vind	LO (Danish Confederation of Trade Unions)

Estonia

Kristi-Jette Remi	Estonian Employers Confederation
-------------------	----------------------------------

Finland

Hanna Boman	Euroguidance network
Helena Kasurinen	The Finnish National Board of Education
Markku Liljestrom	SAK
Markus Penttinen	AKAVA
Simo Polyhonen	AKAVA
Anna Tiilikainen	Centre for International Mobility, Helsinki
Rita Vanhauwenhuyse	Nokia
Heidi Viljamaa	CareerStorm
Raimo Vuorinen	Centre for International Mobility, Helsinki

France

Jean-Luc Caldi	Euroguidance network
Rémy Lecolazet	CIBC
Regis Roussel	Euroguidance network

Germany

Margit Althoff	Transnational Coordination Equal: FUTURA
Isabelle Bonnaire	Euroguidance network
Sonja Deffner	Confederation of German trade unions
Knut Diekmann	DIHK, Berlin
Winfried Heidemann	Hans-Böckler-Stiftung
Bernhard Jenschke	IAEVG/AISOP
Inka Pedraza	Euroguidance network
Karen Schober	Federal Employment Service
Daniel Tech	Social Research Centre Dortmund (SFS)

Greece

Iakovos Karatrasoglu	Euroguidance network
----------------------	----------------------

Ireland

John McCarthy	International Centre for Career Development and Public Policy
Marie McManamon	National Centre for Guidance in Education
Peter Rigney	Irish Congress of trade unions
Nessan Vaughan	FAS

Italy

Cristina Cogoi	Melius
Daniela De Gregorio	Stoa

Concetta Fonzo	Centro Risorse Nazionale per l'Orientamento
Silvana Greco	Director, Centro Documentazione Ricerche per la Lombardia (CDRL)
Daniela Pavoncello	Isfol
Andrea Rocchi	Centro Risorse Nazionale per l'Orientamento
Francesca Torlone	Melius

Lithuania

Aldona Maciuciene	Expert
Neringa Miniotiene	Euroguidance network

Luxembourg

Jos Noesen	Ministry of Education
Jacqui Spence	Prism Research and Consulting

Malta

Romina Bartolo	Union Haddiema Maghqudin
Brian Borg	Projects Officer, Euroguidance Malta
Ronald Sultana	Euro Mediterranean Centre for Educational Research

The Netherlands

Angela Gunn	NXP semiconductors
Martine Maes	CINOP
Annemarie Oomen	APS
Chiel Renique	Confederation of Netherlands Industry and Employers
Nannette Ripmeester	Expertise in Labour Mobility
Peter van Deursen	CINOP
Zjev van Dun	CINOP
Siegfried Willems	Euroguidance network

Norway

Hildegunn Wiggen	AOF Lotofen
------------------	-------------

Poland

Magda Kopczynska	Polish Confederation of Private Employers
Wojciech Kreft	Senior Consultant, ECORYS
Grażyna Morys-Gieorgica	Labour Market Department
Hanna Świątkiewicz-Zych	Ministry of Economy and Labour

Portugal

Vitor Figueiredo	Euroguidance network
------------------	----------------------

Slovakia

Irena Fonodova	Euroguidance network
----------------	----------------------

Slovenia

Daniela Brecko	Director, Planet Gv
Samo Hribar-Milic	Association of Employers of Slovenia

Sasa Niklanovic Employment Services of Slovenia
Simona Torkar-Flajnik Human Resources Manager, KRKA

Spain

Elvira González Santamaría National Institute of Employment (INEM)
Juan Menéndez-Valdés UNICEF
Fefa Vila FOREM

Sweden

United Kingdom

Mick Carey	Careers Europe
Tony Charles	Tony Charles Associates
Pamela Clayton	University of Glasgow
Bert Clough	TUC
Claire Coldwell	Ad astra Career Management
Sally Cross	GIEU, University of Liverpool
Andrew Dean	Marchmont Observatory
Iain Eisner	Careers Scotland
Dave Eva	TUC unionlearn
Chris Evans	Institute of Career Guidance
Joe Fearnehough	TUC
Wendy Hirsh	IES/NICEC
Sally Hughes	Qudos South East
Nigel James	PRIME-Cymru
Geof Luton	Working Lives Research Institute
Norman Mackell	National Education Chairman, Federation of Small Businesses
Ann Mason	Skillset
Rosemary McLean	Career Innovation
Joe McLeod	HAD
Jenny Mirfin	UFI Learndirect
Stuart Mitchell	Corporate Horizons
Rachel Mulvey	University of East London
Marcus Offer	Guidance expert
Liz Rees	TUC unionlearn
Sally Russell	Right Management
Ann Ruthven	centre for excellence in leadership
Caroline Smith	TUC
Tony Watts	NICEC
Sheila West	Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames
Phil Williams	Careers Bradford
Frances Wilson	CIPD
Jonathan Winter	Career Innovation

Cedefop (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training)

Career development at work
A review of career guidance to support people in employment

Cedefop

Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities

2008 – IV, 135 pp. – 21 x 29.7 cm

(Cedefop Panorama series; 151 – ISSN 1562-6180)

ISBN 978-92-896-0519-9

Cat. No: TI-70-07-154-EN-C

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Career development at work

A review of career guidance to support people in employment

This report presents the findings from a research study that set out to review the range of career guidance provision supporting workforce development across the EU-25 Member States and to identify innovative or best practice provision. The report includes 35 case studies which provide accounts of practice by employers, trade unions and the public sector as well as other intermediary organisations, such as outplacement consultancies, professional associations and industry sector bodies.

How should career development support be provided in the workplace ? This review of current practice across the EU identifies several key issues emerging from the research including: how to build the capacity to deliver more effective support; the impact of new modes of delivery, such as ICT, on career development practice ; the disconnect between provision inside and outside the workplace; and the increasing role played by intermediaries, such as trade unions, recruitment consultancies and private/independent providers, in career development support to employed people. Much career support for the employed is informal and a key challenge is how best to support and enhance the capability of those who deliver it. Successful career development practice involves building both human and social capital.



CEDEFOP

European Centre for the Development
of Vocational Training

Europe 123, GR-570 01 Thessaloniki (Pylea)
PO Box 22427, GR 551 02 Thessaloniki
Tel. (+30) 23 10 49 01 11, Fax (+30) 23 10 49 00 20
E-mail: info@cedefop.europa.eu
www.cedefop.europa.eu

Free of charge – On request from Cedefop 5183 EN



Publications Office

Publications.europa.eu

ISBN 978-92-896-0519-9



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