



## **Let the advisors have their say**

Following initial meetings at the 2012 International Congress of the IAEVG / IAG / AIOSP in Mannheim, and at the 2013 International Congress in Montpellier, representatives of professional careers advisors from Germany, France and Holland have agreed to cooperate in a European working group of educational and vocational advisors under the umbrella of the IAEVG / AIOSP. Representatives from advisory groups from Spain, Cyprus, Belgium, Holland, Finland, the United Kingdom, France, Germany and Switzerland have expressed their interest in this Europe-wide collaboration and in joint lobbying on behalf of educational and vocational guidance services within a European political context.

ACOP-F and the dvb invite all European associations active in the area of advisory services, as well as individual members, to collaborate in the debate about common issues and problems and to work towards the improvement of guidance services Europe-wide.

Our aim is the creation of a European working group of careers advisors with the following goals:

- We want to provide a platform for a professional discourse on the emancipatory task of vocational guidance, and the importance of making the subjective needs and circumstances of the individual, as regards their vocational, educational and career choices, the focus of the counseling work.
- Based on an analysis of the current situation, including the training and professional situation of advisors in the European countries, we want to impress our interest in institutionally backed, professionally autonomous educational and vocational guidance on EU institutions.

- We need to evolve joint proposals for the development of humanistic vocational and educational guidance, in the service of the individual, as the focus of our European lobbying.

This call reacts critically to the attempts in individual EU countries to functionalize vocational and educational guidance in the interests of political economy, which we consider to be clearly at odds with EU Council resolutions and recommendations, in which the importance of guidance is continually emphasised as a key means for promoting the development of the citizen and ensuring social cohesion. The actual situation of educational and vocational guidance has consequently changed over the past years in many EU countries and in some cases significantly deteriorated. Some examples to highlight the situation:

in France:

- The public vocational guidance of *Éducation nationale* is now under heavy pressure. Since 2009, more than 50 careers information centers have been closed and, in the next few months, dozens of other services are due to disappear.
- Working conditions and the quality of services have deteriorated significantly .
- Only 4,000 careers advisors are scheduled to ensure support and advice to approx. 6 million pupils, 2.5 million students and thousands of jobseekers who seek the consulting centers in France.

in Germany :

- An increasing trend to functionalize guidance to combat perceived professional shortages.
- As a result, careers guidance, especially for the young, is biased towards particular professions.
- An increasing tendency to deliver careers guidance within the coercive bureaucratic context of educational and labour market policies.
- An unacceptable, because inimical to guidance, trend towards a simplistic , economic quantification of the evaluation of guidance.
- A refusal of state labour market and education policies, and of government-funded guidance providers, to establish mandatory standards for the training and education of careers advisors and uniform quality standards for the provision of guidance, permitting complete freedom of trade in the field of educational and vocational guidance with no quality control.

Ronald Sultana ( *dvb -forum 2/2013 pp. 26ff* ) did not mince his words :

- The economic power of multinational corporations and supranational organizations has expanded at the expense of political power, in recent years, to the extent that decisions concerning human life and well-being are being taken outside democratic control.
- Often, and in many parts of the world, the state has withdrawn from the task of protecting people against the resulting insecurity and fear. Instead, governments are demanding more flexibility in the labour market and in all other areas of life determined by market forces . As a result, individual insecurity is on the rise. In fact, the individual is exposed to an increasingly individualized life risk.
- The individual is expected to adapt to the new circumstances, and to act accordingly, without adequate state provision to enable citizens to meet these requirements.

We believe that a different guidance policy is both possible and necessary, which

1. recognizes the variety of consulting practices and does not engage in their standardization,
2. puts participation in social life and personal well-being at the core of guidance policy,

3. defines a high level of advisor qualification and training, and guarantees high-quality, free to user, counseling services.

We are united in the belief that, in conjunction with education and training , guidance is an essential element in allowing the individual to take his own life in hand and to become a citizen in a community of solidarity. Educational and vocational guidance aims to help develop individual autonomy, individual potential and assists the individual in the decision process.

We urge all careers advisors, and organizations, who feel concerned, to participate in the debate, conclusions of which will be presented to decision-makers, and in particular to the European authorities who are concerned with the redefinition of guidance. In pursuit of these goals, we intend initially to develop an Erasmus project to allow the encounter and exchange of guidance practitioners at European level and to give this appeal a perspective.

If you would like to get involved, please contact us!

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