

Lifelong Guidance and the European Challenge: Issues for Malta

The 20th anniversary of the launch of guidance services in the education sector in Malta provides a valuable occasion and opportunity to gauge the strengths and weaknesses of provision, to see how far the sector stands for guidance for the young person, and how successfully provision has been in identifying and responding to new challenges and new situations. The reasons for the changing set of such an evaluation arise from an international context of guidance in 20 countries. In each, the present 'landscape' will not be provide a total of the set of issues of related guidance in all 20 states. It is important to reflect on issues in Europe and beyond, along a set of criteria and dimensions that have been used internationally to assess the field. In doing so, it comes to that identifying what is being done is something by gaps in provision as well as challenges that the sector has to face.

"That for the report all makes a significant contribution to a policy-making for lifelong guidance provision in Malta and will act as a catalyst for change so that a more professional advisory system is provided for citizens, one that is responsive to their needs and that Maltese, and that goes beyond to the major stakeholders in the development of career guidance. I want the rest of the editors of this report, Professor Howard Gardner, and his excellent contribution to guidance policy development and research of various European and international fields."

John McElroy

*European - European Commission's Expert Group on Lifelong Guidance
Director General for Education and Culture*

"The report contributes to our vision of a more challenging series of career guidance policy issues which cover 20 countries in all. It confirms Professor Howard Gardner's view about a significant role of these issues and brings it to rest into the most knowledge of the situation in Malta but also the same perspective. I trust that the challenging report will ensure Malta to build on its current strengths and to reach Gardner's goal and awareness."

Professor Tony White

*Senior Fellow and Life Professor
International Institute for Career, Education and Community
Development Studies*

Lifelong Guidance and the European Challenge

Issues for Malta

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Nathasha Saliba, Jonathan Bartolo (Employment advisors) (d) *University Counselling Services*: M'Anne Agius* (then co-ordinator of services) (e) *University Students Advisory Service*: Manwel Debono* (then co-ordinator) (f) *Malta College of Arts, Science & Technology Counselling Unit*: Roseanne Borg (counsellor) (g) *Corradino Correctional Facility*: Desmond Zammit Marmarà (co-ordinator, educational services) (h) *National Commission for Persons with Disability*: Joseph M. Camilleri (chairperson) (i) *Sedqa*: Stephen Camilleri* (guidance teacher then on secondment); (j) *General Workers' Union*: Charles Vella (Information and research office) (k) *Unjoni Haddiema Maghqudin*: Joe Morana (l) *Economics and labour market specialists*: Godfrey Baldacchino,* Gordon Cordina (m) *HRD specialists*: Antoinette Caruana* (then at Brandstatter Group of Companies), Alfred Darmanin, Vincent Cassar* (n) *Ministry communications officers*: Alan Camilleri – Ministry for Social Policy. Persons marked with an asterisk (*) were also asked to comment about the report.

Ronald G. Sultana,

Director, Euro-Mediterranean Centre for Educational Research,
University of Malta.



Preface

Guidance and Counselling were imported in Malta in the early post-Independence years mainly from the UK where the first guidance practitioners received their training. It was felt, at that time, that with the onset of industrialisation, tourism and the great technological advances in Malta our youngsters needed 'guidance' to be able to exploit the new work opportunities being created.

Forty years later, another political-cum-economic event is happening in Malta which will also bring in a new perspective to our Guidance Services. Malta's membership in the European Union in May 2004 will usher in many substantial economic changes. Our employment world will change and adapt fully to EU practices and our workers will be able to take up jobs in the EU if they have the necessary qualifications. Mobility of workers in the EU enhances our work opportunities and our workers will need to have all relevant information on work and training openings in the EU.

In view of this new employment framework, our Guidance Services need to look far beyond our shores if they are to fully meet their obligations towards their users. Guidance personnel need to upgrade and update their professional training and qualifications. Wider and deeper contacts need to be established and maintained with their counterparts in all the EU member states.

Guidance practitioners in Malta need to be fully aware of the opportunities for professional development provided by the European Commission. This report is an eye-opener and should serve to boost the aspirations of all those involved in the guidance field, helping them become more aware of the standards they must strive for. The report should also ensure that all the necessary steps are taken so that the best possible use is made of the new opportunities within the EU.

Lifelong Learning and consequently Lifelong Guidance feature highly on the European Union's agenda for employment. These two concepts are very relevant to where Malta is at, since the island must draw on them in a way that is beneficial to all its workers and students.

Finally, one area which Maltese Guidance personnel need to examine thoroughly is the fresh competencies they need, to deal better with new challenges as articulated in this report. Malta needs to embark upon an intensive and objective debate to ensure that such competencies are developed quickly and efficiently. It is recommended that all guidance practitioners should look deeply and critically at the present situation so that they would, collectively and individually, work out the new strategy for Guidance in Malta post-entry in the European Union.

This report will surely make a very positive contribution to this objective. It is written by a qualified



guidance practitioner as well as a seasoned academic in this field. Professor Sultana has produced a detailed and comprehensive review of Lifelong Education and the European Challenge from the Maltese perspective. The European Union Programmes Unit of the Ministry of Education, responsible for the EU programme Leonardo da Vinci, which includes Euroguidance Malta, is very proud to be associated with this venture and has gladly supported the publication of this study.

Joseph M. Sammut

Chairperson and National Co-Ordinator,
European Union Programmes Unit, Malta.

Foreword

In the year 2000 the Heads of Government in the European Union meeting at Lisbon decided to make Europe the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy and society in the world by 2010, a society also marked by greater social cohesion. To achieve this goal is not a simple task. It involves adapting the education and training systems for citizens in a lifelong learning framework in order to increase access to learning and its quality; it involves providing flexible learning pathways and qualifications structures at national level to enable citizens to become lifelong learners; it involves addressing barriers to mobility in education, training and labour market systems in Europe so that citizens can move freely within the European internal market, it involves enhancing the recognition and transparency of qualifications citizens obtain in Europe; it involves increasing the number of languages that each European citizen can speak; it includes citizen and workforce development through lifelong learning; it involves recognition of prior learning and of competences acquired by citizens in a non-formal and informal way; it involves investment in citizens' knowledge and competences; it involves active labour market measures in accordance with the European Employment Strategy to facilitate and increase participation by citizens in employment; it includes preventing the risks of social exclusion. In the context of the 2004 enlargement these are now challenges for Malta.



Citizens need the support of services such as career guidance from multiple sources to be beneficiaries of the vision of Europe of 2010. They also need such support throughout their lifetime as career decision making is a continuous process. This review report is very timely. Career guidance does not exist in a policy vacuum. It serves the achievement of many public policy goals such as efficiency in investment in education and training, labour market efficiency, social inclusion, shared by European governments. It benefits individuals, their families, institutions, enterprises and society at large. Career guidance is not just the concern of the guidance profession.

I trust that this report will make a significant contribution to a national strategy for lifelong guidance provision in Malta and act as a catalyst for change so that a more co-ordinated delivery system is provided for citizens, one that is responsive to their needs over their lifetime, and that views them as the major stakeholder in the endeavour of career guidance.

I salute the work of the author of this report, Professor Ronald Sultana, and his excellent contribution to guidance policy development and research at national, European, and international levels.

John McCarthy

Chairperson,

European Commission's Expert Group on Lifelong Guidance,
Directorate General for Education and Culture, Brussels.



Brief Overview of Guidance Services in Malta

BACKGROUND

• total population (in millions)	0.4 (2002)
• population of working age (15-64) as a % of total population	68% (2001)
• GDP per capita (PPS Euro)	12600 (2000)
- as a % of EU-15 average	56% (2000)

LABOUR MARKET INDICATORS

• employment rate (% of population aged 15-64)	54.2% (2001)
• employment rate of older workers (% of population aged 55-64)	31.0% (2001)
• unemployment rate (% of labour force aged 15+)	7.4% (2002)
• youth unemployment rate (% of labour force aged 15-24)	11.2% (2001)

* % of 18-24 year olds with less than upper secondary education who are not participating in any education or training

Until recently, the task of providing career information, guidance and counselling in Malta was shared by two different Ministries, that of Education and that of Social Policy. Malta's Public Employment Service, the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC), was placed under the portfolio of the Ministry of Education in 2003. There are 33 private providers of career informa-



EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING INDICATORS

• total public expenditure on education (as a % of GDP)	5.0% (2001)
• participation rates in education (ISCED levels 1 to 6) of young people aged 15-24	37.1% (2000/01)
• percentage of upper secondary students (ISCED 3) in vocational education	26.3% (2000/01)
• early school leavers rate * (%)	53% (2002)
percentage of the population aged 25-64 having attained at least upper secondary education	n/a
• participation rates of adults aged 25-64 in education and training (%)	4.4% (2002)
• number of Internet users (per 100 inhabitants)	25.4 (2001)

Sources :-SIF Theme 3 25/2001 (First demographic estimates for 2002); Statistical Yearbook on Candidate and SE European Countries 2001; SIF Theme 2 8/2003, (Quarterly Accounts – the GDP of the CCs); Europa Website: Structural Indicators (May 2003); Employment in Europe 2002; SIF Theme 3 13/2003; Statistics in Focus Theme 3 19 and 20/2002 (LFS Principal Results 2001); SIF Theme 4 8 and 17/2002 (Info Soc) – Reproduced from R.G. Sultana (2003) *Review of Career Guidance Policies in 11 Accessing and Candidate Countries: A Synthesis Report*. Turin: ETF.

tion and guidance registered in Malta, of which only three have some importance. All are more concerned with making job placements than with actual guidance. Some vocational and educational guidance is also offered through trade unions, and in the many youth and community-based organizations on the island. Much of this provision is informal, and offered by non-specialised personnel.

Guidance in the education sector

In the public sector, the Ministry of Education plays a major role in offering information, guidance and counselling services, and has done so since 1968, when a fledgling Guidance Unit was set up. Presently, guidance and counselling fall under the aegis of the Department of Student Services and International Relations, one of seven Departments in the Education Division, each of which is headed by a Director. This Department has three main responsibilities, catering for (a) student services, (b) special education, and (c) international relations. The Guidance and Counselling Unit is located within the Student Services Section, which is headed by an Assistant Director. The Unit, which is led by an Education Officer, is responsible for personal, as well as curricular, educational and career guidance of students, and for the further training of Guidance Teachers.

The roles of counsellors and guidance teachers differ in a number of ways. Counsellors focus more on personal/developmental issues rather than vocational/career issues, a focus legitimated by a separation of roles formalised by a Malta Union of Teachers (MUT) agreement. Counsellors are attached to the central unit, have no formal teaching duties, but have to spend a minimum of three days per week in one or more schools. They offer counselling to individuals/groups of students and/or parents, facilitate referrals of students to other agencies or other specialists, and monitor the

work of guidance teachers. The latter are assigned duties in one secondary school, along a pre-established ratio that presently is 1:300 students.

Guidance teachers spend half of the normal teaching load in classes teaching curricular subjects they are specialised in. This amounts to 14 sessions of teaching, each session being 45 minutes long. They spend the rest of the time leading individual and group sessions with students and parents, in running a careers and further education information room, and fulfilling other duties associated with their role as guidance personnel, including administering a cumulative record card system. There are no Guidance Teachers assigned to primary schools, and while in theory there ought to be five Counsellors dedicated to the primary sector, there is presently only one servicing the eighty state primary schools on the island. Post-secondary establishments and the University of Malta also have counsellors attached to them, catering for the whole range of personal, educational and vocational guidance needs of students.

The non-state education sector, which includes 30% of all students and which is made up of church, independent, and parent foundation schools, also provides guidance teachers and counsellors, and these generally have the same profile and range of responsibilities as their counterparts in the state school system. They often join their colleagues from the public schools for



in-service training sessions. The guidance/counsellor to student ratio in non-state schools is not regulated.

Over and above the information and guidance provided through the Guidance and Counselling Unit, the orientation towards the world of work and further studies is also given through the curriculum, where at both the primary and secondary levels different aspects of both areas are tackled in several subjects, especially social studies, personal and social education, home economics, business studies, and religion. At the secondary level, form teachers meet their classes on a regular basis, and discuss matters of concern to students that very occasionally include aspects of vocational and educational guidance. 'Form' or 'class' teachers also fill in Cumulative Record Cards for students under their care, in consultation with the Guidance Teacher, who has custody of the student profiles and records.

Information about post-secondary educational pathways as well as opportunities for further studies and adult education is provided by another department of the Ministry of Education, i.e. the Department of Further Studies and Adult Education. Up till 2002, the DFSAE annually published a detailed prospectus of post-secondary courses, and this was distributed free of charge to all households with a young person reaching the end of compulsory schooling. 7,500 copies of the Post-Secondary Courses Prospectus were distrib-



uted to fifth formers attending state and non-state schools in July 2000. From 2003 onwards, this information was only available on the department's website. The DFSAE also publishes a catalogue of Adult and Evening Courses that is distributed to Local Councils, district libraries and various industrial enterprises. In addition to that, it disseminates information through its web site and through advertising on the community TV (Channel 22). One of the DFSAE's immediate goals is the establishment of Guidance and Counselling services for adults.

Guidance in the labour market sector

A limited vocational guidance service is also available at the Malta Public Employment Service, the Employment and Training Corporation, until recently falling under the portfolio of the Ministry for Social Policy. The ETC targets a clientele that includes the unemployed, women returning to the labour market, and individuals with special needs requiring advice on accessing supported employment units. It provides one employment adviser for every 550 clients, and offers its services both centrally and through its four regional offices. Employment advisers are principally concerned with job matching, maintaining contacts with employers, and referring job seekers to the relevant training programmes in order to increase their employability options. Up till recently they had no specific training in vocational guidance. They interview clients and draw up a profile and an

action plan for each interviewee on the basis of the registrants' work experience, qualifications, aptitude and work preferences. Employment advisers tend to suffer from both a role and case overload, with the administrative functions taking precedence over the vocational guidance function. There has tended to be little structured collaboration between the guidance services of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry for Social Policy – each has its own budget, and establishes its own operational and training targets independently. Recently, however, there have been some positive developments regarding the latter.

The social partners and guidance

Due to their small scale, Malta's firms do not have the capacity to provide formal information or guidance services: of a total of 23,660 enterprises in Malta, 94.7% are micro enterprises, 4.3% are small and 0.9% medium-sized firms. At most, some larger enterprises offer occupational guidance informally, through the HRD departments, in response to specific situations, such as when an early retirement scheme is introduced.

While Trade unions do offer a lot of careers information and guidance to their members, much of this activity is informal, and in response to situations that arise when members call at the office when facing redundancies, for instance, or when changing jobs.

Lifelong Guidance and the European challenge:

1

Issues for Malta

1. Introduction

Guidance has a relatively recent history in Malta. While educational and vocational guidance and counselling took off in the United States in the early 20th century,¹ and guidance services started being set up in several European countries soon after,² formal provision knows its beginning in Malta to 1968.³ As with many other middle-income countries, and in contrast to industrially developed ones, career guidance systems have been slower to take off and to develop a full range of services partly because of low levels of public resources, partly because the range of choices for many individuals is more restricted, and partly because more people are preoccupied with economic survival rather than with development and growth.⁴

Origins of guidance in Malta

Following recommendations made by J.L. Lewis (1967), one of the UNESCO consultants that helped the post-independence government strengthen and expand the islands' education infrastructure and

¹ Frank Parsons, often acknowledged to be the 'father of vocational guidance', founded a vocational bureau to advise young men seeking jobs in 1908.

² Poland, for instance, already had a fledgling service in 1918, while Latvia and Lithuania began pioneered the field in 1929 and 1931 respectively

³ For a historical account of the origins and development of Malta's educational guidance services, see J.P. DeGiovanni (1997) 'A brief history of the development of vocational guidance and counselling in Malta: 1968-1987.' In R.G. Sultana & J.M. Sammut (eds) *Careers Education and Guidance in Malta: Issues and Challenges*. Malta: PEG, pp.29-42; and J.M. Sammut (1997) 'Malta's guidance and counselling services: 1987-1996.' In R.G. Sultana & J.M. Sammut (eds) (*ibid.*), pp.43-54.

⁴ See AG. Watts & R.G. Sultana (2003) 'Career guidance policies in 36 countries: contrasts and common themes.' Paper presented at the conference on 'Career Guidance and Public Policy: Bridging the Gap', Toronto, Canada, 6-8 October.

services, a Guidance unit for was set up within the Department of Education, with the first two officers receiving their training in the United Kingdom. In the subsequent 35 years, guidance in Malta has had a chequered history, with a number of peaks and troughs depending on the extent to which policy makers valued the service or otherwise.

**Key
developments
in guidance
services**

Following the entrenchment of the service as an integral part of the educational system thanks to an agreement negotiated by the Malta Union of Teachers (MUT) in 1974, guidance and counselling consolidated and expanded its services, with initiatives including the launch of a diploma in Educational Guidance and Counselling at the University of Malta in 1985, the setting up of dedicated guidance and counselling rooms in secondary schools in the late 1980's, the embedding of guidance and counselling themes in the formal curriculum via the introduction of Personal and Social Education as a time-tabled subject in the 1990 National Minimum Curriculum for Secondary Schools, and the extension of some counselling services to the primary school sector in 1994. Other important developments have been the carrying out, since 1990, of annual surveys to document and analyse the educational and vocational preferences of school-leavers; the organisation of a yearly Careers Convention; the launch of a parenting skills programmes in 1996; and the introduction of a Services Manual in 2000.

**Guidance in
the labour
market
sector**

By comparison, guidance in the labour market sector, largely offered by the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC) – serving as Malta's Public Employment Services since 1990 – is, by



comparison, still undeveloped, functioning rather more as a placement agency, with staff generally untrained to provide professional guidance. As we shall see, the situation has changed recently, with the decision to offer University, diploma level in-service training to staff, and with an attempt on the part of the ETC to attain higher standards of provision in this area to match standards reached by leading Public Employment Services in Europe.

The 35th anniversary of the launch of guidance services in the education sector in Malta constitutes a valuable occasion and opportunity to gauge the strengths and weaknesses of provision, to see how far the initial vision for guidance has been preserved, and how successful providers have been in innovating and responding to new challenges, new situations and new demands. The impetus for the carrying out of such an evaluation arises from an international review of guidance that was first launched by the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) in fourteen of its member states.⁵ The OECD prepared a dedicated questionnaire⁶ which was filled in by national experts, on the basis of their in-depth knowledge of career guidance in their own country, and in most instances after

**Malta's
participation
in the
international
guidance
review**

⁵ The countries were: Australia, Austria, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Korea, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, and the United Kingdom.

⁶ The questionnaire focused on (a) key goals, influences, issues and initiatives in guidance, (b) policy instruments for steering services, (c) the roles of stakeholders, (d) targeting and access, (e) staffing, (f) delivery settings, (g) delivery methods, (h) career information, (i) financing, (j) quality assurance and (k) the evidence base.

an extensive consultation exercise with key decision-makers and providers in the field.⁷

At the request of the European Commission, and in order to have a more complete picture of the situation in Europe, the European Training Foundation (ETF) and the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) – both Agencies of the European Union – commissioned experts to use the OECD questionnaire to report on guidance provision in 11 accession and candidate countries (ACC),⁸ and in the remaining EU Member and EEA states which had not participated in the OECD review.⁹ The World Bank

⁷ Details about the review process, as well as national questionnaire responses, country reports, and briefing background papers on different aspects of guidance commissioned from experts, are all available on the OECD web site: www.oecd.org/els/education/careerguidance. The review was co-ordinated by Richard Sweet, together with Tony Watts. Several background papers prepared for the review can be downloaded from the site following the link to Documentation for Career Information and Guidance. For an account of the process adopted, as well as of the main outcomes, see R. Sweet (2001) 'Career information, guidance and counselling services: policy perspectives.' *Australian Journal of Career Development*, Vol.10(2), pp.11-14, and R. Sweet (2003) 'Career guidance: new ways forward.' *Education Policy Analysis* (in press). The overall study is reported in Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (2003) *Career Guidance and Public Policy: Bridging the Gap*. Paris: OECD.

⁸ The ETF review involved 11 acceding and candidate countries, namely Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. For an analytic overview of the country responses to the guidance questionnaire, see R.G. Sultana (2003) *Review of Career Guidance Policies in 11 Acceding and Candidate Countries: Synthesis Report*. Turin: ETF. Besides writing the ETF synthesis, the present author was also responsible for responding to the guidance questionnaire in relation to Malta, and was a member of the review team on the country visits to Luxembourg and Spain. This, together with the fact that he is a member of the Expert Group on Lifelong Guidance, enabled him to have first-hand experience of different aspects of the guidance survey process.

⁹ The CEDEFOP review involved 6 EU member states, namely France, Italy, Portugal, Greece, Sweden, and Belgium and one European Economic Area (EEA) country, Iceland. For an analytic overview of the country responses to the guidance questionnaire, see F.J. Company (2003) 'Rapport de Synthèse sur les Politiques et les Services d'Information, Orientation et Conseil en France, Italie, Portugal, Grèce, Suède et Islande'. Thessaloniki : Cedefop. Other European countries that are not represented in the present overall synthesis include Lichtenstein and Switzerland.

also utilised the same survey instrument to collect information on the guidance systems in 7 middle-income countries.¹⁰ The involvement of these key partners in the parallel review – all using the same survey tool, and all co-ordinating their efforts through regular meetings in a variety of forums – has led to the most extensive harmonised international database ever on policies for career guidance, covering a total of 36 countries.¹¹

The present report draws on the questionnaire response for Malta provided by the present author in the context of the survey of accession and candidate countries co-ordinated by the Turin-based ETF,¹² as well as on the overall review of 29 European countries co-ordinated by the Thessaloniki-based CEDEFOP.¹³ As such, the present monograph sets out to provide a state of the art review of where guidance is at in Malta, in comparison to other European

Objectives of the monograph

¹⁰ The World Bank review includes Chile, Poland, Romania, the Philippines, Russia, South Africa, and Turkey. Poland and Romania had been covered earlier by the ETF, but the World Bank review process includes country visits. The World Bank survey has been co-ordinated by David Fretwell, with Tony Watts as lead consultant. For a synthesis report see A.G. Watts & D.H. Fretwell (2003) 'Public policies and career development: a policy framework for the design of career information and guidance systems in developing and transition economies.' Washington, DC: World Bank Discussion Paper. See <http://www.worldbank.org> (under lifelong learning) to download a copy of this report.

¹¹ A synthesis of all the syntheses is available in A.G. Watts & R.G. Sultana (2003) 'Career guidance policies in 36 countries: contrasts and common themes.' Paper presented at the international conference on Career Guidance and Public Policy: Bridging the Gap, held in Toronto, 6-8 October. In addition to these studies, the policy visibility of guidance has been further boosted by Unesco's co-ordination of a separate project. In this case, the focus was on the role of guidance in vocational and technical education and training – B. Hiebert & W. Borgen (eds) (2002) *Technical and Vocational Education and Training in the Twenty-First Century: New Roles and Challenges for Guidance and Counselling*. Paris: UNESCO.

¹² R.G. Sultana (2003) *Review of Career Guidance Policies in 11 Accessing and Candidate Countries: Synthesis Report*. Turin: European Training Foundation. See <http://www.etf.eu.int> to download a copy of this report.

¹³ R.G. Sultana (2003) *Guidance Policies in the Knowledge Society: Trends, Challenges and Response across Europe*. Thessaloniki: CEDEFOP. A copy of the synthesis report can be downloaded from http://cedefop.communityzero.com/lifelong_guidance?go=234050

countries, along a set of criteria and dimensions that have been used internationally to assess the field. In doing so, it moves on from describing what is taking place, to identifying key gaps in provision as well as challenges that the service has to face.

2. The interest of the European Commission in Lifelong Guidance

The Learning Society and lifelong guidance

Other than the international review of guidance policies, and indeed related to this, a further impetus for the focus on guidance is Malta's status as a future member state of the European Union, where, as with other candidate countries, recent policy making has tended to be 'accession-led', both in the attempt to measure up to the *acquis communautaire*, and to draw inspiration from 'examples of best practice' across Europe. The general objectives frameworks for the Union also have a major impact in steering policy not only in member states but in accession countries as well. Thus, when at its meeting in Lisbon in March 2000, the European Council outlined its aspiration that the EU become 'the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based society in the world' by the year 2010, lifelong learning featured increasingly high on the agenda of member states, as this was acknowledged to be one of the key ways through which such a goal could be achieved. In several documents linked to the notion of a Learning Society,¹⁴ the issue of lifelong guidance was raised,

¹⁴ See the bibliography for the several documents published by the European Commission in this area between 2000 and 2002. For an overview of the guidance-related issues in these documents, see J. McCarthy (2002) 'Recent policy developments in lifelong guidance at European Union level.' Paper tabled at the first meeting of the European Commission's Expert Group on Lifelong Guidance on 13 December 2002.

with educational and career guidance across the lifespan being seen as an important mechanism to further public policy goals.

A review of recent developments in key Commission policy documents (see McCarthy, 2002) shows that guidance has a broad appeal as a mechanism that facilitates the attainment of a number of central and inter-related EU policy goals. Guidance, duly reconfigured to cater for new realities – including non-linear, multiple entry points into education, training and work across time (lifelong) and space (Europe-wide) – is called upon to:

- Accompany the citizen throughout life, supporting transitions and promoting the attitudes, knowledge and skills needed to be active contributors to, and participants in, the learning society/economy;
- Connect clients with local, regional, national and European educational and occupational opportunities;
- Be impartial while at the same time fostering science and technology as an attractive educational and occupational pathway;
- Enhance social inclusion, through re-engaging reluctant learners in educational and training tracks, and through acting as ‘job broker’ on behalf of the unemployed;
- Present up-to-date information that responds to client and employer needs, is transparent, user-friendly, and enables consolidation of knowledge across the educational and labour market sectors;

Box 1:
Lifelong
guidance as
portrayed in
European
Commission
documents

- Cater for the individual and for targeted groups (e.g. women returnees, persons with disability, long-term unemployed, unqualified school leavers, immigrants) in a way that responds to their particular needs;
- Foster a personality package in clients that is functional to the labour market – including flexibility, mobility, entrepreneurship, and so on;
- Establish itself more firmly within sites other than the school and the public employment service, including places of leisure and of work;
- Network with NGOs, voluntary and community-based providers in order to more effectively respond to clients with specific needs, including minority groups for instance;
- Exploit more effectively the potential of ICT in order to attain many of the objectives stated above – including transparency, accessibility, permeability and connectivity – and to encourage clients to engage more proactively in constructing educational and occupational life projects;
- Mobilise itself more professionally, in terms of improved pre-service and in-service training, and in terms of developing a set of sound quality indicators that are promoted and benchmarked across Europe.

3. Defining guidance

Distinction between guidance and counselling

It is important to point out that the present study follows the definition of guidance adopted in the OECD, ETF, CEDEFOP and World Bank surveys. Here a distinction is made between ‘educational

and career guidance' on the one hand, and 'personal counselling' on the other. It is of course difficult to disentangle the two terms and the practices they refer to. This is partly because clients themselves do not necessarily draw the distinction between guidance for different aspects of life tasks which they experience holistically; partly because life challenges are, by their very nature, complex affairs that impact on a variety of overlapping concerns in a seamless fashion; and partly because guidance services targeting the different aspects of life concerns and transitions are often delivered by the same person or category of professional. Despite the acknowledged difficulties in separating the two facets of guidance and counselling services, *the main focus of the present monograph is on the information and advice offered to young people and adults in terms of their choice of pathways in and through education, training and work.*¹⁵ Guidance includes counselling, but is more than that as well – in other words, counselling is only one of several functions performed by educational and vocational guidance practitioners.

¹⁵ The formalisation of the distinction, in the education sector, between 'guidance' on the one hand and 'counselling' on the other, has become an issue in some countries (e.g. Ireland and Norway, besides Malta), with some proposing to have two distinct categories of personnel catering for the different areas, each with its own training and certification route, delivering different, if overlapping, sets of competencies. Indeed, the Netherlands has already adopted this option. Most countries have however preferred to keep all guidance functions together, providing a complementary array of specialised services to which a client can be referred (e.g. Austria, Greece, and Portugal). This debate is important because several countries have noted that personal counselling issues are 'crowding out' career guidance (e.g. Czech Republic, Luxembourg, Portugal and Slovenia, besides Malta). Indeed, Norway's school counsellors report that they spend as much as 80% of their time on personal guidance issues. One reason for the focus on counselling may be that more and more young people play out their frustrations in the context of the school. The psychology background of many guidance workers in schools – and the fact that in many cases most are women – may also tend to reinforce the focus on nurturing and therapeutic functions, as against labour market guidance functions, particularly in schools.

**Definition
of guidance
emerging
from the
international
review**

While the OECD, ETF, CEDEFOP and World Bank surveys clearly show that ‘guidance’ is defined in various ways across Europe (*see Box 2*), the term is essentially used to refer to a set of inter-related activities that have, as a goal, the structured provision of information and assistance to enable individuals and groups, of any age and at any point throughout their lives, to make choices related to educational, training and occupational trajectories and to manage their life paths effectively. Often, ‘guidance’ cannot be represented as a discrete activity or input, but tends to be embedded in other contexts, including learning activities of various kinds. Most of the guidance survey reports implicitly or explicitly conceptualise guidance as a pedagogical activity – a view they share with the European Commission in that the latter refers to guidance workers in a LLL context as ‘learning facilitators’ who enable ‘the acquisition of knowledge and competences by establishing a learning environment.’¹⁶ If we had to draw a composite picture of guidance workers as represented in the different country reports, then it would appear that these facilitate a learning relationship by making available to clients useful and usable information about:

- (a) their own personal resources (in terms of abilities, interests, aspirations, ambitions, aptitudes – all of which can be clarified through an increasing range of assessment tools);
- (b) educational, training and labour market opportunities (in terms of availability at local, regional, national and European levels; in terms of

¹⁶ See European Commission (2002) *A European Area of Lifelong Learning*. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, p.58.

possible flows within and between pathways; in terms of options that each choice opens up; in terms of equivalence in certification – including accreditation of prior experiential learning – as a passport to various courses and jobs; in terms of what different occupational families and individual jobs entail, both in the demands they make and the experiential and remunerative rewards they offer; and in terms of developing entrepreneurial and self-employment capacities).

Most importantly, guidance workers can provide training in the skills that clients need to integrate and manage this information, and to use it to clarify and further their life goals. As with all pedagogical relationships, there is an ethical dimension in delivering guidance services, where a professional code of conduct provides a context for the safeguarding of the client's best interests. This dimension is particularly strong when clients suffer from specific physical or social disadvantages. Indeed, one of the most prominent images of guidance workers collectively portrayed by several of the country reports across Europe – including the one for Malta – is that they are not simply technocratic functionaries serving as a vehicle for information dissemination.¹⁷ Indeed,

**Guidance
is – or
should be
– a learning,
empowering
relationship**

¹⁷ A strong strand in the guidance/counselling tradition connects with critical humanistic approaches that have their roots in Enlightenment philosophy, and in critical theory in particular. Such a strand is predicated on three tenets. According to Aloni (1999), the first is philosophical, 'consisting of a conception of [the human] as an autonomous and rational being and a fundamental respect for all humans by virtue of being endowed with freedom of will, rational thinking, moral conscience, imaginative and creative powers'. The second tenet is socio-political, 'consisting of a universal ethics of human equality, reciprocity, and solidarity and a political order of pluralistic, just and humane democracy'. The third tenet is pedagogical, 'consisting in the commitment to assist all individuals to realize and perfect their potentialities and 'to enjoy', in the words of Mortimer Adler, 'as fully as possible all the goods that make a human life as good as it can be''. See N. Aloni (1999) 'Humanistic education.' In the *Encyclopaedia of Philosophy of Education*, which is available on the following website: http://www.vusst.hr/ENCYCLOPAEDIA/humanistic_education.htm

many guidance staff express a discomfort when conflicts arise between the bureaucratic and the professional demands of their job, particularly in the context of public employment offices. In the best of cases, guidance workers consider themselves as empowering and networked nodes, who use their information of – and contacts with – the education and labour market to facilitate the social inclusion of those at risk, and to support all clients in the crystallisation and pursuit of life goals, in their search for more meaningful, fulfilling and dignified living, and in active citizenship. This lies in stark contrast with the sometimes justified critiques that guidance serves to reproduce and reinforce social, gender and ethnic inequalities, particularly when some clients are encouraged to lower expectations and aspirations to what are considered to be ‘realistic’ levels.¹⁸

**Guidance
can fulfil
both
personal
and public
policy goals**

Guidance is thus considered to be an important instrument which supports citizens in attaining their own personal fulfilment, while at the same time facilitating a better fit between the demand for – and supply of – skilled labour. While these twin goals are shared by what were, until recently, the two main public providers of guidance and counselling services, i.e. the Ministry of Education and the Ministry for Social Policy,¹⁹ the former tends to

¹⁸ For a critique of guidance that serves to entrench social inequalities, see A.V. Cicourel & J.I. Kitsuse (1963) *The Educational Decision-Makers*. NY: Bobbs-Merrill; and A.G. Watts (1996b) ‘Socio-political ideologies in guidance.’ In A.G. Watts, B. Law, J. Killeen, J.M. Kidd & R. Hawthorn *Rethinking Careers Education and Guidance: Theory, Policy and Practice*. London & New York: Routledge. Locally, Rotin (1997) has shown how guidance teachers, often unwittingly, end up channelling students into specific educational trajectories - see J. Rotin (1997) ‘The myth of ‘choice’: how working class kids get working class schools.’ In R.G. Sultana & J.M. Sammut (eds) (*ibid.*), pp.165-194.

¹⁹ The Employment and Training Corporation was transferred to the Ministry of Education in 2003.

give more importance to the personal, developmental and educational guidance needs of their clientele rather than to the vocational and career guidance aspects that is also considered to be their role. Teachers are also generally uncomfortable with their role of ‘channelling’ persons towards skills profiles required by the economy: as the *Guidance and Counselling Services Manual* states, ‘Guidance programmes are person-centred and are, therefore, primarily concerned with empowering pupils to take responsibility for themselves, their own development and learning rather than imposing particular standpoints, values and decisions.’²⁰

Defining guidance in both the school and labour market sector in Greece:

Law 2525/1997 defines guidance in terms of its contribution to educational goals and its relevance to addressing socio-economic problems. Specifically, it charges not only guidance services but the whole school with the responsibility of helping students (a) explore and match their personal traits, abilities and skills, interests and plans for the future with contemporary opportunities and realities; (b) make wise decisions regarding their educational and vocational options; (c) learn about the world of work and the present working environment; and (d) learn how to find, process and use information. Royal Decree 405/1971, article 28, establishes that in the labour market sector, the goals for guidance are to provide information on

**Box 2:
Defining
guidance in
some
European
countries**

²⁰ Guidance & Counselling Services (2000) *Description of Services Manual*. Floriana: Education Division, p.9.

vocational training opportunities, to support young people and adults in making decisions regarding their training options, to assist them in finding placements in apprenticeships and continuous vocational training, to help clients develop job-seeking skills, and to place them in employment.

Defining school guidance in Iceland:

A key report on guidance for the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture defined school guidance with reference to four main functions, namely: (a) *Preventive*: with guidance staff carrying out research, referring, making suggestions of organisational changes, and offering preventive counselling to groups and individuals; (b) *Curative*: with guidance staff assisting in finding solutions to personal problems that hinder individual pupils from gaining learning and growth from their educational experience; (c) *Informative*: with guidance staff gathering and giving educational and vocational information, individually or through the career education programme in the school, either as a teacher or as a consultant to teachers; and (d) *Developmental*: with guidance staff providing individual pupils with assistance in exploring educational attainment and vocational interests, and enhancing understanding on how these elements come into consideration in the decision-making and career-planning process.

Defining guidance in the labour market in Portugal:

Ministerial Order 297 of 1997 defines guidance in terms of the services that the Department of Employment should offer to clients, namely: (a) design and create information networks in order to

keep the vocational education system and its methodologies and technical content up-to-date, so as to meet the needs of the various social and occupational groups using the service; (b) lay down and develop technical standards and procedures for seeking information for oneself and for career information and guidance and to devise and implement techniques and models for psychological diagnosis within a technical and scientific framework that is constantly updated; (c) design and produce technical models and tools for developing skills that enhance employability in line with the needs of various social and occupational groups; (d) define basic principles and guidelines for processing and graphically presenting technical materials produced for purposes of career information and guidance; (e) underpin the operations of the National Resource Centre and encourage its networking with other national and international resource centres; and (f) create, adapt and disseminate technical tools for career information and guidance suitable for groups encountering particular difficulty in finding employment due to personal problems or to circumstances of social disadvantage.

4. Key objectives and goals for guidance in Malta

The OECD, ETF, CEDEFOP and World Bank reports all suggest that governments invest in guidance to support public policy in three specific areas. It first of all promotes *lifelong learning goals* by ensuring an adequate knowledge and skills base to meet the challenges of high ability societies

Guidance can support three key public policy goals

operating in the context of economic globalisation. Guidance can make a contribution to the attainment of such goals by helping the education and training system become more efficient, and by developing tighter linkages between the world of learning and the world of work, both within national contexts and, given the creation of a common learning and working space, across Europe.

Guidance is also attractive to policy makers because it can help address a whole range of *labour market issues*, it can improve labour market outcomes and efficiency, and it can support economic development goals. Policy makers are therefore increasingly looking to guidance for support in addressing labour market shortages, tackling mismatches between labour supply and demand, reducing the effects of labour market destabilisation, dealing with unemployment, and improving labour mobility.

Guidance also has a role to play in helping governments attain *social equity and social inclusion goals*, by mobilising resources in order to reintegrate marginalised and at risk groups into education, training and working tracks.

There is a lack of clear policy-steering in the guidance field in Malta

A clear sign of the usefulness of guidance in policy terms is the dynamic nature of the field across most of countries surveyed by the international review, where a growing range of initiatives and innovations can be observed, both on the national as well as a pan-European level. Despite such dynamism, however, the field often suffers from an inadequate articulation of a common vision across different

sectors, with its potential greatly reduced due to fragmentation. Malta is a case in point. There are as yet no comprehensive formal/legal documents outlining the government's key policy objectives for guidance and counselling in Malta, and there is no equivalent to, for instance, the Act on Educational and Vocational Guidance in Denmark, which provides the overall legislative steering instrument applied to guidance and counselling. Malta's National Employment Plan, which is expected to provide some important policy leads in this area, is still in preparation. The fact that formal policy documents are unavailable has one significant implication: that specific targets, measures to attain such targets, and mechanisms to monitor progress in achieving targets are largely absent. In the absence of policy steering, the divide between the different providers of guidance, and between guidance services within the education sector on the one hand, and the labour market sector on the other, remains unbridged.

Despite the lack of legal instruments specifically referring to guidance, one can nevertheless extract some of the more significant policy directions from Electoral Manifestos, the National Minimum Curriculum, Ministerial speeches, circulars, Ministerial orders and guidelines, as well as declarations made at high profile and public events, such as during Budget speeches, the launching of the Joint Assessment of the Employment Policy Priorities (the JAP), or at national conferences on education. Similarly influential can be other 'soft' steering instruments such as educational campaigns, often decided upon by the Ministry or

**Policy
instruments
in Malta**

the Education Division. Examples of such recent campaigns include those focusing on ‘bullying’, ‘child abuse’ and ‘drug abuse’, which led to special in-service training of guidance personnel, as well as to publications that were distributed to students and families. As we will have occasion to note in several sections of this monograph, many of the initiatives in the guidance field tend to focus rather more on the personal counselling aspect rather than on the career guidance one. Another soft steering mechanism has been the development of a Guidance and Counselling Services Manual, which is expected to lead to a clearer articulation of the role and function of guidance personnel, establishing standards that all the corps aspires to.

Guidance and Malta’s Education Act

Other policy directions for guidance can be gleaned from the more general legislative framework outlining the key objectives for education nationally, as set out in the 1988 Education Act.²¹ This amplifies constitutional provisions, supplies the legal framework for the education structure, and is the main legal instrument governing education provision in Malta.²² The Act, while reinforcing the constitution’s emphasis on the compulsory nature of education, which the nation commits itself to provide free of charge to all its citizens, further elaborates on the dual goal of education: liberal (knowledge for its own sake) and utilitarian

²¹ As a member of the Council of Europe since 1964, Malta has long followed policies similar to those of the EU Member States in the field of education. Consequently, Malta is aligned with the principles provided by EU Resolutions, Declarations, Conclusions, and Recommendations (including equality of opportunity, illiteracy, safety in schools, etc). Maltese legislation and practice are also generally in line with the *Acquis*.

²² There is general agreement that the Education Act needs to be revised, and it is expected that the matter will soon surface on the agenda for public debate.

(knowledge to further personal and national goals). In a country where the only natural resource is its people, education is mandated to both form human beings holistically as citizens, and as producers. The Act, therefore, while not referring to guidance and counselling directly, stresses the principle that education should equip each Maltese citizen with the skills, trade, professional or vocational competencies that are required by the labour market, and highlights the view that education is the best investment in the development of the talents of the Maltese people.

The role of guidance, while not formally articulated through specific legislation, or even targeted as a policy concern, is clearly of public policy concern given the implications of the government's overall vision and objectives for education more generally. These have been most recently articulated in two key policy documents, both of which were the subject of wide debate with educators, parents and social partners, and around which a national consensus has been mobilised. The two documents, namely *Tomorrow's Schools: Developing Effective Learning Cultures*²³ and the new *National Minimum Curriculum*²⁴ are based on the four principles of Entitlement, Equity, Efficiency and Economy, and have formalised and supported the shift towards an educational service that is more student-centred, more responsive to individual learning needs, and more focused on

**Recent
policy
documents
and their
implications
for guidance**

²³ K. Wain *et al.* (1995) *Tomorrow's Schools: Developing Effective Learning Cultures*. A Ministerial Consultative Committee of Education monograph. Floriana: Ministry of Education and Human Resources.

²⁴ Ministry of Education (1999) *Creating the Future Together: National Minimum Curriculum*. Malta: MoE.

output rather than input. There is an increasing dissatisfaction with a system which orients students through a high stake formal assessment at the end of primary schooling, and that channels pupils to different secondary schools in such a way that, to a great extent, determines educational and consequently occupational trajectories.

An educational system based on selection and channelling jeopardises the role of guidance

In such a context, the scope of 'guidance' is obviously limited, leading to a situation where what we have is what in Luxembourg is referred to as '*orientation par échec*' ('failure-led guidance'). There too a highly streamed and examination-oriented system constrains the scope of educational and career guidance. Increasingly it is argued in Malta that the education system has to be able to include all kinds of learners and to guarantee them access to a minimum entitlement of learning that enables them to be productive and fulfilled citizens in a democratic and high-ability society. There is therefore a slow but perceptible shift away from a culture of selection, channelling and exclusion that marked educational practice and structures in the past, to one that is more concerned with an efficient and equitable distribution of life chances to all.²⁵ Such a shift in culture is accompanied and vehicled by new practices, that include school development planning, increased parental involvement, a greater

²⁵ The legitimacy of such a shift has received international support by the research evidence provided by the OECD PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) Report, a study which attempted to measure the quality of education systems in 32 advanced countries. The best systems are those that combine quality *and* equality, in other words, where the largest possible number of students succeeds, and where there is a very small gap between those who succeed and those who fall behind. For details of the PISA report, see <http://www.pisa.oecd.org/>

emphasis on continuous and formative assessment, student profiling, individual education planning, and the mainstreaming of students with special needs. Structurally too there has been the phasing out of lower secondary trade schools in an attempt to reduce early differentiation.

A related aspect of the overall vision for education in Malta is the reduction of drop-outs and the retention of as large a percentage as possible of each age cohort in post-compulsory education and training.²⁶ Such a policy is considered to be critical to the successful modernization of the economy and the restructuring that is required if Malta is to become a service-oriented, high skilled society that can compete on a level footing within the common European market. Lifelong and lifewide learning feature increasingly on the agenda and in policy discourse, a development signalled by the setting up in 2001 of the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST), a community college that, through its modularised delivery of courses, aspires to cater for the training needs of young people and adults alike. The MCAST is also a key strategy adopted by the government in its attempt to modify the academic drift among students, by offering them a more vocationally oriented educational trajectory that enjoys parity of esteem with the general stream in further education.

The role of guidance in fostering a high-ability society

²⁶ In 1990, 56% of all students finishing their compulsory schooling went into further education. In 2000, the number had risen to 65%. Similarly, while only 1000 students attended the University of Malta in 1987, the number had increased to over 7600 students in 2002, with around 17% of each age cohort proceeding to University studies.

Policy goals for guidance in the labour market sector

As for the ETC, and as specified by the Employment and Training Services Act (Act no. XXVIII) of 1990 which established the Corporation, one of its overriding goals is to help the integration or reintegration of individuals in difficult situations in the labour market. This it does through a variety of services which include: assisting in the search for jobs, helping employers find suitable employees, increasing employability of clients through training and schemes, and providing special Supported Employment Services to target groups such as persons with disability, very long term unemployed, ex-substance abusers and ex-convicts. The ETC also runs apprenticeships in collaboration with the MCAST and other training institutions. It is striving to facilitate pathways back to learning, and contributing to the development of such important initiatives as the accreditation of prior learning and the establishment of a National Vocational Qualification Framework.²⁷

Policy directions and social trends signal the need for improved guidance services

Most of the directions being adopted within the formal educational and training system demand a diversification and intensification of guidance and counselling services. The making of appropriate choices is pivotal to reducing the phenomenon of early school leaving and the maintenance of motivation to remain within formal education. Educational guidance and professional support is

²⁷ LN 215 of October 2000 established the *Malta Professional Vocational Qualification Awards Council* (MPVQAC) as an independent body with the goal of developing a unified Vocational Qualification framework that helps to establish qualification standards in non-regulated vocational fields, in such a way that skills profiles are more readily recognised and certified. More recent legislation (LN 162 of 23 July 2002) applies to professions and professional activities (Mutual Recognition of Qualifications Act).

increasingly required if the goal of catering for individual learning needs is to be fulfilled. Students and workers are likely to want improved access to information and to guidance as government opens up further education and training pathways for all young people and adults. More and more women are opting to return to work after a brief interlude of child-rearing. The phenomenon of ‘women returnees’ has direct implications for the delivery of guidance services, particularly those offered within the context of the ETC and further education and training institutions.

The restructuring of the economy requires adults to think differently and more flexibly about their employment trajectories. It is likely that they too will need improved access to guidance services that will provide them with the required information and support as they move between training, re-training, and occupations. This is particularly true given the educational gaps in relation to adults with no formal qualifications, a concern that has been most recently signalled by the Joint Assessment of the Employment Policy Priorities for Malta (JAP), which has noted that education levels in Malta’s labour force are low, with 51.9% of the working age population not having completed secondary school – when the corresponding EU average is 40%.²⁸

²⁸ See Ministry of Social Policy (2001) ‘The joint assessment of the employment policy priorities of Malta’. The report is available on http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/employment_analysis/japs/malta_en.pdf

**Guidance
and the
Malta
response to
the Lifelong
Learning
Memorandum**

Some of these implications for guidance have been spelt out in the recommendations that emerged from the national debate on the provision of LLL opportunities in Malta, in the process of articulating a formal policy on lifelong learning.²⁹ Among the many strategies tabled to enhance LLL and to maximise opportunities and pathways back to learning, the document proposed a re-thinking of guidance and counselling. While the many achievements of the services offered both by the Ministry of Education and that of Social Policy were acknowledged, it was also argued that ‘a new breed of job/career brokers needs to be developed in Malta.... They would need to be highly skilled in ICT in order to extend their knowledge to career and job opportunities elsewhere in Europe’ (p.12). The document calls for strong, cross-sectoral collaboration so that in joining forces, the different providers could come up with ‘a coherent national strategy for the provision of a Job Brokerage Service’ (p.12). The point was also made that different Ministries should provide their employees with guidance and counselling ‘to mitigate employee/job mismatch and burnout,’ and that special approaches ought to be developed to effectively target disadvantaged groups in need of specialised guidance. Many of these recommendations are echoed in this monograph.

²⁹ See Ministry of Education (2001) ‘Report on the National Consultation Process on Lifelong Learning’ (mimeo, July). The report was the outcome of debate and wide social partner consultation in response to the LLL Memorandum of the EU, i.e. Commission of the European Communities (2001) *Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality*. COM(2001) 678.

5. Recent initiatives and changes

As has already been noted earlier, the guidance field internationally is intensely alive and active. The following list of selected initiatives reported in the Europe-wide guidance survey (*see Box 3*) gives a good sense of the dynamism in Europe, suggesting that it has indeed become a significant mechanism for addressing some of the key policy challenges that governments have to face:

- The promulgation of legal instruments promoting different aspects of career guidance (e.g. Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain).
- The commissioning of research and reports in order to investigate different aspects of guidance services, with a view to their improvement (e.g. Bulgaria, Denmark, France, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Sweden).
- The planning and implementation of reforms in guidance in the education and/or labour market sector (e.g. Germany, Greece, Finland, France, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, the United Kingdom, most CEE countries).
- The extension of guidance-related services in the education sector (e.g. increase in school guidance staff in Iceland, Portugal; increasing service provision in Finland, France; developing the guidance-oriented school in Greece, Denmark, Latvia, Portugal; introducing school-to-work issues across the curriculum in Austria, Czech Republic, Romania, Slovenia).

Helping governments face important policy challenges

Box 3: Evidence of dynamism in the guidance field in Europe

- The strengthening of the guidance function in Public Employment Services (e.g. Germany, Greece, Ireland, Malta, Portugal).
- The extension (or consolidation) of careers guidance services to new client groups, such as higher education students (e.g. Austria, Estonia, Cyprus, Greece, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Romania); students or registered unemployed with disabilities (e.g. Bulgaria, Greece, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia); those already in employment (e.g. Austria, France, Greece, Iceland, Latvia, Sweden, United Kingdom); parents (e.g. Cyprus); conscripts (Denmark, Lithuania).
- The facilitation of access to services through regional provision (e.g. Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Norway, Poland, Spain).
- The enhancement of access to services, in practically all European countries, through ICT and internet provision (see especially Finland, the Netherlands, Iceland, Sweden, United Kingdom).
- The development of new tools, such as aptitude testing services (e.g. France, Iceland, Poland, Romania).
- The shift to a tiered guidance service, encouraging clients to access information in a self-service mode, freeing up staff to engage in individual or group guidance sessions with those who have deeper needs (e.g. Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Sweden, United Kingdom).
- The articulation of professional qualification and service standards for career counsellors

- (e.g. Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia).
- The increase, across the board, of increased opportunities for specialised initial and in-service courses, including courses offered at higher education level (e.g. France, Greece, Poland, Romania).
 - The establishment – or intensification of activities – of career guidance associations (e.g. Austria, Estonia, France, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Romania).
 - The attempt to enhance cross-sectoral collaboration in order to provide a more effective service, and to make the best use of resources (e.g. Austria, Bulgaria, Denmark, Finland, Hungary). EU initiatives such as EUROGUIDANCE Networks, as well as the funding of projects through Leonardo and PHARE programmes, have also enhanced cross-sectoral collaboration. Increasingly countries are embarking on strategies to build up an integrated career guidance system, through the establishment of national guidance forums or agencies (e.g. Bulgaria, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Poland).

It would seem that initiatives in Malta are somewhat trailing behind what is happening across Europe, and particularly so in the education sector, despite the fact that the new National Minimum Curriculum attempts to redefine and in many ways emphasise the importance of school-to-work links, implying an increased role for guidance and counselling services. It is in

**Guidance
initiatives
in Malta**

fact rather curious that some of the most promising 'recent' initiatives have been promoted by individuals and groups outside of the formal guidance sector.

**The
SCOOPS
project**

Two such initiatives are the Coops in Schools Project (SCOOPS),³⁰ which was launched in October 1995, and the Young Enterprise Malta scheme.³¹ Both initiatives are part of the extra-curricular educational programme, and go against the stream of much guidance activity in schools in that they emphasise entrepreneurship and self-employment. SCOOPS sets out to provide secondary level students with an opportunity to organize themselves into cooperative units to run and manage their own creative projects, and to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes which will help them to identify their occupational strengths, their potential contribution to the local labour market, and to create for themselves a viable self-employment option (*see Box 4*). Over a 7000 students have participated in this scheme thus far.

**Box 4: The
curricular
goals for
SCOOPS**

Knowledge: about the meaning and value of work; about the duties and the rights of the worker; about safety regulations; on the global economy and its effect on the local economy; on social and political

³⁰ See G. Baldacchino & S. Rizzo (1997) 'Cooperative experiences in schools: a review of the SCOOPS project.' In R.G. Sultana & J.M. Sammut (eds) (*ibid.*), pp.271-281. The SCOOPS initiative was promoted by personnel from the Workers' Participation and Development Centre at the University, and the Co-Operatives board. The project is now entirely managed by Outlook Co-Op.

³¹ See J. Harper (1997) 'Vocational learning: the Young Enterprise model.' In R.G. Sultana & J.M. Sammut (eds) (*ibid.*), pp.283-292. See also *The Malta Independent on Sunday (Gallarija)*, 1.09.02, p.12.

history concerning the Maltese worker; about workers unions and movements; on the Maltese Co-operative Movement; on social benefits of different categories of employees; about the taxation system; about the range of job vacancies available and their requirements; about finding a vacancy; on subsidies and financial schemes; and on work ethics.

Skills: Working in groups and self control in critical times; planning and organisation; developing one's own potential; discussing issues and negotiating deadlocks; time management; project management; evaluation of one's activities; presenting of projects or business plans; finding solutions to problems encountered during work; concentration; detecting dangers and concern for safety at work; interpreting regulations, instructions, orders and directives; choice of one's career; handling an interview; writing of a curriculum vitae and presenting one's portfolio; financial management of one's earnings; keeping up to date with one's field of work; preparation for temporary unemployment; awareness and experience of information technology; literacy, numeracy and operacy.

Attitudes: appreciate that business requires long-term planning; appreciate that motivation in education is important for one's future career; generate respect for all trades and professions; appreciate the need of workers to join groups; appreciate the importance of accountability and initiative; appreciate lifelong education.

The Young Enterprise Scheme

The Young Enterprise scheme – first piloted locally in 1988 – is now a regular feature of most sixth form (upper secondary) establishments, including vocational ones. The scheme has helped over 3,500 students to build up a variety of business skills as they set up and run a live company – properly incorporated, manufacturing saleable products, and selling competitively in the Maltese (and occasionally overseas) market. In both cases, but especially in the latter scheme, employers are involved in giving advice, in preparing business kits, and in generally being available to guide teams as they go about achieving their goals.

The production of guidance resources

Another project concerning the production of career-related information has been launched by the Malta Tourism Authority, which has published a booklet entitled *Careers in Tourism*. It has also launched a programme, called ‘Choice’, in order to raise awareness among secondary schools students on careers within the tourism industry. The programme entailed travel overseas, and visits to hotels, restaurants and travel agents to obtain experience of work practices in the industry.

A recent initiative, this time led by staff from the Guidance section itself, is the production of a new careers orientation pack in Maltese, containing interactive exercises to help students clarify their knowledge and thinking about the work options that are open to them. This pack, which is aimed at the lower forms in secondary schools, and at academically weaker students in upper forms, is accompanied by a teachers’ handbook. Plans to computerise vocational and educational information

in order to facilitate the dissemination of up-to-date information to students and parents via terminals in Career Rooms in each school, referred to in 1996,³² have failed to materialise, though as we shall occasion to note, progress has been achieved in ensuring greater transparency of – and access to – information through the development of websites detailing education and training courses on offer.

As has already been noted, the ETC has tended to focus on guidance as a component of its job brokerage remit, and has, till now, not developed the a range of services that have a strong guidance function. Nevertheless, details of some initiatives can be provided in this context. The ETC, for instance, has adopted a caseload management system, whereby employment advisors classify clients according to specific categories in order to ensure that their service responds more effectively to the needs of registrants.³³ This is followed up by a personal action plan that guides registrants towards the labour market or further training. Several new schemes have also been adopted by the corporation over the past two years which, while not having a specific guidance function, do facilitate the re/integration of at-risk groups in the labour market. More directly related to vocational guidance is the web-based job-matching service,

Guidance initiatives in Malta's labour market sector

³² See J.M. Sammut (1997) 'Malta's guidance and counselling services: 1987-1996.' In R.G. Sultana & J.M. Sammut (eds) (*ibid.*), p.48.

³³ The client categories are: registered disabled, very long term unemployed (5 years and over), youths (16 – 24 years of age), 25 years and over, over 40's, and special cases (e.g. ex-substance abusers, ex-convicts, social cases). Employment advisors also use a profiling system which ensures the consolidation of information about a client in view of finding a match with available vacancies.

and the training programme that the ETC has launched in collaboration with the Workers' Participation and Development Centre at the University of Malta. This diploma course in Occupational Guidance and Career Counselling provides the corporation's employment advisors – as well as teachers wanting to become guidance staff in schools – with an in-service professional development opportunity which is significant even at a European level,³⁴ where there tends to be great variation in the training of guidance for the education and labour market sectors.³⁵ The diploma course enhances the professionalisation of guidance on the island, and lays the ground for improved cross-sectoral collaboration.

6. Key challenges facing guidance services in Malta

Guidance in Malta's broader social context

The Malta survey on guidance services identifies a number of challenges that policy makers have to face. Some of these challenges are more pertinent to the education sector, others need to be faced by the labour market sector, while others need to be addressed collaboratively by both sectors. Such challenges as will be outlined below need to be placed in a broader societal context. Indeed, one of the major defining categories that helps make sense of contemporary Maltese society is the notion of 'transition' –

³⁴ Details of the course outline offered in this diploma-level course can be found by following the education link on the WPDC homepage at the following address: <http://home.um.edu.mt/wpdc>

³⁵ See McCarthy, J. (2001) 'The skills, training and qualifications of guidance workers.' Paper prepared for the OECD Career Guidance Policy Review. This paper can be downloaded from <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/36/24/2698214.pdf>

Malta is, in many ways, a society in transition.³⁶ Various factors are contributing to the modernization of Maltese society, not the least of which being the attempt to measure up to the *acquis communautaire* of the European Union, as Malta prepares itself for adhesion as a full member by 2004. Economic restructuring, liberalisation of the media and of the economy, increased openness to globalization forces, increasing secularisation, and so on have accompanied, and in many cases contributed to changing values and a degree of insecurity as past certainties are challenged, and as family and church lose some of their hold on younger generations.³⁷ All of this has important implications for guidance services, if they are to support young people and adults to manage change, to avoid social exclusion, and to exploit the opportunities that arise.

As has already been noted, the key challenge for guidance in Malta remains that of articulating a set of clear objectives that are supported by the policy-

³⁶ See R.G. Sultana & G. Baldacchino (eds) (1994) *Maltese Society: A Sociological Inquiry*. Msida, Malta: Mireva Publications.

³⁷ See A. Abela (1991) *Transmitting Values in European Malta: A Study in Contemporary Values of Modern Society*. Rome & Valletta: Editrice Ponteficia Università Gregoriana; A. Abela (1994) *Shifting Family Values in Malta: A Western European Perspective*. Malta: Discern; A. Abela (2000) *Values of Women and Men in the Maltese Islands: A Comparative European Perspective*. Malta: Commission for the Advancement of Women, Ministry for Social Policy. In this context, one can understand why politicians with a Christian democrat persuasion have expressed concern that while in the past family and church could be counted upon for the reproduction of values and lifeskills from one generation to the next, it now increasingly falls on schools to ensure the continuation of such a process. Indeed, this was precisely one of the reasons why Personal and Social Education (now Personal and Social Development – PSD) was formally introduced as part of the core curriculum in 1990 – see R.G. Sultana (1992) 'Personal and social education: curriculum innovation and school bureaucracies in Malta', *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, Vol.20(2), pp.164-185. This move reinforced the role of guidance teachers and counsellors in schools, with both groups of teachers often working closely together. Much of the PSD curriculum concerns guidance-related issues, and indeed, some PSD staff are also guidance teachers.

maker and by other stakeholders in as concrete manner as possible. Other challenges are set out below.

**Getting the
education-
work link
right**

There is first of all the need to ensure that guidance staff are knowledgeable about the world of work, about the opportunities that exist in the labour market, and about the economic trends that are likely to have an impact on the opportunity structures available to students.³⁸ Such knowledge should extend beyond Malta's horizons, given the new opportunities that will arise for studying, training and working abroad on entry into the European Union. School guidance staff tend to not only have limited awareness of labour market opportunities, whether locally or overseas, but they are also considered to have a bias against industry when they come to offer advice to students. This tends to reinforce the academic drift noted earlier,³⁹ and in some cases even encourages students to take up employment in the public sector, as educators tend to present private entrepreneurs as so imbued by the profit motive as to exploit their employees.⁴⁰ While Maltese guidance teachers engage a wide spectrum of activities that create bridges between

³⁸ Cognizant of the criticism levied at it by the world of work it is expected to bridge, the Guidance and Counselling Services section has resolved to commence a training programme of its personnel which includes seminars on the Maltese labour market, visits to and short placements in industrial concerns, and stronger linkages with the employment service section of the ETC with a view to regularly up-dating guidance teachers with developments in the labour market. However, clear and determined steering in this regard is essential if such ideas are to be implemented.

³⁹ See O. MacDaniel (2000) 'An overview of Vocational Education and Training in Malta'. Turin: ETF (mimeo), p.17.

⁴⁰ See F. Borg (1997) 'Employers and education: a response to Sultana.' In R.G. Sultana & J.M. Sammut (eds) (*ibid.*), pp.133-138. Generally speaking, however, empirical research on the messages that guidance teachers give students regarding the world of work is still largely missing.

school and the world of work, ETC officials have often criticised the guidance personnel working in school contexts, considering that they are not sufficiently knowledgeable about the labour market and therefore badly placed to provide information and advice.

Such criticism has been echoed by employers' associations – the Federation of Industry (FOI), for instance, has often taken the Guidance Unit to task for having neither the required knowledge regarding employment prospects, nor the skills to interpret labour market trends. There is also a feeling that the emphasis on 'choice' based largely on the personal likes and aspirations of students (or their parents) leads to skills bottlenecks. The FOI has indeed often urged guidance teachers to 'be familiar with actual – as opposed to imagined – current skill demands by employers. This has to be done not only by studying statistics and reports, but also by conducting visits to employers' establishments and communicating on a regular basis with management and technical personnel.'⁴¹ On their part, guidance teachers often complain that very few firms, factories or private and parastatal companies accept students on vocational visits, with guidance teachers having to rely on their own knowledge or experience of different employment sectors when advising students. The challenge of providing guidance staff with a better knowledge base concerning the skills profiles required by the Maltese economy is likely to be facilitated by the

⁴¹ FOI (1992) Position paper on the system of apprentice training (mimeo, 19.10.92), p.1. More recently, Olaf MacDaniel (2000), in his report 'An overview of Vocational Education and Training in Malta' (Turin: ETF), also made the same point (see p.17).

publication of the ETC's national human resources development policy and strategy, and by the Employment Barometer exercise, which serves as a mechanism for the systematic monitoring and analysis of skill shortages. On their part, however, guidance staff in schools should be more proactive in accessing and making good use of the readily available labour market information, which can be easily accessed from both the ETC and the National Statistics Organisation web sites and publications. It is clear, however, that school staff need support not only in keeping track of changes, but also in making sense of the information that is provided for guidance purposes.

**Access to
appropriate
work-related
information**

Linked to the challenge above is the fact that in Malta, students in schools, as well as young people and adult clients, do not have access yet to a data bank of information about different occupations. One of the key services associated with guidance is the provision of valid, reliable, contextual, relevant and useful information about occupations. This would include the qualifications required, the salary one can expect to get, the career progression structure, and a description of the work that is to be done with, where possible, visual support to facilitate an experiential understanding of the occupational field in question. Plans for the ETC to produce leaflets with 10 job descriptions every year, which could be used by guidance teachers in their work in careers education, have yet to materialise.

**Cross-
sectoral
collaboration**

It is not information alone, however, which will ensure more effective guidance services in schools. As with most countries surveyed by

OECD, ETF and CEDEFOP, there is a need in Malta to improve co-ordination between guidance services in schools and in the Public Employment Service. Such cross-sectoral co-ordination would ensure a more productive collaborative approach to providing reliable and timely information to students as they go about making their choices.⁴² Cross-sectoral co-ordination would include enhanced co-operation with other helping agencies. One of the main barriers of successful coordination is the sector-divided structure of guidance and counselling field, with those responsible for provision referring to different central authorities. This division is only partly explained by the fact that the different sectors cater for different client profiles. A major development that could potentially improve cross-sector collaboration is the recent transfer of the ETC from the Social Policy to the Education Minister's portfolio. As already noted, the fact that guidance staff from both the education and labour market sector are now being trained together is another positive development in this regard.

Some social partners have recommended that, given Malta's small size, it would make sense to streamline existing resources and provision through the setting up of a national body, operating from a national resource centre for

**The need for
a national
guidance
forum**

⁴² See the Ministry of Social Policy (2001) 'The joint assessment of the employment policy priorities of Malta', p.13. See http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/employment_analysis/japs/malta_en.pdf However, I share the view of the Director of Student Services and International Relations that the strength of guidance teachers is their location in schools. They could certainly have a strong presence in the community, but being school based certainly facilitates client access.

Guidance and Counselling.⁴³ Despite the lack of formal co-ordinating mechanisms, Malta's small size leads to frequent meetings between practitioners, whether these are based in schools, in the employment service, or in youth, church or other types of associations in the community. The lack of co-ordination, particularly between the guidance services offered by the Ministry of Education and those in the labour market sector, has recently led the Guidance and Counselling Unit to invite staff from the ETC to address guidance personnel on issues related to the labour market. Currently, improved strategies and mechanisms to facilitate the flow of information from the ETC to guidance personnel in schools are being explored. The Careers Convention, the SCOOPS and Young Enterprise schemes, the apprenticeship schemes, and visits to industry provide good opportunities for co-ordination between schools, the public employment service, employers and trade unions. Generally, however, the perception is that such opportunities are rarely exploited to the extent that they should be, and one of the strong recommendations that will be made in this monograph is the setting up of a national guidance forum. Indeed, several countries across Europe are adopting the strategy of establishing such forums, in order to enhance cross-sectoral collaboration and partnership in guidance provision (*see Box 5*).

⁴³ See Ministry of Education (2001) 'Report on the National Consultation Process on Lifelong Learning' (mimeo, July), p.12. See http://www.education.gov.mt/edu/edu_division/report_III_01.htm

In *Finland* key stakeholders engage in wide-ranging and many-sided co-operative ventures, and several organisations are interested in issues connected with counselling and guidance. A National Advisory Group was set up on the initiative of the Finnish EUROGUIDANCE Centre (CIMO) in 1999. It brings together the national authorities and other key players in the field of guidance and counselling, ensures coordination, and seeks to create and exploit synergies among the different actors operating in the field. In addition, CIMO has its own Advisory Council representing different ministries, universities and polytechnics, business and industry, as well as student and youth organisations.

**Box 5:
Enhancing
cross-sectoral
collaboration
and
partnerships
in provision
through
National
Guidance
Forums**

Bulgaria established a National Agency for Vocational Education and Training – NAVET – as a specialised government body for the accreditation and licensing of activities in VET as well as for co-ordinating institutions related to VET and guidance. The managing council of NAVET includes 24 representatives: 8 each for the respective Ministries, for employers' organisations, and for employee organisations.

In the province of Styria, *Austria*, a strong regional network has been established to facilitate the transition of young people to work. The network includes representatives from the Styrian provincial government, educational institutions, employer organisations, individual companies, trade unions, and the public employment service. The *Berufsfindungsbegleiter* project aims to improve young people's access to firms, advice, and information.

**Challenges
for the ETC**

Guidance personnel at the ETC require specific training in responding to the needs of the clientele normally dealt with by the public employment service. The JAP (2001, p.17) indeed notes the need for vocational guidance personnel at the PES to 'modernise the ETC's job matching services and to improve the profiling of job seekers and their matching with appropriate job vacancies and/or training programmes.' An internal audit at the ETC has highlighted the fact that while progress has been made in these areas, as well in the development of a caseload management system, further action must be taken to ensure appropriate and effective standardised profiling, and better client follow-up.⁴⁴ The launch of the Diploma in Occupational Guidance and Career Counselling is very promising in that it should lead to a reinforcement of the guidance function of the ETC.

**The need
for quality
auditing**

There is as yet no formalised quality auditing procedure in order to ensure that guidance services in schools and at the ETC are attaining objectives.⁴⁵ While guidance teachers are monitored by counselors, they are not peer mentored, and while they do have a regular forum that provides opportunities for discussion and professional development, the general feeling is that there is much that still needs to be done to ensure a quality service.⁴⁶ There is

⁴⁴ See J. Bartolo (with C. Micallef) (2002) 'ETC's caseload management system analysis'. Malta: ETC (mimeo).

⁴⁵ One of the ETC's main criteria for evaluation is quantitative, i.e. the number of job placements made. The ETC is also about to introduce standard operating procedures across the whole range of its activities.

⁴⁶ The areas for evaluation suggested in Annexe I of the *Services Manual* are useful in that they propose a comprehensive check-list to help guidance teachers focus on different aspects of their role.

also no mechanism in place to measure the effectiveness of vocational guidance in orienting people towards new skill areas, nor a formally approved ethical code of conduct to guide personnel. The setting up of a national Association for Counsellors, and more recently, of an association for Personal and Social Development teachers, could have a positive impact on the establishment and maintenance of standards, though both groups do not include educational and career guidance as a specific focus of their activities. More directly relevant to guidance is the publication and distribution of a *Services Manual*,⁴⁷ which should be followed up by a *Quality Service Charter*, to be drawn up in consultation with the National Quality Charter unit.

Clients in Malta, whether young or adult, generally have ready access to guidance personnel. Distances are short, and staff is present both in-house (in schools, in the case of the education sector, and in regional offices, in the case of the ETC⁴⁸), and at the central office (the Guidance and Counselling Unit of the Education Division; the ETC Headquarters). Information is also readily available through the free distribution of brochures, and through links with the community through local councils, the Church, the community TV (Channel 22) and radio programmes. There is, however, an aspiration to also provide on-line career guidance accessible from schools and homes, which would

**Enhancing
access**

⁴⁷ The Guidance and Counselling *Services Manual* recommends that 'evaluation of guidance should take place at least annually, with perhaps a limited number of aspects, to be tackled in depth each year. This could be based on the feedback of all parties involved' (p.39).

⁴⁸ The ETC has outreach regional centres in Valletta, Cospicua, Mosta and Victoria (Gozo), other than at Hal Far, its headquarters.

enable students and adults search education, employment and training opportunities.

The need to diversify service providers

The issue of lifelong and lifewide occupational guidance has to be addressed, and while the Department for Further Studies and Adult Education has plans to establish an adult guidance and counselling service, it is within-house provision by enterprises and trade unions that is likely to be most effective in responding to the needs of adults and workers, a point that will be reinforced in other sections of this monograph.

7. The role of stakeholders and social partners

As noted earlier, there is no national body co-ordinating guidance and counselling activities, and hence there is no formal and regular forum – equivalent, say, to the Germany's Alliance for Jobs, Training and Competitiveness, Hungary's National Career Orientation Council, Poland's National Forum for Vocational Guidance, or the United Kingdom's Guidance Council – which includes stakeholders, public authorities and social partners, and which functions as an advisory body to the relevant Ministries.

Employer organisations

Very little if any guidance is provided by employers within firms

Employers and employer organisations in Malta do not offer guidance services within enterprises. This is in contrast with the situation in larger European countries, when enterprises provide career information and guidance services in-house, either

through their own personnel in HRD departments or by buying services from specialised external agencies and consultants (e.g. Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, the United Kingdom). This they may do for one of three reasons:

- (a) to facilitate career development within the company,
- (b) to guide employees towards training in skills areas that management envisages will become necessary for the company's growth – this may entail training needs assessments, and
- (c) to support workers that will be made redundant or outplaced, by offering them access to re-training routes and into alternative employment.

Few of the guidance reports from the accession countries and from the small nation states in Europe make any reference to such services. Larger countries are more likely to indicate the incidence of such practices, especially where the state supports such initiatives through including career guidance provision within expenditure allowable against training levies (e.g. the Netherlands), through awarding a Quality Mark to enterprises that invest in the development of their own employees (e.g. the Netherlands, the United Kingdom), and through making Public Employment Service guidance staff available to companies, particularly small and medium-sized ones that do not have the capacity to develop guidance services in-house (e.g. Germany).

**The links
between
employers
and schools**

Employers in Malta do play an indirect part in supporting guidance-related functions in schools, particularly in promoting stronger links between the world of education and the world of work. Up to a few years ago and since the mid-1980s, an Education-Industry Unit used to operate, with the person in charge of the Guidance and Counselling Unit having regular meetings with the business community generally, and the Federation of Industry in particular.⁴⁹ The role of that Unit is, in principle, to be taken up by a 'National Association for Industry-Education Co-Operation', one of the proposals made by the NMC Working Group focusing on the links between school and work.⁵⁰ The work of this autonomous body is to be complemented by the setting up of a unit within the Education Division charged with the responsibility of supporting schools in their endeavours to introduce the world of work across the curriculum. Even if both bodies have not yet seen the light of day, the social partnership model that is being adopted by all government entities is already leading employer associations and individual employers to play an increasing role in aspects of Malta's educational set up, even if not directly linked to guidance and counselling. Employers are formally represented on the National Curriculum Council, which was set up in 2001. They are also often present on School Councils, which have a largely advisory and fund-raising role, and are composed of representatives from parents and

⁴⁹ One of its achievements was the production of a *Skills and Training Needs Survey Report* (Malta, mimeo, 1987).

⁵⁰ See A. Caruana (2000) 'Links between schools and the place of work.' In J. Giordmaina (ed.) (2000) *National Curriculum on its Way*. Malta: MoE, Education Division & Faculty of Education, pp.351-353. Also pp.333-349.

teaching staff, and in post-16 institutions, students. School Council Presidents are nominated by Local Councils from an approved list proposed by the MoE, and at the secondary school level, the President is often chosen from the business community in order to, in theory, facilitate partnerships between schools and industry.

In the VET sector, the Institute of Tourism Studies requires the Board of Governors to collaborate with social partners in the management of the institution, and thus includes representatives from the hospitality industry. The MCAST is also managed by a Board of Governors that puts a premium on integrating social partners in decision-making. The College's statute makes provision for the setting up of a Partnership Office, which is to have a number of roles, the most relevant of which in this context is the development of partnerships with the industrial and services economic sectors on the island.

Employers are also represented on the development boards of the MPVQAC, the Council that has been given the responsibility to establish a Malta Vocational Qualification framework, and the definition of standards for the different callings. The FOI regularly issues position papers, some of which have directly dealt with VET and LLL policies. The impact of these position papers is hard to assess, though it does seem that many of the ideas tabled have entered the policy-making network.⁵¹

**Employers
and the
post-16
education
sector**

**Other
indirect
input by
employers
in the
guidance
and career
information
field**

⁵¹ For a review of FOI Position Papers on education and training, and their impact on policy-making, see R.G. Sultana (1997) 'Employers and education in a Mediterranean micro-state: the case of Malta.' *Journal of Education and Work*, Vol.10(1), pp.37-58.

Employer organisations do not have much of a role at all in directly funding information, guidance and counselling services in schools. Indirect funding comes through when such organisations, or individual enterprises belonging to employer associations, pay a fee to buy exhibition space in the annual Careers Convention organised by the Guidance and Counselling Unit. Some of the major firms also incur expense in producing information leaflets about their own occupational sector, which are distributed at the fair and also exhibited in the careers and further education information room that some schools have. Employers facilitate work orientation visits organised by guidance personnel, and in the case of apprenticeships, offer work placements and study visits. Employers participate in Career Conventions, and contribute brochures to stock careers information rooms in schools. They are often invited to address students in order to provide first hand information about their particular enterprise, especially at the key decision-making points in the students' lives, when course options or further education routes have to be chosen. They also contribute advice and act as mentors to students taking part in the Young Enterprise Scheme.

It is relevant to point out that, in the case of the ETC's employment advisory service, which partly depends for its job-matching process on vacancy submission surveys with employers, the latter do not seem as co-operative as expected in ensuring a flow of information.⁵²

⁵² See J. Bartolo (2002), *ibid*, p.11.

The role of trade unions

Trade unions are generally not active at all in providing, regulating or funding information, guidance and counselling services.⁵³ At best, some unions take part in careers information fairs and produce some information material. No study or survey regarding the guidance needs of workers has been commissioned on the part of unions, and there is no professional guidance or educational service dealing with the career plans of unemployed members. Trade union officials will typically spend a lot of time listening to and advising members facing such challenging circumstances as redundancies and redeployment. They are also often contacted by employers and managers asking for recruits, references or recommendations. Due to their extensive contacts with the world of work, trade unions tend to be, in a way, job centres in their own right. Much of this activity, however, tends to be in response to specific needs and situations, and not the result of a co-ordinated and formally organised strategy. Trade unions offer several courses to members, and some of these are directly linked to the world of work.

Again, this is in contrast with the direct and indirect input that trade unions make in the guidance field in some European countries. Indirectly, trade unions occasionally stimulate guidance provision for their members by negotiating for 'career paragraphs' (e.g. the Netherlands) in the collective bargaining process.

Formal information and guidance services do not feature on the list of trade union priorities

Guidance services by trade unions in some European countries

⁵³ It should be pointed out that the MUT has a very powerful role to play in the articulation and execution of educational policy, and historically has been very much at the forefront in promoting the development of guidance services. One of its past presidents (Mr Abel Giglio), and the present secretary general (Mr J. DeGiovanni) of the Union, received professional training in vocational guidance and counselling. The former was one of the two pioneers responsible for the establishment of the Guidance Unit.

This is especially critical in contexts where major restructuring and privatisation make redundancies likely, and where information and guidance support systems can be of benefit in directing workers into re-training and alternative employment routes. In addition, some trade unions are themselves providers of guidance services (e.g. Austria, Denmark, Greece, Iceland, Spain, Sweden). While in most cases, as in Malta, such provision is informal, offered by union staff who have no specific training in the field (e.g. Cyprus, Estonia, Romania), the potential for effectiveness should nevertheless not be underestimated, especially since low-qualified and low-skilled workers are more likely to feel comfortable making use of such services than those offered through employer-managed structures. In some countries, unions have become more aware of this potential, and have launched training courses for shop stewards to act as ‘education ambassadors’, ‘learning representatives’ or ‘learning advisors’, encouraging workers to access education and training opportunities (e.g. Denmark, Norway, the United Kingdom).

The role of community based organisations

Community-based organisations and NGO's have the potential of responding to the guidance needs of specific groups

The European survey of guidance noted that, most often, community-based organisations provide services to specific groups, especially if they are the target of national equity policies. Few of these initiatives were reported for accession countries, including Malta, where the key provider remains the state. Other European countries (e.g. Luxembourg, Portugal, Spain, Sweden), however, reported an increasing number of projects which community-based associations organised on their

own (either as self-financed initiatives, or more often through outsourcing by the PES), or in collaboration with a public agency (e.g. Luxembourg's *Femmes en Détresse* project; the Adult Educational Guidance Initiative in Ireland, which targets unemployed adults who wish to take up education and training). Typically, such initiatives cater for unemployed adults who suffer from social or physical disadvantages: community-based organisations that work with them are considered to be closer to the realities of these target groups, and therefore potentially more effective in responding to their needs. Clients might also feel more comfortable with such forms of provision, which tend to be built around personal rather than bureaucratic service cultures.

While not offering guidance services directly themselves, some stakeholders in Malta have had an impact on guidance provision through the agendas they mobilise in the public sphere. Thus, the Commission for the Advancement of Women and the National Commission for Persons with Disability, have on occasion drawn attention to specific issues they feel guidance services should deal with, including the gender-stereotyped manner in which subject and career tracks are chosen, and the lack of specialised vocational support for disabled clients.

Guidance-related agendas of some NGO's in Malta

8. Target groups and priorities

As has already been noted, most career information, guidance and counselling services in Malta are offered in the education sector and are there-

The key recipients of guidance

fore largely addressed towards young people, especially at key decision-making points in the flow through the school system. These include the transition from the primary to secondary school sector (age 11+), the choice of subject options at the end of Form 2 (in Junior Lyceums at age 13+) or Form 3 (in Area Secondaries at age 14+), and choice of further education or work options at the end of Form 5 (age 16+) and Form 6 (age 18+).

**Target
groups
in the
education
sector**

Target groups that are offered special attention include female teenagers, who are often encouraged to think beyond traditional stereotypes in their choice of occupational futures,⁵⁴ and increasingly students who are at risk. No guidance teachers are assigned to special schools, and the vocational guidance needs of students with disabilities in mainstream school are not presently catered for.⁵⁵ The Guidance and Counselling section also runs a Schoolgirl Mothers' Unit (Unit *Għożża*), targeting pregnant teenagers who might otherwise give up on schooling.⁵⁶ Occupational guidance issues may feature informally in this context.

⁵⁴ See M. Darmanin (1997) 'Gender, identity and vocational guidance.' In R.G. Sultana & J.M. Sammut (eds) (*ibid.*), pp.195-224. Guidance teachers are instructed to 'avoid all gender stereotyping of careers, and to ensure equality of opportunity regardless of gender' – See Guidance & Counselling Services (2000) *Description of Services Manual*. Floriana: Education Division, p.26.

⁵⁵ This is the view expressed by officials at both the National Commission for Persons with Disability and the Education Division's Student Services. A case for the development of guidance services for students with disabilities has been made by A. Bezzina, J. Camilleri & E. Galea-Curmi (1997) 'Common human needs: career education and vocational guidance with students who have disabilities.' In R.G. Sultana & J.M. Sammut (eds) (*ibid.*), pp.225-242.

⁵⁶ During the year 2000, 114 new unmarried teenage mothers contacted the unit, with 85 girls attending the programme offered. Counselling was offered to 49 girls as well as their partners and parents (cf. *Annual Report*, 2000, Education Division, p.18).

Outside the formal educational system, the ETC largely targets young unemployed – who are guided towards employment opportunities or back into training – women returners, long-term unemployed, disabled clients, and clients who are in special need, such as ex-substance abusers, ex-convicts, clients from economically depressed areas,⁵⁷ and more recently, unemployed refugees.⁵⁸ These disadvantaged groups constitute an important proportion of the overall client base of the ETC, which has the catering for the needs of all the unemployed as its remit. Other guidance-related activities are aimed at those intending to set up their own small business. Such guidance is also provided by the Institute for the Promotion of Small Enterprises (IPSE) and the newly set up Business Incubation Centre within IPSE.

Target groups in the labour market sector

Occupational guidance is also offered informally to prison inmates attending the Corradino Correctional Facility. Here, help is provided by the Education Unit and by the ‘Welfare Desk’, which is run by a social worker who is not, however, formally qualified in guidance. Clients are provided with information as to the likelihood of openings in specific occupational areas, and are helped to find work through contacts with employers and through the ETC. Occupational guidance can also include informal individual interviews where advice is given to the resident as to educational opportunities that can be followed in order to obtain qualifications

Other target groups

⁵⁷ See ETC Annual Report, 2000-2001, pp.9 ff.

⁵⁸ A legal notice of May 2002 established that refugees have the right to register for employment and can benefit from the same services as local citizens. The ETC keeps a separate register for such refugees.

that could lead to new occupational paths. Links with local educational institutions are then established to facilitate access to courses of study.

**Identifying
priorities
in the
information
and
guidance
field in
Malta**

While there are as yet no legislative basis for the identification of priorities in the field of guidance and counselling, nevertheless policy directions are signalled by central government through policy documents, which often help to focus attention on particular challenges. Thus, the National Commission for Persons with Disability within the Ministry of Social Policy has published a *National Policy on Special Education in Malta*⁵⁹ that is very much in line with the Salamanca Statement, to which Malta is signatory. The Commission has also published another key document, entitled *Employment and Persons with Disability: National Policy*,⁶⁰ where a number of points made are directly relevant to the provision of guidance and counselling, given that they focus on the assistance that should be provided to persons with disability in their transition from school to work, and in the provision of suitable employment opportunities and sheltered workshops guided by the principle that Malta has the duty to create a least restrictive environment conducive to the integration of every disabled person. The Commission effectively functions as a pressure group, encouraging various sectors of society to become more aware of disability issues, and offering resources and training so that the needs of persons with disability are better catered for.

⁵⁹ See National Commission for Persons with Disability (1994) *Special Education in Malta: National Policy*. Malta: Ċentru Hidma Soċjali.

⁶⁰ See National Commission for Persons with Disability (1995) *Employment and Persons with Disability: National Policy*. Malta: Ċentru Hidma Soċjali.

Other priorities – which have recently included the articulation of a code of school behaviour, national policies on child protection,⁶¹ and campaigns against bullying, drug addiction and alcoholism – are announced centrally by the Minister of Education, often in response to the perceived rise of a new challenge, or to evidence suggested by research. Priorities and target groups are also identified at the school level, particularly now that each school community has to draw up a development plan that sets out specific targets that facilitates management by objectives. In most cases, these priorities have tended to focus on personal counselling issues, rather than educational and career guidance ones.

Most of the priorities targeted by Malta's policy-makers concern counselling, not career information and guidance

Schools with a higher incidence of at-risk students are provided with a larger number of guidance teachers. Groups that are considered to be at risk also have easier access to support thanks to special seminars that are organised for them, both during and after regular school time. Other special measures include in-house campaigns, the publication of special brochures, the carrying out of surveys to better identify problems and issues and to facilitate the articulation of the view of the clients, and so on. The issue of regional disparities becomes important when one takes the island of Gozo into account. Special efforts are indeed made to ensure that Gozitan students get the same opportunities as the rest of the Maltese, and thus, the Careers Convention venue shifts to Gozo every alternate year. Similarly the ETC has a regional office catering for the needs of Gozitan unemployed.

Active steps towards special target groups

⁶¹ See Education Division (1999) *Child Protection: National Policy – Procedures for Schools*. MoE, Safe Schools Programme: Malta.

**ETC
schemes
catering for
the needs of
specific
groups**

Additionally, the ETC has set up a number of special schemes which, while not directly linked to vocational guidance, do assist targeted groups in finding employment. These include:

- the *Job Start Youth Initiative*, aimed at unemployed youths between 16 and 24 years of age, to enable them to integrate in the labour market in the shortest time possible. Job plans are drawn up, and a meeting between client and employment advisor is held once every four weeks to discuss career choices and the difficulties being encountered;
- the *Job Experience Scheme*, which exposes young registrants to the realities of the labour market, and sets out to improve clients' employability by offering in-house training and work experience (maximum of 13 weeks on a 24-hour week) with a view to effective integration in work. The scheme is aimed at those aged 16 and over with no work experience.
- The *Basic Employment Passport Scheme*, which provides basic employment skills to young school leavers leaving the educational system with little or no skills and qualifications.
- The *Youth Outreach Programme*, which helps young people from economically depressed areas in developing basic lifeskills and job search skills.

Despite the range of initiatives outlined above, the Malta survey indicates that more needs to be done for specific groups of young people, particularly those who are in difficulty at school, and those who have disabilities. While both males and females are systematically encouraged to think beyond gender stereotypes when considering future educational and occupational paths,⁶² trends indicate that not much headway has been made in this regard, especially when it comes to the choice of vocational education and training routes. Similarly, some social partners and policy makers are of the opinion that the academic drift on the part of students in further education is at least partly the result of the orientation and advice provided by the guidance services at the secondary school level. As already noted, guidance staff in schools tend to have little knowledge of labour market trends, and are badly placed to advise students on employment opportunities. Many are aware of the gaps in their knowledge, and feel reluctant to provide career guidance.

Major gaps in the provision of information, guidance and counselling

There is also a consensus over the fact that a comprehensive information database regarding further education and employment opportunities should be made available on the internet. This would include a web-based national gateway with links to all existing services of information, guidance and counselling – one that could operate from

⁶² Guidance teachers and counsellors are particularly targeted by the NMC in the promotion of gender equality, given that their attitudes will have a strong influence on the choices that students make.

a national resource centre.⁶³ Recent considerations of the ETC in view of the drawing up of the JAP, the VET monograph⁶⁴ and the Human Resource Development Plan⁶⁵ have suggested that the guidance services offered by the ETC are less than adequate, and that these have to be strengthened by the further training of their staff. Finally, there is as yet no tradition in either the public or the private sector to offer guidance services to employees, who might be encountering difficulties in meeting work-related challenges including burn-out, stress, relationship problems with colleagues or management, and the anxiety and insecurity that can be caused by the demands of a changing work environment that calls for the development of new knowledge, skills and attitudes, as well as by retirement.

9. Staffing

There is a great diversity in the professional background and training of guidance staff across Europe

As the synthesis of trends and practices in 29 European countries shows, the career guidance labour force in Europe is marked by great diversity in the extent and nature of professional training required prior to entry, in the range of competencies its members have to master and use on-the-job, in the overlap there is between their role and other roles, in the progression pathways it offers them, in the salaries it is able to command relative to other

⁶³ One positive move in this direction was the launch, in September 2000, of a website managed by the Department of Further Studies and Adult Education which provides detailed information regarding post-secondary courses offered in state institutions, as well as other information required by prospective local and overseas students. See http://www.education.gov.mt/edu/studies_adult.htm

⁶⁴ The overview of Vocational and Education Training provision in Malta can be found on the ETF website, i.e. <http://www.etf.eu.int/>

⁶⁵ This is being prepared by the ETC and should be available in late 2003, early 2004.

professions, and in the status it enjoys among the community it serves. Much of this diversity is evident not only *between* European countries, but *within* them as well, indicating that what we have here is a 'truncated' and not fully realised process of professionalisation.⁶⁶ In the following sections we will consider the staff categories in the guidance field in Malta, the qualifications and training they have, and the competencies they are expected to master both presently, and in the coming years.

As already noted earlier, there are two categories of staff in compulsory secondary school settings (*see Box 6*): (a) *guidance teachers* are generally attached to one school,⁶⁷ and dedicate half their time to teaching a subject, and the rest of the time to vocational and educational guidance in individual or group settings. They are also responsible for administering a careers and further education information room,⁶⁸ run seminars on leadership, relationships and communication, lead parental skills courses,⁶⁹ ensure smooth transitions (between primary and secondary schools; between compulsory and post-compulsory education; between school and work), organize visits to industries and constituted bodies, and manage a cumulative record card system profiling the educational and personal development

**Staff
categories
in the
compulsory
education
sector**

⁶⁶ In his book *Schoolteacher: A Sociological Study*, Lortie (1975) had made the same evaluation of the partial professionalisation of teachers. I owe the term 'truncated profession' to him.

⁶⁷ Girls' schools are allocated female guidance teachers; boys' schools can have male and female guidance teachers.

⁶⁸ About half the secondary schools have a careers information room. In most cases, there is no computer available to help guidance teachers perform their tasks more effectively.

⁶⁹ Parental skills courses are generally co-ordinated by facilitators trained specifically for the purpose, and include PSD teachers besides counsellors and guidance teachers.

of students. Form teachers, PSE teachers, religion teachers and spiritual directors also often offer guidance support, generally by mobilising basic helping skills; (b) *counsellors* are responsible for a number of schools, focus mainly on personal development issues, handle cases referred to them by guidance teachers, and provide further training to the latter. They do not have any formal teaching responsibilities, though they do lead group counselling sessions on a variety of issues related largely to personal development. Counsellors are complemented by a small group of staff that have specialised training in particular areas, such as child abuse. Other support is provided by psychologists.

**Box 6:
Position
descriptions
of School
Counsellors
and
Guidance
Teachers in
Malta
(Services
Manual,
2000)**

Position Description of School Counsellor:

Main responsibilities:-

1. Is responsible for the running of a guidance and counselling service in one large school, or a number of small schools;
2. Works in continuous collaboration with the Education Officer, Guidance and Counselling;
3. Liaises with the Guidance teacher/s in the school he/she is posted to, and with the Guidance Teacher/s in the other school he/she is assigned;
4. Advises parents and helps students in making educational and vocational choices;
5. Co-ordinates the work of Form Teachers and Guidance Teachers in collaboration with the Heads of Schools concerned;
6. Advises heads of schools and staff on the compilation and use of cumulative record cards, and ensures that these record cards are properly kept;

7. Advises on the profiling of students;
8. Advises on and encourages a healthy all-round development of students;
9. Helps students with problems;
10. Conducts personal counselling sessions with individuals, and/or with groups of students;
11. Facilitates referrals of students to other specialists and services;
12. Organises activities and services, during normal school hours at institution and systems levels, in collaboration with the Education Officer, Guidance & Counselling;
13. Organises any other activities on a voluntary basis.

Position Description of Guidance Teacher:*Main responsibilities:-*

1. Performs the duties of a Teacher;
2. Assists and guides students in their personal, education and emotional development;
3. Caters for particular needs of students referred to him/her by other teachers or school administrators, and prepares any reports and makes the necessary contacts with the Education Division for external referrals if, and when required;
4. Advises parents on the personal development and behaviour, subject options and career choices of their children;
5. Organises meetings (including talks, discussions, seminars, etc.) for parents as agreed with the Head of School;
6. Prepares students and provides the necessary information for subject options and career choices;
7. Organises visits by students to educational institutions and career related establishments;

8. Co-operates in the organisation of Guidance and Counselling activities and services at school and system level;
9. Works under the direction of Counsellor and Guidance and Counselling Education Officer/s;
10. Facilitates the transition from primary to secondary school, and from school to another school, or to school leaving;
11. Organises guidance and counselling spaces and facilities at school.

**Staff
categories
in the post-
16 sector**

‘Counsellors’ are also attached to the different institutions in the post-compulsory education system, including the Junior College, the Institute of Tourism Studies, the MCAST, and the University.⁷⁰ These counsellors are expected to cover the whole range of guidance, namely career, educational and personal guidance and do not have formal teaching responsibilities, though they do run seminars on a variety of topics, such as stress management and leadership skills. At the University, the task of providing information about courses and career opportunities opened up by the different degrees and diplomas is also fulfilled by a Students Advisory Services, which collaborates closely with the Counselling service. The Students’ Union also provides students with information.

⁷⁰ In many countries there is often the assumption that post-16 students need less in terms of educational and occupational guidance, since they have already made their choice. This is far from being the case, and the unsatisfied guidance needs of students have been the subject of much research recently – see A.G. Watts & R. van Esbroeck (1998) *New Skills for New Futures: Higher Education and Counselling Services in the European Union*. Brussels: VUB Press.

At the ETC, there is only one category of guidance personnel. *Employment advisors* operate from four job centres, the most important of which is located in Valletta. Job centres handle requests for manpower from employers, as well as applications for work from job seekers, and advertise vacancies. Employment advisors guide jobseekers in finding an occupation, and also inform clients about possible training opportunities.

Staff categories in the labour market sector

Number of (full-time) staff

Sector	Category	Total number	Total Females	Total Males
Compulsory schooling	Counsellors	17 (state) *6 (private)	11 4	6 2
	Guidance teachers	98 (state) *31(private)	56 20	42 11
Post-compulsory schooling	Counsellors	1	0	1
	Guidance teachers	9	5	4
University	Counsellors	2	1	1
	Student Advisors	2	–	2
Public Employment Service	Employment advisors	13	8	5

* For the private (non-state) school sector, no distinction is made between guidance teachers serving the compulsory school levels and the senior school levels.

Some European countries have developed policies that enable the use of non-professionals (e.g. alumni, stakeholders, significant adults and peers who often work with the ‘hard to reach’), para-professionals (e.g. information officers), and ‘linked professionals’ (e.g. social workers) to work with, and complement the work of trained guidance

Policies to make use of non-professional groups

staff, both in the education and the labour market sector. Reasons for these include the desire to ensure access in a context where the supply of qualified staff is not keeping up with demand, or where service provision through bureaucratic set-ups proves unpopular. A further reason could be the trend to offer tiered services, where client needs for information are catered for by front-office staff, and where individuals are only referred to face-to-face interviews with counsellors when the situation warrants it.

Malta does not appear to have taken up this option in providing services in the guidance field. The use of non-professional groups is not a matter of policy, but is the result of the personal initiative taken by guidance teachers themselves. Thus, parents, alumni and employers are often called upon to address students during career orientation seminars, Career Conventions, and so on, in order to share their knowledge and career and further education experiences.

Professional training required of guidance staff in the education sector

Guidance teachers are not required to have specific training, even though around 40 have followed a diploma-level course in guidance and counselling at the University, and most if not all have followed short, specialised though non-credentialed in-service courses. In the state school sector, guidance teachers are chosen by interview after a call for applications from among teachers with at least two years' classroom experience. Applicants with a diploma in guidance are automatically appointed to vacancies. Other applicants are chosen on the basis of criteria used

by the interviewing board, which include: qualifications, experience in schools and in community organisations, suitability for the post, recommendation by head of school, personality, and professional competence. Appointments are renewable every two years.

To qualify as counsellors, guidance teachers need to have eight years' teaching experience, five years' experience as guidance teachers, and a professional qualification. This diploma-level certificate is generally obtained from the University of Malta.⁷¹ Several counsellors would have also completed a Masters' degree, mostly overseas.⁷² Staff aged 40 and below would have also, as a rule, followed a four year honours degree in teaching, or a three or four year degree in such areas as humanities, sciences or psychology, followed by a one-year full-time teacher training course.⁷³ Older staff have generally been trained at one of the two teacher training Colleges, whose two-year courses were replaced by that offered by the Faculty of Education, set up in 1978. Some would have a first degree followed by a post-graduate certificate in education.

⁷¹ This Diploma in Guidance and Counselling was first offered in 1985. After catering for three cohorts of students, the name of the course was changed to Diploma in School Counselling, and this was also offered three times. In all there have been 109 graduates from the two Diplomas. Some of these graduates would no longer be practising guidance counselling, as the diploma has often served in the past as a backdoor to upward mobility into administrative grades in the teaching profession.

⁷² A new Masters in Psychology course has been offered recently within the Department of Psychology of the Faculty of Education at the University of Malta, with a strand specialising in educational counselling.

⁷³ The Post-Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE).

Till recently, employment advisors at the ETC did not receive specialised certified pre-service training in guidance, and have largely developed their knowledge and skills on the job. As already noted, the situation is now changing with the introduction of the first Diploma course especially tailored for their needs.

**Training
requirements
across
Europe**

It is interesting to see how such pre-service and in-service training – or lack of it – compares with the situation across Europe.⁷⁴ In several countries, a person can, in some sectors, offer formal career guidance without having any specific training in the field at all, or where a few hours of in-service training, often offered in-house, are deemed to suffice (e.g. France, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg). Other countries are much more demanding however (*see Box 7*), either requiring or encouraging guidance workers to have a masters degree (e.g. Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Finland, Poland, Romania), though this may be in psychology rather than in career guidance as such. Specialised masters-level degrees are offered by a number of countries (e.g. Finland, Poland, Portugal, Romania, the United Kingdom), but across the whole range of expectations, it is often the case that employers of career guidance staff – and therefore most frequently the state – demand qualifications from what are considered to be fields related to guidance rather than in guidance itself. Often these include

⁷⁴ There have been some attempts to regulate qualification equivalence frameworks for guidance in order to establish Europe-wide recognition and to facilitate Europe-wide mobility. One such project has been launched by Austria, Germany, Hungary and Poland, which are working together on a Leonardo da Vinci programme that will lead to equivalence in certification for their career guidance staff.

psychology, education, sociology, economics and social work. While disciplinary overlaps with career guidance may be evident, there is often no sustained attempt to analyse whether the competencies offered during the study period coincide with those required in employment. In most of these cases, the expectation is that career guidance workers learn their skills on the job.

In *Greece*, until a few years ago, SEP – the guidance programme in secondary schools – was implemented by people who, for the most part, lacked any relevant training. However, since 1999 many special training programmes have been organised for SEP officials in universities under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and the Pedagogical Institute with EU support funding. The Ministry also operates a model Centre for Vocational Guidance, which it uses for professional development purposes. The University of Athens and the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki both organise annual programmes attended by all vocational guidance managers. At the same time ten of the country's universities have run in-service training programmes of about five months' duration, attended by 450 secondary school teachers. Similar programmes for the training of 78 teachers in information processing have been carried out at the Athens University of Economics and Business and the Athens Technological Education Institute.

Box 7:
Examples of
training
opportunities
and
requirements
in the
guidance
field in
Europe

In *Iceland*, the ministerial report on 'Strengthening the Guidance Profession' issued in 1998 proposed

several measures, including the extension of the one-year School Counselling Programme at the University of Iceland to two years. The course will now lead to a master's degree. The report also proposed that training should be more competency-based, that staff should become more conversant in the use of guidance tools, and that they should have improved access to computer facilities and databanks.

Romania has invested a great deal in training its guidance staff. It offered a master's degree in guidance and counselling at the University of Bucharest in 1996. Three years later, with World Bank co-funding, the same university offered a master's degree in public policy, with a specialised modules in career guidance. Since then, about 900 graduates have followed that option. In 1999, Babe^o-Bolyai University started offering a master's degree in counselling psychology. Romania, like several other candidate countries, also participates in the ACAD-EMIA project – a transnational exchange programme funded by the EU LEONARDO da VINCI programme for the training of guidance staff.

**Types of
competencies
required from
Malta's
guidance
staff**

Typically, Malta's guidance teachers and counsellors in educational settings would be required to have a set of foundational personal skills or traits that would include understanding, openness, honesty, integrity, genuineness, and so on, as iden-

tified by the *Services Manual*.⁷⁵ On the basis of this profile, guidance teachers and counsellors need to have the following competencies if they are to respond effectively to the demands that are made upon them: communication skills; group facilitation skills; individual and group assessment skills; knowledge of career development theory; labour market knowledge; information management; awareness of gender issues and their impact on choice and decision-making processes; knowledge of further education opportunities; leadership training skills; skills in working with colleagues and with school administration; skills in ICT; knowledge of specialised helping agencies to whom clients can be referred; ability to work with parents.

There is presently no job description for employment advisors in the ETC. The competencies required by ETC staff would overlap those of guidance teachers in schools, with an emphasis placed on the ability of employment advisors to establish a good relationship with clients, on having a sound knowledge of labour market opportunities and requirements, and on motivating clients to actively search for employment and to learn new skills that enhance employability.

There are at least six key areas where guidance personnel will need to develop fresh competencies, both to better deal with new challenges linked to societal and technological developments, and with

**Changing
competency
requirements**

⁷⁵ See Guidance & Counselling Services (2000) *Description of Services Manual*. Floriana: Education Division, p.10.

the demands of lifelong learning.⁷⁶ These six areas are listed below:

- The first concerns new challenges arising from changing lifestyles in Malta, and from an increasingly differentiated group of young people who would want to manage their transitions from school to work differently and not necessarily in a linear fashion.
- A second challenge arises from the increasing need of guidance staff to be more aware of labour market realities, and to be sufficiently knowledgeable about the world of work and the emerging trends to better advise students regarding local and European education, training and employment opportunities.
- A third challenge concerns the modality of delivering guidance services, which need to be better integrated with the services that can be offered at the local level, through youth organisations, the ETC and the local council. In other words, staff should have stronger competencies in cross-sectoral collaboration.
- Fourthly, guidance personnel will need to receive further training to better exploit the opportunities of information management that ICT provides.
- Fifthly, they will need increased competencies to provide the appropriate specialised guidance support to students with disabilities and other target groups.

⁷⁶ The identification of competencies required by educational and vocational guidance staff has been the subject of much thought by the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance (IAEVG), which has recently issued a very useful list that serves to signal standards that training programmes should target. The list is reproduced as Appendix I to this report.

- Finally, given the implications of labour market restructuring and the needs of lifelong learning, guidance personnel will need to be better prepared to provide guidance to adults.

Following the collective agreement between the MUT and government in 1994, and the upgrading agreement of February 2001, all teachers – including guidance staff – have a statutory obligation to attend in-service courses of at least three days' duration every year. Over and above these obligations, however, guidance personnel have several other opportunities to upgrade themselves, though most of these are short courses that do not lead to any formal qualification. Such short courses – which are generally offered in-house through a general meeting of all personnel once monthly – target either specific skill development, or consider issues that are identified as needing attention. The University, mainly through the Faculty of Education and the Psychology Department, offers in-service training opportunities through the organisation of seminars and conferences. The Education Division also occasionally sponsors counsellors to attend conferences and seminars, both locally and abroad. There is a demand on the part of guidance and counsellors for a Masters degree to be offered in their field.

**Professional
development
opportunities
for guidance
staff**

The ETC has provided interim in-house training through an 'Employment Advisory Skills' Programme with four modules (eight four-hour sessions) in intrapersonal, interpersonal, and

helping skills, and in principles of career choice and development. Staff have also had other in-service training opportunities, principally through a two-week Leonardo placement with FAS (the Irish PES) in Dublin. Three ETC employees have also benefited from an observation visit to the Job Centre Plus in London, as preliminary training for the role of EURES advisors to facilitate job mobility of workers within EU countries (EUROGUIDANCE). Eventually, these three employees will receive further training on an EU Commission-sponsored scheme.

Professional development opportunities available via EU programmes

Further in-service training should increasingly become available to Maltese guidance staff on accession, if the corps and its leaders are proactive enough to exploit such opportunities. Across Europe, for instance, several countries have made use of European Social Fund resources, which have been allocated to the training of guidance workers in a number of innovative projects. A case in point is Poland, which has very recently placed guidance high on the agenda in the Programming documents for Structural Funds, and in particular in the National Development Plan, the Community Support Framework and the Sectoral Human Resource Development Programme. The Commission has also promoted and supported a European dimension in guidance through its Programmes and Initiatives such as SOCRATES, Leonardo da Vinci, and PHARE, enabling the exchange of good practice Europe-wide, and the further training of guidance workers.

10. Delivery settings

The education sector

The comparative study of guidance provision across Europe indicates that one of the main settings for the delivery of services remains the school, and indeed, that is where young people are most likely to first come across formally-provided guidance. Traditionally, school guidance services were likely to be concentrated at the lower secondary level, targeted at students making choices about subject cluster options that opened up educational tracks which, in turn, led to groups or families of occupations. Given the lack of permeability between pathways in traditional education systems, such decisions were often irrevocable, high-stake ones, and guidance was often delivered on the basis of one-to-one personal interviews at the key points where the educational system branched off into different tracks.⁷⁷ Little if any educational or occupational guidance was offered at the primary school level, and at a time when further and higher education had not yet become massified, guidance services at these levels were also few and far between. Despite the great variety of guidance systems across Europe, the 29 country survey suggests that most have moved away from this traditional model of provision, extending the reach of guidance to the different school levels, and delivering the services in a richer variety of ways.

A key setting for delivery of guidance services is the school

⁷⁷ If we accept Boudon's (1974) elegant model to explain how social inequalities are created through educational systems, which according to him are exacerbated the more cut-off points there are, then guidance provided at such junctures are of great significance to reinforce – or to challenge – institutionalised reproduction forces.

Malta reflects this trend, if somewhat weakly, in that guidance is offered at all ages across the secondary and post-secondary education system, although provision is less strong elsewhere. As a setting for the delivery of guidance, the secondary school in particular seems to be gradually moving to what can be called ‘the guidance-oriented school’ model, relying on a set of different strategies that go beyond the individual face-to-face interview. Young students are oriented towards the world of work through career education lessons, through the integration of career education in other subjects and, to a lesser degree, through work visit programmes.

Career education lessons in schools

Career education is not a stand-alone subject in the Maltese curriculum, i.e. career education is not formally allocated space in the weekly or semestrial timetable, as is the case in Austria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Finland, Greece, Romania and Spain. However, guidance teachers organise a variety of extra-curricular activities at key transition points in the school life of students (e.g. when choosing subject options at the end of Form 2 or 3; or when choosing further education or work paths at the end of Form 5 and Form 6) in order to provide information as well as decision-making skills. Such sessions take the form of ‘careers seminars’, consisting of a full-day session where students learn about post-secondary courses and schools, learn how to write up a CV and how to behave in an interview. Reference has already been made to the SCOOPS project, which teaches about co-operatives and the world of work in an experiential and innovative manner.

There are at least two other options to deliver guidance in school settings. The first is by embedding career education within a more broadly-based subject, such as social studies or personal and social education – this is the case of countries such as Hungary, Latvia and Poland, besides Malta. Education about the world of work features as a topic in social studies during the last year of Maltese primary schooling, as well as in different years at the secondary school level. The topic is also addressed by the religious studies, home economics and business studies curriculum, and is generally tackled by PSD teachers.⁷⁸

Policies to integrate career education in other subjects

A second option is to have aspects of career education featuring in most or all the subjects of the curriculum, as in Denmark and Greece. In Malta, there is an increasing awareness – signalled by several passages in the *Description of Services Manual*, issued by the Guidance and Counselling unit in 2000, that ‘all members of staff in school make important contributions to guidance programmes’ (p.9), that ‘guidance and curricular work are not separate entities...although the school counsellor and the Guidance teachers are at the core of the programme, their work can be much more effective if it integrated with that of the staff of the school, the parents, the community and other support agencies...Guidance is a structured, *whole-school* programme’ (p.14). Despite such statements, however, there do not seem to be any projects that structure co-ordination between different teachers in delivery the school-to-work curriculum.

⁷⁸ See J. Mallia & M. Mallia (1997) ‘Bells and punch-clocks: schooling for work in Malta.’ In R.G. Sultana & J.M. Sammut (eds) (*ibid.*), pp.73-101.

**The NMC
and the
world of
work**

Both strategies of ensuring that work features more centrally in and across the curriculum are likely to be strengthened in the future. The new NMC – currently in its implementation phase – places a great deal of importance on knowledge about the world of work, and requires teachers to prepare students to participate in a global economy, and to inculcate skills and orientations that are needed by a knowledge-based society, including commitment to lifelong learning, knowledge and proficiency in ICTs, flexibility, creativity, management and leadership skills, ability to work in groups and teams, communication and negotiation skills, and so on. The NMC also requires teachers to help students develop a critical understanding of the business world, of different forms of entrepreneurship (including co-operatives), of the changing work environment, of workers' and employers' organisations, of the European labour market, of workers' rights and responsibilities, of health and safety issues, and so on. The NMC document recommends that teaching about the world of work should be done in a project-based, experiential manner, with importance given to the development of specific skills such as the preparation of *curriculum vitae*, self-presentation skills, skills in managing one's income, and so on.

**Proposed
structures
for
facilitating a
focus on
school-to-
work issues**

While the implementation process is still in its early stages, a number of structures have either been recommended or, in some cases, already set up in order to ensure that the NMC provisions are followed. Thus, a 'School and the World of Work' Focus Group has been working to ensure that all



secondary school teachers are aware of the need to make schools more relevant to the world of work, and to come up with a strategy to implement work-related themes across the curriculum. Guidance staff is also being asked to develop further ways of facilitating the transition between school and work. As already noted, the NMC has recommended that a specialised unit be set up within the Education Division in order to guide and support schools in their endeavours to introduce the world of work across the curriculum, and that a National Association for Industry-Education Co-operation be also established.

Career education features regularly in the post-secondary vocational sector. The induction into the world of work is here not the subject of formal lessons as much as the socialisation into skills, attitudes and the work ethic that is specific to a particular calling. Such socialisation takes place through example, mentoring, and formal and informal guidance – particularly during practical sessions at the educational institution, during the apprenticeship phase in industry and during internships.

Many countries provide ‘work shadowing’, ‘work experience’, ‘work visits’ and forms of work simulation in order to connect their career education programmes more directly and experientially to the world of work. Of course, many secondary level students are already involved in the after-school, weekend and holiday labour, and research evidence indicates that the participation of Maltese students in this ‘twilight economy’

**Career
education in
the post-16
sector**

**Teaching
about the
world of
work
through
work
experience**

can be high, particularly in the case of males.⁷⁹ Such activity, while helping young people develop various skills, tend to serve more the purpose of 'earning' than of 'learning', and often put the students at the risk of exploitation and physical as well as other harm. On the other hand, structured experiences provided by the school, when well planned and followed-up, hold great potential in helping young people understand some of the occupational implications of the educational choices they make, and aspects of working life more generally.

Several European countries report that students have between one- to two-week supervised work placements or 'work tasters' prior to making their choice of subjects. This is the case in Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom. Other countries, notably Austria, Bulgaria, France, Iceland, Ireland, the Netherlands and Slovakia have similar, though perhaps less extensive, provision. While in many cases the organisation of such activities is not mandatory, and depends on the initiatives taken by individual guidance staff or schools, there are instances where there are strong central policy leads in this direction (*see Box 8*). Estonia and Latvia, for instance, organise a 'work shadowing day' at a national level on an annual basis.

⁷⁹ See R.G. Sultana (1993) 'Practices and policies in child labour: lessons from Malta', *British Journal of Education and Work*, 6(3), pp.45-60. See also R. Borg (1997) 'Factors determining career choice.' In R.G. Sultana & J.M. Sammut (eds) (*ibid.*), pp.149-164.

Exploratory visits in enterprises are an integral part of vocational orientation in all the *Länder* in Germany, and generally involve an element of work experience. Companies are increasingly appreciating the value of this form of contact between schools and industry, and there is a growing number of partnerships between schools and enterprises. Preparation for workplace visits and work experience generally takes place during the key vocational lessons, but they also increasingly feature in other subjects, such as chemistry, physics, German or geography. As a rule, practical placements last between one and three weeks, and several *Länder* have published comprehensive teaching guides and didactic support material on practical placements. There are extensive health and safety provisions for legal and insurance-related reasons. In some cases, practical placements can also be spent in other European countries, with the aim of making pupils familiar with the practical side of vocational training and work in other Member States of the European Union.

**Box 8: Work
place visits
and work
experience
in Germany**

In Malta, many secondary schools organise brief orientation visits to industries, but there is no formal requirement of work experience in the 11-16 curriculum, though some secondary schools do offer a one-week job-shadowing programme to their fifth formers. Such programmes are however rare. Work experience is a feature of the post-secondary curriculum – largely through apprenticeship schemes and, in the case of the Institute of Tourism Studies, through local and international internships.

Other features of educational services

Typically, the career information, guidance and counselling services in the secondary education sector, other than career education lessons and orientation visits in industrial settings and further education institutions, would include: individual and group guidance, running a career and further education library, holding meetings with students and parents (particularly in relation to the choice of subject options and post-secondary pathways), and preparing information packs. Staff used to also administer a career interest inventory based on the Rothwell-Miller test, but this is no longer done. Few if any specialised tools for guidance and work orientation, such as Holland's career interest inventory, are used.

Some schools organise a careers market or fair. The Guidance Unit also organises a national Careers Convention on an annual basis, but for a number of reasons – including the position adopted by counsellors that their contribution should focus on leading professional seminars rather than on the organisational aspects of the event – the initiative has started showing signs of decline, and in fact the career fair did not take place in 2003.⁸⁰ Occasionally schools invite parents and alumni to address students on career-related topics.

Guidance counselling services in the tertiary education sector

Guidance services are also offered at the post-secondary and tertiary level institutions in Malta and Gozo, and these are considered as an integral part of their mission to cater to student needs. Guidance counsellors are available on campus,

⁸⁰ For the past few year, Government allocated Lm5000 for the Careers Convention initiative, but this could only be used if at the end of the event the balance was in the red.

meet students individually on appointment, organise seminars and short courses on such areas as study skills, leadership skills, stress management, and so on.

At the post-secondary level in non-vocational institutions (ages 16+ to 18+), students have access to personal, educational/curricular, and vocational guidance. The service is in charge of organising and disseminating information about careers, as well as about further educational opportunities. Counsellors organise seminars inviting staff from the different University and MCAST faculties and institutes so that students can better orient themselves to the courses available.

Most post-secondary level in vocational institutions (ages 16+ onwards) have been integrated within one community college, the MCAST. This is serviced by two full-time counsellors,⁸¹ who form part of the Information and Support Centre.⁸² The Institute of Tourism Studies, which is a separate entity under the Ministry of Tourism, employs one full-time and one part-time counsellor. Both institutions operate a website which carries information about courses on offer, and the employment opportunities that these lead to.

⁸¹ A reduction in guidance and counselling services has been noted with the establishment of the MCAST: while the institutes that previously fell under the aegis of the Department of Further Studies and Adult Education each had guidance personnel, the bringing together of many of these institutions under the College umbrella means that only two counsellors are available to over 1100 MCAST students, and that at the central campus.

⁸² The Information Centre also provides advice and information on all full-time and part-time day and evening courses at the MCAST. It also offers information on grants, and includes a Basic Skills Unit to support students who need assistance with literacy and numeracy in order to be able to follow their course.

**Guidance
at the
University**

Malta has only one university-level institution. This has a complement of two full-time and two part-time counsellors who, while focusing on personal counselling, also offer educational and vocational guidance, though the duty of providing information is formally assumed by the Students Advisory Service, appointed by the University Council for the purpose. Limited educational and career information is provided by the Students' Union, which also regularly organises career fairs. There is a proposal to establish a careers information room in collaboration with the ETC. A separate unit offers advice to students who wish to go abroad to participate in European Union exchange programmes. A specialised unit offers support and advice to students with disabilities.

Besides guidance and counselling offered centrally, some University faculties also operate an informal advisory service, which can range from providing information about courses and further studies locally and overseas, to organising personal support through the use of mentors, either from among staff or senior students. Each faculty also has its own web-site, managed centrally by the University's Communications Office, which generally carries information about educational, and occasionally employment opportunities. Given the scale of the island, it is quite common for each faculty to have extensive networks with employers, and to recommend graduates for vacancies.

**The increasing
importance of
guidance in the
H.E. sector**

Educational and career guidance in tertiary level institutions is increasingly on the agenda in several European countries (*see Box 9*). There is an awareness that increasingly, the age, experience and

background of students vary, and it has become more necessary to provide a much broader range of guidance services to meet the growing diversity of student needs. In a Europe which actively promotes and facilitates student mobility – through such programmes as Socrates and Leonardo, through the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), and through the harmonisation of the degree structure as part of the Bologna process – foreign/exchange students are increasingly present on campuses, and have special guidance needs which also have to be attended to. Many institutions have, like the University of Malta, the Institute for Tourism Studies and the MCAST, also adopted modular structures of course delivery, giving students a great deal of flexibility in designing their own programme of studies, in relation to their own learning needs and occupational goals. Such individualised pathways make the links between courses and the graduate labour market more complex. All this diversity and extended opportunity both create challenges for career guidance, and make it all the more necessary and relevant.

In *Finland* and *Ireland*, recent evidence showing that there is a link between guidance provision in higher education and student retention has proved to be a particularly motivating factor in stimulating investment in guidance services at this level. *Germany* has passed a Framework Act for Higher Education which requires institutions of higher education, including universities and *Fachhochschulen*, to inform students and applicants on the opportunities and conditions of study and on the content, structure and requirements of

Box 9:
Guidance in
some
European
higher
education
systems

study courses, and to assist students by providing subject-oriented advice. Many German institutions of higher learning have established Central Student Counselling Services, while 50 out of about 350 universities have set up their own careers services in order to facilitate the transition between study and the field of graduate employment.

Services provided by the public employment service

The key focus of employment advisers remains the unemployed

The ETC's job placement advisors focus mainly on providing support to unemployed youth and adults, as well as to those who might wish to change their jobs. A key role of the guidance personnel is to help clients clarify their life goals and understand their strengths and aptitudes, and to provide information on education, training and jobs. They offer advice as to which education and training opportunities exist (most of which are available free of charge or at a nominal fee at the ETC itself), provide training in job-search and self-presentation skills, and draw on the ETC's databases to direct clients to job vacancies and opportunities.

In addition to this, the ETC hosts Form 5 and Form 6 students in order to familiarize them with the range of services it offers as an employment agency. During such orientation visits, ETC officials provide details regarding apprenticeship schemes, and help students understand better issues regarding the world of work, including rights and responsibilities, wage regulations, and so on.

Malta has a large number of voluntary organisations working with children, young people and adults, both at the national and at the local level. Several NGOs, particularly those working with young people, offer counselling services free of charge. Some of these organisations are specialised to deal with specific areas in the counselling field, such as marital counselling (*Cana Movement*), or substance abuse (*Sedqa, Caritas, Alcoholics Anonymous*) and child abuse (*Appoġġ*) counselling. Others work with people with disabilities (*Eden Foundation, Arka Foundation, Richmond Foundation, Dar il-Kaptan*), or offer support to prisoners and their families (*Mid-Dlam għad-Dawl*). Most of the NGOs would be concerned with personal rather than with educational or career guidance. A number of these organisations also have a high national profile through programmes they lead on the media, and especially on the radio, where guidance and counselling are offered in relation to questions made by participants.

Other settings for guidance activities

Another category of organizations, such as the Foundation for Human Resource Development, have an interest in guidance-related issues but do not offer a professional service themselves.

11. Delivery methods

Innovative delivery methods are a key concern across Europe in the attempt to ensure that guidance services reach clients effectively. Indeed, the issue of access has been highlighted by the Commission's deliberations on the role of guidance in supporting LLL and the Objectives for

The Commission's emphasis on facilitating access to guidance through innovative delivery

Education and Training. Among the quality indicators identified in its document *A European Area of Lifelong Learning*, the European Commission (2002) emphasises the need for guidance to be organised as an *open* service that is continuously and locally *accessible* for all; as a *client-centred* service which reaches out to citizens and follows up on their needs rather than waiting for them to come; and as a *diversified* service offered through such non-formal and informal channels as NGOs and community-based associations so that disadvantaged groups are more effectively reached. Reporting on young people's views on guidance services in the White Paper *A New Impetus for European Youth* (European Commission, 2002), the Commission also notes the emphasis young people placed on having access to user-friendly guidance systems that were easily accessible in places where they spent their time.

**Delivery
methods
across
Europe**

The European survey on guidance has noted several attempts to develop delivery methods to make sure that services reach clients. Many countries make use of television, mass media, road billboards, and other advertising strategies and outlets, in order to ensure that information related to further education, training and employment opportunities reach the community. Several newspapers feature supplements on careers, as well as on education and training courses, besides advertising job vacancies and labour market trends. Particularly interesting is the innovative use of mobile, peripatetic counselling teams to cover communities that are hard to reach, or because there are not enough resources to cover demand

(e.g. Austria, Bulgaria, Estonia, France, Hungary, Latvia, the United Kingdom). The case of Latvia is especially instructive as an example of a creative way of still providing a service, despite resource limitations. Thus far, the country has managed to establish only 19 Professional Career Counselling Centres in 26 of its regions. It has set up mobile teams, however, to cater for the needs of the other seven remote areas.

As has already been noted in a number of places, guidance has not tended to feature centrally at all in the government's priorities. There have been few policy statements concerning the need to develop new delivery methods to enhance access, or concrete support for such measures. Initiatives have generally tended to come through from practitioners in the field. Nevertheless, the general policy regimes of the present government should have an indirect influence on guidance and counselling providers, in that certain priorities that have been signalled in the social, educational or labour market policy arenas will have sent clear messages across several fields. Thus, it is clear that the government's concern that all students should experience a degree of success at school, that students with disabilities are integrated in a mainstreamed setting, that the vocational education route becomes an attractive pathway enjoying parity of esteem with other pathways, that parents are included as equal partners in the educational enterprise – all have implications for guidance in schools, and in some cases may have mobilised and focused guidance-related activities to support that policy direction.

Policy signals in relation to the delivery of guidance services in Malta

Similarly, the state's commitment to the development of e-government should eventually impact on the method of delivering information, moving in the direction of a web-based portal as recommended by the national report on Lifelong Learning. The government's policy of decentralisation towards local councils could also lead to guidance delivery that is more firmly located in district offices, with terminals encouraging career exploration and assessments, self-directed searches, and access to information about further education and career opportunities. As noted earlier, the new NMC makes several recommendations in order to support government policy to have more effective bridges between schools and the world of work. Such proposals are likely to lead guidance teachers and counsellors to be more pro-active in developing links with industry, once the implementation phase of the NMC is in full swing.

**The impact
of the new
technologies
on the
provision of
information
and
guidance
services**

Across Europe and beyond, the issue of providing individuals with reliable, valid, usable, information in as transparent and timely a manner as possible, in order to enable all citizens become aware of opportunities and to make use of them has become a major concern. While there is an awareness that the new Information and Communication technologies are not a panacea, and indeed can reinforce inequalities due to the digital divide both across and within countries, there is nevertheless much hope – and investment – in ICT-based resources, which are seen as a way of promoting innovative and diverse ways to deliver guidance services to clients. The strategic use of ICT in several contexts has led to major shifts in the way guidance services

are delivered, partly by encouraging clients to engage in a self-service, self-help mode, and also by transferring information and services – hitherto only available in dedicated offices – to the site occupied by the client, be this the home, the school, or the workplace. Such ease in transferability of guidance services has been facilitated by the development of increasingly sophisticated software supporting guidance functions, and is particularly important for remote communities, that are traditionally harder to reach than those living in urban centres. Other countries have exploited the opportunities presented by call centre technology which, in some contexts, has been developed extensively to offer personalised support in response to differentiated needs. The UK's *learndirect* initiative (see *Box 10*) is particularly remarkable in this regard.

In 1998, the UK set up *learndirect*, a service that is based on call centre technology. Its underlying goal is to offer free and impartial advice that can assist adults to access further education and training opportunities. Call centre help lines are open between 08:00 and 22:00, 365 days a year. Over five million people have called *learndirect* since it was opened. All staff have access to an online database of information on some 600,000 education and training courses, at all levels, as well as a wide variety of other printed information. The online database can be accessed directly at <http://www.learndirect.co.uk/>, and is updated monthly. An online diagnostic package can be used to assess interests and preferences as part of the web site. There have been over 10 million hits on the site since it opened in 2000 (see Watts & Dent, 2002).

Box 10: The 'learndirect' initiative in the UK

**The use of
ICT's in
delivering
guidance
and
counselling
services in
Malta**

Malta has not yet fully exploited the application of ICT's in the career information and guidance field. The use of the internet in guidance is largely restricted to the provision of information about further education opportunities. Most post-compulsory educational institutions have now developed their own web site, though a national education portal is still to be created. While most guidance teachers have received training in the use of IT, and schools have computer laboratories and, in many cases, access to the internet, there is no computer-aided career guidance (CAGC) system in use in schools, though an initial attempt to consider such software programs as JIG-CAL had been made in the mid-1990's. The Students Advisory Services at the University has been making use of CASCAID for the past three years in order to help students clarify directions on the basis of interest inventories, and handles several requests for information by e-mail. Guidance teachers do not, generally speaking, have a PC in their careers room. No CD-Roms have been produced to support self-exploration and job searches. The co-ordinator of counselling services at the University used to use Sigi-plus, a computer-based tool to test skills and aptitudes, but this proved to be too costly and is no longer available. Recently, the Euroguidance office has produced a CD-Rom with information about Malta's educational system, largely directed at foreign students wishing to study in Malta. In addition, its linkage with PLOTEUS, the EU's internet portal of learning opportunities,⁸³ will provide easily accessible information to local students.

⁸³ For further details, consult the PLOTEUS website: <http://www.ploteus.org/ploteus/portal/home>

Other internet-based information sources related to guidance are provided by the ETC, which has its own web site for both job-seekers and employers. The site – www.etc.org.mt – provides details of ETC employment and training services, advertised job vacancies, and includes some interactive facilities for clients. Some privately managed web sites – such as Malta’s main portal <http://www.di-ve.com/> – as well as www.xol.com.mt and www.searchmalta.com – advertise careers vacancies.

12. Career information

Career information used by guidance personnel in schools is generally either provided centrally by the Guidance and Counselling Unit, or collated from a variety of sources – including industry – by the guidance teachers themselves. There is no government legislation controlling the classification, distribution and storage of such information. Nor has there been much in the way of concrete support to stimulate or fund initiatives in this regard. Some of the small countries in Europe also report a similar state of stasis in this regard, with the economy of scale making it difficult for them to produce their own information, either in print or electronic format. As an alternative, they tend to adopt or adapt material produced elsewhere. The UK-produced ‘Adult Directions’ has proved popular with Slovakia and Slovenia, who have adapted it, under licence, to reflect their national realities, integrating it with national educational and employment databases. Luxembourg’s Career Information Centres (BIZ) make use of material –

The role of the public sector in providing guidance-related information

including detailed descriptions of occupations – produced in Germany.⁸⁴

Another actor in Malta's public sector that has a role to play in regard to career information is the ETC. The latter has a Labour Market Research Section which collates, analyses and interprets labour market information and conducts research on issues related to the labour market. It also runs a National Employment Database on an Informix system, which facilitates data warehousing and information management. As from 2002, and at six monthly intervals, the ETC started carrying out an Employment Barometer exercise which provides an opportunity for an exchange of information between employers and the public employment service.

**The role of
the private
sector**

There are no private companies in Malta that produce guides to jobs or to further education. Newspapers regularly publish information about job vacancies, while a number of privately-managed websites also carry job adverts. Government has not taken any direct steps to stimulate the private sector's role in providing career information, either by forming partnerships with it, or by outsourcing. The situation is not very different across the accession countries, where the private sector has not invested much in the information

⁸⁴ Other than career-related information packages, many European countries also adopt or adapt resources that facilitate decision-making. One of the most popular is 'Real Game' – a simulation exercise based on experiential learning strategies which facilitates student learning about adult life and work roles, and helps them engage in career and educational planning. The *Real Game Series* is funded by Human Resources Development Canada under the understanding that all programmes in the series will be fully self-sustaining once launched. Further information can be obtained at <http://www.realgame.com/>

market, with the exception of Romania and, to a lesser extent, Slovakia. More ICT-based initiatives on the part of the private sector have been reported by other European countries, though the focus is largely on educational and occupational guides and handbooks, which seem to be the best guarantee for a return on an investment through direct sales, and/or through featuring advertisements – a factor that carries with it the danger of limiting their comprehensiveness and objectivity.

Typically, schools provide career information on individual leaflets, often grouping similar market sectors (e.g. helping professions) together. Some of these leaflets are produced in-house by guidance teachers themselves. Occasionally, larger industries provide schools with their own information leaflets. The ETC also circulates information and leaflets. Some attention is given to make publications attractive and user-friendly. The Guidance and Counselling unit, for instance, employs a Graphic Art Technician, and special efforts are made to have material available in Maltese, or in English with a Maltese translation, wherever possible, though no legislation specifically requires this. No special efforts are made, however, so that students with visual impairment have access to the material and brochures produced by the Unit.

Most of the material is distributed free of charge through schools (intended for students and their parents), or through the ETC offices (intended mainly for the unemployed). Some of the material is also accessible in school libraries and guidance rooms, as well as in libraries managed by the local

**Formats
used for
presenting
career
information**

councils in districts, or in downloadable format from the internet. Extensive use is made of the Education Channel and of radios. The ETC also advertises its services on large bill boards placed strategically in main arterial thoroughfares. MCAST has done the same, and has in addition advertised its courses through inserts in the local newspapers. University courses are also advertised in the press, as well as on radio and TV. There have been no surveys carried out to evaluate the effectiveness or perceived usefulness of the careers information material made available.

Lack of comprehensive career information systems in Malta

There are no print, CD-Rom, or web-based directories that offer a comprehensive description of occupational opportunities in Malta, though some headway has been made in providing information about education and training opportunities. The Students Advisory Services at the University of Malta has, however, recently produced a CD that carries all the relevant information regarding undergraduate courses. Many educational institutions, whether state or non-state, have developed their own websites, some of which have links to information about further education opportunities. Here, and in any career information that is made available to young people and adults, labour market data on unemployment rates and number of job vacancies in particular employment sectors are hardly ever found in brochures or websites produced by guidance personnel, largely because this would require constant up-dating, which is beyond the capacity, resources and training that guidance personnel have. In other words, there are as yet no career information systems that begin to

approach the comprehensiveness that can be found in countries which have invested in this area (*see Box 11*).

Poland has developed a multi-dimensional career information system – ‘Counsellor 2000’ – integrating the most recent developments in Artificial Intelligence, stimulating the client’s efforts by linking information management with decision-making strategies. Information about educational and training pathways, and the relevant occupations they lead to, is linked to the personal profile of the client using the system, itself developed after accessing self-assessment tools available on the same software. In addition, the system has been adapted so that it can be targeted at particular groups of users, such as persons with disabilities.

**Box 11:
Using ICT
for guidance
purposes in
Poland**

The Guidance and Counselling Unit, as well as individual guidance officers, have personal networks with industries and with employers’ associations, and information is gathered regularly, but informally and unsystematically, through such contacts. The extent to which such information is more reliable, valid, and objective when compared to that obtained by clients through their own networks is questionable. Efforts are being made to strengthen the flow of employment-related information from the ETC to the Guidance and Counselling Unit.

**Methods
used to
gather
information**

The ETC gathers its information on vacancies and on labour market trends through constant contact with employers, and through skills surveys and

studies. The Employment Barometer study, which is carried out with a sample of employers, attempts to identify occupation and skills gaps. The survey covers the perceptions of employers for the six months before and after the exercise, and gathers information regarding which occupations are most in demand, issues related to shortage, surplus, and recruitment.

Some research institutes (e.g. Workers' Participation and Development Centre, Market Intelligence Services Co. Ltd. – MISCO) or other entities (the Students Advisory Service at the Registrar's Office, University of Malta) occasionally carry out surveys that provide relevant information that can be used in vocational guidance. MISCO also keeps track of the number of job vacancies in particular occupational groups, and together with the local newspapers, provides classified advertisement services which link up supply with demand in the job market.

The importance of developing a concerted information strategy to serve guidance needs in Malta

There is no formal, articulated strategy in Malta to ensure that the different sources of information link up in a way that helps the end-user. This is an issue for several countries in Europe, where it is not uncommon to find different ministries collecting different information, creating data sets that cannot always be consolidated in a way that helps users make better sense of options and opportunities. In some cases, governments produce a number of overlapping databases, which together provide only partial coverage of what is available – this is the case with Finland, Norway, and Sweden, to mention just a few cases. A few countries have

taken steps to combat fragmentation. Estonia, for instance, has established a platform of common standards and specifications agreed to by different ministries responsible for data collection. Others, like Bulgaria and Slovakia, have formalised agreements, or promulgated laws, specifying the nature of the coordination that must exist between different ministries in the delivery of guidance services, and encouraging co-operation between and among institutions at national, regional, district and local levels. In some cases, government has provided funding to external agencies which have the task of comprehensively managing career information systems (e.g. ONISEP in France; the Careers and Occupational Information Centre in the United Kingdom; the Foundation for VET Reform in Estonia; the Open Society Fund in Bulgaria). Some of these agencies have been privatised (e.g. the National Career Service Centre in the Netherlands), or their activities have been partially or fully outsourced to the private sector (e.g. the Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Spain).

13. Financing

An analysis of the European country responses to the guidance survey suggests that government funds can be directed at a package of services, of which guidance represents only one facet, or alternatively, they can be targeted at guidance activities specifically. In addition, government funds can be channelled to the client via national, regional, or local governing bodies. Irrespective of the

**Methods in
government
funding**

modality the funding is packaged in, and the governing apparatus that is used to channel it through, state funding reaches the guidance service user in one of four main ways. It can: (a) be managed directly by the national, regional, or local government itself; (b) be delegated to a government-controlled agency; (c) be devolved to a range of institutions; or (d) be outsourced or sub-contracted to, for instance, community and other not-for-profit organisations, or private companies. Examples of all four modalities can be identified across Europe.

Financing arrangements in Malta

In Malta, guidance services are generally financed by the state through the annual budgetary allocation made available to the respective Ministries and entities. Clients making use of government-provided guidance and counselling services are not charged any fees. As with many European countries, it is next to impossible to gauge the extent of government investment in guidance, because the costs of delivering guidance services are included in broader budgets that cannot be readily broken down and are therefore difficult to compute. At the ETC, for instance, while there is a cost-centre accounting system, the cost of guidance cannot be separated from the cost of placement, as it is difficult to distinguish between two functions performed by the same worker. In the case of the central Guidance Unit of the Education Division, we know that the state allocates around Lm8000 annually for capital expenses, materials and supplies, and training costs. Little else is known other than that, other than the salaries paid out to guidance staff,

rendering it difficult to gauge the real cost of the service, and consequently impossible to audit the relationship between financial input and outcomes. Very little too is known concerning private investment in activities directly linked to guidance in Malta, though this is bound to be very little, considering that private guidance services are quite undeveloped.

14. Assuring quality

The lack of adequate information on input in relation to output is, as we will have occasion to note in later sections, only one of the many gaps in knowledge about the guidance sector, and has implications for quality auditing. Quality in service provision is increasingly on the agenda of several countries across Europe (*see Box 12*). Governments tend to use a number of different mechanisms to ensure quality. In many cases, legislation sets the parameters, but often this is articulated in broad, general terms which needs to be complemented by such mechanisms as 'quality standards' that specify more directly the way clients can be assured of the services they are entitled to. Standards can serve a number of goals related to quality assurance and quality improvement. They can be used to set minimum thresholds for service providers, which must be met if an entity is to be awarded a licence to offer career guidance services (e.g. Bulgaria), or if funding is to be transferred. All adult guidance services offered in England, for instance, have to demonstrate that they have met

The use of legislation and standards to assure quality in service provision

the Matrix Standards if they are to secure public funds.⁸⁵

Standards can serve as criteria for establishing performance targets and for organising service evaluation and inspection. Several countries, for instance, have developed occupational descriptions for career guidance staff and for those involved in the production of career-related information in either the education or the labour market sectors, detailing the competencies that providers are expected to demonstrate in fulfilling their roles (e.g. Estonia, Denmark, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain). Performance evaluation on agreed-to standards, as a mechanism for quality control, is sometimes tied to career progression, as in Romania; while in Finland, salaries are tied to outcomes of services through a management-by-results system. In Slovenia, there is a move to tie performance targets to outcomes-based evaluation of career guidance services. Quality standards can also establish some sort of common ground and add coherence to a diversified system. Spain, for instance, has developed a 'European Excellence Model' – an adaptation of the European Foundation for Quality Management model – to be used by schools to evaluate themselves on a number of criteria, with guidance services being involved in this self-assessment as part of the overall exercise. Denmark uses a similar approach in its vocational education and training sector, with self-assessment being complemented by external audit processes.

⁸⁵ The Matrix quality standard for information, advice and guidance services can be found on the following website: www.matrix-quality-standard.com

Since April 2002, the *United Kingdom* has put into place the *matrix* quality standard for information, advice and guidance services, which is administered by the Employment National Training Organisation. Accreditation of organisations against the standard is awarded by the Guidance Accreditation Board.

**Box 12:
Efforts to
improve
provision
through
quality
standards**

Romania has developed a set of both quantitative and qualitative quality criteria, to evaluate the results of the information, guidance and counselling services:

Quantitative indicators include: number of people counselled, tested, guided etc. individually or in groups (school and university students, adults); number of counselled persons who found employment; number of information materials produced (information about professions, brochures, posters, web sites); number of surveys, studies, investigations, scientific papers etc.; additional financial resources attracted; drafting of promotion materials on the image, objectives and services of the different centres providing vocational guidance; credentials obtained by counsellors.

Qualitative indicators include: client satisfaction; efficient use of available resources (equipment, ICT, tests, questionnaires); involvement of other potential sources of counselling and guidance (the community, representatives of administrative authorities, employers, trade unions); networking; vocational self-learning; engagement in professional associations in the field.

These criteria are set by the community of guidance practitioners themselves and reflect aspects they regard as relevant for the evaluated activity. Within the boundaries of formally imposed general norms, the expert has a certain degree of autonomy in measuring and evaluating his or her own work. The tools used have a guiding role and provide the expert with feedback.

The *Estonian* Ministry of Education and Research has issued guidance providers with the following guidelines:

- They are to specifically design their services to respond to the needs of young people;
- They are to be open to all young people, without the need for an appointment;
- They are to provide information on a wide range of subjects, in a variety of forms, prepared both for young people in general and for groups with special needs;
- The information provided has to be practical, pluralistic, accurate and regularly updated;
- They have to operate in a way which takes into account the personal needs of each user, which respects confidentiality, and which provides a maximum of choice, promoting the client's autonomy;
- They are to refer the user to a specialised service when necessary.

Quality standards as well as quality auditing do not yet feature centrally on the guidance agenda in Malta. Indirectly, of course, in education, as in other government sectors, one aspect of quality assurance is the further professional training of guidance teachers and counsellors. In addition to this, a key initiative has been the production of a Guidance and Counselling Services Manual, and there are plans to develop a Quality Service Charter with the aid of the government's Charter Support Unit. Quality assurance in the education sector has generally been maintained through 'passive measures', i.e. through the employment of inspectors/education officers. There is a post for such an education officer for guidance and counselling, which, however, has remained vacant with the retirement of the incumbent in March 2002. To some extent, counsellors monitor the work that guidance teachers do in schools, but once again, the focus tends to be largely on personal rather than occupational guidance. Guidance teachers are also required to write a bi-annual report on their activities, which is, in theory, evaluated centrally at the Guidance Unit.

Strategies to ensure quality in Malta

At the ETC, services are monitored continuously in terms of operational outputs, which basically means that the focus has tended to be on quantitative criteria – e.g. how many unemployed people are placed in employment – rather than on qualitative ones, such as the extent of client satisfaction with the service provided. More recently, however, the ETC has administered surveys among users of job centres, as well as commissioned research studies, in order to gauge the level of client satisfaction with services.

No standards or formal guidelines have yet been developed nationally for the production of career and education-related information, that ensure validity, reliability, accuracy, objectiveness, comprehensiveness, relevance to target group, timeliness, user-friendliness, and so on. Neither have formal standards of staff competencies in the information, guidance and counselling services been developed.

**The
promotion
of standards
by
professional
associations**

In many European countries, as well as in North America, for instance, standards are also promoted by professional associations that group guidance providers together. The European survey noted that several countries have recently founded or strengthened such associations. Examples include Austria, the Czech Republic, Cyprus, Estonia (founded in 2002), France, Greece, Iceland (in 1981), Italy (in 2001), Latvia (in 1996), Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, and Sweden. In the United Kingdom, sector-focused associations have been consolidated under one national umbrella (the UK Federation of Professional Associations in Guidance – FEDPAG). Some countries have also established registers to regulate the profession (e.g. Germany, the Netherlands, Latvia, Poland, Romania, the United Kingdom). In Malta, guidance teachers and counsellors in the education sector tend to belong to the Malta Union of Teachers, and staff attempt to determine their work roles as well as to impact on policy-making via the MUT, though it would be fair to say that they do not have a strong professional identity and are poorly organised.⁸⁶ The recently launched

⁸⁶ It is relevant to note, for instance, that when the new Diploma in Occupational Guidance and Career Counselling was launched by the WPDC University of Malta, the Guidance Unit did not have much influence at all on the programme of studies.

Counsellors' Association does not include educational and career guidance within its scope.

15. The evidence base

Another way of ensuring quality in the delivery of guidance services is to build up a strong evidence base that provides policy makers and stakeholders with a comprehensive understanding of the overall picture of provision, as well as of the effectiveness of that same provision in meeting public policy objectives. A sound evidence base in the guidance field would include a number of factors, such as (a) the number of users of services, as well as their characteristics (such as age, gender, region, socio-economic status, educational level and ethnic origin), (b) the different needs of different types of clients, (c) client satisfaction rates, and variation in these rates by client characteristics. Across Europe, a good understanding and evaluation of the inputs, processes and outputs of the service is seriously hampered by a weak evidence and data base.

Malta is no exception in this regard, and has not yet developed the capacity to generate the data indicators required to assess the impact of provision. There are thus no statistics gathered on a regular basis providing details regarding the access to and use of guidance and counselling services in Malta on a national level, though now schools are requested to keep data on how many students have

**Ensuring
quality
through
evaluative
research**

**A weak
evidence
base in
Malta**

gone to the guidance teacher.⁸⁷ Some services do write up an annual report, which includes the number of clients that they have seen throughout the year. This is the case for the Counselling Unit at the University, where, on average, around 375 students make use of the counselling services annually. For the year 1996-1997, 153 students were seen for guidance in educational matters, 13 in vocational guidance, while the rest wanted personal guidance.

The ETC does keep quantitative information on the number of clients catered for. The table below, for instance, shows statistics for the period January to June 2001, in comparison to data for 2002.⁸⁸ The table includes new registrants, repeats (i.e. those who register again after a strike off period) and the number of clients who have sought help at Job Centres.

2001	January	February	March	April	May	June
New Registrants	323	242	250	212	216	159
Repeats	1246	945	952	864	894	713
Job Centres	4271	3678	3704	4392	5289	5235

⁸⁷ One study, carried out in part-fulfilment of the requirements of a Masters degree in education, does provide us with some information in this regard, though this is now somewhat dated. The survey involved a random sample of 292 fifth formers in Junior Lyceums which, for the scholastic year 1990/1991, represented 25% of all students in that sector, and 13.7% of all students at the secondary school level. The study revealed that 85.6% of all students who answered the questionnaire had been to see the guidance teacher. 34.2% of all students had a meeting with the guidance teacher only once, while 36.3% went once every term. 52.7% of the girls and 33% of the boys who had a meeting with their guidance teacher reported that the interaction took place in the context of a group session, with the whole class being present. The study also suggests that more boys than girls make use of the guidance service; boys are also more likely than girls to view guidance teachers as an effective source of information and help – see R. Borg (1997) 'Factors determining career choice.' In R.G. Sultana & J.M. Sammut (eds) (*ibid.*), pp.149-164.

⁸⁸ All three tables provided by N. Saliba, from the ETC's Employment Services.

2002	January	February	March	April	May	June
New Registrants	475	267	343	378	244	189
Repeats	1352	924	788	1053	947	800
Job Centres	4368	4011	3540	4288	4403	3943

The ETC also keeps data on the number of hits on its website, and a trend analysis for access to different web-based services for the period October 2001 to June 2002 is shown below.

Website Trend Analysis	No. of Hits on ETC Website	No. of Hits on recent vacancies	No. of Hits performed by Occupation
Oct 2001	101691	2950	1654
Nov 2001	154761	4291	2478
Dec 2001	165679	4249	2638
Jan 2002	355651	9247	5584
Feb 2002	255562	7111	3648
March 2002	291783	7939	3478
April 2002	207918	5875	2665
May 2002	147485	4191	1929
June 2002	232865	7301	3213

Overall, however, and in both the education and labour market sector, there are no formal, established procedures to clarify societal and individual needs and demands for information, guidance and counselling services. There are no official formulated criteria to judge the benefits or outcomes of information, guidance and counselling activities. However, the Services Manual suggests a list of areas for evaluation, meant to help the guidance counselling team in a school gauge the effectiveness

Criteria to evaluate the benefits and outcomes of guidance services

of their efforts.⁸⁹ These include such indicators as:

- More effective learning and higher educational attainment;
- Greater social cohesion at school;
- Smoother transition between primary and secondary schools;
- Lower incidence of disruptive behaviour on the part of students judged to be 'difficult';
- Less truancy and absenteeism;
- More students seeking advice when making educational or career-related decisions;
- Stronger and more positive links with parents;
- Decrease in incidence of dropping out;
- More students being satisfied with the curricular choices they have made;
- A more positive environment at the school, with lower incidence of conflict, bullying, aggression and violence;
- Improved relations between students, and between students and teachers;
- More students seeking to continue their studies after the completion of compulsory schooling.

⁸⁹ See Annexe I, pp.43-45 of the *Services Manual*.

At best, guidance staff occasionally carry out needs surveys on their own initiative. Some guidance teachers also prepare questionnaire surveys in order to evaluate the extent to which they are effectively responding to client needs. At the ETC, no study has been carried out to monitor the effectiveness of the ETC's career information and guidance services, though a report on the caseload management system analysis provides indicators for the improvement of the work done by employment advisors. In both the education and labour market sectors, there is no research available in Malta that provides an insight into the impact of careers services on individuals' occupational choices, the ability to use career information, the impact of services upon employers, and the development of a learning society.

The need to generate more information about guidance outcomes

Some European countries have attempted to generate more data on guidance provision through setting up national research centres. This is the case of the Czech Republic (Institute of Pedagogical and Psychological Counselling), Greece (the National Centre for Vocational Orientation), Ireland (the National Centre for Guidance in Education), the UK (National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling, and the Centre for Guidance Studies at the University of Derby). There are no such national research centres specialising in career information or guidance and counselling services in Malta. The function of research is largely, though not exclusively fulfilled by the Faculty of Education. The Guidance and Counselling Unit, however, has developed an important database,

Generating an evidence base in guidance

from 1990 to the present, on the basis of a tracer study it carries out annually. These tracer studies provide useful information on the trajectories followed by students after completing their compulsory education, with the data being differentiated according to school type and gender, and educational or occupational destination. Some research is carried out by practitioners themselves. In 1992, for instance, the Students Advisory Services at the University, carried out research into the employment situation of University Graduates, gathering information about various aspects of the graduates' employment such as their employment conditions and their attitudes about work. Recently it has prepared a report on the career outcomes of graduates.⁹⁰ The ETC's research function has been consolidated with the establishment of a research department, which has commissioned studies of, among others, the school-to-work transition process in Malta. This study is still in progress.

16. Guidance in Malta – in the balance

Having provided a detailed analysis of several key aspects in educational and career guidance services in Malta, in comparison to the key trends as they are emerging across Europe, it is important to highlight the key strengths that may serve as a foundation for further development, as well as the main weaknesses which must be addressed if such development is to occur.

⁹⁰ See M. Debono, A. Caruana & N. Caruana (2002) *Career Outcomes of Graduates*. Student Advisory Services & WPDC.

- Malta has a well-established guidance service in the education sector, with clear roles, objectives, and service manual, and with many institutions having a dedicated room for guidance and counselling activities. The post of the guidance teacher in schools is perceived to be attractive, though the personal counselling role tends to take precedence over the vocational guidance role. The Services Manual also provides benchmarks for practitioners in the education sector which, if adhered to, can make a marked positive difference in service delivery.
- Guidance issues permeate the school curriculum, with several subjects addressing the world of work. Experiential extra-curricular activities ensure that at least some students develop real skills in setting up and being part of co-operatives and small businesses.
- A broad range of information about educational futures is made available in both print and, to a lesser extent, in ICT format in the context of schools. Information about occupations is much less extensive, however, and not easily available.
- Due to country's scale, clients have ready access to services, whether in educational institutions or through the ETC's outreach offices.
- In the labour market sector, there is an increasing awareness of the differentiated needs of clients, with specific strategies being

Strengths

developed to target at-risk groups, including women returners, ex-substance abusers, ex-convicts, and clients from economically depressed areas.

- The new Diploma in Diploma in Social Studies (Occupational Guidance & Career Counselling) being offered by the WPDC at the University of Malta, in collaboration with the ETC, is a major development which is positive both because it furthers the professionalisation of guidance staff at the public employment service and in schools, and because it encourages and facilitates cross-sectoral collaboration.

Weaknesses

- The Maltese guidance scene suffers from a lack of clear policy steering. It is true there are several issues on the educational agenda that are presently requiring attention, but this report would submit that the educational and occupational guidance of young people and of adults should be considered among the main priorities of the relevant authorities. Guidance is not just a private good – it is also a public one, and many of the economic goals established for the country can be facilitated by a sound guidance system that is delivered, in an effective manner, in a lifelong and lifewide manner. With the transfer of the public employment service from the Ministry of Social Policy, the greatest responsibility for guidance in both the education and the labour market sector now lies with the Ministry of Education. It is this Ministry

which, in collaboration with stakeholders and other partners, is required to provide clear leadership so that this field, and the service, improves and reaches the standards that have been identified by the OECD, European Commission and World Bank reviews, and that are being striven for internationally.

- Clear policy steering requires an effective and efficient executive arm to carry policies through. It is striking that, at the moment of writing, the sections dealing with guidance in both the education sector and the labour market sector are without a head. In the former sector especially, this situation seems to have reached an impasse given the unattractive conditions of work offered to the education officer that would assume the responsibility for leading the unit. It is unlikely that educational and vocational guidance will register any progress in any coherent, organised and holistic manner if the several initiatives of guidance teachers in schools remain fragmented.
- Similarly striking is the fact that while government receives a lot of support from the private sector – in terms of both voluntary and for-profit organisations – in providing counselling and social work-type services aimed to help individuals cope with life's stresses and challenges, there are no such initiatives in the educational and occupational guidance field. At best, some agencies provide head-hunting or job placement services. However, the key social partners – namely entrepreneurs and

company managers on the one hand, and trade unions on the other – have not as yet developed guidance services. Nor do the many community organisations on the island supplement or complement the guidance facilities provided by the government, except informally by untrained staff.

- The pre-service and in-service training needs of guidance staff need to be attended to more carefully and systematically, with further opportunities provided for personnel to obtain university-recognised certification that would contribute to the professionalisation of the service. In-service programmes should be planned to respond to guidance staff needs, and with a view to ratcheting up standards and service delivery in both the education and the labour market sector. Presently, much in-service provision is offered on an *ad hoc* basis.
- Occupational information in particular is still rudimentary, and there is as yet no system available, whether print or electronically-based, which would support guidance staff, particularly in schools, to help young people develop an understanding of the range of occupations available, the qualifications that each of these occupations requires, the salaries they command, the progression routes within each, and the challenges, satisfactions and experiences that they lead to.
- There is as yet no formalised quality auditing procedure in order to ensure that objectives

for guidance services in the education and labour market sector are being attained. While some of the responsibility for such monitoring is being attended to, in the context of schools, by counsellors, the attention of the latter tends to be overwhelmingly on personal, rather than on occupational guidance. There are no laws, formal regulations, guidelines or mechanisms to monitor the provision of information, and to ensure that it is accurate, objective, and reliable, or to evaluate it in terms of its accessibility, transparency, timeliness, and user-friendliness. As in many other contexts in the public sector, there is also no procedure in place that systematically and regularly carries out evaluation of impact of the service, to gauge patterns in client group use along such criteria as gender, social background, age and other attributes, to record client satisfaction with services provided, and to study outcomes in relation to inputs.

- There is a lack of cross-sectoral collaboration, with the labour market and education sector often working in parallel. While, as in most countries, there is a tension between the public employment service and the education sector, with each party laying a stress on different aspects of guidance – largely due to the fact that they are serving different client groups – such a tension could be productive, leading to the establishment of a fair balance between guidance operating as both a public and a private good.

- School guidance staff tend to have little understanding of labour market issues, while those in charge of producing and disseminating information about the labour market have not tended to be particularly effective in helping educators understand the structure of, and trends in, employment opportunities.
- Guidance services for adults tend to be largely restricted to the unemployed and to some at risk groups. There are few, if any, guidance services – whether public or private – available for adults who might wish to change occupational tracks, or whose employment is insecure due to company restructuring.
- ICT-based information that contains a guidance function has yet to be developed. Most of the websites available are replicas of – or substitutes for – print-based materials, giving more importance to cramming information rather than designing the site in ways that render it useful to specific groups of users. There is as yet no guidance-oriented software or internet site that functions as a multi-dimensional, matrix-based management information system, connecting educational and career information with labour market data.
- Guidance services and guidance specialists are required to cater for specific client groups. Early school-leavers, for instance, as well as out-of-school youth, should be an

important target for collaborative work by the education guidance services and the public employment service. Despite the policy of mainstreaming in schools, there has been virtually no development in the provision of specialised guidance services for students and young people with disability.

17. Conclusion: Benchmarks for guidance in Malta

In attempting to build on present strengths and to address current weaknesses, providers of guidance services in Malta would do well to keep an eye on some of the major trends that mark the field across Europe and internationally, as countries strive to meet the challenges that arise in their attempt to restructure themselves as knowledge-based societies. These trends have been identified as a result of the 29 European country survey often referred to throughout this monograph – trends which have also been underscored in different ways by the OECD and World Bank reports, and by the international research literature in the field. By highlighting the direction of flows in policy-making across Europe, the list of trends effectively proposes a series of benchmarks, indicating what ‘best practice’ may be like in the field. Policy-makers and practitioners can, in this way, better situate their own efforts within the general picture, appraising their own achievements in relation to those of others, and drawing inspiration from the range of alternatives that are being piloted elsewhere.

Learning from European and international trends in guidance service provision

**Distilling
trends in
guidance: a
continuum of
flows**

The nature of guidance:

- From a service that is considered to be peripheral...
...to one that is central, a key responsibility for government in partnership with others
- From a service that draws its rationale and tools from psychology...
...to a service that is more multi-disciplinary
- From a service that considers opportunities in the context of a nation state or region...
...to a service that facilitates student and worker mobility across Europe

Who guidance is to be provided to:

- From a service that is available to unemployed youth and adults...
...to a service that caters for within/between career moves
- From a marginal service targeting 'at risk' groups ...
...to a mainstream service available more broadly
- From a service aimed largely at secondary level students...
...to a service that caters for the needs of all

When guidance is to be provided:

- From a service that is provided mainly at key decision points...
...to a service that is provided lifelong
- From a service that is 'curative' and provided at crisis points...
...to a service that is educative, empowering citizens with learning and career management skills, preparing for wise decision-making throughout life

Where guidance is to be provided:

- From a service that is offered only in institutional sites...
...to a service that is also available in leisure sites, in the community, and in the home
- From a service that is formally bounded in time and space...
...to a service that is ubiquitous

Who provides guidance:

- From a service that is exclusively provided by the state...
...to a service that is also provided by community organisations and private entities
- From a service that is delivered only by guidance staff...
...to a service that includes inputs by stakeholders and others

- From a service that is staffed by non-specialised personnel...
...to a service that requires pre- and in-service training
- From a service that tends to focus on personal and educational guidance issues...
...to a service that gives due importance to career guidance
- From a service that is poorly professionalized...
...to a service that has clear entry and career progression routes
- From a service that is staffed by same-level personnel...
...to a service that includes different staff categories, including para-professional workers

How guidance is to be provided:

- From a service that focuses on provision...
...to a service that focuses on self-access and self-service with appropriate levels of assistance or none
- From a service that is centrally managed...
...to a service that is decentralised but monitored centrally
- From a service that is largely homogenous, irrespective of client diversity...
...to a service that is differentiated, responding to specific needs

- From a service that is segmented according to sector...
... to a service that values cross-sector collaboration
- From a service that works with individuals...
...to a service that maximises its impact by also working with groups
- From a service that is available to students outside the curriculum...
...to a service that permeates guidance issues through the curriculum
- From a service that demands guidance staff to fulfil multiple roles...
...to a service that encourages specialisation in service delivery
- From a service that is unregulated...
...to a service that has codes of conduct and standards of practice
- From a service that fails to connect education and labour market data...
...to a service that uses ICT' to consolidate different data
- From a service that is under-researched...
...to a service that is systematically reflexive

**Transforming
the
guidance
paradigm: the
challenges of
the Learning
Society**

The shifts, trends and flows that are visible to a greater or lesser extent across Europe and internationally signal what is effectively a transformation in the guidance paradigm. Guidance is clearly moving away from its traditional roles in terms of when, where, how, and to who it is offered, adopting a remit that is marked by lifelong and lifewide concerns. The international guidance studies that have been taking place since 2001 have shown that none of the countries reviewed can claim, on its own, to hold the key for addressing the most pressing issues that concern the increasingly complex and non-linear pathways between education, training, work and non-work. Collectively, however, the 36 countries reviewed provide a rich tapestry, signposting pathways for policy-makers and practitioners alike in their bid to be of service to citizens in the emerging Knowledge Society.

Malta has contributed to this international *agora*, and some of its initiatives have been showcased as examples of good practice from which others can draw inspiration. The SCOOPS initiative, the way school-to-work issues feature across the curriculum, the Services Manual, and the offer of a joint diploma course to guidance workers in both the labour market and the education sector have been of particular interest to guidance professionals in a number of countries. Malta, however, has also much to learn in its attempts to provide all its citizens alike with a service that facilitates both the private good, and the public one. Hopefully, this monograph will have contributed to that learning process, and to promoting the paradigm shift that local services need to engage with in the search for the Learning Society.

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APPENDIX I

International Competencies for Educational and Vocational Guidance Practitioners

*Approved by the International
Association for Educational and
Vocational Guidance (IAEVG) General
Assembly, Bern, 4th September 2003*

Competency Framework

Core Competencies

- C1 Demonstrate appropriate ethical behaviour and professional conduct in the fulfilment of roles and responsibilities
- C2 Demonstrate advocacy and leadership in advancing clients' learning, career development and personal concerns
- C3 Demonstrate awareness and appreciation of clients' cultural differences to interact effectively with all populations
- C4 Integrate theory and research into practice in guidance, career development, counselling, and consultation
- C5 Skills to design, implement and evaluate guidance and counselling programs and interventions
- C6 Demonstrate awareness of his/her own capacity and limitations

- C7 Ability to communicate effectively with colleagues or clients, using the appropriate level of language
- C8 Knowledge of updated information on educational, training, employment trends, labour market, and social issues
- C9 Social and cross-cultural sensitiveness
- C10 Skills to cooperate effectively in a team of professionals
- C11 Demonstrate knowledge of lifelong career development process

Specialized Competencies

- 1. Assessment
 - 1.1. Accurately and thoroughly conceptualize and diagnose clients' needs based on different assessment tools and techniques
 - 1.2. Use the data derived from assessment appropriately and according to the situation
 - 1.3. Identify situations requiring referral to specialized services
 - 1.4. Facilitate effective referral by means of initiating contacts between referral sources and individuals
 - 1.5. Maintain up-to-date listings of referral sources

- 1.6. Conduct a needs assessment of the clients' contexts

2. Educational Guidance

- 2.1. Demonstrate concern for students' potential and the skills to facilitate its achievement
- 2.2. Guide individuals and groups of students to develop educational plans
- 2.3. Assist students in their decision making process
- 2.4. Assist students to improve their self-awareness
- 2.5. Assist students in their course selection
- 2.6. Assist students to overcome learning difficulties
- 2.7. Motivate and help students to take part in international exchange programs
- 2.8. Consult with parents on their children's educational progress and development
- 2.9. Assist teachers to improve teaching methodologies
- 2.10. Assist teachers to implement guidance within the curriculum

3. Career Development

- 3.1. Knowledge of career developmental issues and the dynamics of vocational behaviour

- 3.2. Demonstrate knowledge of pertinent legal factors and their implications for career development
- 3.3. Plan, design and implement lifelong career development programs and interventions
- 3.4. Knowledge of decision making and transition models to prepare and plan for transitional stages: School to work transition, Career shifts, Retirement, Job dismissing, Downsizing
- 3.5. Identify influencing factors (family, friends, educational and financial opportunities) and biased attitudes (that stereotype others by gender, race, age and culture) in career decision making
- 3.6. Assist individuals in setting goals, identifying strategies to reach them, and continually reassess their goals, values, interest and career decisions
- 3.7. Knowledge of state and local referral services or agencies for job, financial, social and personal issues
- 3.8. Knowledge of career planning materials and computer-based career information systems, the Internet, and other online resources
- 3.9. Skills to use these career development resources and techniques appropriately

- 3.10. Skills to use career development resources designed to meet the needs of specific groups (migrants, ethnic groups and at risk populations)
- 3.11. Help clients to build their career and life project

4. Counselling

- 4.1. Understand the main factors related to the personal development of clients and the dynamics of their individual behaviour
- 4.2. Demonstrate empathy, respect and a constructive relationship with the client
- 4.3. Use individual counselling techniques
- 4.4. Use group counselling techniques
- 4.5. Address the needs of at-risk students
- 4.6. Assist clients in:
 - 4.6.1. Prevention of personal problems
 - 4.6.2. Personality development
 - 4.6.3. Personal problem solving
 - 4.6.4. Decision making
 - 4.6.5. Sexual identity
 - 4.6.6. Social skills

- 4.6.7. Health education
- 4.6.8. Use of leisure time
- 4.7. Help clients to develop a personal life plan
- 4.8. Detection and referral of cases to other specialized services

5. Information Management

- 5.1. Knowledge of legislation, pertaining to education, training, and work at local, national and international level
- 5.2. Knowledge of equivalence of degrees and professional qualifications obtained in different countries
- 5.3. Collect, organize, disseminate and provide up-to-date career, educational and personal/social information on:
 - 5.3.1. Education and training
 - 5.3.2. Occupational information
 - 5.3.3. Employment opportunities
 - 5.3.4. Others (Health, Leisure...)
- 5.4. Use Information Technologies to provide educational and occupational information (Data-bases, Computer-based educational and career guidance programs and the Internet)

- 5.5. Assist clients to access and use educational and occupational information in a meaningful way

6. Consultation and Coordination

- 6.1. Consult with parents, teachers, tutors, social workers, administrators and other agents to enhance their work with students
- 6.2. Demonstrate interpersonal skills needed to create and maintain consultation relationships, goals, and desired behaviour change
- 6.3. Demonstrate skills in working with organizations (universities, business, municipalities and other institutions)
- 6.4. Interpret and explain concepts and new information effectively
- 6.5. Coordinate school and community personnel to bring together resources for students
- 6.6. Use an effective referral process for assisting students and others to use special programs, services, and networks
- 6.7. Skills to coordinate and stimulate the student's creativity to built their own programs (studies and work)
- 6.8. Skills to build up a good image as a professional

7. Research and Evaluation

- 7.1. Knowledge of research methodologies, data gathering and analysis techniques
- 7.2. Promote research projects in relation to guidance and counselling
- 7.3. Use presentation methods to report the outcomes of the research
- 7.4. Interpret the results of this research
- 7.5. Integrate the results of this research into the guidance and counselling practice
- 7.6. Evaluate guidance programs and interventions, applying up-to date techniques and program evaluation models
- 7.7. Keep up-to date with current research findings

8. Program/Service Management

- 8.1. Identify target populations
- 8.2. Conduct needs assessment
- 8.3. Inventory resources relevant to program planning and implementation
- 8.4. Knowledge about relevant current literature, trends and issues
- 8.5. Promote community awareness of the programs and services

- 8.6. Manage (design, implement, supervise) programs and interventions
- 8.7. Evaluate effectiveness of the interventions
- 8.8. Use results to effect program enhancement by recommending institutional/agency improvements
- 8.9. Skills to organize and manage the educational, counseling, guidance and placement services
- 8.10. Manage and supervise personnel
- 8.11. Promote staff development

9. Community Capacity Building

- 9.1. Skills to develop relationships with key community partners
- 9.2. Conduct analysis of human and material resources
- 9.3. Conduct needs assessment of the community
- 9.4. Work with the community to effectively use these resources to meet their needs
- 9.5. Work with community to develop, implement, and evaluate action plans to address economic, social, educational & employment goals

- 9.6. Work with local, national and international resource networks for educational and vocational guidance (e.g. IAEVG)

10. Placement

- 10.1. Coach clients in work search strategies
- 10.2. Use of the Internet in the job search process
- 10.3. Present work opportunities to clients and facilitate their appropriate job selection
- 10.4. Liaison with employers and with education and training providers to obtain information on the opportunities they offer
- 10.5. Consult with policy makers
- 10.6. Follow-up on placement suggestions
- 10.7. Match individuals to particular vacancies in employment, education or training
- 10.8. Support clients with employment maintenance



APPENDIX II

Guidance Resources – Some relevant Websites

LOCAL

Ministry of Education:-

<http://www.education.gov.mt>

Department of Further Studies and Adult
Education:-

http://www.education.gov.mt/edu/studies_adult.htm

Employment and Training Corporation:-

<http://www.etc.org.mt>

Euroguidance (Malta):- *<http://www.euroguidance-malta.com/>*

Ploteus:-

<http://www.ploteus.org/ploteus/portal/home>

Foundation for Human Resource Development:-

<http://www.fhrd.org/default.asp>

Junior College:- *<http://www.jc.um.edu.mt>*

Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology:-

<http://www.mcast.edu.mt/>

Institute of Tourism Studies:- *<http://its.gov.mt/>*

University of Malta:- *<http://www.um.edu.mt/>*



University of Malta Students Advisory Service:-

<http://home.um.edu.mt/sas/>

University of Malta Counselling Service:-

<http://www.um.edu.mt/counsell.html>

Misco:- <http://www.miscomalta.com/>

Job advertising:- <http://www.di-ve.com/> and

<http://www.xol.com.mt>

INTERNATIONAL

Associations

International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance:-

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/~hiebert/iaevg/iaevg.html>

Association of Career Management Professionals (now the Association of Career Professionals International - ACP International):-

<http://www.londonchapteriacmp.co.uk/>

The National Advisory Council for Educational and Career Guidance: the Guidance Council:-

<http://www.guidancecouncil.com/>

The National Association of Careers and Guidance Teachers:- <http://www.nacgt.org.uk/>

The National Association for Educational Guidance for Adults:- <http://www.naega.org.uk/>

Standards

Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Development Practitioners:-

<http://www.career-dev-guidelines.org/>

UK Matrix quality standard for information, advice and guidance services:-

www.matrix-quality-standard.com

Further training opportunities for Career Guidance workers

<http://www.derby.ac.uk/cegs/policy-makers/CPD.html>

Guidance resources homepage

<http://www.wisemantech.com/guidance/career-info.html>

<http://www.derby.ac.uk/cegs/practitioners/info-services.html>

Guidance centres

The Centre for Guidance Studies:-

<http://www.derby.ac.uk/cegs/>

The Centre for the Study of Technology in Counseling and Career Development:-

<http://www.career.fsu.edu/techcenter/>

The National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling (NICEC):-

<http://www.crac.org.uk/nicec/nicec.htm>

Institute for Career Guidance:-

<http://www.icg-uk.org/>

The Guidance Accreditation Board:-

<http://www.icg-uk.org/>

Information about a career interests game

<http://career.missouri.edu/holland/>

The Real Game Series Web Site:-

<http://www.realgame.com>

Smart Options: intelligent career exploration:-

<http://www.lifework.ca>

<http://www.learndirect.co.uk> provides free access to

Holland's interest inventory, non-commercial purposes.

Guidance services in the higher education sector

<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/hecareersservicereview/>

Code of practice for quality assurance in guidance in higher education:-

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/public/COP/COPcex/introduction.htm>

An example of a Statement of Service adopted by a Career Guidance office:-

<http://www.uwe.ac.uk/careers/statementofservice.shtml>

Examples of web-based occupational information systems

<http://www.jobfutures.ca>

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/career>

<http://www.learndirect.co.uk>

<http://www.careersworld.com/>

<http://www.qualifax.ie/>

<http://www.myfuture.edu.au>

<http://www.careers.govt.nz>

<http://www.careers.ngfl.gov.uk/index.html>

<http://www.oikotie.fi>

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