

GOOD GUIDANCE Stories 2.0

Good Guidance Stories 2.0 The Methodological Concept Summary



The Good Guidance Stories 2.0 partnership



The comprehensive Methodological Concept, further information about the project and the above partners is available at the project website:

www.goodguidancestories.org

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The Project

The Erasmus+ funded project Good Guidance Stories 2.0 aims to improve educational and job-related Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) for young adults by developing learning material for IAG practitioners. The project places special attention on the target group of young adults (18 – 35 years), particularly those experiencing barriers to employment.

Good Guidance Stories 2.0 builds upon the results of two preceding projects, Good Guidance Stories (Guide) and Good Guidance Stories+ (Guide+), in which eight case study modules and teaching notes have been developed. The digitization of these case studies and their adaptation to recent developments of the world of work as well as to the needs of IAG practitioners and young adults will be one part of the work in this project.

Guide 2.0 will continue to develop case study-based learning material, which can be applied in complex situations with uncertain solutions (as is very often the case in the work of IAG practitioners). Seven new case studies will be developed with a focus on employability and the challenges of today's labour market, through an international community of practice made up of 12 IAG practitioners and managers.

The enquiry carried out in the six project cities London, Dublin, Trieste, Marseille, Berlin and Tampere is the basis for the methodological concept that serves as the foundation for work on the Good Guidance Stories 2.0 project and especially the development of the case studies.

The project's overall aim is to improve IAG (Information, Advice, Guidance) services for young adults, particularly for those with complex needs, who may be experiencing disadvantage and are underserved by the current system. Furthermore, the project contributes from a transnational European

perspective to current calls for transformational change in IAG practices, especially to those targeting young adults most challenged in making successful transitions.

Case Studies and Co-Production

Co-design and co-production are an integral part of the Good Guidance Stories 2.0 methodological approach. Co-design is derived from the idea that the understanding and solving of a problem can be improved if designers, suppliers and consumers look at it together. Since the early 2000s this approach is increasingly applied to change processes in public services, in which service users are recognised as the experts of their own experiences and play an important role in the design process.

In Guide 2.0 the co-production approach will be put into practice throughout the project, beginning with this qualitative enquiry and followed by the development and testing of a continuing professional development curriculum. Co-production is realised through the participatory enquiry process and an international community of practice which will be established between practitioners from all participating project countries.

The form of case studies was chosen because it is particularly effective in "bridging the gap between theory and practice and between the academy and the workplace" (Barkley/Major 2005, p. 81) and can also be applied in complex situation with uncertain solutions as is very often the case in the work of IAG practitioners.

Every Guide and Guide+ case study is complemented by a teaching note that provides additional information and summarises the learning objective, possible teaching approaches, reflective questions, related research and a section of

classroom experiences from other facilitators. The methodological handbook developed in the first Guide project gives detailed instructions on how to develop and how to work with case studies.

In Guide 2.0 seven case studies will be developed by an international Community of Practice of IAG practitioners and managers from all six project countries.

The Enquiry

The enquiry was carried out in all six partnership cities and 184 IAG practitioners, managers and young clients of IAG service were involved through focus groups and interviews in which they discussed effective IAG practices, exchanged good practice experiences, identified IAG effectiveness factors and outlined current challenges.

The young adults were the largest group (81 participants) within our sample. They all participated in focus groups prepared following the principles of the participatory appraisal approach. The group structure also correlated with the principles of co-design and co-production, in which individuals are seen as the experts of their own lives and environments. The young adults in this sample are aged 18 – 29, have different educational levels (university degree – no high school diploma), some unemployed at the time of participation, some had taken part in educational or employment programmes, some recently found employment, some have a migration background while others do not - but all have used IAG services in recent months.

The 65 interviewed practitioners work in organisations that offer IAG services. Some are specialised in offering IAG to young adults, while others work with additional target groups as well. They work with a wide range of target groups in terms of educational background and career

expectations, and a variety of IAG services are represented in this sample

The managers were the hardest group to reach in this context. Due to a high workload and time concerns some did not take part in the survey, although they expressed great interest. 38 managers took part in the enquiry who come from different types of organisations and fulfil different tasks: service coordinators, training centre directors, managers of smaller programmes or projects within one organisation, managers of IAG organisations and supervisors within the employment unit of the city administration

The Results

Summary of academic perspectives

In each national country a desk research was carried out looking on the academic view on effective IAG practice. Summarizing them the following similarities can be found: all national reports see the purpose of IAG as offering a structure for supporting individuals in making decisions and plans regarding their own professional development, which may include further training or a direct route towards employment.

Another aspect most definitions have in common is reflection. IAG should facilitate an individual process to become aware of one's own resources and competences but also one's own needs and development wishes for a professional future, with the aim to live more resourcefully and reach one's full potential.

Four of the six country perspectives emphasise the importance of working with clients of an IAG setting in an empowering manner by making information available, explaining the system and by supporting reflective processes. Through the

development of self-management skills, the clients should be enabled to act on self-responsible decisions.

Guide 2.0 Enquiry - Effective practice Indicators

The first response that practitioners and managers offer to the question, which indicators tell them that IAG was effective was in cases where the client finds a job or a placement in a training measure and gains new and measurable skills. In subsequent discussions it became clear that simply finding a job without having gone through a guidance process may not be best for the client, as it may be going against their will or preventing them from obtaining better jobs if they hold certain qualifications. So, many practitioners see also smaller steps on the clients' path towards employment or training as indicators for effective practice or success; such as setting up the client's CV or less measurable events such as moments of growth in the client's self-confidence or when clients who lacked orientation or motivation develop their own ideas and a positive vision of employment.

Guide 2.0 Enquiry - Factors contributing to effective practice

The factors that pave the way to effective IAG practice described by the practitioners in this enquiry are manifold and are grouped into five distinct categories: service design, practitioner's attitude and skills, setting of an IAG session; client's circumstances; (local) IAG system.

Service design

In this category fall factors that influence the values and the way an organisation is designed and what kind of service or support it offers. Some of the most important aspects in this category are the following

- to offer long-term accompaniment for clients seems crucial for the effectiveness of an IAG process as well as support for all concrete steps not only during the orientation phase, but also once the client is in the process of applications or even the first period in employment.
- IAG service should also be prepared to recognise and react to problems as mental health, addiction or housing that young clients face and that may impede the success of an IAG process.
- the service should institutionalise a stable relationship with employers of different sectors. This should be part of tasks of the manager or of a person who cares for this topic specifically, and not dependant on the practitioner's personal network.

Practitioner

These factors are related to the IAG practitioners and their skills, knowledge and attitudes.

- for young adults it is crucial that the practitioner is perceived as friendly and open.
- practitioner should see every young adult as an individual and be aware of their own prejudices or generalisations during the IAG process.
- practitioners need an in-depth knowledge regarding the changes in the world of work and the local labour markets.
- practitioner need to be able to build a genuine and trusting relationship with the young client.

The setting of an IAG session

This means the concrete setting of an IAG encounter between a practitioner and a young adult and one example for an important factor in this category is:

- Being easily accessible. This was expressed in many interviews and focus groups as a substantial factor and referred both to the geographical reachability and minimizing effort or complexity to obtain an appointment.

The Circumstances of Young Clients

Various factors on the side of the young client can decide on the success or effectiveness of an IAG process. Some of the most mentioned factors are:

- whether the client is there on their own will or if they feel forced to attend. Even though the young person is attending IAG voluntarily, it is important that they are open and willing to reflect on their past and current wishes and willing to start a learning process.
- This openness or ability may be impeded if the young adult is affected by other problems, such as mental health issues, addiction or housing which should be addressed before or in parallel to heading down the path towards entering the labour market and professional development.

(Local) Guidance System

These factors concern the IAG service as actor within the labour market and local networks and the following factors are considered important to deliver effective practice:

- network building of organisations, also known as interagency cooperation.
- A development of common quality standards that helps build client's trust in the IAG concept.

- providing guidance for companies on how to integrate young adults who experienced difficulties in entering into the labour market shouldn't be an afterthought.

Examples of effective practice, approaches, methodologies and materials

During the interviews and focus groups, particularly when discussing the factors contributing to effective practice, various approaches, tools, methods and techniques were listed as being effective or facilitative towards effective IAG.

The collection of these examples of approaches, tools, methods and techniques is diverse and illustrates the many levels of success upon which an IAG encounter can be decided and supported. This can only be an overview of the different types of good practice that became visible during the enquiry process. A detailed list with all examples and references can be found in the comprehensive Methodological Concept in Annex B.

Service design and value statement

Examples of good practice concerning aspects of how a service is designed and on which values and core principles it is based. Recommendations include: a definition of guidance that highlights the importance of a holistic and young adult-centred service; building teams with diverse professional backgrounds; working in partnerships and offering multidisciplinary support structures where clients can also find support for mental health or financial issues.

Tools Complementing and enhancing an IAG process

In this section (mostly technical) tools are recommended. For example, tests that assess talents and potentials of a client. One is an online platform that is able to match current job offers from regional employers with the CVs of IAG clients. Another tool used and recommended is the Microsoft Teams application, as it enables a more informal and immediate contact with the young adults or groups while offering the opportunity to exchange confidential information as it meets GDPR standards.

Activation measures

Most good practices considered to be effective within an IAG process can be described as activation measures. An example of this would be the “School of 2nd Chance,” which gives the opportunity for people without any formal qualification to graduate in an environment that can offer greater individual support. Other examples are different types of internships or trainings that are embedded in a support programme offering assistance to clients and employers.

Policies and Research

Policies that highlight the needs of young adults and provide financing for the promotion of a good quality offer of employment, continuing education and IAG were also emphasised. Research concerning the implementation and effectiveness of labour activation policies and considering aspects, as the psychological impact of unemployment.

Identified gaps and required development

The enquiry also asked for aspects in the IAG sector that currently do not work well or challenges that practitioners, managers and the young clients see. This summary sheds light on some selected aspects mentioned by the three stakeholder groups. A more detailed description can be found in the comprehensive Methodological Concept.

Practitioner Perspective

In focus groups and interviews most practitioners expressed their wish for increased continuing professional development (CPD) and were critical of the lack of available training, or not having had the chance to be involved in CPD for several years.

In all local contexts practitioners brought up the high volume of cases to be followed as challenging. The shortage of time for individual consultation with each client is further intensified by high requirements on bureaucracy.

Working with young adults according to their needs and trying to reach institutional objectives or funding requirements, such as a certain number of job/training placements, can become a conflict for practitioners when they feel a young client needs additional support or time but they lack the resources to see them more often.

Managers' perspective

One major concern of managers was the question of funding of their services. They see that practitioners must deal with a high caseload and that due to this the effectiveness of their work is lower. On the other hand, sources of funding are limited and to apply for different types of funding

always bares bureaucracy and administrative effort for the organisation.

Managers are also concerned that their services are not known to the target group of young adults. They identify a gap in target group-specific public relations, as well as a need to bring the concept of IAG further into public discourse.

Managers also saw a major need to increase engagement with employers, in order to offer clients more varied job opportunities or internships. They also recognized a need to work directly with employers and explain the different options employers have to offer a job (experience) to young adults and support them with eventual administrative tasks.

Young Adults perspective

Many focus group participants described experiences of IAG sessions where they didn't feel seen as an individual by the practitioner, and were regarded as a 'problem', a 'number' or 'just another case'. This feeling sometimes led to an inner resistance towards the whole process and mistrust in the benefits of IAG. For them, the most important factor of an effective guidance process was a genuine encounter with the practitioner.

Participants were very aware of the pressure faced by many IAG organisations that these need to fulfil quotas and justify the success of their work to the funding authorities. Some also experienced being pushed into the direction of the labour market needs or to participate in trainings that do not correspond to their career wishes. Most young people agreed that IAG should encourage autonomy and not be quota based.

The information that IAG is available for young adults should be promoted in all schools, and their online presence should be adapted to suit their young target group.

One concern was reported by young adults regarding the language used in the guidance situations. They felt intimidated by a language unknown to them and which they call 'guidance jargon', a language used by authorities and professionals that does not connect with the world of the young person.

Summary and implications

For this enquiry 184 IAG practitioners, managers and young adults were involved in interviews and focus groups. The results show a broad and multifaceted picture of IAG in the six cities of Tampere, Dublin, Trieste, Marseille, London and Berlin. Although the frameworks and structures are different due to national legislation, funding structures and traditions, views on effective administering of IAG practice are related in many ways and various challenges and needs for development are shared in the different local contexts. Selecting a participatory approach for the Guide 2.0 project allows for different stakeholder perspectives to become visible and highlights unique regional circumstances and specificities.

The academic and professional research perspectives on effective IAG practice emphasise a holistic approach towards guidance and the empowering aspect of IAG, along with the acquisition of new skills and knowledge by the clients. Guidance practitioners and managers do share this view of effective practice, although their assessment of success and effectiveness in their daily routine is also connected to finding job placements or training measures for their clients. For the young adults and clients, IAG is particularly effective when they feel seen as individuals and experience support over a longer period and with all tasks and obstacle that they face on their way to employment or training.

This enquiry also collects factors that are essential for offering effective IAG practice

or contribute to it, and it becomes clear that these requirements are very complex and the quality of an IAG service or an encounter between a practitioner and a young adult may be influenced by many different levels.

The factors highlighted as most important by the stakeholders involved in Guide 2.0 are summarised in the following:

Effective IAG services are independent and easily accessible, provide a safe environment for the young adult and the practitioner. During an IAG encounter the client and the practitioner build a genuine and constructive relationship to work on the young adult's needs and to encourage him/her to gain self-confidence, take control and engage in society. Depending on the young client's needs and own wishes, this can be a long-term orientation and development process or assistance in finding employment or work experiences immediately including support during the first working phase. The practitioners act professionally and are able to update their skills and knowledge constantly, especially regarding changes in the labour market and the world of work. In an effective IAG system with good interagency cooperation, other issues of the young person, such as housing or mental health, can be adequately addressed and a lively network with employers facilitates smooth transitions.

Unfortunately, we find many of the mentioned factors also present in the list of gaps and challenges that need to be addressed. For many of these, improvement is impeded by financial or structural barriers within the IAG system, such as often the high workload of practitioners or the insufficient mental health support for young adults.

This section on the gaps and challenges gives us the clearest indications how Guide 2.0 can further enrich the debate on

continuous professional development of IAG practitioners.

We can see that the case studies from Guide and Guide+ with the competences and topics that they address are still highly relevant and match with many of the current gaps and challenges pointed out in this enquiry. For example, the 'Ethical Practice' competence is closely related to the conflict experienced by practitioners and managers between an holistic guidance process and the work-first approach; and the 'Operate Within Networks and Build Partnerships' competence corresponds to one of the most mentioned needs for a closer interagency cooperation and the network building with employers.

But it is also clear that the development of new case studies will be necessary to offer materials for continuous professional development of IAG practitioners that correspond to current IAG work challenges. The quickly changing labour market requires a varied set of employability skills from young people and practitioners, and well-informed decisions of IAG managers. The foreseen case study topics match the topics brought up by the stakeholders in this enquiry, and together will build a basis for the international community of practice to determine which competences and settings will be addressed in the seven Guide 2.0 case studies.

The lack of continuous professional education for practitioners was one of the most commonly identified gaps. This highlights the importance of further enriching the debate regarding continued professional education in the IAG sector, which is also one of the main aims of the Good Guidance Stories project series. Practitioners specified that the barriers to participation were mostly a lack of time and no support by their organisation. It is precisely at this point that Guide 2.0 hopes to bridge the gap by offering openly accessible online learning materials that are applicable in various contexts.