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Vocational Guidance Education in Full-Time Compulsory Education in Europe

European Commission

VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE EDUCATION IN FULL-TIME COMPULSORY EDUCATION

FRANCE

School year 2007/08

Education is compulsory for pupils between the ages of 6 and 16, and covers primary education (*école élémentaire* – ages 6-11), lower secondary education (*collège* – ages 11-15) and the first year of upper secondary *(lycée)*. The end of compulsory education is a key moment in terms of guidance. Pupils have the possibility to go on to general or technical education in a *lycée* or to full-time general and vocational education in a vocational *lycée*. Parents (or pupils if they are of age) have the choice of options taken in the upper form, but guidance is chosen based on the family's request. This is discussed by the board of teachers in order to prepare the school head's decision, which may be disputed in the event of a disagreement.

This description does not cover vocational guidance education during the last year of compulsory education.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND NATIONAL OBJECTIVES

The July 1989 law on education states that 'the right to guidance counselling and information on education and careers is part of the right to education'. The April 2005 law on guidance and a programme for the future of schools specifies that 'pupils elaborate their educational and vocational guidance project with the help of parents, teachers, guidance staff and other competent professionals. The administrations concerned, local government, professional organisations, companies and associations contribute to this'.

The objectives of the national policy in terms of guidance are in keeping with the major public objectives of raising qualification levels provided for by law: 100 % with the first level of qualification, 80 % with a secondary school diploma *(baccalauréat)*, and 50 % with a higher education diploma. They involve a better integration of the capacity to find one's way in basic education, through the development of individualisation with more personalised support, as well as through the quality of services provided and their accessibility, the production of reliable information, and specific measures to prevent the exclusion of target groups such as young people with difficulties at school or from socially disadvantaged areas, unemployed people, etc. The emphasis is also on the awareness-raising of the public concerned and of social stakeholders with respect to guidance in the context of lifelong learning (validation of experience, adults' skills, ongoing training, etc.).

Furthermore, the law of 10 August 2007 concerning freedoms and responsibilities of universities, made guidance and the integration of students one of the fundamental missions of higher education institutions and, as such, led to the obligation of preregistration and the generalisation of the 'active guidance' mechanism.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The ministries responsible for national education and employment are those which are most involved in the development of policies and the establishment of education and services related to educational and vocational guidance.

The responsibility of the Ministries of National Education and Higher Education and Research, is to provide services and counselling to young people in secondary schools and in higher education, whereas the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Solidarity targets adults seeking employment, a change of career or training.

Most of the services of the Ministry of National Education are provided in schools themselves, which are responsible for the follow-up of all pupils for the first year after their studies, or in the Information and Guidance Centres (CIOs) and their agencies under the remit of the ministry.

The guidance activities under the ministry responsible for labour are run by the National Employment Agency (ANPE).

Furthermore, a large number of public, semipublic and private bodies (such as, for example local missions, youth information centres (CIDJ), etc.) play an important role in terms of vocational guidance or are aimed more often at young people who have finished compulsory education.

VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE EDUCATION IN THE CURRICULUM

Vocational guidance education is included in the national curriculum for compulsory education. In addition, vocational discovery education was introduced in 2004 in the guidance cycle in *collège*, corresponding to the third year. It is aimed at providing pupils with greater exposure to the professional world and at helping them pursue their reflection on their educational pathway. Two vocational discovery formulas are proposed:

- an optional vocational discovery course of 3 hours/week aimed at providing pupils with initial knowledge of the professional world. It must be offered in all *collèges* to all pupils who are interested. The results of its continuous evaluation are considered for the award of the national degree *(brevet)*;
- a vocational discovery module of 6 hours/week aimed more specifically at pupils at risk who are willing to get involved in a professional training project after the third year.

Furthermore, the gradual establishment of the common foundation of knowledge and skills provided for by law clearly identifies objectives in the 7th pillar – developing autonomy and initiative – to acquire the capacity for lifelong self-guidance, also leading to the national degree *(brevet)*.

Finally, from the start of the 2008 school year in volunteer schools in view of a generalised implementation at the start of the 2009 school year, a ‘careers and training discovery pathway’ will be established for all pupils from the 5th year (age 12) until the last year of *lycée*. It is organised as ‘career stages’ – chances to meet professionals, visits to

companies, observation in a professional setting, etc. – and as 'highlights' at each level of training – a day spent in a *lycée*, LP, CFA, etc. for each pupil in the 4th year, and in a higher education institution for each pupil in the 1st year. Each pupil will have his or her own follow-up notebook. These activities will be based on academic specifications and on the dynamic relationship between schools and companies.

Traineeships within the framework of the curriculum

In the 3rd year of *collège*, each pupil spends a week of 'observation in a professional setting' in the framework of his or her pathway, which may also take place in the 4th year. In total, by the end of *collège*, each pupil spends 10 days in a company or in contact with professionals.

In addition to the alternating mechanisms which exist in *collège* for pupils in the 4th year (aged 14 and over), a new alternating mechanism for an initiation to careers is proposed to volunteer pupils in *collège* (aged 15 and over), to discover one or several careers via alternate training, whilst pursuing the acquisition of the common foundation of knowledge and skills.

Furthermore, a traineeship is required for each technical and vocational diploma.

OTHER TYPES OF ACTIVITY/GUIDANCE SERVICES

Contacts with the professional world

See the section above on traineeships within the framework of the curriculum.

Guidance services at school

These services are based on two main stakeholders:

- the main teachers in charge of conducting personalised guidance interviews, in cooperation with the guidance counsellors/psychologists, in the 3rd year of *collège*, the 1st and last years of general and technical *lycée*, as well as in vocational *lycée* where, from the 1st year, personalised interviews are already an essential element of vocational guidance provided to pupils and of the fight to reduce school drop-out rates. These personalised interviews are held as early as possible in the school year and families are invited to participate, allowing the immediate establishment of the desired individualised support.

- guidance counsellors/psychologists (CO-P), who work essentially with pupils in *collège* and *lycée*, young people in the process of professional integration and older students. They also work with adults. They help them build their training and integration pathway gradually and make use of different techniques (individual interviews, group work, evaluations, etc.). In all their actions, they intervene directly with young people in schools and in Information and Guidance Centres (see below).

They are individual guidance counselling specialists and, in *collèges* and *lycées*, technical counsellors on the educational team. In their counselling activity, guidance counsellors/psychologists also ensure the continuous follow-up of pupils, and contribute to ensuring the conditions for their success.

Guidance services outside school

There are close to 700 Information and Guidance Centres (CIOs) and agencies under the Ministry of National Education. The role of the CIOs consists essentially in providing support to all sectors of the population, especially to young people who have received an education and their families, and information on studies, professional training, qualifications and careers, as well as providing individual counselling (helping people know themselves better, retain useful information, organise the elements of their choice, etc.). They are also responsible for the production of summary documents for educational teams and pupils, as well as for coordinating exchanges and reflections between partners in the educational system, parents, young people and local and economic decision-makers.

QUALIFICATIONS OF GUIDANCE STAFF

In the schools

The recent specifications for the initial training of teachers, which are also used as a reference for their ongoing training, explicitly include the acquisition of knowledge and capacities in order to provide guidance to their pupils. Furthermore, a work placement will become compulsory before their recruitment.

In the framework of the 'careers and training discovery pathway', the academic specifications must explicitly implement a mechanism for the specific training of teachers.

In other guidance services

The guidance counsellors/psychologists in the public education service are recruited from applicants with a psychology degree (or another psychology degree accepted by the laws in force) who have passed the competition tests and have undergone training for two years, leading to the national degree of guidance counsellor/psychologist. They also benefit from ongoing training.

COOPERATION BETWEEN SCHOOLS, EMPLOYERS, PARENTS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

These cooperative efforts are recommended explicitly by the 2005 guidance law (see above). They are established on the initiative of the academic authorities and schools.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION ON VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE

The bodies responsible for gathering, producing and disseminating vocational information for pupils are the National Office for Information on Education and Careers (ONISEP) and the Information and Guidance Centres (CIOs).

ONISEP has developed a high-speed computer network which allows a maximum amount of information to be exchanged via the internet. It works in collaboration with the Study and Research Centre on Qualifications (CEREQ), a public body under the education and employment public services, whose mission is to provide expertise in various areas such as integration, professional opportunities, the relationships between training and employment, etc.

Each CIO has a self-documentation service on education and careers allowing people to consult documents according to their interests and level of education. The CIOs work in liaison with the National Office for Information on Education and Careers, which provides them with important documentation.

In addition to traditional documentation, the use of information and communication technologies (computers, multimedia, internet access, etc.) has been growing for over a decade.

The Academic Guidance and Information Service (SAIO) proposes information on guidance to each director of education: open days, events, studies, current events, statistics, etc.

Furthermore, a national specialised information centre – the Inffo Centre (www.centre-inffo.fr) – provides information on ongoing training for adults.

Internet references

The common foundation of knowledge and skills in 4 languages: http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid2770/le-socle-commun-de-connaissances-et-de-competences.html

Information for the public: http://www.onisep.fr

Information for educational teams: http://www.onisep-reso.fr

Sources

1. Guidance Policies in the Knowledge Society. Trends, challenges and responses across Europe. Cedefop comprehensive report. Ronald G. Sultana. Cedefop Panorama series; 100. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2004.
2. ETV and Cedefop thematic analysis 'Guidance and counselling for learning, career and employment' at www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/Information_resources/NationalVet/Thematic
3. Eurybase; Eurydice.
4. Career Guidance and Public Policy: Bridging the Gap. OECD 2004.