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DEVELOPMENT OF INFORMATION SERVICES, ADVICE AND GUIDANCE IN ADULT EDUCATION

**Proposals for an Action Programme by Working Group
established by the Ministry of Education and Ministry of
Labour**

Ministry of Labour 2006

1. THE ASSIGNMENT AND ITS BACKGROUND

1.1. The challenges of skills, careers and equality

The development of the population's age structure, impacts of information and communication technology, the complex change of the working life as well as progress in globalisation and regional development are great challenges to the skills of the working age population. By 2015, some one million people now in the labour force will have retired or left working life for some other reason. The diminishing age classes act as an impetus for attempts to ensure the availability of labour, extending careers in working life and increasing the employment rate. In the future, increasingly high skills levels, continuous development of skills and an ability to adjust to ever changing circumstances will be required of the labour force.

Wide-reaching development of adult education and improving the quality and effectiveness of education and training are central objectives of the Ministry of Education (Development plan for education and research 2003 - 2008) and the Ministry of Labour (Policy programme for employment, Employment policy strategy). The starting points of the adult education policy are continuous development of the skills of the adult population in working age, increasing the education and training opportunities of groups under-represented in adult education as well promoting integrity, equality and civic involvement in the society. According to the views of a parliamentary working group on adult education, the working age adult population should have a possibility to continuously develop their skills and to renew them thoroughly every 10 to 15 years.

In the future, an increasing share of the population will have a good general education and basic vocational training or third-level education when entering the working life. When striving to extend careers and promote vocational mobility, sufficient investments are needed in maintaining and renewing the skills provided by education. For an extensive period of time, large numbers of workers without a basic vocational diploma will remain in working life. For this reason, improving the educational/training standards will remain a central task for the adult education policy even in the future. The increased numbers of immigrants and multi-culturalism will be other challenges faced by the adult education policy.

The continuous change of the work and the labour market is reflected in changing demands on the labour force and individuals. Various new opportunities are open for people, but the speed of development and competition at the same hold them back. Due to the social change, uncertainty in working life has increased, and as a result, controlling one's life has become more challenging for the individual. Finding one's own place, continuous development of skills, and being faced by unemployment or ill health are demanding challenges which bring many uncertainties into people's lives. Lives and careers today require more individual solutions than the traditional educational, vocational and working life careers. Before, people moved on from studies to work, whereas now their lives consist of alternating periods of work, unemployment and training. Repeated and continuous education and training are parts of career progress.

On the other hand, family structures, structures of the immediate surroundings and other security factors are becoming looser, which results in increased detachment. The individual him/herself must make sure that his/her "story" makes sense and continues. A

capability to reflect, to examine the basis of one's own conceptual models, is an essential condition for survival in the post-modern society, and in this process, guided support is a vital means of assistance. In the labour policy strategy, advice and guidance services are associated with the prevention of social exclusion and, above all, safeguarding the availability of a skilled labour force. The advice and guidance services also aim at increasing the employment rate - a skilled citizen is likely to stay on and enjoy working life for longer (Mind over Career, a labour political study 2005).

Adult education plays a central role in the maintenance and renewal of the skills of the working age adult population. The Ministry of Education is responsible for a comprehensive network of parties providing adult education, an adequate basic offer, a working system of diplomas and quality assurance as well as the competence and skills of the teaching staff. Staying on in working life and employability are supported by both proactive and corrective labour force training. In the planning of meaningful working and educational careers that respond to the skills needs of the working life and the citizens, and in order for people to complete education/training making these careers possible, wide-reaching information and advisory services and guidance will be needed.

The challenges described above are being met with a policy of life-long learning, anticipation of skills needs, development measures of the working life, by increasing the efficiency of co-operation between the working life and education/training and by improving the working life skills of those organising education/training. The Government has set as the target to increase the annual rate of the working age adult population taking part in education/training from 54% to 60% by 2008. In addition to the quantitative target, the quality and effectiveness of adult education need to be improved, and the use of resources needs to be made more efficient in order to increase productivity.

This will not succeed without networking and determined co-operation between the educational and labour administrations. Information and advisory services on adult education and guidance supporting the planning of educational and working careers and acquiring the skills required for them play a central role in this process. A necessary prerequisite is an adequate offer of education and training and diploma systems suited to the needs of the working-age adult population, schemes for identifying and recognising existing skills, financial preconditions and support forms for adult education as well as the skills, resources and attitudes of the staff over the whole chain.

1.2. The international perspective

Both the European Union and the OECD have highlighted the central role of a lifelong learning policy and guidance covering both the educational and working career in the development policies for years to come. Based on the Maastricht communiqué and the Education and Training 2010 programme of the European Ministries of Education, making lifelong guidance more efficient has been proposed as one of the focuses of educational policies in all member states. The aim is to guarantee appropriate guidance and advisory services for the citizens enabling them to plan individual and flexible paths of study. In the conclusion adopted by the Council in 2004, as the starting point for organising these services were specified the following:

- 1) developing prerequisites that support career planning
- 2) improving the availability of the services and
- 3) improving the quality of the services.

As starting points and objectives for life-long guidance, the following factors were specified:

- 1) efficiency of investments in education, training and development of the labour force
- 2) efficiency of the labour market
- 3) lifelong learning
- 4) inclusion
- 5) social equality and economic development.

Lifelong guidance supports the achievement of many political goals of the European Union; in other words, it is an important instrument for promoting Europe's competitive ability. In case life-long guidance is implemented well, the efficiency of investments in the development of education, training and the labour force and that of economic development in general can be increased. A requirement for life-long learning is that the citizens have access to sufficient guidance and advisory services for their selections of education, training and careers. The social inclusion and equality of the citizens can be enhanced by making the guidance services efficiently available for all population groups in all phases of their lives.

The EU documents emphasise the fact that well-organised guidance serves the objectives of various parties in the society in a wide sense. The citizen will be able to reconcile his or her personal goals, education and training alternatives and career development in pace with the needs and opportunities of the labour market. Education and training organisations, on the other hand, will have motivated students, and companies suitable employees with an ability to develop their professional skills. Social and economic development can be accelerated by means of active civic involvement and flexible mobility of labour.

According to the EU documents, the principles of organising this guidance should be based on customer-orientedness, active involvement in the guidance process, improving the availability of guidance services and continuous quality assurance. An overall evaluation of the guidance services can be produced in the light of five so-called meta criteria. These are:

- implementation of customer-orientedness
- competence of the professionals in the guidance sector
- permanent quality assurance of the services
- coverage of the various aspects and
- organising guidance services parallel with those provided by the public administration.

In 2001-2003, the OECD and the European Commission jointly proceeded to evaluate the career guidance policies of a number of countries. The objective was to establish how career guidance services promote lifelong learning and active labour market policies. The final report (Career Guidance, A handbook for policy makers, 2004), focuses attention as regards adult population to such as the small number of easily accessible services, low

number of companies taking care of the career development of their employees, and the fact that the employers and employee organisations, even if they are aware of the need, do not show sufficient interest in developing career guidance. According to the report, however, the new partnerships between several parties could promote career guidance, which should always be an essential part of adult education programmes. The report also pays a lot of attention on developing the quality of career guidance and its systematic and continuous evaluation.

1.3. The assignment and constitution of the working group

In the context of the above described topical objectives of the adult education and labour policies, the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Labour set up on 1 June 2005 a joint working group, as the task of which was specified preparing an action plan for developing information and advisory services of adult education and guidance supporting the planning of working life and education/training careers. The target of the preparative work was that by 2008, the citizens would have access to versatile, customer-oriented information and advisory services covering the whole offer of education and training and that all educational establishments and universities providing adult education also have in place guidance arrangements suitable for adult education.

These development measures in particular promote the identification and recognition of skills, conquering learning difficulties and a wider participation in education and training of groups under-represented in adult education. The development measures also improve the guidance-related skills and proficiency in adult pedagogics of teaching and guidance staff, advisory and guidance activities of the labour administration, and staff skills and networking co-operation between the various offices. What is considered absolutely necessary is systematic co-operation between the educational and labour administrations and utilisation of multi-professional skills.

As expected in the assignment, the preparative work built on experiences of current projects and programmes (such as Aihe, Noste, Opintoluotsi, labour administration projects linked to information, advisory and guidance services and the development of labour market training), the current information, advisory and guidance services of the educational and labour administration and the results of any assessments conducted. In the course of the preparation work, the group perused and built on the reports by the following working groups: Provision of guidance services for young people (MoL 29.2004), Pilot project in pupil and student guidance/MoE (funding from the policy programme for employment), Recognition of previously acquired skills in the educational system (MoE 27.2004) and The objectives and progress of information guidance of free cultural work.

As the chairpersons of the working group acted Director Marita Savola from the Ministry of Education and Labour Market Counsellor Tuija Leminen from the Ministry of Labour. As members of the working group were appointed Educational Counsellor Jorma Ahola, Educational Counsellor Juha Arhinmaki, Educational Counsellor Maija Innola, Development Director Kirsti Kylä-Tuomola, Educational Counsellor Armi Mikkola and Educational Counsellor Tarja Riihimäki from the Ministry of Education, Educational Counsellor Aino Rikkinen and Educational Counsellor Pentti Yrjölä from the National Board of Education, Project Manager Marja Pakaste (the Noste programme) and General

Superintendent Teija Felt and General Superintendent Liisa Winqvist from the Ministry of Labour. As secretaries of the working group acted General Superintendent Tuija Groop from the Ministry of Labour, Educational Counsellor Raija Meriläinen from the Ministry of Education and Educational Counsellor Aino Rikkinen from the National Board of Education.

As specified in its assignment, the working group heard researchers and experts of the field. For this purpose, a large-scale hearing was organised on 12 December 2005. For the results of this hearing, please refer to Chapter 3.1. In addition to the hearing, the working group held a total of ten meetings.

3.2. The working group's views on development needs and measures

The working group crystallised its views by evaluating the current state and future of information, advisory and guidance services for adults and summarised its opinion of the state and development needs of the services as follows:

Information services, advice and guidance in adult education are part of the lifelong learning policy. The importance of these services has not been sufficient understood and developed as part of adult education policy measures in Finland. This aspect is missing entirely in such as the proposals of the parliamentary working group on adult education, based on which the adult education political objectives have been defined in recent years. There are plenty of possibilities of obtaining qualifications and education/training at the adult population's disposal, but determined efforts should be made to develop the offer at all levels so that it will better meet the needs of the working-age adult population in particular. This would take place by increasing the efficiency of the identification, recognition and giving credit for previously acquired skills as well as increasing study arrangements suitable for the life situations of the working-age adult population both in education leading to diplomas and various types of further and continued education and training.

According to statistics and studies, a large share of adult education is hit and miss, based on rather low levels of planning and knowledge, and the shares of people starting in education and using the opportunities of obtaining diplomas, education and training are not evenly distributed between the population groups. By means of versatile and customer-oriented information, advisory and guidance services, the possibilities of the citizens and the working life to find the types of education, training and diplomas that are the best suited for the various skills needs can be improved and inappropriate selections could be reduced. This way, the economical use of education and training resources could be improved, saving time and money. The objectives associated with the employment rate, participation in education and training by the working-age adult population and the effectiveness of education and training highlight the needs for improving the services. Measures should in particular target groups under-represented in adult education. There is a growing need for information on education and training opportunities abroad that are suitable for the adult population and on opportunities meeting the international demand for education and training in Finland.

The range of Internet services providing information on education and training is large, but their usability and presentation of offer suitable for the working-age adult population are inadequate both nationally and at the level of individual educational establishments and universities. A particular problem is that the citizens do not know about these services. In the development of information services offering adult education and career planning for the citizens, the starting point must be improving coverage and compatibility as well as the needs of the adult population and responding to them. In the electronic information services of both the educational and labour administration, the offer that is the most suitable for the educational needs of the adult population must be easily accessible. A central instrument in this are the national collective information services Opintoluotsi and Ammattinetti offered by the educational and labour administrations. It is absolutely necessary that educational establishments and universities arranging adult education also develop their information services to more clearly provide information on

the opportunities of obtaining qualifications, education and training open for the adult population. The development of Internet services to a great extent responds to the needs of independent search for information of the adult population. They also facilitate the use of advisory services for their ultimate objective, or making decisions in the turning points and transitional phases of people's lives. At the same time, detailed and costly adult education manuals that quickly become outdated can be gradually replaced by short guide books only including general information and instructions for the use of the services, which support the use of the information services on the Internet.

Changes in working life and the society increase the need for career planning and development of skills for the duration of the working career. It is necessary to develop advisory and guidance services supporting career planning and the associated further or extended studies or more comprehensive retraining through multiple channels on the Internet, through help lines and in group and individual advice and guidance. It is estimated that along with the better educational standards and improved IT skills, an increasing share of the working-age adult population will be able to make use of electronic services and this way find the basic information for their career and education/training plans. The development of advisory and guidance services will focus on serving and assisting target groups needing individual support. The availability of advisory and guidance services is also important in situations in which large-scale changes in a person's career and life in general are being planned. It is also important to build up co-operation needed in the development of advisory and guidance services between the labour market organisations, key personnel in working life, the labour administration and providers of adult education into functional networks that are easily accessible in the perspective of those needing the services. It is necessary to make use of the experiences and operating methods of central development programmes and projects in the development of the advisory and guidance services, not only nationally but also regionally and locally.

The efforts to extend working careers, ensure the availability of labour and promote a policy of life-long learning require investments in the skills of the working-age adult population and their continuous development. **Support including guidance is not adequately or comprehensively available before making decisions on education or training, nor to support the student to pursue the selected studies or qualifications in educational establishments and universities.** In order to avoid wrong choices or unrealistic plans, larger changes in a person's career or life in particular need to be supported by guidance and advisory services that analyse the skills needs and educational alternatives. Encouraging groups that are under-represented in adult education to obtain education or training needed by them requires parallel services to be implemented in co-operation with the working life (such as SAK's competence pilot programme). This will not succeed without national activation, regional/local co-ordination and support from the working life organisations.

Efficient guidance tailored to the skills needs that would promote adult education is not available to an adequate degree in colleges and universities providing adult education. The numbers of staff specialising in guidance are inadequate, and insufficient quantities of skills and responsibility of this type is included in the training and tasks of the teaching staff. On the other hand, taking the customers' needs in consideration in the development of the guidance services requires the use of many types of expertise in the guidance work. The closer proximity of work and education/training imposes on educational establishments and universities providing adult

education a requirement to develop their working life skills and operating methods. Making the offer that is suitable for adult education more versatile, efficient introduction of individualisation, support and guidance services promoting the completion of studies, practices of identifying and recognising skills acquired in different ways as well as investing in the skills of the teaching and other staff are central measures. An increased number of elements reinforcing lifelong learning thinking, working life skills and acting as a tutor is needed in the basic and continued education and training of the teaching and guidance staff provided by universities and universities of applied science. In addition, we need to discuss the launching of a support and coaching programme for guidance implemented as a once-off joint project of the labour and educational administrations. It is necessary to reinforce the research activities in this field based on the current plans and to make use of them e.g. in the training of the teaching and guidance staff.

The implementation of information and advisory services and guidance targeting the skills of the working-age adult population will require extra resources, but when successful, also bring about savings. Wrong choices and overlapping education and training will be reduced, and the diploma and education resources are in more efficient use as skills are being built up systematically. The citizens and working life will also save time and money. Assessments of the quality and effectiveness of the services need to be organised systematically applying international examples. Making use of the ESF programme is a realistic alternative for launching large-scale and urgent measures. The action plan helps to promote equality and to disseminate good practices developed in the Noste programme as operating models in the entire sector of adult education.

4. PROPOSED MEASURES

4.1. PROVIDING EASY-TO-USE INFORMATION SERVICES SUITABLE FOR ADULTS

In order to increase the systematic quality of adult education and to improve the efficiency of resources use, we need Internet services that provide information on the opportunities of obtaining diplomas, education and training available for the working-age adult population in a clear, comprehensive and customer-oriented manner with national, educational establishment or university level and, whenever possible, also regional co-ordination.

This will require co-ordination and development of the current services provided by the educational and labour administrations so that these would highlight and present the offer suitable for adult education more clearly than before. An essential tool in this will be the national collective information services provided by these administrations (Opintoluotsi and Ammattinetti), which will be jointly developed with particular focus on services for adults. Their development is strongly linked to the educational information search service provided by the National Board of Education (Koulutusnetti). This reform shall also reach the Internet services presenting the educational offer of educational establishments and universities, which can be considered as part of the work to develop the information society.

The electronic services shall include tests for citizens and specialists that facilitate the evaluation of the need of skills and the various educational options and possibly identification of learning difficulties as well as analysis and planning tools that will be useful in the advisory work on the Internet over long term.

The detailed adult education publications of today that are expensive and soon outdated can be gradually be discontinued and instead, condense, illustrative guides can be developed that give guidance in the use of the Internet and other services. In order to meet the challenges of internationalisation and multi-culturalism, the general guides and their complementary tailored guides should be available at least in English and Russian. The language versions of the Internet services and service sections responding to the requirements of internationalisation shall also be developed in co-operation between the different administrations. The awareness and use of these services shall be highlighted in the Websites and other communication of the various administrations, but their use by the citizens also needs to be promoted by high-quality campaigns and bulletins.

Implementation plan:

The development programme of information services will be immediately launched in 2006-2008 in co-operation. Its preparation and implementation will be ensured by the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour, National Board of Education, educational establishments, universities and other central actors. The action plan can be mainly funded by redirecting current financing, making use of ESF programmes and relying on resources available after the Noste programme. According to the working group's estimate, the need for resources will be €5 - 6 million annually.

4.2. IMPROVING THE ACCESSIBILITY OF ADVISORY AND GUIDANCE SERVICES

The working life and the working-age adult population need competent and versatile advisory and guidance services in order to prepare career and education/training plans that meet the needs of skills and changes in their lives in the best possible way.

This will require a development of the services over multiple channels: on the Internet, through help lines, and advice and guidance provided for groups and individuals. There is a growing demand for advisory services through the Internet in particular, and rationalisation benefits can be obtained through it. The need for individual services is great in situations requiring major changes in a person's life or changes of profession, and for groups requiring particular encouragement and support.

Safeguarding the availability and adequacy of services and versatile expertise requires intensive networking and the preparation of a concrete development programme, the planning and implementation of which will be ensured by the labour administration, educational administration, labour market organisations and educational establishments and universities. Co-operation with companies and other key persons in work organisations will be necessary in the organisation of regional and local level advisory and guidance services, as well as in order to intensify co-operation between workplaces and education and training providers. The working group suggests that the experiences received in the Noste programme of forms of experimental activities at the workplace and peer advice (e.g. competence pilots) will be made use of and their scope will be extended. Similarly, the operating models of the Employment Offices, regional co-operation networks developed within the framework of the Noste programme for experimental activities and regional pilot projects shall be made use of and their scope extended.

Implementation plan:

A more concrete plan for the development of advisory and guidance services will be prepared during the year 2006 in co-operation with the labour and educational administrations, working life organisations and other central actors. Based on the preparatory work, the working group proposes that the development measures will be launched in 2007 - 2009. The implementation of the programme will require sizeable extra resources, which the working group suggests will be mainly financed with ESF funds. The working group's estimate is approx. €10 million annually.

4.3. DEVELOPING NEW INSTRUMENTS AND OPERATING METHODS FOR RECOGNISING THE SKILLS OF THE WORKING AGE ADULT POPULATION TO SUPPORT GUIDANCE

The offer and operating methods of educational establishments and universities providing adult education shall be reformed so that the providers and experts of the labour administration can better than today anticipate the skills needs of the working life and to act as partners for companies and work organisations in the analysis of skills needs and organisation of education and training arrangements.

Firstly, this requires making the range of diplomas, education preparing for diplomas and the offer of further and continued education and training more versatile and developing these for the needs of working life. Secondly, the use of teaching and guidance forms and methods suitable for the life situations of the adult population need to become established. Thirdly, individualisation in starting the studies, taking diplomas and the necessary education and training must be further improved so that the schemes for the identification, recognition and giving credit for prior skills are used extensively. Fourthly, we must ensure that the working life knowledge and adult pedagogical (andragogic) skills of the teaching, guidance and other staff in adult education are up-to-date.

In order to succeed in this, we also need general measures to develop the adult education policy (diploma systems, offer, recognition of learning, development policies of individualisation and guidance activities, financing grounds, performance guidance and organisation licenses), active participation by the labour market organisations, labour administration and the working life and a reform in the focuses and operating methods of colleges and universities. In the preparation of further measures, practices developed in the AiHe project will be utilised and their scope will be enlarged.

Implementation plan:

In order to support the implementation of the development plan, a support and coaching programme for guidance jointly implemented by the labour and educational administrations need to be launched in the years 2008 - 2010. The preparative work for this project would take place in 2006-2007. Its preparation and implementation will be ensured by the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour, National Board of Education, educational establishments, universities and other central actors. The implementation of the support and coaching programme will require large-scale additional resources on a once-off basis. The same objectives, such as the development of skills and services systems promoting the working of the labour market, are emphasised in the strategic focal points of the ESF programming period 2007-2013. The working group proposes that the support and coaching programme will mainly be financed from ESF funding. According to the working group's estimate, the need for resources will be a minimum of €10 annually.

4.4. REINFORCING THE STRATEGIC POSITION OF GUIDANCE AND RESEARCH AND PROVIDING MORE TRAINING FOR THOSE GIVING GUIDANCE

The concept of guidance should be included as a central part in the planning of the whole education and training offer and implementation, applying the principle of lifelong learning. Reinforcing the position of guidance will also require reformations in legislation concerning education, training and universities. This type of development measures are also highlighted in central European Union documents.

In the basic and continued training of the teaching staff in universities and universities of applied science, this area needs to be highlighted in the next few years, and a division of labour that is appropriate nationally and regionally need to be agreed between the universities. Particular attention in the basic and continued education and training should be attached to competence related to working life co-operation, identification and recognition practices for skills acquired in various ways, Internet teaching and adult pedagogics. The skills in multi-culturalism and the teaching and guidance of those with an inadequate basic training and those suffering from learning difficulties will also need to be reinforced. The education and training programme mentioned in the implementation plan is part of the same whole as the support and coaching programme cited in Chapter 4.3.

Research in the field and international co-operation within the European Union in particular has developed in a positive direction e.g. in the Universities of Jyväskylä and Joensuu. On this basis, it would be appropriate to develop a strong co-operation network of Finnish and foreign universities and research institutes for the needs of the educational and labour administrations, which will also be able to activate researcher training in the field and continued education for the teaching and guidance staff. Research will also be needed for the purposes of quality assurance of the overall arrangements of guidance in particular and for assessments of cost-effectiveness. Enhancing research also concerns information and advisory services.

Implementation plan:

The development programme of education/training and research will take place in 2008 - 2012. The preparatory work preceding the implementation of the programme will be done in co-operation between the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour and the universities and colleges. As part of the preparatory work in this phase, concrete proposals will be drafted concerning the needs to reform legislation, co-operation between universities and universities of applied science and the division of labour in the implementation of the educational programme as well as the needs to develop research and resourcing. As far as colleges are concerned, the aims of education and resources will be agreed in the performance agreements. Resources for enhancing research activities can be allocated from the research funds of the Academy of Finland, EU research programmes and the sectorial research funding of the responsible Ministries. According to the working group's estimate, the need for resources will be €10 -15 million annually.

4.5. THE DEVELOPMENT POLICY WILL REQUIRE CO-OPERATION AND NETWORKING

Succeeding in the implementation of the development policy described above will require determined co-operation of the various actors at the national, regional and local level. Co-operation between the educational and labour administrations, working life organisations and other central actors to activate and co-ordinate the further preparation of proposals of the Action Programme concerning information services, advice and guidance in adult education will need to be separately organised.

Implementation plan:

For this purpose, it is suggested that a co-operative working group for the Action Plan will be set up for the three-year period 2006 - 2008. After this, the need to continue the activities of a working group of this type for the latter part of implementing the proposals, or the period 2009 - 2012, can be reviewed. In order to promote regional co-operation and networking, operating models suitable for the various regions will be organised.