

## 6<sup>TH</sup> EUROPEAN CONFERENCE IN E-GUIDANCE: *WIDENING ACCESS TO LIFELONG GUIDANCE*

### ABSTRACT

#### TITLE OF THE SPEECH

***Initiatives in developing the guidance practitioners' competencies: Quality safeguarding in guidance counsellors' training: The European Career Guidance Certificate (ECGC) and The ICT Skills of Guidance Counsellors – a research, development and training framework***

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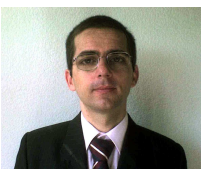
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Petre Botnariuc is a researcher at the Institute for Education Sciences from Bucharest at the department for Lifelong Learning and Counselling and an information counsellor for the National Euroguidance Centre. He works on research and educational projects at both national and European level in the area of career counselling, in-service training and tools development for the guidance practitioners. He has university degrees in Education Sciences at the University of Bucharest, Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences with specialisation on the designing, managing and evaluating the distance education programs as well as on learning in virtual communities.

#### ABSTRACT

##### **The European Career Guidance Certificate - ECGC**

In the last ten years several attempts have been made to improve and monitor the quality of career guidance counselling throughout Europe. The project MEVOC (2003-2005) was started out of this ambition for high-quality counselling. By



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developing a quality manual for educational and vocational counselling the project helped to enhance quality standards in vocational counselling which are practice-oriented but nevertheless based on extensive expert consultation in all nine partner countries. The main project results are competence standards for career guidance counsellors, the so-called "MEVOC-standards". Four superior competence categories: "Education and Career", "Counselling Practice", "Personality" and "ICT Skills" are subdivided in 35 competence standards. Since the project end in 2005 the MEVOC-standards and competence categories have gained increasing relevance in some partner countries, e.g. in Austria, Germany and Italy.

The ongoing interest in the MEVOC-standards lead to the idea of a follow-up project: The project ECGC (short for: **E**uropean **C**areer **G**uidance **C**ertificate) was developed. To be exact it has to be said that the project ECGC builds on the results of two previous projects, not only MEVOC, but also ICT-SKILLS FOR GUIDANCE COUNSELLORS.

It is a characteristic of the ECGC project partnership that the main actors of the two antecessor projects (ibw and Melius) are leading partners in ECGC. Additionally new project partners are involved as the MEVOC and the ECGC products will be transferred to three new countries (Greece, Norway and Lithuania).

Main reasons for the project were the following:

1. Only in some of the project partner countries training offers for guidance counsellors exist already. However, most existing offers are not completed with an officially acknowledged certificate; none of the existing certificates are standardised or comparable with other national or international certificates with regards to contents, aims, or quality.
2. All existing certificates require visiting a course with compulsory attendance. A lot of career guidance counsellors do not have the chance to visit such a training course due to timing/financial reasons, geographical disadvantage etc.)
3. No certification system exists for career guidance counsellors who do not want to visit a course as they have years of job experience and the required knowledge/skills/competences, but who would want to get a certificate (i.e. get their non-formally trained knowledge/skills/competences officially certified).

ECGC started in 2007 and was born by the idea of transferring the MEVOC-standards into a certification system for career guidance counsellors. This European certificate will enable career guidance counsellors to furnish proof of compliance with qualitative standards.

The ECGC certification procedure has a three-tier structure and consists of: online test, assessment centre and written work. Against the background of their already existing knowledge, skills and competence it is up to exam candidates in what way they want to prepare for the exam. The ECGC qualification level corresponds to the level of 'Academic Expert' and shall be certified with 60 ECTS. The ECGC certification system will be compatible with existing vocational and continuing training provision. Course attendance is not compulsory to obtain the ECGC.

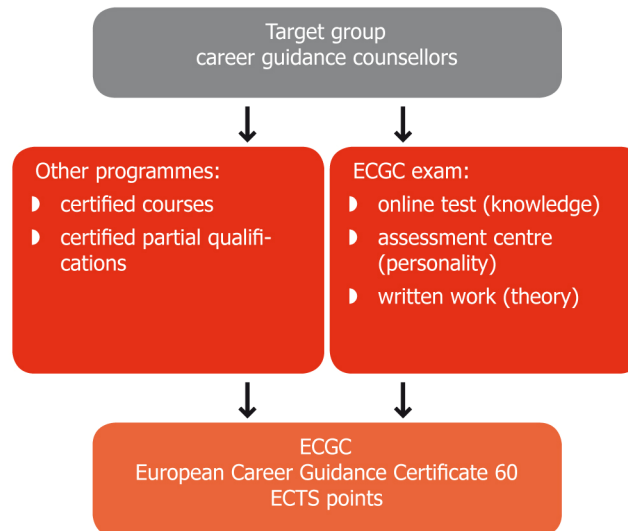
The ECGC is a provision for counsellors who

- have at least 500 hours of counselling experience in groups or one-on-one sessions;
- who – in addition to their practical experience – have completed specific continuing training courses for career guidance counselling;
- who have completed training programmes that are either not officially recognised or related to the subject matter (e.g. coaching programmes) and want to be certified as career guidance counsellors.

Now that the project end is in sight it can be said that with the ECGC a standardised and internationally transferrable procedure has been developed to certify both formally and informally acquired knowledge, skills and competence of career guidance counsellors.

As to the project impact it may be expected that ECGC is a step towards reaching the aim of the European Lifelong-Learning strategy and the professionalisation of the career guidance sector on a national and international basis.

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### The ICT Skills of Guidance Counsellors – a research, development and training framework

Starting from 1985, the European Commission has supported a series of international conferences on the use and role of technology in guidance. In this context it became apparent that in order to design the initial and continuous training of guidance practitioners it is of utmost importance to identify the full spectrum of the needed ICT competences.

Thus the idea of the first ICTSkills project was born. The project was run in a partnership with interdisciplinary expertise coming from five countries (Italy, United Kingdom, Romania, Spain, Germany). It included: the development of an online database with information about the national contexts, relevant research and tools; a survey on the practitioners' view on the role of ICT in their work and their training needs; an inquiry with national experts; the development of a comprehensive map with the guidance related ICT competences, as well as the design of a training curricula based on the three dimensional map. It emphasised that the training in the use of ICT in guidance on the one hand should provide practitioners with criteria and models allowing them to both evaluate existing resources and to develop new ones, and on the other it should also develop in them a new attitude to including current ICT tools in their practice and remain open to new ways of delivering guidance. The project had a great impact both nationally and internationally and it was included in the 50 best practices by the EC. These along with the feedback from the practitioners involved (need to identify and validate their ICT competences acquired in different contexts through the use of an e-practitioner profile; need to acquire new ICT competences; and to assess and record their ICT competences) coalesced the need for a follow-up project aiming to design appropriate training and tools based on the developed map of competences.

The ICTSkills 2 project consequently developed:

- an open source platform including the developed tools and training pathway;
- a standard e-guidance practitioner profile, designed as a transferable and easily adaptable model for other national and sectoral contexts consisting of two units, six elements and 28 sub-elements. This was adapted to facilitate designing a training path and assessment, to minimise repetition, to introduce also tasks related to managing the use of ICT in guidance, to accommodating new media and software (i.e. Web 2.0 technologies) and by distinguishing four interrelated areas (Lim & Tay, 2003) where the use of ICT can enhance the client's career learning and development;
- an online self-assessment skills tool;
- an e-portfolio addressed to the e-guidance practitioners aiming to clarify their current level of competence, their learning, its motivation and context and to store all the relevant information about one's own professional development;
- a blended learning training path based on the map consisting of 30 training modules, where each module equates to 25 hours work and is rated at 30 ECTS credits (equivalent to half-a-year or 750 hours of study);



EUROPEAN LIFELONG  
GUIDANCE POLICY  
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Education and Culture DG  
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- national pilots in Italy, United Kingdom, Spain and Romania.

As the project comes to an end the partnership already takes steps to a further development of and validation of the training framework based on the e-practitioner profile and to extend the mainstreaming of results.

### FOR ADDITIONAL INFO

[www.ibw.at](http://www.ibw.at)

[www.ecgc.at](http://www.ecgc.at)

[www.emevoc.at](http://www.emevoc.at)

[www.mevoc.net](http://www.mevoc.net)

[www.euroguidance.ise.ro](http://www.euroguidance.ise.ro)

[www.ictskills2.org](http://www.ictskills2.org)