

SOCIAL EUROPE

Supplement on VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE IN THE
EUROPEAN COMMUNITY



COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR EMPLOYMENT,
SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND EDUCATION

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VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE IN THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

1. In recent years the demands upon those working in the field of vocational guidance have increased enormously. Professional staff trained to help people find jobs have had to take on the new and often difficult role of counselling those facing continuing unemployment. Rapid technological and economic change means that millions of people now seek help in maintaining themselves in their present occupation or in developing a new career. Finally, in response to rising unemployment and structural change there has been a major growth in the range of vocational courses available, in the public education/training system, in the voluntary sector, or from commercial agencies.
2. The Commission has undertaken periodic reviews of developments in vocational guidance over the last 20 years. The report which follows looks at recent trends and highlights some of the key policy issues which are emerging. It draws upon a study undertaken for the Commission by Prof. Jean Drévilion of the University of Caen. His study report is obtainable from the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP), Bundesallee 22, D-1000 Berlin 15.
3. The Commission is following up this review with a more detailed study of the ways in which educational and vocational guidance services in the Community are organised. This study will in particular examine the impact of the differing structures upon the nature of the services offered to young people, and ways in which the "neutrality" of guidance can be safeguarded - for example, through the recruitment and training of guidance staff. The study is being co-ordinated by Mr Tony WATTS of the National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling (UK).

VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE IN THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

Some recent developments

INTRODUCTION

1. In its Recommendation to the Member States of 18 July 1966 (1), the Commission announced its intention to publish an annual report on "the function of vocational guidance, its progress and experience gained". These practice of producing annual reports has been discontinued for some time. Given the profound economic and social changes of recent years and corresponding policy developments in the field of vocational guidance, this new summary report of the current situation in the European Community has been produced with a view to contributing to the discussions in Member States regarding the development of vocational training policies, particularly in the light of the commitments entered into by the Council in 1983 in its Resolution on Vocational Training Policies for the 1980s (2).

2. In this introductory section the background to the report is discussed, and the importance of the issues is emphasized. The next section summaries some of the key developments in the Member States in recent years. The next three sections of the report refer more specifically to policy trends in respect of :
 - young people making the transition to adult and working life ;
 - adults, whether employed or unemployed ;
 - older people making the transition to retirement.

(1) Commission Recommendation to the Member States of 18 July 1966 concerning the development of vocational guidance, OJ n°. 154 of 24 August 1966 - text at Annex A

(2) Council Resolution of 11 July 1983, OJ n°. C 193/2 of 20 July 1983.

The report then looks briefly at a number of management issues, including the organisation, staffing and financing of vocational guidance services. The final section notes some of the issues affecting the development of guidance services.

3. This report draws on the study produced for the Commission by Professor Jean Drevillon of the University of Caen which is obtainable from the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training.

Background to the Report

4. In its Recommendation of 18 July 1966, the Commission sought to lay the foundations of a Community strategy on vocational guidance. A major concern of this Recommendation was the need to improve the vocational guidance offered to the large numbers of people who were at that time moving from the rural areas of the Community to seek employment in the rapidly-developing urban and industrial areas.
5. The main elements of the approach adopted in the Recommendation remain valid. The four key recommendations are that :
 - (a) Member States should expand their vocational guidance services for both young people and adults, and improve their quality. A free service should be available to all who need or wish to change their job, or undertake further training, and for all those who face particular difficulties on the labour market - such as those living in rural areas,

migrant workers and their families, and the disabled.

The scale and nature of need, and the success of the vocational guidance services in meeting it, should be regularly reviewed by the Member States.

- (b) The organisation and staffing of vocational guidance services must be adapted to the needs of the population, especially at local level. This will necessitate, amongst other things, flexible arrangements to ensure that vocational guidance services are accessible to all, including those living in rural areas, and people who are unable to visit the services during normal office hours.
- (c) Close co-operation is essential between vocational guidance services and individuals and agencies working in related fields, notably, education and training institutions and services, and the placement services.
- (d) Systematic arrangements should be made for the exchange of information and experience between the Member States.

6. A number of more recent Community texts have confirmed a continuing interest in vocational guidance. They include the Council Resolutions of 13 December 1976⁽¹⁾ and 12 July 1982⁽²⁾ on the transition of young people

(1) OJ no. C308 of 30.12.1976

(2) OJ no. C193 of 28. 7.1982.

from school to adult and working life, and the Council Resolution of 11 July 1983⁽¹⁾ on vocational training policies. International organisations, such as the OECD⁽²⁾, Council of Europe⁽³⁾ and ILO⁽⁴⁾ have also given considerable emphasis to vocational guidance.

Why vocational guidance is important

7. In recent years the social and economic situation of the Community has changed dramatically. In particular:

- (a) there is a quite new recognition of the discrimination, both direct and indirect, suffered by girls and women, and the social conditioning which makes it different for them to enter and progress in non-traditional occupations ;
- (b) prolonged mass unemployment, especially amongst young people, means that the vocational guidance services now have millions of potential clients for whom there is no immediate prospect of paid employment ;

(1) OJ n°. C 193/2 of 20.7.1983

(2) See, for example, the November 1982 statement by the OECD Education Committee on "The Role of Education and Training in Relation to the Employment and Unemployment of Young People".

(3) Final communique, Second Conference on Employment of European Ministers of Labour, 5 May 1983.

(4) ILO Convention (No.142) and Recommendation (No.150) on Vocational Guidance and Vocational Training in the Development of Human Resources, 1975.

- (c) in responding to the unemployment crisis, Member States have established a variety of new education, training and employment programmes which have often added to the uncertainty and confusion experienced by the unemployed and those who work with them;
- (d) rapid technological and commercial changes have destroyed the traditional concept of a "career" for many - perhaps most - of the Community's workforce. The consequences include the following:
- fewer young people are now entering a career from which they will ultimately retire. Instead they are entering an occupation, which they are almost certain to change during the course of their working life;
 - the disadvantages of those who are unemployed or who lack vocational qualifications have been multiplied;
 - the staff of vocational guidance services themselves risk becoming less effective unless they make special efforts to update their skills and knowledge;
- (e) such changes have often had particularly adverse effects upon certain disadvantaged groups, such as the disabled.

8. Thus vocational guidance is important :-

- (a) to individuals, in helping them to benefit from

social and economic change;

- (b) to employers and to the Community's economic performance as a whole, in helping to maximise the productivity of the Community's human resources;
- (c) to all involved in providing education and vocational training programmes, because such provision can only be effective if people have access to the programmes which best meet their needs.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN THE MEMBER STATES

The process of vocational guidance

9. A basic distinction can be drawn between the process of vocational guidance itself, and the wider social and cultural context within which it takes place. As regards the process, there have in recent years been major developments in terms of the length, breadth, complexity and scale of effort in this field.

10. Firstly it is now increasingly accepted that vocational guidance must be seen as a continuing process, starting early within the schools, and remaining accessible throughout working life. Intervention cannot wait until young people are about to leave school. Key educational and vocational choices often need to be made around the age of 12, and the roots of social and economic disadvantage lie even deeper - in early childhood, or earlier. Equally, the concept of a once-for-all stage of vocational decision leading to a lifelong career is increasingly unrealistic. In future years, the majority of the working population may well have to change their occupation at least once during working life.

11. Secondly, it is increasingly recognised that vocational guidance needs to be seen within the context of advice and information about educational opportunities, social benefits, sports and leisure facilities etc. There are a number of aspects to this, including the following :-
 - (a) prolonged mass unemployment means that millions of the Community's citizens are spending considerable periods of time unemployed and economically inactive, or on education, training or temporary employment programmes. So they need information and advice about the increasingly wide range of non-salaried activities, about how to survive on a reduced income, and so on;

 - (b) the disadvantaged have suffered disproportionately because of the employment crisis. People who have difficulties on the labour market often have other problems, though the chain of causation is often

obscure. For example, young women continue to have difficulty in entering non-traditional occupations; women cannot easily return to employment after raising a family; and in many regions the job prospects for migrants, and for the disabled, are bleak. In these and other specific cases, vocational guidance needs to be linked with the provision of various other specialist services - language training, psychological and health services, the provision of good cheap accommodation, and so on;

- (c) the scale and pace of social, economic and technological change means that the traditional concept of "work" is increasingly being questioned. Already the Community's citizens can expect to spend less than 10 % of their life at work. Patterns of work are tending to become increasingly flexible. Within the workplace, decision-making is becoming more and more autonomous. For all these reasons, and quite apart from the immediate problem of mass unemployment, people are seeking advice and information related to their personal development - through work and in other ways - rather than strictly vocational advice and information.

12. Thirdly, the process of vocational guidance is becoming more complex. In part, this reflects the trends discussed above. But it also reflects fundamental shifts both in individuals' perceptions of themselves, and in the structure and operation of the labour market. Reliance on traditional academic examinations as an index of an individual's potential at work is declining. There are also major changes in the organisation of work and in the skills and aptitudes required by workers,

demands which can vary enormously between enterprises and which can be concealed behind the persistence of conventional systems of occupational classification. Vocational guidance can no longer be - if indeed it ever was - a simple process of matching an individual's formal qualifications with the qualifications required for entry to a specific job or occupation. A much more complex process is now necessary, in which the focal point is the active involvement of the client, and in which a range of professionals need to work together as a team and also make use of informal sources of advice and information.

13. Finally, it is clear that in most Member States the scale of effort devoted to vocational guidance is massive and increasing. It is to vocational guidance is massive and increasing. It is impossible to measure accurately, but some indication is given by the number of interviews given by the public vocational guidance services. In the Federal Republic of Germany the number rose from 1¼ million in 1975 to 1.7 million in 1980, and is still rising. In Denmark the number of interviews within the school system rose from 48,000 in 1975 to 60,000 in 1982, while in recent years there has also been increased activity outside the school system - 56,000 interviews in 1980, 60,000 in 1982/83.

14. In some Member States there is evidence of a change of balance within this overall increase in activity. The most rapid area of growth has been in vocational guidance directly linked with job placement, particularly involving young people who have just left school. There is increasing demand for information and advice from young people with good

qualifications, who would previously have expected to find jobs without difficulties; for example, specialist services for university graduates are now widespread and expanding. There is evidence, too, that vocational guidance activity is becoming more intense - the first session is now often followed by a series of follow-up sessions, perhaps over a period of several years.

15. There have also been several initiatives to broaden the whole approach to guidance at the same time as making it more intensive. A most obvious example is that in the French 'Missions Locales à l'Insertion Sociale et Professionnelle des Jeunes en Difficulté' which have been developed following a report of Prof. Bertrand Schwarz to the French Government to provide locally, in areas of the highest unemployment, a central focus of information and guidance. The most significant features of the 'Missions Locales', are :
 - (a) their role in matching the advice they give to young people (aged from 15-25) on vocational matters with advice and help on educational, social and personal problems ;
 - (b) their dual function which involves them both in advising young people on the basis of existing opportunities, and also working with providers of education and training to ensure that they design opportunities which correspond to young people's needs ;
 - (c) their constitution, with representation on their boards of local social partners, local and national

government and voluntary agencies, and their joint financing from both national and local sources.

The context of vocational guidance

16. The overall social and cultural context within which vocational guidance takes place has also been changing rapidly in recent years. Four particularly significant trends are :-

(a) the self-help phenomenon;

(b) the information explosion;

(c) the new emphasis on local community;

(d) a new interest in the media and the locations from which information and guidance are offered.

17. There is clearly a major role for self-help in both vocational and social guidance. At a group level, the articulation and organisation of services by the unemployed for themselves, is something which is growing in many parts of the Community. The creation, for example in the Federal Republic and the United Kingdom, of Independent Living Centres run by and for disabled people is a particular example of this development. At a personal level, the growing convenience and accessibility of information stored in computers is making it progressively easier for individuals to pursue complex lines of inquiry with little or no recourse to the assistance of an adviser or counsellor.

18. Closely connected with the growth of opportunities for

self-help is the explosion of availability of information, and of the means by which it can be organised and made accessible. The true potential of the new information technologies for providing people with local, national and international information has scarcely yet been realised, and its benefits will come latest to many of those most affected by unemployment and economic change, unless steps are taken to ensure that there is good local access to high technology sources of information.

19. In a number of Member States there has been a growing interest in new local forms of assembling vocational information, and of communicating it. As well as the French 'Missions Locales', other examples include the new regional education and industry liaison committees (COA's) in the Netherlands, and the ways in which schools in Denmark fulfil their legal obligation to maintain contact and ensure guidance for every young person for two years after the end of compulsory schooling.

20. It is increasingly widely accepted that the means by which information and guidance are provided are often likely to be crucial to whether or not they are accepted. The youth information initiative pioneered in the 'Young Scot' publication and which has since inspired similar initiatives for example in Denmark and Italy, has shown not only the importance of design and presentation of information, but also the need to involve young people much more closely in the whole process of preparing and disseminating information.

YOUNG PEOPLE IN TRANSITION TO ADULT AND WORKING LIFE

Vocational guidance in the education system

21. It is part of the responsibility of education systems to guarantee that young people receive the information they need to make decisions about their lives, including the training they will seek and the work they will do, as well as about their housing, their money, their rights and responsibilities, their family and personal lives and the opportunities for leisure and activity that exist in their local communities. The first series of the Community's pilot projects on "Transition from school to adult and working life" has highlighted the importance of guidance and counselling in compulsory schooling.
22. Already at the early stage of the transition period schools can provide a special framework and climate for guidance and counselling activities, which help young people to get a grip on the problems connected with making decisions on their future lives and careers. Schools have a particularly significant role to play, in addition to the work of external services outside them, because :
- for many young people, schools constitute a more familiar and more secure environment for guidance activities than external services which often appear remote and threatening to them ;
 - teachers normally have a far better knowledge of the personality of their students than external services. It is therefore easier for them to understand what information the individual young people need, and to provide it when they need it ;
 - the continuous learning process at school provides opportunities for personal development, which cannot be achieved by single interventions from external agencies. Thus schools are in a better position to help young people to develop the motivation and ability to seek and find information, to select what is relevant for them, and to make best use of available information.

By developing gradually young people's understanding of the complexity of decisions involved and of their ability to seize opportunities for choice (or to cope with lack of them) schools can also encourage the individual to make active use of any services and help available on leaving school and throughout adult life.

23. In order to achieve this, guidance and counselling activities must be integrated into the school curriculum and should be woven into the learning and social activities provided in the schools. Schools should try to provide a wide range of opportunities for their students to find out information, and to acquire the skills and understanding of how to use that information in a practical way. This can be done in various ways : co-operation with careers information offices, use of local people and computer-based sources of careers information, the establishment of work experience schemes, "taster" courses, observation visits and preparation for adult life/transition courses. Some Member States are moving towards the conception of lower secondary education as a preparatory, orientation phase of education - in other words, education up to 16 would be seen as a whole phase of guidance.

24. No less important, all teachers should be able to understand the vocational relevance of their own subject and the relationship between the part of the curriculum with which they are directly concerned and the guidance process. A recognisable trend in schools in a number of Member States is the increased involvement of all or most members of staff, informally or formally, with some aspect of the vocational guidance process, alongside the appointment of specialist vocational guidance tutors/careers teachers offering expert counselling to individual students, acting as co-ordinators of guidance activities across the curriculum and with agencies concerned with guidance based outside the school.

25. The degree to which a school's vocational guidance system is co-ordinated with guidance and information facilities that exist in the Community will determine its effectiveness. Co-ordination with and between outside agencies is necessary for two reasons :

- to bring together information about all opportunities in the locality for education, training and employment and other sectors in order to reduce the negative effects of unhealthy fragmentation of services ;
- and to make more effective use of available resources and to avoid the risk of duplication.

Among the important experiments being carried out within education systems are those which are being closely monitored as part of the Community's second network of transition from school to work projects. The focus of this network is not merely on the innovations being carried out within the participating schools, but also on the relationships which these schools are able to make with local social partners, and with other important providers of services and facilities. It will be a high priority for those responsible for the support and animation of this network, and for the development of its reports and technical products, to provide information and ideas relevant both to schools themselves, and also to those concerned with the formation of Member State and Community policies.

26. Many young people are and will remain unable to acquire all the information they require while they are at school. In many instances they may not appreciate what information they need until they have left school and embarked on adult life. This presents Member States with the problems of providing information, guidance and counselling services away from schools, and also of finding ways of ensuring that they are fully accessible to the young people for whom they are designed. There is evidence that current provision of this kind does not always reach those who need it most, even though it may be thoroughly and intensively used by those whose disadvantages are fewer, and who are therefore better able to find things for themselves. The long-term young

unemployed, whose numbers are growing throughout the Community, and those with educational and social disadvantages present understandable problems to those who try to help them. But these problems must be overcome. The penalties of failure will be serious human waste, disaffection and also economic and financial waste.

27. On the other hand, it has been noted that in Member States where advisory services for young people have been least developed in the past, new services have been directed more effectively at those who are most disadvantaged, and who need them most. This indicates a greater freedom of action enjoyed by those who are able to design new services without being constrained by traditions and practices which have only limited relevance to current economic and social conditions. It must also be seen alongside the fact that conventional advice offered about the conventional labour market has diminished relevance to young people whose prospects of work are limited or non-existent.

Communicating with young people

28. Any young person's first requirement is for access to information about educational opportunities, training, jobs and other social and personal issues. Member States face a major challenge in trying to devise means of providing this information in the most acceptable and efficient form. Many young people will not acquire information from the mass media either because they are suspicious of its quality or its bias, or simply because they do not read newspapers or watch a great deal of television, and therefore simply do not encounter it.

29. It is evident that a point has already been reached where the complexity of information available to young people demands that urgent consideration is given to its transmission through the new information technologies. Many schools still have a long way to go before they can offer sufficient suitable hardware to enable effective and general information systems to be provided by this means, but resources are growing by the day. There is even further to go before it can be envisaged that sufficient hardware will be available outside schools or conventional training institutions.
30. A consideration of major importance is that proper use of high technology means of providing information will also enable an enormous growth of self-help in the acquisition and use of information. It will be possible for individuals to follow a specific line of enquiry along purely personal paths, and at the same time to be presented with more related options than could be available through an intermediary or counsellor. And valuable resources of professional time will be freed from routine information tasks, and thus more able to offer personal advice to those unable to help themselves.

The need for continuity

31. Many young people do not simply become unemployed and remain unemployed. They encounter periods of unemployment interspersed with jobs, and perhaps with education and training. They are often ill-informed not just about the options they might pursue, but also about what is actually happening to them. There are examples in some Member States of young people being provided with consistent advice and information throughout their transition from school to work and adult life. In some cases these adults have been called 'tutors for transition'. It is not clear whether this concept will easily transplant from one Member State to another, but the idea merits further attention. Again, it would seem essential that such people receive some form of training.

32. This proposition inevitably brings into question the roles of family and friends. The very speed and extent of economic and social change have removed (perhaps temporarily) the capacity of many parents to support and advise their children in the ways in which their parents were perhaps able to support them. Some argue that the influence of parents is continuing to diminish, and that young people increasingly seek support from their peer groups. Wherever informal support comes from, it is of great importance and deserves attention for the highly cost-effective support it can provide to formal services.

THE DEMANDS OF A CHANGING LABOUR MARKET

The basic approach

33. Adults have been as confused and disorientated by the effects of recession as have young people. In many cases it can be argued that they stand at least as much in need of information, guidance and counselling as do young people. After all, for many of them, the whole basis of their assumptions about work, about the kind of lives they would lead, and about what they could provide for their children has been destroyed by unpredicted and apparently permanent unemployment. They are in need of help in making decisions about their careers, about how to change their lives in order to accommodate altered financial circumstances, and about how best they can prepare their children for adult life.

34. In the face of these needs there are generally fewer

resources available to adults than to young people. The services which exist are generally concerned with placement into jobs, and those who provide them are unqualified to offer broader career advice, or to relate career advice to financial, social and personal problems.

35. Virtually everyone now of working age, and young people entering the labour market, must accept that the patterns of working life have been changed irrevocably from those which were regarded as conventional no longer than five or ten years ago. Career changes as well as job changes will have to be regarded as normal, requiring re-education and retraining. The status accorded to part-time work, voluntary work and formal and informal education are being re-assessed. In short, the whole pattern of social and cultural attitudes to the place of work in people's lives is being altered, and while the unemployed are facing the most difficult adjustments because they are being forced abruptly on them, the majority will soon find themselves trying to come to terms with the same realities.

Communicating with adults

36. In a significant number of cases the difficulties of communicating information to adults will be complicated by their very poor standards of literacy and numeracy. It has already been widely observed that opportunities for offering literacy tuition to adults are few, and must be taken, because they may not recur. One of the

most frequently-observed opportunities for dealing with literacy problems is at any kind of career change or crisis when the inability to assimilate fresh information becomes a damaging handicap. It is of the greatest importance that educational institutions make themselves ready and competent to provide information and education for change coupled with literacy and numeracy tuition. On the other hand, there are millions of adults at work who might benefit from vocational guidance but in practice do not have the time or energy to pursue it seriously.

37. Otherwise, the difficulties of communicating information to adults are likely to be different from those of communicating with young people. In many ways they will be less, if only because adults are far more likely to accept information from the mass-media. On the other hand they may be less adaptable to the technique of turning the new information technologies to their own use.

The specific needs of women

38. The success of policies directed at ensuring equality of opportunity for women depend partly on ensuring that employers and others act fairly, and even discriminate positively on occasions, and partly on the ability of those who have formerly suffered from discrimination to take advantage of new opportunities. The ability of many women to do this will depend to some extent on the quality of the information on the basis of which they are planning and developing their careers, partly on the amount of guidance they can be given in the use of relevant information, and in some cases on the professionalism of whatever counselling services exist. (1)

(1) see the Council Resolution of 11 July 1983 on vocational training policies in the European Community in the 1980s, chapter IV (2) (b) (ii).

39. Where there has already been experience of special initiatives for training and employing women it is likely that there will be well-formulated approaches to guidance and counselling. These may not always be backed up by the best means of providing information, but they should be studied to assess their effectiveness, and also to see what can be learned from them about the best means of providing for other adults.

40. There may be a continuing case for separate advisory services specifically for women, but it will need to be argued in the light of two possible approaches to the issue. The first is to argue that the greatest benefits will come to women from securing their due portion of services that are generally available. It is perfectly possible to argue that, so long as they can acquire a sufficient service by this means, they will be more likely to move on to making effective bridges into the labour market, having the same information at their disposal as similarly able and qualified men. The second is to concede the general validity of that approach but to argue that now, and for some time to come, many women in many parts of the Community will only benefit to the full from services which are specially designed and provided with their needs in view.

41. All training projects designed for women should include provision for them to understand and review their career options and plans, and to broaden their understanding of their own potential in the labour market. This may not

be possible without some additional training for teachers and trainers.

The long-term unemployed

42. A growing priority is being attached throughout the Community to the needs of the long-term unemployed, particularly as the numbers of adults who are unemployed for more than 12 months increases both in overall terms, and also as a proportion to the unemployed as a whole. There must be significant anxiety that the general lack of specific vocational guidance amongst adults actually condemns some people to this group who might otherwise find employment much earlier, and also that insufficient is being done to design new services to cope with their special needs. The Commission has recently launched a study into the role of vocational training in assisting the long-term unemployed back into economic activity, and the preliminary work suggests that vocational guidance can have a crucial role in the process.

Migrants

43. The considerable effects on migrants and their children of worsening unemployment within the Community dictate that they be given particular attention with regard to vocational guidance, both to enable them to extend the range of the choices available to them, and also to encourage them towards enhancement of their skills. The cultural context within which such guidance is offered is central to its usefulness and acceptability.

The disabled

44. As far as possibilities both in open and in sheltered employment are concerned - and the choice between these - disabled people (of whatever age) need either special guidance services, or full access to general services whose staff are trained to advise on their special problems. There are also a growing number of examples of initiatives throughout the Community providing guidance within the context of broader schemes to train and employ disabled people, or through Independent Living Centres, but these are in no way comprehensive, and many disabled people are inadequately served.

TRANSITION TO RETIREMENT - THE NEEDS OF OLDER WORKERS

The basic approach

45. The problems which older workers face in their transition to retirement, and the need for these to be faced during the last ten to fifteen years of their working lives, were set out and discussed in a conference organised on behalf of the Commission by CEDEFOP from 14-17 October 1980 (1). It highlighted the following issues :

- (a) Access of older workers to appropriate educational and training opportunities is likely to be decisive in determining the quality of retirement they enjoy. There are difficulties in sustaining a case for high expenditure on vocational training for older workers since the available time for the investment to be recouped either by the State or by the enterprise is relatively short. But the argument for mixtures of

(1) 'Older Workers and the Transition to Retirement' - M.J. Faulkner, CEDEFOP Conference paper, 1980.

practical training and education is strong. A properly prepared transition to retirement, in many cases involving a staged reduction of hours of work associated with gradual changes of role, undoubtedly brings with it benefits of improved health, and can probably also be argued on grounds of better efficiency.

- (b) Without good guidance and counselling for retirement few older workers are likely to give adequate consideration to the changes they can make in their lives as they grow older. They are most unlikely to be in a position to assess the use they may make of educational services, their potential for part-time work, or the voluntary activities they may undertake. It has already been demonstrated in several Member States that the potential role of retired people in voluntary and community work is considerable, and one example from the United Kingdom, a charitable agency called the Retired Executives Action Clearing House (REACH), has placed more than 1,000 retired executives in unpaid voluntary jobs between 1979 and 1984.
- (c) It would seem that the counselling which exists for older workers is largely to be found in the context of pre-retirement arrangements made by enterprises, and in services provided by non-statutory organisations specialising in the problems of older people. This inevitably means that the extent of guidance and counselling is limited to those whose employers are large enough, or sufficiently concerned to make provision for them, and to others who come within the ambit of voluntary organisations (quite possibly

because they have already experienced some social or health problem.) It is most unlikely that these two groups constitute a majority of older workers, even in the Member States where provision is at its most extensive. In many parts of the Community it seems unlikely that more than a very small minority of older workers receive any help. Those who work for themselves, employees of small and medium-sized enterprises, and those whose later working years have been disrupted by the effects of recession and blighted by unemployment (as opposed to voluntary early retirement) are in need of the most help.

46. If these factors were seen to be important in 1980, the effects of economic change and of recession on the lives of older workers since then can only have reinforced that judgement. In addition to the disruption of expectations which so many have experienced, there is the positive consideration of the vast resource of energy, talent and long experience reposing in older workers whose retirement has been forced on them during their fifties. They in particular need a great deal of help to enable them to adjust their expectations and, if necessary, seek retraining, education, or totally new fields of activity.

47. A further factor is the rapid ageing of the population of most Member States, partly due to reducing birthrates, and partly due to dramatic increases in life expectancy both for men and for women. Apart from the actuarial problems this phenomenon is likely to cause in the foreseeable future, it also signals a need for a new

view of retirement and the role which retired people play in society. Far from representing (particularly for men) little more than a few years of exhausted decline leading to relatively early death, it must now be seen for an increasing number as likely to comprise anything up to a third of life, much of it in perfectly reasonable health, even if powers of creativity and urges towards competitiveness have declined. If the challenge and potential of this new state of affairs are to be met, the response will involve a different priority for guidance and counselling in the context of continuing education throughout adult life, and much revised and improved approaches to guidance and counselling for people making the transition to retirement.

MANAGEMENT ISSUES

The local context

43. It is evident that there are clear priority localities for the improvement and extension of guidance services :

- (a) areas of the highest unemployment, and where the risk of unemployment is greatest;
- (b) localities which may well be included in those above, but which may also be smaller and more contained, where there is a collapse of a dominant employer;
- (c) other localities which may not apparently suffer from the highest levels of unemployment, but where,

through isolation as in many rural areas, or as a result of other special circumstances, choices available to specific groups in the community may be extraordinarily complex or unfairly and narrowly constrained.

Finance and management questions

49. Whatever views are taken in the future of the degree of investment which ought to be made in vocational guidance, and of the extent and scope of provision for different groups in the community, it is clear that both methods of financing and of management will have to be closely scrutinised.
50. On the basis of reports of developments within Member States, there are a number of trends in financing and management which, while they are by no means universal, seem to represent a fair balance of the way in which thinking is beginning to move:
- (a) the priority given to vocational guidance within schools, and also within training courses is increasing rapidly, adding to their costs;
 - (b) there is no real evidence that an increase in guidance in the schools reduces the demand for it elsewhere; rather, it may be that it underlines a need for an incremental guidance facility available after schooling, and after transition to adult life;
 - (c) there is a growing tendency for costs to be shared

out nationally and locally, a formula which alone seems capable of ensuring adequate services in the areas where need is greatest and funds are most scarce;

(d) there is evidence of an interest and a capacity for self-help, especially amongst unemployed adults; if encouraged and invested in, this might result in medium and long-term economies;

(e) this tendency in some places is balanced by a counter-tendency to view vocational guidance as an activity which should be professionalised to ensure its quality, and also to guarantee that it is not carried out by those whose neutrality and objectivity are in question.

The Commission is planning to undertake a comparative study of current practice in this area in the Community, focussing on the recruitment, training and operation of vocational guidance personnel.

ISSUES AFFECTING THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE

51. Views differ considerably throughout the Community, and often between different groups in individual Member States about what should be attempted in vocational guidance, and about its relationship to other needs. It is common ground that people should at any rate begin their working lives on the basis of the best possible information and advice about the opportunities available to them and the means by which they may be able to take advantage of them. There is less agreement about the extent to which this can be provided in isolation from information and advice about other difficult social problems (for instance, housing, legal rights, health), and even from assistance with purely personal

difficulties. It is strongly argued on one hand that many of those most in need of improved vocational guidance also need help with many other problems and difficulties, and that it is impossible to achieve a worthwhile solution of one difficulty without also dealing with the others. It is also argued that unemployment creates social and personal problems, so that people who are unemployed themselves, or who come from families which experience unemployment are likely to need other forms of guidance as well as vocational guidance. On the other hand it is argued that if it is to be effective, vocational guidance must be highly specialised, and that other needs must be looked after in other ways. At the heart of this debate is the issue of whether vocational guidance is viewed simply as a means of directing people to the training and jobs which may be available, or whether it is seen as an essential aid to those whose traditional expectations of work cannot be realised in today's labour market and who therefore need a great deal of assistance in finding and fulfilling new roles in society.

52. A second important issue is the extent to which vocational guidance is needed and should be provided. In this there are different priorities attached to different groups:

(a) There is agreement that young people need the best guidance services available throughout the period of their transition to adult life. There is also agreement that this should be provided free of charge.

- (b) There is growing agreement that the adult unemployed, especially the long-term unemployed, are in urgent need of similar services, and at present cannot secure them. There is a question-mark over the extent to which they may be able to organise them for themselves through self-help.

- (c) There is an equally general consensus that adults in employment should be alerted to the value of recurrent vocational guidance, and should be encouraged to seek it. It is often suggested that they ought to be in a position to secure it and pay for it themselves. On the other hand, can it be argued that a lack of adult vocational guidance actually helps fuel unemployment by failing to alert people to market and skill changes before they happen, and at a time when they can actually seek retraining, or organise a move to a different area ?

- (d) Vocational guidance provision is a clear implication of the Community's policy initiatives for equality of opportunity for women. Its general availability is another matter, and is not yet achieved.

- (e) Provision for migrant workers, and for the children of migrants is becoming an increasingly important priority in some parts of some Member States. It will continue to be a necessary element of whatever policies are developed towards migrant workers in the future.

- (f) Vocational guidance provision of a highly professional nature is accepted as being essential

for the disabled, but it does not yet exist on a general basis.

- (g) Neither does guidance for those facing retirement, which is as much a vocational phenomenon as any other, and which may increasingly lead not to total disengagement from the labour market, but to different, perhaps part-time roles within it.

53. The proposition that guidance services should be extended, both in size and in scope, normally raises a number of practical problems:

- (a) the fear that extensions of such potentially open-ended activities may lead to spiralling expenditure without directly quantifiable results (except, say, for increases in numbers of people interviewed);
- (b) the suspicion that a significant extension of vocational guidance to adults will lead to the formation of new institutions and agencies, and may also conflict with the objectives of the social partners;
- (c) the further suspicion that an extension of both numbers and the scope of vocational and social issues covered by guidance will lead to the creation of large and complex 'systems' of provision.

54. One of the most important keys to further advance in this important field will be the extent to which Member State Governments can be assisted to decide on priorities as between the various groups who most need guidance services, and

the range of services they are likely to need. These might range from extensive vocational and social guidance for young people and for groups identified as having special difficulties, access to vocational guidance for adults at work, with special extra arrangements made for the long-term adult unemployed, and an extension of both in-company and locally-provided pre-retirement guidance.

CONCLUSIONS

55. The Commission is currently reviewing its policies and programmes with respect to the vocational training of both young people and of adults. In both cases it is clear that the issues must be discussed within a broader policy context which takes full account of education and employment policy also.

The Commission intends to present some new proposals in this field over the coming year, and specific initiatives in respect of vocational guidance will be put forward within this framework.

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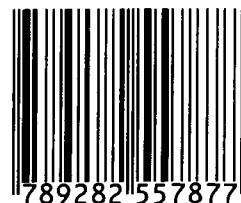
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