

Guiding Cities

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Intellectual Outputs 01

State of the Art



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O1/A1 - Analysis of guidance activities

Objective:

The GCities consortium will analyze the current state of guidance activities within their context. The analysis will collect information, data and description of services about: types of services, guidance services specifically directed at ESL or those at risk of ELS, targeted services for other specific groups, actors involved in the organization and implementation of guidance activities.

In Romania guidance has existed since around the 1940s¹, although it has suffered major changes since 1990, after the fall of the Communist regime. The needs of users have completely changed, since the labour market became free. During the Communist regime, the range of professional options was limited, but the path was clear and jobs were secured for everyone. In contrast, the new social and economic organisation gave rise to a growing number of opportunities, but also to uncertainty and in a certain degree, to unemployment. Graduates of secondary or tertiary education were no longer automatically assigned to a job, but needed to find themselves a job, a task for which many Romanian youngsters were left unprepared. Changes in society led to confusion also in the education system, which has known, and still faces, many reforms and abrupt changes, for which teachers, pupils and parents report as being ill prepared. School failure and school abandonment became an issue, the same as unemployment became hard to manage by the labour system. To tackle these problems, since 1990, school and university counselling offices have been opened and became functional, employment agencies have started to offer guidance for job seekers, NGOs have become active in the fields of guidance and school abandonment, major universities have created Master degree programmes in guidance and counselling and step by step, legislation came in place. Many changes and improvements still need to be done, but we can say that Romania has come a long way in the field of guidance since the fall of the communist regime.

Governance and coordination

1) Is there an area or department that has the responsibility to coordinate the services and/or resources that are offered in the field of guidance in the city/region/country? If so, which area or department?

In Romania, at the present time, we cannot speak about coordination of all guidance services; instead, the coordination can be found at the sectorial level:

¹ Desk study report on: Location of career counselling and guidance services in partners' countries – comparative report - Guidance and Counselling for Self-employment. "SELF-EMPLOYMENT" Project reference: PL/04/C/F/RF-84151 Agreement No. 2004-2242, Leonardo da Vinci Programme

- The coordination in the educational level is at the county level. Guidance services in the **educational sector** are coordinated by The County Centres for Educational Resources and Assistance (CERAs), which coordinate school counselling offices, speech therapy offices and school mediators and the County psycho-pedagogical assistance centres (PPACs), which coordinate school counsellors.
- Guidance services in the **employment sector** (Centres for information and guidance in career) are coordinated by ANOFM (National Agency for Employment)
- There are also private providers of guidance services and NGO's, which are not under the coordination of any external body.

2) Which actors provide guidance in your country? Who are the main actors/stakeholders?

MAIN PROVIDERS

- Ministry of Education, through school counselling offices and university guidance centres
- Ministry of Employment, through Centres for information and career guidance

SECONDARY PROVIDERS

- NGOs
- Ministry of Justice, through Probation Centres
- Local councils, through the General Direction for Social Assistance and Child Protection
- Private sector, through HR departments in companies and private offices

3) Is there any coordination between the different actors that provide guidance in your country? If so, please describe.

In Romania, at the **political and research level**, the representatives from education and employment sectors cooperate in the field of lifelong guidance in the framework of the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN) which aims to assist the European Union (EU) Member States (and the neighbouring countries eligible for the EU Lifelong Learning Programme) and the European Commission in developing European co-operation on lifelong guidance in both the education and the employment sectors.

An important partnership was created in 2015 between relevant stakeholders at the national level—public authorities and research organisations - under ReferNet, Cedefop's European network. The representatives of the National Centre for the development of vocational education and training, Ministry of Education, Institute of Educational Sciences, Ministry of Labour, Institute of Research in

the field of labour, National Qualifications Authority, National Agency for implementing the Erasmus Programme, contributed in 2015 to the country national report on VET system, including specific topics related to guidance and counselling.

While **guidance and counselling practitioners** recognize the importance of cooperating with other institutions on different levels, this has a long way to go before it becomes generalized practice.

There are many projects and programmes on different topics (e.g. career development, motivation to learn, early school leaving, etc.) that involve policy makers, researchers and practitioners, but there have been very few examples of these instances being transferred at national level.

One cause for this situation is the lack of a coordinating body for guidance policy. Up to 2010, the Institute of Educational Sciences had a role in providing methodological support for school counsellors, who represent the largest group of counselling practitioners in Romania, but the Law of Education that came into force in January 2011, has removed formal links between the Institute and the school counselling system.

Cooperation between services is strongly encouraged, but there are very few tools at the disposal of regular counselling practitioners to achieve this. In practice this means that most cooperation work tends to be done using predefined frameworks that tend to be a bit rigid. For example labour market counsellors do come to schools to present the labour market and unemployment legislation, but the information delivered tends to be the same regardless of employment perspectives of the pupils attending the presentation. Similarly, the cooperation between school counsellors and higher education counsellors tends to be limited to bringing adolescents to universities when they have their "open days". Also, one of the most prominent obstacles in the cooperation between guidance services comes from administrative divisions and funding opportunities. While the school counselling network has expanded considerably during the past decade (starting in the low hundreds and reaching over 2000 practitioners), the other networks (labour market, higher education and the private sector) have not kept up with demand. This means that except for the school counselling network, the other networks are very short on human resources that would be able to engage in cross sector cooperation.

Resources

4) Is there a specific space and/or website where the guidance actions, services, resources....of the city/region/country are collected? If so, which is it?

AT the level of the CERAs (The County Centres for Educational Resources and Assistance) information is being centralized in the biannual activity reports of each counsellor and in the institutional annual report, which is advanced to The Ministry of Education. Still, the function of the activity reports is mainly administrative, and not that of sharing the information with other practitioners.

Within different projects financed by the European Social Funds, online platforms dedicated to guidance and counselling have been created and professionals had the opportunity to meet and exchange practices at conferences and seminars.

There are email groups in which school counsellors exchange information and resources.

5) Which agents/institutions offer guidance services and/or resources to citizens? Who are the users/clients and which type of services and/or resources do they offer?

MAIN PROVIDERS

- **The county psycho-pedagogical assistance centres (PPAC)**, established in 1990 continue to offer services of psycho-pedagogical assistance for pre-school children, pre-university students, parents, teachers. Their main task is to provide information, guidance and counselling for pre-schoolers, students, parents and teachers on: knowledge/ self-awareness, adapting students to school requirements and school activities to students' needs, improving the relationships school-students-parents. The county psycho-pedagogical assistance centres comprise the offices of psycho-pedagogical assistance, organised in schools with a cumulated population of 800 pupils/ 400 pre-schoolers or by a group of schools.
- **The Centres for Educational Resources and Assistance (CERAs)** were established in 2005 (through the Order of the Ministry of Education) with the main aim to assure the quality of educational services. There are 42 centres at county level functioning based on a Framework-Regulation (2011). They are connected units in the pre-university education system, subordinated to the Ministry of Education and methodologically coordinated by the county School Inspectorates. The CERAs coordinate, monitor and evaluate the activity of: the county psycho-pedagogical assistance centres, the speech therapy centres, school centres for inclusive education, and specialised services of school mediation.
- **The career guidance and counselling centres** (27) in universities facilitate the socio-professional insertion of graduates on the labour market. A new methodology of the Ministry of Education regarding the organisation and functioning of these centres came into operation in November 2014.

- **Centres for information and guidance in career from Employment agencies** particularly target job seekers. The guidance services they provide are: information delivery regarding labour market and trends in professions, support in setting career objectives, personality assessment and self-assessment, support in decision making, training in job searching (CV, job interview).

SECONDARY PROVIDERS

- Different **NGOs**, who target disadvantaged communities (special needs, low socio-economic status)
- **General Direction for Social Assistance and Child Protection**, which offers guidance and counselling mainly for disadvantaged groups (e.g. abandoned children and adolescents, victims of domestic violence, poor families, etc.)
- **Probation Centres**, which offer guidance to law offenders
- Human resources departments from **private companies and private offices**, who offer coaching and training for employees and managers.

6) Are there services specifically directed at Early School Leavers or those at risk of Early School Leaving? If so, what type of services are offered and by what type of agents/institutions?

- **Guidance and counselling offices from schools**, coordinated by PPACs, have in their responsibilities the prevention of school leaving, this representing however a small fraction of their duties.
- A national initiative is a system called **second chance school**, which enrolls adults and youngsters that have either abandoned or never attended school.
- Within the **VET system**, school attendance is encouraged by a monthly scholarship of 200 lei (around 45 EUROs), given to all students who attend VET schools.
- **NGOs** are the most active organisations in Romania in fighting school leaving. For example, Save the Children Romania has 17 integrated centres around the country, which have a component of second chance school.
- The **European Social Fund** has financed in the past years a variety of national and local projects with the main aim of fighting school abandonment, which have been implemented by School inspectorates, CERAs, NGOs, local councils.

Policies

7) Has the city/region/country incorporated guidance in its governance plan (as a strategy, action...)? If so, in what way?

Romania adopted the Framework methodology regarding the Lifelong Guidance and Counselling approved by both Ministry of Education (Regulation 4469/2012) and Ministry of Labour (Regulation 1804/2012). The methodology regulates the general, institutional and conceptual framework by which life long career guidance and counselling services are being delivered.

The framework sets a common definition of guidance: “Lifelong guidance and counselling refers to all services and activities that support persons of any age and at any moment of their existence to make choices in education, training or work areas and to manage their career”.

Technologies

8) How would you describe (in a broad overview) the weight or percentage of services that are delivered through ICT versus face-to-face methodologies?

In Romania, services are being delivered mostly face to face; the use of ICT is still scarce. School counsellors also use the method of phone counselling.

There are ICT guidance tools available, but they yet need to be mainstreamed. Until now, their impact has been dependant on the promoters’ ability to make counsellors aware of the existence of such tools and the costs associated with operating them. You can find below some examples:

- Guide to the world of occupations www.go.ise.ro is a self-assessment and matching online system providing descriptions for about 700 occupational profiles and offering a variety of ways to choose the most suitable occupation by interests, skills, admission and other criteria as well as information for successful entry and re-entry into the labour market.
- Career4you www.career4u.ro is a web platform dedicated to guidance, adapted for adolescents and adults. It can be used independently or with the support of a counsellor.
- Cognitrom Career Planner (CCP) is a multi-user platform designed for career counselling, information and management, which can be used by: pupils, parents, teachers, counsellors and experts (Psychologists). http://www.cognitrom.ro/en/prezentare_ccp.html

Best practices and experiences

9) Are there any projects or initiatives that can be of interest to the Guiding Cities project: focused on benchmarking, coordination of guidance services in a community or reducing early school leaving?

- The partnership created in 2015 between relevant stakeholders at national level– public authorities and research organisations - under ReferNet, Cedefop’s European network, which is described above.
- Educational Integrated Centres from Save the Children Romania, which serve children, youngsters and adults who have abandoned school or who are in risk of school leaving.
- UNICEF Romania – “Come to School” Campaign, which had the aim of raising school participation and reducing school abandonment in disadvantaged areas. The main activities were training of school administrators and teachers, training of school mediators and parents counselling.

10) Professional profiles and training

- Who can be a guidance practitioner and provide guidance services in your context?

- In the **education sector**, school counsellors provide guidance services. They can be graduates in Psychology, Pedagogy, Psychopedagogy, Sociology: Bachelor degree required in order to become a counsellor for preschool education up until 8th grade, Master degree required in order to become counsellor from 9th grade forward.
- In the **employment sector**, counsellors have tertiary education and a certificate of guidance career counsellor, issued by National Authority of Qualifications, following a course of minimum 40 hours
- In the **private sector** there is no standardisation, but in general guidance practitioners are graduates of social sciences (Psychology, Sociology, Economics, sometimes Law or Philology)

- What type of initial and continuous training is provided to guidance practitioners?

Initial training:

Most universities offer Bachelor degree courses in vocational psychology, counselling. The most important public universities in Romania offer Master degree courses and PhD studies in guidance and counselling are offered in the universities in Romania (Bucharest, Cluj-Napoca, Timisoara, Iasi). Some private higher education institutions offer Master degree courses: e.g. the University Titu Maiorescu Bucharest. The practitioners have the opportunity to study guidance and counselling at distance: at CREDIS Department (University of Bucharest).

Continuous training:

Teacher's Houses, the training department of School inspectorates organize courses for school counsellors.

There are also courses and trainings organized within the framework of different European projects. NBCC (National Board for Certified Counselors), an American not-for-profit, independent certification organization opened its office in Romania, in 2007. Since 2005 they run the GCDF (Global Career Development Facilitator) programme, which is an international certification in career development. Until now, 450 professionals have been trained and certified as GCDFs, working in human resources departments in companies, school counselling offices, university counselling centres and in private practice.

The practitioners organised and participated at national and European level in many workshops, conferences, trainings and events on different topics of guidance and counselling. A variety of projects on career guidance and counselling were financed.

11) Evaluation - How are guidance services evaluated in your context?

There is no general standard for the evaluation of guidance services; instead the evaluation depends on the procedures of the institution delivering the services.

- **School counsellors:** at the end of the school year the school principal completes an assessment file for the counsellor, and also the school counsellor completes a self-evaluation sheet (number of pupils counselled, number of parents, number of groups of pupils/ parents, projects, trainings, collaboration with other institutions, teaching activities). Beneficiaries complete a need assessment questionnaire at the beginning of the school year and a satisfaction questionnaire after the activities they were involved in.
- **NGOs:** monthly activity reports, child's file, satisfaction questionnaire completed by the beneficiary

O1/A2 - Focus groups

The focus group was organized in 20 March 2015, at the Institute of Education Sciences, from Bucharest. Ten persons participated, representing public and private schools, social services, NGOs and the Police department. In addition to the ten participants, other two professionals, who couldn't attend the focus group, answered our questions via email.

➤ **List and description of participants**

Name	Role	Organisation	E-mail	Note
Flavia Dorelia Cardaş	School counsellor	School “Emil Racoviță”	flaviacardas@gmail.com	
Mihaela Dinu	Area manager	Save the Children Organisation	mihaela.dinu@salvaticopiii.ro	
Ana Maria Acatrinei	Regional Coordinator	Save the Children Organisation	ana.acatrinei@salvaticopiii.ro	
Cristiana Ana-Maria Boca	School principal	CEDP STEP BY STEP Association	cristiana.boca@stepbystep.ro	Institution partner in the project
Florența Teodorescu	Under-commissary for prevention	IGPR – Institutul de Cercetări și Prevenire al Poliției Române (Institute for Research and Prevention of Romanian Police)	prevenire@politiaromana.ro	
Cristina Todică	School counsellor for special needs children	VET school no. 3 for children with special needs	cristinatodica12@yahoo.com	
Ella Manu	Psychologist/ researcher	Institute of Education Sciences	ellamanu2005@yahoo.com	Institution partner in the project
Valentina Constantin	School Counsellor	School no. 80	valentina_const@yahoo.com	
Costin Geambașu	Social worker	General Direction for Social Assistance and	zona51area@yahoo.co.uk	

		Child Protection		
Gabriela-Mirela Moaghen	School Counsellor	School "Principesa Margareta"	mirelamoaghen@yahoo.com	

In addition to the participants described above, other two professionals, who couldn't attend the focus group, answered our questions via email:

- **Aura Stănculescu**, director of BMCERA (Bucharest Municipal Centre for Educational Resources and Assistance), the centre which coordinates school counsellors, speech therapists and school mediators from Bucharest area.
- **Robert Florea**, director of BMPPAC (Bucharest Municipal Psycho-pedagogical Assistance Centre), the centre that coordinates school counsellors from Bucharest.

➤ **Staff member involved**

Delia Goia, researcher from IES

➤ **Report on the information collected**

Guidance actors

Participants indicated that the main actors providing guidance in Romania are **Ministry of Education**, through County Centres for Psychopedagogical Assistance; **Ministry of Labour**, through Employment Agencies and **NGOs**. The **General Directions for Social Assistance and Child Protection** also have guidance among their responsibilities, but in reality they are very short on staff and overwhelmed by the number and difficulty of social cases.

Guidance in schools is provided by school counsellors, who are coordinated by the County Centres for Psychopedagogical Assistance. A school counsellor can be located in a school, if it's a large school or can be in charge of two smaller schools or a school and two kindergartens. Each school counsellor is responsible for a minimum of 800 pupils. Guidance is only a part of school counsellors' job description, which contains also personal counselling (individual and group), learning support, parents counselling, teachers' consultation, conflict mediation and teaching duties. School counsellors from public schools present at the focus group accused an excess load of duties. At the focus group there were school counsellors working in regular schools, but also a school counsellor

working in a VET school for special needs children. The range of problems she faces seems to be larger than in a regular school, as well as their complexity.

Counsellors working in NGOs benefit from a better ratio counsellor/ beneficiaries, and also from a multidisciplinary work environment. Usually in a team there is a psychologist, a social worker and a teacher, working together for the same cases. NGOs were represented in our focus group by the organisation Save the Children Romania, who has a long history in fighting and preventing school leaving. They only work in multidisciplinary teams and place a big focus on empowering vulnerable persons.

Psychologists provide guidance for social cases at the General Direction for Social Assistance and Child Protection. However, their duties include also psychological formal assessments, psychological counselling and even psychotherapy. They are overwhelmed by very large number of cases, the majority being also very complex from a psychologically and social point of view. Time left to guidance is therefore very little, and in reality there isn't much done in this direction.

Coordination

Discussion from the focus group showed that the coordination lies at sectorial level, meaning that guidance services in education, employment, social services and so on, have their own coordination. All participants agreed that there is a lack of general coordination for all guidance services. School counsellors feel there is a good coordination at local level: they have weekly school counsellors district meeting and also frequent meetings with other counsellors from Bucharest area. Many of them use an email group for school counsellors, in which they share information and resources. However, during the discussions, it came out that school counsellors from the private school system are not so well integrated into the network, although formally they report to the Ministry of Education, the same as the counsellors from the public school system. For example, they have to meet the same requirements for promotion (class inspection, application file), but they are not being invited to the regular meeting of school counsellors from Bucharest. The focus group itself became a bridging tool in starting a better cooperation among public and private schools.

Participants acknowledged they collaborate well with different institutions and organisations, but the level is that of collaboration, not coordination.

For example, NGOs have a good and necessary collaboration with the General Directions for Social Assistance and Child Protection, with schools and with local counties. On the other part, Directions for Social Assistance and Child Protection rely on NGOs for help with the most difficult social cases.

Police departments have good collaboration with schools and NGOs in their efforts to prevent victimisation and drug abuse.

Some collaboration is framed by partnerships, other by various projects, financed by ESF and other financing bodies.

Resources

Participants indicated that resources are being collected at local or project level. They are not knowledgeable of a space or website with guidance resources for all professionals, from all fields of activity (education, employment, etc.)

School counsellors usually exchange information, ideas, and practices via their email group and at their weekly meetings.

Various projects offer the opportunity for professionals to meet and discuss during conferences, seminars, and trainings or via online platforms.

Services specifically directed at Early School Leavers or those at risk of Early School Leaving
School counsellors from regular schools that were present at the focus group recognized the prevention of early school leaving as part of their duties, but explained that in reality their daily agenda is very crowded with regular counselling sessions for learning and relationship problems, with group counselling and teaching obligations, to care for the cases of school abandonment. There are instances in which they work for these situations, but not for the majority of them.

In contrast, the school counsellor from the VET special needs school emphasized prevention of school drop out as one of her main tasks. She and all other teachers from the school are constantly doing efforts to keep children in school, by these meaning frequent phone sessions with parents and even home visits. There seems to be a significant problem with adolescent girls of 16 and 17 years old, which become pregnant and leave school. Besides working with pupils, counsellors and teachers from special needs schools put effort in enrolling parents of the children in second chance schools and in qualification courses.

Her disclosure led to an interesting discussion about the risk of school drop out in special needs children. It seems like the situation is complex and with contrasting views, depending on the institutional belonging. Teachers and even counsellors in regular schools in many cases perceive special needs children as a burden and as a threat, as some can become violent towards peers or even teachers (this perception was evident even inside our focus group). On the other hand, private

schools deal much better with special needs children, since they have more resources and better-trained staff. Parents cannot enrol their special need child in a regular public school, because they are being directed to a special needs school. Instead, they can enrol their child in a regular private school, in a regular classroom, but few parents can afford to pay the fees for private education. After visiting some special needs schools, some parents become so disappointed that they decide to not send their child to school at all: the conditions in special needs schools are poor and they can't afford a private school. In this regard, NGOs have in general a more humanistic view (and more resources than public schools) and put emphasis on the mass integration of special needs children, sometimes finding themselves in conflict with school representatives. The gap between NGOs and private schools on the one hand and public schools on the other hand in matter of integration of special needs children surfaced very well in our focus group. The explanation can lie in part in the better resources of NGOs and private schools (better and more frequent training, better salaries, a more positive organisational culture) compared to those of public schools.

The representatives of Save the Children Romania presented their country wide integrated centres, aimed at the prevention and fighting against school abandonment. There are 17 centres around the country. The team of each centre is composed of a social worker working full time and of two teachers, working part time. Teachers receive special training from Save the Children organisation in order to develop skills for working with youngsters and adults who attend second chance school. Social workers (who are usually from the community) go on the field, identify children/ youngsters/ adults who have never been to school or have abandoned school and help them to enrol in school. The service is called integrated, because it concerns the educational aspect, but also the social and economic one: social workers support beneficiaries in order to obtain the necessary documents for school enrolment (many of them don't even have an identity card), to obtain the minimal wage and other social benefits. The integrated services also offer parents counselling.

Technologies

The preferred and mostly used method for all participants in the focus group is face-to-face counselling. One school counsellor said she uses frequently phone counselling and sometimes Facebook chat. ICT is mainly used for email groups among counsellors.

Best practices and experiences

- Save the Children – Educational Integrated Centres <http://salvaticopiii.ro/?id2=000200020000>

- ROI Association - I Fly! Education through coaching, a project that brings together pupils, parents and teachers, through a team coaching process <http://zburd.ro/>

➤ **Emerging needs and priorities of the group**

It became clear that practitioners would benefit from a better communication and coordination between different sectors providing guidance services.

For the school counsellors in public schools, better ratio counsellor/ pupils for school would be greatly needed. This holds also for the counsellors in social services.

All practitioners, no matter what their institutional affiliation was, expressed their need for a more clear and explicit purpose of the evaluation of services. A feedback and follow up of evaluation with future recommendation would be a needed first step.

➤ **Conclusions**

In Romania two important networks provide guidance: education and employment. NGOs are also active in providing guidance free of charge, as a supplementary resource both in education and employment sector. There is also the private sector, which charges for services. Secondary providers are social services and probation centres.

In the education system, the main providers of guidance services are school counsellors, who are also responsible for personal counselling, learning support, parents counselling, conflict mediation, teachers' consultation and teaching duties. They also have a big number of pupils (minimum 800), all these making difficult for them to offer guidance for all pupils.

In regard to integration of services, there is a general lack of coordination across sectors, coordination lying at the local and field level.

ICT tools are present, but rarely used. In order for them to be more widely used, teachers and counsellors need training and supervision.

Participants to the focus group pointed to a lack of indicators to what is considered good work. There is an evaluation of services, but is quite quantitative and not very informative of what one should do to improve her/ his services.

One striking difference that surfaced during the focus group is between the private and NGO sector on the one hand, and the public sector on the other hand. Differences lie in resources, but also in values. A better communication between those sectors would benefit both.