



Needs Analysis Summary Report

May 2016

1 Background

This Needs Analysis Report was produced by the UCL Institute of Education (IOE) as part of the evaluation of the Erasmus+ funded project, “GOAL: Guidance and Orientation for Adult Learners” (GOAL). GOAL is a collaboration between six partner countries: Belgium (Flanders), the Czech Republic, Iceland, Lithuania, the Netherlands, and Slovenia. The project will develop existing models of guidance for adults in the six countries through pilot projects specifically designed to provide guidance services which meet the needs of low-educated adults. By “low-educated”, we refer broadly to adults who have few or no qualifications; however, the specific target groups within that broad definition differ to various degrees across programmes. Forthcoming GOAL project reports will contain detailed analysis of programme participants across the six countries.

In the project’s pre-evaluation stage, the aim of the GOAL Needs Analysis was to learn about the adult guidance background and current situation in each of the six countries. This knowledge will be used in the IOE’s evaluation to provide context for the first research question – *How do existing conditions/resources in the pre-programme environments influence the relationships among programme operations and outcomes?* – and to study change and impact.

The Needs Analysis consisted of three components: first, IOE conducted an English-language **review of international literature** on the policy, practice and research contexts for GOAL, with emerging findings used to generate two templates for local evaluators working in each of the six partner countries; second, local evaluators populated one template with findings from **reviews of national-language evidence**; third, the second template was used by local evaluators to capture findings from **local SWOT analyses** of current guidance and orientation provision for adult in the twelve intervention locations (two sites per country).

This key purpose of this Needs Analysis Report is to serve as a reference document for the GOAL partners through which they can see the pre-intervention situation in the other countries and reflect on the situation in their own. Although each country will use the same broad intervention strategies with the same broad target group, the specific target groups vary, each intervention is unique, and each country has a different starting point. This Needs Analysis Report provides partners with the opportunity to view these complexities through the lens of common themes.

Work on the international and national literature reviews and the SWOT analyses took place between March and September 2015. All findings were synthesised by IOE prior to the rollout of the pilot experimentations in October 2015. This summary Needs Analysis report presenting findings from all three components was finalised in February 2016. The full Needs Analysis technical report was made available from June 2016.

2 Context of adult guidance in the six GOAL countries

2.1 Guidance and orientation for adults

2.1.1. In 2008, the Council of the European Union defined lifelong guidance as:

a continuous process that enables citizens at any age and at any point in their lives to identify their capacities, competences and interests, to make educational, training and occupational decisions and to manage their individual life paths in learning, work and other settings in which those capacities and competences are learned and/or used. Guidance covers a range of individual and collective activities relating to information-giving, counselling, competence assessment, support, and the teaching of decision-making and career management skills.¹

This definition marked an acknowledgement which had grown at the European level and in individual Member States since 2000 that Information, Guidance and Counselling is a key component of lifelong learning policies and a priority area for action. Of particular interest to the GOAL project is the current focus on the role that high-quality guidance services for adults can play in raising participation rates in adult learning.

2.1.2. However, the culture of adult guidance is underdeveloped and especially so among those adults who are traditionally less likely to engage in work-related and other forms of learning, such as those with limited qualifications and/or low literacy and numeracy skills. There is a perception – which to some extent is still borne out by practice – that guidance is almost exclusively a careers-focused service offered in schools at or near the point where students are completing their compulsory education.

2.1.3. Guidance interventions piloted on the GOAL project include educational, training and employment guidance, although the primary focus is on learning (including the recognition of prior learning). It is important to stress that there are overlaps between employment and educational guidance (and indeed, personal guidance) and that the boundaries between the sectors can be unclear at many levels, including ministerial, with responsibilities in the GOAL countries split between two (or more) government departments. Educational guidance can support adults who want to embark on a study programme, enabling them to select the best learning opportunity. For adults who participate in education, educational guidance can enhance their employability and career management skills and help them to progress into further education and work. Nonetheless, educational guidance for adults is an underdeveloped area. Services offered through adult education institutions are particularly underfunded and may face challenges in offering comprehensive and client-centred advice that looks beyond specific institutional pathways.

¹ Council of the European Union (2008) *Council Resolution on better integrating lifelong guidance into lifelong learning strategies*. 2905th Education, Youth and Culture Council meeting. Brussels: European Commission p. 2.

2.2 Adult guidance and the knowledge economy

International analysis

2.2.1. The growth of the knowledge economy has seen a change to employment and careers guidance, which is shifting from being a service where unemployed people are “matched” with jobs and service success measured by Public Employment Services in terms of short-term employment outcomes, to one where greater emphasis is placed on the development of the career management skills that enhance longer-term career prospects. One consequence of this, as can be seen in the case of the Czech Republic, is an increasing emphasis on preventive policies rather than interventions and remedial approaches. Since 2000 there has been an acknowledgement at the European level and in individual Member States that Information, Guidance and Counselling is a key component of lifelong learning policies and a priority area for action (Sultana, 2003). Furthermore, Guidance contributes to policy goals in lifelong learning, in social inclusion, in labour market efficient and in economic development. Lifelong guidance is concerned with more than just about job-matching – it is about developing individuals.

National analysis

2.2.2. All GOAL countries reported on the increased importance of adult guidance in their governments’ strategic objectives and Action Plans. In Flanders, employment services have focused on developing employment and career guidance that is individualised, intensive and client-led. Guidance services in the Flemish education sector lag behind those in careers and employment. Evidence from Slovenia argues strongly that specialist activity is needed in the field of adult education to provide support to adults at all stages of their learning journeys.

2.2.3. The main objectives of education and vocational guidance in Iceland are to: strengthen individuals’ awareness of their talents, attitudes and interests; provide information about opportunities; and increase individuals’ motivation to pursue those opportunities. The guidance is meant to help people of all ages, every social status and in any circumstances realise their strengths, interest and competences so that available opportunities in career or educational development will become clear.

3 Theories and philosophies underpinning guidance services

International analysis

3.0.1. The changes to what is defined as lifelong guidance for adults described above have been accompanied by developments in the theories and philosophies underpinning guidance services, with guidance now offered throughout the life course, and a focus placed on developing the skills that allow adults to navigate career paths. There is, however, disagreement about where responsibility for guidance lies: to what degree is it with individuals, who should access guidance to help them negotiate the changed world, and to what degree is it with governments, which should provide guidance for adults as an acknowledgement of the wider impact this will have on society and the economy? Where adult guidance services, particularly those outside of the employment sector,

are underdeveloped in some countries, they may also draw too heavily on the type of guidance offered in schools to young people rather than that targeted to the specific needs of adults. In many countries in Europe, like Lithuania, traditional notions of career orientation, which are based on matching individuals to occupations in line with personal traits and interests, still have a great deal of currency, although they may not be adequate to the complexity of adult needs.

National analysis

3.0.2. All the national teams provided evidence that the economic downturn of 2008 and rising rates of unemployment and migration had made an impact on the approaches taken by governments and guidance services. In Iceland, for example, there is an increasing focus on how to make more successful links between the educational system and educational opportunities and the development of the economy and its requirements for competent employees, whether temporary or permanent. This is based on an understanding that integrated policy formulation and implementation in employment and education benefits individuals, the economy, and society as a whole. The same can be said for Flanders, where one solution might lie in a stronger focus on networks, including those with career guidance services, and with employers, when developing educational guidance services. In Flanders, high rates of unemployment among young people with low levels of education, and wider concerns over the need for a more highly qualified and skilled workforce, have seen a shift to proactive and bespoke support for all job-seekers in order to avoid long-term unemployment.

3.0.3. Out of the six GOAL partners, Slovenia appears to have taken more steps to articulate the philosophies underpinning the delivery of its guidance services and the network of 14 regional guidance centres for adult education. In Slovenian career guidance, the use of development theory and social learning theory models are an acknowledgement of the fact that the individual's career no longer depends on a single correct decision, but on the development of skills that will last throughout the life course. Under such paradigms, the guidance counsellor is no longer merely the person who matches the individual to the job, but a trainer, educator and mentor. As the Slovenian national literature review stresses, changes in society have brought about changes in theoretical views and front-line practices.

4 Stakeholders

4.1 Policy and Programme Actors

International analysis

4.1.1. In Europe, guidance services for adults are offered in both the employment and education sectors. Services are primarily offered by the state and not by private enterprises. However, beyond these general observations, guidance services are characterised by diversity, with the consequence that responsibility for guidance services extends into policy areas other than education and employment and stakeholders come from a wide range of fields.

National analysis

4.1.2. Career guidance for adults in the Czech Republic is provided both by the education and the employment sector: educational institutions provide a wide range of career guidance services, and the Centre for Career Guidance provides complex lifelong guidance services both for students and adults. In 2012, “Career counsellor” was approved as an occupation within the National Register of Occupations; in 2015 three additional professional qualifications for career guidance were approved and included in National Qualifications Framework.

4.1.3. In Flanders, different institutions provide different types of adult guidance and orientation in various fields. The guidance offer is fragmented and lacks collaboration and coherence. Public Employment Services (PES) offer employment guidance through service contact points called “werkwinkels” and through tender partners, and also offers programmes through collaborations with Centres of Social Welfare. Also career guidance for employed people is under the responsibility of the PES. Furthermore, there are ‘Houses of Dutch’, service points where foreign language speakers are oriented towards the most suitable L2 programme. However, none of these services focus on educational guidance specifically whereas adult education in Flanders is very fragmented and falls under different policy domains and various ministries which makes it difficult for adult learners to find the offer fitting their needs, especially for low educated.

4.1.4. The Icelandic Ministry of Education, Science and Culture oversees the development of adult learning, funds much of the sector. The Ministry of Social Services subsidises education and training for the unemployed. Lifelong learning centres in Iceland seek to create opportunities, provide programmes, courses, support and counselling for a particular geographical region in the country. These centres co-operate with schools at the upper secondary and higher education levels and with municipalities, employers’ and employees’ organisations and private enterprises.

4.1.5. No specific guidance institutions (e.g. career guidance centres) have been established in the public sector in Lithuania. The main responsibility for provision of these services for students is given to the educational institutions (general education, VET schools and HE institutions). Public employment services provide training and related information and guidance for the unemployed.

4.1.6. In the field of Dutch adult guidance, cooperation is formalised between vocational training institutions, employers and municipalities. These three parties work together in regional Education and Career Guidance Points co-financed by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment. All parties contribute time or financial resources to these “points” which are client contact centres for people seeking advice on career and education opportunities in any given region.

4.1.7. The two key stakeholders in the field of adult education in Slovenia are the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport (MESS) and the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (MLFSAEO). However, evidence from the Slovenian team indicates that inter-ministerial coordination could be made more efficient and that although Slovenia follows European directives up to a point, the implementation of these directives into legislation, executive documents and practice is not yet satisfactory.

4.2 Low-skilled adults: findings from PIAAC

4.2.1. Three of the six GOAL countries participated in the OECD's Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) study in 2012: the Czech Republic, Flanders, and the Netherlands. Slovenia and Lithuania are participating in the second wave of the survey.

4.2.2. Results for the Czech Republic showed lower than OECD average results for middle-aged adults, and significant differences in results between those with high and low socioeconomic status: in the Czech Republic, literacy is – more than in the other countries – influenced by parental educational attainment. Adults with less education had lower skills, but those with higher numeracy and literacy and with better skills at problem-solving in technology rich environments were more likely to participate in further education and to do so on a larger scale, even when the influence of their age, education, and gender was taken into account. A significant challenge for the further education system in the Czech Republic is the implementation of appropriate forms of education and motivational instruments for the people with lower education and those without employment. The benefits of further education are, according to the PIAAC survey, greatest for these groups, both from the perspective of increasing their competences and from the perspective of their employment and success in the job market.

4.2.3. In Flanders, as in most countries participating in PIAAC, relatively large minorities of the adult population have poor literacy, numeracy and problem-solving skills. The level of economic inactivity amongst adults with low proficiency is considerably above the OECD average. There is a large gap in literacy proficiency between native-born adults whose first language is Dutch and foreign-language immigrants. Their average proficiency is also among the lowest observed across participating countries. The share of low educated within the working population is much smaller than their share in total within the labour active population (age 25-64) which is an indication of under-representation of low education in paid labour.

4.2.4. In the Netherlands, a relatively low percentage of the adult population (12%) are categorised as having poor literacy. However OECD data suggest that the Netherlands has experienced an increase at the two extremes of the literacy distribution: adults with low literacy and those whose literacy is considered to be very good. This finding suggests that the literacy gap is increasing in the Netherlands. The Netherlands also features relatively large differences between male and female numeracy skills, with women scoring much lower than men. The skills differences between adults with a Dutch background and those with non-Dutch backgrounds are high compared to analogous differences in other OECD countries. There is also a large literacy gap between employed and unemployed adults, with the unemployed having lower skills.

4.2.5. With no participation in PIAAC, and no large-scale research surveys, less quantitative data is available on the low-educated population in Iceland. It is estimated that 6% of 25-35 year old people in Iceland experience difficulties with literacy, as do 11% of 46-55 year olds and 21% of 56-65 year olds: 4,600 people in total. The number of unemployed immigrants in Iceland grew substantially after the economic crisis. Many have low levels of education and those that do not have a good grasp of the Icelandic language are especially vulnerable. Although unemployed migrants face occupational problems, their issues are first and foremost social ones.

4.2.6. Both Lithuania and Slovenia are participating in the second wave of PIAAC, with results expected in 2016. Low-educated adults as a group are not defined by legislation in Lithuania, although they are mentioned as target group in strategies. The employment rate of people aged 20-64 with ISCED 0-2 (pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education) in Lithuania was 36.6% in 2012. In 2014, the share of 25-64 year olds who participated in formal and non-formal training was less than two-thirds the EU average (5.7% in Lithuania versus 9% in the EU as a whole). In Slovenia, as in other countries, adults with low skills are less likely to participate in formal and informal education.

5 Challenges and barriers

International analysis

5.0.1. For the GOAL target group the two main systemic challenges to the provision of suitable guidance services are that: 1) there is limited access to guidance; and 2) the outcome based focus (short-term job match) means that the current process gives insufficient time to address the complex problems and needs of low skilled adults.

5.0.2. Multiple problems can prevent adults from engaging in work and in learning. In addition to systemic barriers, these include: previous negative experiences of education and learning; being unused to long or longer term planning/planning for the future; and financial constraints. However, a key issue when tackling these challenges in order to offer high quality services is the limited evidence available on successful initiatives and approaches, with most evaluations of services limited in scope and focused on short-term outcomes or on progression rates to employment, education or training.

National analysis

5.0.3. In the Czech Republic barriers can be traced back to the education system (e.g. formal admission requirements, inaccessibility of study formats other than full-time) in other policy areas (i.e. insufficient coordination between education and employment policies) and, of course, on the part of learners (e.g. lacking motivation, the need to combine family and work duties).

5.0.4. Career guidance in the Czech Republic is seen as inadequate for both young people and adults. The main constraint on adult career guidance is the lack of systematic guidance support for adults and lack of information about the possible guidance services. As for career planning support for adults, the Labour Office specialises in counselling for the unemployed. Career counselling is seen as inadequate due to the lack of a systematic framework and staffing deficiencies and its availability is generally uncoordinated. Services provided by NGOs are usually project based, with insufficient staffing, limited locations, and differences in approach. Education and career guidance for adults provided by the Centre for Career Guidance in the National Institute for Education is free, but only a marginal activity of the Institute and is designed to deal with specific situations as they arise.

5.0.5. Adults searching for an educational offer in Flanders are confronted with a wide range of a non-transparent provision. Low-qualified adults struggle to find their way through a wide range of dispositional, institutional, situational and informative barriers to find the most suitable provision. Flanders lacks a comprehensive network of guidance services, including a central data management

system which can support the process of searching, choosing and decision making. Importantly, the implementation of austerity measures following the economic crisis has led to far-reaching cuts to the opportunities to develop educational guidance services. Although employment and careers guidance is very well organised and delivered, a greater focus on educational guidance is needed.

5.0.6. The Icelandic population is one of the smallest in Europe and is thinly scattered over a relatively large area. More than half the population lives in and around the capital, Reykjavík, making it possible to offer a wide variety of education and training to people of all ages there. Outside of the capital – and in the most rural areas in particular – this is much more difficult due to the small size of the population in each region. Evaluation results from the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (2014) indicate that the main barriers to participation in adult learning are lack of time, financial reasons, various diagnoses (ADHD, dyslexia), illnesses, social circumstances, family responsibilities, low self-esteem, lack of support from employers, transportation, and the shortage of vocational training options.

5.0.7. The European Semester Country Report 2015 for Lithuania stressed the lack of appropriate career guidance for adults and the fact that there was no system to assess and recognise skills acquired through non-formal or informal learning. Several reasons can be identified as contributing to the low participation rate of working age adults in education and training: no well-developed system of recognition of competences; insufficient competence of the pedagogical staff at training institutions; lack of financial support for training; and lack of access to quality guidance services.

5.0.8. The three main challenges in the Netherlands to providing guidance services for low-educated adults are: low demand, because the target group frequently does not recognise that lower levels of basic skills limit them in their professional lives; improving the impact and effectiveness of guidance and counselling services; and increasing the number of organisations that deliver guidance services, if required, “in disguise” –e.g. through bundling guidance with other services that individuals seek out. There is a need to multiply the number of locations where adults with low levels of basic skills are identified and subsequently receive appropriate guidance services.

5.0.9. The main challenges in lifelong education in Slovenia are the same as in the majority of European countries: an aging population, social-economic developments, technological developments, and the needs and requirements of the labour market. In order to raise educational levels, employability and the number and range of learning opportunities, particular attention is required for vulnerable groups of adults, e.g. those who: are less educated (i.e. fewer than four years of secondary schooling); enter lifelong learning less often (or not at all); are less motivated; and/or face a range of other obstacles. To reach these target groups it is necessary to develop and strengthen quality guidance support. This includes the development of strategies for increasing the accessibility and inclusion of vulnerable groups of adults in lifelong learning.

6 Assessing impact and quality

International analysis

6.0.1. In general, there is a lack of quality assurance mechanisms in adult guidance services in Europe. Policy makers have had to rely on a very limited evidence base. Outcome measures are problematic because guidance does not happen in isolation. Most evaluation studies are limited in

scope, with limited evidence bases and a focus on short-term outcomes or on “first step” progression into employment, education or training. While these outcomes are valuable, more information is required about longer-term outcomes and their sustainability.

6.0.2. The European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network has attempted to address these issues in assessing quality and impact through developing and piloting a Quality-Assurance and Evidence-Base (QAE) Framework containing five key elements that support quality service delivery and underpin the collection of evidence: 1) Practitioner competence; 2) Citizen/user involvement; 3) Service provision and improvement; 4) Cost-benefits to government; 5) Cost-benefits to individuals. The ELGPN QAE Framework is a matrix with indicators, organised around an input-process-outcome framework.

National analysis

6.0.3. Guidance and counselling services provided at schools in the Czech Republic up to the tertiary professional level are evaluated by the Czech School Inspectorate, as are school guidance facilities. Career guidance and counselling provided by Public Employment Services (PES) is monitored and evaluated by the General Directorate of the Labour Office using tools such as a national system of monitoring indicators, including performance indicators for guidance counselling involving job brokering and performance indicators for special guidance.

6.0.4. In Flanders no literature was found on impact assessment directly linked to any guidance services. Employment data are collected for those who have participated in some guidance programmes, but these are short-term, and collected for a maximum period of six months after the programme ends. In Iceland there is increased quality control and co-operation between the Educational and Training Service Centres and Lifelong Learning centres on the basis of the European Quality Mark validation system. Specific standards for career guidance services are being developed and tested in the context of the EQM, and it is anticipated that this will also happen in 2016 for validation services.

6.0.5. The Lithuanian Centre of Non-Formal Youth Education (Career Education Unit) participates in the monitoring of career guidance services for pupils up to upper secondary education level. This monitoring is on a national level, and involves data collection, data analysis, preparing reports and making recommendations. Data are gathered via local municipalities and general education and VET schools and processed with the help of the Information System of Career Education Monitoring. Guidance services provided by territorial labour exchanges and their youth job centres are monitored by organising user satisfaction surveys both of jobseekers and employers.

6.0.6. The Education and Career Guidance Points in the Netherlands are subject to continuous monitoring and evaluation. Evaluations focus on the quality and sustainability of the regional networks, and not on the impact/effect of the intervention on individual clients. Client *satisfaction*, however, is measured. A few Education and Career Guidance Points use an instrument to assess the level of basic skills of clients in order to direct them more efficiently to an appropriate education offer.

6.0.7. On the national level in Slovenia, a comprehensive system to measure effects of different guidance activities for adults has not yet been established. However, a comprehensive model of

assessment was developed in 2009 for monitoring and measuring the effects of the guidance activities provided by the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education (SIAE). These guidance activities are provided through a network of 14 regional centres which are professionally developed, monitored and supported by the SIAE.

7 Service Delivery and Evaluation: inputs

7.1 Available opportunities

7.1.1. Across the six countries, guidance opportunities for adult learners can be characterised as lacking clarity and lacking visibility. Policy-makers in some countries have grappled with the issue of whether fragmented guidance services for adults should be drawn together into a coherent whole and if so, how this should be done. It can certainly be argued that consolidation offers greater possibilities for quality assurance and the setting of national standards.

7.1.2. In the Czech Republic there is currently no systematic guidance support for adults who want to increase or change their qualifications. In Flanders Guidance provision focusing on career and employment is very well developed, there are however very few opportunities for educational guidance. Only very limited guidance staff is employed in educational guidance services within locally funded small initiatives. Structural funding is lacking. This provision doesn't meet the level and the complexity of the need.

7.1.3. The number of providers of adult education and guidance in Iceland appears to meet the needs of the target group. However, the availability and variety of courses/educational opportunities is not as good in sparsely populated areas. In Lithuania career guidance services for adults are provided in adult education centres, which help adults to complete secondary education, or VET institutions, which offer training programmes for youth and adults. These services are mostly offered on a case-by-case basis, which is dependent on the motivation of administrators to organise and find sources of funding. The main weakness of this approach is that these institutions typically limit their focus to the qualifications or programmes that are offered inside educational institutions.

7.1.4. In Slovenia, adults can access counselling services at one of 14 regional guidance centres, which provide services for adults enrolled in adult education, or at school centres and other adult education organisations, where counselling services are available to adults both before and during the learning course. The main weakness in the system is that counselling activities in the regional guidance centres and the other learning centres are not well enough linked. The Education and Career Guidance Points in the Netherlands have a near nationwide coverage and this is mapped to strong national coverage of educational opportunities for adults (mainly in the study of literacy and numeracy). The principal threat is funding cuts, which require creativity and prioritisation on the part of local authorities.

7.2 Practitioner capabilities

International analysis

7.2.1. Practitioners working in counselling and guidance services in adult learning may focus on career guidance (in relation to finding a job), educational guidance (in relation to learning choice and

planning and coaching of the learning process), or more personal guidance (in relation to people's personal problems and questions). These roles may be contained within a wider job description, or practitioners in teaching positions may be assigned counselling and guidance tasks alongside or as part of their teaching activities.

7.2.2. The QAE framework developed by the ELGPN lists three criteria relevant to practitioner quality – possession of recognised qualifications relevant to the careers sector; engagement in CPD, and membership of a careers professional association. However in many Member States guidance workers lack a strong professional identity, are poorly organised, and are often poorly supported by a disparate network of professional associations and research and training organisations.

National analysis

7.2.3. The GOAL national literature (see Needs Analysis Technical Report) reviews highlighted moves in all countries towards the formalisation of practitioner capabilities. In Flanders there is no centrally organised training for those who wish to become career counsellors but providers are required to meet certain quality standards. However, a formal professional qualification profile for career counsellor is being developed. In Iceland guidance counsellors need a licence to practice and certified counsellor training. The career guidance practitioner's status at education institutions in Lithuania has not yet been formalised, and there is a need for the development of standards for their competences and training. Nearly all adult guidance practitioners in the Netherlands have experience in education and/or re-integration practices. However, there are no formal criteria for guidance practitioners and thus a great divergence in quality between various service points.

7.2.4. In Slovenia, there are minimum qualification requirements for practitioners (educated to degree level) and the Slovenian Institute of Adult Education offers opportunities to practitioners in adult guidance centres for initial training (a 48-hour course) and continuing professional development (16 hours per year). There is currently, however, a need for training that would better equip practitioners to work with: a) low-educated adults and b) partner organisations.

7.3 Client Group and its potential

7.3.1. The delivery of high-quality services to low-educated adults is dependent on good knowledge of the target group: successful initiatives will understand not only the barriers faced by their potential clients, but what these clients will respond to.

7.3.2. Evidence from Flanders shows that within the sector of employment guidance more clients from vulnerable groups participate in intensive guidance programmes towards a job, however young adults (U25) without qualification participate less than those with qualifications. Clients in career counselling (service on voluntary base for employed) low educated adults are underrepresented.

7.3.3. In general, both representatives of companies in Iceland and the target client group lack sufficient information about the adult educational and guidance system. Counsellors need to be aware that many service users in the target group have very little information about what opportunities they have, about the value of their current knowledge, and about where to start and how to continue.

7.3.4. Although there are many guidance services available for unemployed people in the Netherlands, those in employment are poorly reached. This lack of opportunity is compounded by the fact that seeking guidance is still considered taboo, especially among non-migrant groups.

7.3.5. In both the adult guidance centres and school centres in Slovenia, there is a need for more in-depth understanding of the characteristics and needs of adults within the groups targeted by the GOAL study: more data are required to further this understanding. There is also the perception in adult guidance centres that counsellors lack the time to include more low-educated adults in the centre's services for in depth counselling. Improved understanding of low-educated adults and the context of their lives is likely to play an important role in developing connections with experts from other fields who work with the individuals targeted by GOAL.

8 Service delivery and evaluation: processes

8.1 Assessment of needs

International analysis

8.1.1. Guidance for adults can take many forms. For some clients, a one-off session resulting in an action plan will be sufficient. But for others, the process is a more complex one lasting a longer time, and perhaps including periods of non-engagement from the counselling journey. There is increasing awareness of the need for more holistic approaches; some of this awareness has been translated into legislation/formal documentation (although not necessarily practice). Where it is being put into practice, this tends to involve services taking holistic client needs as their starting point and drawing together a large range of service providers to deal with this.

National analysis

8.1.2. The national literature reviews suggest there are different approaches to assessing what clients need from guidance services. In Lithuania, assessment of the client's guidance needs is not regularly carried out. In Slovenia, although analysis is carried out annually to identify target groups adults who are in need of additional services, further work is needed, both in identifying target groups within the local population and developing a more in-depth and nuanced understanding of the existing target groups. Iceland, too, reports that a key weakness in assessing the needs of low-educated adults in guidance is the fact that there is only limited data available on this cohort. Flanders reported more formal structures within employment guidance for assessing client needs than the other GOAL partners, whether through initial assessment of specific needs linked to assigning clients to the appropriate guidance programme or as a self-analysis exercise completed by clients.

8.2 Development of an action plan

International analysis

8.2.1. Hawthorn and Alloway (2009) emphasise the importance of drawing up realistic action plans comprised of small steps for this client group. Hawthorn and Alloway also suggest that an action plan

should identify barriers, and the actions needed to help clients overcome those barriers, including the use of additional services where necessary.

National analysis

8.2.2. In Flanders, the development of an action plan is one of the required outputs of the career guidance programme supported by the PES. In most of the cases (80%) this action plan had been developed. The action plan is however often considered as an administrative requirement for funding and developed by the counsellor rather than a supportive tool for the client. Data from Slovenia suggests that some counsellors believe that insufficient time is dedicated to the development of action plans and that the process would benefit from better tools.

8.3 Collaboration with other organisations

International analysis

8.3.1. Hawthorn and Alloway (2009) identified links with other agencies as one of 11 critical success factors in offering careers advice to adults. Network arrangements are important in order to meet client needs through referral, to provide professional support, to encourage partnership working including setting up new joint initiatives, and to keep in touch with funding opportunities. However, as networks can be time and resource intensive to maintain, it is often more effective to capitalise on existing networks rather than establish new ones.

National analysis

8.3.2. In some countries there is a high degree of collaboration between relevant stakeholders in educational and career guidance for adults (for example, schools, Public Employment Services, VET and HE institutions, local businesses and employers). Such collaborations appear to be more formal in Slovenia than in Lithuania (where there are no national agreements, only inter-institutional ones), but even in Slovenia there is a sense that collaborations tend to exist between partners who have a history of working with each other and that new collaborations, which might prove more beneficial to clients, are seldom initiated.

8.3.3. A strength in Iceland is that collaborations forged between the Lifelong Learning Centres and the Education and Training Service Centres have proved effective in reaching target groups; however there are weaknesses that stem from inconsistencies between educational institutions (in the evaluation of courses with the same curriculum for instance).

8.3.4. In Flanders, collaboration can be undermined where partner organisations within the sector of employment guidance are effectively in competition over clients and want to guide them to their own specialist counselling. Unstable funding can contribute to weaknesses in the collaboration system as a considerable time investment is needed to collaborate with partners. In the Netherlands the new nationwide action plan against low literacy, “Count on Skills”, provides new opportunities for partnership building, particularly because of the new involvement of the Ministries of Health and Social Affairs in low literacy action plans. Across the country, networks are being built in which municipalities, education providers, guidance centres, libraries and NGOs cooperate. The aims of these networks are to: improve outreach to the target group; direct clients to appropriate basic skills courses; and monitor clients’ progress with regard to outcomes such as basic skills improvements,

social inclusion and labour market participation. Partners for the GOAL project are or will become part of the existing regional networks of the Count on Skills programme. The Reading and Writing Foundation, an adult literacy NGO, receives funding to maintain, extend and support these networks.

8.4 Effectiveness of Practitioners

8.4.1. The process by which the effectiveness of guidance practitioners is measured differs between the GOAL countries. In both Flanders and Lithuania, impact on employment is partly judged by results – that is, by client employment rates and outcomes in the period after counselling. No research is available from the Netherlands on the effectiveness of guidance practitioners. One reason for this is that effectiveness is strongly dependent on the quality of the individual practitioner, but there is currently no policy focus on practitioner quality.

8.4.2. A finding from the Slovenia evidence review probably holds good for all the GOAL countries: in order to evaluate the effectiveness of practitioners, more work needs to be done to understand the component parts of the counsellor’s job, especially where that role involves working with vulnerable adults.

8.5 Engagement of clients

8.5.1. Successful engagement of clients can depend on the location of services. One possible route to more successful client engagement in education and career guidance is through actively involving the client group in the development of guidance services.

8.5.2. Educational and vocational guidance, and prior learning validation, have proved to be successful ways of reaching low-educated adults in Iceland, but the complexity of the system, and the lack of transparency about available opportunities, poses a threat to client engagement. Flemish evaluation research found evidence of differences in engagement levels between different cohorts: for example, clients over the age of 45 attended fewer sessions, although these sessions contained as many total hours as observed with other groups and were spread over a similar time period, suggesting that older workers may have had fewer opportunities to visit the careers centres.

9 Service delivery and evaluation: outcomes

International analysis

9.0.1. More research is needed to assess the effects, and in particular the longer term effects, of participation in adult guidance. Research and evaluation is more prevalent in the field of career guidance than educational guidance. Most monitoring that takes place does so in terms of “top down” targets and performance indicators which are set by governments or by funding bodies and which tend to focus on the outcome variables which are easiest to measure quantitatively. Benefits that are harder to quantify but which may be of significant importance to users – and which may serve as necessary intermediary steps on the way to longer term outcomes – are equally valid but are sometimes less straightforward to measure.

9.0.2. Measuring “soft” outcomes (that is, outcomes such as changes to confidence or motivation) almost inevitably involves gathering data at two different time points, measuring distance travelled. But changes can take a long time to be felt and few evaluations have the capacity or the funding to track clients over a long enough period.

9.1 Client Satisfaction

9.1.3. Client satisfaction is the easiest aspect of a service to measure as it is relatively easy to ask clients to give a reaction to the service that they have received and to routinely record this as a part of monitoring. Kirkpatrick (1994) argues that evidence usually collected through feedback forms and customer satisfaction surveys which attempt to identify and understand the experience of the service user should be a critical element of service design and evaluation.

9.1.4. In the GOAL countries it is common practice for guidance services in both the employment and education sectors to evaluate client satisfaction, and most countries were able to report high levels of satisfaction in their evaluation evidence base. A more nuanced picture emerges from Flanders, where Verbruggen and Sels (2009) reported high levels of service user satisfaction across a number of measures including value for money, counsellor competence, and relevance and impartiality of advice.

9.1.5. Across other impact measurements, relatively little evidence is gathered in any of the GOAL countries.

9.2 Changes in knowledge or skill

9.2.1. Very little data is currently gathered in the GOAL project countries about outcomes related to changes in guidance clients’ knowledge and skills. The Netherlands is an exception, as clients there have their basic skills (literacy and numeracy) assessed before the guidance begins.

9.3 Changes in life circumstance

9.3.1. There are two key challenges in monitoring data on changes in life circumstance – the need to follow clients over a long time period, and the difficulty of linking changes in life circumstances to the guidance received.

9.3.2. The national literature reviews from Flanders, Slovenia and Lithuania found very little evaluation evidence on changes in the life circumstances of service users following guidance. In Iceland two studies have reported on “soft” outcomes from programme participation, in terms of positive changes to levels of self-confidence. Only the Netherlands has gathered robust quantitative data on this impact as part of service evaluation (although no control group was used): 58% of clients reported being more active in social/leisure activities after using the guidance service, 51% reported feeling more socially included and around 50% reported better health.

9.4 Changes in employment or training status

9.4.1. Outcome data in the form of destination data indicating that clients have gained a job or embarked on a course of learning following the guidance are, after client satisfaction, the variables

most likely to be monitored by guidance services or their funders. This area is, however, problematic, primarily because of the connection between these data and programme funding.

9.4.2. Although this type of outcome data are collected in some GOAL countries, local evaluators stressed that there is a threat that the relationship between funding and subsequent rates of employment may mean an overreliance on getting the client into any available job, rather than the most suitable or most sustainable employment option. For example, in Flanders, funding of employment guidance is mainly based on results – that is, client employment rates three months after guidance.

9.5 Fit of education, employment or training with client skills and aspirations

9.5.1. The appeal of measuring, for evaluation or quality assurance purposes, the fit between the outcome of the guidance and the client’s abilities, aptitudes, interest and achievements is clear and thus this “matching” process is a traditional feature of guidance practice within a practical framework. This practice is not without criticism, however, as matching fails to take into account human behaviour, and the fact that individuals do not always act in their own self-interest.

9.5.2. Very little national data was found on the fit of employment or training with the skills and aspirations of guidance clients: the Czech, Dutch, Icelandic and Lithuanian evaluators found no relevant sources, and although this relationship is evaluated occasionally in Slovenia’s regional guidance centres, no national results from these evaluations were available.

9.6 Fit of education or training with employment opportunities

9.6.1. Some evidence emerges from the literature of good practice from guidance service providers in ensuring a fit between training offers and employment opportunities. In Lithuania, for example, VET institutions which specialise in providing training for adults have successfully cooperated with local businesses regarding the recruitment and further training of employees, and programme offers in VET and higher education are based on labour market need surveys and consultations with employer organisations (Cedefop, 2014).

9.7 Sustainability

9.7.1. Lack of sustainability presents a major threat to guidance and orientation services and to the continuity of the reform process itself. This situation has become particularly acute in all countries following the 2008 economic crisis with funding levels dropping year on year; at the local level, guidance services for adults must compete with other funding priorities.

9.7.2. In both Lithuania and Slovenia, the main threat to guidance services for adults, and for low-educated adults, is the precariousness and time-limited nature both of funding and of the action plans developed as part of national strategies.

9.7.3. In the Netherlands discontinuation of national funding to the Education and Career Guidance Points would mean the collapse of more than half of these guidance centres. This said, a strength of the system in the Netherlands is that services, which were launched in 2010, are evaluated regularly,

and the positive evaluations to date have helped ensure the continuity of the service. Evaluations also offer the opportunity for service improvement.

9.7.4. The expectation in all countries is that the GOAL project offers the opportunity to build sustainable services that contribute to national action plans.

10 Local SWOT analyses

10.0.1. Local SWOT analyses completed by the six GOAL partners assessed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in the pre-programme environments at each intervention site. These needs assessments were primarily intended to shape the experimentation protocols being developed for each project site.

10.1 General SWOT

Current service provision

10.1.1. Local SWOT analyses completed by the six GOAL partners assessed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in the pre-programme environments at each intervention site. These needs assessments were primarily intended to shape the experimentation protocols being developed for each project site.

10.1.2. Despite the strong local dimension, and the fact that each country is at a different stage in the development of its guidance services for the target group, a number of common issues and themes emerge, which highlight shared strengths and concerns.

10.1.3. Existing guidance services are broad and generally offered free-of-charge. Although services differ widely in scope, range and delivery mechanisms, all teams reported that services were staffed by strong teams of professionals, committed to their jobs and to their colleagues, who have a positive attitude and are highly client-orientated. Moreover, evidence emerged of well-established methods of cooperation between delivery partners and, in most cases, a shared agenda underpinning this cooperation.

10.1.4. The greatest weakness in current provision is limited resources, i.e. inadequate and unstable financing, which threaten the long-term sustainability of guidance initiatives. Resource challenges manifest themselves through a number of routes, including understaffing. In many cases staff have too many competing demands on their time from other aspects of their job roles.

Target group

10.1.5. By focusing on the needs of low-educated adults, the GOAL project is targeting a cohort that is more likely to experience multifaceted problems, many of which impact on engagement levels and undermine the effectiveness of educational and employment guidance services. The target group at its widest is both heterogeneous and complex – placing many demands on counsellors and meaning that complex services and resources will be needed to meet the needs of individual clients. The project represents an opportunity to adapt existing methods to the sensitivities of low-educated adults and, in some cases, to appeal to marginalised or hard-to-reach adults through new technology and social media.

10.2 SWOT per Intervention strategy

1) Networks and Partnerships

10.2.1. Existing partnerships are based on shared objectives at the policy and the management levels; however this is not always matched by shared strategic objectives. Networks can be overly large and complex, and the good will on which partnerships run is vulnerable to staffing changes. There is a need in some countries to look outside of traditional partnerships to find new and better relationships, and GOAL offers the opportunity to develop an identity and brand for the services being piloted.

2) Tools

10.2.2. The GOAL partner countries share the desire to improve services for low-educated adults by adding more structure to the guidance process, whether by formalising aspects of the interview process or drawing on a tried and tested toolkit of resources. The partner countries also note, however, that there are challenges when using existing tools with this client group, who are more likely, for example, to have poor digital skills, or who have trust and self-esteem issues that make tools which require personal reflection seem intrusive and demanding. Tools present valuable opportunities to engage clients in the guidance process, yet their use also places many new demands on counsellors, who must be trained to use the tools if their effectiveness is to be optimised.

3) Competences

10.2.3. Some GOAL countries do have competence profiles for guidance staff, or well-developed descriptions of their role which can serve as the foundation of a new competence profile that includes the specific skills needed to work with the GOAL target groups. However, this process is complicated by the fact that counsellors have different starting points and different needs, and that resources for staff development and training are limited. To all teams, the third intervention strategy, focused on counsellor competences, represents an important opportunity for cross-national learning and cooperation.

4) Outreach

10.2.4. GOAL is focused on reaching out and bringing outreach to adults who have not previously engaged with educational, training and employment guidance. Although contact routes exist, there is a need to improve these and to improve visibility and accessibility, so that the service is not lost and is understood by clients and partners alike.

5) Providing Quality Services

10.2.5. The GOAL teams are able to draw on a strong base of guidance experience and current political will to extend quality services to the target group. To do this, more knowledge of the target group needs to be gained, but there is a commitment to developing services that are client-led and that can generate positive outcomes for clients that are more than “quick fixes” to their short-term employment needs.

10.2.6. Lastly, through this evaluation, the GOAL project offers the country teams the opportunity to measure and monitor effectiveness in ways other than client surveys and to see which data are collectable and most useful in monitoring impact in particular.