

Lifelong Guidance

ABSTRACT

The Lifelong Guidance is one of the most crucial tool for implementing the strategy of Lifelong Learning and for reaching the 2020 benchmarks of the EC by each of the Member States. Career guidance refers to services and activities intended to assist individuals, of any age and at any point throughout their lives, to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers. Lifelong guidance should start as an early process that assist children and young people upon active career planning and personal development. The transition to a knowledge-based economy and society commits to develop citizens and economies through lifelong learning where education and training have a fundamental place in the implementing progression of the revised Lisbon strategy for jobs and growth.

KEYWORDS: *Lifelong Guidance, Lifelong Learning, 2020 benchmarks of the EC.*

“With a view to ensuring the effective exercise of the right to vocational guidance, the Parties undertake, provide or promote, as necessary, a service which will assist all persons, including the handicapped,

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to solve problems related to occupational choice and progress, with due regard to the individual's characteristics and their relation to occupational opportunity; this assistance should be available free of charge, both to young persons, including schoolchildren, and to adults."

EUROPEAN SOCIAL CHARTER (1996 Revision) Article 9
The right to vocational guidance

GENESIS OF LIFELONG GUIDANCE

Definition

Lifelong guidance is the most recent step in the hitherto history of the development of vocational guidance and career counselling. The definition of vocational guidance appeared for the first time in the official formula of the National Vocational Guidance Association in 1937 in the USA. There it was stated that it is *"the process of assisting the individual to choose an occupation, prepare for it, enter upon and progress in it"*. Disregarding the choice of a given occupation, the definition seems to be quite good even nowadays as it takes into account the lifelong dimension.

A second dimension, that of lifewide seems to appear in the Super revision of the definition: *"The process of helping a person to develop and accept an integrated and adequate picture of himself and of his role in the world of work, to test this concept against reality, and to convert it into reality, with satisfaction to himself and benefit to society"* (Super, 1951, p. 92).

Thus, taking into account both these definitions as the origin of the concept for lifelong guidance, it becomes easier to understand the current definition by OECD. It is based on a milestone EU document, i.e., the Council Resolution (2004), which took into account the definition of lifelong guidance, and was developed by Cedefop (Sultana, 2004), and presented in the handbook

for policy makers: *“Career guidance refers to services and activities intended to assist individuals of any age and at any point throughout their lives to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers. Such services may be found in schools, universities and colleges, in training institutions, in public employment services, in the workplace, in the voluntary or community sector and in the private sector. The activities may take place on an individual or group basis, and may be face-to-face or at a distance (including help lines and web-based services). They include career information provision (in print, ICT-based and other forms), assessment and self-assessment tools, counselling interviews, career education programmes (to help individuals develop their self awareness, opportunity awareness, and career management skills), taster programmes (to sample options before choosing them), work search programmes, and transition services”* (OECD, 2004, p. 10).

The definition is quite complex, therefore, the meaning of lifelong guidance, not in the form of an outline of formal definition, but rather in that of explanation, was made clearer in the next Cedefop publication on the use of common European reference tools (Cedefop, 2005), in which it was stated that *“Guidance refers to a range of activities, which include for example information and advice giving, counselling, competence assessment, mentoring, advocacy, teaching decision-making and career management skills, that enable citizens of any age and at any point in their lives (lifelong) to identify their capacities, competences and interests, to make meaningful educational, training and occupational decisions and to manage their individual life paths in learning, work and other settings in which these capacities and competences are learned and/or used (lifewide). Guidance is provided in a range of settings: education, training, employment, community and private.”*

As suggested by the authors, the explanation is pivotal in avoiding ambiguity in the Member States, (Cedefop, 2005).

Another point of view is understanding that it has deep roots in classic vocational psychology, of which only two examples of

the concept's origin have been mentioned above. Nevertheless, these examples shed light on a deeper understanding of the two dimensions of human life concealed in the definitions lifelong and lifewide as a bridge between the classic concept of vocational guidance and the modern one of lifelong guidance.

Lifelong guidance in EU documents

The transition to a knowledge-based economy and society is committed to developing citizens and economies through lifelong learning where education and training have a fundamental place in the implementing progression of the revised Lisbon strategy for jobs and growth. It is a response to the continuous changes in education and employment policies arising from the Lisbon (2000) goals of making Europe the most competitive knowledge-based economy and society in the world, marked by social cohesion, by 2010.

In 2002, the Member States committed themselves to developing national lifelong learning strategies (Council Resolution, 2002), including formal, non-formal and informal learning at all levels of education and training, which starts from the pre-school and primary continues through the secondary and tertiary levels and ends at adult education. The resolution stressed the context of all learning activities undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences within the spheres of private, civic, social or working life.

Consequently, any lifelong learning strategy should provide flexible learning pathways and effective transition points between systems and levels of education and training that avoid dead ends. An important aspect in all this is to provide a strategic overview and a coherent set of priorities (Council, 2008) while also identifying the resources needed for different measures, including a transparent system for recognition of prior learning.

It seems that the idea of lifelong learning (Härtel, Freibergova, Kasurinen, Schiersmann, Noworol, 2007) is a response to multiple transitions, which increasingly characterize citizens' lives: particularly from the World of Education (VET, higher education, further training, etc.) to the World of Work (employment, entrepreneurship, unemployment, etc.), (Banka, 2007; Härtel, Noworol, Bańka, Kremser, 2005).

The European Commission has recognized that it is not enough to provide citizens with educational chances but also necessary to guide them through their whole lifespan. Hence, the idea of lifelong guidance has started to play a key role in all major decisions that individuals have to take throughout their lives. In this respect, it can contribute to empowering individuals to manage their own career paths in a more rational way in the context of today's labour market, and to achieve a more secure balance between their personal and professional lives.

There is a political consensus at the international level that guidance is seen as a key strategic component for implementing lifelong learning and employment strategies at local, regional, national and European levels. A condition for effective guidance is continuing improvement of the ways in which education and employment systems reach social cohesion.

As the contemporary education and employment related choices facing young people change and become more and more complex, good guidance becomes increasingly important. Change and complexity arise not only from changes in jobs and career patterns, but also from the growing flexibility of the pathways that link education to working life. Such change and complexity constitute strong challenge to lifelong guidance, a challenge that should start as an early process assisting children and young people with active career planning and personal development.

The OECD report in the year 2000 established certain basic goals that are still relevant, and, to some extent, constitute the base indicators for benchmarks 2010:

- A large proportion of young people completing full upper-secondary education with a recognized qualification for either work, tertiary study or both;
- High level of knowledge and skills among young people at the end of the transition phase;
- A small proportion of teenagers not being at the one time in education and unemployed;
- A large proportion of young adults with a job after leaving education;
- Few young people remaining unemployed for lengthy periods after leaving education;
- Stable and positive employment and educational histories in the years after leaving upper secondary education; and
- An equitable distribution of outcomes by gender, social background and region.

Regarding Lifelong Guidance, the Council Resolution (2004) was a milestone document. In almost all later EU documents concerning LLG there are notes based on the Resolution, setting the key objectives for lifelong guidance policy for all European Union citizens, prioritizing their central role:

- refocusing guidance provision (1) to develop individuals' career competency to enable them to manage their lifelong and lifewide learning and work pathways and the transitions therein; and (2) to do this as an integral part of lifelong and lifewide education and training programmes;
- widening access to services so that each citizen can have access to guidance throughout their lives and at times, in locations, and in forms that respond to their needs;
- improving the quality of the services at national, regional and local levels, and, where appropriate, the assurance mechanisms for guidance services, information and products (including on-line services); and
- strengthening structures for policy and systems development at national and regional levels by involving appropriate key

players (such as ministries, social partners, employment services, service providers, guidance practitioners, education and training institutions, consumers, parents and youth).

Since the milestone Council Resolution (2004), there has been an increasing level of European wide understanding of the key role, played by lifelong guidance in the development of a knowledge-based society, social cohesion, reaching Lisbon goals in the member states and sustainable development of the European labour market.

The Recommendation (2006) by the European Parliament and the Council *on key competences for lifelong learning* emphasizes that the ability to search for education and training opportunities can be developed and supported by guidance processes towards personal fulfilment and professional development of citizens discernible by social integration.

Making use of the existing initiatives at the time, the Council Resolution of 15 November 2007 *on new skills for new jobs* aims at strengthening the identification of new types of jobs and skills needs at the European level. It stresses the role of lifelong guidance, which should enable jobseekers to identify the competence modules required to move to new jobs within the knowledge society.

A Cedefop (2008) forecast suggests that the total increase in employment in Europe between 2006 and 2015 will be over 12.5 million additional jobs at the highest qualification level (tertiary education) and almost 9.5 million jobs at the medium level, whereas the demand for jobs requiring low qualifications (lower secondary education) is to fall by 8.5 million. In 2015, high qualifications will be required for approximately 30% of jobs, whereas vocational qualifications will be needed for almost half of the rest. It is expected that this will increase the pressure on the upper and post-secondary levels of education, mostly to improve quality and access.

In 2007, the Member States set up a European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN), comprising voluntary access of Member States to increase the opportunities to learn from one another and to cooperate on developing policies, systems and practices in the field of lifelong guidance. Unfortunately the ELGPN do not emphasis cooperation and development of LLG at the national level of many Member States.

The European Parliament and Council Recommendation (2008) *on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning* is supposed to facilitate workers' mobility and help make lifelong guidance an essential part of education and employment policies and practices in the Member States.

The Council Conclusions (2008) *on adult learning* stress the responsibility of the Member States to establish quality information and guidance systems which are more personalized, fair and equitable to the economic, social and individual benefits.

The joint progress report of the Council and the Commission (2008) *on the implementation of the work programme 'Delivering lifelong learning for knowledge, creativity and innovation'* notes that "*particular attention must also be given to lifelong guidance*"

Council Resolution (2008) *on better integrating lifelong guidance into lifelong learning strategies* points out four priority areas, focusing on lifelong guidance within each:

1. Encouraging the lifelong acquisition of career management skills;
2. Facilitating access by all citizens to guidance services;
3. Developing the quality assurance of guidance provision;
4. Encouraging coordination and cooperation among various national, regional and local stakeholders.

LIFELONG GUIDANCE, EMPLOYABILITY AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Three publications (European Commission; OECD – Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2004, Cedefop, 2005, 2008a), intended as tools for policy and decision-makers as well as for stakeholders to support the implementation of the 2004 resolution and other above-mentioned EU documents, which are focused to supporting the development of national and regional guidance policies, systems and practices in the education and employment sectors. In general, Member States should establish and strengthen structures for more effective guidance policy formulation and implementation setting up their national guidance forums.

Corresponding to lifelong guidance, which is the domain of well educated professionals and counselling organizations providing service for citizens, there is employability, which refers to a person's capability of gaining employment. It is strongly influenced by the knowledge, skills, competencies, motivation and attitudes of a person wishing to gain employment as well as by the institutions in and rules of the labour market. Another important factor which should be considered as a framework for employability is demographic change (See Figure 1.)

Analysing the old age dependency ratios, it becomes obvious that in 2008 there are almost four persons of working age, i.e., 15-64 years old, for every person aged 65 or over. In 2060, the ratio is expected to be almost two to one.

Taking into account the total number of population, 495,4 million in 2008, and the forecast, 519,9 million in 2030 and 505,7 million in 2060, the working age population, that is, 15-64 year-olds, is to fall by about 50 million while the population of older than 65 will increase by more than 60 million. Thus, loud and clear from the numbers that the provision of LLG services and their quality will play at least the role of double importance, taking

into consideration that the state of they are in today is sufficient. However, the picture painted for the present situation may not be altogether true concerning LLG provision as the figures appear to vary hugely from one country to the other, and quite a few policy makers seem to disregard the problem.

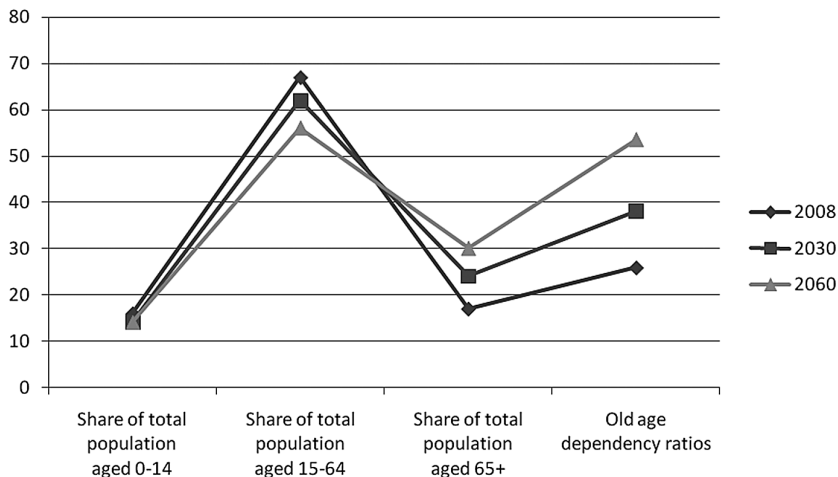


Fig. 1. Demographic change in EU 27 (in %). *Source:* EUROSTAT population statistics.

The core indicator for measuring progress in the field of employability is the share of population with high educational attainment. It presents the educational characteristics of the supply side of the labour market, that is, the proportion of highly skilled workers in the labour force, which plays an important role in relation to economic growth.

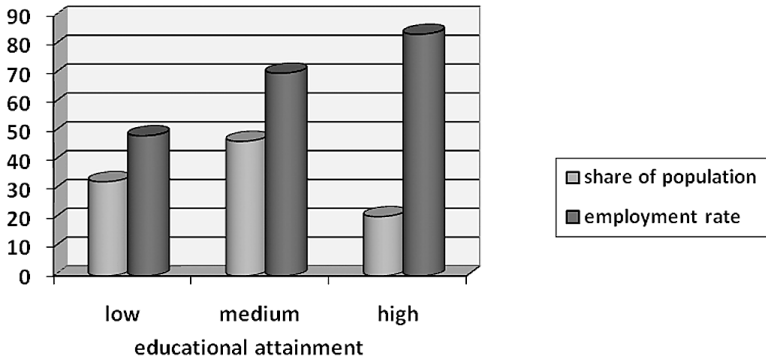


Fig. 2. Educational attainment and employment rate in 2007 (EU-27, 15-64-year-olds). Source: EUROSTAT (LFS).

The Council Conclusion of May 2007 adopted the educational attainment of the population as one of sixteen core indicators for measuring progress on education and training systems. The Commission emphasized the central indicator for monitoring progress towards the knowledge-based economy as the share of the population with high educational attainment. The situation in the year 2007 is shown in Figure 2. below.

From Figure 2, it can be seen that the employment rate grows linearly depending on the educational attainment: the higher the educational attainment, the higher the employment rate. This regularity does not mirror the share of population: higher levels of educational attainment relates to the smallest proportion of population, while the biggest corresponds to medium-level educational attainment.

The main characteristic of educational attainment of the population in Member States is that young people with higher levels of formal educational qualifications enter the labour force, while older generations with lower levels gradually leave. This generational effect becomes more visible year by year.

Another interesting aspect of the educational attainment level of the population is the corresponding performance in the labour market. The overall tendency is made clearly visible in Figure 3 below, where a clear tendency can be observed: the higher the educational attainment, the higher the employment rates are across European countries.

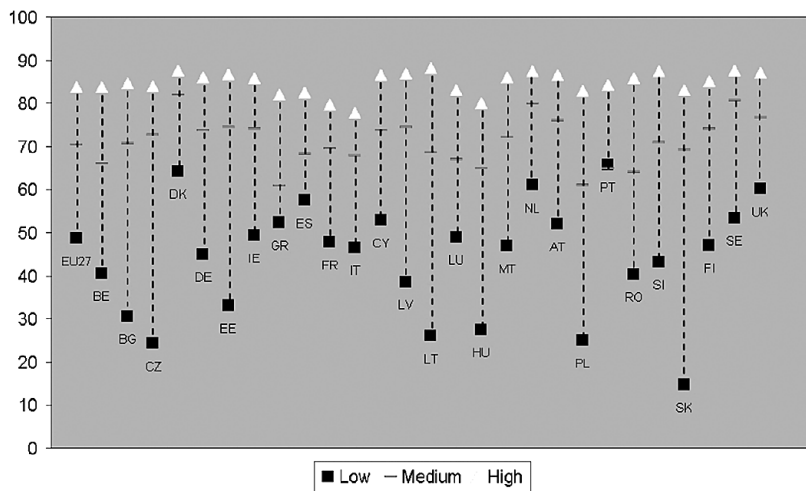


Fig. 3. Percentage of employment rates (vertical axis) and educational attainment (low, medium, high) in different Member States for 15-64-year-olds in 2007. Source: EUROSTAT, New Cronos database.

Figure 3. only illustrates labour market demand in relationship to people with different educational attainment levels. It does neither consider the rules of and institutions in the national, regional and local labour markets, nor the overall labour market situation, which also impacts on the performance of workers with different educational attainment levels. What is more important, it does not mirror the quality of LLG services, which has significant impact both on the educational attainment and on the employment rates.

The demand for higher competences is expected to be rising continuously in most occupations, including uncomplicated elementary jobs, due to the ongoing growth of the service sector and sweeping technological and organisational changes.

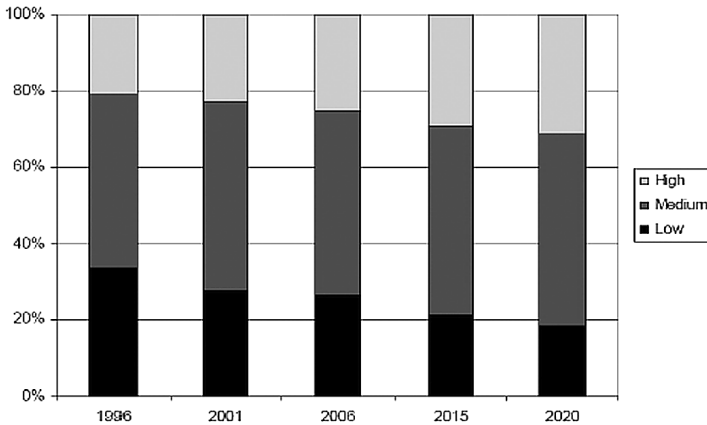


Fig. 4. Employment shares by education attainment level in the years 1996-2020. Source: Cedefop (2008), EU27.

Based on projections made by Cedefop, in 2015, high qualifications will be needed in approximately 30% of all jobs, whereas almost 50% will require medium-level qualifications, including vocational qualifications. Jobs requiring only low level qualifications will have decreased from over 30% in 1996 to around 20% of the working age population in 2015 (See Figure 4.). It is expected that this will increase the pressure on the upper and post-secondary levels of education to improve the quality and access to their LLG service provision in the broad sense that means including dropouts and graduates.

As mentioned above, progression in educational attainment of the population and increases in employment rates require the development of lifelong guidance systems in the Member States in order that they can face up to the future challenges of

demographic change and productivity growth. One important approach for doing this is to develop National Fora for Lifelong Guidance Policy, and, incidentally, to reach this aim, all international initiatives, especially those supported by EC funding are very welcome. One of them, of high importance for the development of LLG service provisions across the Europe, would appear to be the EUROPLACEMENT project.

LLG AND 2020 BENCHMARKS

Table 1. The 5 benchmarks to be achieved by 2010 and by 2020.

<i>Benchmarks to be achieved by 2010</i>	<i>Benchmarks to be achieved by 2020</i>
No more than 10% early school leavers.	At least 95% of children from the age of 4 and the age for starting compulsory primary education should be participating in early childhood education. The proportion of early leavers from education and training should be less than 10%.
Decrease of at least 20% in the percentage of low-achieving pupils in reading literacy.	The proportion of low-achieving 15-year-olds in reading, mathematics and science should be less than 15%.
At least 85% of young people should have completed upper secondary education.	
Increase of at least 15% in the number of tertiary graduates in MST, with a simultaneous decrease in the gender imbalance.	
	The share of 30-34-year-olds with tertiary educational attainment should be at least 40%;
At least 12.5% of the adult population should participate in lifelong learning.	An average of at least 15% of adults should participate in lifelong learning.

In May 2007, the Council introduced in Conclusions (2007) a clear arrangement of 16 core indicators for monitoring progress towards the Lisbon objectives in education and training. They are seen as a vital measure for monitoring the progress made by Member States in the area of guidance in their lifelong learning strategies. They also play an important role as a key tool for assessing the implementation of the goals set in the Lisbon Strategy.

In order to guide progress on the Education and Training 2010 Work Programme, the Council introduced an indicator for tertiary graduates in Mathematics, Science and Technology (MST) and, in May 2003, adopted five benchmarks to be achieved by 2010, and in May 2009, five benchmarks for 2020 (See Table 1.).

The Table 1. shows that the benchmarks 2020 are new with two exceptions. The first is the benchmark *The share of early leavers from education and training should be less than 10%*, which is gradually stronger condition in comparison to the one for 2010 *No more than 10% early school leavers*. The benchmark was totally not reached till 2010.

The situation regarding the above for all EU27 countries is presented in Figure 5 below.

The benchmark for 2010/20 was reached by only seven Member States, HR, LT, PL, CZ, SL, SK, FI, and almost by AT, already in the year 2010 (See Figure 5.). It is also possible to consider this fact by taking into account the countries that have already received the proscribed level of progress and performance exceeding the average of the five European benchmarks for 2010. These are PL, UK, DK, FI, IE, IS, NO, SE and SL. The 18 other countries have not yet reached the average of the five benchmarks for 2010.

The second exception is the percentage of the adult population which should participate in lifelong learning (See Table 1.). The benchmark 2020 deals with a higher average, which means

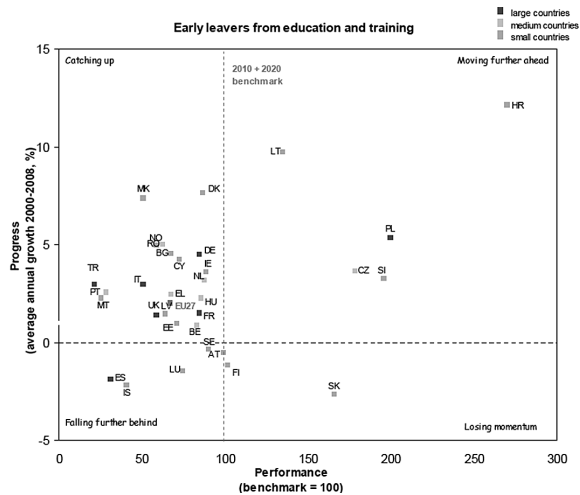


Fig. 5. Early school leavers. Percentage of those aged 18-24 with less than upper secondary education and not in education or training. Source: European Commission DG JRC/Crell.

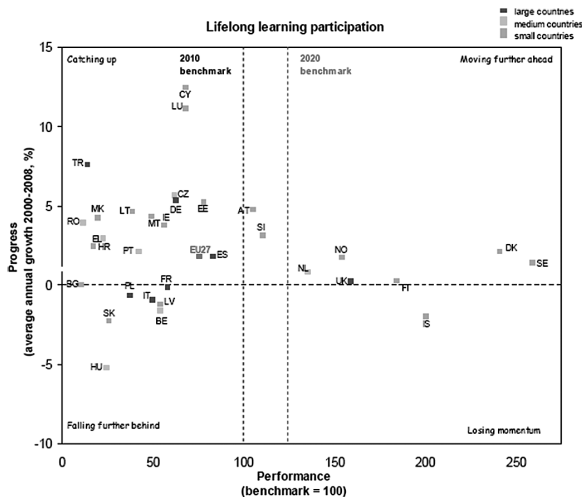


Fig. 6. The percentage of the adult population which should participate in life-long learning. Source: European Commission DG JRC/Crell.

a progress of 2.5% in comparison to the benchmark of 2010 (See Figure 6).

The performance and progress made by each country from 2000 until 2008, as average for the EU27, in each of the five benchmark areas are shown in Figure 7 below. It is clear that the EU27 average indicates that only in one benchmark, the one for MST graduates, progress and performance has been good and the benchmark for 2010 reached. In contrast, a very bad situation is illustrated by one benchmark, i.e., the one concerning low achievers in reading, where the EU27 average shows a tendency of falling further behind. Concerning the other three benchmarks, the situation is fairly good: the average for EU27 shows that progress has been made, the results not falling too far from the benchmark for 2010.

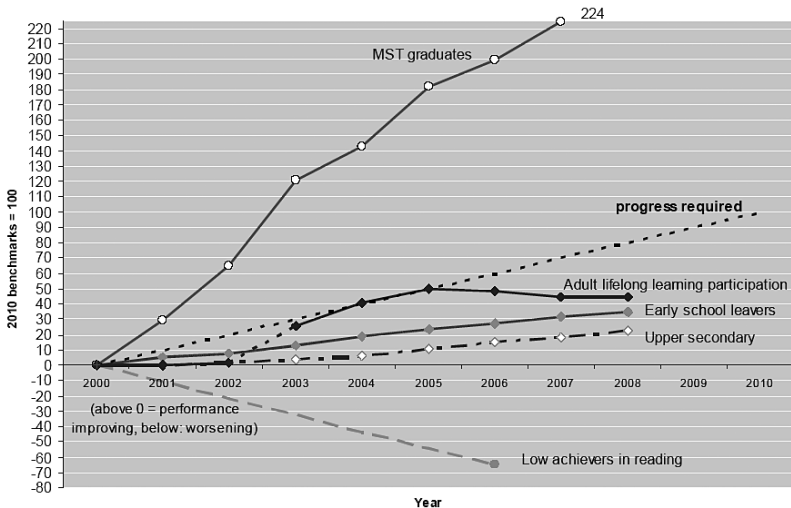


Fig. 7. Progress 2000 – 2008 towards meeting the five benchmarks for 2010 (EU averages). Source: European Commission DG Education and Culture.

Figure 8. below presents the five benchmarks for 2020 as hitherto performance and progress of the EU27.

From the figure, certain trends towards reaching benchmarks for 2020 can be observed. Two of them, *Pre-primary education* and *Tertiary attainment*, exceed the required level of progress, and it would be good to maintain the situation for the next 10 years. Two others, *Early school leavers* and *Adult lifelong learning*, are at present below the required level of progress. However, hopefully, progress can be made within the next 10 years. The worst situation is with the benchmark *Low achievers in reading*, where the EU27 average is falling steeply (See Figure 8.), which sets a great challenge for primary and secondary schools. There is some hope, though, of *Pre-primary education* perhaps being able to change the situation.

In conclusion, it is obvious that, to a great extent, reaching the 2020 benchmarks depends on the position of lifelong guidance in the strategy of LLL set by each Member State and the quality

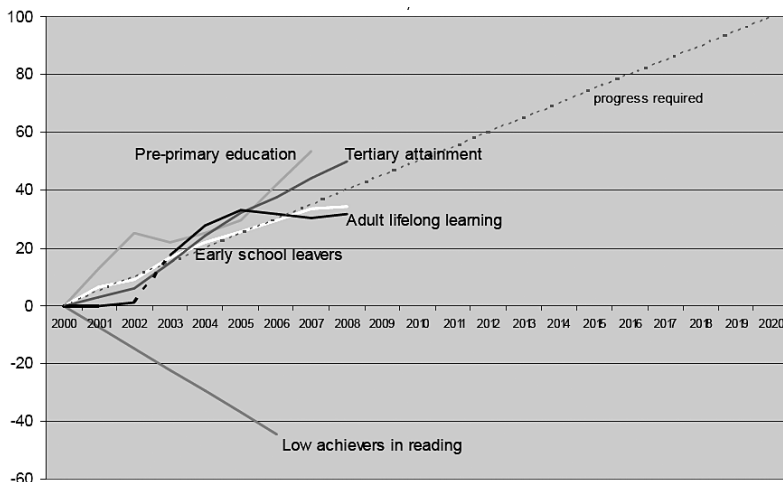


Fig. 8. Progress 2000–2008 towards meeting the five benchmarks for 2020 (EU averages). Source: European Commission DG Education and Culture.

of service provided. In other words, to a great extent, reaching the Lisbon goals is dependent on the creation and development of high quality career guidance services with open access to citizens of any age and in any life role, with special respect given to the transition of youth to the labour market.

Explicit lifelong learning strategies have been adopted by the majority of countries and the implementation of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) is entering a crucial phase. Most Member States are making significant progress in developing frameworks for national qualifications and in linking to a broader use of learning outcomes in order to define and describe qualifications and the validation of non-formal and informal learning. Measures have also been taken to further develop lifelong guidance systems for adults and also to help young people complete their education and training and make successful transition to the labour market.

In a rapidly changing world, lifelong learning is essential to the development of today's knowledge-based society and economy and the key to employment and economic success. The EU strategy emphasizes countries working together and learning from each other, principally developing lifelong guidance systems as an implementation tool for lifelong learning strategy.

Therefore, the priority of the Member States is given to strengthening policies, systems and practices in lifelong guidance in Europe so as to create a suitable institutional environment and adequate systemic devices for converging strategies towards building national and regional lifelong guidance systems (Cedefop, 2008a). The basic role is to support and develop the national LLG fora, which are independent and apolitical organizations across sectors, with high levels of equity, efficiency and quality. These NFLLGP are often created as a bottom-up movement of LLG professionals and should be strongly supported by regional governments and relevant ministries. In this context, improved cooperation such as EUROPLACEMENT and cross-

sectoral and multiprofessional initiatives, increased dialogue and stronger partnerships among all key players and stakeholders in the frame of national fora will help lifelong guidance become a reality in the Member States.

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