"Career Management Skills for Youths and Adults in a Public Employment Service context" *Ronald G. Sultana*	EUROPEAN LIFELONG GUIDANCE POLICY NETWORK
Reflection Note **In preparation for the WP1 - ELGPN Peer Learning Event** **Lisbon, 28-29 March 2011**	

1. Introduction—the PES context:

1.1. In many countries, many of the main career guidance (CG) services are located within Public Employment Services (PES). Many of these services are addressed at adults, particularly those looking for employment, and less often for those wanting to change their jobs. In some cases, CG services are also provided to young people who are still in education and/or training, with PES staff either receiving students on their premises, and/or going to schools to provide services there. In many countries, substantial public resources are invested in these services. They therefore have a significant influence on the extent and nature of the CG services available to citizens.

1.2. PES can be said to have 4 main functions: [a] job broking; [b] providing labour market information; [c] administering labour market adjustment programmes; and [d] administering unemployment benefits. CG services, as well as elements of CG that are embedded in otherwise administrative tasks, can be found across the four functions. However, most Career Management Skills (CMS) training is provided through [c], i.e. labour market adjustment programmes. These include:
   - job-search assistance programmes, generally offered through self-help provision, group activities (in the form of job clubs, job fairs and workshops), and individual assistance (in the form of CG and intensive counselling);
   - training and education programmes; and
   - direct job creation programmes.

1.3. A study of CG in PES in Europe[1] has suggested that one can distinguish between four distinct facets of the CG service offered to individuals:
   [a] the personalisation of services;
   [b] the attention paid to assessing the individual's attributes and preferences;
   [c] the attention paid to long-term career strategies and CMS, seeking to assure not only their immediate employment but also their future employability; and
   [d] the attention paid to helping individuals to develop personal action plans.

   The study also suggested that there is some tension between the tendency for CG to address longer-term goals, linked to lifelong learning and sustained

[1] R.G. Sultana & A.G. Watts (2006) *Career Guidance in Europe's Public Employment Services: Trends and Challenges*. Brussels: DG Employment, Social Affairs, and Equal Opportunities. The full report is at: http://www.um.edu.mt/__data/assets/pdf_file/0018/39501/PES-Guidance-DG-Sultana-Watts.pdf. A brief synthesis of the report is available as an article in the *International Journal of Educational and Vocational Guidance*, Vol.6(1), 29-46. This Reflection Note draws on this study.

employability—and hence to some of the CMS that the LLG Resolutions are trying to promote—and the pressures for PES to focus on short-term goals, seeking to get unemployed individuals into employment (and therefore off benefit) as quickly as possible.

2. Labour market adjustment programmes—opportunities to provide CMS:

2.1. European PES have adopted a 'personal service model', which has led to very similar approaches – with some minor differences – to the ways in which unemployed clients are assisted in the job-search process. In different phases of this process, a number of opportunities arise to promote the development of CMS (i.e. DOTS—Decision learning, Opportunity awareness, Transition skills, Self-awareness—see *Annex 1* for an inventory/catalogue of CMS) These can include:
- Learning about oneself through the initial diagnostic meeting with an employment adviser (profiling);
- Learning to set goals, and the development of a plan to attain those goals (personal action planning);
- Learning to look for jobs in relation to that plan (with the employment advisers offering individual- and/or group-based support in developing job-search techniques, in sitting for job interviews, in preparing job applications and *curricula vitae*, and so on. Some clients are referred to 'job clubs', which provide a supportive environment that promotes the acquisition of self-confidence and motivation.

2.2. There are, in principle, at least four CG elements in these processes, though it must be noted that in some countries, the interaction with clients is mainly managed in an administrative rather than counselling spirit:
[a] counselling skills of relationship-building;
[b] diagnostic/assessment skills, to define the customer's needs, work experience, skills and qualifications relevant to his or her job-search;
[c] skills of making occupational/educational suggestions, based partly on the customer's needs and wishes, and partly on the employment adviser's knowledge of the labour market and of employers' demands; and
[d] skills of supporting action planning.

3. PES services to students—more opportunities for CMS provision:

3.1. In several countries, PES make substantial contributions to CG provision, as well as to CMS learning, in educational institutions—even if high unemployment has led many PES to cut back on these services, obliged as they are to focus instead on job-seekers. The following are some examples of PES activities in schools:
[a] PES staff often visit schools and higher education institutions in order to give talks and present information about the labour market, and the structure of employment opportunities. In some cases, they provide training in a range of CMS, besides advertise the kinds of services that PES offer and which pupils might need to make use of when they leave school.
[b] PES staff may also run programmes (on their own, or in collaboration with others) with early school-leavers and drop-outs, on the assumption that institutions that are separate from the school are more likely to accepted by

those who have experienced problems at school. CMS learning is often at the heart of such programmes.

[c] Furthermore, PES staff may be involved in running work-related programmes with students, involving work skills development, work shadowing, work tasters and work experience, and the management of work-based learning in apprenticeship schemes.

4. PES trends affecting CMS provision and delivery:

4.1. Four main trends have been identified in relation to the provision of CG services within PES contexts. These are: an increasing resort to the tiering of services, self-service provision, decentralisation, and outsourcing. Some of these trends impact on the provision of CMS for young people and adults seeking employment:

[a] A number of PES are seeking to manage the pressures on their resources through *tiering of services*. A common model is to define three levels of service: self-service (through use of resource centres and websites); group-based services, and brief staff-assisted services; and intensive case-managed services (including individual counselling). Each tier represents different opportunities for clients to engage with CMS learning.

[b] Given the increasing use of ICT, as well as the deepening of the recession, many countries have made a major shift towards *self-help services*. Most PES increasingly use ICT to facilitate access to career, labour market and further education and training information and guidance in self-help mode. Examples include the development of self- and career-exploration packages; web-based job-search facilities; and web-based registration, integrating the possibility of entering one's CV or constructing a 'personal skill register' on-line. Some PES also give users the possibility of creating their own domains, so that they can better 'market' themselves. Particularly where self-help services are supported by PES staff, clients can develop a range of CMS that serve them in good stead in managing transitions.

[c] 'New Public Management' approaches to organisational restructuring have had a strong effect on PES, with *decentralisation* being an important outcome. Regional and local offices enjoy greater degrees of autonomy in the organisation of services, in making decisions about the way offices are run, in the recruitment of personnel, in the training of staff, and in the way funds are used. This has implications for the customisation of services, and thus to the type of CMS programmes that are offered, which can be tailored to the specific needs of clients within that locale. Decentralisation can however also impede the development and dissemination of national labour market information, and the harmonious development of services in the interests of labour mobility, and can lead to deep differences in service provision between regions. Over the past years, therefore, several countries have taken measures to bring about more coherence at a national level, so that national policy frameworks setting out goals, which can be reached in different ways across the different regions, are now increasingly common. A national CMS framework can therefore be envisaged.

[d] Another aspect of New Public Management approaches to the organisation of PES services is *outsourcing*. Such institutional relationships can be marked by collaboration (through partnership agreements), devolution (through outsourcing or even privatisation of specific functions), and/or competition (with private employment agencies). Much of the outsourcing involves specialised services that cater for specific client target-groups, and is motivated by a desire to ensure that those closest to these groups deliver a service that is timely and both customer- and context-sensitive. The range of services which PES contract out, and which have a greater or lesser career guidance element embedded in them, is broad. They include client assessment, APEL, job-search training, job coaching, and personal action planning. This means that aspects of CMS training are often delivered by entities collaborating with, and under the supervision of, PES staff, rather than by PES staff directly.

5. Issues related to the provision of CMS in PES contexts:

5.1. PES staff are required to help clients clarify where their occupational strengths and interests lie, and to open up pathways into jobs that use these strengths and satisfy these interests. However, they are also expected to place clients into employment as quickly as possible – even if at times this entails overcoming client reluctance to work, or to work in jobs that are less satisfactory for them. This can create role tensions, and can impact on the range of CMS offered.

5.2. In some countries, there is a shift away from seeing clients as passive recipients of services (i.e. a medical model where PES staff are the 'experts' treating 'patients'), towards seeing clients as persons with resources, not just with problems. Clients are thus encouraged to be active in their own development, working together with their adviser as well as with other support group members. Employment advisers apply 'solution-focused' interventions where training goals, attitudes, locus of control and self-efficacy are given central importance. The role of CMS learning in this model is pivotal. PES staff are however not always trained to fulfil the multiple and expanding demands in a professional manner. Changing models of service provision lead to new methodologies – such as group guidance skills and profiling methods – which require specialised training.

5.3. Despite the inevitable focus on the short-term goal of placing clients in employment, PES can play an important role in supporting clients in long-term career management and development. Its potential contribution to CMS is therefore significant. PES can be the gateway to lifelong learning, helping people to review the direction of their careers, to determine what learning would benefit them and steering them to appropriate institutions or learning packages, and to sustain their employability and respond flexibly to change. With 'flexicurity' becoming a more generalised, European policy response to the demand by capital for more flexibility, and the demand by workers for more security, CMS are bound to feature increasingly higher on the PES agenda over the coming years.

COMPETENCY 1: Build and maintain a positive self-image
Improve on abilities to maintain a positive self-image
- Explore how one's career decisions have been and still are influenced by one's characteristics
- Identify one's personal achievements related to work, learning and leisure.
- Adopt behaviours and attitudes that project a positive self-image.
- Engage in life/work experiences that provide a sense of personal achievement.

COMPETENCY 2: Interact positively and effectively with others
Improve abilities for building positive relationships in one's life and work
- Demonstrate effective social and group membership skills, knowledge and attitudes.
- Demonstrate personal management skills (time management, problem solving, finances, stress..).
- Apply strategies for overcoming self-defeating behaviours and attitudes.
- Demonstrate behaviours and attitudes for establishing and maintaining positive relationships.

COMPETENCY 3: Change and grow throughout one's life
Develop strategies for responding to life and work changes
- Describe one's personal motivations and aspirations.
- Develop and apply strategies to adapt and respond effectively to life and work changes (e.g., problem solving, networking, updating portfolio and résumé, acquiring new skills and knowledge, attending personal growth workshops).
- Examine one's personal motivations and aspirations and determine their impact on one's decisions.
- Create life/work scenarios based on personal motivations and aspirations.
- Improve one's ability to adapt and respond to life and work changes.

COMPETENCY 4: Participate in LLL supportive of life/work goals
Participate in continuous learning supportive of life/work goals
- Prepare short and long-range plans to achieve goals through appropriate educational/training paths.
- Outline and adopt strategies to overcome personal barriers to education and training.
- Undertake learning activities (e.g., studying, taking tests, receiving work site feedback).
- Assess one's skills, knowledge, attitudes and determine how these enhance life/work opportunities.
- Determine which continuous learning strategies work best for oneself.
- Improve learning strategies and engage in a LLL process supportive of one's life/work goals.

COMPETENCY 5: Locate and effectively use life/work information
Locate, interpret, evaluate and use life/work information
- Discover contracting and hiring practices.
- Assess the reliability of life/work information.
- Identify work opportunities available to oneself with respect to one's set of work skills.
- Assess life/work information and evaluate its impact on one's life/work decisions.
- Determine which work opportunities should or will be considered in one's life/work scenarios.
- Create or adapt life/work scenarios using pertinent and accurate life/work-related information.

COMPETENCY 6: Understand the relationship between work and society/economy
Understand how societal and economic need influence the nature and structure of work
- Explain how one's personal values and interests determine the importance one gives to work.
- Evaluate the impact of society's needs and functions, and that of the global economy on self.
- Evaluate the impact of social, demographic, technological trends on work & learning opportunities.
- Engage in work experiences that satisfy one's needs as well as contribute to society.

COMPETENCY 7: Secure/create and maintain work
Improve on abilities to seek, obtain/create and maintain work
- Establish relationships that will help with finding work.
- Practice or apply work search tools and skills required to seek, obtain/create and maintain work (job application forms, résumés, portfolios, job interviewing, proposals, cover letters...).
- Experience career planning and work finding services available through organizations (e.g., government, educational institutions, business/industry, labour and community agencies).
- Plan career changes reflective of one's preferred future.
- Re-examine one's network and determine the relationships most helpful to one's work search.
- Evaluate oneself in terms of effective tools for seeking, obtaining/creating and maintaining work.
- Create and engage in work opportunities reflective of one's preferred future.

COMPETENCY 8: Make life/work-enhancing decisions
Incorporate adult life reality into life/work decision making
- Demonstrate the skills, knowledge and attitudes required to assess work opportunities.
- Demonstrate effective career decision-making skills, knowledge and attitudes.
- Determine personal criteria for making decisions about learning, family and work.
- Identify potential consequences of one's decisions, and assess work opportunities for oneself.
- Evaluate the impact of one's decisions on self and others.
- Engage in decision making respectful of oneself and supportive of one's goals.

COMPETENCY 9: Maintain balanced life and work roles
Incorporate the "balanced life/work" issue in life/work building
- Apply strategies for negotiating work, family and leisure demands (e.g., working hours, time with friends) with family members.
- Determine the value of work, family and leisure activities for oneself.
- Determine the kind of work, family & leisure activities one feels will contribute to a balanced life.
- Engage in life/work scenarios and leisure activities that support one's goals and contribute to a balanced life.

COMPETENCY 10: Understand the changing nature of life/work roles
Understand and learn to overcome stereotypes in life/work building
- Demonstrate skills, knowledge and attitudes that help eliminate stereotyping in work environments.
- Evaluate the impact of trends in the gender composition of the labour force on one's career plans.
- Determine one's need to adopt strategies or take actions that help eliminate gender bias stereotyping.
- Create and engage in fulfilling life/work scenarios regardless of gender bias and stereotyping.
- Engage in life/work experiences in ways that help eliminate gender bias and stereotyping.

COMPETENCY 11: Understand, engage in and manage one's own life/work building process
Manage one's life/work building process
- Plan and apply coping strategies or desired scenarios during transition periods (e.g., starting a family, retirement, losing a job).
- Update one's portfolio.
- Review one's preferred future and fine-tune one's life/work action plans.
- Pursue one's action plans.
- Revisit one's preferred future to determine whether or not it is necessary to modify and/or create new life/work scenarios and adjust one's short-term action plans.

- Re-examine one's strategies during transition periods in light of one's preferred future and determine whether or not it is necessary to adjust them.

Annex 2: *Blueprint for Life/Work Designs*
Level Four

RESOURCE:		REVIEWER:								
SECTIONS:										
COMPETENCIES										
AREA A: PERSONAL MANAGEMENT										
1.4 Improve on abilities to maintain a positive self-image										
2.4 Improve abilities for building positive relationships in one's life and work										
3.4 Develop strategies for responding to life and work changes										
AREA B: LEARNING AND WORK EXPLORATION										
4.4 Participate in continuous learning supportive of life/work goals										
5.4 Locate, interpret, evaluate and use life/work information (II)										
6.4 Understand how societal and economic needs influence the nature and structure of work (II)										
AREA C: LIFE/WORK BUILDING										
7.4 Improve on abilities to seek, obtain/create and maintain work										
8.4 Incorporate adult life reality into life/work decision making										
9.4 Incorporate the "balanced life/work" issue in life/work building										
10.4 Understand and learn to overcome stereotypes in life/work building (II)										
11.4 Manage one's life/work building process										
INSTRUCTIONS:	List the components (e.g. chapters, software components, exercises, sessions, units, lesson plans) of the resources under review as column headings in the table above. Then, review each resource and check which, if any, of the 11 competencies the component primarily addresses.									