



IAEVG International Conference 2024 – Riding the Wave of Change

Digitalisation and Lifelong Guidance Policy in Hungary: Lessons to be learnt from the COVID-19 stress

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Scope of the paper

- Considers **four relevant Hungarian national strategies** in the context of some of the policy guidelines of the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN, 2015), especially Guideline 9 – Information and Communications Technology in Lifelong Guidance.
- The **coronavirus crisis** of 2020–21 **was a catalyst** and an opportunity to adapt to the digital challenges in lifelong guidance.
- Also to **go deeper with former DESI data** (From 2014 to 2022, the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) summarised indicators on Europe's digital performance and tracked the progress of EU countries.)

Methodology

- First, relevant *national digitalisation strategies* are reviewed and analysed from a lifelong guidance policy perspective.
 - using selected policy guidelines of the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (2015) as *benchmarks*
- 2) than contrasted with findings from empirical research on the challenges faced by Hungarian lifelong guidance practitioners during the lockdown period (Tajtiné et al. 2020)

Used Lifelong Guidance Policy GLs (ELGPN, 2015)

- **Guideline No. 2. Access to Lifelong Guidance Services**
It refers to the means and conditions by which citizens can engage with lifelong guidance services, tools and resources and participate in career development activities over their lifespan to enable them to make meaningful learning, career, and work choices.
- **Guideline No. 6. Improving Careers Information**
It refers to any sort of information in any medium that assists citizens to make meaningful choices about learning and work opportunities. It includes information on occupations, the labour market, education, VET, higher education study programmes, and pathways between these.
- **Guidelines No. 9. Information Communication and Technology in Lifelong Guidance**
Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in lifelong guidance refers to the products, infrastructure, and electronic content that enhances policy and systems development for lifelong guidance and the delivery of lifelong guidance services, resources, and tools.

Four national strategic which are most relevant to lifelong guidance were reviewed

- National Info-communication Strategy for 2014–2020 (NIS)
- National Digitalisation Strategy for 2022–2030 (NDS)
- Digital Education Strategy (DES), 2016
- Digital Labour Market Strategy (DLMS), 2018

2nd element of the study Experience from the field: career guidance practitioners during the COVID lockdown in Hungary

- Turning from the policy level to the actual practice of career guidance, findings from empirical research conducted during the COVID lockdown period highlight the daily challenges faced by career guidance practitioners in Hungary.
- Hungarian career guidance caseworkers around the country, when asked about their experience concerning the COVID lockdown in a field research using a questionnaire (n = 106) and interviews (n = 11)

Discussion

- As demonstrated, career guidance is currently **not treated as a field** in its own right in the digital strategies of Hungary
- The COVID-19 pandemic and the **lockdowns boosted the digitalisation** of career guidance services BUT access remain temporary

Beyond the COVID times

- Access to career counselling services in each strategy is based on the needs of the policy sectors and does not follow the lifelong approach
- The further development of the **methodology of digital counselling and career guidance** deserves as much attention as hardware and technical platforms
- digital guidance provision can be hindered by the inadequate **development of digital content** for career guidance and counselling, the services associated with it and the **attitudes of professionals towards the use of ICT**
- The necessity of a **professional protocol**

Full article

Borbély-Pecze, T. B., & Gyöngyösi, K. (2024). Digitalisation and Lifelong Guidance Policy in Hungary: Lessons to be learnt from the COVID-19 stress. *Nordic Journal of Transitions, Careers and Guidance* 5(1), 45–54. <https://doi.org/10.16993/njtcg.61> .