



# **ACUMEN** **Policy Paper**

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*“It doesn’t matter how slow you go,  
as long as you don’t stop.”*

Confucius

## 1. Introduction

Acumen Career Management Skills (CMS) is a European Union Erasmus supported project that examined the current situation in the field of career management education across 8 partner countries. Having the necessary skills to manage your own career is now of considerable importance as the European employment market continues to move towards more high-value, highly-skilled jobs. Globalisation and new technologies are reshaping the structures of working life and the contents of work, creating new models of work and generating increasingly diversified expectations where occupational skills, social competencies, and learning are concerned. As the partners (and indeed as have many other reviews or projects e.g. ICARD) discovered career education and CMS is at contrasting contexts, varied and fragmented within the adult and higher education and schools across the 8 partner countries. There is no clear and formal framework for CMS in Europe. Within this context of volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (V.U.C.A) environment the need for people to become and make well-informed decisions about their work and career choices is increasingly important. Acumen CMS has attempted to bring the varied concepts and ideas (of career education, career management, career transition, talent management and so forth) under one roof, creating a self-help guide and eLearning materials for both learners and career education practitioners (educators, carer advisers, human resource managers and so forth) using the Scottish CMS Framework (2012).

## 2. Executive Summary

The Acumen consortium considers Career Management Skills (CMS) almost like a 'new literacy' within the workforce, especially for those in low-skilled or under-valued employment, who do not have the ability to develop and manage their own career progression pathway and face uncertain future as the employment market evolves. CMS is now the new key basic skill and a necessity within the VUCA environment. ACUMEN project produced a model of provision designed to suit the learning needs and preferences of adults in the workforce but these same eLearning materials could equally be used by anyone, from students in schools or universities to career education practitioners and career advisors.

Processes of social change such as globalisation and new technologies are reshaping the structures of working life and the contents of work. There are now a host of new learning environments (from moodle and other learning platforms to open university) and opportunities available to adult learners and workers that offer them affordable and accessible, on-demand learning opportunities to help them satisfy the new competence expectations of their employers. Across the world, society is changing and the rate of change is accelerating. Flexibility and adaptability linked to a lifelong learning disposition are the keys to adjustment to such change.

The ACUMEN project consortium are of the opinion that traditional career guidance, although still relevant and important as a school-based or institution-based service, is wholly unsuitable to meet the needs of adults already in the workforce and that there is a considerable gap in the market for freely available and easily accessible career management training resources to help adults take control of their own career trajectory. Career management is a continuous process that occurs throughout one's career and not just at discrete times. It may be helpful to think of career management as a philosophy and set of habits that enable adults achieve career goals and develop career resiliency. CMS is the new 'labour market literacy'. Adults in the workforce who have developed the necessary skills should be able to assess where the labour market is going; consider new skill areas that are appropriate to their own strengths and preferences; develop a personalised learning plan and map-out their career pathway to sustainable and rewarding work based on an understanding of potential future skills needs. Successful career management is accomplished through regular habits of building relationships, engaging in career development conversations, updating career development plans, and setting new goals as life and career needs change. Being proficient at career management also means possessing basic skills related to job searching and managing change in a resilient manner.

The Career Management Skills Framework for Scotland, published in July 2012, describes career management skills set around 4 themes of: Self; Strengths; Horizons; Networks. This framework is the basis for the ACUMEN project and consortium partners developed a complete suite of tools and resources that

address each of the above themes and support adults within the workforce or those seeking employment to identify an appropriate career progression pathway.

In today's dynamic and ever-changing economy it is perhaps time to move-on from the traditional reliance on state-bodies to provide services especially in areas where motivated individuals can be trained to become self-sufficient. It is also worth noting that the traditional career guidance service is probably of little value to those already active in the workforce. What workers in today's dynamic economy need is help to develop a range of robust career management skills that once acquired can be called upon again and again to help plot a career progression pathway through today's non-linear and ever-changing working environments.

There is no such thing anymore as a job-for-life or a skill-for-life. In the modern economy the focus is firmly placed on having the latest skills embracing the knowledge society. For many adults in employment whether they work in low-skilled positions or are employed in vulnerable sectors there is an urgent need for them to take responsibility for managing their career pathway, identifying skill sets that are likely to be in demand and seeking out essential training or supports to safeguard their employment.

There are many adults for whom the transition from education to employment is one that has proved incredibly problematic. Equipped to make informed career choices many adults now find themselves working in jobs and employment that are quickly disappearing as new work practices and new emerging technologies demand new skills. In many cases adult workers find themselves in vulnerable position unable to find support or assistance to retain their job. Supporting adults within the workforce to manage their own career, take control of their own destiny and devise a personal career pathway can have an enormous impact in today's rapidly evolving labour market.

As with most areas of educational development, progress in the design and delivery of guidance services in different Member States has varied. Bringing together a consortium of partners provided considerable opportunities to learn from each other, exchange best practice, and develop a model for guidance provision that is characterised by its adaptability to different cultural perspectives,

relevance to different service delivery models, and exploitable beyond the initial partner countries. Acumen CMS has been developed exactly for that reason to support individuals in a complex environment giving them the flexibility to manage change and wherever possible retrain to sustain their careers.

## Recommendations for policy change

The proposed policy paper examines the experience of the project partners in 8 different EU member states and makes recommendations for policy change on the basis of that experience. In particular views of the different control groups (made up of educators, HR managers, and career advisers) in each partner country are also explored. It considers why a change of policy (e.g. at governmental level i.e. national policy, institutional level such as a university, school or even an employer) might be relevant and the benefits to be derived from the new model being suggested. The self-help guide and eLearning materials which will allow individuals to manage their own careers while at the same time perhaps increasing productivity at national or institutional level while also embracing the lifelong learning principles.

### National Level

1. The most effective and realisable alternative is the implementation of career management skills into the curriculum in all secondary/high schools
2. Raising awareness of CM among educators and education providers.

### Institutional Level

3. Prepare an educated work force from young people to adults by encouraging them to use and making available lifelong learning resources such as the Acumen eLearning CMS suite
4. Create an active and integrated network between public and private services

## 3. Body of the paper

### a) Overview/Background

#### Statement of purpose

The Acumen consortium identified a number of key points that ought to be addressed which are discussed in this Policy Paper:

1) Human Resource Development (HRD) is the corner stone for any nation or institution to become and remain competitive on the global stage. As such adult educators, workforce development experts, employment services providers and human resource managers are key to any adult education service provision. These professionals, therefore, need to be encouraged and helped with resources in the development of CMS as they work across a wide range of work settings and concerning the widest range of educational topics.

(2) Independent learning is an important area for development to support job retention for many low-skilled workers; to help workers in vulnerable employments climb the labour market ladder; to help many of those currently on the margins of society and economy back into gainful employment. Independent career management could be the first step on the road for many adults in difficult situations.

Purpose of this Policy Paper is to fuel wider debate and discussions on career management skills implementation into educational systems.

#### Review of current policy

Career education and management across the partner countries differed widely and some were at an advanced stage (e.g. Finland), others lacked a definite national policy until as recent as 2017 (e.g. England), others had just embarked on initiatives that would bring them in line with their European counterparts (e.g. Cyprus and Czech Republic) as far as education provisions are concerned and yet others (e.g. Germany and Ireland) have had a mixed bag of successes with

their career education provisions. In Italy although there is no formal national CMS Framework the need for CMS was formally recognised and regulated in 2013. Under such varied situation it is therefore, helpful to examine the stages at which career education sits in each partner country and how Acumen CMS might add value to the ongoing national debates and implementation of national plus institutional policies. Further this might lead to a European Framework for CMS and talent management across the EU where the 2020 vision is to promote equality, enhance lifelong learning capacity making citizens more productive and therefore realising the full impact of the human resources within the Union as it grapples with global changes, especially those in the west (e.g. USA) and in the east (e.g. China).

## Austria

In Austria, the adult education policy is divided and services, which provide career guidance, are very diverse: On the one hand, the *Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research* is responsible for developing programmes, determining policy structures and setting priorities related to the general adult education. Moreover, formal schooling is regulated by this Ministry.

The *Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection*, on the other hand, is concerned with labour market policy by taking into consideration trends in the labour market and in adult education. The majority of funding for related issues is regulated there.

The *Public Employment Service Austria (AMS)*, Austria's leading provider of labour-market related services, is responsible for matching candidates with job openings and assisting jobseekers and companies by providing support, information, qualification opportunities and financial assistance. It is commissioned by the latter mentioned ministry. Institutions of social partners like the *Chamber of Commerce, Chamber of Labour, Economic Chamber* provide advice on education and work and cooperate closely with the AMS.

A constant know how and information transfer between both ministries takes place, leading to an active labour market policy in Austria. The trend is moving

away from conventional training to provisions with a stronger relation between education and jobs/ labour market. To react to this trend, economic data and employment statistics should be more taken into account by the training provider. The outputs developed with the ACUMEN project are aligned with the trend of moving away from conventional training to provisions with a stronger relation between education and jobs/ labour market.

The preferred options, suggested by the interviewed stakeholders (i.e. the Austrian control group), are therefore training measures which would be developed and designed in corporation with all before mentioned partners (*Public Employment Service Austria, Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection and Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research*). However, it would be crucial that the educational training provider is solely responsible for developing educational input, processes and individualised support. Also, the practical experience made by the interviewed stakeholders shows the importance of assuming the main responsibility by the educational training provider. Thus, in Austria the control group felt that CMS responsibility ought to be retained at institution levels with support and cooperation from Austrian governmental agencies.

Further, the Austrian control group mentioned that in the implementation of the proposed option, there is the urgent need for a permanent dialogue between all involved parties, including the views and opinions of learners, the students. It is crucial to make learning outcomes completely transparent for all members involved in the process, inclusively – or especially – for learners. All parties have to know what goals will be achieved, when, how and also why the defined aims are important.

## Cyprus

Enhancing the provision of guidance and counselling services to all population groups is a policy priority, as outlined in the Lifelong Learning Strategy 2014-2020 for Cyprus. Vocational Education is provided to youth in Secondary Education (STVE) and to adults aged 18 and over by both the private and the public sector.

Career Guidance to VET learners is usually provided by the services of the school or the college of further education. However, there is no provision for courses on career management skills or career support services in these centres.

The main actors for guidance and counselling in Cyprus are the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC), the Ministry of Labour Welfare and Social Insurance (MLWSI) and the Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA).

Other important providers of guidance in Cyprus include:

- The Cyprus Youth Board specialized in guidance for the youth until the age of 30.
- Trade Unions and Municipalities.
- Career Services of Universities in Cyprus

The Cyprus National Forum of Lifelong Guidance was established in March 2012 by a decision of the Council of Ministers. Its aim is to develop a specific policy in line with the 2004 and 2008 Council of Europe Resolutions on lifelong guidance and the Commission Communication (2010) "Europe 2020 - A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth". Its main objectives are:

- Coordination and communication between guidance services
- Establish a guidance quality assurance framework
- Enhance citizens' access to guidance services
- Promote research on guidance
- Representing Cyprus in meetings and working groups at European and international level on lifelong guidance.

Several EU and local funding programs are supporting financially a variety of projects in education and training of individuals from vulnerable social groups, such as illiterate and digital illiterate adults, early school leavers, young unemployed people and low-qualified adults. These programs often include courses or trainings in career management and planning. Nevertheless, these programs are only available for a limited time period (duration of funding period) and are not matching the numbers of individuals that are searching for a job or want to improve their career management skills.

Further, career services available to assist individuals to manage their careers and to make informed career choices are usually directed to young graduates or young unemployed people up to the age of 35. The financial crisis and the global change in the employment industry however, have also affected other vulnerable groups and individuals with long-term careers. The availability of career guidance services for these groups are limited to private companies and job agencies. Hence there is a need for individuals in Cyprus such as the Acumen CMS.

## Czech Republic

Guidance and counselling systems in the Czech Republic are offered along two lines, each of which has a series of background institutions, very dedicated and highly specialised. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, through its Labour Offices mainly deals with career choices, transitions and new occupations. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports mainly deals with guidance and counselling at schools.

Career guidance in the Czech Republic is carried out by several actors, often specializing in carefully defined target groups. No targets to include all in a mainstream offer valid for everybody seem to exist. On the one hand, this helps users in these groups at present. On the other hand, it stresses the difficult issue of creating 'a transparent and coherent lifelong guidance system'. Theoretically, a mainstream approach would have made this easier.

The newly perceived career management services are becoming an indispensable part of lifelong learning. It is a fact, however, that adult education and lifelong learning are not among the strengths of the education systems in the Czech Republic. In the Czech Republic we may even speak about severe underestimation of this part of education, and an urgent need to redress the situation include career management education.

Czech Republic has the lowest unemployment rate in the EU. Actually we are facing lack of workforce in several parts of the industry. This situation makes a

great opportunity to change job and career path. Career guidance is available but for already employed people and it is on commercial basis. Thus many of low skilled and low paid people, willing to change their job, does not have enough resources to use those services. ACUMEN career management tools are big opportunity for this group of people, because are available, user friendly, free of charge and time flexible. We see a big gap in the education of the young generation. Interviewed experts recommend to add career management into school curriculum.

## Finland

The career management skills are highly respected in Finland. '*Knowledge and education*' as well as '*employment and competitiveness*' are two out of the six key projects in the current Government Program. The government aims at reducing the youth unemployment and to ease the transition from education to working life and therefore emphasizes the role guidance counselling and career services. There is also a firm position of career counsellors in learning institutions: it is required by law for all learning institutions to offer guidance counselling to help the student to achieve the learning and career goals.

Career management skills are also taught as a subject at school: In basic education and upper secondary high school it is also compulsory to teach guidance counselling as a subject with a certain amount of lessons per week. In vocational school labour market and entrepreneurial studies are compulsory to all students. Most of the guidance and career counselling is therefore given by learning institutions for their students. The overall situation of career management services in Finland is seen to be good and fitting to most career changing situations. Guidance and counselling in Finnish education system is part of the curriculum.

In adult career management the biggest service provider is the Government owned Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment that offers career services for everyone in need for free. The services of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and

Employment are available for everyone throughout the country. They offer career coaching for clarifying client's career goals with the help of a peer support and practical trials.

Another career service provider worth noticing is the recruitment companies. Their services are often bought by large companies and available to employees of those companies. There is also an increasing amount of private career service providers who are often better able to meet the fast changing needs of those changing a career. Therefore ACUMEN is not seen as offering something completely new. However, the tools developed and shared in ACUMEN project are seen as useful material for adult educators and other professional helping adults in career transitions. The four themes of the model are seen amongst career management professionals as appropriate and applicable.

## Germany

The employment agency in Germany is legally obliged to offer (free) career guidance as stipulated in its Social Insurance Code. There are agencies in all major cities and towns in charge for persons getting unemployment benefit and looking for a new job. Additionally there are so-called Job Centres which also offer guidance and coaching for jobseekers, partly by case management. Guidance practitioners working at the employment agencies and Job Centres offer individual in-house guidance. The employment agencies and Job Centres cooperate with private coaching providers who offer longer coaching support for guidance seekers. Costs for coaching in companies (group/ team coaching, individual coaching e.g. for managers) are usually paid by the employer. Moreover, many private/for profit institutions and many self-employed coaches, guidance practitioners etc. offer career advice (fee-required). However, there is no nationwide uniform coaching and guidance programme, which is why offers may differ in the different federal states and also in the regions of a state.

Germany offers a variety of possibilities for career guidance seekers, the issue on the one hand lies in the accessibility for employed persons.

These days developing your personality and your career management skills get more and more important. In the course of digitalisation, the working world is subject to constant change, which is why the demand for self-management and self-organisation increases steadily. In order to solve this issue we discussed two alternatives to the current policy in Germany, one alternative being in-service career coaching for employed people funded by the government, the other one being career management skills as part of the curriculum in all German schools from grade 7 onwards.

## Ireland

Nationally, AEGI is an initiative which is supported by the Department of Education and Skills and is operated by the National Centre for Guidance in Education. This initiative is implemented locally by career counsellors working to deliver Adult Education Guidance and Information Services (AEGIS), which are offered across the country by the 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs). In total, AEGI oversees and manages 40 adult education guidance centres offered by these 16 ETBs across every county in Ireland. Guidance in the sector of Adult Education or Further Education and Training in Ireland is primarily delivered through these centres.

Supplementary to these local and national guidance services providers, there is a plethora of private companies in Ireland who offer services to adult learners in terms of career management. These are all professional services, however, which require clients to pay fees to receive support in relation to career management. The fact that supports for career management and planning career transitions for adults in employment is only available through for-paying professional services was seen as a major issue affecting employees in Ireland today, by the focus group participants. Free services and advice that are available in Ireland are primarily targeted to socially and economically disadvantaged adults. For the majority of workers who are in a career that they do not find fulfilling, or who are seeking to improve their competence so that they can be promoted in their current workplace, or who want advice on planning their potential career pathway, there exists very little support in Ireland today, unless they are willing to pay professional

service providers. As such, there is a need for resources such as those developed by the ACUMEN project – where employees from all walks of life can be supported.

## Italy

In Italy Career Management Skills (CMS) and career education were formally defined and regulated in the National Guidelines for Lifelong Education in 2013. There is currently no national CMS framework. Career guidance functions are divided between the School Districts (educational guidance) and Regions (professional guidance). The presence of particular targets has also created the necessity for ad hoc information centres (for women, immigrants, etc.). Furthermore, in Italy the Guidance Practitioner is not officially recognized as a professional profile and, therefore, there are no formal requirements to become a guidance practitioner. Schools and Universities do not have a guidance practitioner in their staff. Not even the Public Employment Services managed at Provincial level have a guidance practitioner, and they usually hire external staff from associations and agencies to cover this role.

During the focus group, participants highlighted that young people face strong difficulties in understanding how to move in a workplace; they do not know how to express themselves to their manager, they do not know how to negotiate, etc.; obviously, this is not a problem for those who have already a previous working experience. Some participants highlighted that one of the critical elements in the field of career management is decision making, i.e. the ability to choose not only for the purpose of career development but also "ecologically" i.e. decisions aligned with one's values and with his/her life.

ACUMEN represents a paradigm shift in Italy: from career guidance to professional choice and to the construction of a training and professional career.

## UK

In the UK Career Education Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) as it is widely known differs across all the four regions: England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. All the regions base their CEIAG on a number of policy themes

to suit the local conditions in each country i.e. the economy and skills shortages, social mobility and educational reforms. For the context of this paper only the issues related to England are further discussed and debated.

Current unveiling of the Careers Strategy (Dec 2017) by the UK Government suggests a definite push towards a more comprehensive offer and finally establishing a National Careers Plan for England as the government prepares for Brexit. For a number of years, and perhaps a decade practitioners, educators and providers of careers advice have been clamouring for a more robust and operational agenda for careers sector since the dismantling of Connexions and the austerity that struck UK, particularly England & Wales, since 2010. Experts within the UK control group, agreed that Lifelong Learning (LL) and Lifelong Guidance (LG) have been prevalent in the UK for a number of years that has covered all sectors of the society and learning – formal, non-formal and informal – from primary, secondary, vocational and Further Education to Higher Education and Adult Training. Main objectives of LL and LG have been to create a learned society in which all citizens have equal opportunities to enable them to meet the challenges of the changing work place, especially as digitalisation has expanded in the last 20-odd years.

Control group of experts from UK also mentioned that there is a difference in the offer of CEIAG (Career Education Information Advice & Guidance) between the public and private sectors in England. A wide variety of career management resources of varying quality exist. Some programmes are aimed at school leavers and/or university graduates and are highly structured, aiming to deliver candidates along tried and tested, well-trodden career paths, as in the Social Services and Care as well as for the NHS. Some have also been highly rated and reviewed by independent experts. In other areas, and in particular adult education and training, programmes do exist but may be covered haphazardly due to funding issues.

A number of resources exist for the adult learner in terms of careers guidance. These include libraries, job centres, adult education and careers advisory services, Citizen Advice Bureau and Sector Skills councils which provide a helpful

starting point for those adults seeking to further their careers, when they already have jobs, or those looking to retrain in a new field or change professions entirely. The UK government also has a careers service available online and in various other media, the National Careers Service, which aims to cater to all. Numerous other private companies also seek to fulfil candidates' expectations, usually at a price but these are inaccessible to adults with low skills and at the lower end of the spectrum with fewer or no qualifications.

The main challenges facing England in the current Brexit era are:

- Addressing the impact of the austerity & economic crisis
- Re-skilling / Upskilling of the labour force
- Availability of affordable or free CEIAG for low-skilled workers
- Adapting CEIAG to reduce skills gap while looking to newer opportunities in a digitalised world such as the green economy
- Promoting transparency and validation of qualifications (including, non-formal or informal learning) to promote social mobility especially among low-skilled and migrant groups

The vision of the Careers Strategy (unveiled on 4 December 2017) is to create a society in which all citizens have the skills that enable them to deal with new technologies changing lives, whereby people are able to move freely between jobs, regions and countries. Publicly available resources such as the UK government's National Careers Service can be used as a springboard or inspiration when designing new resources (e.g. Acumen CMS). UK control group experts suggested that other open-source resources can also be harnessed in a similar way; however they must be checked first for quality control as they are of varying quality and usefulness.

## b) Discussion

### Alternatives presented by ACUMEN to current policy options

ACUMEN proposes a new approach for the development of career management supports and resources. It considers career management as a subject to be taught; as a set of competences to be developed and updated; a skill set to be used and re-used throughout ones working life. It considers career management skills as key factors that will ultimately define the achievement or non-achievement of a sustainable career. It sees career management skills as key determinants of social and economic well-being.

ACUMEN provide a wide range of educational materials that are designed and developed with the latest digital technologies and platforms in mind. Career management is a learning area that is targeted at adults in the workforce who are removed from traditional institution based provision.

The ACUMEN project developed a comprehensive delivery model for a new career management intervention across the full range of adult education settings. It has developed this new subject area and addresses the needs of adult learners' right through their working life with resources that address 4 key thematic areas based on the Scottish CMS Framework (2012). With goals for guidance service provision increasingly framed within overall lifelong learning policies of all partner countries within the Acumen project and EU Member States the model developed by ACUMEN is relevant and applicable in all adult and continuing education settings.

The ACUMEN project propose to harness the general acquiescence to new technologies among adult populations by giving them the required knowledge to allow them use these technology platforms in a meaningful way that will help to support effective career management. Giving adult learners the autonomy to manage their career pathways as free agent learners able to effectively research, evaluate, assess and move on can only be good for the individual, the labour market and the career guidance service providers. Supporting the role of adult educators, workforce development experts, employment services providers and human resource managers in this new career planning environment help to

broaden the knowledge and skills base of key professionals often tasked with providing career support. Helping adult learners make insightful choices and decisions and building these transversal skill sets will have a positive impact on educational outcomes for many years to come. In the light of impending skill shortages in certain key high-value industrial sectors the more well informed adult learning choices that can be made on an annual basis the better the outlook for the individuals concerned and the economy as a whole. Effective career management can have positive knock on effects throughout education and the economy.

The ACUMEN career management resources are also benefit to human resources managers. Replacing staff can be a very expensive and time consuming process and it can take a considerable length of time before new employees get up to speed in their new job or even learn the ethos of the company. It is of much greater benefit to encourage those already employed to acquire new skills and this can be best achieved by human resource experts in the context of a career management strategy for their workforce.

ACUMEN addresses a genuinely European issue and it is most appropriate to address it at a European level. Most importantly adults who complete the career management curriculum bring a considerable skill-set with them wherever they go in their career and have those skills to call on when the opportunity or necessity for career change presents itself.

The ACUMEN project comprehensively address career management skills in a European context and provide tools and resources that are localized to meet the needs of adult learners in each partner country.

### c) Implementation

Austria

The preferred options, suggested by the interviewed stakeholders (Austrian control group for the Acumen project), are therefore training measures which would be developed and designed in corporation with all government partners; ***Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection and***

**Public Employment Service Austria (AMS).** However, it would be crucial that the educational training provider is solely responsible for developing educational input, processes and individualised support. Also, the practical experience made by the interviewed stakeholders shows *the importance of assuming the main responsibility by the educational training provider.*

In the implementation of the proposed option, there is the urgent need for a permanent dialogue between all involved parties, including the views and opinions of students. Further, it is crucial to make learning outcomes completely transparent for all members involved in the process, inclusively – or especially – for learners. All parties have to know what goals will be achieved, when, how and also why the defined aims are important. Evaluation and measurement of the achievements and goals is the essential part of the project that ensure that a learning process runs according to the plan and the defined goals are accomplished.

## Cyprus

A policy action should be based in a holistic approach rather than just seeking and finding a job for a client. For an effective lifelong guidance a combination of interventions, customer centered and more communicative approaches should be employed. Career counsellors' competences should be monitored and evaluated periodically as this will ensure the improvement of service provision and that there is cost-benefit to the government and the citizens/individuals.

ICT technologies and self-learning can be important tools in implementing a lifelong guidance policy. A toolkit with activities that could help individuals to develop career management skills could be created as well as for career counsellors for improving and updating their knowledge in the field.

Last but not least, a *network between public and private services should be created* in order to better support and implement a policy at National level.

## Czech Republic

The biggest challenge for career management is *to prepare educated work force from young people leaving education process and as well among existing workforce* empowering them to change their career to more suitable for their individual needs and needs of the labour market. All interviewed stakeholders saw the gap for the career management resources especially available in Czech language.

Career management skills in education and employment and their smooth operation are issues that, since recently, have been gaining in importance. Matching the labour market needs with the potential of the population plays an important role not only in the lives of individuals, but also in the development of society as a whole.

In the market exist information, counselling resources and career-related media which must be regularly updated, innovated and expanded. For the sake of a comprehensive approach it will be necessary to set up career management tools for target group of employed people changing their career in the fast moving Czech labour market. This section would operate in conformity with specific rules and help improve the chances of people in the labour market and, at the same time, provide for the needs of employers.

## Germany

In-service career coaching would not only raise awareness for the importance of career management skills but it could also lead to more satisfactory job decisions and, therefore, to more happiness and productivity at the workplace. However, the downside of this alternative is that in-service career coaching would have to be funded which would possibly lead to higher taxes. Furthermore, the productivity outcome of the in-service career coaching might not be determined immediately but rather over the long term, so it would be hard to prove any improvement to justify the government's funds. Hence, what we find to be the *more effective and realisable alternative is the implementation of career management skills into the curriculum in all secondary/high schools.*

Children could internalise the importance of personality development and career management skills to ensure a successful and satisfying career. Moreover, given the fact that children are curious by nature they would be amenable to a topic that might be beyond anything they have engaged with.

Though children at that age (ca 13 years old) do not have any professional experience and might not yet have the ability to think as complex and reflected as adults, by implementing career management skills into the curriculum we would allow children to develop their personality and thereby lay the foundation for our children to grow reflected and self-aware adults with high chances of a successful career ahead.

*One way to implement this policy action would be to make career management skills a main subject in secondary/high schools.*

Ireland

Focus group participants saw the potential *to promote the ACUMEN resources with the local Education and Training Board*. As a member of ETBI – Education and Training Boards of Ireland – by engaging with the local ETB and promoting the ACUMEN approach to career guidance, focus group members proposed that this would give the ACUMEN project access to the national stakeholders who can be petitioned to use the ACUMEN approach to career management with their clients

ETBI is the national representative association for Ireland's 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs). ETBI represent these 16 regional education and training providers at national policy level and so they would be best placed to make evidence-informed policy recommendations at a national level, following the testing and piloting of the ACUMEN resources in regional ETBs.

Following the evaluation of the ACUMEN resources across the project consortium, once all training has been implemented in partner countries, Meath Partnership will make contact with representatives of the Meath Adult Education and Guidance Service and the Louth and Meath Education and Training Board to discuss the exploitation potential of the ACUMEN resources and to encourage

that these resources, and our approach be piloted with clients of these services. *This will constitute the first step in accessing stakeholders at policy level in Ireland who can make recommendations to adopt the ACUMEN resources and approach in all guidance services.*

## Italy

Stakeholders observed that *Career management skills are extremely useful and valuable both for those who work and for those who are about to enter the labour market. Nonetheless, they are important at all stages and the differences among various phases of one's own working life* should be considered when thinking of different skill levels: before starting work; moving beyond education towards work; while in work; when not working; preparing to leave or reduce work.

The idea of levels also provides the potential to help evaluate the effectiveness of interventions to enhance career management skills. One of the participants suggested that we might imagine skill levels along a continuum, where awareness of one's own skills and capabilities represents the basic level, autonomy is at an intermediate step and proactivity is at the end (highest level).

Since in Italy we do not have a national CMS framework the best strategy might be bottom-up. The idea is *to build a network of people who are interested in Career Management Skills, train them and help them use ACUMEN resources for their job.* The key issue is to address the essential role that appropriate in-service training supports for adult education staff plays in achieving quality learning outcomes especially in new disciplines like career management where specific skill sets are essential to ensure quality outcomes.

## UK

The control group participants in UK highlighted that the recent Careers Strategy (Dec 2017) is a move in the right direction for CEIAG (Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance) sector. The government finally seems to be committed to a Careers Agenda for England.

Focus group also felt that Brexit is likely to deflect away the attention from good intentions in the career strategy as political issues take precedent. They question if this will again affect implementation of the ideas unveiled in the new careers strategy.

Thus, decision making at managerial levels in both adults and state education sectors is likely to slow down. However drivers of change (below) do demand a necessity for a careers policy for all groups and in particular adults

- Advances in digitalisation at work and for consumers
- Brexit
- Austerity within the adult education over the past, at least 5, if not longer years

ACUMEN CMS is likely to complement many of the good practices prevalent at many institutions and also that available from the private independent sector.

Further, ACUMEN CMS is likely to:

- Complement existing offers at both state (National Careers Service) and that offered by private independent providers
- Allow individuals (in low-skilled jobs, unemployed, NEETs, recent graduates) the opportunity to take career matters in their own hands
- Offer bite-sized learning for those on-the-move as it can be accessed on many mobile devices.
- Empower people with new ideas and helping to design alternative career paths as they could see how to improve skills in a changing labour market
- Enhance digital skills for the many, especially for the low-skilled, unemployed and long-term unemployed adults



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