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Guidance in Education - the educational guidance system in Denmark

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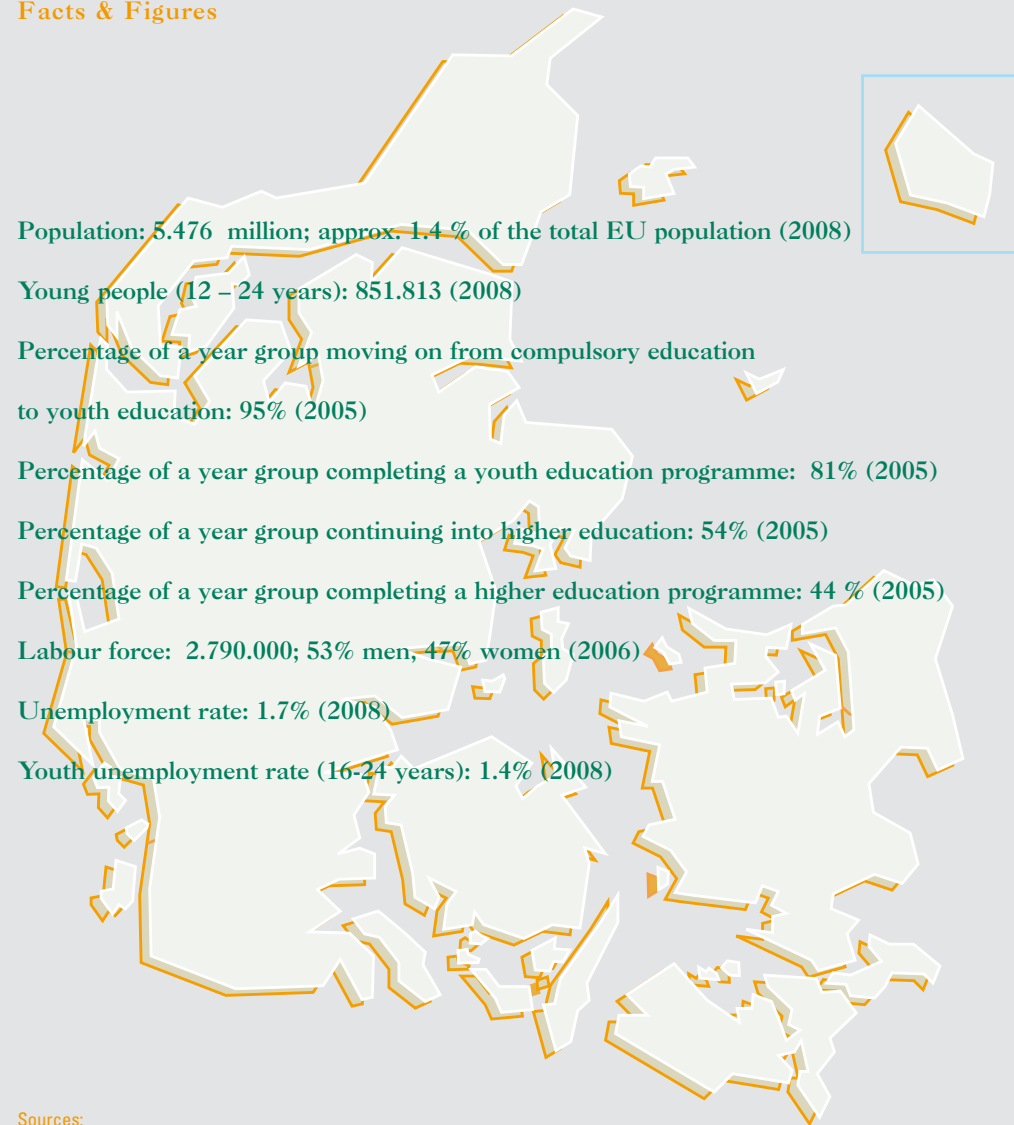
# Guidance in Education

– the educational guidance system in Denmark



## Introduction

### Facts & Figures



Sources:  
Statistics Denmark  
"Facts and Figures - 2007", Ministry of Education

Provision of educational and vocational guidance for pupils and students in the education system and for young people outside education and employment is given high priority in Denmark.

In 2003, the Danish parliament adopted a new act on guidance ([www.eng.uvm.dk](http://www.eng.uvm.dk)), as a result of which a comprehensive restructuring of guidance services in the educational system was initiated. The 2003 Act has been amended several times since in order to support the Danish Government's declared goals that, by 2015, 95 % of all young people should complete a youth education programme and 50 % should complete a higher educational programme. The Government wishes to make it easier for citizens to make realistic decisions about learning opportunities and careers - for the individual's own sake and for the good of society as a whole. The Danish guidance reform should be seen in this perspective.

The guidance system became operational 1 August 2004. The Ministry of Education has been responsible for the implementation of the Danish guidance reform, and it has a controlling and coordinating role in relation to the guidance system.

This publication gives an overview of the key elements of the reform and the Danish guidance system in the educational sector which is primarily concerned with guidance services for young people. The main providers of guidance services for adults are the municipalities but these services are not covered by the reform and, therefore, they are not described in this booklet.

An online version of the present publication is available at:  
[www.ciriusonline.dk/euroguidance-en](http://www.ciriusonline.dk/euroguidance-en)

## Main Aims of the Guidance Reform

The Danish act on guidance aims to develop a simpler and more transparent guidance system with easy access to high quality guidance services. The act is primarily targeted at young people up to the age of 25 years, but it also addresses adults wishing to enter a higher education programme.

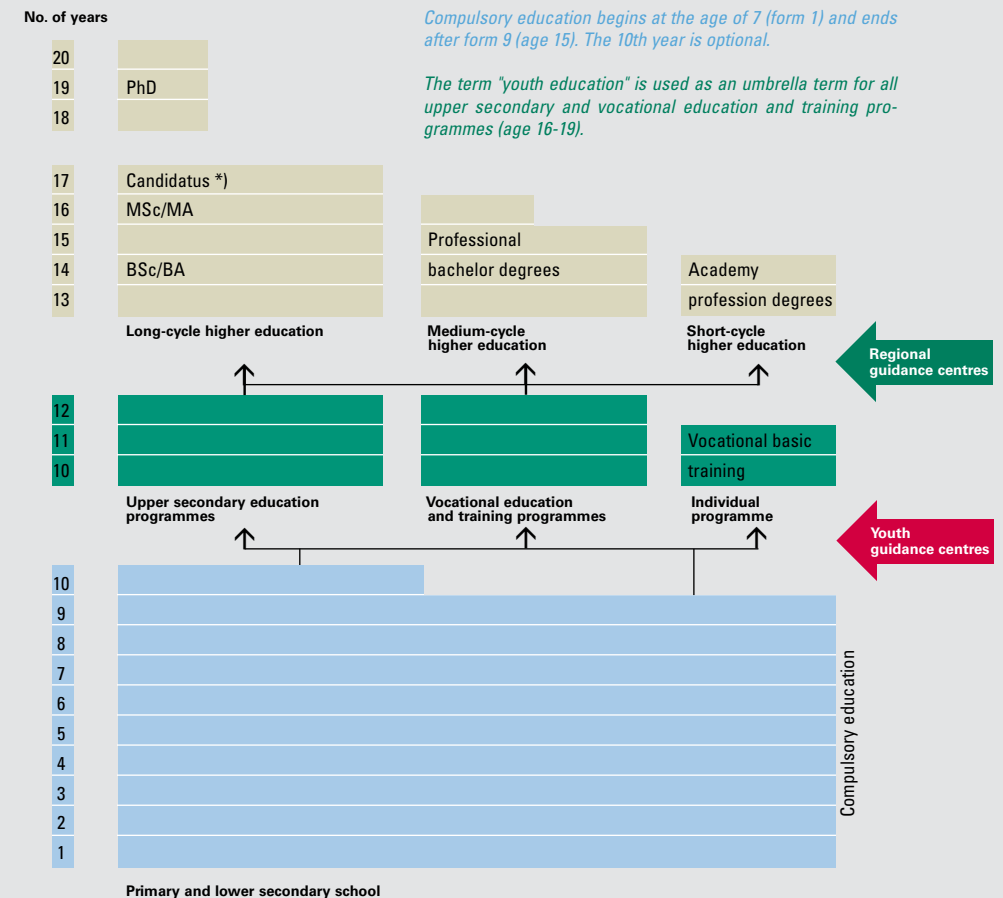
The act defines the 8 main aims of the reform. According to these aims, guidance related to choice of education, training and career shall:

- ▶ help to ensure that choice of education and career will be of greatest possible benefit to the individual and to society, and that all young people complete an education, leading to vocational/professional qualifications;
- ▶ be targeted particularly at young people who without a specific guidance will have difficulties in relation to choices and completion of education, training and career;
- ▶ take into account the individual's interests and personal qualifications and skills, including informal competencies and previous education and work experience, as well as the expected need for skilled labour and self-employed businessmen;
- ▶ contribute to limiting, as much as possible, the number of dropouts and students changing from one education and training programme to another; contribute to support students in making choices included in education and training;
- ▶ contribute to improving the individual's ability to seek and use information, including ICT-based information and guidance, about choice of education, educational institution and career;
- ▶ help to ensure coherence and progression in the individual's guidance support;
- ▶ be independent of sectoral and institutional interests;
- ▶ guidance shall be provided by practitioners with an approved guidance education or recognized competencies at the same level.

## Independent Guidance Centres

Two types of centres, which are independent from sectoral and institutional interests, have been established:

- 45 Municipal Youth Guidance Centres ("Ungdommens Uddannelsesvejledning", UU) provide guidance in relation to the transition from compulsory to youth education.
- 7 Regional Guidance Centres ("Studievalg") provide guidance in relation to the transition from youth education to higher education.



## Youth Guidance Centres



Guidance is regarded as a continuous process that should help young people become more conscious of their abilities, interests and possibilities, thus enabling them to make decisions regarding education and employment on a qualified basis.

The 45 youth guidance centres are distributed among the 98 municipalities in Denmark. Each centre covers a “sustainable” area in terms of geographical distance and quality; quality referring to number and variety of youth education institutions in the area as well as the management structure of the centres.

The municipal youth guidance centres provide guidance services for young people up to the age of 25 years, focusing on the transition from compulsory to youth education or, alternatively, to the labour market. Their main target groups are:

- Pupils in lower secondary school - forms 6 to 10.
- Young people under the age of 25 outside education, training or employment.
- Other young people under the age of 25 who seek out guidance in relation to youth education programmes or employment.
- Young people with a special need for guidance concerning choice of education, vocation and career - a transverse target group of young people with various problems related to the continuing or completion of an education programme.

In cooperation with the school principals, the youth guidance centres organise guidance activities at schools - close to the pupils. Teachers are still responsible for the provision of general careers education from form 1 to form 10 but the youth guidance centres should serve as a source of coordination, inspiration and further development in this area. Guidance specifically related to the transition from compulsory to youth education is the responsibility of the youth guidance centres - but it is provided at the pupils' schools. The aim of the guidance process is to develop the pupils' self-knowledge and ability to make decisions regarding education and career. It is concluded with the drawing up of an individual transition plan in form 9, describ-

ing plans and objectives after compulsory school. Introduction courses to youth education take place in form 8. Bridge building and mentor schemes are important tools in form 9 and bridge building also in form 10.

The centres are obliged to establish contact with young people under the age of 25 who are outside the education system or the labour market. Together with the individual young person, the guidance counsellors discuss different opportunities and schemes that may help them get back into education, training or employment.

The youth guidance centres are funded by the municipalities, and the municipal councils in a particular area define the overall framework for their centre's activities - within the scope of the act on guidance. The daily management and responsibility for the provision of guidance activities is ensured by the managers of the centres, whose sole focus is provision and continuous development of youth guidance services in their area.

Quality assurance is emphasised in the guidance reform. Transparency in relation to the youth guidance centres' activities and results are important in order to assure a high level of quality. Objectives, methods, planned activities as well as the performance of each centre are thus to be published on the Internet. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education has developed a set of guidelines that the centres have to use when they set up their own quality assurance system. As a minimum, this system has to include figures concerning the scope, results and effect of the guidance provided, as well as procedures for annual self-evaluation of the centres by means of user and employee surveys.

Cooperation across sectors is a key issue in the act on guidance. The aim is to ensure a coherent guidance system and a regular exchange of experiences, knowledge and best practice. The youth guidance centres are thus obliged to cooperate closely with primary and lower secondary schools and youth education institutions in the area, as well as local business life and the public employment services.

# CASE STORY

UU Sjælland Syd – a Youth Guidance Centre By manager Uffe Tvede Hansen



Our main aim is to give every young person the guidance and support that he or she needs in relation to education-, training- or job-related decisions. Individual and group guidance sessions for pupils in lower secondary schools are provided at the pupils' schools. We arrange introduction courses at different youth education institutions for all pupils in form 8, work placement periods for all pupils in form 9 (1-2 weeks per year) and 4-week bridging courses at different youth education institutions for all pupils in form 10. We are in close contact with enterprises and the social partners in our area and we act as a mediator when schools want to visit e.g. a specific type of enterprise or if they wish to invite representatives from enterprises, trade unions or employers' organisations.

**“Our guidance counsellors have become much more conscious of their profession, and they express a wish to work towards greater professionalism”**



As for young people outside the education system, we have 3 local offices in the 3 municipalities, located in places easy to find for young people. Any young person is welcome to visit us at our offices or to contact us via phone, e-mail or SMS to make an appointment for a guidance session. Our website provides all relevant contact details. We are informed automatically when a young person drops out of school or college, and we then contact him or her to discuss available options. Furthermore, our own administrative system regularly reminds our guidance counsellors to contact the young people, whom we consider to be “at risk” for various reasons.

We cover a large region. Some staff members have coordinating tasks and some are responsible for cross-regional activities such as integration of young people from

ethnic minorities or cooperation with regional educational institutions. However, the majority of our guidance counsellors work in one of our 3 municipalities. Still, it is important for us to continue developing a corporate spirit and to ensure that we move in the same direction. Consequently, we have monthly meetings and we have developed a set of common descriptions of our main tasks, practices and procedures for the entire UU. Together with more locally oriented targets and action plans, the common descriptions are now collected in a new main description of our organisation and our targets. We see these joint efforts as a way of ensuring the quality and dynamics of our work.

Many Danish guidance counsellors were worried that with the establishment of the new guidance centres, the close relationship to the pupils would disappear, thus making it difficult to provide high quality guidance services. Now, 4 years after the change, our experience is that the quality level is at least as high as it was before our new guidance system and the decision to have all our counsellors working full-time has brought more professionalism and efficiency to our work. It has become easier for us to exchange and discuss ideas and experiences. Also, our guidance counsellors have become much more conscious of their profession, and they express a wish to work towards greater professionalism. Currently, our main challenges are to motivate more young people to take an education instead of taking unqualified work.



**3 municipalities in the Southern part of Zealand with a total population of 160,000 people**

**25,000 young people (12-25 years old)**

**65 primary and lower secondary schools**

**31 full-time guidance counsellors are employed at UU Sjælland Syd**

## Regional Guidance Centres



Whereas the youth guidance centres focus mainly on guidance concerning the transition from compulsory to youth education, the 7 regional guidance centres are responsible for provision of

- ▶ guidance in relation to the transition from youth education programmes to higher education; and
- ▶ information on all higher education programmes in Denmark and the possible occupations or professions that these higher education programmes may lead to.

The regional guidance centres' main target groups are:

- Pupils in youth education programmes.
- Young people and adults outside the education system who wish to enter a higher education programme.
- Pupils in youth education programmes with an extended need for guidance concerning choice of education, vocation and career.

The regional guidance centres focus on the transition from youth education to higher education. They organise a wide variety of educational and vocational guidance activities for pupils in upper secondary education including workshops, seminars, careers fairs, individual and group guidance sessions. These activities take place at the pupils' schools.

The regional guidance centres cooperate with youth educational institutions in general and cooperate more specific regarding young people with an extended need for guidance.

Young people and adults are welcome to call or visit the centres to get information about higher education opportunities or to make an appointment for a guidance session. On a regular basis, it is also possible to meet guidance counsellors from the centres at different neutral localities across the 7 regions - e.g. at a public library - to

ensure that geographical distance does not prevent people from getting access to relevant guidance services.

The 7 regional guidance centres are funded by the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry has the overall responsibility for the centres. The centres have been selected after a call for tenders. Most of them are consortia of different educational institutions. The centres operate on the basis of a contract with the Ministry, in which the financial conditions are also specified.

An important part of the contract concerns the formation of a quality assurance system and the centres are required to carry out an annual report on the results of each centre's quality assurance system. A user survey of the Regional Guidance Centres must be part of the quality assurance system in order to create the basis for a user-driven development parallel to experiences gained. Additionally, the quality assurance system has to include figures concerning the scope, results and effect of the guidance provided.

The performance of the centres is described in their annual activity reports, which are approved by the Ministry. The centres are obliged to develop a quality assurance system on the basis of a set of guidelines designed by the Ministry.

Like the youth guidance centres, the regional guidance centres are obliged to cooperate with relevant partners in their region to ensure a coherent guidance system and a regular exchange of experiences, knowledge and best practice. Relevant partners include youth education and higher education institutions, the social partners and industry and commerce.

# CASE STORY

Studievalg København – a Regional Guidance Centre

By deputy manager and guidance counsellor Jan Svendsen



**3 counties with a total population of 1.6 mio. people**

**96 youth education institutions**

**34,000 pupils in upper secondary education**

**32,000 pupils in vocational education and training**

**17 guidance counsellors and 3 support staff members are employed at Studievalg København**

Our guidance services are related to choice of higher education. Guidance activities differ according to target group but generally speaking, our main objective is to put our clients in a position where they themselves are capable of making qualified decisions regarding choice of higher education.

For pupils in upper secondary education, which gives access to the entire range of higher education programmes, we offer at each school in our area:

- 5 obligatory workshops or seminars, focusing on themes such as the national guidance portal and other IT-related working tools, higher education programmes, admission procedures, careers and entrepreneurship;
- group counselling sessions for pupils having difficulties choosing higher education
- meetings where the parents are also invited;
- individual guidance for pupils at their school.

Through these events we ensure that the pupils are confronted with different perspectives on higher education several times during their 2-3 years in upper secondary education. Each guidance counsellor at Studievalg København is responsible for a number of schools. This ensures that the pupils get familiar with the guidance counsellor. At the same time, we remain “neutral ground” in the sense that we do not know the pupils well from classes. Many pupils consider this an advantage because they won't be met with preconceived opinions when they want to discuss their future possibilities.

For pupils in vocational education and training, which gives access to a limited number of mainly short-cycle higher education programmes, guidance counsellors at Studievalg København come out to vocational colleges as often as it is needed in order to inform about possibilities in the higher education system.

Both young people and adults are welcome to call, e-mail or visit us in our centre in central Copenhagen which is open every day. Here we offer both individual and group guidance sessions.

We give high priority to quality assurance and have developed client feedback and evaluation systems, which are used after all our events. Continuous development of our services and staff training, i.e. regular supervision, are two other important areas. Apart from attending various further training courses, we also arrange regular staff meetings where we discuss themes such as our services in general, specific events, or guidance methodologies.



**“Our main objective is to put our clients in a position where they themselves are capable of making qualified decisions regarding choice of higher education”**

## Guidance in Relation to Completion of Education

At all institutions for youth education and higher education, guidance is provided for pupils/students concerning the completion of the specific youth or higher education programmes. Guidance counsellors at educational institutions are often part time teachers and part time guidance counsellors.

In order to make contents and methods in guidance visible, all educational institutions must have general guidelines for their guidance service.

Educational institutions cooperate with youth guidance centres and regional guidance centres in order to have coherence in guidance. This cooperation has a general and also a more specific perspective regarding pupils/students in risk of dropping out of education. In relation to the effort of minimizing drop out rates at schools, guidance at all levels in the educational system plays an important role.

The educational institutions have to establish a quality assurance system, which includes drop-out and completion rates of each particular educational institution in order to measure the effect of the guidance provided. Furthermore, an annual user survey, designed to provide information on user benefit of guidance, has to be part of the quality assurance system as well.



## National Guidance Portal



The national guidance portal **www.ug.dk** launched by the Ministry of Education is an ICT-based careers information and guidance portal. The portal helps people find careers information in order to make qualified decisions about education, training and careers.

The portal provides comprehensive and up-to-date information on:

- ▶ youth education and training programmes;
- ▶ higher education programmes;
- ▶ occupations/professions;
- ▶ labour market issues;
- ▶ learning opportunities abroad;
- ▶ study programmes taught in English at Danish colleges and universities.

The portal includes an e-mail based enquiry service, the possibility of developing an interactive personal education plan, an Internet-based guidance tool facilitating the choice of education, occupation and careers, as well as links to educational institutions and to the electronic admission systems (**www.optagelse.dk**).

The regional guidance centres have their own pages at the portal where they can present their activities and provide contact details. The youth guidance centres' contact details are available at the portal, and most of them have developed their own pages. For information regarding adult education, please see **www.vidar.dk** - the Ministry of Education's database with information about adult and post-school education.

In August 2009 the two portals **www.ug.dk** and **www.vidar.dk** will unite in one portal: **www.ug.dk**

## National Dialogue Forum



Denmark has a long tradition of cross-sectoral cooperation on guidance issues at national, regional and local levels. At national level, this tradition is continued through a National Dialogue Forum, which was established by the Minister of Education in 2003. The purposes of the Dialogue Forum are:

- ▶ to develop and enhance the level of quality in Danish guidance services, and
- ▶ to secure a close dialogue between the Minister and relevant organisations, institutions, guidance counsellor associations and individuals holding a leading position in Danish guidance.

The National Dialogue Forum has 3-4 annual meetings where issues such as best practices, experiences, new ideas and innovative thinking within the field of guidance are discussed. In between meetings, the Dialogue Forum members have the opportunity to continue discussions - or initiate new ones - on an ICT-based discussion board.

The Dialogue Forum is headed by a board of three persons, one of whom is the chair of the forum, all appointed directly by the Minister of Education. Currently, the Dialogue Forum consists of individual members as well as representatives from member organisations and ministries, appointed for a period of 3 years. Examples of member organisations are:

- ▶ National employers', employees' and trade organisations
- ▶ Guidance counsellor associations
- ▶ Youth organisations
- ▶ Municipal authorities.



## Training of Guidance Counsellors



One of the objectives of the Danish guidance reform is to improve the qualifications and competencies of guidance practitioners in order to professionalize Danish guidance services. Consequently, one common training programme is offered to guidance counsellors from all sectors. With the 2007 amendments of the Act on guidance, it is now a requirement that educational guidance practitioners complete the diploma programme in educational and vocational guidance. Alternatively, guidance practitioners with extensive experience in the field can apply for assessment and recognition of their competencies and prior learning.

Five Centres for Higher Education across the country offer the training programme on a part-time basis. It is equivalent to 12 months full-time studies and consists of 3 basic modules, two optional modules and a diploma project. It has a value of 60 ECTS points. The basis modules are:

- Careers guidance and the guidance practitioner (guidance theories and methodologies, ethics, ICT in guidance etc.)
- Careers guidance and society (labour market conditions and policies, the education system and educational policies, development of society and business etc.)
- Careers guidance and the individual (different target groups, human development, learning theories etc.)

The optional modules have more specific focus and students elect modules, which are relevant in their guidance practice. The diploma project is defined by the student. The training programme is offered as an adult learning programme and corresponds to a diploma degree. Entry requirements are, as a minimum, a completed short-cycle (2-year) higher education programme and 2 years of relevant working experience. Furthermore, it is possible to follow a master programme in guidance at the Danish School of Education, University of Aarhus. Both training programmes are offered within the framework of the Danish adult education and training system. They are aimed at and adapted to adults who already have another higher education degree and 2 years of relevant work experience.

## Centre of Expertise for Guidance

The Ministry of Education is responsible for the development and running of a national centre of expertise for guidance. This includes activities such as collecting examples of best practice and knowledge within the field of guidance, quality development, coordination among different types of guidance services, and initiating analyses, surveys and cross-sectoral experimental and developmental activities.

To support and disseminate information about these activities, a virtual resource centre has been established, specifically aimed at guidance counsellors ([www.vejledningsviden.dk](http://www.vejledningsviden.dk)). The virtual resource centre includes an electronic news service, an on-line journal on guidance, a virtual library, links to relevant legislation, information about best practices, recent research activities, surveys and analyses etc. within the field of guidance.

## International Perspectives

Lifelong guidance is on the agenda in many international fora, and the main aims and components of the Danish guidance reform are very much in line with the EU and OECD recommendations on guidance policies and practices.

The Danish Ministry of Education is also aware of the importance of promoting an international dimension in Danish guidance. International activities for guidance practitioners are initiated by the Danish Euroguidance centre, placed in CIRIUS. The Euroguidance Network includes national centres in 31 European countries and is partly funded by the EU through the Lifelong Learning Programme. The network supports the development of the European dimension in educational and vocational guidance and promotes mutual awareness and cooperation between guidance services in Europe. Furthermore, in 2007 a European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network was established (<http://ktl.jyu.fi/ktl/elgpn>).

## Further Information

**The Danish education and guidance system:** [www.eng.uvm.dk](http://www.eng.uvm.dk)  
(The Ministry of Education)

**The Euroguidance Centre in Denmark:** [www.ciriusonline.dk/euroguidance](http://www.ciriusonline.dk/euroguidance)  
(in Danish) or [www.ciriusonline.dk/euroguidance-en](http://www.ciriusonline.dk/euroguidance-en) (in English)

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**The Euroguidance network:** [www.euroguidance.net](http://www.euroguidance.net)

