

Appendix 1

ICELAND

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Section 1	A brief outline of your country – demographics, population and career service provision – target groups and providers (maximum 300 words)
	Geography Iceland is a relatively large country of 103,000 km ² situated in the North Atlantic. Vast areas are uninhabitable, either lava fields, deserts, mountains, lakes or glaciers (Einarsson, 1996).
	Demography Iceland is one of the smallest nations in the world with only 320 thousand inhabitants. It is the most sparsely populated country in Europe (Ministry of Foreign affairs, n.d.). Two thirds of the population live in the area of the capital, Reykjavik.
	Labour market In 2010, Iceland had the second highest employment rate in Europe or 78.1% (OECD, 2011). Women are very active on the labour market in Iceland, and for example in 2010 Iceland had the highest employment rate of women with children in the OECD or 81% (OECD, 2011). Unemployment has always been low in Iceland, except for the sudden change following a collapse of the financial system in October 2008. Despite the resulting economic crisis Iceland seems to be recovering. In 2011 unemployment rates have lowered to 5-6% in total (9.5% for the younger age groups) and forecasts of figures of annual GDP growth are around 3% (Ministry of Finance, n. d.).
	Education The educational system is divided into four levels: Pre-primary, compulsory (single structure primary and lower secondary education), upper secondary and higher education. Continuing and adult education is provided by public authorities, private institutions, companies and organisations (Eurydice, 2011). All public education is free of charge.
	Main national career guidance services Guidance is provided by certified school counsellors at all school levels, the student counsellor ratio is 1/500 in primary, lower and upper secondary schools and 1/1500 at the University level. Guidance services are also provided to adults in lifelong learning centres and public employment agencies.

Section 2	Taking each of the four general symposium themes (see below), describe the two greatest strengths and two greatest weaknesses relating to each theme in your country (maximum 100 words for each strength and weakness; therefore maximum 400 words per theme and maximum 1,600 words in this section).
Theme 1: Political, economic and social changes and the changing role of career guidance and career guidance policies	
Strength 1	Weakness 1
<p>The profession of educational and vocational counsellors has grown quite fast in the last 20 years.</p> <p>Counsellors work at all school levels as well as within public employment services and adult education coordinated by the Education and Training Service Centre. Around 85% of the counsellors have special training in educational and vocational counselling.</p> <p>Laws of the right of students and adult citizens to educational and vocational counselling were passed in parliament in 2008 and 2010.</p>	<p>There is a need for further policy making concerning the educational and vocational counselling, especially within the school system. There is especially a need for evidence base, something that has already been suggested in a ministerial report to parliament.</p> <p>More cooperation is needed for coherent services for the user. The student counsellor ratio needs to be improved.</p>
Strength 2	Weakness 2
<p>The Icelandic government has set as an objective to raise the education level of people active in the labour market. In 2005 the government signed an agreement with the social partners to raise the education level so that by 2020 90% of the labour force would have secondary education or more, whereas in 2005 only 70% of the labour force had reached that level. This resulted in an increase in career guidance services for people with little formal education.</p> <p>There are currently 25 to 30 counsellors working in 13 adult education centres in the country.</p>	<p>There is too much emphasis on personal counselling and the dominant mode of delivery is individual counselling. Other modes of delivery need to be enhanced, especially Information and Communication Technologies (ICT).</p> <p>For the moment we do not have national ICT guidance strategies or policies in Iceland. There have been many attempts made to establish an information web-portal that have all ended without any noticeable results.</p> <p>The legislation from 2008 and resolution of parliament from 2007 stresses the need that guidance has to address the problem of dropout from upper secondary school that touches approximately 30% of a cohort.</p> <p>We still need policy on how guidance</p>

	can contribute to reduce dropout.
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Theme 2: Lifelong guidance policy as a part of integrated human resource development policies – challenges and opportunities	
Strength 1	Weakness 1
<p>Iceland is the only country that has passed a law that states that only certified educational and vocational counsellors can practice the profession. A legislation from 2009 states that only certified school and career counselors should be employed in counselor positions. This provides users with qualified counseling service.</p> <p>Four differnt laws were passed in 2008 to 2010 that set policies for lifelong guidance in Iceland. This legislation defines guidance as a student's right that should be provided by licensed counsellors to students at all ages. In the Compulsory School Act 2008 and in the Upper Secondary School Act 2008 it is stated that all students have a right to school and career counseling. The same right is set forth in the Adult Education Act from March 2010.</p>	<p>Although we have laws stating the rights of students and citizens to counselling we do not have clear plans on how to implement those goals, such as what administration, standards, tools or co-operation is needed.</p> <p>It is not enough to set rules, such as in the national curriculum on career education, if it is up to schools how they are implemented, i.e. recent research shows that careers education is only provided in approximately 25% of schools at the compulsory level and upper secondary level.</p>
Strength 2	Weakness 2
Counsellors working in the educational sector and in vocational guidance all have similar background and education: a diploma or MA degree in educational and vocational guidance from the University of Iceland. This makes collaboration and cooperation easier between counsellors in different sectors.	Sectors, such as working with children, need to be enhanced with in service training after completion of training at the University. Since no work is being done on developing standards of counsellors working with children, no policy exists on in-service training of counsellors in different sectors, such as those working at the primary school level.

Theme 3: The changing world and the changing role of career guidance – skills and competencies for lifelong guidance practitioners	
Strength 1	Weakness 1
<p>Legislation about educational and vocational counsellors was passed by the Icelandic Parliament in 2009. According to the law, only those who have been licensed by the minister of education can use the title: Educational- and vocational counsellor, and work as such. A licence is to be granted to applicants who have completed education in educational- and vocational counselling at a university approved by the minister of education. If there is uncertainty whether an applicant (for a licence to use the title educational- and vocational counsellor) fulfils the criteria stated by this law, an evaluation is to be sought from an evaluation committee appointed by the minister of education (for a period of four years at a time). By certifying the title of educational- and vocational counsellor by law, certain quality of service is guaranteed to the benefit of clients.</p>	<p>No in-service training is required from educational and vocational counsellors to maintain or renew professional skills. Standards of educational and vocational counselling competencies have not been developed.</p>
Strength 2	Weakness 2
<p>A revised MA program in educational and vocational counselling started in 2010. It is 120 ECTS credits (60 ECTS in theoretical courses (up to 20 ECTS in methodology), 30 ECTS in practical courses and training and 30 ECTS in MA thesis).</p>	<p>This revised MA programme needs to be evaluated on a regular basis. It has a strong emphasis on research and on practice and needs to withhold that balance.</p>

Theme 4: Evidence-based practice; evidence-based policies	
Strength 1	Weakness 1
Several evaluation studies have been conducted on career education, school counsellor's role in Reykjavik primary and lower secondary schools and adult guidance. In Iceland there is a know how in evaluation of guidance.	Very little is known about the quality of guidance at upper secondary and university level in Iceland, since no holistic evaluation study on guidance provision has been done.
Strength 2	Weakness 2
Policy making in guidance is based on committee reports supported and funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The committees are always based on professionals and in co-operation with the Association of educational and vocational counsellors. Informal ways of obtaining feedback from users give hints in a small society... and statistical information on people who use the services...	Although results of evaluation studies are taken into account in reports of committees, no one at the ministry of education and culture is responsible for integrating recommendations of these studies into policy making. Process of evaluation need to be formalized into a more evidence based way of making policy.

Section 3	Looking at the themes, prioritise them according to the most important ones for your country team to explore further and learn about at the symposium. (1 = most important – 4 = least important)
Political, economic and social changes and the changing role of career guidance and career guidance policies	Priority 1 2 3 4
Lifelong guidance policy as a part of integrated human resource development policies – challenges and opportunities	Priority 1 2 3 4
The changing world and the changing role of career guidance – skills and competencies for lifelong guidance practitioners	Priority 1 2 3 4
Evidence-based practice; evidence-based policies	Priority 1 2 3 4

Section 4	Thinking about the themes, describe up to three high-level key public policy and/or practice initiatives currently being advanced or considered in your country (write no more than 100 words on each). If it is possible, please say to which of the themes each initiative is most closely linked.
High-level key public policy/practice initiative 1	Even though access to the internet is exceptionally high in Iceland, steps have not been taken to develop a holistic and accessible ICT system to deliver careers information and guidance. This means that some basic educational or occupational information is completely missing or can be difficult to find. No single access service providing web or telephone career guidance is available. Development and implementation of an ICT portal to be used in high on the agenda within the field of educational and vocational counselling.
Linked most closely to Theme 1	

<p>High-level key public policy/practice initiative 2 Evaluation of the educational and vocational counselling provided within the school system. School counsellors work in nearly all schools in Iceland. The information we have from two evaluation studies is that around 60% of their time is in personal counselling. We need to know how students inform themselves about educational and career choice, who provides it and what are the outcomes.</p>
<p>Linked most closely to Theme 4</p>
<p>High-level key public policy/practice initiative 3 In service training of school and career counsellors, based on standards. Quality issues in relations to the practice of counsellors.</p>
<p>Linked most closely to Theme 2</p>

Section 5	<p>Future Focus – what are the key elements of your team’s overall vision for career policy, practice and research in your country? (write no more than 30 words).</p>
<p>Growth has been a key element in the development of educational and vocational guidance services in the past 20 years. Quality and access of services are key elements of the guidance policy in Iceland.</p>	

References

- Eurydice (2011). *The organisation of the school system in Iceland 2009/2010*. European Commission: EACEA. (see http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/eurybase/eurybase_full_reports/IC_EN.pdf)
- Einarsson, T. (1996). Geology and physical geography. In J. Nordal and V. Kristinsson (Eds.). *Iceland. The Republic*. Handbook published by the Central Bank of Iceland. (pp. 23-32). Reykjavik: Central Bank of Iceland.