European Research Agenda for Career Guidance and Counselling

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Chapter 13

European Research Agenda for Career Guidance and Counselling

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Key words: Research Agenda, Career Guidance, Career Counselling, Literature review, Career Profession, Career Practice

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1. Introduction

Research on career guidance and counselling (CGC) is oriented towards the *professional practice* of career support in different formats and systems, which itself has only been emerging since the late 19th century (Savickas 2009). Currently, we are facing a rapidly changing world with many consequences—some positive, some challenging—for people shaping their educational and working lives. Various formats of career support, and the systems these are embedded in, are increasing in their complexity. As a knowledge-based practice, CGC demands a solid research base. In view of changing educational, work and career questions and conditions, the practice of CGC also demands constant reflection and innovation on this research base.

The scientific discourse on career guidance and counselling is still somewhat dominated by the perspectives of academic sub-disciplines such as vocational psychology and educational sociology, or by the perspectives of other knowledge-based practices, such as education or social work.[1] These perspectives are very rich, but lack a holistic focus on the practices of professional career support. Unlike older professions, such as medicine, law or (to some extent) education, which have established their own trans-disciplinary bodies of knowledge by integrating practical knowledge with different disciplinary perspectives, the profession of CGC is in a continued process of defining itself (its social functions, the roles and tasks of its professionals) and, correspondingly, its main body of knowledge.[2] For the professionalisation of career guidance and counselling (CGC), we (the authors) see a political imperative to establish CGC as a distinct profession, as opposed to a specialised sub-division of psychological practice, or adult education, along with dedicated study programmes, a common trans-disciplinary body of knowledge, and its own practice-based research agenda. This accords with the NICE Memorandum (NICE 2016b).

The goal of this paper is to outline, one possible European Research Agenda (ERA) from which to develop a definitive research basis and knowledge foundation of the CGC profession. In the remainder of Section 1, we will outline what we mean by CGC, why we believe that a European research agenda for our practice is needed, and how we have developed the research agenda so far. In Section 2, we present a conceptual framework, which helps to define the scope of practice-based research on CGC, and hence helps to confine the ERA. Section 3 represents the first version of the ERA, which we have worked out over a three-year period. It is made up of six sub-sections. In each sub-section, we discuss the status quo of relevant research, e.g. on the effectiveness of CGC, and formulate needs for further investigation, whereby our ambition has been to work out major issues. In the final discussion, we reflect upon this first version of the ERA, and propose steps for its further development in the future.

[1] For a clear distinction between academic disciplines and knowledge-based practices, see Jarvis (1997, p. 11).
[2] Trans-disciplinary knowledge integrates theoretical knowledge from different disciplines, e.g. biology and psychology, with practical knowledge, e.g. about healing and medical interventions (Defila *et al*. 2006).

1.1 Career Guidance and Counselling - Terminology

In this contribution, career guidance and counselling (CGC) is understood as a broad practice, covering a range of interventions which support individuals from diverse target groups and with different needs in their career development. The practice of CGC includes: career education; face-to-face or social-media-based counselling for individuals and groups; the provision of information and tools for self-assessment; interventions in clients' social systems, and the organisation of career services (Council of the European Union 2004, OECD 2004, NICE 2012). Career interventions are relevant both in public and private spheres. Career support is offered in schools, through vocational training, in universities and colleges of adult education, in companies, by labour-market support systems, public employment services, and social-support systems for citizens in many different situations in life. Such a broad understanding reflects the diversity of practices and research in CGC, and has also been adopted in standards and common reference points for the training of career practitioners (NICE 2012, NICE 2016a). Partially, especially in its reference to social systems interventions and the management of career services, our understanding expands the definitions offered by the OECD (2004) and CGC-related policies in Europe (Council of the European Union 2008; ELGPN 2012).

1.2 Goals of the European Research Agenda

The overall aim of this European research agenda (ERA) is to develop a common idea *of research activities, which might strongly support the development of innovative career interventions and career support systems today and in the near future*. Developing such a research agenda is a central goal of the European Doctoral Programme in Career Guidance and Counselling (ECADOC), which the European Commission co-funded from 2013 to 2016. ECADOC is a joint strategic initiative of the Network for Innovation in Career Guidance and Counselling in Europe (NICE) and the European Society for Vocational Designing and Career Counselling (ESVDC).[3] The ERA can help to reach the different following objectives:

Providing a Foundation for Innovative Research: A central function of the ERA is to feature the status quo of relevant research and highlight current strengths (e.g. existing centres of excellence), but also to emphasise a wish list and formulate fields for future investigation. Such a foundation may help the community of researchers define the scope of the research field as well as increase its inner coherence and consistency.

[3] The NICE network (www.nice-network.eu) and the ESVDC (www.esvdc.org) represent more than 100 academics concerned with the academic training of career practitioners and career-related research from more than 30 European countries. The main goal of the ECADOC project (larios.psy.unipd.it/ecadoc/) was to set up joint structures for specialised doctoral training in career guidance and counselling across Europe. The European Commission's financial support to produce the European Research Agenda does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors. The Commission cannot be held responsible for any use, which may be made of the information contained therein. The ESVDC aims to stimulate and promote European and international collaboration in research and development in the fields of life designing, vocational guidance and career counselling. NICE promotes excellence and innovation in academic, research-based training of career practitioners in Europe, e.g. through common European standards and reference points.

Promote Research Cooperation: A more consistent description of the research field will allow individual researchers, research teams and institutions to relate their themes of research to those of other researchers. This way, the ERA can promote interdisciplinary and international research cooperation, for example through topic-based research clusters. At the same time, the ERA could also offer sensible categories for setting up international research databases, in which contributions from different lines of thinking can be organised for an enhanced exchange of knowledge.

Offering Orientation for Research-Based Training: Students in the CGC field may profit from the ERA at all levels of academic training. It will make it easier for them to identify research gaps and interesting issues for their own research, and to connect these with broader discourses. Moreover, the ERA may support the active involvement of doctoral researchers and students in broad international research contexts and projects. Thereby, aspiring researchers may benefit from an increase in perspectives, networking with various experts in their field of research, and develop their key competences for interdisciplinary and cross-cultural research.

Raising the Profile of Our Discipline: Finally, a coordinated research agenda for Europe opens up the possibility of raising central and highly relevant research questions for our entire practice and making it more visible to the public. This in turn will increase the overall visibility of study programmes and doctoral training in our field throughout Europe since it will inform the public systematically about the meaningfulness of research in our field.

If we have chosen to speak of a European Research Agenda, this is largely pragmatic. This project was supported by the European Commission and by academic societies located in Europe. For the most part, the academics working on this project are European. Talking of a global research agenda would be inappropriate, albeit that many of the research questions under discussion here are of interest beyond European borders. At the same time, focusing on a European research agenda has enabled us to concentrate on questions which are pertinent to the common values of the so-called 'European project' with its celebration of diversity and human rights, facilitating mobility across national borders, promoting innovation through the cross-fertilisation of academic disciplines, cultures, and practices. At the same time, we are aware, that this also brings some limitation in recognising important developments from other parts of the world, if only within the scope of this paper. Finally, organising collaboration around a European research agenda will be easier to facilitate in the coming years, and academics in other world regions may want to set other priorities for research relating to career guidance and counselling than the ones which emerged in the duration of the ECADOC project.

1.3 Methodological Approach

The development of the ERA followed several steps. First came a comparison of existing and published research in the field of CGC[4]. In this first wave of the research, we approached researchers within the relevant CGC academic networks in Europe, namely the NICE and ESVDC

[4] This method was used by Plant (2003) and (with an particular focus on evidence) by Hooley (2015).

communities. We asked approximately 90 researchers from more than 30 countries, (mostly within but some beyond Europe) to refer us to relevant studies. We received 45 responses from individual researchers or research groups, referring us to a total of 428 studies. The collected data comprised information about the studies (title, author, country, institution, language), and, where available, summaries of the studies. Additionally, we asked for key words that could help to build up a more comprehensive system of categories (e.g. a database).

The second step was the mapping of this research. The collected pieces of research were analysed regarding keywords, content and methodology, with the goal of working out a framework of relevant research perspectives (Section 2). An important foundation for the development of our categories was provided by the NICE Professional Roles, which were developed by the NICE network from 2009-2012 with a high involvement of many experts from across Europe, including most members of the ESVDC. The NICE Professional Roles describe the central practices associated with career guidance and counselling, and comprise: career counselling; career education; career assessment and information; social systems interventions and career service management (NICE 2016a, 17).

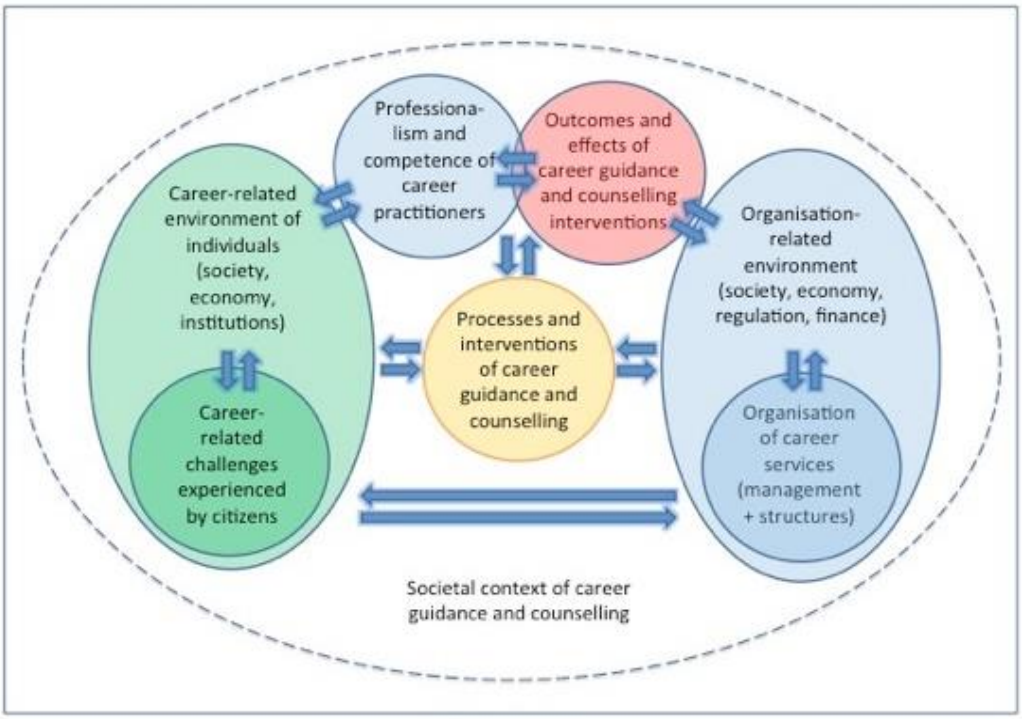
The mapping and consequent framework were widely discussed, notably at two ECADOC Summer Schools (Padua 2014, Paris 2015) and at the European Summit on Developing the Career Workforce of the Future (NICE Conference: Canterbury, UK 2014). During these events, participants contributed to the elaboration and sophistication of the six identified research perspectives with their ideas and reflections. At the Canterbury Summit, we also discussed principles of research in the CGC field, including the relevance of participatory research. Drawing on these discussions, a set of principles for an improved cooperation between research and practice were integrated into the NICE Memorandum (NICE 2016b). Most importantly though, we used these events to generate ideas and discussions about future research needs in our field: the ideas which are presented here. Interested researchers were involved in discussing specific areas of research into career guidance and counselling, and suggested a multitude of relevant questions, problems, ideas and themes for future research through these moderated discussions. We recorded these ideas and systemised them.

This chapter presents the first edition of the ERA, including our framework of relevant research perspectives (Section 2) and the proposals for research that might strongly support the development of innovative career interventions and career support systems today and in the near future (Section 3). From what we as its authors have learned from the process, further discussions and elaborations will be necessary to refine this product. Its first edition can only perform as a starting point for further efforts to support the coordination of innovative research in our field.

2. Scope of Research in Career Guidance and Counselling

CGC is a complex field of research. This makes it necessary to reduce the existing complexity to identify the different perspectives, which are relevant. The core of the European research agenda (ERA) is its conceptual framework of interlinked research perspectives, which enabled us to identify and systemise innovative research themes. We have ensured that this framework is underpinned by empirical knowledge derived from current research in our field, but also made sure that it is open enough to incorporate important research questions, which are not yet being addressed sufficiently (Section 1.3). The main function of our framework is to define central categories of research which are relevant for career guidance and counselling (CGC). We have chosen and defined the categories in such a way that they integrate all relevant perspectives systemically, demonstrate the interplay of the different aspects, and live up to the complexity of the subjective, dynamic and context-bound processes, in which career guidance and counselling deals (Schiersmann & Weber, 2013; ***Vuorinen, Nykänen, Karjalainen, & Pöyliö***, 2011; Patton & McMahon, 1999). Figure 13.1 shows how we have structured the ERA into different but strongly interlinked perspectives. Six perspectives are distinguished, and the figure shows the links between them. In the following, we briefly present the distinct research perspective of each category.

Figure 13.1: Conceptual framework to define the scope of research in CGC



Career-related challenges experienced by citizens. Broadly speaking, this category concerns all forms of knowledge which relate to understanding the situation and career development of individuals in contemporary societies. This includes research on psychological and biographical aspects, values, characteristics, career-related questions and challenges experienced by individual citizens, and career-related research on their social, economic and institutional environments.

Processes and interventions of CGC. Research on the interactions of practitioners (or communities of practice) with clients (or groups of clients) is a central category of research related to CGC. It concentrates on different formats of career interventions and career support (with individuals or groups), the investigation of impact factors, the integration of knowledge and information in CGC processes, the use of social media etc.

Outcomes and effects of CGC interventions. This category concerns research about the effectiveness of interventions and services, long-term results of CGC for individuals, institutions or societies, and the critical investigation of the existing evidence base for CGC. Because the outcomes of CGC are linked to all dimensions identified in our conceptual framework—and not just to the interventions—we think their investigation should be treated as a distinct area of research.

Professionalism and competence of career practitioners. The people who are responsible for career interventions warrant further research. Relevant issues include their professionalism, roles and responsibilities, competences requirements, values, their training, and the recognition of their competences. It also seems important to distinguish between diverse fields, formats, and types of practitioners (NICE 2016a).

Organisation of career services. CGC interventions are delivered by organisations that provide career support. Research focussing on these organisations and how they shape and influence the CGC practice adds a meaningful subject to our agenda. This comprises management aspects, service improvement, organisational development, human resource strategies, the evolution of services, integration of technology along with particular innovations.

Societal context of career services. This category highlights the overall embeddedness of CGC systems, interventions or theoretical models within the broader societal contexts, policies and discourses. Relevant research looks at economic factors, educational systems, social, legal and cultural issues, as well as political and societal circumstances, rights and norms, as critical factors of influence and asks for critical research that considers ethical implications.

3. Research Agenda

3.1 Career-related Challenges Experienced by Citizens

The changes we are experiencing nowadays are occurring so fast that it is increasingly difficult to develop a clear awareness of them. Accordingly, they strongly affect the rhythms of existence in terms of education, work and other aspects of life. We want to point out some changes that have occurred in industrial and post-industrial societies over the past decades and that have had important consequences for individuals. These changes, which have largely been brought about by the internationalisation of markets, global competition, digitalisation, and contemporary policies, have forced some individuals to reorganise their lives and to continuously question their increasingly uncertain futures. Bauman (2005) describes the profound transformation of the structures of society as having moved from a solid to a liquid state. The metaphor of liquidity emphasises that social links have become more fragile and volatile and that long-term projections are difficult. A liquid society requires individuals to define themselves much more strongly than in the past, when one's identity was more strongly defined by relatively stable groups and institutions. To a large extent, people now need to identify for themselves the core values by which they want to live, since fewer behavioural standards are prescribed externally. This also relates to perceived status, and to which people want to invest in education and work in their lives, for instance.

The terms 'knowledge society' and 'information society' point to the vital role that technology now plays in our lives. Technology will be more and more characterised by a merging of informatics, biology, materials sciences and nanotechnologies whose potentials may radically change several aspects of our lives. These innovations will facilitate a more accurate monitoring of both environmental and individual health, while simultaneously increasing personal safety and raising taxing issues related to privacy. Companies will be required to deal with a more complex computer architecture, with multi-ethnic populations and (especially in Western countries) with the progressive ageing of the work force (Parhizgar, 2013).

Thanks to the contributions of theories of complexity, we are becoming more aware that reality is mostly made up of systems characterised by a high number of elements which influence each other, with consequences that are difficult to predict (Robertson & Combs, 2014). The management of complex phenomena requires sophisticated knowledge, skills and competences, which transcend the errors of linear thinking (Dörner, 2008). Repeated personal and social "transitions" arise in these conditions. They require sophisticated coping strategies because, besides work and future perspectives, individual well-being and quality of life are at risk (Nota *et al*., 2014; Nota & Rossier, 2015).

High-qualified work is turning into a complex problem-solving activity, forcing workers to be more responsible and creative in their work (Dubar, 2000). Work is increasingly becoming a service relationship between employers and employees, or professionals and clients, where trust

and loyalty become central, but where long-term working relationships are under greater pressure—for example because labour-market structures are evolving and there is greater global competition. Unlike "core" workers with permanent employment, "peripheral" workers and self-employed people (among others) experience more unstable, sometimes precarious work situations, moving from one short-term contract to the next. People with few or no qualifications, and people working in fields that are becoming increasingly automated and digitalised, are under constant threat of unemployment. The situation of freelancers, self-employed professionals with small firms, consultants and others may provide greater degrees of freedom, but they must develop a personal way of managing their work and careers. This situation forces the CGC profession to tailor work practices to the expectations and possibilities which are very different regarding each of these groups, and which increasingly require strategic, non-linear approaches to career construction (Guichard, 2015).

Considering the above, there is an evident need to conduct research that helps find original and innovative solutions to the difficulties we are experiencing, relying on rigorous procedures, qualitative and quantitative, and multidisciplinary approaches. The following paths of research focussing on the career-related challenges of citizens could be particularly beneficial for the development of our academic discipline.

Research centred on personal attributes, which support career construction in the 21st century. Conditions such as those just described emphasise the need to identify personal and situational attributes that can effectively help individuals constructing their professional lives, and in successfully managing multiple and changing career trajectories—so different from the linear trajectories which characterised employment in the last century. Dimensions such as adaptability, work preparedness, hope, optimism, resilience and time perspective are already playing a crucial role. The so-called ‘Life Design’ approach (Savickas, 2015) suggests specific attention should be devoted to reflectivity, to awareness of changes and to the need to pursue multiple trajectories. Socio-economic conditions contribute to creating a work context, which with diminishing frequency guarantees the social structures which afford the support and protection that European workers have experienced in the past (Sultana, 2011).

Research is then required to take into account that career construction in the future cannot be viewed in isolation from other life contexts of the individual, whether these be social, family or personal contexts. With the decline of traditional communities, and the increase of individualiation, there is a need to establish new sympathetic relationships among individuals in order to increase the probability of finding support when facing difficult situations. While this means that people should be prepared autonomously to co-create (technologically supported) networks that can benefit their career development, it does not suggest a reduction of the political and economic responsibilities of those in decision-making positions for supporting inclusion and solidarity through the provision of career support systems. Research on CGC should increasingly pay attention to aspects such as values, attitudes and skill development through activities such as civil engagement, involvement in voluntary activities or social advocacy, as these are useful in

fostering the construction of positive and supportive relationships and inclusive and sympathetic networks.

Research centred on vulnerable people's needs for career support. Simple of complex vulnerability (due to disability, poverty, long-term unemployment, negative experiences of immigration, discrimination or psychological distress) may be associated with less knowledge, lower levels of coping strategies, and lower propensity to personal agency. Conditions of vulnerability, given the premises, can complicate career construction and hinder work inclusion. European research should be able to delineate the weaknesses and strengths of people with different characteristics, so as to identify risk factors, to promote specific interventions, and especially to enhance preventive actions through a new awareness by social services, practitioners, and the educational and work context. Some research has been initiated on the career-related attitudes and particular need of people belonging to cultural minorities (Leong & Flores, 2015), of immigrant workers (Schultheiss & Davis, 2015), of low-skilled workers (Cort *et al*., 2015), and people classified as experiencing social and economic disadvantage (Blustein *et al*., 2015). Other recent issues such as the development of extremist attitudes and the lack of future perspectives among Western youth should also concern researchers in the field of CGC. Career professionals should be more directly associated with the production of such research by taking part in it as much as possible for example through action research.

Research centred on the social contexts of individuals, and how these can influence their career development. Individuals' career stories and career construction are shaped and evolve within contexts, including family, school, community and work. It is increasingly important to have specific knowledge on contexts since people may share a common culture. At the same time, however, the diversity of the events which individuals experience, and the communities which they participate in has increased substantially. Thoughts, actions and attitudes of parents, teachers, educators, employers and colleagues can characterise individuals' career development, professional trajectories, coping strategies, opportunities and experiences. The role of collective political and religious ideologies should be considered here, just as much as the influence of the diverse cultural and sub-cultural value systems, norms, and beliefs. European research should shed light on processes that characterise the interactions between these different types of people and how they can affect, even reciprocally, individuals' career construction. In this regard, it may be important to focus on and use more systemic approaches.

Research centred on aspects of technological progress that may characterise individuals' career planning. New technologies (such as social media) are changing the modes of social interaction, the way we communicate, study, teach, work, and so on. This can affect career construction processes. Research should shed light on the effects of technological change, to prevent any negative effects on the one hand, especially on individuals at a developmental age, and stimulate attention to advantages for individuals and societal welfare, on the other hand.

The developments described and the research aspects that are outlined here stress the relevance of a perspective which focuses on individual lives within their complex societal contexts. In terms of innovation in CGC, relevant research needs to be linked to the other perspectives described in this ERA, especially to the development of interventions to face the new challenges of education, vocation and career development (Section 3.2). To understand the more complex problems that people deal with, we must imagine research designs that include more people and professionals in the research process, e.g. in action research approaches (Thomsen *et al*., 2017; Weber & Katsarov, 2013; Vilhjálmsdóttir *et al*., 2011). Integrating people into such research processes would not only open research up to subjective perspectives, but would also contribute to the involvement of citizens in active development and change processes. It is very important for the development of the CGC field to prepare and to empower the future generation to be able to handle their challenges and to be active in shaping a worthwhile society. One aspect here is to work with educational community and social workers to collect broader perceptions on the evolution of society, and about how different professions develop practices regarding these representations.

3.2 Processes and Interventions of Career Guidance and Counselling

Career guidance and counselling (CGC) activities are very diverse and complex *interventional processes*, which are delivered in diverse formats, e.g. one-on-one, in groups, face-to-face, at a distance, or through social media. Career interventions draw upon diverse theories and methods which have emerged and evolved from different theoretical traditions over the past century. Guichard (2011) suggests that a shift from 'advice' to 'counselling' can be recognised in the field of CGC. Interventions in terms of 'advice', whereby an expert formulates a diagnosis and offers a recommendation (for example matching people to jobs), are giving away to more process-oriented theories and practices of 'counselling'. That being a process whereby practitioners support people in making sense of their current challenges, and help in developing appropriate solutions (decisions) and resources (including new knowledge, attitudes, behaviours and skills). This shift can be linked to counselling theories which are historically routed in psychotherapy and/or psychosocial theory and practice. This shift (from advice to counselling) is acknowledged by several researchers of career interventions (Nota & Rossier, 2015; Arulmani, 2014; Brown, 2013; Athanasou & Esbroeck, 2008). Increasingly common in this literature are: narrative approaches (Reid & West, 2014); systemic approaches (Patton & McMahon, 1999; Schiersmann & Thiel, 2012); constructivist approaches (Savickas, 2015; Peavy, 1994); action approaches (Valach *et al.*, 2015), or empowerment approaches (Sultana, 2014; Poulsen *et al*., 2016) which improve people's career management competences and, more broadly speaking, people's ability to reflect and adapt to the changing world. Despite differences in methodology and the potential combination of approaches and methods, all these theories describe career support as a communicative and interactive process in which a client (or a group of clients) and a counsellor work together to solve the problems which clients are facing. These kinds of processes may range from one-off interventions to more sustained support.

Research centred on the micro-level analysis of CGC processes. In contrast to a high volume of *theoretical* work describing CGC approaches that may support individuals in dealing with their career (and life) problems, efforts to empirically investigate CGC processes seem to be underrepresented. The reason for the relatively weak empirical research base regarding the interventional process itself may be explained by the limitations of relevant research methodologies; for example, the inherent difficulties of accessing and observing practice, or problems in standardising reliable instruments for this kind of research. At the same time, the tendency to focus on evidence about the effectiveness of interventions (Section 3.3) is very relevant in the actual discussion, but is itself subject to some critique (McLeod, 2013; Haug & Plant, 2015).

Data in this kind of research comes from documented processes (which can include video, audio, transcripts). Generally, it can be said that process research follows, monitors and interprets CGC processes with an appropriate methodology, e.g. interaction research, conversation or discourse analysis, video analysis, interpretative phenomenological analysis, thinking aloud, or ratings based on validated scales. Recent research on career counselling processes includes Pouyaud & Vignoli (2013), Cardoso *et al*. (2014), Hartung & Vess (2016); Pouyaud, Bangali, Cohen-Scali, Robinet & Guichard (2016); Schiersmann, Petersen & Weber (2017). While qualitative approaches and single case studies may derive their research categories from data themselves or focus more strongly on the description of certain processes, approaches that try to quantify and/or control the interactional process need to build upon parameters that can be used systematically for the observation and the rating of the action of the practitioner, as well as the interactive process, which practitioners and clients co-construct through their joint endeavour (Grawe, 2000). For instance, Masdonati *et al*. (2009) investigate the working alliance and the synchronisation between clients and counsellors. Other process research might focus on the factors influencing clients' problems and resources, the aspect of goal-setting in the process, the development of clients' career management competences, and the development of solutions. In general, strengthening the link between processes and outcomes (Section 3.3) would be desirable for future research into CGC. For example, such process-outcome research might look at the change of attitudes, behaviours and cognitions of clients throughout career interventions. Process-outcome research promises deeper insights into why certain interventions are more effective than others. All approaches that focus on the interactional character of CGC must consider that career interventions are primarily iterative processes of co-operation between clients and counsellors; not linear "treatments" that can be captured appropriately by positivistic input-output models (McLeod, 2013, p. 1769). Thus, the implemented research methodology should integrate perspectives from practitioners and clients with the observation of the interaction (Bimrose, 2008). Additionally, the feedback of process analysis to the process itself can be a matter of inquiry (Schiersmann *et al*., 2015).

Research centred on strategic approaches and types of interventions (macro-level processes), which fit best for clients with certain sets of CGC needs and formats of CGC. Since clients generally do not all face the same challenges (which they wish to resolve) career

practitioners need to be able to facilitate CGC processes in a personalised way, based on an initial clarification of the client's concern. Empirical research which investigates how career practitioners co-create a CGC process with clients, selecting approaches, methods and interventions based on such a needs analysis, and adapting the process from that point on, could be highly beneficial to identify good practice strategies for dealing with specific sets of client needs. This sort of research approach may also be interesting to investigate how CGC process are influenced by different formats of career interventions, e.g. interaction via social media vs. face-to-face. It is worth considering how new communication technologies may not only have an impact on the way CGC is practised, but also how they transform the relationship of time and space for people in general, and what type of impact this may have on clients' expectations of career services (Sampson & Makela, 2014).

Research centred on the impact of the clients' contexts on the CGC processes. It is widely acknowledged that career interventions are highly embedded in the context in which they take place ***(Vuorinen et al., 2011)*** and that counselling processes partly focus on the integration of such factors into the different career interventions (e.g. by working with knowledge about organisations, educational systems, labour market or career opportunities). Process research should consider aspects such as gender, race/ethnicity, social class, organisational constraints, labour market aspects, ongoing social or organisational change and the social capital and networks which can come into play for the individual client, because these are interaction variables for the process itself (Bimrose, McMahon, & Watson, 2015). More specifically, it would be valuable to investigate how such aspects manifest themselves *in the process*, particularly in terms of interpreting the situation of the client and the incorporation of information into the process (Enoch, 2011).

Research centred on the use of assessment, tests, and information in CGC processes. There is a diverse use of assessment instruments, test and related measures, both qualitative and quantitative, in CGC processes (McMahon & Watson, 2015). We assume that the way of integrating such instruments in CGC changes over time. It would be of interest to examine how such methods are used in practice and combined with other approaches. The same can be said for the role of *information and informational resources* within the CGC practice. Despite the existence of a wide range of instruments, methods, techniques, and informational sources, their incorporation in interventional processes is not widely investigated. For instance, research could look at the intended and unintended effects of tests and information on interventions. Also, further research is warranted on how to optimise the quality and availability of relevant resources (cf. Section 3.5 and CEDEFOP 2016).

3.3 Outcomes and Effects of CGC Interventions

Research on the effects of CGC is a recent research field is at present both weakly developed and methodologically challenging. In principle, different dimensions should be distinguished regarding the investigation of the effects of CGC: input, process, output and outcome aspects, which would have to be investigated in their context (Schiersmann, Maier-Gutheil, &

Weber, 2017).[5]

We assume that different levels can be differentiated, especially in terms of outcome. So the individual level includes intrapersonal factors (such as self-efficacy, self-esteem or professional biographical competence), and aspects linked to social outcomes (such as participation in education or change in the employment situation). At the organisational level, outcomes may be of wider public interest e.g. to save money by means of more effective job switching or by lower dropout rates during training or further training. The policy level is interested in outcomes at the societal level including graduation rates, employment rates, and rates of social expenditures. In the following, selected areas are explored for these perspectives. Overall, it can be stated that not all of these perspectives feature in current research across Europe. In particular, the organisational and societal outcomes seem to be primarily investigated through non-published evaluation studies rather than the focus of published scientific research (Hooley, 2015, p. 14-16; Schiersmann, Maier-Gutheil, & Weber, 2016). The claim of clearly identifying the effect of counselling should be carefully formulated and critically examined. Thus, McLeod (2013) points out that evidence-oriented research contributes to increasing the legitimacy of counselling and the potential to attract research funding, but argues on the other hand, that the practice could become strongly oriented on the models of research and less on the diversity of the problem areas of the clients. The assumption of a linear measurability of the effect in counselling must also be classified as difficult for methodological reasons. Last but not least, ethical issues play in to this, for example with regard to experimental studies (Schiersmann & Weber, 2017).

On an individual level several meta-analyses have shown that vocational guidance, career counselling, and more general career interventions are effective, and that this effectiveness was associated with a large effect-size for individual counselling (Whiston *et al*., 1998). This effectiveness did vary according to the presence of some critical success factors, with the effectiveness of the interventions increasing in line with the number of said factors (Brown & Ryan Krane, 2000). Career interventions have an important impact on some outcome indicators, such as career decision-making, self-efficacy or (the lowering of) anxiety, but a lower impact on other indicators, such as self-concept changes or well-being. Moreover, some underserved populations or people with particular needs, such as young adults Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). Neets represented about 12.9% of the youth age group in Europe (Eurofound, 2012) and they could benefit from specifically designed career interventions, some of them being in-between or a combination of psychosocial rehabilitation and CGC interventions. For this reason, it would be important to study which type of intervention is appropriate for which type of clients and the specific impacts of these interventions. Hence, large-scale, multi-centric, controlled trial studies would be especially informative. Combining clinical and experimental approaches which compare different types of interventions with different type of clients would also be of interest aside or in

[5] Process-related research has already been discussed above (Section 3.2). In this section, we only focus on outputs and outcomes of CGC.

combination with more qualitative approaches.

Few studies have analysed the long-term impact of career interventions. Bimrose (2008) observed that counselees found the intervention useful even five years later if it provided access to "specialist information, including local labour market information, details of courses, training and employee opportunities" (p. 62). Perdrix *et al*. (2012) observed that career counselling had a long-term impact and that most counselees did go on to implement their career plans. However, career plans can sometimes be difficult to implement if the contextual and personal constraints are not taken into consideration. Career interventions were designed to help counselees to overcome timely career-related difficulties, but they also aim to increase counselees' abilities to make career decisions and to manage their career and life over the longer term. Several studies have also shown that brief psychological interventions can increase clients' resources (Koen *et al*., 2010). More research should be conducted assessing the long-term effectiveness also in terms of career-plan implementation and analysing how career interventions increase self-management, self-directedness, and life designing competences; competences that help people regulate and adapt their behaviours to the demands and constraints of their contexts in order to achieve their personal goals and values.

As outlined earlier, careers have become less predictable and part-time or temporary work is more frequent. To manage career transitions, people are expected to be more flexible, employable, and able to adapt to new realities and constraints. Thus, people are challenged to use different coping or adaptive resources to manage their careers and adjust to an ever-changing work environment (Rossier, 2015). Hence, career interventions are also about inducing changes. Career interventions can induce an evolution of clients' identities, self-concepts, goals, and plans, and modify the way they act as an actor, agent, and author. Only very few studies have been published about change induced through career interventions (Cardoso *et al*., 2014). Research on change through career interventions should consider counselees' motivational system and how they become not only actors but also agents and authors of their change (Rochat & Rossier, 2016). Certainly, much more should be done in this area to better measure change, describe patterns of change, and identify the agents of change.

Studies of educational outcomes, employment or economic impacts have considered the effects of counselling on individuals in their social context. Studies in this area are particularly demanding with regard to the methodology since a large number of intervening influencing factors are to be expected here (Schiersmann & Weber, 2017). As real control group signals are hardly feasible, the quasi-control group design (in contrast to the control group) is more likely to be used to identify the impact of the consultation (Regional Forecasts Northern Ireland, 2008; Killeen, & White, 2000; Schanne & Weyh, 2014; Tyers & Sinclair, 2005). These studies are, however, to be interpreted with caution since the effects directly attributable to counselling are rather small, can be based on presumptive assumptions or can not be determined unequivocally. Moreover, such studies show that the impact of counselling can be assessed differently depending on the perspective and the indicators being developed.

As a further dimension to investigate outcomes at the organisational and social level, attempts can be made to examine the usefulness of the consultation in the sense of economic effects, useful for example for funding bodies or social actors. Examples include consideration of the effects on the participation in the labour market (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, 2009) or the general employment rate as well as the individual economic benefits (e.g. higher income) or savings on social benefits (Regional Forecasts Northern Ireland, 2008). Individual pilot studies in Germany also attempt to capture the cost-benefit ratio of financial resources employed by counselling (Albrecht *et al*., 2012). For the recording of economic outcomes, the effects determined can only partly be attributed to the consultation and the results achieved (so far) remain relatively illustrative.

Evidence about CGC' outcomes and effectiveness should be further studied with a broader mix of methods and a deeper investigation of the links between interventions and effects (cf. Section 3.2). A greater focus could be directed at characterising outcomes, studying the long-term effectiveness of specific interventions for specific clients, better understanding how to strengthen clients' resources, and towards understanding and characterising change in this context. This also should include further qualitative studies about the subjective perception of interventions and short and long-term effects. The integration of the perspective of users would be important from different reasons, methodologically but also politically (Plant 2012).

In the field of CGC, many new theories emerged to describe how career interventions imply a co-re-construction. Such theories could contribute to a research programme to develop more effective interventions, adapted to the contemporary constraints, for the clients' and societies' benefit (Nota & Rossier, 2015). Furthermore, there seems to be a need for a structured discussion of different outcomes of CGC interventions (e.g. for individuals, organisations and societies) and there seems to be a need to reflect the possibilities, methodological limitations, ethical constraints and political dimensions of evidence in this field (Haug & Plant, 2015).

3.4 Professionalism and Competence of Career Practitioners

The current context of rapid change (cf. Section 3.1) easily causes citizens to feel insecure and uncertain about the future. Among other factors, this environment of constant change also necessitates a change in research paradigms and interventions related to CGC (cf. Section 3.2). With the adaptation of practices and interventional processes to new circumstances, career practitioners, that is professionals who are supporting people in dealing with their career-related challenges as (part of) their profession, must necessarily revisit their understanding of professionalism and the adequacy of their competences. Drawing on the typology of NICE (2016a), we understand *career professionals* as the main social actors whose explicit mission is to support individuals in facing career-related challenges and to help them reorganise their careers and lives to make them more satisfactory in the future. Other types of career practitioners may be classified as *career advisors*, who offer basic career support next to their main professional roles, for example as teachers or social workers, and *career specialists*, who primarily address more

global problems related to CGC, such as the need for the supervision of career professionals, the development of innovative career services, to reflect and response to social systems and the structural problems. Looking at these diverse roles and the complexity and inter-disciplinarily of the relevant knowledge to fill these roles, one can argue that *career professionals* and *career specialists* need to have a specialised academic qualification. In contrast, those professionals who support individuals with career questions may be sufficiently qualified thanks to accreditation in another discipline, coupled with experience-based competencies that enable them to be effective as a career advisor as specified above (NICE, 2016a) or in another supportive role (e.g. peer to peer voluntary, community-based support). It is important to recall that such forms of non-professional work might gain greater importance either in public practice or in companies, which means that new demands may in turn fall on career professionals, for example building and maintaining these support networks and roles.

To fulfil their societal mission, career practitioners must base their actions on different paradigms of theory and action, focussing on their clients' needs (Savickas, 2008; NICE, 2012). First, there are good reasons to use the concept of *vocational guidance,* the most traditional approach of the profession, which consists in assessing clients' interests, skills etc. and providing them with relevant information on the demands and requirements of vocations and the world of work. Secondly, following the *career development* or *career education* paradigm, career practitioners train, coach and advise individuals concerning diverse career challenges which they face. The goal is to help them develop their own career management competences, in other words their ability to make autonomous, well-informed decisions about career options. Finally, following newer paradigms such as *life designing* or *career counselling*, career practitioners offer clients reflective support, helping them to make a change in their lives and cope with changes by means of deep, dialogue-based reflection (Guichard, 2009) or narrative (Savickas, 2011). Additionally, NICE suggests that career practitioners may need to intervene in the social contexts of their clients, following the paradigm of *social systems interventions* (NICE, 2012, 2016a) for example in supporting adolescents when mediating career-related conflicts with their parents, or in taking steps to challenge social and gendered inequality, where their clients need additional support.

The professional roles defined by NICE (2012) and the European competence standards for the academic training of different types of career practitioners (NICE, 2016a) show that these different paradigms and practices are already being brought together and integrated in various CGC- related degree programmes across Europe. However, the current environment of constant change challenges career practitioners to adapt their practices to changing lifestyles of different groups of people more quickly in the future. Vulnerable groups, including very low qualified adolescents, immigrants, people with disabilities, face additional barriers. Additionally, the need for practice-based research will make it necessary for career practitioners to participate in the production and integration of scientific knowledge in CGC (cf. Section 3.2, for example). Considering the challenges discussed, we have identified several topics on which research should be undertaken in the future to contribute to the professionalism of career practitioners.

Research centred on career practitioners' new interventional competences. With the growing awareness that career practitioners will need to also draw upon new paradigms and approaches of thinking and action in the future, it becomes important to understand which competences and skills they will need. Juntunen and Martin (2015) emphasise the need to develop skills on the one hand in the area of prevention (such as increasing clients' resilience) and on the other hand in the field of social justice. Some research has already been done on the issue of prevention (Nota *et al*., 2015), but it would be useful to identify what kind of knowledge and skills are relevant here. What kind of actions and interventions can promote people's integration? What kind of intercultural competence is relevant here? (Sultana & Watts, 2005). Following McIlveen (2015), career professionals must develop an ethic of *critical reflectivity*, which is described as a meta-competence that builds on the "ontological position that clients and practitioners generate awareness of self and one another through the very process of engaging with one another" (ibid, p. 271). We believe that our understanding of this kind of ethical meta-competence, and the underlying assumptions about reflexivity, would benefit from empirical work aiming to define the criteria, which career counsellors develop to qualify actions promoting social justice, as well as normative-philosophical inquiry. How do counsellors think they could act to promote social justice in their daily work? How should they think about how to maximise their clients' and societal welfare, and honour their clients' rights?

Another new competence may lie in *dialogical interpretation*, i.e. interpreting the client's past to make meaning of the present, facilitating "a narrative process of constructing, deconstructing, reconstructing, and co-constructing [a client's] story with the goal of actively creating the future" (ibid, p. 275). Research on the processes of dialogues and narrations could improve our understanding of this competence. What is a fruitful dialogue? How can you build a rich and supportive personal narration? How do specific skills help counsellors in using these methods?

Identifying new competences can also be a way to approach career practitioners' daily practices. This introduces another research dimension, aiming at knowing more about the way career practitioners work and how they learn on the job. We need more work on the analysis of activities and work of career professionals (e.g. drawing on ergonomic, psychosocial or competence-oriented approaches) research that would help to better understand the daily work, impediments, routines, activities and need for new competences. This would include the integration of the subjective perspective of the practitioners. The findings could then be formalised within learning materials underpinning initial and continuing training programmes for career practitioners.

The following objectives would also benefit from research concerning the training and continuous professional development of career professionals: what training approaches are particularly successful? What are the best ways to teach and develop the competences needed across the different roles within CEG practice? These issues would need to involve trainers in research to experiment with specific or innovative training approaches.

Research centred on career practitioners' competence to participate in CGC-related research and the evaluation of career services. With reference to all sections of the European research agenda (ERA) and the NICE Memorandum (2016b), we would like to emphasise the need for more *collaborative research* between academics and career practitioners for various reasons. First, the transfer of knowledge between practice and research benefits from strong ties, which means that innovation (both in research and in practice) depends on intersectoral co-operation. The validation of CGC-related theories, methods, and instruments in real practice, in collaboration with practitioners, will significantly strengthen their validity, and support their acceptance by practitioners (Thomsen, 2016). As emphasised by Brown (2015), research on the efficacy of career interventions has improved over the past decade, but it is necessary to continue to improve procedures, including the internal validity of evaluation systems. It is of particular importance for practitioners to understand the value of evaluating career interventions, and for them to be capable of supporting these kinds of efforts, as well as relevant research in general. Conducting this kind of research is particularly difficult, because the social and psychological dimensions that may influence people's career development are numerous, and changes cannot solely be viewed as effects of career interventions—which necessitates systemic research approaches (Schlossberg, 1985; Patton & McMahon, 1999; Guichard, 2011). Considering the need for career practitioners' involvement in the evaluation of career interventions and research on career guidance and counselling, several questions arise, such as: What competences do career practitioners need for research and evaluation? What competences for collaborative research will be needed by the career specialists who manage these kinds of research activities, especially in view of the related issue - which research methods are actually suitable for this kind of research (McMahon & Watson, 2007; Thomsen, 2014)?

Research centred on the managerial competences of career practitioners. Another important question refers to the managerial competences which career professionals need for their practice. Due to the high reliance of the practice on expert knowledge, career practitioners ought to manage their practice in self-organised way (at least to a large extent), continuously reflecting and adapting the organisation of their career services to clients' needs (Evetts, 2011; NICE, 2012, pp. 23 and 51). Key research question here are, which competences do they need for this role of *career service management* (NICE, 2016a), how can they be supported in the development of these competences, e.g. through supervision, coaching, or mentoring.

Research centred on career practitioners' professional identity and representation in Europe. Research related to how counsellors perceive their job and profession, and overcome the difficulties of their practice, is quite rare. A comparative international research project to identify the various ways of being a 'career professional', of living this professional identity individually and collectively, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches, would be very useful for understanding the links with the professional roles identified by NICE (2016a). Political and cultural differences might explain the differentiated implementation of these professional roles across Europe and in practitioners' professional identities (cf. Section 3.6). Understanding how

practitioners perceive changes in their profession and their professional future would also be of high relevance, e.g. to devise adequate training opportunities and support systems.

3.5 Organisation of Career Services

It is broadly acknowledged that the organisation of career services, including their immediate cultural and physical environment, the organisational goals, services and available resources, as well as the organisational procedures, culture and structures, plays an important role in determining the quality, outcome and meaning of career guidance and counselling (CGC). It seems however, that comparably little research has actually investigated these organisational factors. With the European research agenda (ERA), we stress the need for meso-level research on CGC, which considers how career services are organised and managed.

Numerous publications which concern the topic represent outcomes of expert discussions, for instance on quality standards and quality assurance for career guidance and counselling (e.g. nfb, 2015). Many take the wider perspective of policy-makers, shaping the circumstances under which career services operate in countries (e.g. ELGPN, 2012). They form an important resource for research into the organisation of career services, both in terms of outcomes, which ought to be measured in evaluative research and in terms of organisational factors, which might influence the provision of career services.

The interrelation of organisational questions with research on the quality, effectiveness and/or outcomes of career interventions has been made clear (cf. Section 3.3). Research on these aspects and their relations with funding streams, organisation or management will benefit strongly - if relevant factors are documented sufficiently in single studies on career interventions so they can be considered in systematic reviews or meta-analyses. Additionally, systematic investigations of the following aspects would be innovative.

Research centred on the effects of different organisational designs. Very few studies have investigated the effects of different organisational designs, legal and financial conditions on the processes and outcomes of CGC. For instance, initial findings indicate that career professionals who work under competitive circumstances (such as freelancers) are under greater pressure to demonstrate their competence to clients than career professionals working for public career service providers (Katsarov, 2015). Similarly, the CGC process may be influenced strongly by mechanisms of quality control and requirements for documentation, as Weber demonstrates (2013). There is also a dearth of studies which consider patterns and systems of co-operation between career professionals and other professionals in supporting clients and citizens dealing with their career-related challenges. However, Watts & Van Esbroeck (1998) offer a good example of such research on CGC in the domain of higher education. Finally, we were only able to identify one study (in English at least) which considered how different management and leadership practices affect CGC (Nykänen, 2011). An investigation of the institutional and organisational reproduction of gender inequalities through career services offered by the German public

employment service seems to remain a relatively singular example of research on the impact of structures on the outcomes of CGC (Ostendor, 2005). Similarly, it could be interesting to investigate emerging forms of organisations such as social enterprises, local or regional provider-networks.

Research centred on the spatial context, culture and social embeddedness of career interventions. Obviously, the location of a career service, e.g. at a university, in a rich or poor part of town, at the workplace of people, or at a (public) benefits office, will have an impact on its accessibility for the target group (Plant, 2008). Initial findings indicate that the location of a service affects its social status, the relationship between the career professionals and their clients, and the trust and motivation of the clients (Großmaß, 2013). Whether career support is offered individually, or to groups of people from the same – or different – communities, is likely to also have a major impact on the process and outcomes (Thomsen, 2012, 2013). Additionally, the financial and legal transactions around career services may have a significant impact on the processes and outcomes of CGC, for example where clients may be punished for not engaging in CGC (Göckler, 2009), or where career services are co-financed by the public purse and by individuals. Finally, it is difficult to find any investigations on the impact of organisational culture, e.g. appreciation of diversity, competitiveness, spirituality, collegiality, openness or confidentiality on different aspects of career service provision. It would be very fortunate, if general investigations into the processes and outcomes of career interventions captured and described these kinds of aspects, so that they could be factored into future meta-studies.

Research centred on the resources provided for CGC. A final, yet crucial area of innovative research would certainly concern the resources available for career services in terms of media, communication technology, information about vocations, educational pathways, the labour market and so on. One stream of research has already received growing attention in the past years, namely the use of ICT for the provision of career guidance and counselling (Bimrose, Kettunen & Goddard, 2015; Sampson & Makela, 2014). Despite the growing number of publications on this theme, it is bound to remain innovative, considering the fast-paced development of diverse technologies. Important research questions concern the use, the potentials and concomitant risks, effects and outcomes of applying different technologies for CGC, both in combination with other communication channels, and in standalone usage. Similarly, career information systems, including databases and self-assessment tools for clients, form an important resource for CGC. While diverse investigations have been undertaken over the past decades concerning the use of such resources for CGC, the availability of new technologies also ensures that this domain will remain a field of innovative investigation. A particular concern for research and development here will be quality assurance: both in terms of the usability of the technologies (for professionals and citizens), and in terms of the reliability and validity of the information. Investigations on the impact of different sources of information on career outcomes are just as important in this respect as efforts to craft evidence-based quality standards.

3.6 Societal Context of Career Services

CGC interventions and career support systems are not only embedded in organisational, but also in societal contexts. Nevertheless, many theories and methods for CGC fail to address the contexts of the practice (Leung, 2008). Citizens as well as career practitioners, services, researchers and policy developers are situated in specific social contexts, both locally and globally. Empirical research focusing on the societal context of career guidance and counselling is scarce when compared to research on the effects of different instruments and methods for diverse population (Schiersmann, Maier-Gutheil & Weber 2017). A meta-analysis has shown that from 1990 – 2009, a clear majority (55.9%) of the published literature was quantitative empirical or non-topical theoretical or conceptual articles (35.5%) (mostly focusing on the level of interventions and individual careers) and that qualitative empirical studies and theoretical and conceptual articles about qualitative methods and mixed methods made up for only 8.6% of the published research (Stead *et al*., 2012). Also, our mapping of contemporary research on CGC showed that research focusing on the societal context of CGC is far less represented as a research theme—compared to keywords like 'client', 'process', and 'counsellor' for instance (Weber, 2014).

What we are concerned with here is research on how societal aspects (e.g. policies and laws, economic and educational institutions, cultural and social norms related to family, social class, gender and race) as well as environmental factors (e.g. geographic location) shape and influence the CGC practices, the theoretical understanding of these practices (science), and the social discourses around CGC. Common to research that includes a focus on the societal context of CGC and career support systems is the effort to situate the analysis in concrete social contexts and include micro as well as meso-level data and link them with thick, rich descriptions of macro-level development. Recent examples are the analysis of the professional formation and identity of career professionals in the UK in the light of neoliberal discourses such as privatization, deregulation, flexicurity and a self-help culture (Hughes, 2013), the analysis of the idea and model of flexicurity in relation to career guidance (Sultana, 2012), and the integration of an environmental approach to the societal role of career guidance (Plant, 2014). Kalyanram *et al.* (2014) write about migration and point to the rural-urban perspectives on CGC and the role of the practice. Mariager-Anderson *et al.* (2016) analyse 'low-skilled' workers' motivation, looking at both individual and societal narratives. In this kind of qualitative research it becomes visible, how the social context is forming the institutional practices and of support (Weber *et al.*, 2016). The following section highlights relevant aspects to focus on in future CGC related research regarding the societal context of career services and interventions.

Research centred on the relationships between political or ethical ideologies and value systems and CGC theory. The societal context does not only influence citizens' lives and careers (cf. Section 3.1), but is also related to the theory development or the ethical standards related to CGC. Theoretical inventions, e.g. the rise of concepts like 'life designing' (Savickas, 2015), aren't

value-neutral. While they may respond to new opportunities and constraints (cf. Section 3.1), the interpretation of societal contexts is strongly based on ideology and worldviews, that is, ideas about the purpose of human life, the functioning of society, the value of work, and so on (Sultana, 2014; McMahon & Watson, 2007). We believe there is too little research concerning embeddedness of CGC theories in value systems, religious and political ideologies and worldviews. Analysing CGC theories in view of the current societal circumstances (e.g. financial crisis), and the discourse context of their occurrence, opens up pathways for their critical reflection, and ways for their potential improvement. Often, the status quo of thinking about complex phenomena like the economy is taken for granted, and prevalent ideologies are considered to be 'common sense' and 'intuitively right'. However, upon critical consideration, the common sense generally appears to be no more than a theory, with its strong points and weaknesses. Because ideologies can be misleading, e.g. the belief that deregulating the financial markets was generally a good idea (leading to the financial crisis), the worldviews which underlie CGC theories have to be analysed with high scientific rigour. For instance, Skovhus and Thomsen (2017) adopted a critical perspective and performed a discourse analysis of (popular) problems taken up by research on youth career guidance over a 10-year period. Likewise, one might ask: How do contemporary societal and political discourses impact policymakers, professionals and the citizens' conceptualization of CGC? What are the relations or tensions between individual and society in relation to CGC, both relating to scientific theory and 'common sense' thinking?

Research centred on the development and implementation of policies for CGC, as well as their justification and evaluation. The European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN) identifies key public-policy areas to which lifelong career guidance and counselling contributes—all of which point to the societal context of policies, practices and research. Economic development, efficient investment in education and training, European mobility for learning and work, labour-market efficiency, lifelong learning, social equity, social inclusion, youth employment and active ageing. The ELGPN focuses on these policy areas, but the responsibility for policy-making remains in the hands of the European nation states, as well as NGOs, private companies and other organisations, which may be able to establish relevant programmes within the national legal frameworks. In this context, the question of how to develop and implement CGC policies seems highly relevant for the establishment of lifelong guidance. For example, Hooley *et al.* (2015), Weber (2013), Weber and Katsarov (2013) or Sultana (2011) investigated different policy approaches to implement CGC network structures at the national and European level. The comparison of different CGC policies and systems seems equally important. It would be especially fruitful to investigate the impact of political agendas, national or institutional cultures, societal power relations and economic drivers on career services. Similarly, the institutional and legal setup of CGC systems, e.g. the involvement of employers and social partners in facilitating career development and lifelong learning, merit deeper exploration. Ostendorf (2005), for instance, looks at how the institutional design of the German employment agency affects career services for women, looking at various institutional dimensions, including networking relationships with local employers. In turn, one could ask how changes or new

initiatives in the practice of CGC impact relevant legislation and policy development? Attention could also be given to a (historical) inquiry into the development of CGC policies and their impact on the quality or the distribution of services.

The goals of CGC policy merit the same level of scientific attention as research on their implementation. The ethical reflection of CGC needs to focus on different layers, e.g. in view of which ethical / political values should guide the setup of CGC systems, the selection and training of career practitioners, and standards for the practice of CGC. Ethical considerations need to be reflected, based on their implications for policy and practice. The reflection upon social change and the appropriateness of CGC systems and interventions is central here. Research could focus on the reaction of CGC systems to the contemporary diagnosis of the societal context of education and work, including aspects like different generations, lifestyles and life circumstances (for instance before and after economic crises), the digital industrial revolution, precarious or decent work, migration and mobility. At the same time, research is needed to understand the possibilities for career interventions to have an impact on social change, the social reproduction of inequalities, or civic engagement.

Research centred on the societal development of CGC practices and the professionalization of CGC. The professionalization of CGC systems and interventions, i.e. the emergence of distinct professional bodies, a specialised workforce, and specialised approaches and methodologies focused on CGC (Mayntz, 1988, NICE 2012, p. 31), is in constant development and bears many layers and contradictions. The influence of political and economic structures and demands is of high relevance, just as the current practices and past traditions of CGC will have an impact on the further development of the profession and its practices. In view of this, research could investigate professionalization trends and strategies for CGC in different countries or regions (in Europe and beyond). Comparisons with processes of professionalization (and de-professionalization) in similar professions could also be informative. In the same context, the effects of policy choices and societal trends (in different policy areas like labour, education) upon the CGC professions could be investigated (including the development of training, contracting, careers of practitioners).

4. Conclusion and Outlook

Research, on career guidance and counselling, often focuses on rather narrow questions and problems. To divide a broad research field into small sections and to investigate micro-areas in depth is the common understanding and the base of scientific research (Kuhn, 1962). However, this can occasionally lead to an atomisation of topics, where particular findings or concepts may assume a disproportionate dominance, which entails both advantages and disadvantages.

It is less common for researchers to back away from this microscopic view and instead try to acquire a joint overview, identify different perspectives and levels, and recognise their relevance through exchange and cooperation. The recognition of the diversity of the topics relevant for our field of research is an important step towards better comprehension and cooperation across disciplines. This broader perspective may encourage the fruitful combination of perspectives and methodologies which have been separated in the past, could foster interdisciplinary cooperation, may help to integrate theoretical perspectives, and—more generally—to inspire the development of innovative ideas, new insights, questions, and research findings. In this sense, this first edition of a European research agenda (ERA) for career guidance and counselling, and the underlying process of exchange and mutual learning, should be understood as an invitation to develop our emerging and hybrid discipline, and to co-operate in future research across countries, disciplines and research traditions.

We believe that the ERA constitutes a necessary and valuable accomplishment, even if it can only be a starting point for stronger interdisciplinary research cooperation in our field. We hope that the ERA will help researchers in our field to deepen, focus and broaden the discourse around the diverse topics, and to further develop appropriate research methodologies. Innovation is always based on the recapitulation of current knowledge, but also requires an open-minded recognition of emerging developments and new horizons. We hope that the ERA will inspire the design of innovative research programmes, and that it will be a helpful resource for large-scale projects like the European initiative on evidence for lifelong guidance.

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