



Local consultation guidebook

Making end users part of your team





Upskilling, consultation and training initiative for front-desk receptionists in the lifelong career guidance sector.

Local consultation guidebook

September 2024

As part of the first stage of this project, stakeholders conducted local consultations with users of lifelong career guidance centres. This guidebook aims to provide tools and advice and set out good practices for organisations wishing to implement a consultative approach to their relations with the public.

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1. Project presentation

The European Desk Reset project began in November 2021 and will come to an end in October 2024. Funded by the Erasmus+ programme, this Europe-wide project brings together six partners from Belgium, Greece, Italy and France.

Their goal is to set up and implement an initiative to update and develop the working practices employed by front-desk reception and information staff working in Lifelong Career Guidance (LLCG) centres.

More specifically, the project aims to offer training and upskilling to LLCG front-desk receptionists to enable them to adapt to evolving working practices.

Target group

Front-desk receptionists in LLCG centres.

LLCG centre professionals working in cooperation with front-desk receptionists

General objectives

Improve the quality of front desk reception services in LLCG centres

Upskill receptionists in LLCG centres

Specific objectives



Objective #1

Support the development of new reception practices, better adapted to the needs of individuals looking for career guidance



Objective #2

Train LLCG centre professionals to deliver reception and information services in a post-pandemic world.



Objective #3

Increase knowledge and awareness among European stakeholders of the important role played by receptionists in LLCG centres.

2. Why a local consultation

As part of the project, the partners decided to launch local consultations within the associated LLCG centres. These consultations took place before the training modules were developed in an attempt to better understand users' perception of current practices in the reception area.

Local consultation objectives

Identify the needs of end users in terms of lifelong career guidance services

Encourage LLCG professionals to involve end users in their internal evaluation process

Facilitate exchanges between professionals and beneficiaries

Enable end-users to co-design the centre's services offer

Expected outcome



For the project

This approach is expected to provide material that will contribute to the training content that will be subsequently developed. This in-depth shared-needs analysis involving both professionals and end users will be a key factor in the development of accurate learning guidelines that address the main challenges faced by front desk receptionists.



For Lifelong Career Guidance Centres

On a broader scale, the partners will formalise the knowledge obtained from the local consultations. The present guidebook aims to share methodological insights and operational tools to develop consultation practices within European LLCG centres.

Why organise local consultations with end users

End users are not only a source of data. They can also contribute to developing innovative solutions that address the organisational or labour issues they are facing.



Broaden perspectives

Collaborating with individuals from different backgrounds and skill sets can bring fresh perspectives, leading to more innovative ideas and solutions.



Improve problem solving

Working collectively encourages people to draw on each other's expertise to tackle problems and find more effective solutions.



Improve communication

By facilitating open and constructive communication, local consultations can help professionals and end users understand each other better and foster better relations.



Increase engagement

Consultations allow end users to participate actively in the life of the LLCG centre, fostering a sense of inclusion and engagement.

3. Preparation

A. Defining the framework

Similarly to project management, the first stage of a local consultation is defining the framework. This mainly involves responding to the usual questions of Why? What? When? Where? When? How?



Traget group

It is crucial to define the profile of the group you are targeting. This will determine your communication methods as well as the appropriate facilitation tools.

Our advice is to open the consultation to a wide variety of profiles in order to collect a representative pool of views and opinions. You may however, depending to the topic you are studying, select the participants according to various criteria such as age, gender, place of residence, specific needs, services used, etc.



Objectives

There are many objectives that can be set as part of a consultation project. The objective you assign to a consultation will impact the methodology you will use.

Objective

Design new activities or services

Improve processes or professional practices

Measure and evaluate efficiency

Methodology

Needs analysis

Quality assessment

Social impact analysis

B. Online vs. onsite consultations

Consultations can be held online or onsite. The choice will have an impact on the logistics.



Online consultation

Logistical aspects

- Set up a registration process to collect the participants' email addresses
- Prepare and send a link as well as several reminders to the registered participants

Pros

- Easier to reach users with mobility issues
- Simpler logistics

Cons

- Digital divide
- Harder to interact



Onsite consultation

Logistical aspects

- Book a room adapted to the number of participants
- Check and prepare all necessary material in advance

Pros

- Facilitation easier face to face
- Informal time useful for collecting feedback

Cons

- Accessibility issues to be considered
- More significant logistical aspects

C. Communication

Communication is a key aspect of any consultation. Since you are asking with volunteers, you must be able to offer them some attractive incentives.

Suggestions



Advertise the topic and objectives of the consultation



Involve professionals working directly with the public in the process



Emphasise the importance of user feedback to make the contributor feel needed and valuable



Develop a multichannel communication strategy (*posters, e-mail campaign, social media content, flyers, etc.*)



Propose activities to reward participation (e.g. *photo shoot for professional photos, Pitch training, etc.*)

D. Logistics

Suggestions



Anticipate the number of participants so that the space is large enough to make your group feel comfortable



Prepare the material in advance :

- Print the attendance sheet
- Prepare the material (flipcharts, etc.)
- Gather the equipment needed (pens, paper, post-its, etc.)



Make sure you are enough facilitators for the group:

- Approximately 1 facilitator per 10 participants
- Make sure someone is in charge of taking notes

4. Facilitation

A. General suggestions



Encourage involvement

Your main goal is to collect qualitative feedback. You therefore must create an environment where participants feel valued and listened to and that encourages them to contribute.

Carefully define the tools used for different purposes and vary them as appropriate.

Use open-ended questions so as not to restrict the scope of the answers.

Diversify interaction to stimulate broader reflexion:

- ♦ Between end-users
- ♦ Between professionals and end-users



Duration

Duration is an essential parameter that you should consider when designing the content of the consultation.

Prepare individual sessions and set a time for each. During the consultation, ensure that there is a person in charge of time keeping.

Consider the participants' availability when setting up the session. Try not to exceed 1.5 hours.



Encourage involvement

Reporting is the final step in a consultation and should not be neglected. It is intended to keep a record of everyone's contribution and is essential element in drawing conclusions about how users' needs are evolving and on how services can be enhanced.

Note-taking: try to have one person in charge of note-taking at all times.

Recording: recording the full session is a good solution to keeping track of the discussion. You will however need to communicate clearly on this point and make sure that every participant has agreed to being recorded. Some participants may feel uncomfortable being recorded without their consent.

Right after the consultation, **summarise** all the sources of your report. Prepare a report template in advance to facilitate this task.

B. Encouraging interaction



The role of the facilitator

The facilitator is essential to successful participation. It is important for the facilitator to know when to step up and pull back in order to make participants feel at ease.

The facilitator has three tasks:

Defining the framework and conditions of the consultation, and ensuring that they are complied with.

Presenting and explaining the working tools to the participants, and **supporting** them if needed.

Ensuring **free and equal participation**



The importance of introductions

Introductions set the mood for the whole meeting. It is therefore important to propose pleasant and interesting activities at this stage to promote interaction between participants and enable everyone to have to be part of the discussion and provide inputs to the consultation.

Suggestions

Choose an **inclusive way to introduce yourself and others**. Avoid information that refers to hierarchy (e.g job, background, age, etc.)

The introduction time is also meant to **set the ground rules for the rest of the consultation**. Make it fun and explain the framework in clear and simple terms to put everyone at ease.

Encourage interaction from this very first stage by suggesting a game of who's who, for instance.



Tips to encourage interaction

Propose a range of contribution types to enhance inclusivity

- ♦ Written contribution
- ♦ Spoken contribution
- ♦ Photos
- ♦ Rating games

Propose a range of content to the participants

- ♦ Quizz
- ♦ Open-ended question
- ♦ Creative content

Mix individual and collective contributions

Facilitate interaction between end-users and professionnels

C. Ressources



Ice-breakers

Ice-breakers are short interactive games designed to start a meeting in a dynamic and lively way, and to help participants get comfortable with one another.

A good ice-breaker should:

- ♦ Encourage self expression
- ♦ Be answered by anyone
- ♦ Build personal context

List of ice-breakers

- ♦ 61 ice-breaker games - [CLICK HERE](#)
- ♦ 25 ice-breakers for any group - [CLICK HERE](#)



Tips and tools for online consultations

Kahoot	<p>Access: account (free or premium version) / free access for contributors</p> <p>Use: free interactive game-based learning platform (cloud of word, survey, free contribution, quiz).</p>
Murals	<p>Access: account (free and premium version) / free access for contributors</p> <p>Use: app designed to create interactive wall or mind-map. It can be used to facilitate ice-breakers, brainstorm, or any online collaborative activity</p>
Draw.io	<p>Access: free account + free access for contributors</p> <p>Use: same as above</p>
Padlet	<p>Access: account (free and premium version) / free access for contributors</p> <p>Use: same as above</p>
Framaform	<p>Access: free personal account</p> <p>Use: open source website allowing users to create and share online forms or surveys. To be used before or after the consultation to collect feedback</p>
Framapad	<p>Access: free personal account</p> <p>Use: collective real-time bas based editor, helps you collect written contributions and its neutral and simple design is accessible and easy to use.</p>

Partners



Associated partner



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