

# FIRST EDITION OF THE EUROPEAN COMPETENCE STANDARDS FOR ACADEMIC TRAINING OF CAREER PROFESSIONALS

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On May 28, 2015, the Network for Innovation in Career Guidance and Counselling in Europe (NICE) released the first edition of its European Competence Standards for the Academic Training of Career Professionals at the sixth NICE Conference in Bratislava (Slovakia). On behalf of the 45 partner organisations of NICE from 29 European countries, Professor Christiane Schiersmann presented the competence standards at the beginning of the conference.

Through the competence standards, NICE wants to help establishing career guidance and counselling as a recognized profession around Europe, particularly by promoting a common professional identity and occupational profile of career professionals. Coordinated through Johannes Katsarov, Dr Jukka Lerkkanen, Dr Jacques Pouyaud and Prof Kestutis Pukelis, the competence standards were developed in cooperation with representatives from over 30 degree programmes across Europe, beginning in 2012. More than 100 stakeholders were consulted on a first draft in 2014.

The European Competence Standards distinguish between three different types of actors engaged in career guidance and counselling (CGC). Most centrally, NICE formulates competence standards for full career professionals, called “CGC Practitioners”. The European Competence Standards go beyond the description of tasks, which career professionals shall be able to perform: Each standard defines a measurable quality level, at which tasks shall be performed. This way, the competence standards shall help to assure the competence of career professionals around Europe, and secure the quality of initial and further training in career guidance and counselling.

Distinct competence standards are also formulated for people, who offer basic career support in addition to their main professional roles, e.g. as teachers or social workers (“Career Advisors”). While they cannot be considered “career professionals”, NICE stresses the importance of people from other professions acting as career advisors for the provision of lifelong guidance and counselling and suggest competences, towards which they should receive specialized academic training.

Finally, NICE formulates competence standards for advanced roles in the provision of career guidance and counselling, titled “CGC Specialists”. Career professionals performing specialist functions, e.g. supervising, teaching or managing other career professionals, are expected to demonstrate additional competences in one or several areas of specialization. An important reason for the decision to also develop competence standards for CGC specialists lies in the need to also professionalize people acting in diverse leadership positions related to career guidance and counselling, including the academic training of career professionals.

Based on the competence standards, NICE makes explicit recommendations for the types and levels of specialized training in career guidance and counselling, which the different types of actors should undergo as an entry requirement for their practice. For the training of CGC practitioners, full training programmes of at least one year are recommended at Postgraduate or Masters Level (1-2 years). As a minimum requirement, CGC practitioners should undergo a full training programme at Bachelor Level, which is dedicated to career guidance and counselling (3-4 years).

NICE hopes that the competence standards will be adopted widely: For developing new and existing degree programmes, for the development and revision of national qualification standards and benchmarks, and for the assessment of prior learning in career guidance and counselling. All interested actors are invited to make proposals for the further developments and revisions of the European Competence Standards in the future.

The short version of the competence standards, which is now available on the website of NICE (see the first link below) will be translated into numerous European languages in the next months. In the coming months, a second volume of the NICE Handbook will be published and present the competence standards in detail.

#### **FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:**

Johannes Katsarov, Coordinator NICE ([johannes\\_katsarov@hotmail.de](mailto:johannes_katsarov@hotmail.de))

Dr Jukka Lerkkanen, Open University of Jyväskylä ([jukka.lerkkanen@jyu.fi](mailto:jukka.lerkkanen@jyu.fi))

Dr Jacques Pouyaud, University of Bordeaux ([jacques.pouyaud@u-bordeaux.fr](mailto:jacques.pouyaud@u-bordeaux.fr))

Prof Kęstutis Pukelis, Vytautas Magnus University Kaunas ([k.pukelis@smf.vdu.lt](mailto:k.pukelis@smf.vdu.lt))

#### **REFERENCES (PLEASE CLICK ON THE FOLLOWING LINKS TO ACCESS THE DOCUMENTS):**

1. Short version of the European Competence Standards in English (May 28, 2015)
2. Presentation of the European Competence Standards by Christiane Schiersmann (May 28, 2015)
3. First draft of the competence standards (September 3, 2014)
4. Conclusions from public consultation on the competence standards (Newsletter #1/2015)