

# **“Presidency Conference on Lifelong Guidance Policy”**

**Address by the Minister of Education and Culture**

**Mr George Demosthenous**

**Palm Beach Hotel, Larnaca**

**24 October 2012**

**9:00 a.m.**

Dear Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to Cyprus and I am pleased to address the 4<sup>th</sup> European Presidency Conference on Lifelong Guidance Policy. The Conference is co-organized by the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, in cooperation with the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network and it is one of the official events of the Cyprus Presidency.

This Conference is being held at a critical time when many countries in Europe, including Cyprus, are currently undergoing a far-reaching financial and economic crisis, which challenges all our efforts for social inclusion and social cohesion.

In this changing socio-economic context across Europe, the detrimental effects on youth employment, due to a strenuous

labour market situation, has forced the education debate at policy makers level to focus on introducing effective policies and measures for youth employability.

As the Europe 2020 Strategy emphasizes the need to equip people with the necessary knowledge, skills and competences, it also strengthens the transversal role of lifelong guidance in the areas of education and training. This, in turn, gives education systems a major role in the initiatives to be taken for combating unemployment and maintaining sustainable development and economic growth.

Appropriate policies for education and training have a major contribution to securing employment for people, thus enhancing social inclusion and social cohesion. The provision of guidance services in our schools and the inclusion of guidance in lifelong learning policies constitute one of the critical elements for progress in education and training, labour market development and community building. Guidance practitioners have a special role in facilitating individuals to harness their personal strengths and talents so that they can avail themselves of opportunities, gain personal fulfilment and, at the same time, contribute to the economic development and social cohesion of their country.

More than ever, there is a need for strong guidance services throughout one's lifespan, to equip citizens with the skills to manage their learning and career development and the transitions

between and within education, training and work. It is therefore, essential to foster participation in lifelong learning, create inclusive labour markets and promote active citizenship; these are all needed in order to reduce unemployment and social exclusion and to increase productivity and economic growth.

The European Lifelong Guidance Network has contributed a great deal in strengthening and promoting the cooperation of the Guidance Services in Education and Labour sectors and has inspired countries, including Cyprus, to create their own National Forum on Guidance.

This year, the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance of Cyprus have formed the National Forum of Lifelong Guidance, which aims at finding a common language and agreed recommendations among a wide range of organisations and agencies, drawn from across the education and labour market sector. In this way, one of the recommendations of the EU Resolution on Guidance and the evaluation committee of the Career Counselling and Educational Services of Cyprus has been taken into account, which calls for effective cooperation and coordination between providers of guidance services at national, regional and local level.

The National Forum of Lifelong Guidance will act as a platform of exchanging information, views and positions on the issue of

lifelong guidance, offering suggestions regarding the creation of policies, systems and practices and promoting lifelong guidance through proposals and initiatives. Above all, we hope that it will improve the coordination and communication between services that provide guidance so as to increase public access to them.

Dear Delegates,

This Conference marks the launching of a new Work Programme for the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network 2013 - 2014. At this point, I would like to congratulate the coordinating committee, the experts and the members of the ELGPN for the valuable work they have accomplished in the past years and wish them an even more productive and successful new programme.

Last but not least, I would like to thank all of you for your presence and offer my warmest wishes for every success to the deliberations of your Conference.

George Demosthenous  
Minister of Education and Culture