

## **Do actions and methods in guidance for older workers exist in Spain?**

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*Older people suffer discrimination in the labour market, in that their chances of finding employment if they lose their jobs are small, and the longer someone is out of the labour market, the harder it is to return. Although they often do possess the technical and transferrable skills required, these are not always recognised. Those who remain in work also encounter discrimination. They are unlikely to receive ongoing training and encouragement for career development, especially if their existing skills and qualifications are at a low level.*

*This paper is focusing on the Spanish situation, looking at the actions and methods in careers guidance for older workers. For this purpose 52 websites of Spanish trade unions were visited during 2010. Using the main findings of 131 questionnaires from 48 employers' organisations, 41 trade unions and 28 public employment services from across the country, we look at guidance from a macro and micro perspective: how guidance is provided and who the main beneficiaries are.*

*We conclude that in the Spanish labour context, there is a specific need to improve the coordination and effective publicity regarding existing guidance services and their accessibility. Evidence shows that those who make least use of the careers guidance services are the older workers aged 50 to 55 years, and no special attention is given to meeting their needs.*

**Keywords:** Old workers, careers guidance, active labour market policies, social partners, Spain

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## Introduction

Guidance, as one of the active labour market policy (OECD 1993) is not only an individual practice (Clayton et al. 2007). It is also more than a “face-to-face interview” (Plant 2001) and in 1992 the Standing Conference of Associations for Guidance in Educational Settings (SCAGES 1992) differentiated up to eleven activities related to guidance. Five more have since been added (Ford 2001, 2002, 2007). It is therefore pertinent to refer to a broad concept of guidance, including one-to-one interviews, group sessions, self-help information, advocacy, referral, counselling, advice, etc, aimed at a varied group that includes young people searching for their first job, long-term unemployed older people, active workers who want a change of professional career, etc.

Older workers are a high risk group in terms of discrimination and social exclusion (Bendick Jr. et al. 1997; Haight 2003; Clayton et al. 2007). Employers are often reluctant to hire older workers or to retain them as their views of this collective are based on negative stereotypes all over the world (Gilsdorf, 1992, Hively 2004; Kirk and Belovics 2005). Lundberg and Marshallsay (2007) concluded in a study about older workers’ perspectives in South Australia that ‘a substantial majority of older workers believe that older workers face discrimination in the workforce, but less of them report discriminatory attitudes from their colleges and employers.

In the case of older people, the holistic approach of guidance can have a special added value (Sultana 2004; Clayton et al. 2007). This is true to

the extent in which it helps them to rejoin employment, to enter the job market for the first time at an advanced age, to change their professional career and to retain workers about to undergo early retirement.

In some cases, the Third Age is defined as 50 or more, or even as low as over 45. At the European Union, when talking about older workers, we are referring to those over 55. Over 45 years is commonly used in the case of Spanish labour market. This is also common in other Mediterranean countries like Italy and France (Clayton et al 2007)

National information, advice and guidance policies present various key goals in accordance with the context to which it belongs. If we look at the Spanish labour context, said goals can be condensed into two: helping the unemployed to find employment and providing special attention to the more disadvantaged groups (women, over-45s, long-term unemployed, etc.) and secondly, providing guidance and advice services for workers at their work place. At present, the aspects most influencing the preparation of policies in Spain include the existence of specific collectives who require greater efforts in careers guidance and advice.

Since 1998, with the European Employment Strategy, which involved the putting into practice of active market labour policies, Spain has shown significant progress in the area of social dialogue regarding the treatment said collectives are to be given on the labour market. As we shall see, proof of this is that new and recent initiatives have been created for the provision of careers guidance, advice and information services in Employers' organisations and Unions. But the question is: are these guidance services designed and implemented to meet older workers' needs?

### **Some progress in Spanish employment policy for older workers**

Economically active population comprises all persons of either sex above a specific age who furnish the supply of labour for the production of economic goods. Looking only at men aged over 65, the countries with highest activity rates are in Africa (for instance, Malawi with 83.47%, Mozambique 82.76%, Tanzania 82.15%) and those with the lowest activity rates are in the EU. The lowest is Hungary with 0.91% followed

by Belgium 1.65% and Luxembourg with 1.83% (NationMaster 2010). The situation in other developed countries such as Australia is very similar to other EU countries. The activity rate for men over 65 in this country is 7.54%, in Denmark is 9.41%, in Sweden is 6.62%, 6.59% in Italy, being the case of Spain only 3.04%. Workers over 65 in other non EU countries, such as the United States and Canada, face a slightly better situation to those who live in the countries already mentioned, being 13.49% and 9.41% respectively (NationMaster 2010)

Focusing from now on the situation of workers over 54 in the EU, it is pertinent to say that Europe started to tackle the challenges caused by the ageing of the workforce since the middle of the 1990s. Accordingly, the 2001 Stockholm European Council set the activity rate target for 50% of the 55-64 age group to be implemented by 2010. Although the European Bureau of Statistics (Eurostat 2007) reported that the gap from the 50% had diminished from 13.2 percentage points in 2000 to 5.3 percentage points in 2007, most Member States had to step up their effort.

In Spain, although the activity rate of the 55-64 group has improved in the recent years, in 2007 was still under the target (44.6%) and under the European (EU27) average (44.7%) (Eurostat 2008). Taking into consideration only the male old workers, Spain widely reached the objective. The problem comes when considering female old workers whose activity rate is about 30%. Consequently when analysing employment discrimination or problems for this target group, gender issues are especially relevant in this country (Suso 1997; Perez and Nogareda 1995).

In 2010 the activity rate for workers over 55 years in the EU27 was 49.7%. In Spain the situation was slightly over the EU average reaching 50.8% (Eurostat 2011) and above the Stockholm activity rate target for the 55-64 age group. But when looking at the employment rates for workers over 55, the situation becomes different. Whereas in the EU27, the average employment rate is 46.3% for this age group, in Spain it is set under the European average, at 43.6%. During that year, there were 12.208.918 people over 55, representing 26.55% of the total population, and 4.463.355 of those belonged to the 55-64 age group (INE 2010).

From September, 2013 the activity rate of the 55-64 age group in the EU28 is 54.6% (54.5 % in Spain) and in the OECD is 59.8%. Countries such as Australia and United States are above these figures, with 63.7% and 64.3% respectively (OECD 2014).

The Spanish current employment situation of older workers is worthy of consideration. It is well-known that the population is gradually getting older and the effects of this ageing process are becoming especially apparent in the working population, which, in the coming decades, will be significantly reduced (Gruber and Wise 2001). On the other hand, one of the main problems facing employment in Spain today is the discrimination against older workers, who are systematically thrown out of their jobs and increasingly treated as a group of people of reduced worth who have lost their capacity for employment.

The action taken by the Spanish government regarding employment and social affairs includes information and guidance services specially geared to the unemployed, but also to user communities with specific needs: women, young adults, the disabled and immigrants. Other authorities, economic and local corporations, provide guidance and counselling for self-employment and the establishment of business. Government resources tend to be used to deliver information and guidance in the form of a series of schemes, encounters and workshops, as well as subsidies for different kinds of collaborating agencies (e.g. NGOs, social partners, not-for-profit entities).

The main efforts along the lines of professional guidance are geared to the unemployed, young people without experience, the long-term unemployed and unemployed over 45. The other negatively affected collectives, which include young adults, are also given special treatment. However, when they find a job, guidance loses importance to the point where it ceases to exist. Furthermore, older people rarely use the few guidance services available and are often unaware of their existence as a result of their difficult access (e.g. some services are provided over the Internet and consequently aimed at younger people).

The framework of action of the Spanish National Action Plan for Employment (PNAE) includes the start-up of measures aimed at finding employment for people over the age of 44 and their maintenance in

employment even after the age of 65. In particular, the PNAE for 2002 (Ministerio de Trabajo y Asuntos Sociales 2002) proposed the following measures as part of its guideline 3: Employment for older people:

- Reform for partial retirement making it possible for retired people to work, with a reduced pension while doing so.
- Change in the way retirement pensions are calculated, in such a way that those who continue to work after the age of 65 receive a higher pension.
- To motivate employers to employ older workers, a new system for reducing social security contributions.
- If workers over the age of 55 are dismissed as part of layoffs, the employer has to pay a part of the social security contributions until the worker reaches the age of 61.

Besides these measures, there are three types of programmes aimed at increasing the employment of this group of people:

- Programme for Active Employment Income (RAI): the unemployed over the age of 45 that have been registered as such for more than 12 months and have no income can apply for this type of income as long as they undertake to carry out actions in favour of gaining employment.
- Employment Workshops: programmes that combine employment with training.
- A set of measures aimed at this group's participation in professional training.

As it has been said before, where the Spanish rate of activity improved during the years in which European Strategy for Employment had been applied, mainly thanks to the greater participation of women, the 55-64 age group did not make such good progress towards the objectives set forth in Lisbon and Stockholm. In 2004, the rate of unemployment for people between 55 and 64 years of age was 41.2%, an increase of 7.2% in comparison with 1997. For the first time, the PNAE 2004 (Ministerio de Trabajo y Asuntos Sociales 2004) included objectives for the rate of activity that was to be reached in 2005 as part of the plan to reach full employment by 2010. The age group of 55 to 64 was expected to reach a rate of activity of 41.7% (0.5% more than in 2004).

Although the priorities for the PNAE 2004 do not make any particular reference to older workers, they are considered in three of its guidelines: Guideline 5: to increase the supply for labour and promote a longer working life; Guideline 8: to make employment profitable by means of incentives to make it an attractive option; and Guideline 9: to regularize undeclared employment. Finally Spain met the target reaching 42.3% (INE 2008)

The Qualifications and Vocational Training Law (BOE 2002) meant a step further in giving relevance to guidance provision to workers, since it literally includes “supplying adequate information and guidance on vocational training and employment qualifications to any interested individual”. This law came into force in 2002, but in real practice it is being firmly implemented although slowly.

Proof of this is that for the Ministry of Work and Social Affairs, the priority collective for careers guidance and advice is the unemployed owing to the fact that they receive the greatest amount of social benefits. For the social partners, the main target group is the unemployed, followed by the unemployed over 45 (young adults) and, finally, employed workers. Evidence shows that by age groups, those who make most use of the careers guidance services are the younger individuals (21-25 years), while the over-45s constitute the collective that least benefits from this type of programme (OECD 2002).

More specifically, through educational and employment authorities, five measures have been designed to guarantee access for all target groups. For workers, employed and unemployed, these three: personalised citizen service centres without the need for prior appointments, publication and distribution of leaflets, books, etc. and information on the Internet. One possible explanation for why adults are less willing to use these guidance services could be the fact that the services are not easily accessed by said target group.

The most recent progress on active ageing taken by the Spanish Government was an active employment measure in order to elevate the retirement age that has been falling since the 70's and was stabilized at the age of 62 until 2005, as it is stated in the Report on the Spanish national strategy with relation to the pension system (Ministerio de

Trabajo y Asuntos Sociales 2005). Three years later, the average of the retirement age reached 63.66 (Ministerio de Trabajo e Inmigración, 2008) and 67 in 2011, the second highest in the European Union, only after Ireland, Finland and the United Kingdom (68) (Eurofound 2012).

In the framework of the agreements between the government and the social partners on labour market and social security measures, Spain has introduced a package on incentives both to employers and workers to continue employment. All workers who postpone the retirement for one or more years after the age of 65, until 70, will have additional increments in their pension, two per cent for each extra year independently of the contributed years, or three per cent to those who have paid more than forty years of contributions.

Besides the advice and information services that depend on central government, there are other entities that also provide guidance services through collaboration with social partners and other non-profit entities. There are many varied services to suit the corresponding objectives and groups. The main instruments for their implementation are as follows:

- Public subsidies for careers guidance through Instituto Nacional de Empleo (INEM).
- Collaboration agreements with public and private entities (social partners)
- Private initiatives.
- Subcontracting to specialised companies.

In this paper we focus in the Public employment services depending on Central Government, and the social partners: Employers' organisations and Trade Unions, as guidance providers.

## **Methodology**

The methodology is based on a combination of techniques aimed at gathering qualitative and quantitative information, including the revision of 52 Spanish websites of Trade Unions visited during 2010, and the statistical analysis data obtained from 117 interviews made all over the Spanish territory to 48 Employers' organisations, 41 Public Employment services and 28 Trade Unions, during 2011 and 2012.

The statistical treatment of the data was carried out using statistical package SPSS for windows v.18.

### **Qualitative analysis: Looking at Spanish Trade Unions' websites**

There is a range of public policies related to older workers in play, as Taylor (2002) admits, and guidance and training programmes for older workers is in fact included into the group of the ten main policies. Encel (2003) examined trends in labour force and the range of public policies in seven countries: Australia, Finland, Germany, Japan, Netherlands, UK and USA. All these countries, except UK, developed with different level of extent, guidance for older workers.

In the last years, more attention has been given to older workers' needs, but it has been also stated that the methods and tools used in careers guidance had a limited application and effect (Watts and Sultana 2004; Kirk and Belovics 2005). Some authors such as Canaff (1997) Myers (1992) London (1990) went in favour of using what they call positive methods, focused in the last professional years of an individual.

Moreover, the conclusions of some studies such as the South Australian aged care workers study (Lundverg and Marshallsay 2007) conclude that older workers see themselves as needing fairer access to training programmes "to enable them to update their skills, and to keep up with the developments in technology, specially in training in computing skills updating of existing skills, and professional development training programs that would enhance specific skills in their particular field".

The role of social partners in the age management process (Gruber and Wise 2001) is widely recognised. Kirks and Belovics (2005) stated that "recognizing that the workforce predictions of the past are rapidly becoming a reality, many groups (e.g., employers, governments, agencies, counsellors) are beginning to address the needs of older workers".

The European Employment Committee highlights that 'the social partners have a key role to play in the implementation of the policy of ageing. It is important that employers, workers and their representatives are deeply involved in developing new programmes since this will

ensure a better match with the actual problems facing old workers in their workplaces or unemployed people'. (OECD 2002)

To understand what kind of actions and methods are used by guidance providers in Spain and in order to find specific guidance programmes addressing older workers' needs, it is first convenient to understand the role of the social partners, Employers' organisations and Trade Unions, in the process.

Spanish Employers' organisations are voluntary business associations with the purpose of defending business interests. Confederación Española de Organizaciones Empresariales (CEOE) is the main Spanish business confederation representing enterprises of all sectors of economic activity.

They are normally constituted according to sectors and location, and they group together in larger associations. Although they do not offer specific guidance services, they provide services of this kind to the various centres according to the circumstances and requirements of each industry or geographical area, e.g. in careers guidance workshops, industry studies or studies of the regional job market, etc. The provision of guidance services depends on public funds.

The Unions participate more actively in the implementation and provision of careers guidance, advice and information services and they keep continuity in time of the service. These are the main conclusions after visiting 52 Trade Unions' websites during 2010:

The leading Union in Spain is Comisiones Obreras (CC.OO.), which plays an active role through the following:

- Migrant Worker Information Centre Network (CITE in Spanish).
- Miguel Escalera Training and Employment Foundation (FOREM in Spanish): offering local, regional and national projects financed by public funds, such as:
  - Professional careers guidance actions for the unemployed
  - Guidance service for the maintenance and promotion of employment, aimed at workers.

This Union participates mainly through two types of actions:

- (i) Actions aimed at the unemployed, also called OPEA actions (Career Guidance for Employment and Self Employment Assistance - see Figure1):

The purpose is to place the unemployed in better conditions regarding the job market and achieve better opportunities for employment. The actions are carried out individually or in groups and by careers guidance professionals whose purpose is as follows:

- Report on the job market.
- Define professional objectives.
- Identify employment resources.
- Offer careers guidance.
- Provide training in social communication skills.
- Offer job hunting techniques.

In general, these types of actions are aimed at all the unemployed registered at an employment office:

- Students on professional training courses.
- The long-term unemployed.
- Those seeking their first employment.

***Figure 1: What OPEAs do?***

The following are a few questions you might ask yourself:

- *What do these careers guidance actions do?*  
They put you in better conditions for finding employment.
- *So, what do you do? What do you offer?*  
Employment information: on the job market, on training possibilities, on how to access employment, etc.
- *I'm not sure what I'm looking for, I don't know what I want to do, what jobs I can do or how to look for one. What's more, I've never been offered anything.*  
If what you need is a personal plan, we'll help you, offer you guidance regarding what you need and choose an itinerary for you to follow.

- *Yes, but I get rejected from every job application and I'm sure there are people who are in better conditions than me and who know the 'right' people. And who's going to look after my family while I'm at work?*

Perhaps you need us to help you overcome your personal difficulties and raise your confidence in yourself and in your possibilities.

- *I know what I want and I have the training I need to start work, but now what do I need to know?*

Now you have to organise yourself, find out and train in what we call an active search for employment, discover your possibilities, where and how to find work and the ins and outs of a selection process.

You will learn a little about legislation, contracts and other legal documents. If you're interested, we can give you advice on self-employment.

- *Do I have to go through all the stages of the process?*

No, only the ones necessary in your case. Some actions are carried out in groups and others individually, but always with a supervisor who offers advice and guidance. The actions have different durations.

Source: [www.ccoo.es](http://www.ccoo.es)

## (ii) Actions aimed at workers: guidance for holding down employment and obtaining promotion at work:

CC.OO. has started up an information and careers guidance system for employed workers taking part in their continuous training courses. The system offers information and advice for holding down employment and obtaining promotion at work, increasing training and even changing employment. This helps prevent the negative circumstances that affect employment and anticipate changes by means of an analysis of the personal and professional situation, the information about the work environment and updating competences through training. The careers guidance service provides the following:

**1. Information about:**

- Training (courses, subsidies, etc.)
- Professional subsidies and sectors in expansion.
- New employment areas.
- Public and private offers of employment.
- Professional profiles.
- Certificates of professionalism.
- Employment search techniques.
- Creation of companies.
- Resources in employment and training.

**2. Advice aimed at the following:**

- Identifying your professional profile.
- Determining your professional objectives.
- Establishing your professional career.

**3. Techniques for developing your personal skills for holding down employment and/or obtaining promotion at work.**

The second largest Union in Spain is Unión General de Trabajadores (UGT), whose Instituto de Formación y Estudios Sociales (IFES) (Training and Social Surveys Institute) provides an integrated guidance-training service. Its socio-labour advice and information section includes the following actions:

- Preparation of informative sessions and organisation of courses on how to find employment.
- Publications to enable strategies when seeking employment.

Looking at the information on the websites about guidance programmes offered by the Trade Unions, the most common methods used by guidance providers in Spain are as follows:

- Personalised support:
  - Methods aimed at self-esteem, motivation, personal skills and the preparation of an action plan.
  - Methods aimed at finding employment, interviews, etc.
  - Methods that include advice and decision-taking at the end of a stage of search for employment.
- Group guidance and information:
  - Informative sessions on the job market.
  - Specific information by target groups: the unemployed, employed workers, by age, etc.

- Generic diffusion:
  - Electronic information: CD ROMs, websites, e-mails, etc. Guidance Service through internet started up by the Department of Employment of Andalucía for job-hunters (especially over-45s), who can arrange an appointment at the nearest careers guidance service.
  - Information campaigns in the media.

No specific guidance programmes were found for older workers. Only some specific actions for unemployed over 45 years, especially for those suffering long-term unemployment.

### **Quantitative analysis: macro and micro perspectives**

As Greco (2007) stated, guidance can be analysed from a macro and micro perspective. Macro perspective looks at the guidance providers: who they are and how they do it. The micro perspective, analyses who takes benefits of the guidance services, this is, the demand.

For that, we designed a questionnaire (containing 24 questions) to be used in face to face interviews with guidance providers all over Spain. A sample of a minimum of three Employers' organisations, three Public Employment services and three Trade Union associations per region was selected. In reality it was easy to conduct more than three interviews in some regions whereas in some others it was not possible to get any (see Table 1).

**Table 1:** Distribution of valid questionnaires per Spanish Region

	<b>Employers Organisation</b>	<b>Public Employment services</b>	<b>Trade Unions</b>
Andalucía	3	1	2
Aragón	2	0	0
Asturias	1	2	2
Baleares	2	5	3
Cantabria	3	3	3
Castilla La Mancha	4	3	1
Castilla León	4	1	2
Cataluña	3	5	2
Extremadura	2	2	2
Galicia	3	0	0
La Rioja	2	4	2
Madrid	5	1	1
Murcia	3	3	2
Navarra	3	1	2
Com. Valenciana	3	7	2
País Vasco	5	3	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>28</b>

Source: Compiled by authors

The interviews were conducted at the guidance providers' place and there was only one interview per institution, normally made to the person in charge of the service.

There were 117 valid questionnaires: 48 from Employers' organisations, 41 from Public Employment services and 28 from Trade Unions.

Two types of questions were asked:

- To understand who the main beneficiaries are. For that, attention was paid to the gender and age of the participants in the guidance actions, accessibility, level of education, professional category and their motivations and interests. In

this case, guidance is analysed from a micro perspective, this is, the demand.

- To understand how guidance is provided. For that we looked at the accessibility of the service, the methods and tools, the human and web resources, evaluation of the service and follow-up. These findings are used in the macro analysis, in order to study the provision of guidance, what in economic terms is called the supply.

Firstly, the descriptive analysis shows the following conclusions about the beneficiaries (also called clients or participants) of the guidance services in Spain:

- 92% of interviewed agreed that people over 50 to 55 are those who less use the careers guidance services in Spain, followed by individuals from 16 to 21 years.
- There are no significant gender differences, although women seem to use guidance services more than men (in Employers'organisations: 54% women, 46% men; in Public Employment services: 57% against 43%; in Trade Unions 55% and 45%). When looking at older workers (over 55) the difference does become important. In this case, more men participate in guidance actions (77% of men against 23% of women)
- People with a low level of education and with a lower professional category are those who more benefit from the guidance services in Spain.
- Guidance is most demanded from workers in the service sector (mainly tourism and shop keepers). Workers from the primary sector are who benefit the least.
- The 86% of interviewed said that it is the client who decides by himself/herself, to follow a guidance programme. The training courses are also in many occasions (55%) a way to inform and encourage people to look for guidance. Employers and Trade Unions admitted that signposting from the Public employment services is also effective (47% and 63% of them respectively). It was remarked by 87% of interviewed that there is a real need for better coordination among institutions.

- The 77% of interviewed admitted that the main interest of the guidance participants are: employment searching techniques, followed by job promotion (43%) and training courses supply (39%). Technological changes, professional mobility and competences auto-evaluation, are in general, of very low interest.

Secondly, the conclusions of the macro analysis shows:

- 72% of interviewed said that the most common way to promote guidance services is through web pages, followed by the edition of flyers and leaflets (68%)
- Most of the interviewed institutions have a guidance team composed by psychologists, pedagogues, sociologists and psycho-pedagogues. In many occasions it is easy to find a wider multidisciplinary team including other specialists (for instance in starting-up news business, self-employment, etc).
- The size of the team varies depending of the type of provider. Average size for Employers' organisations and Public Employment services is three people. For Trade Unions the average size is not very representative, because we found Trade Unions associations with one guidance provider, such as FOREM-Asturias, whereas other services like Andalucía Orienta-UGT with one hundred seventeen.
- In Employers' organisations and Public Employment services, interviewed people said that around 28% of the guidance providers had a fixed employment contract. The rest (72%) had a temporal contract. In Trade Unions, the situation is the other way around, 57% has a fixed contract and 39% temporal.
- The web site is commonly used in guidance services: 74% of the Public Employment services and 66% of the Employers' Organisations admitted to use it for guidance. In the case of Trade Unions, the percentage is lower: 54%.
- 79% of the institutions are concerned about client satisfaction (72% of the Employers' Organisations, 76% of the Public Employment services and the 89% of the Trade Unions). The majority use a questionnaire after the guidance action is ended.

- 72.6% of them implement a follow-up system through telephone or electronic mail. Not significant differences among guidance providers (70% of employers' organisations, 73% of public employment services and 75% of Trade Unions)
- About tools and methods: individual interviews and group sessions are the most successful methods in guidance. Telephone and internet are also used but not very frequently. This result needs to be explained with more detail (see Tables 2-4). The interviewed had to choose among:
  - Individual interviews
  - Group sessions
  - Specific module in training courses
  - Internet
  - Telephone
  - Leaflets and flyers
  - Other.

In Employers' organisations, 75% of the interviewed provided guidance through individual sessions, but only 56% through group sessions. Leaflets and flyers are not frequently used (only 18% used them). And 87% admitted that they always provided guidance from their job place.

90% of the guidance practitioners working in the Public Employment services used individual interviews, 71% provided guidance in group sessions and 56% through internet. Only 10% of these institutions admitted to provide guidance out of their job place.

In Trade Unions, all interviewed said they used individual interviews, and 61% also group sessions. With the exception of only one case, all the rest provided guidance from their job place.

**Table 2:** Methods used by the Guidance Services of 48 Employers' Organisations

	Number of answers (maximum 48)	Percentages (%)
Individual interviews	36	75
Group sessions	27	56.2
Module in Training courses	18	37.5
Internet	17	35.4
Telephone	16	33.3
Leaflets and flyers	9	18.7
Other	1	2

Source: Compiled by authors

**Table 3:** Methods used by the Guidance Services of 41 Public Employment Services

	Number of answers (maximum 41)	Percentages (%)
Individual interviews	37	90.2
Group sessions	29	70.7
Internet	23	56
Telephone	19	46.3
Module in Training courses	14	34.1
Leaflets and flyers	7	17
Other	3	7.3

Source: Compiled by authors

**Table 4:** Methods used by the Guidance Services of 28 Trade Unions

	Number of answers (maximum 28)	Percentages (%)
Individual interviews	28	100
Group sessions	17	60.7
Telephone	13	46.4
Internet	7	25
Leaflets and flyers	4	14.2
Module in Training courses	3	10.7
Other	3	10.7

Source: Compiled by authors

Finally and gathering some answers from the micro and macro analysis, this question was made: ‘Why do you think this collective.....is not using the guidance services?’ As stated before, all the interviewed agreed that the users who benefited the least were workers over 55, followed by the younger. Here some answers related to older workers:

- “This group of older workers is less motivated. This scepticism is related with low levels of education. Most of them have been working in the same job and they feel it is too late now to learn (they do not like the idea of coming back to school)”
- “In general terms, they are very responsible and serious people but with low self- confidence and self-esteem, low interest in starting up a new business and low geographical mobility.”
- “This group needs specific training in new tools and techniques to understand the labour market nowadays. They like learning for a practical purpose such as improving employability and learning specific work skills”
- “Older learners favour small groups, and one-to-one support from tutors. Learning from computers can be isolating, we know that but we are not giving them what they really need and demand”

All interviewed stated that careers guidance in order to be effective must be based on the needs of the users. It should be an “á la carte” service. This is also highlighted by the Valencian Community OPEA Programme experts (European Commission 2007).

## **Conclusions**

The main efforts made as part of careers guidance, advice and information policies in Spain are aimed at the unemployed, with special attention being paid to the more disadvantaged collectives, which include unemployed over 45.

The action taken by the Spanish government regarding employment and social affairs includes information and guidance services specially geared to the unemployed, but also to user communities with specific needs: women, young adults, the disabled and immigrants. Other authorities, economic and local corporations, also provide guidance

and counselling for self-employment and the establishment of business. Government resources tend to be used to deliver information and guidance in the form of a series of schemes, encounters and workshops, as well as subsidies for different kinds of collaborating agencies (NGOs, social partners, not-for-profit entities).

The main efforts along the lines of professional guidance are therefore geared to the unemployed: young people without experience, the long-term unemployed and unemployed over-45s. The other negatively affected collectives, which include young adults, are also given special treatment. However, when they find a job, guidance loses importance to the point where it ceases to exist.

The role of social partners in the age management process is being widely recognised in the last years. In an attempt to check if this was occurring in Spain, the methods and tools used to provide guidance to workers have been listed. Looking at 52 Trade Unions websites and conducting 117 interviews to guidance institutions all over Spain, no specific actions or methods for older workers were found.

Looking at the results of the quantitative macro analysis, we can draw the conclusion that there is a specific need at national level to improve the coordination and effective publicity regarding existing guidance services and their accessibility.

In this paper we focused the attention on older people, who rarely use the guidance services available in Spain. As revealed in the Review of Career Guidance policies. Spain National Questionnaire (OCDE 202) over-45s constitute the collective that least benefits from this type of programme. In the micro analysis, we concluded that the least beneficiaries are workers from 50 to 55. They are often unaware of their existence probably as a result of their difficult access or lack of credibility. Many older workers might think that guidance services are like “going back to school” since no specific actions and methods are designed and implemented for them.

Spanish guidance services are not taking into account the age of the worker as a relevant factor. Advice and information services are clearly insufficient for meeting older workers’ needs.

In this country guidance and training programs for older workers is not satisfactorily implemented as a public policy, whereas in other countries this issue is being more widely covered (Philip, 2002). Secondly, the stakeholders such as Business Associations or Trade Unions are not either fully responding to this need.

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