



Portfolio of successful practices

for the Reception Area of
Lifelong Career Guidance Centres





Front DESK REception upSkilling, Exchange and Training in Lifelong Career Guidance.

Portfolio of Successful Practices for the Reception Area in Lifelong Career Guidance Centres

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Designed to raise awareness of the importance and value of the reception area among European career guidance stakeholders, this guide outlines ten innovative practices developed to improve the quality of service at reception.

Author: Réseau International des Cités des métiers

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1. Project presentation

Desk Reset is an Erasmus+ project, funded by the European Union. It brings together six partners from four European countries: Belgium, Greece, Italy and France.

This project was developed following the observation that the role of a Front-Desk Receptionist was undergoing profound change as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and the accelerating digital transition. Through first-hand accounts and field research, it came to light that these societal changes were reshaping the reception function, and that organisations receiving end-users, especially those providing social or public services, needed to adapt in order to maintain a high level of service quality in the reception area.

The Desk Reset partners decided to target Lifelong Career Guidance (LLCG) Centres, because this sector needs to provide and maintain a high-quality reception service for its visitors, in order to effectively fulfil its social role.

The aim was thus to facilitate access to a range of tools designed to support the implementation of new and innovative practices in the reception area, as well as among the staff working in the front-desk reception role.

The project aims to address 3 main challenges:

Improve the quality of front-desk reception services in LLCG centres

Upskill and reskill the role of reception officer in LLCG centres

Increase knowledge and awareness among European stakeholders regarding the major role of reception officers in LLCG centres.

Three deliverables have been developed in order to meet the aforementioned objectives:



Portfolio

of 21st century reception practices for Lifelong Career Guidance Centres



Skill Repository

and Non-Formal Validation Framework



Training Programme

for front-desk receptionists in LLCG centres

2. Portfolio presentation

Why produce this guide?

This guide is the first deliverable for the project. It has been developed by analysing internal practices and researching innovative practices throughout Europe in order to select the most relevant and innovative practices for the reception area.

The aim of this guide is to disseminate best practices and highlight the tangible results of the reflective work carried out at LLCG centres to improve the quality of reception services and the information provided to visitors. This deliverable reflects our commitment to raising awareness of the reception area's important role in the career guidance process. It outlines ten practices that cover all areas of reception work, and demonstrates that all stakeholders of the organisation should be involved in improving the reception area and its service quality.

This guide, as well as the examples highlighted herein, has also been incorporated into our training programme, with reading materials designed to enhance learners' knowledge and outline theoretical concepts supported by examples from the field, thus demonstrating how to make best use of the skills and principles reviewed during the training sessions.

Structure

The practices presented in this portfolio have been selected according to the following criteria:

- ◆ The practice identified can be implemented in lifelong career guidance centres or in any other organisation that receives end users (eg: Library, Local Council, etc)
- ◆ The practice identified can be implemented on-site or online
- ◆ The practice identified can be implemented in other organisations that receive visitors

To make this guide easier to follow, we have classified the practices into themed categories, represented by pictograms.



Managing the flow of people

One of the roles assigned to the reception area is to control and manage the flow of visitors. To achieve this, the front-desk reception and its staff need to be provided with the proper tools, processes and equipment to guide visitors to the right services, help them find their way around and also manage waiting times. The reception area's method of operating is shaped by whether services are delivered online or on-site, and whether appointments can be made or not, which may require the implementation of new and innovative practices.

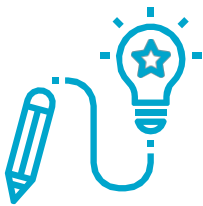
The practices listed in this category aim to provide easy and quick access to services in accordance with the various methods of operation that may be adopted by LLCG centres.



Cooperation between the front-desk receptionist and other professionals:

In order to provide relevant and accurate information in the most efficient way, processes must be implemented to ensure constant access to up-to-date information, such as the daily agenda or the services available. In a multi-partnership work environment, it may be difficult to ensure that front-desk receptionists always have access to the latest, up-to-date information.

In this section, we will review tools and processes designed to facilitate internal communication and ensure better circulation of information.



Involving users in the process of designing the reception area

The reception area is the first and sometimes the only space where visitors come into contact with the organisation. It fulfils a variety of functions, serving as an information space, a waiting area or a meeting place, and so on. In order to design a space tailored to users' needs, conducting a needs analysis based on a participatory approach is highly recommended. Consequently, when designing or reorganising the reception area of lifelong guidance centres, or any place that receives visitors, end-users should be involved in the reflexion process.

The initiatives and methodologies presented in this category aim to facilitate end-users' involvement in designing the reception area, or provide ways of collecting user feedback to better adapt equipment or processes to their concerns and needs.



Facilitating users' access to services

At a time when people are bombarded with a never-ending flow of data, it can be hard to find and identify the exact information they need. As public services should strive to empower their users, facilitating access to services is a key challenge in promoting user autonomy. The reception area is where visitors are provided with information, helping them to identify the services that best meet their needs. This information must be delivered in different ways and the format in which it is made available should be adapted to suit various needs and types of visitors. This process can thus be facilitated by using visual aids, videos or printed tutorials, delivering information in person in a specific way, etc.

In this section, we focus on innovative ways to deliver information, while bearing in mind the end goal of promoting user autonomy.



Welcoming, providing support and ensuring accessibility for all:

One key aspect of the user experience in the reception area is that these spaces should provide a reassuring and friendly environment. Ensuring and improving accessibility plays a key part in this. Anticipating how the space will be used by providing furniture and equipment that visitors can quickly get to grips with will help them feel that the space has been designed especially for them.

In this category, we focus on practices that improve the quality of reception services by facilitating access to an increasingly diverse audience, and by increasing the range of solutions offered to visitors with learning differences.

Successful practices

Practices	Promoter	Type	Category
Multimedia area	Cité des métiers of Brussels	Equipment	Access to services Cooperation with the team
Bilingual signage	Cité des métiers of Brussels	Equipment	Access to services Accessibility for all
Guided virtual tour	Cité des métiers of Torino	Digital tool	Access to services Cooperation with the team Managing the flow
General information	Cité des métiers of Paris	Organisational practice	Cooperation with the team
BCN Points	Barcelona Activa	Equipment	Access to services Accessibility for all Managing the flow
Portable magnetic loop	Barcelona Activa	Equipment	Accessibility for all
Netvibes	Cité des métiers of Paris	Organisational practice Digital tool	Cooperation with the team
Nursery corner	Cité des métiers of Paris	Organisational practice Initiative	Access to services Accessibility for all
Reception guidebook	Cité des métiers of Brussels	Guidebook Organisational practice	Cooperation with the team

 **ORGANISATION:**

Cité des Métiers of Brussels

 **CATEGORY:**

- Access to services
- Cooperation with the team

 **FORMAT:**

Equipment

 **DESCRIPTION:**

The Cité des Métiers of Brussels developed a multimedia area composed of more than 40 computers accessible to users. They provide access to online guidance services and resources, as well as documentation and the activity programme developed by the Cité des métiers.

In this space, users can carry out administrative procedures and research online. It has also been developed to improve digital literacy, especially via the “digital steward”, which helps users who request this service to learn about and familiarise themselves with performing tasks online (creating a CV, using basic software, accessing public services online, etc.

The space is managed by the reception area as the digital help service is provided by the same team as the front-desk reception.

 **OBJECTIVES:**

- ♦ Bridge the digital divide that prevents people from accessing their rights and reduces their autonomy
- ♦ Diversify the tasks performed by front-desk receptionists

 **OUTCOMES & IMPACT:**

The Multimedia area facilitates access to the services offered by the Cité des métiers.

This approach is helping to bridge the digital divide and empower users by providing the tools needed to promote their digital autonomy.

It makes it easier to identify users’ needs in terms of digital mediation, and thus to consolidate and adapt the activities offered in this particular field.

 **ORGANISATION:**

Cité des Métiers of Brussels

 **CATEGORY:**

- Access to services
- Accessibility for all

 **FORMAT:**

Equipment

 **OBJECTIVES:**

- ♦ Create a space that is accessible to linguistically-diverse communities.
- ♦ Encourage users to find their way around independently by clearly indicating the function of each area and the resources available

 **DESCRIPTION:**

The signs at the Cité des métiers of Brussels have been designed to meet the specific needs of the people that use its services. Brussels is officially a bilingual city, where local authorities must provide resources and services in both French and Dutch.

As a result, the Cité des métiers of Brussels, which is mainly promoted and supported by local institutions, had to overcome dual challenges when designing its space:

- ♦ Create signs that promote user autonomy and make it easier for them to navigate the different areas and resources available
- ♦ Design signs in both languages that are legible, understandable and relevant

The CDM enlisted the help of a design studio which proposed the idea of a space where all the signs are bilingual, but include a set of meaningful pictograms to improve accessibility for all types of people, regardless of the language barrier.

 **OUTCOMES & IMPACT:**

Each space is clearly identified by the function it provides to users.

The CDM receives a diverse range of people, and is used by linguistically-diverse communities.

 **ORGANISATION:**

Cité des Métiers of Turin

 **CATEGORY:**

- Access to services
- Managing the flow
- Cooperation with the team

 **FORMAT:**

Digital tool

 **DESCRIPTION:**

As the Cité des métiers represents an innovative initiative in the field of career guidance, one challenge that the Cité des métiers of Turin faced when opening its doors was how to advertise the services offered and also to convince users to come and use these services.

The virtual guided tour was developed in order to share and disseminate information on CDM's services and offers in a simple, modern and entertaining way. It gave a platform to the multiple partners involved, and is now available in several languages to provide access to as many people as possible.

 **OBJECTIVES:**

- ♦ Better communicate with users about the services provided by the LLCG centre
- ♦ Facilitate the matching of users requirements to tailor-made services
- ♦ Promote inclusion by developing a more adaptable tool for presenting the centre's activity and services

 **OUTCOMES & IMPACT:**

The virtual guided tour has helped staff to communicate and raise awareness about the services offered by the LLCG centre to diverse audience.

GENERAL INFORMATION

ORGANISATION:

Cité des Métiers of Paris

CATEGORY:

- Access to services

FORMAT:

Organisational practice

OBJECTIVES:

- Adopt the concept of a non-compulsory reception system
- Raise awareness among the team about reception's key role in LLCG centres

DESCRIPTION:

The CDM of Paris decided to break with the traditional organisation of the reception area. First of all, instead of naming it "Reception", they called it "General Information".

Social and administrative institutions are generally organised so that stopping at the reception desk is compulsory. To break away from this practice and promote user autonomy, the CDM decided to name this area differently and emphasise the function of this specific zone, which is to provide information.

In addition, the CDM of Paris decided not to assign a specific staff member to work on the reception area, but rather to implement a shift system so that the workload would be shared between all the team members. Each week, a new schedule is drawn up in which shifts are allocated to each member of the staff, whether partnership managers, communication officers, event planners, etc.

OUTCOMES & IMPACT:

By performing reception tasks such as providing visitors with information and presenting services, staff members who are not usually in direct contact with users have become more aware of the problems and challenges that arise when dealing with visitors, and more generally, as a result of the centre's organisation.

Many users, whether visiting for the first time or having been there before, don't stop at the reception desk of the Cité des métiers. They feel free to go straight to the advisor they need to see or the equipment they need to use. This system prevents users from waiting unnecessarily at the reception desk.

 **ORGANISATION:**

Barcelona Activa

 **CATEGORY:**

- Managing visitor flow
- Access to services
- Accessibility for all

 **FORMAT:**

Equipment
Digital tool

 **OBJECTIVES:**

- ♦ Reduce queuing times at administrative reception services without limiting access to public services
- ♦ Limit the impact of missed appointments on the organisation of the administrative service
- ♦ Minimise waiting times for users wanting to complete simple procedures

 **DESCRIPTION:**

BCN points are a set of terminals developed by Barcelona City Council.

Those self-service terminals are designed to help local citizens to complete public authority procedures without the need for an appointment. There are 45 terminals in different places around the city.

They make it easier for citizens to complete these procedures by providing information, guidance and tutorials.

The terminals provide a comprehensive service, which includes access to the tax and fines payment system, and printing of users' procedural documents.

 **OUTCOMES & IMPACT:**

BCN points are widely used by citizens, enabling them to complete administrative procedures while going about other tasks, which makes them very convenient. These terminals are helping to reduce the digital divide because they facilitate digital access to administrative procedures, and are very easy to use.

 **ORGANISATION:**

Barcelona Activa

 **CATEGORY:**

- Accessibility for all

 **FORMAT:**

Equipment

 **OBJECTIVES:**

- Promote inclusion for hearing impaired users
- Achieve this goal by providing them with non-stigmatising devices

 **DESCRIPTION:**

In 2021, the organisation conducted an accessibility audit to strengthen its inclusion measures, especially for hearing-impaired users. The solution provided by the Barcelona Activa Quality and Organisation department was to purchase twelve portable magnetic loops.

Those devices enable people with hearing aids and cochlear implants to hear the information provided by the receptionist, and to communicate under the same conditions as other users.

They are freely accessible, ensuring user autonomy and avoiding uncomfortable situations where users have to draw attention to their personal condition unnecessarily.

The front-desk receptionists and career advisors were given one hour of training by the Equality and Inclusion department, to raise awareness of inclusion issues and facilitate the implementation of this new system.

 **OUTCOMES & IMPACT:**

While it hasn't been easy for the organisation to keep track of the number of visitors using these devices, which are freely accessible, it was noted that users with hearing difficulties were being spotted less frequently by the front-desk receptionists.

What's more, this measure provided an opportunity to raise awareness among the Barcelona Activa staff of how they must adopt an inclusive approach in order to properly welcome hearing-impaired visitors.

 **ORGANISATION:**

Cité des métiers of Paris

 **CATEGORY:**

- Cooperation with the team

 **FORMAT:**

Digital tool
Organisational practice

 **OBJECTIVES:**

- ♦ Enable front-desk receptionists to provide visitors with quality, up-to-date and precise information on the internal agenda and career guidance services
- ♦ Ensure equal access to up-to-date information for the whole team

 **DESCRIPTION:**

Netvibes is a platform used by teams to aggregate online resources through URL links. The CDM of Paris uses this software as an internal information-sharing platform, facilitating access to useful and informative resources.

As the front-desk receptionists are the first employees to provide information to users, it is crucial that they have access to up-to-date information. This can be much more difficult in a multipartnership workplace, where the flow of information is vast and constantly changing.

Netvibes is therefore being used to provide themed, categorised information via a platform which is collectively developed regularly updated, and used by the whole team to ensure a collaborative approach.

 **OUTCOMES & IMPACT:**

- ♦ Increased efficiency in providing initial information
- ♦ Increased range of information provided by one receptionist
- ♦ Better guidance given to end users

 **ORGANISATION:**

Cité des métiers of Paris

 **CATEGORY:**

- Access to services
- Accessibility for all

 **FORMAT:**

Initiative
Organisational practices

 **OBJECTIVES:**

- Provide reception services tailored to women with children
- Facilitate access to career guidance services for a category of users

 **DESCRIPTION:**

For two years running, the Cité des métiers of Paris and the Department Council of Seine Saint-Denis (Northern Paris region) have been organising the Women's Employment Fair.

The aim of this event, which is mainly for women who are excluded or isolated from the labour market, is to provide them with professional integration plans, training opportunities and job offers.

As this event is designed for isolated women, one major challenge was to provide an accessible space for them, as they are often looking after their children, whether they are stay-at-home or single mothers. This also makes it hard for them to find jobs or training programmes, and even to attend and benefit from counselling sessions.

Consequently, the decision was made to set up a nursery corner, where the women attending the event could entrust their children to childcare professionals. This service enabled these women to fully participate in the event, without having to organise childcare on their own.

 **OUTCOMES & IMPACT:**

- The event was attended by more than 800 women
- The Women's Employment Fair was attended by a diverse group of women, such as single mothers and migrant women, who are generally excluded from such events because of a lack of childcare. The organisers were thus able to effectively reach this target group.
- Some women admitted that this event was the first time they had left their child in someone else's care.

 **ORGANISATION:**

Cité des métiers of Italian
Switzerland

 **CATEGORY:**

- Managing visitor flow
- Accessibility for all

 **FORMAT:**

Equipment

 **OBJECTIVES:**

- Break with the traditional, sanitised style of waiting room
- Promote interaction and conviviality between people
- Provide a pleasant and welcoming space for users.

 **DESCRIPTION:**

The Cité des métiers of Italian Switzerland needed to redesign its space to overcome the challenge of offering reception and counselling services spread over several floors.

Unfortunately, it had not been possible to accommodate all these services on the same floor. The reception area thus needed to be redesigned so that the layout of the premises was clearly signposted and promoted user autonomy.

To this end, the centre decided to create a coffee corner with comfortable seating, a reading area and self-service hot drinks. In this space, users can wait, chat, exchange ideas, and forge ties with other people. It is freely accessible to promote user autonomy. Last but not least, it aims to help users make the place their own by offering a free space where they can relax.

As part of the Cité des métiers' future development, a library area is currently being designed, which will be located right next to the reception and waiting room area. The idea is to encourage visitors to make the most of their waiting time to discover what printed resources are available to them.

 **OUTCOMES & IMPACT:**

- According to feedback from the quality survey completed by users, the Cité des métiers' user satisfaction has increased significantly.
- Waiting times are considered short compared to other institutions, and users' gave highly positive feedback on the conditions in the waiting area.

 **ORGANISATION:**

Cité des métiers of Brussels

 **CATEGORY:**

- Cooperation with the team

 **FORMAT:**

Guidebook
Organisational practice

 **OBJECTIVES:**

- ♦ Facilitate the integration of new front-desk receptionists into the team and the work environment (internal organisation, organisational chart)
- ♦ Familiarise receptionists with the ecosystem of partners
- ♦ Keep track of essential information and ensure its availability

 **DESCRIPTION:**

The Front-Desk Reception at the CDM of Brussels is composed of a team of five employees. As a result of the characteristics and number of employees, there is a high rate of staff turnover. Integrating newcomers had thus become a time-consuming activity. It was essential to develop a tool to centralise and facilitate access to fundamental and helpful information to help integrate new team members.

For this reason, the CDM of Brussels decided to create the Reception Guidebook. This twenty-page booklet contains priority information to help newcomers familiarise themselves with the receptionist's role. It provides details of the centre's general organisation, such as the organisational chart, key contact information, a list of the main partnerships, relations and functions of the various services, and major public or social services for visitors, etc.

 **OUTCOMES & IMPACT:**

The induction program for newcomers is now more efficient in terms of time and quality.

Induction has become a more autonomous process via which everyone can learn at their own pace, while managers remain available as needed.

The guidebook consolidates all the basic information required for integration, helping to develop a more standardised level of skills and knowledge among the entire team.