



Lárionad Náisiúnta um Threoir san Oideachas

National Centre *for* Guidance in Education

ANNUAL OUTPUT STATEMENT 2015

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FOREWORD FROM CHAIR

I welcome this Annual Output Statement report from NCGE for 2015.

It has been a year of significant change for NCGE and its staff as it relocated to a new premise back to the original offices of Léargas and NCGE in Parnell Street, Dublin. This change represents a new chapter in the life of NCGE and I wish to acknowledge the patience and co-operation of the NCGE staff with this major transition. In particular, I acknowledge the support of Mr. Jim Mullin, Director of Léargas who facilitated this process with considerable skill and foresight. The staff of NCGE has always been generous and warm in welcoming visitors to their place of work in the past and can do so once again with a sense of justifiable pride in their newly acquired space.

This annual output statement offers a welcome opportunity to narrate the practical activities of NCGE over this past year and provides a very tangible expression of the agency's work across a wide range of sectors in education with responsibility for guidance. It represents a remarkable record of achievement in the context of considerable change both at the organizational and structural level of NCGE. The statement demonstrates that NCGE continues to maintain a long term commitment to projects which have always been at the core of the agency's work and equally is responsive to the needs and requirements of an ever changing landscape in the field of guidance policy and practice.

I wish to acknowledge the ongoing dedication and professionalism of the staff in the NCGE under the very energetic direction of Ms. Jennifer McKenzie as the Centre's director. I would also like to recognize the extensive support of colleagues on the Management of Guidance Committee and in particular to express gratitude to colleagues who have resigned during this past year due to other work commitments and to welcome new colleagues on to the committee. The continued support of the DES is very much appreciated in assisting NCGE to realise its vision and to facilitate the outputs outlined in this statement.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Paul King'.

Chair, NCGE Management of Guidance Committee



DIRECTOR'S NOTE

The NCGE Annual Output Statement for 2015 outlines the ongoing activities during a challenging time for the Centre. In the course of 2015, the small core staff was directly affected by staff changes and absences due to long term illnesses and family bereavements. NCGE also moved offices again for the second time in three years.

Throughout this period however the core team continued to deliver on the Strategic objectives agreed for 2015 to 2017. In some cases this involved beginning the processes which would develop over the course of three years and also included changes to staff activities and responsibilities to achieve these objectives.

The ongoing and developmental outputs of the Centre are detailed within this report including the delivery of continuing professional development programmes and the innovative development and piloting of online CPD for Mobility Guidance Counselling; the support for and participation in various working groups and the NCGE continued collaboration and support for the DES in the development of policy in Guidance .

NCGE is particularly proud to have participated in the development of the ELGPN tools and guidelines for Member States, published in 2015 to support guidance policy and practice , and we will continue to inform and advise our stakeholders using these guidelines.

The NCGE move to new premises, back “home” to the original offices of Léargas and NCGE, has provided the opportunity for NCGE to continue the excellent working relationship and collaborative activities with Léargas, while maintaining a separate office space more conducive to the work of the Centre.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the core staff of and external contractors working with NCGE for their continued dedication to the support and development of guidance policy and practice across the education and FET sectors. Finally, I must acknowledge the continued support of the Chair, Management of Guidance Committee and the Executive Director of Léargas, and the Department of Education and Skills for their continued support for the work of the Centre and staff.

Is mise le meas

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jennifer McCann'. The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a light blue rectangular stamp or seal.

Director, NCGE

THE NATIONAL CENTRE FOR GUIDANCE IN EDUCATION

The National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE) is an agency of the Department of Education and Skills, operating under the aegis of Léargas, with responsibility to support and develop guidance practice in all areas of education and to inform the policy of the Department in the field of guidance.

The Management of Guidance Committee 2013-2016 agreed that the Mission and Vision of NCGE are:

Mission: Develop and support quality guidance provision in the education sector as part of lifelong learning in accordance with national and international best practice

Vision: Leading and shaping guidance practice to enable the learner to make informed and appropriate life choices

In defining guidance in the education sector NCGE is informed by both the National Guidance Forum Report 2007 and DES Guidelines 2005 which state that:

‘Guidance facilitates people throughout their lives to manage their own educational, training, occupational, personal, social and life choices so that they reach their full potential and contribute to the development of a better society’ (National Guidance Forum 2007)

‘Guidance in schools refers to a range of learning experiences provided in a developmental sequence that assist students to develop self-management skills which will lead to effective choices and decisions about their lives. It encompasses the three separate but interlinked areas of personal and social development, educational guidance and career guidance’ (Guidelines for Second Level Schools on the Implications of Section 9 (c) of the Education Act 1998, relating to students' access to appropriate guidance.)

The strategic aims informing the work of the Centre (2015-2017) are detailed below.

NCGE - AIMS

The National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE) is an agency of the Department of Education and Skills, established in 1995, operating under the aegis of Léargas.

The Aims of the NCGE, as outlined by the Department of Education and Skills, include:

1. Promote the implementation of best practice in guidance counselling in schools, centres for education, and Further Education and Training settings

2. Promote the implementation of best practice in guidance counselling in non-formal settings in accordance with national priorities
3. Advise on policy and strategies for the promotion of a continuum of guidance in the context of lifelong learning
4. Provide advice, support, materials and resources for guidance counselling in education and FET
5. Advise on high quality and relevant initial guidance counselling education and training and to provide continuing professional development (CPD) for guidance practitioners
6. Organise the provision of guidance to Irish nationals in the European Schools
7. Contribute to the exchange of information on guidance counselling provision and practice with other guidance and employment services, through the National Resource Centre, (Euroguidance Centre) both in Ireland and in other Member States of the EU.

In fulfilling its aims NCGE, as a constituent part of Léargas, is committed to working in collaboration and partnership with relevant stakeholders including the Department of Education and Skills (DES), SOLAS, Directors of Studies of Guidance Counselling (DSGC), the Institute of Guidance Counsellors (IGC), Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI) , the Adult Education Guidance Association of Ireland(AEGAI), Higher Education Authority(HEA), National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals(NAPD), Department of Social Protection (DSP) and other Government Departments and National and Employer agencies where appropriate.

NCGE Strategic Objectives for 2015-2017

In giving expression to the Aims of the Centre, notwithstanding that guidance is provided throughout the employment, education and training sectors and that the focus of lifelong guidance remains lifelong and life-wide, the key focus of NCGE Strategic Objectives for 2015-2017, will include to:

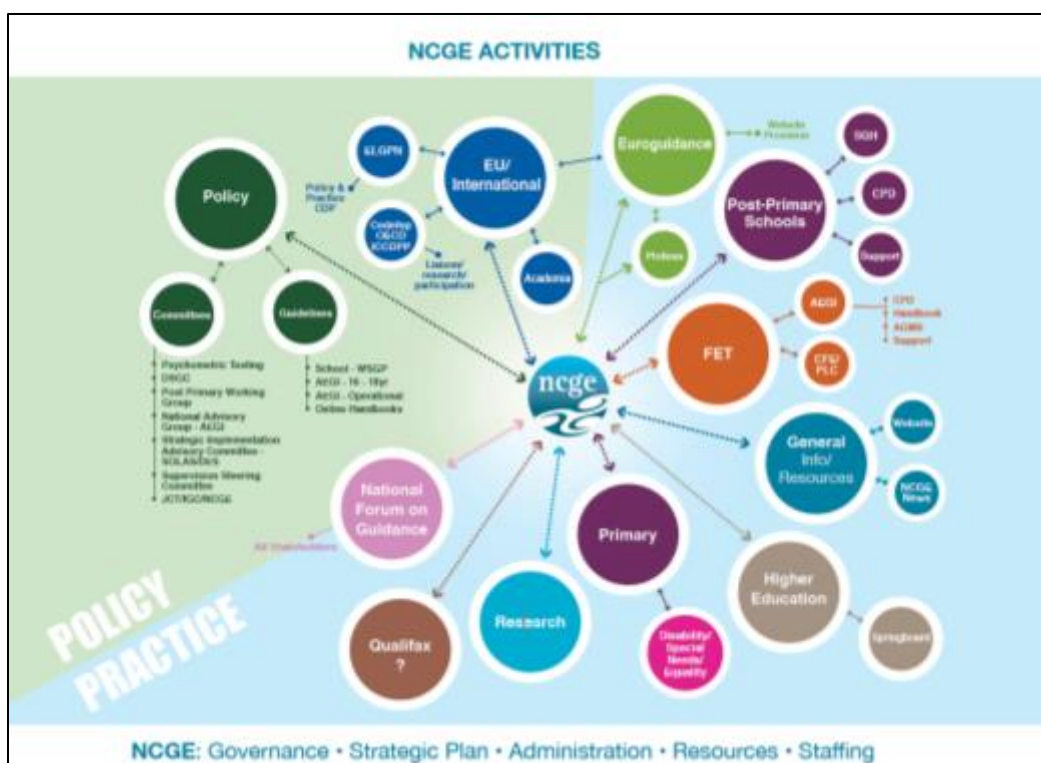
- (i) Inform and support the development of DES lifelong guidance policy in the education and training sector
- (ii) Develop and support quality guidance practice in post primary schools and FET sector
- (iii) Promote and support a national and EU focus to guidance policy provision and practice

NCGE will remain adaptable and responsive to the requirements and priorities of the Minister and the Department of Education and Skills.

NCGE provides support and development for guidance practitioners in the education sector and promotes European mobility and the European dimension of guidance in education and

training. NCGE was the DES designated representative at the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN) during the networks lifetime (2007 -2015)

As a member of the EUROGUIDANCE network, funded by the EU Lifelong Learning Programme, the Centre also assists people seeking information on education and training opportunities in Europe. NCGE provides advice and assistance to a wide range of organisations and individuals involved in education, training and employment in guidance matters.



Graphic representation of the NCGE work and collaboration with Stakeholders

1. MANAGEMENT OF GUIDANCE COMMITTEE

The NCGE Management of Guidance Committee (2013-2016)

The Minister for Education and Skills nominated the Chair and membership of the Management of Guidance Committee 2013-2016. These nominations were ratified and appointed to the Committee by the Board of Léargas.

Terms of reference for and Role of Management of Guidance Committee are available to download at:

http://www.ncge.ie/uploads/ToR_MGC_Final_Oct2013.pdf

FINANCE SUB COMMITTEE

The Management of Guidance Finance Sub-Committee meets quarterly. Management accounts are prepared by Léargas for the subcommittee, and a report is presented to the Management of Guidance Committee. The Finance subcommittee comprises the Director of NCGE, the Chair of the Management of Guidance Committee, the Executive Director and representative of the Léargas Finance and Audit Committee and representative of the Department of Education and Skills. In 2015, given that SOLAS now provides the grant allocation funding for the FET programme and staffing, a representative of SOLAS was invited to attend the sub-committee.

MANAGEMENT AND ORGANISATIONAL ACTIVITIES

The Management of Guidance Committee (2013-2016) met four times in 2015

During 2015, the MGC requested that the DES invite representation from ETBI. The NCGE Strategic Plan 2015-17 was signed off by DES, Léargas and members of the MGC.

The Staff Performance Management Review system was continued in to 2015, with further HR support provided by the contracted external HR Company Peninsula.

In 2015, NCGE had six full time staff which includes Director, Guidance Programme Co-ordinator (Post Primary), Guidance Officer/Euroguidance Co-ordinator, Guidance Officer (AEGI), Information Officer and Office Administrator.

A major challenge for the management and operations of the Centre in 2015 relates to the reduced capacity to complete strategic priorities, due to the reduced number of core staff. Due to various personal reasons for staff (i.e. Career break, long-term illness and family bereavement), extended but approved absences from the Centre had a direct impact on the completion of required Programme activities by original deadlines set.

The main challenge for NCGE/Euroguidance Ireland in 2015 was the issue of the long term medical leave for the Euroguidance Co-ordinator. In late 2015, NCGE was finally approved by DES to recruit a temporary staff member for the Euroguidance Centre; however this recruitment process proved difficult. To counteract the difficulties due to Euroguidance Co-ordinators long term sick leave, the Director, reallocated roles and specific work projects of the Euroguidance Centre to all other NCGE staff within the Centre. This was to ensure that the core work and projects of the Euroguidance Centre were achieved, however projects had to be prioritised or postponed based on the staff available.

As one staff member returned from approved Career Break in the final quarter of 2015, NCGE was obliged to contract the services of an appropriate Information Services provider to edit and produce the NCGE News and to maintain, edit and support the NCGE and Euroguidance websites.

NCGE continued to contract external staff and agencies to provide specific services in areas such as online CPD module development and administration

2. POST PRIMARY ACTIVITIES

PROVISION OF RESOURCES AND MATERIALS FOR POST PRIMARY

The School Guidance Handbook (ISSN 2009-6801) an online handbook for guidance counsellors, launched by NCGE in September, 2013 is available to all guidance counsellors and schools at www.schoolguidancehandbook.ncge.ie

The School Guidance Handbook (SGH) provides digital content to inform and support the development and delivery of the school guidance programme. Schools can sign up to the handbook to receive content alerts. The SGH Editorial Panel, established in 2013, with representatives of the DES Inspectorate and Directors of Studies in Guidance Counselling met a number of times in 2015, to review content submitted, make recommendations concerning the appropriateness of content, and suggest editorial changes as appropriate prior to publishing.

NCGE continued to contract the services of the Co-ordinator, a retired Post Primary Guidance Counsellor and former tutor on the WSGP programme.

NCGE updated the mailing list for the SGH and encouraged guidance counsellors and schools to sign up for alerts. There were 1,400 email addresses on the system in 2015.

NCGE provides the articles within the Policy and Practice Guidelines section *as Gaeilge* as this section includes information, guidelines and templates to inform school guidance policy.

Statistics on usage

DOWNLOADS

Event Label	Total Events	Unique Events
	2,165 % of Total: 96.70% (2,237)	1,082 % of Total: 15.27% (7,890)
1. Best Practice, Ethical and Legal Considerations in Psychometric Testing for Guidance Counsellors (EN)	364 (16.81%)	314 (17.58%)
2. Data Protection for the Guidance Counsellor: Issues To Plan For (EN)	335 (15.47%)	275 (15.48%)
3. Career Sailboat Model as a tool for the Guidance Counsellor (EN)	177 (8.19%)	153 (8.57%)
4. Bereavement: How Guidance Counsellors Can Support The Grieving Student (EN)	154 (7.11%)	92 (5.19%)
5. Planning the School Guidance Programme (EN)	134 (6.19%)	90 (5.04%)
6. Data Protection Consent in the School Context (EN)	117 (5.40%)	99 (5.54%)
7. A Guide for post-primary schools in developing a policy for the use of assessment instruments (including tests and web-based resources) (EN)	91 (4.20%)	85 (4.70%)
8. Anger Management in the Classroom (EN)	80 (3.70%)	72 (4.03%)
9. Self-Care: Some Prescriptions for Calm Living (EN)	70 (3.23%)	62 (3.47%)
10. Ethical Research in Guidance Counselling (EN)	64 (2.95%)	54 (3.02%)

Visitors to the SGH site can download the various articles for future reference and use in school. The table above shows the top ten articles downloaded from the SGH in 2015

For those policy related articles published in the Irish Language, there were a total of 42 articles downloaded. Here is a breakdown of those events (numbers afterwards = total event/unique event):

- Data protection Consent in the School Context 15/12

- Data Protection for the Guidance Counsellor: Issues to Plan For 15/12
- Best Practice, Ethical and Legal Considerations in Psychometric Testing 7/6
- A Guide for post-primary schools in developing a policy for the use of assessment instruments 2/2
- Planning the School Guidance Programme 2/1
- Dealing with Ethical Dilemmas in Guidance Counselling 1/1

COMMITTEES AND WORKING GROUPS

NCGE convenes and participates in committees and working groups for and on behalf of the DES. The activities for 2015 are as follows.

FET Strategy Implementation Advisory Committee

NCGE was invited by DES and SOLAS to participate in the FET Strategic Implementation Advisory Committee (SIAC) as an implementing partner of the FET strategy 2014-2019. (See Adult Guidance Section for detail)

Advisory Committee on Psychometric Testing

NCGE convenes the meeting of the Advisory Committee on Psychometric Testing annually on behalf the DES. The NCGE Director chairs this committee, hosted in NCGE in May each year.

The Committee comprises representatives from DES, NCGE, NEPS, IGC, Irish Learning Support Association (ILSA), Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI) and Church of Ireland College of Education (CIC).

The DES made the decision in 2015 that the Committee would no longer meet annually but rather once every 2-3 years. However, NCGE worked closely with DES on the publication of the new Circular Letter 0034/2015, which included the list of approved assessment instruments. *“Assessment Instruments (including tests and web-based resources) approved for use for guidance and/or learning support in post-primary schools from May 2015 until further notice”*

https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/clo034_2015.pdf.

DES Working Group on the recognition of initial education programmes in guidance counselling

This working group, established by DES in 2012, met on five occasions in 2015. Membership included representatives of DES Curriculum and Assessment Policy Unit (CAP), Further Education and Skills Section, DES Inspectorate, NEPS and NCGE. The terms of reference of this working group included to: address issues such as the criteria for recognition of guidance counsellors to work in an institution under the remit of the DES; establish protocols by which courses leading to recognition as a guidance counsellor may be approved by the Department; establish protocols by which changes to courses leading to recognition as a guidance counsellor may be approved by the DES.

In March 2015, NCGE collaborated with DES to publish the draft of the CRF for public consultation. Ten submissions were received by DES. The penultimate draft was discussed and reviewed by a consultative forum consisting of representatives from organisations/individuals who had made a submission as part of the first phase of consultation. This consultation group met in the DES Clock Tower on the 4th November. The DES and Director of NCGE and the Guidance Programme Coordinator gave presentations to the consultative forum.

Feedback gathered from the forum meeting informed the final draft of the PRF in December, 2015. NCGE supported the DES in the public consultation process and the drafting of the final version of the document retitled Programme Recognition Framework: Guidance Counselling; Criteria and Guidelines for Programme Providers by the end of 2015. This document was finalized and subsequently published in March 2016.

Post-Primary Guidance Working Group

Following the publication of the NCGE *'Review of Guidance Counselling provision in second level schools, 2012-2013: Report of the findings'*, the Management of Guidance Committee requested that NCGE convene the Post Primary Guidance Working Group and agreed the Terms of Reference for the group .

Membership of the Working Group, chaired by the NCGE Director, includes representatives from DES Inspectorate, DSGC, IGC, NCCA, NCGE and NEPS. This group met three times in 2015.

- guidance learning outcomes for years 1-6 in post-primary schools were drafted
- identification of key qualitative and quantitative data, plus evidence and guidance data collection in schools – a survey was circulated to schools to complete in respect of the type of data that would be useful to include in an online resource.

Collaboration with JCT and the IGC in relation to guidance in the JC Framework

NCGE hosted one formal meeting with the IGC and JCT in 2015 regarding the design and development of a CPD programme for guidance counsellors. Working in collaboration, the NCGE/JCT/IGC team agreed:

- to explore opportunities such as Short Courses and Other Learning Experiences for guidance provision in the Junior Cycle Framework.
- that a CPD programme for guidance counsellors would be provided in conjunction with JCT, the content of which would be agreed by NCGE/IGC and JCT.
- that reference would be made to Junior Cycle guidance provision in schools within the Principals Junior Cycle workshops.

The roll out of the CPD for guidance counsellors, originally planned for 2015 was delayed due to DES and union discussions; however NCGE and IGC continued to meet to collaborate on the development of draft programme and content etc.

DES Guidance Counselling Supervision Steering Group

NCGE was appointed to the Supervision Steering group by QCAP. This group oversees the provision of guidance counselling supervision for post primary school based guidance counsellors. This is hosted by DES Teacher Education Section 3 times per year. The service is managed by the Monaghan Education Centre and co-ordinated via the IGC branch network. NCGE attends these meetings in an advisory capacity.

PROVISION OF CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD) FOR GUIDANCE COUNSELLORS IN POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS

NCGE designed and delivered a CPD programme in psychometric testing for guidance counsellors working in schools in 2015. The CPD programme employed a blended learning methodology i.e. a combination of e-learning with face-to-face workshops. A social constructivist pedagogy was employed. The CPD programme was delivered on eight occasions in different locations around Ireland ranging from Cork to Galway.

The Circular Letter 0034/2015 on assessment instruments highlighted good practice in test administration and a list of assessment instruments was prepared and distributed to schools by the DES in May, 2015. Digital content was also developed for the School Guidance Handbook to support the practice of testing in schools e.g. a policy template for schools on psychometric testing.

3. PRIMARY EDUCATION AND NON FORMAL EDUCATION SECTOR ACTIVITIES

The strategic plan for NCGE 2015-2017 outlined the priorities of the NCGE work Programme. While NCGE had worked for many years with the Primary School resource teachers, this group was no longer co-ordinating such meetings. However, Guidance Officers within the Centre continue to source articles as appropriate for *NCGE News* on guidance issues in primary education and non- formal sectors.

Articles relating to non-formal education activities were published in Issue 43; Preparing for Enterprise; A community response to Economic and Social Challenges in the Inner City. p14 and Issue 44; A Multimedia approach to CPD

The Information Officer returning in September 2015 established links with the Léargas based EURODESK and was invited to provide an Information Stand at the 'Time to Move' EURODESK network event held in Dublin in October 2015. An article about this event was published on page 20 of NCGE News 44 http://www.ncge.ie/uploads/NCGE_News_44.pdf

4. ADULT EDUCATION/FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING SECTOR ACTIVITIES

AEGI CO-ORDINATION

NCGE co-ordinated the development of the Adult Educational Guidance Initiative (AEGI) on behalf of the DES until 2014. On 1st July 2013, the VECs were replaced by the 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs). There are 39 AEGI Services which are managed in 2015 by the 16 ETBs and WIT.

The agreed Service Level agreement 2015 between DES, Léargas and NCGE clarifies the revised role of NCGE in relation to the AEGI.

SOLAS is responsible for the funding, coordination of the development and evaluation of the Adult Education Guidance Initiative (AEGI) within the Education and Training Board management structures. SOLAS will fund the NCGE work to support the development of guidance policy and provision in FET, with ETBI and ETBs to develop and implement the strategic priorities of the FET Strategy as it relates to guidance.

NCGE consulted with the DES Further Education and Skills section and SOLAS to inform and advice on the issues of concern for the continued provision of the AEGI services following the VECs merge to 16 ETBs.

NCGE Director met with and provided information to SOLAS, to clarify the role of guidance in and the developments required for guidance in the FET sector, in advance of the publication of the DES FET Strategy 2014-2019.

DES FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING STRATEGY- SOLAS STRATEGIC IMPLEMENTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SIAC)

NCGE attended four meetings (February, April, July, and October) in 2015 as a lead partner in the SIAC.

DES suggested that a consolidation of all the actions on guidance and progress related to same needs to be drawn together and considered by the SIAC as it was identified that individuals requiring guidance are finding the current pathways confusing.

In May 2015, ETBI and NCGE developed a draft national framework document for an Integrated FET Guidance Strategy. One of the objectives of the strategy is to provide clarity regarding the structures surrounding the future guidance services in FET. Working in collaboration, NCGE consulted with AEGI guidance co-ordinators, and ETBI consulted the FET managers working group on the draft strategy. Throughout 2015, the draft was revised.

NCGE continued to monitor the provision of AEGI services via the Qualitative and Quantitative reports. NCGE completed the Executive Reports, which were presented to the Advisory group and made available to all AEGI services and management for download via the AEGI Web-based Handbook.

The Adult Guidance Management System (AGMS), the client information and management database of the AEGIs, is monitored and supported by NCGE. Based on information from AEGI Services and reporting requirements of the DES, NCGE identifies changes and developments needed in the AGMS with the IT provider. In 2015 changes were made to allow public access to the Adult Guidance Handbook.

NCGE provided technical support to the AEGI services and staff and liaised with ETB/WIT management in relation to the AEGI services on a regular basis.

NCGE has one staff member, in the role of Guidance Officer, working specifically on the AEGI/FET programme, reporting to the Director. In December 2015, the position of Guidance Programme Co-ordinator (Further Education and Training), was approved by the DES. This role at Assistant Principal Officer level will be appointed to co-ordinate the NCGE programme for the FET sector, including the development of the Guidance Strategy to include the AEGI services. Once this position was approved by DES, NCGE submitted the grant application request to SOLAS to fund the position.

PLSS

In April 2015, the PLSS Coordinator, Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI) met with NCGE Director and NCGE Adult Guidance Officer and 12 AEGS coordinators and presented to them on the Programme Learner Support System (PLSS). The development of PLSS is a key support for the achievement of **Strategic Goal 4 of the FET Strategy 2014-2019** to implement a new planning and funding model for FET and will provide the key data source on programme outputs, outcomes and performance.

CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

NCGE designed, developed and delivered (in collaboration with presenters, trainers, academics and professionals in the field) Continuing Professional Development to the Adult Educational Guidance Services

A one day conference on Service Delivery for AEGS staff was held on 21st May 2015 in the Clock Tower. Presentations were made by

Dr Siobhan Neary, Deputy Head of iCeGS presenting on Professional Identity.

Fergal Blanchfield, Case Officer and Bernadette O'Rourke, Adult Guidance Co-ordinator presented on Working Well Together The Kilkenny Experience DSP – ETB Interagency Protocol

Remote Platform Guidance Kerry Adult Guidance and Information Service presented on Remote Platform Guidance

Mary Stokes, CDETB Adult Education Guidance Service Dublin Inner City presented on Working effectively with Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Migrants to Ireland

72 staff members from the AEGS services nationally attended this conference.

A one day workshop for Adult Guidance Information Officers was held on 22nd May 2015 with 25 staff in attendance. Workshops were provided in Social Media and Alexander Technique.

A two day National CPD was delivered in the summer of 2015 as follows:-

Day One – 7th July, 2015 – 55 in attendance
Chaos Theory with Professor Robert Pryor

Day Two – 8th July, 2015 – 45 in attendance

Telephone and Remote Platform Approaches to Guidance with Liane Hambly

The CPD programme is organised for and reflects specific staff roles *and* the Service as a whole. Where possible, recordings of the presentations made were uploaded in video format to the AEGI online Handbook.

AEGI WEB BASED HANDBOOK

NCGE manages and develops the online handbook for AEGI on behalf of the DES. The online Handbook was revised and relaunched in September 2014, renamed as the *Adult Guidance Handbook*. It provides public access for all though registration is required for secure access to specific sections and resources aimed at guidance professionals only. This can be accessed directly or via the NCGE website home page. www.ncgeadultguidance.ie

Where possible, recordings of the CPD presentations and workshops were uploaded in video format to the AEGI Web based Handbook. NCGE notified guidance counsellors working in the wider FET Sector, via Higher Options and the IGC Conference that this online resource was available for their use also.

5. HIGHER EDUCATION ACTIVITIES

Following the success of the HEA National Access Office Springboard guidance phone-line in previous years, NCGE participated again with HEA in the recruitment of appropriately qualified staff for the Springboard phone-line.

The NCGE Director continued to liaise with representatives of the Association of Higher Education Careers Services (AHECS) in relation to the National Forum on Guidance and National Conference.

NCGE News includes articles on guidance issues in higher education and highlights examples of innovative practice and resources.

DIRECTORS OF STUDIES IN GUIDANCE COUNSELLING (DSGC)

NCGE hosted and chaired three meetings of the committee of the Directors of Studies in Guidance Counselling in 2015. This Committee represents the five Universities in Ireland which currently provides initial education and training programmes for guidance counselling. These include the Directors of the programmes in Dublin City University, National University of Ireland Maynooth, University College Cork, University of Limerick and Trinity College Dublin. The remit of the Committee is to examine policy, social and practice issues in guidance counselling and the implications of these for the development, delivery, content and review of initial education and training programmes in guidance counselling.

NCGE also chaired two meetings of the Directors with the IGC in 2015.

DSGC Sub group to discuss the development of the PSI Agreement on Psychometric Testing

NCGE and the DSGC met with the Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI) to progress the development of the psychometric test register for guidance counsellors. It was agreed by all parties that the redeveloped register would include guidance counsellors who qualified prior to 1999. NCGE working with representatives of DES, DSGC, IGC, AEGAI and PSI worked throughout 2015 on the redrafting of this Agreement.

The revised Agreement is to promote good practice in psychometric testing and to ensure that guidance counsellors signed up to the register are qualified test users. In addition the issue of public safety will be addressed as the register will reside with an Irish based organisation.

Once the redeveloped register is published all guidance counsellors will be encouraged to sign up to it by the Directors, NCGE, IGC and AEGAI.

The Advisory Committee on Psychometric Testing met on Monday 25th May 2015 to review the DES List of Assessment Instruments for Learning Support and Guidance. It also

provided an opportunity for members of the DSGC to input into the proposed Advisory Group: Assessment List for Primary and Special Schools

6. EUROPEAN GUIDANCE SECTOR ACTIVITIES

EUROGUIDANCE

NCGE continues to promote the EU dimension in lifelong guidance by disseminating relevant information via the online e-zine *NCGE News*,

Summer 2015; Euroguidance Section Pages 21-26 <http://ncge.12.ie/issue-43/index.html>

Winter 2015: Euroguidance Section pages 20-21 http://www.ncge.ie/uploads/NCGE_News_44.pdf

Euroguidance Centre continued to provide information to clients via social media Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/EuroguidanceIreland>

NCGE promotes Euroguidance and mobility in attendance at national and regional meetings, through regular liaison between NCGE, DES, the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (DJEI), SOLAS (formerly FÁS) and other government departments, including the Department of Social Protection (DSP).

Irish Reference Group for EU Initiatives in Education and Skills

The Euroguidance Co-ordinator worked in collaboration with NCGE Director, to continue the partnership and collaboration with our colleagues in QQI and EQF, NARIC, Léargas and DES in the Irish reference Group for EU Initiatives. A third meeting was held in November 2015. NCGE Director spoke on behalf of the role of Euroguidance, PLOTEUS and ELGPN in Ireland

<http://www.europass.ie/europass/IrishReferenceGroupforEUInitiativesinEducationandSkills.html>

CPD MODULES ON MOBILITY GUIDANCE COUNSELLING

One major focus for the Euroguidance Centre in 2015 was the completed development and piloting of the Online Mobility Guidance Counselling CPD modules. This CPD programme contains direct links to relevant resources for the guidance counsellor, to support the student to choose and plan for mobility learning outcomes.

As this CPD programme was originally developed in Sweden and translated, this has been adapted by Euroguidance Ireland for Irish guidance practitioners. In the EG Network meeting in Helsinki, EG Ireland informed the EG colleagues of the developments so far.

PLOTEUS

Euroguidance Ireland has been a member of the EU Commission PLOTEUS EQF co-ordination group for several years. NCGE is in receipt of specific funding for development relating the PLOTEUS portal. NCGE continued to work with DIT contracted consultant

on the *Development of a Cloud- based solution for interconnection of national datasources to PLOTEUS II*. Euroguidance Ireland continued to collaborate with Euroguidance Austria on this project. The absence of the Euroguidance Co-ordinator required the direct involvement of the Director in this project.

EUROPEAN SCHOOLS

On behalf of the Department of Education and Skills, NCGE supports and co-ordinates the guidance service to the European Schools (www.eurisc.org). The guidance provision includes various methods of guidance delivery including group and one-to-one guidance for students, information evenings for parents and a phone and on-line service.

In the absence of the Euroguidance Co-ordinator, the NCGE Information Officer, with the support of the Director, took on the co-ordination of the European Schools Guidance Provision on return from career break in the autumn.

A Guidance counsellor was contracted to visit and work with relevant European Schools in Brussels and Luxembourg. Guidance provision to smaller schools via Skype (i.e. online video calling from Ireland) was provided to ensure Irish Students have the opportunity to access guidance sessions with an Irish guidance counsellors. This Skype service was offered to and coordinated with European Schools in Frankfurt, Mol, Varese, Alicante, Bergen, Culham, Karlsruhe and Munich.

A total of 88 students and 9 parents were reached this year, against a backdrop of extraordinary circumstances with Brussels in a state of high terrorist alert and “security lockdown” while the Guidance Counsellor was visiting.

ACADEMIA

For over 10 years NCGE co-ordinated Academia (the European Exchange of Guidance Counsellors) in Ireland, which is now funded by the Erasmus+ programme. Unfortunately, NCGE is no longer able to play a role in Academia as the NCGE operates under the aegis of Leargas which is designated as the Erasmus+ National Agency in Ireland.

NCGE Information Officer attended the Academia Co-ordinators meeting in Madrid, Spain in December to discuss possible future engagement with the long standing Academia network.

EU CONFERENCES

It was planned that the Euroguidance Coordinator would attend a number of international and EU conferences in 2015; however this was not possible given her medical condition and repeated absences due to illness.

- The Director attended, and gave a presentation at the IAIEVG conference in Japan in September

- The Director attended the EG network meeting in Helsinki in November.
- The Information Officer attended the Academia Co-ordinators network meeting on behalf of NCGE/Euroguidance in Madrid in December 2015
- The Information Officer attended the Time to Move event in October 2015, hosted by Eurodesk in Ireland

EUROPEAN LIFELONG GUIDANCE POLICY NETWORK (ELGPN)

The European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN) has undertaken systematic policy co-operation at European level for over seven years and developed a comprehensive range of EU reference tools and publications for European lifelong guidance policy and system developments. The utilization of this toolbox by Member States will support all engaged partners of the European Semester to have an even stronger and cross-cut impact on different and related policy areas (such as education, social inclusion and employment policies).

In 2007-15 the ELGPN has published several different types of outputs. These can be found in published form on the Network website <http://elgpn.eu/publications>.

NCGE is the designated representative for Ireland at the ELGPN. Three Plenary Meetings in 2015 were attended by the Director and Guidance Programme Co-coordinator

17th Plenary Meeting – Latvia

18th Plenary Meeting - Luxembourg

19th Plenary Meeting – Finland.

In June 2015, NCGE Director was invited to present to the newly established National Guidance Forum meeting in Paris and the Adult Guidance Conference in Estonia in October.

NCGE/Ireland continued to act as co- lead for the working group on Quality Assurance, in co-operation with Portugal. NCGE also actively participated in the working group on Career Management Skills. Both documents were completed for publication by ELGPN in October (see links below)

7. GENERAL

PUBLICATIONS, RESOURCES AND MATERIALS

The NCGE Website www.ncge.ie provides information to clients and stakeholders on the role and activities of NCGE, with direct access to the School Guidance Handbook, the Adult Guidance handbook and sections such as ‘How to Become a Guidance Counsellor’,

policy documents and research, and guidance policies and provision in the education sectors. The website features a rotating carousel of images on the home page to highlight 'what's new' information. In the absence of the Information Officer due to approved career break til September 2015, NCGE contracted the services of an external Information Services consultant to ensure monitoring, administration and update content editing.

A comprehensive web audit was carried out by the external Information Services consultant in 2015 to assist with further discussions around development and upgrading of NCGE website for 2016/17.

WEBSITE

NCGE website 2015 reports show (via 'google analytics') that there were 16,692 unique visitors to the website, recording 37,454 unique page views (53,860 total page views). Of these 77. 2% were first time visitors to the site and 22. 8% returning visitors.

EUROGUIDANCE WEBSITE

The NCGE Euroguidance Ireland Centre website is maintained as a microsite of the main NCGE website www.euroguidance.ie

EUROGUIDANCE FACEBOOK PAGE

The NCGE Euroguidance Facebook Page was set up as a promotion element of Euroguidance Ireland. To date there has been a total of 1356 page likes.

NCGE NEWS

NCGE News (ISSN 2009-6941) is the NCGE online interactive newsletter /magazine which provide articles and reviews on guidance provision across the education sector. NCGE publishes the NCGE News e-zine twice per year. NCGE News (Dublin. Online)

Each publication of NCGE News highlights examples of guidance policy and practice both nationally and internationally to inform guidance providers in post primary schools, higher education, adult guidance and non-formal sectors. Focusing on a particular theme for each edition, the NCGE News e-zine includes articles on good practice from our international colleagues as well as updates on activities of the Euroguidance Centre, ELGPN and the National Forum on Guidance, reviews of websites, smart-phone apps and relevant books.

In 2015 these themes included:

Summer edition: Leading and Shaping Guidance Practice

<http://ncge.12.ie/issue-43/index.html>

Winter edition: The Role of CPD

http://www.ncge.ie/uploads/NCGE_News_44.pdf

NCGE News statistics (via Mailchimp) show the numbers of NCGE News e-zine accessed online during 2015 as follows:

Total stats for y/e 31. 12. 15

4888 total successful deliveries

3759 total opens

4801 total clicks

1637 unique opens = 33. 5%

451 unique clicks = 9. 23%

NATIONAL FORUM ON GUIDANCE

NCGE co-ordinated and hosted two meetings of National Forum on Guidance in 2015 on 30th April and 3rd December.

The first meeting of 2015 was held on Friday, 8th May in The Clock Tower, DES, Marlborough Street, Dublin 1. Please see click on the link to see the presentations.

The focus of this meeting continued the theme of Lifelong Guidance – Building the Evidence Base, with specific emphasis on the Voice of the User/Citizen. NCGE was delighted to welcome speakers from “Young Voices” – a group facilitated by Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) and National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) who provided us with the “Voice of the User”.

The second meeting of the National Forum on Guidance was held on 3rd December 2015. At this Forum meeting, ELGPN Co-ordinator Dr. Raimo Vuorinen formally presented the final ELGPN Tools to the Department of Education and Skills representative Breda Naughton in the company of gathered members from the National Forum on Guidance in Ireland.

The NCGE Director and Dr. Vuorinen focused on the work that has been achieved to date, with Ireland's full status membership of the ELGPN and the Network's focused work programme.

The tools provide guidelines and reference framework resources for member states to renew national, regional and local guidance policies and practice.

ELGPN Tools No. 4: Designing and Implementing Policies Related Career Management Skills

ELGPN Tools No. 5: Strengthening the Quality Assurance and Evidence-Base for Lifelong Guidance

ELGPN Tools No. 6: Guidelines for Policies and Systems Development for Lifelong Guidance

NCGE announced to the Forum , that to continue the work described in ELGPN tool no. 5 of quality assurance and evidence based-policy and systems development, NCGE seeks to establish a working group from Forum members to focus and establish QAE guidelines at national level, to reflect requirements in the Irish context.

Facilitated group discussions of those present provided an opportunity for members to reflect on how the three tools – CMS, QAE and Guidelines could be used from local, to regional to national level.

NCGE thanked those organisations who have participated and contributed to the Forum discussions to date and clarified that with the support of the Department of Education and Skills, the National Forum on Guidance will continue into 2016.

NCGE carried out a Feedback survey with the participants and invited attendees to the Forum. This survey looked at representation at the Forum and suggestions for other participants; the aim of those attending the Forum and if this was achieved; expression of interest in participating in the NCGE working group on Quality Assurance (QA) in guidance; the use of the ELGPN tools , published in November and presented to the DES in December 2015.

The responses indicated

50% response rate

90% willingness to participate in the QA working group

100% goal in attending the Forum is for networking, collaboration and information sharing

70% achieving their goal (45% found Forum very helpful, 33% helpful and 22% slightly beneficial)

95% interested in continued participation in the Forum discussions etc.



National Forum attendees – December 2015

INFORMATION PROVISION AND CONFERENCES

NCGE hosts stands each year at conferences of both the Institute of Guidance Counsellors in March, and Higher Options in September. This provides direct access to NCGE for guidance counsellors and other clients of the Centre. With the return of the Information Officer, a review of exhibitions that NCGE could attend during the academic year was carried out to see how NCGE could best increase its profile among its stakeholders.

ICT DEVELOPMENTS IN NCGE

NCGE makes use of the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) to support the work of committees convened by NCGE, such as the School Guidance Handbook Editorial Panel, the Directors of Studies in Guidance Counselling and other relevant programmes. The VLE is accessible through <http://vle.ncge.ie>.

NCGE continued to use Survey Monkey™ questionnaires for online feedback and evaluation of the CPD workshops and AEGI activities as well as creating engagement with participants of the National Forum on Guidance.

NCGE continued to use the NCGE Vimeo channel to host video based resources in the NCGE website.

Video conferencing facilities via Adobe Connect - NCGE purchased a licence for Adobe Connect in order to facilitate online synchronous meetings and CPD. A number of meetings were hosted by NCGE through Adobe Connect and resources were developed to support NCGE staff and external users with using the Platform.

GENERAL ACTIVITIES

Throughout 2015, NCGE continued to provide briefing documents and information on guidance counselling and guidance related issues for the education and FET sector to the Ministers' office and various sections of the Department. NCGE also provided information to SOLAS and other Departments and agencies (e. g. NEPS, NCCA, GLEN)

In January, following discussions with the Higher Education Section of the DES in December 2014, NCGE made a submission regarding the future of the Qualifax database. NCGE was invited to present at a consultation meeting in the DES in March to discuss the future of Qualifax. NCGE was invited to further meeting with the DES, It was, and remains NCGE's submission that the Qualifax database is a guidance tool and therefore should be managed and co-ordinated by NCGE, as per the DES designated remit.

In June, NCGE made a submission, drafted with the Post Primary Guidance Working group, to the NCCA regarding the naming and inclusion of Guidance within the Well-being area of the new Junior Cycle programme.

Following the publication of the GLEN and NCGE 2013 guidelines - *Supporting Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Students: The role of Guidance Counsellors*, NCGE was consulted by GLEN in 2015 for the development of the “Being LGBT in School” resource for schools. This new resource would consolidate all relevant guidelines, including that with NCGE, into one comprehensive resource for schools.

8. FINANCIAL REPORT

NCGE FUNDING

Core funding for the National Centre for Guidance in Education is provided directly from the Department of Education and Skills. The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Unit (CAP) provides funding for the core NCGE programmes;

- SOLAS provides the grant to NCGE to fund the AEGI and FET programme within NCGE;
- the DES International Section funds the European Schools programme;
- EU funding via the Erasmus + supports the Euroguidance Centre, ELGPN, and Academia programmes within NCGE.

NCGE continued to ensure compliance with completion of various reports to DES and other government departments on issues such as finance, environment, energy efficiency, procurement and parliamentary questions, etc.

NCGE SUMMARY ACCOUNTS 2015

Expenditure as detailed below includes co-ordination and delivery of programmes across the guidance in lifelong learning spectrum, staff salaries and Centre overheads.

Detailed financial reports are provided quarterly and annually via Income and Expenditure returns to DES, Board of Léargas and annual financial returns to EU Commission for EU funded programmes.

NCGE Summary Accounts as detailed in the Léargas audited accounts 2015

Funding Source	Income	Expenditure
DES CAP unit	506,000	441,581
SOLAS	178,999	178,999
Other Total: (to include: NRC – EUROGUIDANCE, Academia, European Schools, ELGPN)	114,509	178,928
TOTAL	799,508	799,508

NCGE STAFF IN 2015

Jennifer McKenzie	Director
Linda Darbey	Guidance Programme Co-ordinator
Hilary Lynch	Guidance Officer (EUROGUIDANCE Co-ordinator)
Ursula Kearney	Guidance Officer
James Hogan	Office Administrator – to end February 2015
Jean Rafferty	Office Administrator – from March 2015
Shivaun Gallagher	Information Officer – returned from Career break Sept 2015

NCGE MANAGEMENT GUIDANCE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

DECEMBER 2015

1.	Breda Naughton	DES
2.	Gerry Flynn	IGC
3.	Jennifer McKenzie	NCGE
4.	Jim Mullin	Léargas
5.	Paul King (CHAIR)	DCU
6.	Shira Mehlman	SOLAS
<i>New Members – 22nd September 2015</i>		
7.	Kathy Finnegan	NAPD
8.	Shane Rooney	AEGAI
9.	Stephen Fitzgerald	DSP
10.	Orla Christle	HEA
11.	Linda Neary	DES
12.	Joe Cunningham	ETBI

MGC (2013-2016) MEMBERS WHO RESIGNED DURING 2015

1. Elaine Quinn (DSP) Resigned – 12th May 2015
2. Fidelma Collins (Léargas) Resigned – 12th October 2015
3. John Wynne (AEGAI) Resigned – 12th May 2015
4. Peter Brown (HEA) Resigned – 16th April 2015

GLOSSARY

ACCS	Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools
AEGAI	Adult Educational Guidance Association Ireland
AEGI	Adult Educational Guidance Initiative
AEOA	Adult Education Officers Association
AGMS	Adult Guidance Management System
CAP	Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment
CFE	College of Further Education
CIC	Church of Ireland College of Education
DCYA	Department of Children and Youth Affairs
DEIS	Delivering Equality Of Opportunity In Schools
DES	Department of Education and Skills
DSGC	Directors of Studies in Guidance Counselling
DSP	Department of Social Protection
ELGPN	European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network
ETB	Education and Training Board
HEA	Higher Education Authority
IAEVG	International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance
IGC	Institute of Guidance Counsellors
ILSA	Irish Learning Support Agency
IVEA	Irish Vocational Education Agency
JMB	Joint Management Board
LCAGP	Limerick City Adult Guidance Partnership
NAPD	National Association of Principal and Deputy Principals

NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NEPS	National Educational Psychological Services
NESC	National Economic Social Council
NCSE	National Council for Special Education
PSI	Psychological Society Ireland
SOLAS	An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna.
VEC	Vocational Educational Committee
VLE	Virtual Learning Environment
WSGP	Whole School Guidance Planning