

Guidance in evolution

“The Only Thing That Is Constant Is Change” *Heraclitus*



In celebration of the 50th issue of this publication, NCGE Director Jennifer Mc Kenzie reflects on the constantly evolving guidance landscape.

Reviewing the themes and the articles in the NCGE News publication up to this point provides a real historical reference of the developments in guidance and the societal and educational contexts in which guidance services are offered. In the wider education and training sector in Ireland, the last 10 years in particular have seen the greatest change in the national structures; with the establishment of the Further Education and Training Authority SOLAS¹ the replacing by the Education and Training Boards (ETBs) of the Vocational Education Committees (VECs) and FÁS, and we have more varied management bodies managing

our primary and post primary school systems; for example Educate Together schools <https://www.educatetogether.ie/>. We have had an increase in immigrants to Ireland, whether as economic migrants or through the asylum seeking and /or refugee process, thus also changing the demographics of our population. Within social and cultural developments in Ireland, guidance counsellors have been to the fore in supporting the Marriage Equality debate and referendum and in supporting LGBTQ clients of guidance services achieve their full potential in society.



¹An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna, (Irish Further Education and Skills Service)



In Ireland, the National Guidance Forum (2004-2006) confirmed the national commitment to guidance provision with guidelines on quality assurance and competences of guidance practitioners and a nationally agreed definition of guidance to inform developments across the sectors.

'Guidance refers to the process of facilitating individuals or groups at any point throughout their lives to develop their capacity for the self-management of their personal, social, educational, training, occupational and life choices in order to grow towards their potential and thereby to contribute to the development of a better society'. https://www.ncge.ie/sites/default/files/nationalguidance/documents/NGF_Guidance_for_Life%20final.pdf

In parallel; lifelong guidance achieved prominence in the confirmation of 2 EU Council Resolutions on guidance in 2004 and 2008, thus confirming an EU wide definition of Lifelong Guidance.

'A continuous process that enables citizens at any age and at any point of their lives to identify their capacities, competences and interests, to make educational, training and occupational decisions and to manage their individual life paths in learning, work and other settings in which those capacities and competences are learned and/or used' [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:42008X1213\(02\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:42008X1213(02)&from=EN)

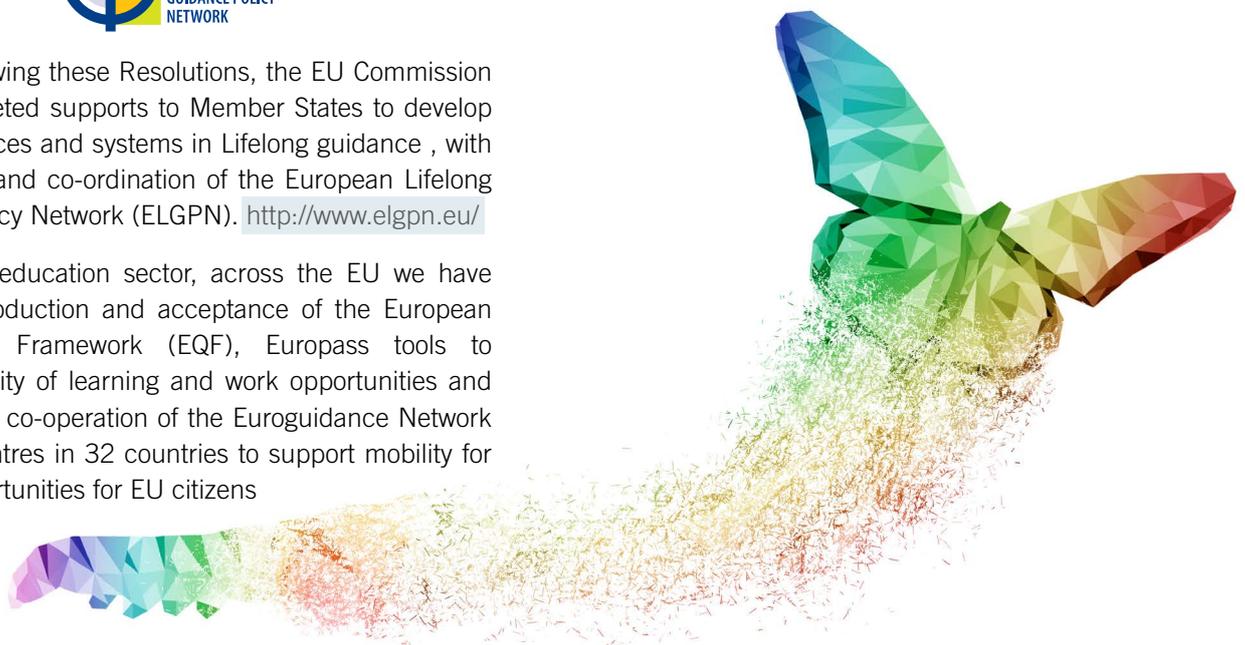


In turn, following these Resolutions, the EU Commission provided targeted supports to Member States to develop their own policies and systems in Lifelong guidance, with the funding and co-ordination of the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN). <http://www.elgpn.eu/>

In the wider education sector, across the EU we have seen the introduction and acceptance of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), Europass tools to support mobility of learning and work opportunities and the continued co-operation of the Euroguidance Network across 64 centres in 32 countries to support mobility for learning opportunities for EU citizens

In Ireland we now have the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), and several national strategies to lead the developments in education and training and society as a whole (e.g. National Skills Strategy, Higher Education Strategy, and FET Strategy). These strategies have been developed to support the country out of the most serious economic crisis from 2008 where national unemployment levels have now reduced to approximately 5%, from a high of 15% in 2012. <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-wamii/womenandmeninireland2016/employment/>

Throughout the nearly 23 years since the first issue of 'NCGE News' guidance provision has responded to the needs of the students and clients whether in schools, adult education, further and higher education institutions and labour market / unemployment support services. It is remarkable in 2018 to consider that in 2000 the concept of "adult educational guidance" was introduced through 8 pilot projects, which expanded to 39 pilot projects and are now accepted as a mainstreamed FET based guidance service for adults working with over 50,000 beneficiaries nationally each year. Through the dedication of professional guidance staff, models of guidance have been developed for adults in basic education, literacy and ESOL (English for Speakers of other languages) programmes. In schools guidance, there have been several Departmental Circulars, documents and guidelines outlining good practice in guidance delivery in post-primary schools. Most recently the NCGE Whole School Guidance Framework <https://www.ncge.ie/school-guidance-handbook/ncge-whole-school-guidance-framework> promotes the guidance counsellor at the centre of the Whole School Guidance programme provision, networking and collaborating with all school staff to ensure the guidance needs of students are met.



In confirming the commitment of the Department of Education and Skills to the future delivery of quality guidance in schools, the Programme Recognition Framework <http://www.ncge.ie/ncge/programme-recognition-framework> outlines the minimum standard of training required for a guidance counsellor to work in the education and training sectors.

Amongst all of these changes, the developments in ICT have supported and challenged the provision of quality guidance services. Whether accessing information online or providing guidance through e-guidance services, ICT has made a huge contribution to the professional practice. Notably in the gathering of appropriate qualitative and quantitative data for guidance services, online and bespoke systems have supported the review, evaluation and planning of adult guidance services since 2008. In Edition 29 of NCGE News, https://www.ncge.ie/sites/default/files/ncge/uploads/NN_issue29-Summer08.pdf we remarked on how “innovative, valuable and useful” the developments in ICT were at that time and we asked “imagine where we will be in 2013”!

Which is exactly the point? Look where we are in 2018! Guidance services provide impartial information, careers education, development of career management skills, guidance counselling for personal reflection and development and genuine holistic supports for the clients / students. Provision of guidance necessitates a reflection

and consideration of the wider education, economic, social and cultural environments in which these services are placed. Whether there is an “upturn” or “downturn” in the economy, individuals require supports and the skills to make decisions about their education, career and life choices. Guidance provision has changed with society. We work with groups and with individuals in one-to-one guidance sessions, we collaborate with colleagues, we make referrals to relevant support agencies, we are accountable for the quality of our service to our clients, we keep up to date (or at least we try to) with ICT developments that will enhance our delivery, we ask clients / students for feedback, we attend CPD and we value supervision for our work. So as the world around us changes, so too might our mode of delivery. However, supporting the individual, at any age, to make sense of their situation, reflect on their interests, values and circumstance, develop their career management skills and to make the right decision (i.e. plans A, B and C) for them has not and cannot change as this at the core of our work in guidance. Indeed with the proliferation of information available to us at our finger tips and careers developing now that none of us had even dreamed of 20 years ago, guidance is more relevant now than ever before in this ever-changing world.

For our part, NCGE is energised and excited to continue to chart and document the course of guidance developments in the next 50 issues of Guidance Matters!



You can access the 'NCGE News' archive here: <https://www.ncge.ie/ncge/ncge-news-archive>. There you will find links to a number of previous issues of 'NCGE News'. Not every copy is uploaded at this time so if you see any old issues not listed that you may have stored somewhere, please let us know and we will arrange to have them collected, scanned and uploaded for everyone to read.

