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NEWS

NCGE NEWS
- READER SURVEY

You may have opened and read many issues of NCGE news already, or you may have just discovered it. Whichever group you belong to, we would like to know more about you, get your feedback and hear your suggestions for future topics. The information that you provide will help NCGE News continue to improve and tailor content so that you find it even more useful. To participate in this quick survey, click on the link below:

https://www.ncge.ie/reader-survey

GDPR

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) will come into force on the 25th May 2018, replacing the existing data protection framework under the EU Data Protection Directive. This regulation places more emphasis on transparency, accountability and the security of personal data.

The role of the Guidance Counsellor has been an essential element in providing students and job seekers with professional objective information and guidance on their strengths, abilities and aptitudes. As such, the role necessarily involves the processing of personal and often highly confidential information regarding people of all ages. In that context, the activities of the Guidance Counsellor must be compliant with Irish Data Protection legislation. In all contexts Guidance Counsellors, whether in schools, adult or FET guidance should work with managerial staff in this regard.

Introducing a further challenge, in May 2018 the Irish and European Data Protection landscape will change significantly with the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation – a new set of data management obligations which will take effect across the European region on the same date. Whilst all Guidance Counsellors should ensure they are aware of GDPR implications within their organisation, the NCGE article and webinar linked to below offer a brief overview of the Regulation, as well as setting the day-to-day activities of Guidance Counsellors within that context.


Additional information:

SGH updates

The School Guidance Handbook is an online resource, supporting the development and delivery of the school guidance programme. To access articles published since our last issue and to view recent webinars go to: https://www.ncge.ie/school-guidance-handbook

Welcome...

to Issue 49 of our NCGE News as we enter a time of change for the guidance community.

New EU and Irish data protection legislation will affect our record keeping and influence our communications and services into the future. The increasing growth in social media is providing opportunities for guidance services to engage in direct support of clients and learners. There is a higher level of focus on non-linear career pathways and increasing later life career transition.

In parallel and fitting within this cycle of change, NCGE coordinated 13 countries in focussing on data-gathering for post primary schools-to identify a framework for such data gathering that could support self-evaluation and strategic planning into the future. The ongoing Dept. Review of Career Guidance is focussing on Careers Information and Tools and it is vital, in this time of change, that both are considered in the context of quality guidance service provision.

Thanks as always to the various contributors; Irish, EU and International colleagues to NCGE News. We’d love to hear the views of our readers and we invite you to contribute to future editions.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Is mise le meas,
Jennifer McKenzie
Director

Where abbreviations or terms are not explained within or at the end of any article; a glossary is available on P40
EDL Competition Winners

NCGE / Euroguidance Ireland would like to thank all students, guidance counsellors and language teachers for putting so much time, effort and energy into their European Day of Languages competition entries. The response was fantastic and our judges had a tough time choosing, but in January 2018 they finally agreed on the junior and senior level winners.

Congratulations to:
Tullamore College, Riverside, Tullamore, Co. Offaly (Junior Level Winner)
Gaelcholáiste Chiarraí, Tobar Mhaigh Dóir, Trá Lí, Co. Chiarraí (Senior Level Winner)

Supported by Euroguidance Ireland - winning students have been given the opportunity to experience their dream job in the country and language of their choice. Already, Gaelcholáiste Chiarraí students will be visiting ‘Le Monde’ Newspaper in Paris in mid May. We wish both winners every success in their future careers.

The European Day of Languages Competition 2017 was run in collaboration with Léargas, The National Agency who manage international and national exchange programmes in education, youth and community work, and vocational education and training.

The competition involved students filling out a Europass CV, with the help of their guidance counsellor and language teacher, for their dream job in a language they are studying in school. Teachers then chose one entry from each class to be submitted to the national competition. The competition offered an opportunity to familiarise students with the Europass CV, which is commonly used across Europe and to encourage students to consider learning and employment opportunities across the EU. Europass CV templates are available online in various languages and can be found through the link below.

http://www.europass.ie/europass/euro_cv.html

For more details see
https://euroguidance.ie/edl-competition-winners-announced

Mobility Guidance

The CPD online Mobility Guidance Counselling module aims to provide guidance counsellors with the skills they need to support students in their quest to study, work or volunteer abroad. The module explores the process of mobility-preparation, induction and re-integration and contains resources that will assist the guidance counsellor in empowering students to make informed choices about learning mobility.

To register your interest in participation in the next module and for more info visit:
https://euroguidance.ie/cpd-mobility-guidance-counselling

Euroguidance Highlights

Check out “Euroguidance Highlights 2017” - The annual publication from the Euroguidance Network detailing the activities of the Euroguidance Centres and Network during the year. Work of Euroguidance Ireland - hosted by NCGE - is featured in this edition.


DES Career Guidance Review

In January 2018 the DES announced the commencement of a Career Guidance review in line with the Action Plan for Education 2018, Objective 4.5, Action 80. The Career Guidance Review is being carried out by DES appointed Indecon International Consultants and Professor Tom Collins has been appointed by the DES to chair the steering committee to support the review. Indecon are now inviting all interested stakeholders to contribute to a public consultation process. This is to be done by submitting your views in writing by 25th May 2018. Details of the review are outlined via the DES website link below.

https://www.education.ie/en/The-Department/Announcements/career-guidance-review.html

Have you signed up yet?
PSI Register of Psychometric Test Use: Guidance Counsellors

The IGC, the AEGAI and the Directors of Studies of Guidance Counselling signed up to an agreement with the PSI in 2016 which supports the professional practice of guidance counsellors in the use of psychometric tests. Please click below for information on the registration process and CPD available from PSI in this regard.

https://www.ncge.ie/psi
The rise of social media in career services

Social media is regularly in the ‘news’ for good and for not so good reasons. In career development social media can be used by organisations to further develop a common understanding with clients. For many, social media is simply a collection of online tools that enable communities to share information, communicate and socialise. Social media provides new opportunities for career practitioners, but it also creates a demand in terms of new competencies. Following on from NCGE’s recent webinar that covered areas including using ICT tools and Social Media in guidance, in this article Jaana Kettunen explores the use and importance of social media in and for career guidance services.

The rise of social media in career services

Social media has recently been gaining a foothold in the field of career guidance and has become part of many career practitioners’ daily practice. Recent research on practitioners’ experiences provides insight into how social media is currently used in career guidance. In its narrowest form, it is simply an information distribution tool without opportunities for communication or interaction. In its broadest form, it is used for cooperative knowledge building and meaningful communal discussion on career issues.

From information delivery to co-careering

Emergence of the utilisation of social media in career guidance
Typically, social media is used in career services merely to deliver information, for which it is fast and effective, allowing practitioners to reach large numbers of people instantaneously. However, some practitioners are concerned about the professional use of social media as an information source, emphasising that active and safe participation on social media requires honed skills and the ability to seek, choose and evaluate complex online content. There are ethical concerns regarding the accuracy and currency of information, especially which practitioners themselves present and share online.

Social media is also used more broadly for career services, where not only information delivery but also one-to-one communication takes place. This can occur asynchronously, involving a delay in the receipt of messages, or synchronously, where people communicate simultaneously in real time. The ability to write online is essential since most communication on social media still takes place in writing. Ethical concerns regarding online privacy make it essential to understand the privacy settings of the various applications and services used.

A third, and broader still, application of social media is for collaborative career exploration. Methods and activities that foster collaborative processes in career learning among peers are highlighted. While the ability to discuss matters online is essential, practitioners also emphasise that structure, active support and guidance are necessary for discussions to facilitate knowledge-building. The kind of collaborative interaction being built by the group and the respectful and supportive treatment of others should be agreed upon.

The fourth and broadest use of social media is for co-careerering, where shared expertise and meaningful co-construction of career issues among community members takes place. Creating and maintaining an online presence is key, and this must be mindful and well-managed so as to present a genuine image of oneself within the discussion communities.

**Social media competency in career guidance**

Social media challenges traditional interactions and practitioner–client guidance relationships. There is a shift away from control by experts to a blend of expert and socially-constructed knowledge. Since social media skills and competencies are often secondary considerations, they are poorly developed in training and there is therefore an urgent need to update both pre-service and in-service training curricula. Social media currently plays a significant role in reforming career practices and related work cultures and thus it is increasingly important to support career professionals in their understanding of the various social media tools and the innovative ways in which these can be incorporated into existing practices. The current challenge for the profession is to decide how best to use these technologies.

**Reference**

“Career practitioners’ conceptions of social media and competency for social media in career services” is openly available here:


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**The Author**

Jaana Kettunen, PhD, is a Researcher at the Finnish Institute for Educational Research of the University of Jyväskylä, Finland. Her main research interest is on the role of ICT and social media in career guidance. It is both theoretical and practical: it aims at the development of theory-based and evidence-informed pedagogical practices.
Across education and labour market sectors Guidance Services provide quality impartial information to clients and learners in support of their career decision making. It is vital therefore that guidance counsellors remain aware of national policies, labour market information and economic and skills development initiatives, alongside traditional education and vocational training pathways. NCGE wishes to acknowledge and thank the Skills Planning and Enterprise Engagement Unit of the Dept. of Education and Skills for the updates provided in this article.

### Briefing on National Skills Architecture

**February 2018**


### National Skills Strategy 2025

The purpose of the National Skills Strategy 2025 is to provide a framework for skills development that will help drive Ireland’s growth both economically and societally over the next decade. Through the vision, objectives, actions and indicators outlined, the Strategy will support the development of a well-educated, well-skilled and adaptable labour force, creating and sustaining a strong pool of talented people of all ages throughout Ireland.


### Strategy Statement – Action Plan for Education 2016-2019

The central vision of the Action Plan for Education is that Irish Education and Training should become the best in Europe over the next decade. The plan contains hundreds of actions to be implemented with particular focus on disadvantage, skills, and continuous improvement within the education service. Implementation and monitoring arrangements have been put in place within the Department. The reality is that skills formation begins at pre-school and continues through all levels of the education and training system.

National Skills Council
The National Skills Council was launched in 2017. Chaired by the Minister for Education and Skills, the Council is made up of high level officials from both public and private organisations. The role of the Council is to oversee research, advise on the prioritisation of identified skills needs and on how to secure delivery of identified needs. It will have a key role in promoting and reporting on the delivery of responses by education and training providers to those priorities. At a recent meeting of the Council in January 2018 the main strategic discussion item was “Lifelong Learning”. Planned future strategic discussion items include, “The Future of Work” and “Career Progression and Information”.

Regional Skills Fora
To help foster stronger links between employers and the education and training sector, the Department of Education and Skills has established a network of nine Regional Skills Fora and appointed nine Regional Skills Fora Managers. Each forum provides robust labour market information to inform programme development while encouraging greater collaboration between ETBs, IOTs, Universities and Industry. A key emerging strategy for industry both nationally and in the regions is the upskilling of the existing workforce at all levels.

Skills for Growth Audit Tool
Launched in 2017, the purpose of the Skills for Growth Initiative is to increase the quality and quantity of data available on skills needs in individual enterprises, to allow for enhanced engagement between enterprise, education and training providers and other relevant members of Regional Skills Fora. Data will be collected at individual company level by the Regional Skills Fora Managers using a tool created by DES in conjunction with the Skills and Labour Market research Unit in SOLAS and Regional Skills Fora managers. This tool will enable granular data on skills needs to be collected and processed. As part of the Skills for Growth project, Enterprise Ireland is providing tailored workshops delivered by IMI to client companies. Spotlight on Skills is the title for these workshops. Four workshops have taken place with 40 companies attending, representing employment of over 4,000 people.

Review of Career Guidance
It is planned that by end Q2 2018 the Dept. will have completed a review of existing career guidance tools and career information for post-primary / further education / higher education students and adults, currently in place across the education and training system in Ireland. The purpose of the review is to ensure that the Dept. is providing a high quality, relevant career guidance support service to all students from post primary level up to further and higher education. (See earlier ‘News’ Article on P4)

Springboard+:
Under Springboard+ 2017, the eligibility criteria has been expanded to include homemakers and those in employment or self-employment who wish to upskill, reskill or cross skill in the Biopharma/Med Tech sector and those in employment, or self-employment in the ICT sector who wish to upskill from a level 7 to a level 8 qualification. Over 300 homemakers have enrolled in Springboard+ 2017 courses, including in Advanced Manufacturing, Business and Entrepreneurship. In 2018, Springboard+ courses will be extended so that all courses will now be open to people irrespective of their employment status.
Springboard+ - [https://springboardcourses.ie/](https://springboardcourses.ie/)

Lifelong Learning
There is an increased focus on lifelong learning and a target to increase participation in lifelong learning to 15% by 2025 from 6.7% in 2014, has been set. The improved labour market situation in Ireland is leading to a renewed focus on supporting skills development for lifelong learning and people in employment. Ireland’s efforts to increase its lifelong learning participation rate are supported by actions outlined in the National Skills Strategy 2025. This includes providing greater resources to “Skillnets”, opening up programmes such as “Springboard+” and “Traineeships” to people in employment and the development of a new framework for ETBs to support people in employment.
In Ireland there is no formal provision for Guidance in primary schools within the lifelong context, however NCGE to highlight examples of best practice in guidance, play therapy, coaching and skills programmes for primary education. The Centre also continues to research the level of formal guidance in the primary school system in other EU countries. As part of the primary school curriculum, Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) provides particular opportunities to foster the personal development, health and well-being of the child. See [http://www.sphe.ie/](http://www.sphe.ie/)

In 2017, Sareena Hopkins, Executive Director of the Canadian Career Development Foundation (CCDF) visited ‘Job World’ in South Korea; a careers learning environment targeted at all ages. She provides her impressions below.

## Korea Job World

I had the privilege of visiting Job World in June 2017. Located just outside of Seoul, it is the “Disneyland” of Career Development. It is a sprawling complex that, on first impression, quite literally took my breath away. As I entered, I saw a full size airplane (including flight simulator), a state-of-the-art broadcasting facility with two students reading the news, a full size runway with little models being prepped by little designers, kids fighting a digitalized wall of fire with a real water hose and students simulating surgery on a stuffed animal in a veterinary hospital. And that was just the tip of the iceberg!

Job World comprises two main areas:

- a career assessment, combining gamified interest/aptitude testing and debriefing with a trained careers professional;
- a massive “encounters” area in which the visitor can literally enter into and participate in simulated work from across a seemingly endless number of jobs.

The latter is divided into two separate but parallel areas – one for very young children (pre-school) that allows for play-based exploration and one for pre-teens/teens with more sophisticated experiential activities.

A few things really stood out to me as unique and incredibly impressive:

- Job World manages to make career development fun. The children and youth we saw were having the times of their lives exploring diverse job roles. Parents clearly brought their young children there to “play” in the same way that you might take your child to a theme park or fair;
- Job World seems to be underpinned by an impressive government-industry partnership. The Korean government had clearly invested very significantly, but major industries have also offered state-of-the-art equipment for simulations and collaborated with Job World to develop and refine the activities for visitors;
• Despite significant industry investment, Job World was not about promoting the “hot jobs” as our profession is often subtly (and sometimes not so subtly) encouraged to do by our funders. Job World included high tech simulations, but also opportunities for children to “try on” roles in the service industry, traditional Korean arts, high paying and entry level positions. There didn’t appear to be any promotion of one over the other. The goal was simply wide-ranging exploration so visitors could “taste and try on” diverse possibilities. This exposure to the realities of the world of work is sorely missing in so many parts of the world and this one centre provided incredible career exploration opportunities.

• A developmental approach was built into every aspect of Job World. All South Korean children are invited to visit from early ages and, from their first encounter, their activities, assessment results and preferences are saved in their electronic profile. In subsequent visits, they continue to build their profile and – over time – can see patterns of interest and aptitude and the evolution in their own unique career development journey.

We have a lot to learn from Job World: Career development is, at its core, about self-exploration and exploration of the world around us. Career development is centrally important and deserves investment by both government and industry…and career development can, when done well, be one of the most fun and meaningful things a person of any age can do!

The Author

Sareena Hopkins

As Executive Director of the Canadian Career Development Foundation (CCDF), Sareena works to strengthen the reach and impact of the career development field through strategic policy initiatives, targeted research, innovative development and capacity building. In addition to her role with CCDF, Sareena is founding Executive Officer of the Canadian Council for Career Development (CCD) and was awarded the International Gold Medal for Leadership in Career Development in 2014. Email: s.hopkins@ccdf.ca
Expected outcomes from the Thematic Seminars

The aim of the seminars was to develop a transnational resource to facilitate the development of evidence based guidance practice and in particular the use of ICT in supporting quality assured practice in school guidance. It was expected that the transnational resource could be used across Europe to:

- Identify data gathering tools and methodologies that can be used to inform evidence based practice in school guidance services
- Present a set of questions relating to data gathering on inputs, process and outputs
- Present a framework for how the data can be collected online

From an Irish perspective it was envisaged that the thematic seminars would build on and follow on from the work of the ELGPN in relation to the Quality Assurance and Evidence-Based Framework and Designing and Implementing Policies Related to Career Management Skills (www.elgpn.eu/publications). The seminars would also provide opportunities to learn from career management skills/competence frameworks developed and implemented in a number of EU member states and thus contribute to the Irish knowledge base in this area.

Thematic Seminar Participants

Participants from 13 countries, including Ireland, attended the two seminars in Dublin. The first in September, 2017 (7-8th) and the second in February, 2018 (22-23rd). Countries participating across the EU and EEA included Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Norway, Poland, Sweden and Spain. Participants included policymakers, managers of guidance services, guidance counsellors, and academic providers of guidance programmes. Participants included policymakers, managers of guidance services, guidance counsellors, and academic providers of guidance programmes. Participants from Ireland included, ACCS, 2 Inspectors from DES, ETBI, IGC and 7 guidance counsellors from schools, NAPD, two Directors of guidance university programmes and NCGE. A number of participants were also active members of the Euroguidance Network.
Thematic Seminars

The first seminar was held in The Grand Hotel, Malahide, Dublin, on the 7th and 8th September, 2017. During the seminar participants shared experiences with one another during table discussions and participated in group activities. A presentation on an example of a data gathering system was presented by Finland. The seminar was facilitated by two UK facilitators, Dr. Deirdre Hughes and Trevor Carson, with expertise in guidance and evidence informed practice. Both Hughes and Carson brought a UK perspective to the seminar. After the seminar the facilitators drafted an interim report which was shared with all participants through the NCGE Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

The second seminar was held in The Royal Marine Hotel, Dun Laoghaire, Dublin, on the 22nd and 23rd February, 2018. Participants had the opportunity to reflect on the learning arising from the first seminar and to share policy and practice relating to data gathering in guidance in schools through the NCGE VLE prior to the seminar. The seminar was facilitated again by Dr. Deirdre Hughes and Trevor Carson. Participants from countries with data gathering systems under development/in place were invited to present at the Seminar. This included a presentation from NCGE on the Irish Department of Education and Skills (DES) Adult Guidance Management System.

Final Report and Transnational Resource

On completion of the second seminar, the facilitators issued a second draft report to all participants to ensure their input into the final version. As per the stated aim of the TCA, this final report will inform any process for the development of any NCGE proposal for an online data gathering system in post primary schools in Ireland.

Access the final TCA report here - https://www.ncge.ie/ncge/DublinTCA

For further information contact ncgeinfo@ncge.ie
The Framework was developed by the NCGE convened post-primary guidance working group from 2015-2017. The post-primary guidance working group included representation from DES, DSGC, IGC, NAPD, NEPS, NCCA and NCGE. Following a public consultation process, The Framework was published and distributed to schools in September, 2017 with the invitation to participate in a pilot project testing the implementation of the Framework in schools.

Pilot Project

16 post-primary schools nation-wide are currently participating in the NCGE pilot project ‘looking at whole school guidance in junior cycle’. Schools represented include, small, medium and large rural and urban voluntary secondary, ETB, community & comprehensive and private schools. Participation in the pilot includes a representative from school management (principal/deputy) and the guidance counsellor(s). The pilot project which commenced in January will be completed in May 2018. It involves a blended approach – engaging online with material (resources developed to support implementation of the Framework) and participation in two face-to-face workshops and an online meeting.

Schools participating in the pilot have the opportunity to explore the whole school guidance programme at junior cycle using a ‘School Self Evaluation’ (SSE) methodology. It is expected that participating schools will identify strengths and areas for improvement within the junior cycle whole school guidance programme as a result of participation in the pilot. Schools participating in the pilot project have also been introduced to the continuum of support model for guidance, as detailed in The Framework and have had the opportunity to meet with Prof. Jim Sampson from Florida State University to explore how a continuum of support model may be applied to the whole school guidance programme.
All 16 schools participated in the first face-to-face workshop which was held in the Department of Education and Skills on Marlborough Street, Dublin 1 on the 6th February. The workshop provided school principals/deputies and guidance counsellors to explore guidance in junior cycle, to share practice and to learn from one another – a community of practice. The workshop was followed-up by an online meeting with all schools (in 3 separate meetings) on the 20th February. The online meeting provided schools with the opportunity to review and share their progress to-date and to identify steps to take prior to the final face-to-face workshop on the 2nd May. On the 2nd May schools were invited to showcase their work, had the opportunity to hear from Prof Jim Sampson and provided NCGE with critical feedback on the pilot project and materials.

Once the pilot project phase is complete, the resources developed by NCGE and the participating schools will be made available to the wider school community through the online NCGE School Guidance Handbook.

The full “Framework” and the Whole School Guidance “Wheel Poster” can be downloaded at the following links on the NCGE website:

- [ncge-whole-school-guidance-framework](https://www.ncge.ie/school-guidance-handbook/ncge-whole-school-guidance-framework)
- [Framework_POSTERS_P1ONLY.pdf](https://www.ncge.ie/sites/default/files/Framework_POSTERS_P1ONLY.pdf)

If you would like more information regarding The Framework or the pilot project, please contact NCGE at ncgeinfo@ncge.ie.
The ALBA Programme

A Case-Study in Learner-Centered, Flexible, Competence-Based Irish Higher Education

Inspired by the innovative work of De Paul University (Chicago), the Adult Learning BA for Personal and Professional Development (ALBA) at All Hallows College commenced in 2009 in response to the HEA report ‘Who Went to College in 2004?’ This identified north Dublin as a higher education participation ‘black spot’. ALBA ceased in 2017 as a result of closure of the college. Useful lessons were learned in terms of enabling mature, part-time students to successfully complete degree studies. The programme and its impact were evaluated in 2017 under the auspices of the Higher-Education Competence-Based Learning Project Expert Working Group at All Hallows College-DCU. The report “The ALBA Programme 2009-17: A Case-Study in learner Centered, Flexible, Competence-Based Irish Education. Research Report’ By Breathnach, C., Kelly, C., Kilgallon., C., and Larkin, S. was produced. This article is based on this report.

Student Profile

Between 2009 and January 2014, 209 students enrolled on ALBA – there were no further enrolments as the College announced its wind-down in May 2014. The majority were 34-59 years of age. 56% were female and 44% male. Most were from Dublin and were parents. 91% had no family background in higher education. 56% had completed their Leaving Certificate. 44% had been early school leavers –3.5% finished school following primary education. 85% had completed some form of further education, but only 1% was studying prior to starting ALBA. Before enrollment, 34% were unemployed, 8% were fulltime carers, 33% were in fulltime and 22% in part-time employment. 3% were retired.

Programme Framework

Accredited by DCU, ALBA was based on adult and transformative learning philosophy, recognising the complexity of adult life and valuing the experience of adult learners as a resource to learning. Learners and faculty were considered co-educators. Dialogue was at the heart of the learning process.

The EU Bologna Process provided crucial underpinning. ALBA reflected EU and Irish policy in relation to lifelong learning, educational ‘progression pathways’, transversal skills, competency-based learning outcomes enabling the autonomy and responsibility of students, recognition of prior formal, informal and non-formal learning, personal and professional development, the need for creativity, adaptability and ‘learning to learn’. The development of critical thinking was fundamental to ALBA.

Application and access to the programme were based on ‘learner readiness’ rather than previous educational attainment. These involved extended conversation with programme staff culminating in a Learning Assessment Seminar. This supported prospective students in considering their previous educational experience, their ambitions, their options and the practicalities of undertaking the programme. A mentor was allocated to each student for the duration of studies. Studies could be undertaken on either a part-time or fulltime basis.

Lifelong guidance is a key element in the support of all learning. Transversal skills and critical thinking support the development of career management skills and these are often embedded within adult education programmes such as the ALBA programme. Once an adult has entered into a programme; continuous support and mentoring is vital in assisting adults continue on their learning journey.
The programme consisted of high-level competency-based learning outcomes in adult learning, human development, arts and ideas and professional focus up to the Level 7 degree, and a further capstone sequence of outcomes for the Level 8 degree. These supported a series of integrated major and minor awards at certificate, diploma, ordinary and honours level degrees.

Each of the awards represented a pathway to progression that each student could choose in designing their own learning journey. Choices related to:

- the mode of learning;
- the pace of study and completion;
- the award level pathway, and
- the choice of content within the core requirements of each award, including their professional development specialism

The degree awards encompassed all the learning outcomes that could be achieved through lower awards. A student could enrol and could choose to cease, pause and recommence their studies, or alter their pace of study, according to circumstances - remaining on course to achieve a degree should they wish to do so.

The programme was financially self-supporting once it reached a certain scale.

Programme Impact

81% of ALBA students completed studies to an award level. 72% achieved a degree. 32% of the early school leaver cohort achieved a Level 8 degree and 48% a Level 7 degree – a number completed at Level 7 as they re-entered fulltime employment at this point. Those who completed with a certificate or diploma, together with the 19% who withdrew without an award, reported that they did so for financial or health reasons. They stated that they hoped to return to complete a degree. By January 2017, 40% of those who had already graduated had continued to postgraduate or vocationally related education, two had embarked on PhDs.

Formal lifelong learning became a habit for ALBA graduates.

In general, graduates reported strong positive impacts on the development of

- Transversal skills, adaptability and life transitions (74% in fulltime or part-time employment, 12% in retirement, fewer were fulltime carers, and only 6% remained in unemployment)
- Self-confidence, leadership and initiative
- Personal health and wellbeing, family relationships, and community and civic engagement.

By January 2017, 31% already reported that they had become role models within their families for attending HE.

Learning

Evaluation of the programme indicated that four dimensions supported the achievement of high-level learning and the successful completion of flexible and part-time HE studies by mature adult learners. These were:

- The application of adult and transformative learning philosophies and methodologies:
  Learners and faculty as co-educators; RPL; Supportive environment created by mentoring and peer support learning community; High-level competency-based applied learning and assessment supporting multiple learning modes and RPL; Embedded relationship and communication development enabling continuous feedback and continuous responsive innovation;

- Learning structures:
  Flexible, open entry criteria and application processes; Multiple commencement dates annually; Multiplicity of integrated progression / award pathways; Flexible, ‘out of normal office hours’, year-round schedules of learning opportunities; Multiple learning locations;

- Flexibility in institutional approaches supporting the diversity of learners:
  Faculty development support, restructuring of roles and tasks as appropriate; Collaborative inter-institutional / organisational / community partnerships; IT, records and administrative systems supporting flexible provision; Appropriate student support services and facilities at times / places responsive to a diversity of students; A range of data-gathering relating to educational outcomes recognising diversity of students; Appropriate marketing; Research into flexible, high-level competency-based learning; Seed funding and cash flow facilities for programme development;

- Flexible learning and financial arrangements:
  The enabling of HE for mature students requires part-time, learner-centred and flexible and affordable provision and student financial support.

Learning, adaptability, creativity and critical thinking are necessities for the 21st century. Continuous, meaningful access to HE by all is essential to individual and communal empowerment, sustainability and growth. ALBA demonstrated this can be delivered successfully and affordably.

The Author

Dr. Catherine Breathnach was Director of the Adult Learning degree for Personal and Professional Development (ALBA) at All Hallows College between 2014-17. She holds a PhD in Strategic Management, a Master of Business Studies and an MA in Adult and Community Education. She is currently an associate consultant with Artem Management Associates in Bray Co. Wicklow.
In line with NCGE’s stated strategic objective to provide quality information, resources and materials to support guidance provision and practice, in this issue we have published ‘A Day in the life’ of a College of Further Education (CFE) Guidance Counsellor. Guidance in Colleges of Further Education is based on the needs of the students in that college and provision is allocated in accordance with relevant Department of Education and Skills Circulars. The majority of students enrolled in CFE’s in Ireland are engaged in Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) programmes. PLC courses are aimed primarily at students who would like to develop vocational or technological skills in order to enter an occupation, or go on to higher education.

A Day in the Life of a CFE Guidance Counsellor

One of the things we like about being a Guidance Counsellor in a College of Further Education is that there isn’t a “typical day” in the sense that there is such a wide variety of tasks inherent in the job description that no two days are the same. In a very busy college of 1200 students with over 80 courses, the Drop-In Service is inundated with queries as it provides students with an opportunity to have their questions answered, with no appointment necessary. We deal with numerous and diverse queries, for example, finance, HE progression, mature student progression, CAO, UCAS, Eunicas, job search etc., this is just the ‘tip of the iceberg’.

Even when we schedule tasks several weeks in advance, we are always ready for ‘unscheduled’ concerns to be dealt with and therefore, prioritising and multi-tasking is a significant part of our daily role. Our students come from various backgrounds and cultures and range from Leaving Cert, QQI Level 4 graduates to mature students returning to education. These students present in September each year apprehensive but feeling positive, motivated and passionate about their chosen course. Our role is to support them through each phase of the year and help them to build their career plans for the future.

September is always ‘hectic’ as students make their transition to Further Education. There’s such a buzz as they navigate the college, get their timetables, find their feet and make new friends. We suppose you could call this the ‘settling in’ stage as students familiarise themselves with their course, tutors and their surroundings. During this time, we get flooded with queries around course changes and options, grants & financial issues, QQI course progression and personal problems. Representatives from some of the UK Universities are scheduled to present to the students and the commencement of careers fairs and school visits get underway.

Sonia Hoey is a Guidance Counsellor at Cavan Institute since 1999 and with CMETB from 1997. She graduated from University College Dublin with the Higher Diploma in Guidance Counselling in 1997 after completing her BA (Hons) Degree in Psychology and the Post-graduate Diploma in Business Studies in the Michael Smurfit Graduate School of Business - UCD.

Aoife Ward is a Guidance Counsellor at Cavan Institute since 2007. She graduated from University of Ulster with BEng (Hons) Degree in Engineering and worked in the Medical Device Industry for 5 years before returning to education. She completed a Post Graduate Diploma in Adult Guidance in 2006 and a Post Graduate Diploma in Further and Higher Education in 2011.
October/November brings a more settled college environment as students find their feet and they become more confident and career focused. The Guidance Service is very busy with class visits, UCAS Workshops, Personal Statements, HEI visits, Career Interest Inventories, school visits and careers fairs in addition to one to one work with students in areas such as courses changes, financial issues, counselling referrals and crisis support. It is inevitable that our day will not go as planned and we are always conscious of the fact that a student may present with issues where we have to drop all the other tasks and focus solely on their welfare. This is a difficult but very significant part of the role.

In December and January our main focus is to support students and facilitate their application to further and higher education in Ireland, UK and Europe. Our students have access to wide and varied progression options however often this is a very overwhelming time for them (and us!!) as they make sense of the progression routes available and the different applications that need to be completed. In addition to this important career planning we would usually see a surge in referrals for guidance counselling around this time. It is vital that we take a holistic approach which means always prioritising and reprioritising our work depending on the issues presented by the student.

Once CAO and UCAS deadlines have passed, our focus turns to supporting mature students and QQI Level 6 students as they apply for advanced entry. We assist them with preparing for aptitude tests, interviews, portfolios and personal statements. Again students completing their QQI Level 6 award have excellent opportunities to progress into second year in a cognate area in an Institute of Technology. Also we are seeing an increased number of students availing of excellent opportunities to study courses abroad when they are excluded from high points courses here in Ireland. The PLC qualification is very valuable for those who are willing to research and avail of programmes in the UK and Europe for example in Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Radiography, Nursing, Psychology and Social Work. The progression links are developing significantly in Ireland too with the Universities offering excellent links to Science, Business, Law, Arts, Social Science, Nursing, Sport, Computers and Teaching programmes to name but a few.

Moving into spring, our work is very varied and the focus broadens to include employment opportunities and supporting the students with job search, job application, CVs and interview techniques. Thankfully we are seeing an increase in job opportunities for students after the years during the downturn where it was much more difficult to secure employment. Our students have completed their work placements and are displaying job readiness and improved employability skills. They just need some encouragement and belief in their abilities and that is where we come in – coaching them, motivating them and helping them to become more self-confident. The Drop In service is still extremely busy with student queries on SUSI, accepting UCAS offers or dealing with unsuccessful applications, late application to CAO, scholarships, distance learning and part time courses, progression links, apprenticeships and traineeships, crisis support and personal issues.

Ongoing throughout the year are again school visits and careers fairs where we get the opportunity to meet with secondary school students and mature students planning to return to education and discuss the many options open to them. This is important work as it raises awareness of the amazing progression opportunities available to students with a QQI Level 5 or 6 award. One of the highlights of the job for us is seeing the transformation of our students as they go from being apprehensive about the PLC route to the reality that they can access the progression opportunities of their dreams. Past beliefs around what careers are open to them are challenged and they begin to plan their career route and believe that the world is their oyster!

As you can see the Guidance role in a Further Education College is wide and varied and comes with its challenges. It is a role that offers great variety with unexpected and unforeseen events every day! Working with PLC students is very rewarding and enjoyable. We meet wonderful people every day and we thoroughly enjoy supporting and facilitating their personal, educational and vocational growth and development. As always there is pressure on resources, time constraints and many other issues that crop up during the year however the day flies in and we leave each evening feeling we have contributed to improving the well-being of our students and our learning community.

References
1 CAO – Irish Central Applications Office – www.cao.ie
2 UCAS – UK, Universities and Colleges Admissions Service - www.ucas.com
3 Eunicas - European Universities Central Application Support Service - www.eunicas.ie
4 QQI - Quality and Qualifications Ireland, responsible for Irish National Framework of qualifications - www.qqi.ie
5 HEI -Higher Education Institutes – www.hei.ie/higher-education-institutions/?v=1
6 Institute of Technology - http://thea.ie/
7 SUSI - Ireland’s national awarding authority for all higher and further education grants – www.susi.ie
Collaboration & Learning - Action & Reflection

NCGE - MyFuture+ and its application to FET Guidance

NCGE's role includes informing policy and supporting the development of quality guidance practice in the FET sector. In this context the development of useful and meaningful resources to support quality practice is key. Informed by Quality Assurance and Evidence Guidelines of the ELPGN, NCGE supports the development of practitioner competence, service provision and improvement. NCGE also recognizes the need for a cost/benefit for individuals and those funding the guidance service. To this end and acknowledging that Careers Portal designed My Futures+ specifically for the adult guidance community NCGE agreed to facilitate Guidance Counsellors in Adult Education and PLC Centres in engaging with a Pilot of ‘MyFutures+’. The Pilot was run as an exercise to ascertain the real world uses of this programme within adult guidance.

MyFuture+ - A New Adult Education and Guidance Resource

MyFuture+ is an innovative ICT adult career learning and development resource. Through a web-based career file, it aims to assist individuals to explore themselves in relation to career, education and employment opportunities available in Ireland. It is suitable for use with young adults and adults from the age of 16+ in both a one-to-one and group guidance context. Launched in June 2016, MyFuture+ has been developed by CareersPortal.ie in critical collaboration with adult guidance and education staff that support individuals with their career planning and decisions. Staff representing key organisations and services have worked together to shape the resource including; Adult Education Guidance Services, Youtheach/CTCs, Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, Local Employment Services, Community Training Centre’s and PLCs.

MyFuture+ has the unique administration advantage of allowing adult guidance counsellors to instantly view and track their client’s self-assessment results and career research including their Career Interest Profiler, Career Skills assessment, Course preferences and Career documents. This process encourages greater collaboration between the guidance counsellor and the client. This is supported by the mobile compatibility of MyFuture+ and the on-line career file can be accessed at any time by the client from a mobile phone, tablet, laptop etc.

Another unique feature available is QQI Level 4 and 5 Work Experience module templates. This allows learners in FET centres and colleges to store their assignment content and
work experience diary reflections in their on-line career file that can be accessed and edited from any mobile device. The Guidance Counsellor or Work Experience Tutor can instantly view their work and provide live feedback on their assessments.

The Pilot Group – A broad FET Guidance Perspective

NCGE and CareersPortal worked closely with a MyFuture+ pilot group from March 2017-March 2018. Capturing the experiences of guidance counsellors using MyFuture+ in different FET Guidance settings was a fundamental goal. Therefore, pilot members included adult guidance and education staff from various small, medium and large centres across the sector. A total of 8 FET guidance providers participated. The adult guidance practitioners involved work with clients in a one-to-one setting and with groups of adult learners. Adult learners who participated represented those undertaking QQI levels 3, 4, 5 and 6 programmes.

FET Practitioner Collaboration and Learning

The coming together of this Pilot group provided more than an opportunity to trial a new resource. It became a unique learning space for practitioners to work together and explore diversity in their adult guidance practice, discuss challenges and support one another by sharing knowledge and expertise. Group members travelled from around the country to meet in NCGE offices on four occasions and reflected on their experience of using MyFuture+ with their clients and learners. In a very busy and crowded working schedule this was no easy task! It demonstrates the interest, commitment and openness of members to meet, share, learn and explore new ways to further support adult education and guidance philosophy and practice.

An Action and Reflection Approach

The piloting of MyFuture+ within FET guidance offered an opportunity to learn from the members what worked well and reflect on areas for improvement and development. The process of trialing MyFuture+ with clients and learners, gathering qualitative feedback and quickly adapting the resource to improve application, is reflective of an action-research approach. Action research by its very nature is about working with others to make improvements in practice. Darby (et al. 2013 p. 2) describe this as a “process of collaborative self-evaluation, whereby practitioners reflect on their work and identify areas that need reconsideration and possible improvement in dialogue with others.” The pilot group engaged in a very practical and active “doing” process where suggested changes and new developments were integrated as quickly as possible by CareersPortal. A summary document of additions and improvements was shaped by the pilot: MyFuture+ Pilot Developments. These enhancements highlight the benefits of an action learning approach whereby MyFuture+ has continued to be shaped by adult guidance counsellors for guidance practice.

Integrating ICT Career Resources into Adult Guidance Practice

The internet as a phenomenon is increasingly being interwoven into every aspect of everyday life and provides a significant platform from which people can explore and develop their career thinking, learning and development. Research indicates that engagement with ICT blended with face-to-face adult guidance counselling practice is highly beneficial. Reid (2016, pg. 223) argues that “I do not view the internet or digital technologies within careers work as offering a complete service, nor, of course, do face-to-face services.” She recognises that to effectively and competently integrate ICT within careers work that “specific learning or training is required for practitioners to support their digital career literacy” (pg. 238). The MyFuture+ pilot process from its formation has been conscious of supporting the members throughout the timeframe; training in using the resource was immediate, followed by consistent checking in by phone, email and meetings.

MyFuture+ – A Qualitative Case Study

This pilot process was a tangible way to objectively evaluate how a new ICT adult guidance resource applied to FET guidance practice. The term “data gathering” although crucial in building evidence based practice can often feel dry and somewhat removed from personal engagement with clients and learners. It was important to NCCE and CareersPortal to capture as much as possible the experience of those involved. Feedback was documented throughout the process at meetings and through survey monkey with members and their clients/learners. In particular, each member provided a comprehensive and in-depth qualitative case study example of using MyFuture+ in a one-to-one or group context. These reflections allowed unique insight into how ICT guidance resources can impact and support the adult guidance counselling process. The following is one example of such; highlighting both the adult guidance counsellor experience and that of the client.
An Adult Guidance Counsellor’s Reflection of MyFuture+

**Background Information:**

This student is in the first year of an Animation course (She is working towards a QQI Level 5 Award in May). Normally students would either progress to the HND Award or go onto a Higher Education Institute. She worried that her dislike and lack of skill in the computer element of the course would mean that she would not pass the year. By the time she came to see me she was lacking in confidence and very unsure about her ability or desire to continue with this course of study. I explained to the student that if she was having doubts about her course we could use some of the resources on the MyFuture+ software to help clarify her career interests/personality type and career values. We could also use it to research suggested careers. We began by using the Career Interest Inventory as this student was uncertain about her choice of PLC course. We began with a career interview and identified that this student was primarily interested in caring and working with people. We then used the ‘Personality Profiler’ which showed her to be an Idealist and finished by looking at videos of social care workers and job opportunities in this arena.

**Key Outcomes from integrating MyFuture+ into my practice:**

- She used the information she has learned about herself and the work of a social care practitioner to prepare for the interview. She was successful and was offered a place on the course.

- In this instance I was able to write a reference for this student in support of her application to an Applied Social Studies course. I was able to refer to the results of her Career Interest Inventory, the ‘Personality Profiler’ results and the career interview which I conducted. One of the questions which was bound to come up during the interview process was “why have you decided to change from an Animation Course to an Applied Social Studies course?” The interviewers would need to be convinced that the student had made an informed decision based on her career interests, personal preferences, skills and knowledge. MyFuture + provided us with the opportunity to do all of this and to look at videos of Social Care workers.

**Client Perspective:**

“**MyFuture+ allowed me to figure out my interests, complete a personality profile, as well as a careers test and find out my career skills that all followed an informative piece of writing to help you understand more. My results were linked together in terms of the type of person that I am (an idealist) and the job sector I would enjoy finding a profession in (social and caring). You are able to click on certain areas of industry and see helpful information such as a full list of possible occupations, what jobs are in need at the moment, videos, skill sets and more one can use to comprehend the area more. They also compact all of the possible education routes making it easier to do all of the work on one website. After finding out that the course I’m doing in my first year of college is not the right one for me to progress in, it is a very concerning and overwhelming time regarding the direction my career will take me in the future. Overall MyFuture+ has helped me choose the next step in the progression of my education and has made me think”

Providing guidance services to FET learners involves a huge variety of situations and learning environments, such as PLC, Adult Education, Youthreach/CTC’s etc. Piloting this resource across this diversity of FET based guidance services has provided the opportunity to show the potential for using this resource with adult clients wherever they are based.

**References**


The Adult Educational Guidance Initiative (AEGI) and services were set up by the DES over the course of 8 years (2000-2008). The AEGI targets those adults with lower educational attainment, socio-economic disadvantage and who may be long term unemployed, to name but a few. Now operating within the ETB structures, the AEGI will inform the development of the FET guidance strategy into the future. Currently the 2012 DES Operational Guidelines for AEGI remain in place.

NCGE FET Guidance Coordinator Mary Stokes attended the Project GOAL Closing Conference ‘Guidance Counselling for low-educated adults, from practice to policy’ in Brussels in January 2018.


The project involves the development of educational guidance services for low educated adults in 6 countries across Europe: Belgium (Flanders), Czech Republic, Iceland, the Netherlands, Lithuania and Slovenia. Educational guidance services were organized in each country as a policy experimentation in which evaluation of the process and the outcomes played a crucial role. The project was coordinated by the Department of Education and Training, Flanders.

The shared principles of Guidance Services for low educated Adults across six EU countries as recognized by the GOAL project will be very familiar to FET and Adult Guidance Counsellors and Services in Ireland. Attending the Conference it was clear that the model of Guidance services as delivered through the AEGI remains in line with developments in other EU countries – indeed, the AEGI Model has utilised these interventions and models of practice since 2000, ‘during the course of the Project participant countries identified 5 vital interventions’ to be considered when establishing useful Guidance Services for Adults. ‘Local Partnerships, Counsellors competences, Outreach, Service outcomes and Service Quality’

http://projectgoal.eu/index.php/interventions

Familiar too will be the comments from JD Carpentieri of the Institute of Education (University College London) regarding the most important overall message ‘….the readiness not only of participants but also of programme and policy in order to obtain successful outcomes’, while Dana Bachmann (DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion) spoke of the ‘… complexity and diversity of the low-educated population which, for example, includes many adults in employment.’

Dr Ellen Boeren of the University of Edinburgh acknowledged that educational participation is also ‘…a complex issue not an individual matter, bringing in psychological, sociological and economic dimensions’, proposing the significance of the ‘interplay between three cogs that turn together for participation – individuals, learning providers and countries.’
Former coordinator of the ELPGN 2007-15 Dr Raimo Vuorinen of the Finnish Institute for Educational Research argued that adult guidance is ‘…the lubricant between these cogs’… Dr. Vuorinen commented that ‘…adult guidance is changing; not only in the sense that ICT developments are changing the ways in which guidance is delivered and accessed, but also the ways in which we think about and talk about guidance, especially with a shift in discourse from supply to demand. This has an impact on how the benefits of guidance can be communicated and advocated; language should be used that promotes guidance as a solution to the challenges the EC faces in lifelong learning, mobility and employment. Above all, in cross-sectoral work, the focus should be the outcomes of guidance for the client, and not on the roles of the various collaborators.’

Dirk Van Damme of the OECD spoke about the possibility of ‘upward education mobility’ – recognising the need to ‘challenge learners’ and the role of Adult Education & Guidance helping individuals to ‘overcome educational inequality and disadvantage.’, while Professor John Holford, University of Nottingham, expressed concern that ‘political focus has narrowed in on education for employment’s sake; but this “vocationalism” is not increasing overall participation rates.’ He concluded that ‘Education should be for all, and all the benefits of education should be shared, but this cannot happen without stability in educational institutions, in structures and in systems. The equality that educational guidance encourages is also dependent on stability.’

For more on the Project, the work and the conference http://www.projectgoal.eu/ This website presents an overview of the activities and progress under the GOAL Project, and the website www.adultguidance.eu presents the project evaluation results, both on cross-country and on national level.

The outcomes of this GOAL project could also be used to inform the development of the FET Guidance Strategy.

https://twitter.com/goal_project


http://www.projectgoal.eu/index.php/events/2-uncategorised/76
Post-School Education and Training Options for People with Disabilities

When we speak about whole school guidance in post primary schools we refer to the guidance needs of all the students in the school, 1st year to 6th year, and meeting their various personal, careers and educational needs and in particular those who experience extra challenges. In the context of students with Special Educational Needs or disabilities it is vital that the guidance counsellor gives due consideration to identifying the individual needs of these students and work closely with the SEN teacher or Special Needs Co-ordinator and other members of the school support team to provide the appropriate supports.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) has recently published information pamphlets on the main post-school education and training options for people with disabilities. These pamphlets aim to give parents and students an overview of the extensive range of post-school options and supports available and how to get the relevant details and guidance to inform individual choice.

The pamphlets are:

- Information on Post-School Options for School Leavers and other Adults with Disabilities: Further Education and Training
- Information on Post-School Options for School Leavers and other Adults with Disabilities: Higher Education
- Information on Post-School Options for Rehabilitative Training and Adult Day Services.

The pamphlets are available on our website (www.ncse.ie) and from our locally based Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs).

Why did NCSE publish these pamphlets?
Stakeholders have told us that people with a disability may have a difficulty getting clear information and advice on the post-school options and pathways that are available and appropriate for them and about the supports for them to pursue these options. We hope that these pamphlets will be of assistance to students with disabilities who are preparing to leave school. We also hope that guidance counsellors, and other teachers who help prepare students for this transition, will also find them useful.

Moving on from school to further and higher education and training and to employment is a big life change for school leavers and planning for this major life milestone should start early in a student’s post-primary life, particularly for those with special educational needs. We know that guidance counsellors understand that early planning helps to avoid unnecessary difficulty and stress for students and their families.
Having access to readily available information is fundamental to transition preparation and planning. Information and guidance helps students to make right choices for their lives after school.

We know that many students with special educational needs go on to higher education, but as with all students, this is only one option and is limited to those students who achieve the necessary educational requirements. There is also a wide variety of education and training options available at different levels to meet diverse interests, abilities and needs. Unfortunately, not all courses are available everywhere and the variety in provision is very diverse, so information about all suitable options is hard to find.

Recent census data indicates that people with disabilities are still only half as likely to be in employment as others of working age. The employment rate for people with disabilities of working age is 37% compared to a rate of 73% for people of working age without a disability. While there are increasing numbers of people with disabilities progressing through education and training and on to employment and independent living, it is clear that there is yet more to be done to address the barriers and attitudes which still limit progress for some students with disabilities. Having information on the wide range of courses and supports available to them will further assist students in overcoming some of these barriers.

What post-school options are there for school leavers and others with disabilities?

- **Higher Education:** These are the mainstream certificate, diploma, degree and post graduate courses provided by Higher Education Institutions. For individual students with disabilities, necessary supports are arranged by the relevant institutions’ Disability or Access Offices. Also, under the DARE (Disability Access Route to Education) scheme, a number of places are allocated on a reduced points basis to students who have experienced additional educational challenges at post-primary.

- **Further Education & Training:** FET comprises a wide range of courses which cover a diverse variety of needs to help students get the skills and qualifications for employment and can provide a stepping stone to progress on to higher level qualifications. FET is delivered in local centres and colleges mainly by Education and Training Boards under the strategic direction of SOLAS. Colleges of Education can provide appropriate additional assistance for students with disabilities on mainstream courses and specialist training courses are also available.

- **Rehabilitative Training:** These Courses are funded by the HSE and cater for about 400 school leavers each year. Rehabilitative Training helps students with significant support needs to develop life skills, social skills and basic work skills.

- **Adult Day Services:** These services, which are also funded by the HSE, are for people with disabilities with significant extra support needs in order to access their communities and services. Every year about 700 school leavers start attending these services.

The new information pamphlets also provide convenient links and “signposts” to where more specific information on each of these post-school options and supports can be obtained.

Transition guidelines

The NCSE also published in 2016 guidelines for students, parents and schools about transition planning for life after school. You may also find these guidelines useful and they are available on our website [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie).


We will welcome any comments or suggestions about these NCSE information pamphlets. Please contact us by email [adulteducation@ncse.ie](mailto:adulteducation@ncse.ie) with any comments.

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**The Author**

Ray Jordan is Principal Officer in the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) with responsibility for adult education.
A number of key findings emerged in the study in terms of what guidance counsellors are experiencing in supporting students in contemporary education in the age of smartphone devices. These issues included the changing nature of student friendships, behavioural, cognitive and emotional well-being (including sleep deprivation) and learning and engagement in school. The first finding of this study indicated that smartphone usage by students is having a perceived definite effect on their everyday lives including their close relationships with others especially their friends. This correlates with previous research that in adolescence the peer group and friendships become more important and involve constant social interactions (Goggin and Crawford 2011; Ling et al. 2014). All participants in this study agreed the meaning of traditional friendship in adolescence was now distorted as the boundaries become blurred between online and offline.

Smartphone technology is a phenomenon of contemporary adolescent life and is having an impact on society as a whole (Scott, 2015). Equally, Merchant (2017) attests that smartphone technology is the largest unregulated social experiment of our time. Understanding the complexity of smartphone usage in adolescence in post-primary education is a challenging undertaking, and this study considered the particular issues facing the guidance counsellor in supporting the students in terms of his/her wellbeing.

Whilst the literature reveals that some research has been done with adolescents on their views of smartphone usage, relatively little is known about the perceptions of the guidance counsellor in Irish secondary schools. In order to obtain the relevant data, semi-structured interviews were conducted with seven qualified guidance counsellors in one region of Ireland. The participants comprised of four male and three female guidance counsellors.

A number of key findings emerged in the study in terms of what guidance counsellors are experiencing in supporting students in contemporary education in the age of smartphone devices. These issues included the changing nature of student friendships, behavioural, cognitive and emotional well-being (including sleep deprivation) and learning and engagement in school. The first finding of this study indicated that smartphone usage by students is having a perceived definite effect on their everyday lives including their close relationships with others especially their friends. This correlates with previous research that in adolescence the peer group and friendships become more important and involve constant social interactions (Goggin and Crawford 2011; Ling et al. 2014). All participants in this study agreed the meaning of traditional friendship in adolescence was now distorted as the boundaries become blurred between online and offline.
Participants communicated that contradictions of connectivity are the real challenges for adolescents. The participants agreed that connectivity is disconnecting adolescents from real friendships and the opportunity to spend their time together. The smartphone paradoxically disconnects adolescents from each other, thereby reducing their ability to form meaningful relationships (Alter, 2017). It is also argued that smartphones hold the potential to facilitate as well as to disrupt human bonding and intimacy, and a key issue is setting boundaries relating to their usage (Lenhart et al. 2010; Marche 2012). In addition, some of the participants in the study suggested that smartphone use contributes to ‘isolation’ amongst adolescents and that they tend to retreat into the screen rather than hold face-to-face conversations. This is an issue identified by Zimbardo (2011) who states that isolation can have lifelong consequences on the brain and relationships and an adolescent’s ability to make sense of the real world.

The findings support the view that the effects of smartphone usage in post-primary schools are having an impact on an adolescent’s behavioural, cognitive and emotional well-being. The findings suggest this is compounded by smartphone usage as the developing adolescent brain is constantly switched on with constant alerts and notifications from a 24/7 digitally networked society as attested by Sheth and Solomon (2014). This is supported by a major survey undertaken in 2017 by Studyclix (https://www.studyclix.ie/Blog/Show/2017-annual-student-survey) which reported that 60% of adolescents are worried that they use their smartphones too much and 45% say they are ‘addicted’ to them. Participants in this study also spoke of adolescents accessing the smartphone during the night leading to sleep deprivation resulting in poor academic performance.

Finally, another key issue that emerged was the impact of smartphone usage on students’ learning and engagement in school. The findings along with the literature, support the view that smartphone usage is decreasing connectivity to the adolescents’ brain (Aiken 2016). It is argued that skills in critical thinking and analysis have declined with the advent of smartphone technology and is impacting students learning outcomes (Rambitan 2015). Smartphone behaviours can further diminish critical thinking skills which ultimately may affect educational outcomes for the student (Greenfield 2016). However, there may be positive aspects to a broader implication of smartphone usage by adapting classroom instruction to the modern world and designing collaborative learning to engage students’ in the global classroom (Lock 2015).

Feedback received through my study indicates a desire from participants that resources should be allocated by the DES to fund and support both intervention research and relevant additional studies - focusing on policy and legal frameworks around smartphone usage. Feedback received also suggests that the DES should engage with current research findings on smartphone usage and their implications on the developing adolescent. This could inform policy makers on potential work to be undertaken within the school teaching environment in supporting the healthy development of our students. The findings further indicate that guidance counsellors consider CPD in digital literacy beneficial in keeping them informed of the latest social media and messaging apps being utilised by students and in support of educating students on the safe use of technology including personal safety.

Full thesis can be accessed at http://hdl.handle.net/10344/6483
RESEARCH: SMARTPHONE USAGE IN ADOLESCENCE continued

References


The Author

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The 4 R’s of Career Transition

Career transitions often have a profound effect on a person's psychological and social status, relationships within the family, physical health, well-being and lifestyle. Transitions can be positive or negative experiences and can result in a range of stresses, emotions or reactions. Siobhán O’Neill conducted research into the experience of career transition amongst midlife professionals in the mid-west of Ireland and concluded a number of recommendations for career guidance practitioners. As part of this study, Siobhán interviewed professional individuals to gain an in-depth rich account of their experience of career transition.

What emerged in this recent research was some useful pointers that individuals and career practitioners may find useful.

**The 4 R’s of Midlife Career Transition**
- Reflection
- Reframing
- Re-inventing
- Re-branding

**Reflection**
It can often be a confusing, stressful time and the temptation can be to quickly jump in and find your next role. However, the benefits of taking time to reflect enable the individual to: decide on a life path, understand what has worked well in the past, ascertain where they would ideally like their career to develop and explore all options. Reflection, including journaling, accessing independent career advice (enabling reflection), can result in deeper insights. Over my 15 years of career coaching many of my clients say the lightbulb moments of clarity came after career guidance sessions. We should encourage this for our clients.

**Reframing**
What most clients want is to be really heard, listened to and understood. The guidance counselling skill of reframing for the client what you are hearing was most useful and valued by the individuals I interviewed. When in transition individuals may have multiple well-intentioned advisors for example partners, managers, work colleagues, recruiters and friends. To hear one's own thoughts clearly and succinctly as skilled guidance counsellors can provide clarity and empowerment during times of change.

**Re-inventing**
The next R came as quite the challenge to those I interviewed. Don’t underestimate the process of re-inventing oneself when starting a new role. In their
previous role, interviewees stated they were respected amongst their organisations, their skills and abilities were widely known and there was a trusted confidence in them. Adapting to a new organisation and culture posed challenges of learning a new language, an element of proving oneself and building one’s reputation again which many found daunting. From a policy perspective, it might be useful for practitioners to understand this process so that the corporate world can support their employees during transition. I am often brought into companies to career coach in situations when the manager is not coping as well as they should post career transition. I encourage ‘first 100’ days coaching and support for the new manager to successfully guide them be the best they can be.

Re-branding
The career for life no longer exists. Many interviewees had recently completed training programmes or further education up to a Master’s level to assist their employability outcomes. A change of direction whether it is due to upskilling to keep up to date or developing new skills to adapt to our dynamic work spaces was evident. Career management skills and lifelong guidance for adults are essential to increase employability, remain competitive and navigate multiple career transitions. Guidance counselling is critical in steering people towards positive employment options and assisting individuals manage career transitions successfully.

Even though guidance supports are recommended for all citizens, it is evident that employed adults do not have access to such support. The positive benefits of professional careers support from a personal and professional perceptive were highlighted in this research. However, it appears there is currently a gap in the provision of quality careers support for the midlife professional. It would be wise for the careers guidance profession to acknowledge this cohort when engaging in policy objectives.

The Author
Siobhán O’Neill recently qualified with a Masters in Career Guidance Counselling and Lifespan Development in UL. Furthermore, she is a qualified career coach and has been working in the careers area with public and private organisations for over 15 years. She facilitates workshops in areas such as career transition, outplacement, 1st 100 days and performance coaching. Prior to this she worked in the food industry in Senior Management roles. She is passionate about assisting professionals navigate their career and advocates for careers support throughout one’s lifespan.

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The labour market reacted with increased demand, accentuated due to a smaller generation of young people entering the labour market. These economic and demographic factors have improved expectations considerably for the young adults who are looking for a job and who now have more perceived opportunities. However, often these opportunities, like in many other countries, do not match their initial expectations.

Traditional career guidance providers

Traditionally the providers of career guidance services are schools and national public employment services. Each school has a counselling service which, among many other duties, also provides career guidance. Counsellors mostly organise guidance activities (information sessions, visits to schools, companies, fairs etc.) and provide individual counselling sessions/group sessions. Career education is provided as a cross-curricular activity but research shows that this provision is modest.

Employment services provide various forms of guidance for the unemployed. All unemployed persons meet employment advisers and agree on an employment plan; which might include not just job-searching activities but also training and various active labour market measures including job-search, in-depth career counselling and workshops. Clients might also use career centres http://english.ess.gov.si/vicc_ncc where they have access to career resources, e-career development tools, individual counselling etc. Some career guidance activities are, like other measures, provided by external providers which are licenced by the labour ministry.

New providers

The European Social Fund programme (ESF) is a crucial source of financing career guidance in Slovenia considering that the national budget is restricted. As a result, some new guidance providers have emerged and some interesting guidance projects have been accomplished or are under way. I will just mention two networks of providers, financed mostly through ESF, which cover the entire country:

University Career Centres

Career centres within higher education do not have a long tradition, but the pace of development is fast. Staff of the centres are young, creative, open to cooperation and in less than 10 years they managed to develop guidance services which are widely accepted by students. As an example you can look at the website of the Career Centre of Ljubljana University https://www.kc.uni-lj.si/about-career-centres.html
Adult Education Guidance Centres (ISIO centres)
ISIO centres play an important role in supporting adult education. These centres are coordinated by the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education http://www.acs.si/guidance_and_validation. All together 16 ISIO centres operate in Slovenia, some centres were introduced 16 years ago and can in fact not be considered as new. The following link offers you the possibility to learn about the wide range of activities which ISIO centres provide to support adult learners http://tvu.acs.si/paradaucenja/video3/.

New target group
The lack of an adequate labour force in many economic sectors is quite a new phenomenon in Slovenia. In the past it was limited to the construction and a few other sectors. Consequently, the attitude of employers and government regarding older workers has started to change. Now the focus is more on the “older adults”, i.e. potential employees over age 45. This criterion has been chosen not because people over the age of 45 in Slovenia are treated as old but because figures show that in reality employers do not seek to actively train / develop their employees when they reach this stage. The Government allocated substantial resources (ESF financial perspective 2014-2020) for the “professional and personal development” of 45+ employees. The goal is to stimulate older workers not just to “wait for retirement” but develop their competences thus giving stronger contributions to their work environments. The idea is also to spread their tacit knowledge through inter-generational co-operation. The project is not just about professional competences but also about health and well-being. Within the process; each company has to develop a HRM strategy for 45+, developing individual career plans and employee training opportunities. They do all this in cooperation with training centres and external counsellors. The project seems promising, in the first week of its roll out, 930 companies applied, now it has started, we wait for more results.

E-tools
National portal for career information
The Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training provides professional support for career guidance in School and VET education. Support also includes a national website on career information My Choice ‘Moja izboir’ http://www.mojaizbira.si which includes information about schools, education/training programmes, occupational descriptions, occupational videos etc. http://www.mojaizbira.si/poklic/fizioterapevt

E-guidance tools
Various e-tools for career planning are available on the website of The Employment Service of Slovenia. For many years we use the tool “Where/how?” which is an adapted version of ‘Adult Directions’ (Cascaid Ltd., UK), one version is adapted for young people another for adults https://www.kaminkako.si/kudos/.

Challenges
We have many. In spite of some impressive achievements there are some gaps which hinder the overall effectiveness of career guidance. Within schools (grades 1-9) there is currently a heavy burden on the shoulders of school counsellors. It is desired that career guidance fulfil a more central position in the school and in the curriculum. Another challenge is related to the use of e-tools in guidance. Such tools exist and clients use them but we lack evidence as to what they really learn, how they benefit, and how e-tools support other functions in a career development process (learning, decision making) not just information. Career guidance qualification is another challenge. Though in some sectors, the training of counsellors is well developed, it is fragmented. The lack of certified training is not good for the professionalism of career guidance as evidenced when institutions have difficulties in finding providers who can provide quality services.

Slovenia has changed a lot in the last two decades. Foreigners who visited Ljubljana 20 years ago said it is beautiful but “nothing is happening”. Today Ljubljana is no more a sleeping beauty but a vibrant cosmopolitan city https://www.urbanadventures.com/blog/ljubljana-european-green-capital-2016.html listed in tourist guides as a must-see destination. I hope that our career guidance provision will make similar progress.

The Author
Saša Niklanovic is independent consultant in the field of career guidance. He started his career as a career counsellor in the Employment Service of Slovenia (ESS), Regional office Ljubljana. He then led various career guidance projects including the Introduction of Job-clubs (1995), the reform of the ESS Career Guidance Service (1996-1999) and the establishment of a National Resource Centre for Career Guidance (1999). He is author of several articles and manuals on guidance services and methods. In the period from 2004 to 2006 he led the Slovene National Guidance Policy Forum and worked as a member of the European Commission’s Expert Group on Lifelong Guidance. He is a member of the Board of Directors of the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance (IAEVG) since 1999.
Career guidance is sometimes characterised as a ‘globally travelling idea’. It exists in some form in most developed countries and many developing countries. Since the beginning of 2000, a series of initiatives have highlighted the need to develop effective systems for gathering data on the impact of career development/career guidance services in a number of respects, such as individual well-being, social inclusion, and economic development. A characteristic of the initiatives has been gathering and sharing of evidence of best practices between different countries.

However, little attention has been given to how context shapes the concept of career guidance as it travels across the globe. Last year, Ronald Sultana published a book entitled Career Guidance and Livelihood Planning across the Mediterranean (which was reviewed in the last issue of NGGE News). This provided a fascinating insight into the way in which geography and culture shapes the practice of career guidance. In a forthcoming book, we are keen to build on and extend the discussion that was begun in Sultana’s book, whilst turning our sights to the north to focus on the Nordic countries.

Those outside of the Nordic countries will probably have formed an impression of our region from TV shows like Borgen, The Bridge and The Killing, visits to Ikea or from the recent crazes for hygge, sisu (the Finnish art of courage), Scandinavian knitware or Norwegian woodcraft. However, such popular representations of the Nordic countries mask important differences within the countries, which include different approaches to career guidance. In this article, we want to give you a taste of our forthcoming book with an update on what is happening in different Nordic countries.

Since 2003, Denmark has experienced a profound re-organisation of career guidance, through a professionalisation strategy and the forming of independent youth career guidance centres. However, now the centres are facing severe cutbacks and are merged with other youth guidance initiatives to form one-stop shops and focus the service on the 20% of young people most in need of career guidance.

Norway on the other hand, has had uplift in terms of policy interest and funding. The country has established regional career centres for adults and has created a compulsory career-learning program in secondary schools. All of this has been supported by the development of a new Masters in career guidance and a growth of research and evaluation. A governmental green paper from 2016 pointed to the need for a holistic all-age guidance offer and a national quality framework that is now taking shape.

Iceland has introduced a universal right to career guidance, in the midst of its severe economic crises, and has introduced innovative approaches to regionalised workplace guidance.
Sweden has carried out several important developments including the development of new career guidance approaches for immigrants coming to Sweden.

In Finland, they have created a national strategy for lifelong guidance to develop cross-sectoral provision at national, regional and local levels. The Finnish strategy covers equal access to services, career management skills, guidance practitioner competences, quality assurance, and cross-sectoral cooperation and coordination. Currently, the country faces a major reform in the organisation of the public employment sector by 2020. If proposed legislation goes through, public employment services will be merged into new regionally organised growth services and delivered by private companies. This reform will include major challenges such as the overall coordination and management of the services.

Despite these differences, The Nordic countries have a range of strong cultural, political and geographical similarities that make it useful for them to be considered together. As this short summary of recent developments in the Nordic countries shows - context matters. In the centre of this sits the practitioner trying to balance the needs of, among many others, the users, policy makers and decision makers.

Our approach in our forthcoming book (‘working title’– ‘Career Guidance in the Nordic Countries’) is to urge awareness on the interaction between the ‘globally traveling ideas’ of good career guidance and contextual characteristics. To gain such awareness, it is important to spot and consider the way in which different traditions, cultures, politics and practices have framed the development of career guidance across the region. We aim to have the book published and available in May 2019.

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The term mobility has many different interpretations, but in the context of education, it refers to the mobility of knowledge. This happens through student mobility in education within and between countries, the mobility between disciplines and sectors in education and the mobility of education programme delivery. In some countries it is known as learning mobility, mobility in learning or mobility education. Euroguidance Ireland, hosted by NCGE, is part of the Euroguidance network which promotes educational mobility, helping guidance counsellors and individuals to better understand the opportunities available to European citizens throughout Europe.

Educational Mobility

Why is educational mobility important in Europe?

Educational mobility is on the increase across Europe and more students are travelling to study on short-term exchanges, for semester or year-long periods or even do to their full degree or masters abroad. The European Commission actively promotes the development of student mobility and this has been a key political goal since the start of the Bologna process in 2009.

http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/higher-education/bologna-process_en

Such educational mobility is seen as ‘fostering desirable competences, including the further development of students’ personalities, the promotion of their linguistic capabilities and the generation of intercultural sensitivity and professional competences’.


‘The EU already has an excellent track record of actively promoting mobility, starting with university students but also including post primary level pupils, vocational students and young professionals as well as teachers, thanks to the Erasmus+ programme. Most recently, the Commission launched the European Solidarity Corps, which offers new opportunities for volunteering, traineeships and jobs for EU young people between the ages of 18 and 30. In 2017, the project Move2Learn Learn2Move has given the chance to young Europeans to discover and learn about Europe.’


This drive to encourage students to study abroad is evident in the way the European Commission set a target of ‘20% of graduates from Higher Education institutions in Europe to have experience of studying or training abroad by 2020’. This target was part of the Bologna agreement in 2009 and since then, all EU countries have been intensively promoting the educational mobility process to their students, primarily through Erasmus programmes, where students registered in an EU educational institution can apply for a study placement in another EU institution for a period of time. Other students do shorter college study placements, school exchanges, or voluntary or internship placements.

http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/higher-education/bologna-process_en

What are the benefits of educational mobility?

• Increased employability

Many European employers have reported that they have difficulties in finding people with the skills they need to grow and innovate. Educational mobility creates
adaptable and flexible workers who are attractive to employers who need workers who can adjust quickly to the workplace and bring their varied experience with them.

The European Commission continues to promote mobility for a number of valid reasons.

‘Greater labour force mobility, both between jobs (occupational mobility) and within and between countries (geographic mobility), is believed to contribute to economic and social progress, a high level of employment, and to balanced and sustainable development. It also enables the European economy, employment and labour force to adapt to changing circumstances more smoothly and efficiently, and to provide the impetus for change in a competitive global economy. A greater degree of mobility between Member States will also foster closer political integration in the EU’.

https://ec.europa.eu/eures/public/job-mobility

- **Transferability of qualifications**
  
  In the past, it was difficult to secure recognition of qualifications between European countries, but a lot of work has been done in this area under the European Commission. The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) is a credit system designed to make it easier for students to move between different countries. Since they are based on the learning achievements and workload of a course, a student can transfer their ECTS credits from one university to another so they are added up to contribute to an individual’s degree programme or training.

  ECTS helps to make learning more student-centred. It is a central tool in the Bologna Process, which aims to make national systems more compatible. Greater transparency of learning achievements simplifies the recognition of studies done in other countries. ECTS also makes it possible to merge different types of learning, such as university and work-based learning, within the same programme of study or in a lifelong learning perspective.

  This is good news for students wishing to study abroad today, as it is far easier to combine study periods spent abroad with study in their home country. There are options of dual degrees and especially an increase in dual masters degrees organised and delivered between two (and sometimes three) European countries. These are becoming more popular with students and colleges. http://ec.europa.eu/education/resources/european-credit-transfer-accumulation-system_en.htm

- **Personal development**
  
  There are many benefits of studying abroad and ways to grow both professionally and personally. Students who have studied abroad develop an expertise in cross-cultural and interpersonal communication which may become an asset when working on any multi-cultural team in the professional world. Studying abroad also shows employers that students are able to adapt to new settings, and are not afraid of change.

### Educational Mobility for Irish Students

**What are Irish students doing?**

More than one in four students enrolled in Irish higher education institutions intend to study abroad at some point in their academic careers. This figure is according to the Eurostudent Survey VI – Report on the Social and Living Conditions of Higher Education Students in Ireland (2016) published by the Higher Education Authority and launched Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT) in January 2018.

The report states that 6% of those surveyed had already engaged in a learning period abroad while 26% indicate that they plan to undertake such a visit. Law students are the most likely to go abroad (43%) followed by Humanities and Arts at 41%. 60% of the respondents stated that their mobility was organised through the Erasmus programme. Interestingly, 21% organised their own mobility and 19% were supported by another programme.
How can these targets be achieved?

A key part of promoting educational mobility is to begin informing students at post-primary level. Following on from the Mobility Guidance Counselling CPD provided by NCGE for Guidance Counsellors in 2017 to help them to encourage and motivate students to consider studying abroad, a programme for post-primary Transition Year students, Euro-Quest, is currently being piloted and will be launched in schools in 2019.

Euro-Quest is designed to give students an opportunity to explore the idea of studying abroad for a semester, an academic year, or for an entire degree. It begins with an overview of Europe, the European Union and the Erasmus+ programme. It examines practical issues and challenges a student may face while living and studying in a new country. Students are presented with resources and tools to research options for studying across Europe.

It is expected that when Transition Year students have completed the Euro-Quest programme before they make decisions about which further and higher education courses that they will apply for, that they will be more informed about their options of studying abroad and will have the knowledge and confidence to choose courses which have the option of studying abroad and courses with a language component. They will be aware that there are a variety of routes to choose from, whether it is complete immersion in a foreign culture and language in a degree course delivered in another language, or partial immersion where the course is delivered through English or a term or year abroad within a course they are studying in their own country.

The Euro-Quest programme aims to lead students forward towards the European Commission’s vision for education in 2025 where:

‘A vision for 2025 would be a Europe in which learning, studying and doing research would not be hampered by borders. A continent, where spending time in another Member State – to study, to learn, or to work – has become the standard and where, in addition to one’s mother tongue, speaking two other languages has become the norm, a continent in which people have a strong sense of their identity as Europeans, of Europe’s cultural heritage and its diversity’.


The top five destinations for students from Ireland according to the Eurostudent survey were France, the UK, the USA, Germany and Spain.


http://eurireland.ie/2018/02/07/1-in-4-students-at-irish-heis-wants-to-study-abroad-at-some-stage/

There is clear evidence that Irish educational mobility is on the increase and this is reinforced by the targets set by the Irish government’s Department of Education and Skills in order to extend this further.

What targets are set for Educational Mobility in Ireland?

In the Action Plan for Education 2018 launched in February 2018, the target for Irish students enrolled in Irish higher education institutions to spend part of their course abroad is 20%.


In an earlier report, Languages Connect – Ireland’s Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017-2026, the following targets were included:

- to increase the number of participants in Erasmus+ by at least 50% and
- to increase the proportion of Higher Education cohort studying a foreign language, in any capacity as part of their course to 20%


These Irish targets compare well with other European countries. The Steeplechase report (2012), a study investigating plans for and obstacles to temporary enrolment abroad in Austria, Switzerland, Germany, The Netherlands and Poland, found that:

‘In Austria and Germany the goal is for around half of all graduates to have had a study-related experience abroad by 2020. In Switzerland the goal is 20% and in The Netherlands it is 25%’.

http://www.eurostudent.eu/about/associated/steeplechase
EUROGUIDANCE

Euroguidance Network Meeting
17th and 18th of April 2018 – Bradford

The Euroguidance Network consists of 68 centres from 33 EU & EEA member countries. Euroguidance network meetings, held twice per year, bring together the national Euroguidance representatives of each participating country. At these meetings, members discuss and agree upon issues that are relevant for the whole Euroguidance network. Special attention is given to strategy, visibility and impact.

The sharing of experience and expertise supports mutual learning across the different Euroguidance Centres. This interaction also serves the purpose of the Commission in terms of giving updates on the latest policy and strategy level developments. Frequently, these meetings are used to prepare joint initiatives and to exchange ideas based on the work carried out by the Euroguidance Network’s working groups.

The first meeting of 2018 was held in April in Bradford, England. It was hosted by Aspire-igen, hosts of the UK Euroguidance Centre. Euroguidance Ireland, hosted in NCGE, is an active member of the network and participated alongside approximately 50 other participants representing 31 other EU & EEA member countries.

The overall theme of the meeting was ‘Competency development and the formulation of strategic approaches for the improvement of Network coordination and delivery into the future’.

On the first day the four Euroguidance working groups were convened. These are: Strategy/Quality, Staff Development, Promotion and Mobility. At these, various ongoing issues were discussed and work undertaken since the last meeting was reviewed.

The second day was the main Network meeting itself. The key items were:

- An update from the Commission (DG EMPL) on the latest policy and strategy level developments in the fields of lifelong learning, career guidance, employment and international mobility.
- Reports from the four working groups
- Discussion on a proposed Network wide Euroguidance stakeholder impact survey
- Cluster discussions on potential changes to the coordination of the Network’s activities, tasks and working methodologies.
- Funding allocated to common Euroguidance activities
- General Q&A

For further information relating to the role of the network and the support it provides go to: www.euroguidance.eu or follow the network on Facebook @Euroguidance.

To contact the Euroguidance Ireland Centre directly, e-mail euroguidance@ncge.ie and visit www.euroguidance.ie

This article is produced by Euroguidance Ireland and not on behalf of the Euroguidance Network.
Guidance Counsellors are increasingly supporting students and adult learners with specific learning difficulties in mapping out their career and learning journey. Reading about the experiences of an adult with dyslexia may help to inform the further understanding by guidance counsellors.

Dyslexia Unravelled

by Rita Treacy
Orpen Press, 2017

Rita Treacy comes from the unique perspective of being a professional speech and language therapist who has classic dyslexia herself. In this book, she explores the complexities of identifying and treating dyslexia, addressing both the emotional and practical aspects of diagnosing and remediating it. Rita has developed the online WordsWorth Learning Programme (www.wordsworthlearning.com) to help people to overcome their reading and spelling difficulties.

The book contains her own personal story of growing up with dyslexia and her professional story of how becoming a speech and language therapist and specialising in the field of literacy and dyslexia, she was able to convert the burden of dyslexia into a gift both for herself and for others.

At the start of the book she gives a thorough and insightful guide to possible signs of dyslexia across eight categories: pregnancy complications and birth traumas, acquisition of early developmental milestones, family history, medical history, educational history, organisational skills, behavioural issues and socialization. She emphasises that an awareness of the signs to watch out for should enable people to catch a problem emerging, so that it can be assessed and treated early in order to prevent or minimize lifelong difficulties for a child.

There is no universally agreed definition for dyslexia and it is placed as a subcategory of two terms which vary across continents; a specific learning disorder (from a medical perspective) and a specific learning disability (from a psychological and educational perspective). Treacy gives a very clear explanation of what standard scores, standard deviation, STen scores and percentile ranking all mean for the academic future of the child. This information is significant for guidance counsellors who can advise the student on the best routes forward in education and for parents who need help to understand their child.

The most important concern which is conveyed in this book is that there can be a lot of mislabelling in relation to dyslexia. Here is where Treacy becomes critical of many incorrect diagnoses. She gives a summary of some of her own case studies and describes a student who was originally diagnosed as dyslexic because he had difficulties with reading and spelling, but in reality did not have it. Treacy believes that many students with language processing delays and other similar delays are misdiagnosed. Correct diagnosis is extremely important for the student and also for the guidance counsellor who may be instrumental in managing the student’s academic expectations and planning their academic path through the education and vocational training systems.

Treacy sounds a note of warning about some manufacturers who claim that their products can be the ‘panacea’ for dyslexia or some other reading or spelling difficulty. She emphasises that they are interventions, not cures, but acknowledges that many can be very useful in helping to alleviate some of the associated problems. She goes on to challenge the appropriateness of some of the learning support programmes currently used in schools as they may not suit dyslexic students and in fact, confuse them.

Treacy promotes the benefits of professionals working together in multidisciplinary teams so that the most appropriate intervention path can be coordinated for the child. She encourages the ‘flipped classroom’ model where some classes are available to students online. This is very advantageous for dyslexic students who can work at their own pace to revise and reinforce material.

The key message that Treacy leaves at the end of the book is that people with dyslexia should realise that learning differently should not be an embarrassment but that it also has positive qualities and she recommends some useful technologies and methodologies to use.


Information in relation to supporting adults with dyslexia was provided in an article in the last issue of NCGE News. https://www.ncge.ie/sites/default/files/NN48-Research-Supporting%20adults%20with%20dyslexia.pdf

The Reviewer
National Centre for Guidance in Education
Glossary

ACCS  Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools
DES   Department of Education Skills
DSGC  The Directors of Studies in Guidance Counselling
ELPGN European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network
ETB   Education and Training Boards
ETBI  Education and Training Boards Ireland
HND   Higher National Diploma
IGC   Institute of Guidance Counsellors

NAPD  National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals
NCCA  National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NEPS  National Educational Psychological Service
PLC   Post Leaving Certificate (Course)
QQI   Quality and Qualifications Ireland
NCGE VLE Virtual Learning Environment (online learning platform)