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FOREWORD FROM CHAIR

Since the emergence of the COVID-19 crisis in our nation in March 2020 it is hardly surprising that over one year later we are still grappling with unprecedented economic and human consequences on many levels. And it seems very likely that we will be for some time to come. This crisis has altered many aspects of life including radical shifts in employment patterns leading to the loss of work for many and for those fortunate to be still employed, changing work practices with reduced human contact and a heavy reliance on technology as a tool of engagement. In the context of guidance this new world has been described by some as a “vocational magnifying glass” (Austin et al, 2020) bringing to the fore what we have long known in the field of career development - work, career and life are intimately connected. At the very basic level we work to meet our fundamental human needs for food and shelter but the interconnection between work and personal life, the potential it offers for social connection and the meaning it can bring to our lives has resonated deeply over this past year.

This changing world presents a challenge to guidance services as to how best provide effective guidance interventions to our society in the post-COVID-19 world, where we can say with certainty that the personal, educational and career landscape will be vastly different. As Chair of the Management of Guidance Committee (MGC) of NCGE, I therefore welcome the opportunity to present this 2020 Annual Output Statement Report of the National Centre for Guidance in Education which demonstrates a tangible response to this new guidance context.

It is evident from this Output Statement that NCGE is acutely aware of the urgent needs within the guidance community and is reflected in many of the successful and innovative projects and initiatives coordinated by the staff of NCGE during 2020. The provision of activities supporting the delivery of guidance across Post Primary, Further and Higher Education, at European level and the quality of CPD provision by NCGE to guidance practitioners is testament to the relentless dedication and commitment of NCGE staff. On behalf of the Management of Guidance Committee (MGC) I wish to extend our deep appreciation to all the NCGE staff under the capable and creative leadership of Director, Ms Jennifer McKenzie. It has been a remarkable achievement by the staff of NCGE to work remotely while also maintaining an open office in service to the public in accordance with government and public health guidelines.

If, however, NCGE are to continue meeting the challenges of supporting a very high quality of service in guidance provision in this current context and for the future, then it is imperative that the Department of Education’s ‘Implementation Task Force’ proceed with urgency to implement the findings from April 2019 Indecon Report. The development and execution of a National Guidance Strategy to guide and support the future direction of work and careers is never more vital than for this precarious period in which we live. Although the COVID-19 crisis has evoked considerable challenges it is also an opportunity through the implementation of a National Guidance Strategy to prioritise resources, lead practices, and develop policies to positively respond to meet not only individual challenges but also to address social inequalities and to contribute to a more equitable society.

In conclusion, I wish to extend my appreciation to colleagues on the Management of Guidance Committee acknowledging their broad range of professional expertise from a range of guidance policy and practice areas and their steadfast commitment to supporting NCGE.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Paul King'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Paul King, CHAIR, NCGE Management of Guidance Committee



DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Reflecting on 2020 requires both a personal and professional approach. 2020 will be remembered in the global history books for its impact on the physical and mental health of individuals, communities and societies and on the national and international education sectors, economies and the labour market as we knew it. Not one individual or family has escaped the impact of this horrific global pandemic in some way. In Ireland we have also experienced structural and organisational changes at national level which directly affect national guidance planning and delivery.

However, every crisis provides an opportunity to rethink, reconsider and redesign. Rising to the challenge of supporting guidance services to deliver online to their students and clients, the NCGE has modelled the crucial role of guidance provision in supporting clients, students, communities and societies through transitions – both expected and unexpected.

In 2020, NCGE delivered online CPD webinars and developed new and required resources for schools and FET based guidance delivery. NCGE collaborated with stakeholders at national and international level to ensure integration of guidance provision in the education and training sectors and to recognise the role of impartial guidance in the labour market sector. All activities of NCGE were delivered while balancing the requirement to support staff to work remotely in accordance with government and public health guidelines and to continue to maintain the Centre “open” for business to respond to queries and calls from guidance counsellors and stakeholders nationally. The professional commitment of the NCGE staff in rising to this challenge is evident within the reported activities below.

Completing this Output Statement for 2020, it would be remiss of me, all these challenges and changes notwithstanding, not to reflect on the lack of implementation of the Indecon report recommendations. The development of a national guidance strategy is crucial to the further strategic developments of NCGE and lifelong guidance policy and practice delivery in Ireland for the next 5-10 years. It is my most sincere wish, that the next NCGE Output Statement for 2021 will reflect the national decisions and developments outlining the strategic future of NCGE and guidance policy in Ireland.

At the end of a very difficult year for all concerned, both personally and professionally, I wish to express my sincere thanks to Mr Paul King, Chair, for his unending commitment and stewardship and to the members of the NCGE Management of Guidance Committee for their genuine contribution to and support of the work of NCGE.

Finally, to the staff of the NCGE, who have worked above and beyond what was expected of them in 2020, it is my complete honour to lead such a professional and dedicated group.

Is mise le meas

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jennifer McKenzie". The signature is written in dark ink on a white background.

Jennifer McKenzie, DIRECTOR, NCGE

Preamble

Compiling the NCGE 2020 Output Statement of activities requires reference to the national and global impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and to the national structural and organisational changes which impacted on these NCGE activities.

Following the government announcement of public health restrictions and school and FET closures in March 2020, the delivery of schools, FET programmes and support agencies of the Department were required to operate online or “remotely”. This required a rapid change in guidance service delivery and the development of guidelines for good practice in online guidance across the schools and FET spectrum. As a result, NCGE was directly involved in interagency collaboration and co-operation with other agencies of the Department of Education and Skills.

Following the national election and formation of a new government in 2020, the establishment of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) presented new opportunities to focus at national level on the developments required in Further Education and Training (FET) and Higher Education (HE) sectors. Furthermore, the new Department, with oversight of SOLAS, ensured the publication of the SOLAS FET Strategy 2020-2024.

However, the establishment of these two new departments with separated and differentiated responsibilities has resulted in continued delay in making and implementing decisions on the recommendations of the Indecon Career Guidance Review report. This has had direct impact on the role and remit of the NCGE activities, in particular in relation to the FET guidance programme developments.

The NCGE Management of Guidance Committee and the Director have continued to highlight concerns and the implications of this delay on the strategic planning for NCGE.

The following report outlines the activities of NCGE in 2020 in fulfilment of its role and remit as designated by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and now referred to as Department of Education (DoE) from end 2020.



THE NATIONAL CENTRE FOR GUIDANCE IN EDUCATION

The National Centre for Guidance in Education is the agency of the Department of Education with responsibility for leading and shaping guidance policy and practice to enable learners to make informed and appropriate life choices. The Department's Management of Guidance Committee agreed that the Mission and Vision of NCGE are as follows:

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

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

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

'Guidance facilitates people throughout their lives to manage their own educational, training, occupational, personal, social and life choices so that they reach their full potential and contribute to the development of a better society'

National Guidance Forum 2007

'Guidance in schools refers to a range of learning experiences provided in a developmental sequence that assist students to develop self-management skills which will lead to effective choices and decisions about their lives. It encompasses the three separate but interlinked areas of personal and social development, educational guidance and career guidance'

Guidelines for Second Level Schools on the Implications of Section 9 (c) of the Education Act 1998, relating to students' access to appropriate guidance.

The overarching strategic aim of NCGE is: To inform the policy of the Department and support the development and implementation of quality guidance practice in Post-Primary and FET in accordance with national and international good practice.

The strategic objectives of the NCGE in 2020 included to:

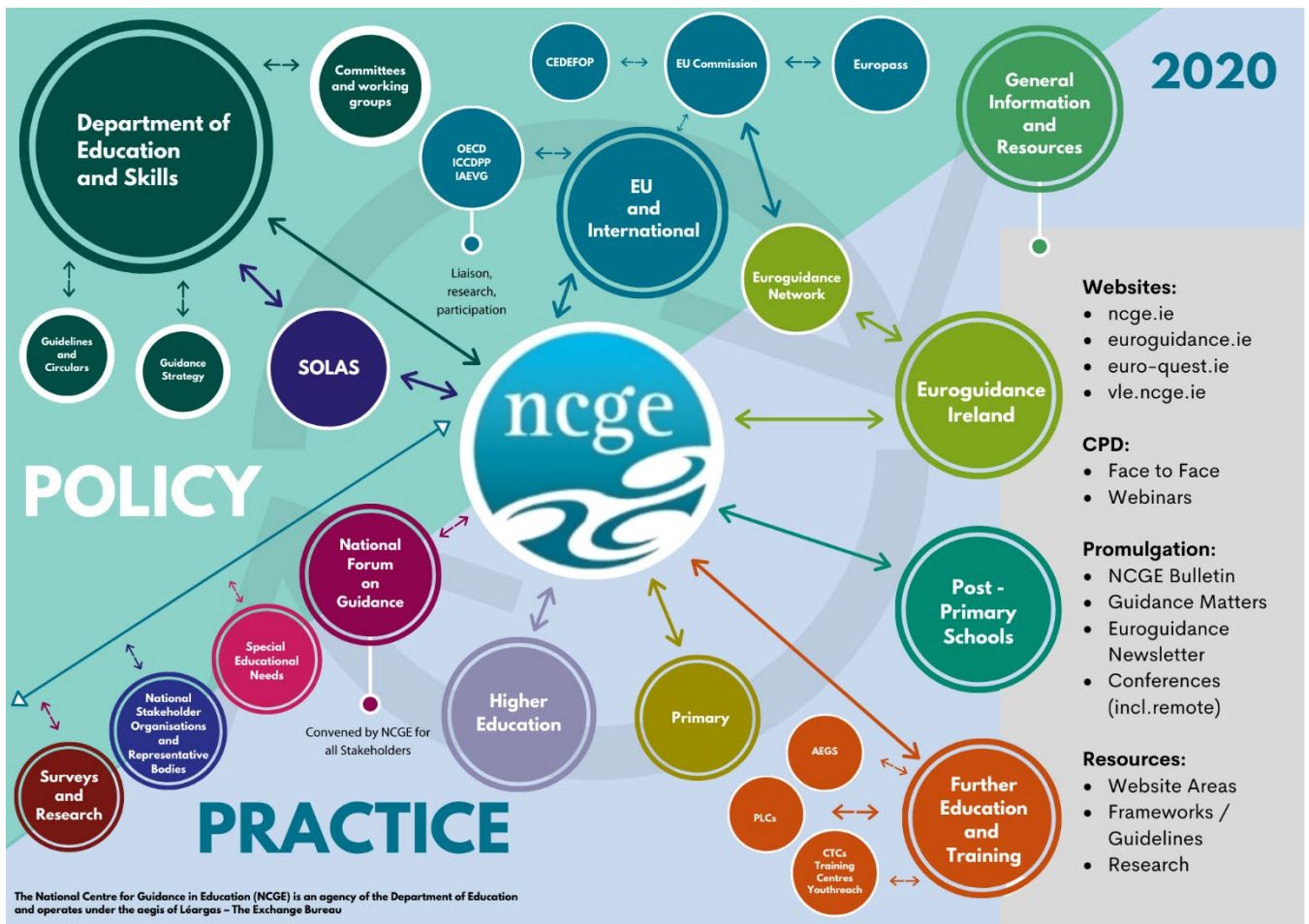
- Inform, influence, facilitate and support the development of Department Lifelong Guidance Policy
- Inform, influence, facilitate, develop and support the implementation of quality guidance practice in post-primary schools and Further Education and Training (FET) Sector
- Provide guidelines, resources and materials to support quality guidance practice and policy development
- Promote and support a National and EU focus to Guidance Policy Provision and Practice
- Coordinate and deliver continuing professional development to guidance practitioners in schools and FET in collaboration with stakeholders
- Adhere to Department Governance and Compliance Requirements

The full strategic document is contained in Appendix 3 on P35

NCGE provides support and development for guidance practitioners in the education and training sector and promotes European mobility and the European dimension of guidance in education and training. NCGE is the Department representative at EU Commission meetings on guidance.

As a member of the [Euroguidance Network](#), part funded by the Department of Education and [DG Employment Social Affairs & Inclusion](#) (European Commission), the Centre also assists people seeking information on education and training opportunities in Europe. NCGE provides information, advice, and assistance to a wide range of organisations and individuals involved in education, training and employment on guidance matters.

NCGE 'Activities Diagram' (2020)



As noted in the preamble, in 2020 DES split into 2 departments. The Department of Education and the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research Innovation and Science.

1. NCGE GOVERNANCE

The NCGE Management of Guidance Committee (MGC) 2017-2019

The Minister for Education nominated the Chair and membership of the Management of Guidance Committee 2017-2019. These nominations were ratified and appointed to the Committee by the Board of Léargas. In 2019 the Department and the Board of Léargas agreed that an extension to the term of office of this Committee was prudent given the Department considerations of the recommendations of the [Indecon Review of Career Guidance](#) and the NCGE focus on strategic projects to support the Department at that time. Thus, the current NCGE MGC member organisations were requested to confirm their agreement to extended membership for 12-24 months; being determined by the Department as appropriate. Terms of Reference for the role of the Management of Guidance Committee are available to download [HERE](#)

A full list of current MGC members can be seen on P34

DES Indecon Review of Careers Information and Tools

In 2020 it was expected that decisions of the Department of Education and Skills' Task group on the implementation of the Indecon report would be implemented. However, due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent establishment of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research Innovation and Science, these decisions and actions were postponed. This delay had a direct impact on the future strategic planning for NCGE for 2021-2023.

Oversight and Performance Delivery Agreement (OPDA)

In 2020, NCGE and Léargas agreed the annually revised and updated Oversight and Performance Delivery Agreement with the Curriculum Assessment and Policy Unit (CAP) of the Department on the role of NCGE, defined as follows:

- acting as a centre of excellence for guidance in relation to Post Primary and Further Education and Training (FET)
- participating in any successor meetings to the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN) or other EU Commission meetings relating to lifelong guidance
- Continuing as an active member of the Euroguidance Network activities
- Developing a strategic plan for NCGE 2019-2020
- co-ordinating and hosting the National Forum on Guidance
- delivering key actions outlined in the Action Plan for Education the OPDA confirmed that SOLAS is responsible for the funding of guidance within the FET sector whereby SOLAS oversees the development and evaluation of guidance provision. SOLAS funds NCGE to support the implementation of the strategic priorities of the FET Strategy as pertains to guidance. The Department remains responsible for the overarching policy for the FET sector, including guidance. This revised PDA was co-signed by Léargas, NCGE, CAP and the International Section of the Department as part of the governance section of the Department for Léargas.

Finance Sub Committee

Management accounts are prepared by Léargas, reviewed by the Finance Sub-committee, and a report is presented to the Management of Guidance Committee. The Finance Sub-committee comprises the Director of NCGE, the Chair of the Management of Guidance Committee, the Léargas Executive Director, a representative of the Léargas Finance and Audit Committee and the MGC representative of the Department of Education and Skills and SOLAS. In 2020 NCGE engaged with SOLAS to nominate the MGC representative to this Committee. The Finance Sub-committee of the NCGE Management of Guidance Committee meets three times per year to consider the Income and Expenditure reports to the Department, prior to sign-off by Léargas for submission.

Organisational Activities

The Management of Guidance Committee met 5 times in 2020. Following the first meeting, held in person in February, the Committee meetings were convened online in accordance with government restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic. A public record of each meeting, based on the approved Minutes, are available online [HERE](#)

Staffing

Following Department approved recruitment process in Q3 and Q4 of 2019, NCGE operated in 2020 with 7 full time staff: Director, Guidance Programme Coordinator (FET), Guidance Programme Coordinator (Post-Primary), Guidance Officer (Euroguidance), Office Administrator, Programme Administration Officer and Communications Officer.

External consultant guidance professionals who had successfully applied in 2019 for position on the *'Panel of External Consultant Guidance Professionals'* to work with NCGE on various projects over a 2-year period, were engaged to work with NCGE on various projects in post-primary, FET and Euroguidance.

[See More](#)

The Staff Performance Management Review system was continued into 2020, with further HR support provided by the Léargas appointed HR Generalist.

Meetings with Ministers

In September 2020, following the appointment of the two new Ministers of DoE and DFHERIS, NCGE requested meetings to outline the concerns of the Management of Guidance Committee and to seek commitment from the Ministers on the implementation of the Indecon Report recommendations. NCGE Chair of the Management of guidance Committee and Director met with both Ministers and were pleased with the understanding of and commitment to lifelong guidance expressed at these meetings.

2. PRIMARY EDUCATION

The NCGE strategic plan outlined the priorities of the NCGE Work Programme, referring specifically to Post Primary, FET and European sectors. While in Ireland there is currently no formal provision for Guidance in primary schools, NCGE continues to explore and highlight examples of good practice in guidance, for primary education. Supports for students in transition from Primary school to post-primary school were developed in as key elements of the Guidance Related Learning modules developed by NCGE for Junior Cycle (**more on P14**).

3. POST PRIMARY ACTIVITIES

A central focus of NCGE's post-primary programme for 2020 was the impact of the Covid – 19 pandemic on the delivery of quality guidance provision in schools, and the development of multiple additional resources for Whole School Guidance provision as outlined below.

Enhancing collaboration

Building on work done beginning in Q3 and Q4 2019, the Guidance Programme Co-ordinator (Post-Primary), continued to prioritise the development of positive working relationships to further promote the implementation of best practice in guidance counselling in schools.

The Guidance Programme Co-ordinator continued to collaborate and communicate with DES Inspectorate, CareersPortal, JMB, CAO, IGC, NCCA, La Touche (Legal Training), USI, ISSU, and Business in the Community Ireland (BITCI).

The Guidance Programme Co-ordinator developed and established existing and new working relationships with organisations such as IBM, The American Chamber of Commerce, Languages Connect (PPLI), Spotlight Skills, NPCPP, the Social Inclusion Unit (SIU) and the Trinity Access (Transforming Education).

Internal collaboration continued to be a focus to ensure targeted and collaborative activities between the Post-primary programme and the FET and Euroguidance programmes within NCGE. For example, the Guidance Programme Coordinator and the Euroguidance Officer co-presented on two webinars and developed country specific information sheets on applications to college abroad.

In order to develop a comprehensive webinar series in response to Guidance Counsellor needs, the Guidance Programme Coordinator worked closely with the Department of Education and collaborated with a variety of stakeholders, including but not limited to NPCPP, NEPS, JMB and many others.

Finally, the process of collaboration with the wider Guidance Community began in 2020 with the development of a 'sharing quality resources' process. Criteria and standards of quality were developed in line with the Whole School Guidance Framework, whereby resources from other agencies and individual Guidance Counsellors were accepted and added to the NCGE online data base of resources.

Promoting quality guidance practice at home and abroad

Over the course of 2020 the Guidance Programme Co-ordinator attended and participated at several national and international events promoting the development and support of quality guidance practice in post-primary schools. Nationally such events included the IGC National Conference, the Forum for the Future of Senior Cycle Curriculum and Assessment in Ireland and discussions on the evolution of the Leaving Certificate Grades, Parent and Student Helpline.

NCGE was invited to collaborate on a number of 'regional' projects for communities of practice. For example, the NCGE programme coordinator for post primary developed five 'follow-on' webinars from the 'National' webinars for Limerick Education Centre. In addition, NCGE were invited to attend the Loreto Education Trust 'Community of Practice' and the Educate Together and IGC 'Peer Support' group.

Reflecting the international role of NCGE, collaboration with 'Careers Wales' and dialogue and discussions with South African guidance colleagues began in earnest.

Whole School Guidance Framework (WSGF)

Whole School Guidance Continuous Professional Development (WSG CPD) continued face-to-face up to and including March 2020 and in webinar format thereafter.

The Guidance Programme Coordinator was invited to meet with local school teams as a 'follow up' to this CPD.

During 2020, WSG Pilot Phase 2 concluded. This phase sought to review and gain a deeper understanding of the implementation processes and changes made in response to the WSGF.

Pilot schools shared their learning experiences on the process(es) of improvement planning in their school by identifying what had been done in their schools to date and highlighting the issues and challenges they continued to face.

Phase 2 also provided the opportunity to discuss and propose how NCGE could provide further supports to schools and Guidance Counsellors and consider how Whole School Guidance planning could be connected to or reflect school self-evaluation processes.

A number of resources were developed to support schools with their reflection and development during this pilot. Schools reflected on and provided feedback on these resources. The development and evolution of WSG CPD became evident during this phase of the pilot.

Development of Guidance Related Learning for Junior Cycle

Following an initial planning phase in 2019, NCGE collaborated with CareersPortal to develop three Units of Learning (18 lessons in total) for Junior Cycle. NCCA supported development of samples of “Appendix I” for each of the units of learning. The content was developed with input from JCT. These units of learning were launched in September 2020 and the roll-out was supported by a webinar. Schools and Guidance Counsellors were supported by the NCGE team throughout the first term of academic year in their utilisation of these resources.

[See More](#)

Response to emergency school closures in March 2020

NCGE reacted quickly to the school closures of March 2020, initially conducting a needs analysis for guidance counsellors and subsequently developing an initial series of webinars to respond to the identified needs.

The webinars focused on a two-prong approach: (i) the provision of remote Guidance as an unexpected occurrence and (ii) the continuation of all aspects of Guidance provision (policy and practice) in line with established policy, and in order to meet the needs of stakeholders in each local school.

A large number of resources were developed to support schools and Guidance Counsellors with all aspects of Guidance provision with regard to both policy and practice.

[See More](#)

Creation and Coordination of Pilot ‘Reimagining Post-Primary Work Experience’

Following previous communications with various stakeholders, NCGE developed a pilot project based around work experience in Transition Year (TY), in collaboration with Exit Entry and a number of additional partners in education (PPLI and Spotlight) and in business (BITCI, IBM, AmCham).

Thirteen schools actively participated in this pilot, with two other schools consulting on the resources provided. The purpose of this pilot included the integration of digital technology with work experience programmes in school thereby enhancing opportunities for students and supporting the work of Guidance Counsellors.

A number of classroom resources were developed for this pilot, pre-existing resources were re-presented and opportunities for work experience were presented through a purpose-built mechanism on the ExitEntry app. Due to demand, the pilot resources were made available to schools nationally for the academic year 2020/2021. Final report and recommendations of the pilot project is due in Summer 2021

[See More](#)

Mixed Methods Research to inform all programme activities

During 2020, quantitative and qualitative research were completed in order to inform all aspects of the post-primary programme.

As referenced above a quantitative needs analysis was undertaken in April 2020 in order to inform the NCGE's emergency response to school closures. As a result of this survey, an initial series of webinars was developed in the final term of academic year 2019/2020. An additional and extensive 'Autumn Webinar Series' was developed and coordinated supporting all aspects of Guidance between August and December 2020.

A number of qualitative focus groups were held with various stakeholders throughout 2020. For example, a day-long focus group with students informed the development of 'Guidance Related Learning for Junior Cycle' (GRL). A number of focus groups were held with Guidance Counsellors on topics such as GRL, digitalised Guidance and needs of Guidance Counsellors in coordinating work experience. These focus groups were hosted online in accordance with government restrictions.

Publication of reports

In order to review and evaluate aspects of the post-primary programme, three reports were published by NCGE during 2020. These reports focused on supports for Guidance Counsellors and schools in their provision of Guidance. Reports included:

[May 2020 Post Primary Webinar Series](#) (NCGE), [November 2020 Post Primary Webinar Series](#) (NCGE), [Guidance Related Learning for Junior Cycle 2021](#) (NCGE / Careers Portal).

4. FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING (FET) SECTOR ACTIVITIES

During 2020, the development of the FET Guidance Strategy remained 'on hold' pending the outcome of the Department Indecon Report on the Review of Career Guidance. Meetings planned with Further Education section of the Department and SOLAS were rescheduled in the context of school / FET closures in accordance with Government and public health guidelines due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Meanwhile, discussions on the development of the FET Integrated Guidance Strategy in collaboration with the Department & SOLAS, with ETBI and ETBs were not held in 2020. This was due to several issues: the delay to the prioritised actions from the Indecon report recommendations; COVID- 19 postponed many activities across the Education and Training sectors; the decision and establishment of the new D FHERIS. NCGE continued to correspond directly with SOLAS on various issues and projects. Communications and correspondence continued online to support implementation of the NCGE workplan and meetings were held in late 2020 with D FHERIS and SOLAS.

Over the course of 2020 NCGE engaged every opportunity to promote FET Guidance integration, with wider FET organisations, practitioners and agencies with ongoing collaborations, meetings, membership of 'Advisory/ Steering' Groups, input to Evaluations and Studies. In accordance with NCGE Strategic Plan, Guidance Programme Co-ordinator (FET) continued to engage with and develop appropriate collaborations, networks and supports for Guidance professionals and services funded through SOLAS.

During 2020 NCGE consulted and/ or collaborated with all organisations listed below regarding their

direct or indirect interest or involvement in the development of an FET Integrated Guidance Strategy: Mitigating Educational Disadvantage Group, QQI, DSP, EU Commission, ETBI, AONTAS, An Cosán, NALA, NDA, AHEAD, IUA, NAPD, NAYC, AHEAD, RPL Practitioners Network, DEIS Transitions to FE, FESS, EAAL Europass, EuropeDirect, EPALE, IACTO, IASIO, TUD Access, MU Department of Sociology and MUSSI (Community & PES Research), Eurodesk & Youth Information Organisations, NYCI, CTC-YR Advocates Network, AGA, IGC, Apprenticeship Ireland, Local ETBs, Work based literacy Supports, Dyslexia Association Ireland, Social Inclusion Organisations, National Learners Forum, Pobal, SICAP, ESOL/ EAL Programme Coordinators, Migrant & Community Education Providers

2020 presented a challenging time for all, with notable significant and ongoing challenges in guidance service delivery across FET, particularly in the context of the pandemic.

Supports for ETB Adult Educational Guidance Services (ETB AEGS) and FET -Wide Guidance Service and Guidance Counselling Provision

While plans in place to deliver face to face workshop CPD and guidance awareness sessions had to be postponed during 2020, NCGE maintained CPD provision and guidance awareness building through hosting and attending support and development meetings online. These included webinars provided on a range of topics suggested by responses to the NCGE FET Guidance Practitioners and Service staff survey (**more on P26**). The themes and topics included:

- Remote Guidance during Covid-19 updates and resource development
- AEGS Remote Guidance & Information Service Delivery - Exploration of Practice and Sharing Experiences
- Networking, online introductions and service awareness promoting useful collaborative engagement across FET
- Guidance Awareness delivery to National Agencies (AHEAD, AONTAS, NALA) offering Covid Support Webinars

In response to COVID-19 Public Health Crisis: NCGE FET mirrored support to Post Primary as agreed with Dept of Education and Skills at that time through surveys, publications and CPD webinars including:

- Survey all FET Guidance Services practitioners and staff to inform the development of appropriate Resources and Guidelines.
- Collaboration on development of supports including: (Covid-19) NCGE Support Information for Guidance Counsellors and guidance practitioners in Further Education and Training (FET)
- Publication of Resource: 'Self-Care and Mental Health issues for Adult Education Guidance Services' by Dr. Marie Rooney
- ETB AEGS - AGMS - Texting Module Guide

[See More](#)

Adult Guidance Management System (AGMS), developments and work toward FET- Guidance Management System (FET- GMS)

NCGE coordinates and manages the confidential Adult Guidance Management System (AGMS) database on behalf of SOLAS, with required completion by the Guidance staff of the ETB AEGS from which NCGE generates and publishes annual reports.

[See More](#)

Following delays due to the pandemic, NCGE reconvened the meetings of the FET Guidance Management System (FET GMS) Working Group (Phase 1) to consider the current ETB AEGS Adult Guidance Management System and issues regarding useful, appropriate data gathering and reporting for FET Guidance. The FET GMS working group included representatives of DES, SOLAS, AEOA, AGA, AEGS staff, Directors of FET and ETBI. The group considered the developments required to widen the use of the data gathering system across FET guidance services. In 2020, the working group met online to complete 'Phase 1' with the development of the NCGE proposal submitted to SOLAS in December 2020 for the development and piloting of a FET wide guidance data gathering system (FET-GMS).

NCGE Interim GDPR Agreements with ETBs re AGMS

Following from 2019 consultation with GDPR experts, SOLAS and ETBI and as per Léargas-NCGE legal advice in consideration of national policy, final Draft of the Interim GDPR Agreements between NCGE and ETB Directors of FET were reached. These were distributed to all 16 ETBS in early 2020 and by April all 16 ETBs had signed these GDPR agreements and returned to NCGE.

NCGE AGMS Research Project

In December 2020 NCGE published the final report on *Overarching Research on Data gathered in the DES/SOLAS/NCGE Adult Guidance Management system of the Adult Educational Guidance Initiative 2004-2018* prepared by Dr. Petra Elftorp, UL. The overarching report presents the findings from the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data on the Adult Educational Guidance Initiative (AEGI) Adult Guidance Management System (AGMS) database, spanning 14 years, from 2004 to 2018. The data in the AGMS has been interrogated and analysed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis.

The research process was supported throughout 2020 by the NCGE Director and NCGE FET Guidance Programme Coordinator, as well as a research advisory group including NCGE staff and AEGS practitioners, and a representative of the Adult Guidance Association (AGA). The report also provides contextual background information about the AEGI and how it was established and developed since 2000.

[See More](#)

Advisory Groups and Committees

In accordance with the NCGE remit to work with stakeholders, to influence the development of policy as relevant to guidance, the NCGE FET Guidance Programme Coordinator continues to participate in various national advisory groups and committees including:

- DFHERIS Interdepartmental Stakeholder Group 10-year Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy
- AONTAS Project Advisory Group for European Agenda for Adult Learning & EPALE
- AONTAS convened 'Mitigating Education Disadvantage' in context of Covid -19 Working group
- QQI convened RPL Practitioner Network Steering Group
- QQI convened National Advisory Group for VISKA
- Irish University Association FE to HE Subgroup
- ETBI DEIS Learners Transitioning to FET Steering Group
- Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment Sustainable Development Goals Stakeholder Forum
- SOLAS National Advisory Committee on Universal Design for Learning Guidelines (NAC UDL)
- SOLAS Programme Evaluation Advisory Committees (BTEI, SST, STP Programmes)

Other Activities

- The NCGE FET programme supported the promotion of the European dimension of guidance through collaboration with Euroguidance Ireland, Eurodesk and Léargas.
Further information available from P19
- Engagement with TOBAR Evaluation, VISKA trials & Guidance in Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)
- Informing briefings for the Cedefop Analytical Framework for Upskilling Pathways (2016 Recommendation)
- Informing and contributing to Cedefop publications on RPL

5. HIGHER EDUCATION ACTIVITIES

Directors of Studies in Guidance Counselling (DSGC)

This Committee represents the universities in Ireland which provide initial education and training programmes for guidance counselling. These include the Directors of the programmes in Dublin City University, Maynooth University, and University of Limerick. While University College Cork had provided this guidance counselling qualification course, NCGE were notified in 2019 that UCC would not continue with the delivery of this programme for 2019/2020 academic year and beyond. The DES Inspectorate also attends this Committee meeting.

[See More](#)

In 2020 NCGE following discussion and agreement of the Committee, re-established communications with the guidance professional representative bodies, to facilitate invitation to IGC, AHECS and AGA to meet with the Directors of Studies Committee to discuss information exchange and collaboration.

Following continued invitation of the Directors, NCGE provided workshop presentations to current students of guidance counselling in MU, DCU and UL. These presentations highlight the national and international role and remit of NCGE, the range of guidance policies at national and EU / International level and the supports, resources and CPD provided for guidance practice in schools and FET. These workshops also provide opportunities for student guidance counsellors to establish initial connections and communications with NCGE prior to qualification.

Other Activities

- Representatives of the Association of Higher Education Careers Services (AHECS) attended the National Forum on Guidance meetings
- Guidance Matters (**see P30**) included articles on guidance issues in higher education and highlighted examples of innovative practice and resources.

6. THE EUROPEAN GUIDANCE SECTOR

Euroguidance

The Euroguidance network consists of Euroguidance Centres in 34 European countries. Its mission is to promote the European dimension in lifelong guidance in member countries and to foster international learning mobility by means of guidance services. Its key target group is guidance practitioners in education and employment, who provide information and guidance on international mobility to end-users seeking studying and training opportunities abroad. The Euroguidance Ireland Centre, hosted by NCGE, promotes this European dimension of guidance and provides quality information on lifelong guidance and learning mobility for guidance professionals and individuals seeking to study or train abroad.

See - www.euroguidance.eu and www.euroguidance.ie

In 2020 Euroguidance Ireland continued as an active member of the Euroguidance Network, attending network meetings and participating in the work of the MTG 1 (Mobility Advice) and MTG 3 (Communications and Promotion) Task Groups.

Network Meetings attended in 2020:

- Euroguidance Network Meeting, Dubrovnik, Croatia, March 2020
- Euroguidance Network Meeting, ONLINE, October 2020

Euro-Quest

A core focus of Euroguidance Ireland efforts and launched officially in 2020; Euro-Quest is a free, online, classroom-based resource for use with Transition Year students in Ireland. It is accompanied by a Student Workbook and Whole School Guidebook. Euro-Quest is comprised of 4 x modules and a pre- and post-course student survey to measure the learning experience and outcomes. The programme is designed to be integrated into the (Transition Year) TY curriculum through Guidance and to link with other subjects with Europe as the common theme.

Through the implementation of an initial 'pilot stage' - the Euro-Quest module was fully developed and tested in the academic year 2018-2019 with 15 (from initially over 20) x post primary schools (staff and students). Pilot activities incorporated; survey gathering, on site (school) visits and coordinated central meetings with pilot participants. A full pilot report was then produced.

Following implementation of the pilot recommendations, in January 2020 Euro-Quest was formally made available to all Post Primary Schools in Ireland. This involved the finalisation and provision of a new and dedicated (Moodle) learning platform with advanced customisation to allow for separate levels of access (Students, School 'Leaders', and School Teachers).

Information on the Euro-Quest module was promoted and distributed through all NCGE / Euroguidance online channels and through the printing of dedicated flyers and leaflets for distribution at relevant events. The 'Student Workbooks' and 'Teacher Guidebooks' were also printed and distributed to each Leader and Teacher enrollee as part of a 'Euro-Quest Induction Pack'. Elements of these were also translated into Irish for use by schools in Ireland whose learning is achieved through the medium of Irish.

As of December 2020, over 1600 students from all over Ireland had enrolled from more than 70 schools. From a comparison of pre- and post-course surveys. It is clear there is currently an initial deficit in the knowledge Irish students have regarding mobility opportunities that is significantly addressed through engagement with the programme.

See: www.euroguidance.ie/euro-quest and www.euro-quest.ie/

Peer Review

Euroguidance Ireland discussed and agreed with Euroguidance Estonia and Euroguidance France to design, develop and implement a Peer Review Process across the 3 countries. It was agreed that the purpose of this Peer Review Process was to consider and review Estonia, France and Ireland Euroguidance Centres in the context of national provision, through interviews with stakeholders and the review of relevant information relating to the main goals, tasks and activities of Euroguidance. The 3 countries agreed to adopt a peer learning process using a 'critical friend' approach to assess current practices. The Estonia and France peer review process completed online due to government and public health restrictions across EU countries in 2020.

The Irish Peer Review is planned for 2021, post completion; a final report of the 3 countries peer reviews will be furnished.

Study Visits

NCGE /Euroguidance Ireland hosts and attends study visits and other peer learning and networking events (as outlined in the grant request for the Euroguidance programme of activities 2018-2020). These activities aim to support the sharing of international best practice in guidance among guidance practitioners and other relevant professionals.

A hosted study visit was planned for 2020, however due to Covid-19 restrictions taking effect internationally at the time of the intended visit it was not possible to execute. Consideration was given to facilitate remotely but given the short notice period for both NCGE and intended participants this was not feasible. The impact of this not taking place was deemed negligible given other national and international priorities that required contingency prioritisation at that time.

[See More](#)

International Conferences

All NCGE staff have a role to support and promote the European dimension of Guidance and to represent NCGE / Euroguidance Ireland and participate in various national, European and International events. Such activities that took place in 2020 are outlined below:

Cypriot Lifelong Guidance Conference (2020):

In January 2020 NCGE/Euroguidance Ireland presented; addressing the importance of guidance in the multidisciplinary environment in which we live, operate and interact' and promoting the sharing of good Guidance practice.

See - <https://bit.ly/2ZlBpLb>

'Viska' Project – Final Conference (2020):

In February 2020 NCGE/Euroguidance Ireland attending the final conference of the 'Viska' project where the continued emphasis on the importance of 'avoiding silos', while paying heed to the maintenance of standards in validation was discussed.

See - <https://viskaproject.eu/>

Learning by Leaving Conference (2020):

In June 2020, NCGE/Euroguidance Ireland attended the (remote) Learning by Leaving Conference hosted by Austrian Networks. The theme was 'inclusion in mobility'

See - <https://learningbyleaving.eu/>

International conference – 'Where Next? Implications for policy, research and practice' (2020):

In October 2020 NCGE/Euroguidance Ireland took part in the panel discussion of this conference that focussed on Evolving Education and Careers. Hosted by 'DMH Associates' online, it welcomed an audience that included 425 delegates and 51 speakers who work in the education and careers sector around the globe.

See - <https://dmhassociates.org/conference>

'EfVET' Virtual Conference (2020):

EfVET is one of the leading European-wide professional associations which has been created by, and for, Vocational Education and Training (VET) providers. In October 2020 NCGE/Euroguidance Ireland took part in virtual workshops as part of this conference.

See - <https://virtual.efvet-conference.eu/>

‘EAEA’ Virtual Conference (2020):

EAEA is a European NGO whose purpose is to link and represent European organisations directly involved in adult learning. In November 2020 NCGE/Euroguidance Ireland took part in virtual workshops as part of this annual conference on Outreach and Access in Adult Learning.

See - <https://eaea.org/event/eaea-virtual-annual-conference-outreach-and-access-in-adult-learning/>

‘EOPPEP’ (Greece) Virtual Conference (2020):

In December 2020 NCGE/Euroguidance Ireland presented as part of this conference on preparing young people for the continuously changing labour market.

See - <https://eoppep.events.podimatas.gr/home-en/>

Policy level collaboration

Joint Policy Networks Meetings:

The NCGE/ Euroguidance Ireland Director represents Euroguidance Ireland at regular meetings organised by DG EMPL through which Euroguidance Centres, National Europass Centres and EQF National Coordination Points are kept informed by, and feedback to, Commission level policy formulation.

EUROPASS Advisory Group

NCGE / Euroguidance Ireland continues to liaise and collaborate with QQI as the national data source for core information and EQF-NCP Ireland to ensure that appropriate guidance, EQF and Europass information is included within the information provided to the Learning Opportunities Portal. The EU Commission established the [Europass Advisory Group](#) in 2018 to support the development of Europass, including the 'Learning Opportunities' portal. The NCGE Director, along with QQI Europass and EQF representatives, represented Ireland on this advisory Group in 2020.

Irish Reference Group for EU Initiatives in Education and Skills

NCGE/ Euroguidance Ireland is an active member of the [Irish Reference Group for EU Initiatives in Education and Skills](#). The primary objective of the Irish Reference Group for EU Initiatives is to disseminate information on EU Initiatives. Members include QQI, Europass, EQF, EQUAVET, ENIC NARIC, and Léargas. Due to the ongoing pandemic, the 8th Meeting of this group could not be facilitated in 2020 and was instead postponed until 2021.

Careers Net

[CareersNet](#) (Cedefop) was established in 2017, to bring together network of independent experts in lifelong career guidance. Working with CareersNet, Cedefop has collected comparable and reliable information on a European scale in the field of lifelong guidance and career development issues. The gathered information and analysis aim at the identification of gaps and solutions, beyond a snapshot of national guidance systems. The NCGE / Euroguidance Ireland Director is a member of CareersNet and has attended all 4 x meetings to date and was appointed to the Steering Group of the Cedefop CareersNet network.

Guidance Provision to Irish students in European Schools

Each year, NCGE/Euroguidance Ireland provides a guidance service to the Irish students attending European Schools. This programme is co-ordinated by NCGE/Euroguidance Ireland on behalf of the Irish Department of Education. NCGE / Euroguidance Ireland collaborates with the Dept to review and plan for the annual provision of this service. Traditionally this guidance service includes face to face, 1-to-1 career guidance and group guidance sessions to larger European schools and via remote methods to smaller schools / smaller cohorts. In 2020 the unexpected arrival of COVID-19 brought forward plans for the service and shortened the development timeline. In autumn 2020, this service was delivered to over 100 students, for the first time ever, entirely online. This transition involved:

- The development of a new student guidance (online) portal
- The creation and integration of an online booking facility ('Calendly')
- The use and integration of 'Zoom' for delivery
- Intensive adapted communication with school coordinators, students and their parents
- The expansion of the guidance team for delivery
- The provision of additional training regarding the European School system, the European Baccalaureate, the new student portal and the use of 'Zoom'.
- The provision of a substantial number of additional resources and an FAQ section to enable students and their parents prepare for their scheduled guidance sessions

In early 2020 NCGE/Euroguidance Ireland commissioned an independent external review of the Irish Guidance Service to the European Schools. This review incorporated feedback from students and their parents, European School Directors, European School 'Coordinating Teachers', the Irish Department of Education and NCGE / Euroguidance Ireland staff. Intended as an internal document; the feedback has provided valuable insights into the views and needs of all stakeholders. The review will inform the ongoing progression of the service.

See: www.euroguidance.ie/european-schools

Other Activities

'Time to Move' Campaigns:

'Time to move' is a Eurodesk Europe-wide campaign which informs young people and those who work with them about opportunities to work, study, train and volunteer in Europe. NCGE FET in partnership with Euroguidance Ireland collaborated with Eurodesk Ireland to organise these events nationally in 2020. In promoting the European dimension of guidance and mobility in the FET sector NCGE FET attended and encouraged participation by adult and secondary school guidance counsellors, Youthreach and CTCs, ETB Youth Officers, INTREO offices, LESN, JobClubs, PLC & FET Guidance, Training Centres, Regional Skills Managers and relevant information networks with several 'Time to Move' events around Ireland.

See More – www.timetomove.eurodesk.eu/

Euroguidance Network Website and Publications

Euroguidance Ireland contributed financially and through the provision and revision of content to the development of the Euroguidance Network website. Euroguidance Ireland also contributed to the Euroguidance Network's 'Highlights' and 'Insight' publications during the year 2020.

See - www.euroguidance.eu/resources/publications

Promoting the 'New Europass'

Over the course of 2020 and on specific request from the Commission (through the Euroguidance Network), NCGE/Euroguidance Ireland committed to the promotion of the new Europass Portal; doing so through our national website, through the production of dedicated web resources and videos, through a competition (in association with another national partner), through our social channels and our regular newsletters - to ensure that guidance practitioners in Europe are kept informed about key developments to this invaluable tool.

See – www.europa.eu/europass/en

7. CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD)

In accordance with NCGE's terms of reference, the Centre advises on high quality and relevant initial guidance counselling education and training and provides Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for guidance practitioners in post-primary schools and FET sector. All CPD programmes are informed by NCGE's Quality Assurance Procedures.

Post Primary

In early 2020 NCGE continued to offer the national CPD programme developed for schools, '[Step-by-step Approach to Guidance Practice using the Whole School Guidance Framework \(WSG\)](#)'. 2 x CPD events under this theme took place in February 2020; hosted in Louth and Kerry. At these, school principals and Guidance Counsellors reflected on the whole school approach to guidance planning. Further review, evaluation and feedback from these sessions, in conjunction with 9 CPD events under the same theme completed in 2019, along with the conclusion of WSG Pilot Phase 2 as previously outlined, were used to revise and develop additional resources and CPD to support Whole School Guidance planning and provision.

Table 1: WSG CPD Attendance Information

Date	Location of CPD event	Total No. of Participating Schools
26/02/20	Louth (Dundalk)	12
27/02/20	Kerry (Killarney)	17

In March 2020, NCGE offered Post Primary CPD training in partnership with La Touche Training on the theme of 'Legal Responsibilities & Confidentiality for Guidance Counsellors'. 4 CPD events under this theme were initially scheduled for March and April 2020; to be hosted in Dublin, Sligo and Limerick. NCGE hosted an initial session of this CPD in Dublin on 10/03/20. All subsequent sessions were postponed indefinitely as a result of Covid-19. This CPD training was developed further into the NCGE Autumn 2020 Post Primary Webinar Series.

Table 2: Legal Responsibilities & Confidentiality for Guidance Counsellors CPD Attendance Information

Date	Location of CPD event	Total No. of Participating Schools
10/03/20	Dublin (DES Clocktower)	18

As previously outlined, following emergency school closures in March 2020, NCGE developed Post Primary Webinar CPD in Spring 2020 to respond to the needs of Guidance Counsellors. These webinars were developed under the general theme of '[Adapting the Guidance plan to support continuity of Guidance provision](#)'. Participants included Guidance Counsellors, school management and representatives from other relevant agencies/bodies *e.g.*, PDST, JCT *et al.* Numbers of participants for the Spring 2020 Post Primary Webinar Series are outlined in the Table below.

Table 3 Spring 2020 Post Primary Webinar Series Live Attendance Information

Date	Webinar	Registered	Attended Live
06/05/20	'Whole School Guidance Provision - Focusing on 6th Years'	340	225
13/05/20	'Adapting the Guidance plan to support continuity of Guidance provision'	300	194
20/05/20	'Whole School Guidance: Wrapping up the academic year 2019/2020'	280	186
27/05/20	'Reflecting on Guidance Provision and Guidance Needs'	271	178

Further information is available in the [NCGE May 2020 Post Primary Webinar Series Report](#)

The aim of the Autumn 2020 webinar series was to ensure Guidance Counsellors and school management were supported in their transition back to face-to-face schooling. A total of fourteen webinars on twelve different topics were presented between August and November 2020. This webinar series was framed by the DES "Plan for Returning to School: Supporting the Wellbeing of School Communities as defined by NEPS". The Autumn 2020 webinar series were planned under phase 1 of the Department/NEPS framework 'Transitioning Back and Settling in.'

Again participants included Guidance Counsellors, school management and representatives from other relevant agencies/bodies *e.g.*, PDST, JCT, NAPD *etc* Numbers of participants for the Autumn 2020 Post Primary Webinar Series are outlined in the Table below.

Table 4 Autumn 2020 Post Primary Webinar Series Live Attendance Information

Date	Webinar	Registered	Attended Live
21/08/20	Getting Started in your new School	123	80
25/08/20	Guidance and Returning to School for Academic Year 2020-2021	474	284
27/08/20	An ABC of digitalised Guidance & links with pedagogy	252	103
01/09/20	Supporting Outgoing Students (the Leaving Certificate class of 2020)	357	182
03/09/20	Introducing Guidance Related Learning Resources for Junior Cycle	378	156
08/09/20	NCGE / Euroguidance Resources for Guidance Counsellors	152	44
10/09/20	Setting up a Network of Support	140	27
15/09/20	EXTERNAL Resources for Guidance Counsellors	312	98
06/10/20	Whole School Guidance Planning for academic year 2020/21	358	123
13/10/20	Mobility in Europe & 'Access Europe' Resources	147	46
20/10/20	Self-Care for the Guidance Counsellor	252	102
22/09/20, 17/11/20, 24/11/20	Legalities of Digitalised Guidance Counselling - Multiple Dates	321	141

Further information is available in the [NCGE November 2020 Post Primary Webinar Series Report](#)

Further Education and Training

NCGE coordinates and delivers the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programme for ETB AEGS staff. CPD training was scheduled for March 2020 for ETB AEGS staff under the theme of 'Restorative Practice for Adult Education Guidance Services in FET'. This CPD was postponed indefinitely as a result of Covid-19.

All ETB AEGS in Ireland were required to close from 12th March 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Service provision in the ETB AEGS was shifted to remote delivery accordingly. In June 2020, NCGE developed webinar support for ETB AEGS Staff to support this delivery method. These sessions provided the opportunity for ETB AEGS Staff to participate in information sharing and peer learning receive relevant updates and note relevant resources that may be of use in their role. The overall theme of the webinar series was 'Remote Guidance provision by AEGS during Covid-19.'

Participants included ETB AEGS Guidance Counsellor-Coordination, Guidance Counsellors and Guidance Information Officer staff. The numbers of participants are outlined in the table below.

Table 5 Summer 2020 Further Education and Training Webinar Series Live Attendance Information

Date	Webinar	Registered	Attended Live
24/06/20	Remote Guidance during Covid-19 (updates and resources)	77	69
01/07/20	AEGS Remote Guidance & Information Service Delivery - Continuing the Exploration of Practice and Sharing Experiences	73	61

Every service of the 16 ETB AEGS was represented over the course of the webinar series.

Further information is available in the [NCGE July 2020 AEGS Webinar Series Report](#).

Euroguidance

Over the course of 2020, NCGE / Euroguidance Ireland continued the facilitation of the online 'Mobility Guidance Counselling Module' for use by guidance counsellors. Due to the prioritisation of the 'Euro-Quest' programme and the allocation of required resources to progress this it was not feasible or appropriate to proactively promote the module. However, guidance counsellors engaged in initial the Euro-Quest pilot were encouraged to complete this module to facilitate additional knowledge pertaining to mobility and NCGE / Euroguidance revised the relevant webpages to provide clearer information to this cohort.

See: <https://euroguidance.ie/cpd-mobility-guidance-counselling>

8. COMMITTEES AND WORKING GROUPS

NCGE convenes and participates in committees and working groups for and on behalf of the Department. The activities for 2019 were as follows.

DES Post Primary Guidance Counselling Supervision Steering Group

This Steering Group is chaired by Teacher Education Section of the Department and managed by the Monaghan Education Centre. The guidance counsellor's supervision programme for school-based guidance counsellors is funded by the Department, managed by Monaghan Education Centre and coordinated and delivered via the IGC branch network. NCGE is a member of the Steering group, working with the Department Inspectorate representative in an advisory capacity to ensure reflection of Department policy on guidance and delivery of quality guidance practice.

Advisory Committee on Psychometric Testing

Following the meeting of the Advisory Committee on Psychometric Testing (normally convened by NCGE on behalf of DES and to review and update the list of psychometric tests and assessments approved by DES for use in post-primary schools), NCGE worked in collaboration with DES to make further revisions to the List of Tests, to account for implications of Brexit and changes to various Tests by publishers.

[See More](#)

NCGE worked in collaboration with the DES and NEPS on the revision and update of the [Circular](#), to include reference to the PSI Register of Psychometric Test Use: guidance Counsellors, which endorses the professional competence of guidance counsellors in the use of psychometric tests in schools.

NCGE – Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI) collaboration

Following changes in personnel in both NCGE and Psychological Society of Ireland, NCGE re-established collaborations with PSI to address outstanding issues of the PSI Register of Guidance Counsellors in the use of Psychometric tests. This resulted in establishing an operational working group with the professional bodies (IGC and AGA) to explore outstanding concerns. NCGE and PSI agreed to ongoing discussions and collaboration to facilitate CPD on psychometric testing for PSI registered guidance counsellors from Autumn term 2021.

[See More](#)

CEDEFOP 'CareersNet'

NCGE Director continued to attend and participate at meetings of the [CareersNet](#) network and as an active member Steering Group of the Cedefop CareersNet network. Due to this membership, NCGE Director was invited to participate in the advisory group to the international inter-agency co-operation on the development of a global survey on the impact of the pandemic on guidance services. This [report](#) was published in December 2020 by Cedefop on behalf of the wider inter-agency group.

NCGE / ETBI Directors of FET Group

In the absence of the FET Integrated Guidance Strategy, NCGE, ETBI and the Directors of FET met in early 2020 to consider future collaboration activities. Further meetings were postponed pending the publication of the SOLAS FET Strategy 2020-2024.

NCGE – IGC meetings

NCGE was invited to meet with the IGC National Executive (NE) in early 2020. Three subsequent meetings were hosted by NCGE with representatives of IGC NE. NCGE had previously proposed in 2018 to IGC that a “working agreement” document would be of benefit to both parties. Meetings held in 2020 provided the opportunity to consider the development of such a document, to outline and clarify the distinct role and remit of the two organisations and provide agreement on future collaboration activities in areas such as CPD and representation at various working groups.

Further meetings of this group were postponed pending changes in the NE in late 2020 and as a result the “working agreement” document has yet to be completed and agreed.

9. PROMULGATION

NCGE provides information to clients and stakeholders of NCGE through various means including its web properties, social media, online and printed publications, showcasing at conferences/exhibitions and direct presentations to stakeholders. Through the Communications Officer, NCGE contracts the services of appropriate external suppliers to ensure quality development and delivery. Given the working environment generated by the onset of the pandemic in early 2020; the importance of disseminating timely, informative and readily accessible information took on an even greater priority and focus. Communication levels increased significantly over the course of the year and additional communication tools, new resource areas and reference points were developed.

NCGE & Euroguidance Ireland main Websites

NCGE's main method of disseminating information and resources is through its online web properties. Over the course of summer 2020, in part response to the pandemic, NCGE re-developed the way that our resources were presented. In addition to the way that content could be accessed we also added a large amount of new and highly relevant resources targeting specific cohorts of the national guidance community.

www.ncge.ie

This is the core website for NCGE and includes dedicated sections as follows:

- Specific Resources for Post-Primary Guidance delivery
- Specific Resources for Further Education and Training Guidance delivery
- Continuing Professional Development (CPD) opportunities
- General information, including about NCGE, reports and FOI / governance requirements

www.euroguidance.ie

The NCGE Euroguidance Ireland Centre website is maintained as a companion site of the main NCGE website and provides particular information relating to the work of Euroguidance Ireland. It includes dedicated sections as follows:

- Specific Euroguidance Ireland Resources (applicable across multiple practice areas)
- Information relating to 'Euro-Quest' delivery in schools
- Information relating the Irish European School Guidance Service
- Information relating to studying / training in Ireland and in Europe and the Network

Statistics on usage

ncge.ie

There was a total of 45,656 visitors to this website in 2020 an increase of 21% vs 2019: recording 74,574 sessions (+30 % vs 2019) and 195,203 total page views (+33 % vs 2019). There was a total of 31,243 documents downloaded from the site in 2020, an increase of 79% vs 2019.

euroguidance.ie

There was a total of 8,040 visitors to this website in 2020, an increase of 64% vs 2019: recording 11,805 sessions (+72 % vs 2019) and 32,567 total page views (+88 % vs 2019). There was a total of 4,224 documents downloaded from the site in 2020, an increase of 500% vs 2019.

This can be attributed to the additional provision of new and dedicated Euroguidance Ireland Resources and the formal launch of the Euro-Quest Programme,

Provision of online resources and materials for Post Primary

www.ncge.ie/resources/post-primary

Over the course of 2020 the 'School Guidance (online) Handbook' was replaced with a new and dedicated resource section. This section provides digital content to inform and support the development and delivery of the school guidance programme. Such digital content includes template documents, webinar recordings, videos, research publications and more.

Provision of online resources and materials for FET

www.ncge.ie/resources/FET

Again, over the course of 2020 the 'FET Guidance (online) Handbook' was replaced with a new and dedicated resource section. This section provides digital content to inform and support the development and delivery of the FET guidance programme. Such digital content includes webinar recordings and information pertinent to practitioners in FET guidance practice.

Social Media

Twitter

www.twitter.com/ncgeguidance

NCGE continued to engage with members of the Guidance Community through its Twitter account. By the end of 2020 there were over 1890 followers to the account (compared to 1300 at the end of 2019); gaining on average 11 additional followers each week.

Facebook

www.facebook.com/euroguidanceireland

The NCGE Euroguidance Facebook Page was set up to promote the activities of the Euroguidance Ireland Centre. By the end of 2020, the total amount of followers was approx. 1600.

'Guidance Matters'

www.ncge.ie/guidancematters

'Guidance Matters' is NCGE's bi annual online interactive magazine providing articles and reviews on guidance provision across the education sector. In 2020 NCGE again published Summer and Winter editions. All staff in NCGE source and / or write articles for this publication on an on-going basis. The NCGE Communications Officer coordinated the process, including the editing of articles submitted, the production of draft copies and liaising with the design and publication team. In addition to being published online for viewing or download, each issue was also sent directly, in e-zine format, to over 4500 NCGE subscribers.

'NCGE Bulletin'

www.ncge.ie/ncge/ncge-bulletin

As much as possible throughout 2020, the 'NCGE Bulletin' was issued monthly to keep guidance practitioners and stakeholders up to date on the ongoing work of NCGE and national / international developments in guidance. Due to contingency (pandemic) requirements this was supplemented / replaced on occasion by requisite tactical communications to specific cohorts.

Euroguidance Ireland Newsletter

www.euroguidance.ie/newsletter

Beginning in February 2020, NCGE / Euroguidance Ireland begun the production and despatch of a dedicated Euroguidance Newsletter. This was sent in e-zine format, to over 4500 NCGE subscribers five times over the course of the year.

Vimeo (Video resources)

www.vimeo.com/ncge

Throughout 2020 NCGE expanded the use of its Vimeo channel; being used to host video-based resources and in particular recorded Webinars. This was an invaluable platform during this period.

The 'NCGE Podcast'

www.ncge.ie/resources/podcast

Over the course of 2020 NCGE developed 'The NCGE Podcast' (being officially launched in January 2021). Through discussions with NCGE staff and guests, a series of episodes relevant to Post Primary, Further Education and Training and European considerations for Guidance are available on the NCGE website and the 'Soundcloud' platform.

Conferences & Exhibitions

NCGE host stands each year at several national conferences and exhibitions, for example the annual IGC Conference and Higher Options exhibition. These provide direct access to NCGE for Guidance Counsellors and other clients of the Centre. In addition to the hosting of stands and exhibition spaces at national events, NCGE and NCGE staff members are invited and present and participate in many international events every year. Due to the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, in 2020 a significant number of planned 'face to face' activities were cancelled and postponed. These included events coordinated by NCGE / Euroguidance Ireland and those intended to be participated in.

Translation to Irish

In 2019, NCGE completed the tender process with the Office of Government Procurement (OGP) to confirm the provision of Irish translation services to NCGE. Throughout 2020, NCGE worked with the newly contracted translator to ensure key information and resources were made available in the Irish language, including:

- Post Primary Resources
- Euroguidance Ireland Resources
- Euro-Quest student workbooks
- 2 x issues of 'Guidance Matters'
- The 2019 NCGE Output Statement
- Various additional letters of correspondence

NCGE continued the established partnership agreement with [Careers Portal](#) for the continued development of www.saoloibre.ie and associated resources. This partnership promotes the development of resources in Irish for guidance counsellors and their students, additional work was done in profiling careers with Irish with a significant focus on opportunities in Europe.

ICT Developments in NCGE

With the onset of the pandemic and in line with the strategic objective to ensure and promote the use of ICT where possible and appropriate, over the course of 2020 NCGE:

- Purchased additional hardware to facilitate NCGE staff's remote working requirements
- Continued (and expanded) the use of the 'Microsoft 365' cloud-based productivity platform, including 'Teams' for internal coordination and video conferencing
- Purchased and integrated a 'Zoom' Licence for external meetings and webinar delivery
- Purchase and used 'Slido' cloud-based polling software
- Contracted an external online conference management company to facilitate the delivery of the National Guidance Forum online

Reporting

Throughout 2020, NCGE continued to provide briefing documents and information on guidance counselling and guidance related issues to Dept. Education (DE) and the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) NCGE also provided information to SOLAS and other Departments and agencies. NCGE continued to ensure compliance with completion of various reports to DE and other Government departments on issues such as finance, environment, energy efficiency, procurement and parliamentary questions, etc.

10. NATIONAL FORUM ON GUIDANCE

The National Forum on Guidance provides an informal communication and co-operation facility for those involved in the provision of guidance and the development and support of guidance practitioners and services. Participants include organisations and individuals providing guidance in both the education and the public employment sector. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, one planned for the Spring of 2020 could not be facilitated. It was however re-scheduled and took place (online for the first time) in Autumn 2020.

See - www.ncge.ie/national-forum-guidance

11. FREEDOM OF INFORMATION & PROTECTED DISCLOSURES

NCGE became subject to the Freedom of Information Act with effect from 31st May 2006.

See - www.ncge.ie/ncge/foi-aie-protected-disclosures

Section 22 of the Protected Disclosures Act 2014 requires the publication of a report each year relating to the number of protected disclosures made in the preceding year and any actions taken in response to such disclosures. *No protected disclosures were received by NCGE in the reporting period up to 31st December 2020.* [Access 2020 Report](#)

12. FINANCIAL REPORT

NCGE Funding

NCGE core funding is provided by DoE Curriculum and Assessment Policy Unit (CAP). This includes funding for the provision of the European Schools Guidance Programme on behalf of the Department. SOLAS provides the grant to NCGE to fund the support and developments for FET based guidance including AEGI CPD and other FET based guidance within ETBs and the overall FET sector. NCGE hosts and manages the Euroguidance Centre for Ireland which is co-funded from the Department CAP grant and the EU Commission. 2020 marked the final year of the multi-annual 3-year funding for Euroguidance 2018-2020.

NCGE Summary Accounts 2020

NCGE financial accounts are published each year within the Léargas Audited accounts.

Expenditure as detailed below includes activities pertaining to the development of policy and the delivery of service to support development and delivery of quality guidance practice in post-primary schools and FET sector.

Detailed financial reports are provided quarterly and annually via income and expenditure returns to DES, the Board of Léargas and appropriate financial returns to the EU Commission for EU funded programmes.

NCGE Summary Accounts as detailed in the Léargas audited accounts:

	<i>Income Euro</i>	<i>Expenditure Euro</i>
DES CAP UNIT	600,000	536,621
SOLAS	278,000	278,000
Other Total <i>(Including Euroguidance)</i>	43,629	107,008
Total	921,629	921,629

Appendix 1 - NCGE STAFF IN 2020

Jennifer McKenzie	Director
Mary Stokes	Guidance Programme Coordinator (FET)
Carol Guildea	Guidance Programme Coordinator (Post-primary)
Orla Ní Cheallaigh	Guidance Officer (Euroguidance)
David Cullen	Communications Officer
Jean Rafferty	Office Administrator
Luke Dunne	Guidance Programme Administrator

Appendix 2 - NCGE Management of Guidance Committee Members

<i>Paul King</i>	<i>DCU (Chair)</i>
<i>Jennifer McKenzie</i>	NCGE (ex Officio)
<i>Karen Murtagh</i>	DES / DoE
<i>Seán P O'Briain</i>	DES / DoE
<i>Jim Mullin</i>	Léargas
<i>Máire Quinn</i>	Léargas
<i>Josephine McGread</i>	AGA
<i>Justin McGree</i>	IGC
<i>Kathy Finnegan</i>	NAPD
<i>Roisin Doherty</i>	SOLAS
<i>Fiona Davis</i>	HEA
<i>Mary B. Ryan</i>	DSGC
<i>Stephen Fitzgerald</i>	DEASP/ DSP
<i>Joe Cunningham</i>	ETBI

Appendix 3 – NCGE Strategic Plan (JUNE 2019 – DECEMBER 2020)

Preamble

The Department of Education & Skills (DES) has informed NCGE of the Minister's decision to extend the term of the current NCGE Management of Guidance Committee (MGC) to **31/12/2020** with the possibility of further extension as appropriate.

The NCGE MGC agreed to extend the NCGE Strategic Plan 2015-2017 to end 2018 pending the outcome of the DES Indecon¹ Review of Careers Information and Tools.

The DES Action Plan for Education 2019 outlines in:

Goal 4- Action 55: *“Establish an implementation task force within the DES to drive the proposed reforms arising from the career guidance review”*

Action 55.2: *Prioritise which of the other actions in the Indecon report on the review of career guidance might be progressed and progress implementation of priority actions.*

Following the DES publication of this Review Report in April 2019, the MGC awaits the decisions of the DES Task Force on the priorities agreed. In this context, the MGC is fully aware that a review of this current plan may be required pending the decisions of DES.

Government of Ireland Sustainable Development Goals

Lifelong Guidance, by definition, supports the individual to make appropriate choices and decisions for their career, education and life path. Core principles of guidance ensure impartiality and supporting equal opportunities for all.

Eu Council Resolution 2008 ² on **better integrating lifelong guidance into lifelong learning strategies** states:

“... the definition of guidance as referring to a continuous process that enables citizens at any age and at any point in their lives to identify their capacities, competences and interests, to make educational, training and occupational decisions and to manage their individual life paths in learning, work and other settings in which those capacities and competences are learned and/or used.”

In accordance with Government of Ireland requirements and to contribute to achieving the *UN Sustainable Development Goals*, the NCGE Strategic Plan 2019-2020 supports the development of sustainable guidance policy and practice specifically in line with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, SDG 5 and SDG 8, outlined below, as appropriate.

- **Goal 4.** *Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.*³
- **Goal 5.** *Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*⁴
- **Goal 8.** *Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all*⁵

¹ Indecon won the DES tendered contract in 2018 to complete the DES required review of Careers Information and Tools

² <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ%3AC%3A2008%3A319%3A0004%3A0007%3AEN%3APDF>

³ <https://sdg4education2030.org/the-goal>

⁴ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg5>

⁵ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg8>

NCGE STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2020

NCGE Strategic Plan will cover the timeframe of **June 2019–December 2020**.

The following is the Vision, Mission and Aims elements of the NCGE Strategic Plan as revised and agreed by DES and the MGC.

VISION

Leading and shaping guidance **policy and** practice to enable the learner to make informed and appropriate life choices.

MISSION

Develop, support and influence **guidance policy and** quality guidance provision in the education and training sector as part of lifelong learning in accordance with national and international best practice.

AIMS

The National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE), an agency of DES, was established in 1995 and operates under the aegis of Léargas.

The aims of NCGE, as outlined by DES, include:

- promoting the implementation of best practice in guidance counselling in schools, centres for education, and Further Education and Training (FET) settings
- promoting the implementation of best practice in guidance counselling in non-formal settings in accordance with national priorities
- advising on policy and strategies for the promotion of a continuum of guidance in the context of lifelong learning
- providing advice, support, materials and resources for guidance counselling in education and FET
- advising on high quality and relevant initial guidance counselling education and training and to provide continuing professional development (CPD) for guidance practitioners
- organising the provision of guidance to Irish nationals in European Schools
- contributing to the exchange of information on guidance counselling provision and practice with other guidance and employment services, through the National Resource Centre (Euroguidance Centre) both in Ireland and in other Member States of the EU

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

DES - Léargas/NCGE Performance Delivery Agreement

Considering the main aims of NCGE, the DES Performance Delivery Agreement (PDA), agreed with Léargas/NCGE in December 2019, outlines the following: -

- The DES PDA clearly states that DES is responsible for overarching policy for the FET Sector, including guidance
- SOLAS will oversee the development and evaluation of guidance provision and fund NCGE work in supporting implementation of the strategic priorities of the FET Strategy as relates to Guidance. This includes agreement of annual funding and work plans

Contd/...

- NCGE will be responsible for the following: -
 - acting as a centre of excellence for guidance, in relation to Post-Primary and Further Education
 - participating in any successor meetings to the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN) Meetings, or other EU Commission meetings relating to lifelong guidance
 - continuing with the coordination, development of resources and delivery of supports in Whole School Guidance (WSG) Planning Programme considering DES Circular 09/2012
 - continuing as an active member of the Euroguidance network activities
 - developing a Strategic Plan for NCGE for 2019 - 2020
 - coordinating and hosting further meetings of the National Forum on Guidance
 - delivering key actions outlined in the Action Plan for Education

NCGE Strategic Plan 2019-2020

To inform the policy of DES and support the development and implementation of quality guidance practice in Post-Primary and FET in accordance with national and international good practice.

Key Objectives

- Inform, influence, facilitate and support the development of the DES Lifelong Guidance Policy
- Inform, influence, facilitate, develop and support the implementation of quality guidance practice in post-primary schools and FET Sector
- Provide guidelines, resources and materials to support quality guidance practice and policy development
- Promote and support a National and EU focus to Guidance Policy Provision and Practice
- Coordinate and deliver continuing professional development to guidance practitioners in schools and FET in collaboration with stakeholders
- Adhere to DES Governance and Compliance Requirements

The NCGE Key Strategic Activities for 2019-2020 include:

1. General Guidance Policy

- i. Inform and collaborate with DES on prioritised actions agreed from the recommendations of the DES Review of Careers Information and Tools
- ii. Inform and collaborate with DES on prioritised actions of ongoing national guidance policy and practice across the Education and FET sectors
- iii. Participate and represent DES at EU and International level on the development of Lifelong Guidance Policy to inform national policy decisions
- iv. Support DES in the continued process of the Programme Recognition Framework
- v. Liaise on behalf of DES, with the Department of Health on the CORU registration for Counsellors and Psychotherapists
- vi. Explore and inform DES on evidence-based and evidence-informed planning to include research and pilot projects as appropriate

2. General Programme

- i. Convene, host and chair various committees on behalf of DES to inform guidance policy (e.g., the Advisory Committee on Psychometric Tests, Committee of the Directors of Studies of Guidance Counselling)
- ii. Convene, host and chair various working groups, as appropriate, with DES and relevant stakeholders to inform and develop quality guidance practice
- iii. Coordinate and host the National Forum on Guidance twice per year
- iv. Inform, influence, advise and collaborate with relevant stakeholders to support the development of quality guidance practice in Education and FET sectors
- v. Provision of Continuous Professional development programme to support quality guidance delivery for guidance practitioners in schools and FET

3. Post-Primary Guidance

- i. Roll out nationally of CPD programmes on WSG Framework to post-primary schools
- ii. Implement Phase 2 of the Pilot Project on WSG
- iii. Develop further online resources for Post-Primary Guidance Policy and Provision
- iv. Establish links with relevant agencies to further develop supports and resources for schools
- v. Consider and explore the development of a data-gathering system for guidance in post-primary, in collaboration with DES
- vi. Promote European mobility in schools through *Euro-Quest* modules for TY in collaboration with Euroguidance
- vii. Consider and explore pilot project with DDELTB regarding guidelines for EAL links to Guidance in schools

4. FET Guidance

- i. Inform and influence DES and SOLAS on the FET Guidance Strategy including exploration of wider FET sector guidance needs
- ii. Collaborate with ETBI and ETBs on the support and development of quality guidance provision in line with the FET Guidance Strategy
- iii. Review, revise and redevelop the Adult Guidance Management System (AGMS) as a FET Guidance Management System to include proposal for funding and national development, as agreed with SOLAS
- iv. Provide online resources for FET guidance policy and provision
- v. Promote European mobility in FET sector in collaboration with Euroguidance
- vi. Consider and explore pilot project with DDELTB regarding guidelines for EAL links to Guidance in FET
- vii. Inform the development of appropriate guidelines for collaboration of guidance and RPL

5. European Programme

- i. Deliver Euroguidance activities and report in accordance with EU Commission requirements
- ii. Collaborate with QQI – EUROPASS as per EU Commission guidelines and national priorities
- iii. Participate in EU Commission EUROPASS Advisory Group, in collaboration with QQI
- iv. Promote European mobility in collaboration with Post-Primary and FET Programmes in NCGE
- v. Participate actively in EG Network activities through working groups, hosting and attending study visits
- vi. Coordinate and deliver the guidance service to European Schools, on behalf of the DES Inspectorate, to include an overarching Review and Recommendations report for the development of the Service from 2020

6. NCGE Communications

- i. Provide online resources through websites (NCGE and Euroguidance)
- ii. Deliver NCGE monthly Bulletin
- iii. Inform stakeholders and clients on International, European and National issues of guidance policy and practice through general reports and the twice-yearly online magazine 'Guidance Matters'
- iv. Maintain NCGE contact database of guidance stakeholders nationally and internationally

7. Staffing, Governance and Administration

- i. Support NCGE Staff to include an appropriate Performance Management System, CPD and succession planning
- ii. Adherence to and completion of reports for DES in compliance with DES procedures
- iii. Collaborate within Léargas to ensure compliance with and adherence to administration, financial and HR policies, including Internal Audit
- iv. Upgrade NCGE ICT office systems to Microsoft 365
- v. Ensure Risk Compliance is explored at all convened MGC meetings
- vi. Report to Léargas Board as appropriate

GLOSSARY

AEGI	Adult Educational Guidance Initiative
AECS	Adult Education Guidance Services
AGA	Adult Guidance Association
AGMS	Adult Guidance Management System
CAP	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Unit (DES)
CDETБ	City of Dublin Education and Training Board
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CTC	Community Training Centre
DEASP/DSP	Dept. Employment Affairs and Social Protection/ Dept. Social Protection
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
DES/DoE	Dept. Education and Skills / Dept. of Education
D FHERIS	Dept. Further and Higher Education, Research Innovation and Science
DSGC	Directors of Studies in Guidance Counselling
EAAL	European Agenda for Adult Learning
ELGPN	European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network
ENIC	European Network of National Information Centres
EPALE	Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe
EQUAVET	European Quality strategies in Vocational Education and Training
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
EURES	European Employment Services
ETB	Education and Training Board
ETBI	Education and Training Boards Ireland
FET	Further Education and Training
HEA	Higher Education Authority
IAEVG	International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance
IGC	Institute of Guidance Counsellors
ILSA	Irish Learning Support Association
LESN	Local Employment Support Network
MGC	NCGE Management of Guidance Committee
NALA	National Adult Literacy Agency
NARIC	National Academic Recognition Information Centre
NEPS	National Educational Psychological Services
PSI	Psychological Society Ireland
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
SOLAS	An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna.
TCA	Transnational Cooperation Activity
VLE	Virtual Learning Environment