



Lárionad Náisiúnta um Threoir san Oideachas  
National Centre for Guidance in Education



An Roinn Oideachais  
agus Scileanna  
Department of  
Education and Skills

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## 19th- 21st February - Exploring the challenges of providing meaningful guidance in a multicultural context in the Further Education and Training (FET) system in Ireland with reference to upskilling and 'The New Skills Agenda'.

**Euroguidance Ireland** hosted a Study Visit on 19<sup>th</sup>- 21<sup>st</sup> February in Dublin to explore the challenges of providing meaningful guidance in a multicultural context in the Further Education and Training (FET) system in Ireland with reference to upskilling and 'The New Skills Agenda'.

It was hosted in the National Centre of Guidance in Education (NCGE) in Parnell Street, Dublin.

Participants in the study group were from the National Resource Centre for Guidance in Estonia, the House of Guidance in Luxembourg, the Student Guidance Service in Karel de Grote College in Belgium, the Labour Office and Career Services in the Czech Republic, and the Guidance and Counselling Resource Centre in Suceava, Romania.

The study visit explored guidance delivery in a multicultural context in Ireland which included presentations from practitioners across a variety of contexts and site visits to community education and training centres in the Dublin area. The participants and presenters discussed the challenges of providing meaningful guidance in a multicultural context and the members of the group shared examples of good practice with each other.

### Education in Ireland:

The **Department of Education and Skills** operates the education system in Ireland. This consists of Primary schools for students aged 4-12, Post Primary schools for students aged 12-18, Further Education Colleges/ Post Leaving Cert- vocational education for students age 18 + and Higher education in Universities & Institutes of Technology.

The majority of Further Education and Training courses are delivered through the **Education and Training Boards** (ETBs). These are regional statutory authorities who have responsibility for education and training, and a range of other statutory functions. ETBs manage and operate second-level schools, further education colleges, multi-faith community national schools and a range of adult and further education centres delivering education and training programmes.

**Adult Educational Guidance Services (AEGS)** are based in the ETBs, providing guidance at a local level to adults who wish to return to education or are attending FET programmes. AEGS provides a guidance service to adults which includes impartial adult education information, one - to - one guidance and group guidance which will help people to make informed educational, career and life choices.

A significant aspect of the Irish AEGS model is the integration and outreach to Adult Community Education Centres around Ireland. This is important as it facilitates access to quality Guidance, while Community Education provides a vital and invaluable part of the Irish Adult Education landscape – Community education may provide English Language along with other free education options for persons who are currently engaged with the Asylum Seeking Process.

**Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)** is responsible for the external quality assurance of further and higher education and training (including English language provision) and validates programmes and makes awards for certain providers in these sectors. QQI is also responsible for the maintenance, development and review of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

QQI hosts the following agencies:

**ENIC:** European Network of Information Centres in the European Region

**NARIC:** National Academic Recognition Information Centres in the European Union in Ireland.

**Day 1:** There was an information sharing session with the first three presentations in NCGE from the director of NCGE, Euroguidance Officer and the Guidance Programme Coordinator (FET) on an overview of the Irish Education System, the role of Euroguidance Ireland in Ireland and Europe, and the challenge of providing meaningful guidance in a multicultural context. This gave the participants an insight to guidance systems, practice and developing projects in Ireland and the role of Euroguidance Ireland in Europe.

In exchange, the visiting participants gave short presentations on their guidance systems and practice in their countries with reference to multicultural guidance. This provided scope for reflections on the similarities and differences in guidance provision between European countries.

This was followed by a presentation by the Head of Information Services in **Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)** on the Irish ENIC-NARIC Centre.

In the afternoon, the Guidance Counsellor (GC) and Guidance Information Officer (GIO) from the City of Dublin Education and Training Board (CDET) gave an overview of guidance information provision for multicultural clients in preparation for a site visit where the visiting group would see a guidance information provision session in action in the community. A discussion was facilitated on quality Guidance Counselling in the AEGS model and meeting the challenges in the context of multicultural needs.

That evening, the study group visited an inner city Community Education Centre; Henrietta Adult and Community Education (HACE) for an introduction and overview of the classes provided and met the students from various backgrounds who use the centre. The group attended the scheduled guidance information session for students focusing on local adult education information.



**Day 2:** The group visited Ballyfermot Training Centre, part of the CDET in West Dublin where the Recruitment Officers presented on the Apprenticeships and Traineeships programmes in the centre. The group discussion considered the public perception of degree qualifications over apprenticeships, and other country representatives agreed that it is the same across Europe; this is a constant challenge for guidance counsellors to counteract the growing trend and support students to consider apprenticeships as much as academic qualifications.

During the visit the group viewed workshops, from electrical to motor mechanics, vehicle body repair and plumbing to classroom based courses such as the Medical Administration class and spoke to students and received short presentations from tutors.

Back to NCGE in the afternoon for a presentation by an Adult Education Guidance Counsellor from a South East AEGS service in Waterford and Wexford Education and Training Board (WWETB). As part of the 'target groups' accessing the (ETB) Adult Education Guidance Services, Guidance Counselling services are delivered to the Irish Syrian Refugee Programme. A case study was outlined which considered the challenges faced by refugees which generated discussion in the group on how guidance could be delivered in their countries in a similar way.



**Day 3:** The group visited the Business in the Community Centre (BITC) in Phibsborough, directly north of the city centre. There the group joined a class run by Employment for People from Immigrant Communities (EPIC), a support service for immigrants and refugees. The CDET AEGS Guidance Information Officer informed them of the AEGS Guidance Service, and explored opportunities for them to move on to further education and employment. The students in this group were from countries such as Brazil, Venezuela and Argentina and they had come to Ireland with various qualifications from certificates to degrees and were looking to build on what they had to move towards steady employment. Questions about public and private colleges, ENIC-NARIC and the National Framework of Qualifications were some of the queries which arose here.

The group was introduced to staff members who work in the BITC centre for EPIC and availed of the opportunity for small group discussions to find out about what EPIC does and how it might relate to their own countries.

The final workshop session was run by NCGE to reflect on and consider the site visits and presentations. They were invited to identify their own beliefs and assumptions regarding the challenges and practice issues in providing guidance in a multicultural and upskilling context. In their groups they shared their reflections and their national experiences.

Finally, participants were asked to complete a study visit evaluation sheet to help NCGE review and plan for further visits.



## Evaluation:

Summarising the contents of the evaluation sheets, the following had been noted by the participants:

- The first site visit to HACE was of particular interest to some study group participants because they did not have such a community education system in their own countries.
- In the second visit to Ballyfermot Training Centre, the group was interested to see the range of apprenticeship courses and noted how easily mature students can access the centre.
- In the third visit to the Business in the Community Centre (BITC) it was a good opportunity for the study group to see a guidance information session in action and hear the questions the students had for the Guidance Information Officer.
- The participants noted and were impressed by the recurring references by staff and students alike to the National Framework Qualifications and how embedded it is in the Irish education system. The ENIC-NARIC process was discussed at intervals throughout the study visit and how it can be used as a supportive guidance tool for multicultural clients.
- The group felt that they got an excellent overview of guidance in the Further Education and Training area in the national context in Ireland. They commented that the presentations from NCGE, Euroguidance, QQI, AEGS and Community Education together with group discussion provided them with ideas and inspiration to continue the development of guidance practice in their countries.

**More information and all presentations can be accessed at**

**<https://euroguidance.ie/study-visits>**