

News from around Europe

News from Ireland



by Lucy Hearne

In Ireland, the provision of a professional guidance counselling service in the post-primary sector (ages 12-18 approximately) gained legislative legitimacy through Section 9 (C) of the 1998 Education Act. This Act specified that schools had to "ensure that students have access to appropriate guidance to assist them in their educational and career choices". Great inroads were made in the preceding ten years within the sector to provide quality guidance services to young people using the three dimensional approach to guidance counselling provision (personal/social, educational, vocational/ career).

However, in December, 2011 the Irish Government approved the removal of the ex-quota in guidance counselling allocation in its fiscal Budget for 2012. Since September, 2012, the new arrangements for provision of services in second level schools have resulted in professionally qualified guidance counsellors teaching curriculum subjects in conjunction with their guidance work. Furthermore, greater autonomy has been given to the managers of post-primary schools in the allocation of guidance resources resulting in the diminution of quality guidance services to students in the last academic year, 2012-2013. Prior to this new budgetary measure, the allocation of guidance hours was 1 post (22 hours) for a student population of 500-799. This decreased or increased in line with student numbers.

Despite the recommendations by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) in 2012 that schools are required to follow the DES (2005) guidelines on the implementation of the Education Act Section 9 (C) current evidence suggests that the service is under significant threat and liable to become eroded unless there is a reversal of the current policy.

In the last twelve months a number of professional bodies have published findings highlighting the fractured nature of provision on the ground (ASTI Survey, 2013; IGC Audit, 2013 (ongoing); JMB Survey 2012; NCGE 2013). In particular, the IGC and NCGE surveys have indicated that there has been an overall 21.4% and 25% reduction in the service respectively, with wide variation in delivery across the different secondary school sectors. Similar policy developments have emerged in the last two years in England where the erosion of face-to-face services and a shift to remote online or telephone-based services is now proving extremely insufficient for supporting young people in their progression (Barnardos research by Evans & Rallings, 2013; Ofsted, 2013). For further information on the Irish surveys: <http://www.igc.ie> and <http://www.ncge.ie>

News from Spain



by Luis Sobrado

In the 2nd International Conference of Models of Educational Research at the University of Alicante (Spain) from September 4-6 in 2013, a symposium on "Research Training and Intervention in University Guidance" took place. The resulting paper integrates results from the European projects NICE 1 and NICE 2, which were included through the professors Luis Sobrado, Elena Fernández and Cristina Ceinos from the University of Santiago de Compostela (Spain). The title of the paper is "Competences and Plans of the Counsellor Training".

News from Denmark



Associate Professor Rie Thomsen, member of the NICE network from Aarhus University, has won this year's DKK 25,000 Guidance Award.

Rie Thomsen's research field is "guidance in communities". Schultz's Guidance Award (DKK 25,000) is awarded every second year to a guidance practitioner who has made a

special effort for education and career guidance in Denmark. The aim of the award is to promote and encourage initiative and innovation for the benefit of Danish educational, business and career guidance. The award was presented by the Danish Association of Guidance Practitioners in connection with a conference held in Vejle for guidance practitioners at continuation schools in Denmark. The chair of the Guidance Award committee, Birgit Heie, explains the choice of Rie Thomsen as follows:

"Since completing her PhD dissertation, Rie Thomsen has actively and tirelessly worked to spread her ideas about getting guidance practitioners out of their offices and encouraging them to mingle with communities of people who are looking for guidance. She has inspired the guidance environment in her lectures and presentations at conferences in Denmark and abroad, in her research network, in her teaching, and in books and articles. It is difficult to overestimate her significance for guidance practice in Denmark."

Rie Thomsen has played a major role in the innovation of guidance for young people who are looking for courses of further education. Serious education and career guidance always used to involve one-to-one discussions behind closed doors. But in her PhD dissertation in 2009, entitled "Vejledning i fællesskaber", Rie Thomsen demonstrated why it was such a good idea for guidance practitioners to get out of their offices and mingle with people looking for guidance in their own environments.

This is how Rie Thomsen explains her own distinctive approach to guidance: "New perspectives and opportunities arise when you challenge traditional ways of thinking, and start conducting guidance sessions in communities. For instance, young people considering various courses of further education can learn from the experiences of current students, establishing ties and relationships that can help them to make up their minds. Guidance practitioners become facilitators, and communities can offer both opportunities and suggestions. Guidance also becomes less private, and the people looking for guidance say they feel less alone with their problems. This helps to ease the pressure. These days, young people often feel that they are always expected to do the right thing."