

Léargas  
Annual  
Report

2010

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# Contents

Foreword.....from the Chairman .....	2
Introduction... from the Executive Director .....	3
Lifelong Learning .....	4
Leonardo da Vinci (LdV) .....	5
Study Visits for Education and Vocational Training Specialists and Decision Makers .....	8
Comenius .....	10
eTwinning .....	14
Grundtvig .....	15
Youth in Action.....	19
Eurodesk .....	25
Europa Diary.....	26
Mind Your Rights.....	26
Language Teaching and Learning.....	27
WorldWise .....	31
IAESTE Student Exchange.....	32
Causeway .....	33
National Centre for Guidance in Education .....	34
Summary of Key Outputs for 2010 .....	35
Léargas .....	40
Summary Accounts 2010 .....	41

## Foreword.....from the Chairman

This year's Annual Report continues to register achievement in the varied and extensive range of activities and services offered by Léargas and this within the context of the continuing challenges presented by the economic climate.

Despite some reductions in applicant numbers in a small number of categories, the demand for vocational education, youth work services, adult learning and language and exchange services continues to show growth. We consistently reach significant numbers of young people, adult learners, teachers, trainers and education and training professionals. The services we offer are adjudged by participants and independent evaluators to be highly relevant and not only meet specific needs in an international and intercultural framework but in some respects are filling gaps for work experience and in-service training which are emerging in Ireland due to current circumstances.

Our partnerships with schools, colleges, universities, youth, community and adult development organisations and businesses is crucial to the provision of these services. As mentioned throughout the report this year, the economic climate has had an impact on the level of activity in vocational education, youth and adult education support systems which in turn has affected the ability of those organisations to allocate resources to international exchange and cooperation programmes. It is a mark both of the relevance of such programmes and the innovative capacity of the organisations involved that they continue to place such a high priority on their continued participation in these activities. Despite current challenges, activity and interest remains strong.

Equally the Agency itself has been managing the continuing challenges for staffing posed by the embargo on recruitment in the public service. At this time our reliance on the dedication, commitment and professionalism of our staff team continues to be the central plank of our success. I take this opportunity to thank them, and the members of the Board, for their untiring and exceptional efforts.

The innovative and professional work of Léargas continues to act as a framework through which Irish organisations and individuals can engage with new ideas and experiences from outside the country. These contacts not only enrich the personal experience of the world of work or education but enliven and illuminate new approaches, strategies and methods. For an island nation on the edge of Europe the opportunity to bring a European and international dimension to the work of educators, learners and institutions is an invaluable contribution to the essential task of nation-building and was never more important than it is today.

Eamonn Kinch  
Chairman

## Introduction... from the Executive Director

The year 2010 was one in which Léargas faced some challenges, recorded significant success and continued the process of improving, integrating and standardising its services. While a handful of programmes saw a slight reduction in the numbers of applications most of the fifty or so programmes managed by the Agency saw increased demand and increased numbers of participants.

In the early Summer, a key time for mobility, a number of projects encountered difficulties related to the Icelandic volcanic ash cloud which forced a number of planned mobilities to be cancelled or rescheduled. There were a small number of groups that had to spend a longer time in partner countries due to the cancellation of their return flight and some had to travel home by alternative means; one group of teachers stayed longer than they wanted in Schipol airport (almost a week). It is a credit to all concerned that these exceptional conditions were managed efficiently and with minimum disturbance to the participants.

This year also saw the convergence of a range of external audits, assessments and evaluations of the Agency and its various programmes by a variety of stakeholders. This activity further challenged staff resources which are already stretched as a result of the embargo on public service recruitment. It is a great credit to the staff team that they managed to meet these additional demands with such a high level of professionalism and I take this opportunity to express to them my deepest thanks.

A number of important operational changes were introduced in 2010 designed to enhance the effectiveness of our services. These included the development and implementation of a 'random selection tool' for identifying projects for the various types of primary checks which we are required to perform in relation to project activity. A reconciliation procedure was developed and began to be implemented in 2010 and will continue on a planned monthly basis in 2011. Further synergies and harmonisation of the wide range of diverse activities which we support will be gained from the continuation of cross-sectoral thematic workshops which were tested for the first time in 2010.

It is heartening to note a number of important trends such as an increase in pupil mobility in Europe particularly at primary school level; the high quality of many of the outputs produced for finalised 2010 projects across a range of sectoral activity; the high level of interest in school partnerships outside Europe (in Africa, Asia and beyond); and the increased and innovative use of ICT in project delivery including the use of websites, wikis, blogs, Skype, twitter, Facebook, etc.

In 2010 the Agency continued its emphasis on promotion but where appropriate, linked this to activities focused mainly on improving the capacity of organisations to engage effectively in international cooperation and exchange. Our promotional strategies have proven to be effective in increasing the sustainability of results and our innovative use of social networking tools now allow us to interface with participants and key stakeholders in real-time.

A clear and consistent message that has emerged in our interaction with education and training, youth work and adult learner sectors in these challenging times is that international cooperation and exchange is now even more important and relevant to what they do. This in turn reinvigorates our commitment to provide them with the broadest and most effective range of opportunities in this field in the coming year and beyond.

Jim Mullin  
Executive Director

## Lifelong Learning

Léargas is the Irish National Agency for three actions of the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) – a flagship initiative of the European Union integrating various vocational education and training initiatives to enable individuals at all stages of their lives to pursue stimulating learning opportunities across Europe.

The objective of the programme in the period 2007-13 is to develop and foster exchange, cooperation and mobility, so that education and training systems become a world quality reference in accordance with the Lisbon strategy. It thus contributes to the development of the European Union as an advanced knowledge-based society, with sustainable economic development, more and better jobs and greater social cohesion.

The three sub-programmes which are managed in Ireland by Léargas are:

- **Leonardo da Vinci** for vocational education and training
- **Comenius** for schools
- **Grundtvig** for adult education

The fourth sub-programme Erasmus for higher education is managed in Ireland by the Higher Education Authority. In addition, a transversal programme aims to ensure that all sub-programmes achieve the best results possible; Study Visits form one of the strands of the transversal programme.

A major feature of the Lifelong Learning Programme in Ireland in 2010 was the hosting by Léargas of a very successful dissemination and valorisation conference on the theme of *Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion* in October 2010. This conference was followed by a series of thematic monitoring workshops on the following themes:

- Sharing best practice and information in school education
- Mentoring and guidance for lifelong learning
- Practical Application of Information and Communication Technologies within Projects (communication, dissemination, management) for Lifelong Learning
- A Journey through the Lifelong Learning Programme (benefits, impact and sustainability)

In association with the HEA, Léargas published a booklet of case studies showcasing projects that contributed to the European Year of Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. This booklet was launched at the conference and is available on the Léargas website.

In 2010 an Interim Evaluation of the Implementation of the Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-2013 in Ireland was carried out by Indecon Economic Consultants which helped to measure the impact and success of these activities. The study notes that “the LLP is generally running efficiently and supporting the delivery of a wide range of projects that are complementing and adding value to national policies and initiatives”. It also states that “The ‘synergies’ associated with the integration of the LLP include:

- closer working between the two National Agencies, including the joint production of two booklets show-casing examples of best practices;
- synergies between Study Visits and the Comenius, Leonardo and Grundtvig sub-programmes; and
- synergies between eTwinning and Comenius.

The integrated LLP has also helped in bringing EU policy closer to national policy on lifelong learning”.

## Leonardo da Vinci (LdV)

The European Commission pursues several goals within the Leonardo da Vinci programme which is one of the central supporting instruments of the Lifelong Learning Programme and aims to promote and enhance the development of vocational education and training.

A national General Information and Promotion meeting was held in Dublin on November 2010 to provide a general introduction to LLP as a whole. A series of Cross-sectoral thematic monitoring meetings were also held in 2010 involving participants from Comenius, Grundtvig, Leonardo da Vinci, and the Study Visits programmes. Booklets of case studies of LLP projects and activities were disseminated to relevant sectors. These activities and other dissemination and promotion measures were very useful and feedback from beneficiaries telling us that they found collaboration very informative and rewarding.

### ***LdV Mobility***

The LdV Mobility sub-programme offers trainees and employees the chance to gain training and work experience in another European country. They can acquire new vocational, language and other skills, adapt to new situations, and gain insight into how training and workplace environments operate in other countries. For those who manage, deliver or design vocational training, the action offers an opportunity to visit European partners to exchange expertise, experience and innovative practices and methods in Vocational Education and Training (VET).

The target for 2010 was to fund 450 participants across all three categories of initial vocational training (IVT), people in the labour market (PLM), and vocational education and training professionals (VETPro). This target was far exceeded as 727 bursaries were funded across all categories. In the IVT category 469 persons were funded across 12 projects: an increase of 153 from 2009. Although the number of projects funded in the PLM category was reduced from 7 in 2009 to 4 in 2010, these were larger in size and the total number of persons increased from 115 to 118. Significant increases were seen in the VETPRO category where the number of projects doubled from 5 in 2009 to 10 in 2010 and the number of persons supported by the programme rose from 80 to 140.

As part of the ongoing quality assurance mandate of Léargas, a *Contract Guidelines* workshop was held for the 2010 generation of LdV Mobility projects. It covered a range of topics, including quality, dissemination/exploitation and project reporting.

At a time of severe economic recession in Ireland the opportunities provided by the Leonardo da Vinci mobility programme for work-based training are partly filling a serious gap in the Irish vocational education and training system. Trainees are alert to the significant advantages accruing from overseas work experience in terms of securing employment in Ireland and elsewhere. VET providers have highlighted this which in turn has strengthened their commitment to a strong European dimension in the programme. The opportunities which the programme affords to disadvantaged and special needs trainees has lent it respect and credibility and heightened its attractiveness with all stakeholders in the Irish VET system. The transfer of best practice—through VETPRO in particular—has led to important innovations in vocational education and training in Ireland and further enhanced the commitment of policy makers to the programme.

Examples of projects funded under each category are:

#### ***Initial Vocational Training (IVT): Studies in Creative Media***

Second year trainees on the Pulse Recording College (Dublin) which specialises in creative media education, were given a vocational training placement in the UK which allowed

opportunity to combine real world experience with technical skills to enhance their capacity as work ready employees for the digital audio media industry. The project was integrated into the second year of the participants' two year course of and complied with several of their Further Education Training Awards Council (FETAC) Modules, including: Communications; Work Experience; Sound Engineering; Media Analysis and Media Production.

***People in the Labour Market (PLM): Sustainable Building Techniques***

Tipperary Institute were a first-time applicant under the programme and their project "Competence Enhancement in Sustainable Building Through European Mobility" aimed to up-skill participants in European methods of efficient building and contribute to the implementation of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive in Ireland (EPBD). Theoretical aspects of the work programme included modules such as exhibition, e-learning, leaflets, brochures and guides, electronic structure, marketing and project management. These were complemented by practical experience in Germany in the Baden – Wurttemberg Carpentry and the Timber Construction Trade Association.

***Vocational Education and Training professionals (VETPro): Professional Development***

An example of types of training activities undertaken in the VETPRO category is that of The National Centre for Guidance in Education. During the week long exchange programme, participants, who are guidance practitioners, work –shadowed guidance practitioners working with different target groups in a variety of countries across Europe. They attended presentations on guidance issues and guidance systems and practices. They met with trainers of guidance counselors, industry, education representatives, those involved in work related and industry based guidance (business, education links etc) while informally exchanging best practice with participants from other countries. The exchange involved "work shadowing", workplace visits and information sessions. Each country has a unique aspect on the training, delivery and practice of guidance and counselling. Exposure to varied work practice and cultural differences facilitated discussion and learning in VET guidance.

## ***LdV Transfer of Innovation***

The aim of Leonardo Multilateral Transfer of Innovation (TOI) Projects is to improve the quality and attractiveness of the European Vocational Education and Training system by adapting and integrating innovative content or results to new settings through working with transnational partners.

This involves the adaptation of innovative project results, their transfer, piloting and integration into public and private systems and practices at sectoral, national and Community level in response to the needs of new target groups and users.

During 2010 three separate meetings were held for each generation of TOI projects (ranging across the years 2008-10) covering topics such as quality and dissemination/exploitation: The number of project applications in 2010 at 15 was down on 2009 (25) though noticeably better than 2008 (9). Five projects were approved for funding in 2010.

These projects provide clear impacts in terms of 'exploitation' of project results or good practice as envisaged by the European Commission. This includes a planned process of transferring the successful results of programmes and initiatives to appropriate decision-makers or implementing programmes with other partners.

***Examples of completed (2007)TOI Projects follow:***

The **MedCap** project, promoted by Cork University Hospital in association with partners in Ireland, Hungary and Austria, identified the need for competence assessment tools—in particular in spinal anaesthesia. It has transferred an innovative competence assessment procedure (derived from Knowledge Space Theory) and used successfully in other sectors, to the medical domain.

The **EIPET** (European Inclusive Physical Education Training) is focused on the effective inclusion of persons with disabilities in mainstream education. It offers comprehensive and adaptable resources for organizations to readily incorporate inclusive physical education (PE) into training programmes. The project transferred the model and modules of inclusive PE training offered in the Institute of Technology Tralee to partners in the Czech Republic, Lithuania, France, Ireland and the UK in 2008-09. A further development in this process is that UNESCO is now working with EIPET to further this goal and to expand the project to other regions.

### ***LDV Partnerships***

Partnerships provide a framework for small-scale cooperation activities between VET organisations enabling them to exchange information at a European level. They facilitate groups to share good practice, discuss problems and compare solutions.

A total of 10 projects were funded in 2010, just one less than the previous year which was exactly on target. Partnership projects continued to be wide-ranging including: emergency services, leisure studies, building, medical services, computing, teaching and training and translation services.

#### **Examples of Partnership projects:**

***“European Music in Healthcare Settings”*** (2008) in which the Music Network Ireland was a partner is a very innovative project since for most of the partner countries it was the first time that musicians were involved in a healthcare setting. The project helped overcome barriers in working with local healthcare organizations. This was particularly evident in St. James Hospital in Dublin. The project succeeded in training a number of musicians in working in a healthcare setting, and promises to make a real impact among healthcare providers who avail of the service. Music Network Ireland plans to incorporate the training into their own Professional Development Programme.

***“Training Requirements and Nursing Skills for Mobility”*** (TraNSforM) project (2010), of St Angela's College, NUI Galway, includes development of a practical framework of skills for managing the impact of mobility for nurses, with trans-european sharing of experience and ideas. The 'TRaNSforM' framework will be used by nurses to self assess personal development and opportunities for learning intercultural competence and applied to work-based learning programmes to develop ideas and identify opportunities. The framework will be mapped to the European Qualifications Framework, and validation in the Europass system will be explored.

***“Supporting people with disabilities by technical aid during working processes”*** (2010) is a project of the Cork-based Cope Foundation. All partners cooperate with a local VET Institute or Sheltered Workshop to develop a Technical Aid which supports people with disabilities in the workplace. They will develop a 'Handbook of Construction' of all partner aids which will contain pictures, engineering drawings, specifications, development criteria etc, which will be disseminated in all partner languages and countries.

## Study Visits for Education and Vocational Training Specialists and Decision Makers

Study Visits form part of the Transversal Programme of the Lifelong Learning Programme. They provide a forum for discussion, exchange and mutual learning on themes of common interest at EU level. In 2010, 46 participants were funded to participate in the Study Visits Programme with a budget of €69,672. With the introduction of two deadlines in 2010 applications increased by 65%, more than doubling the 2009 application numbers.

Participation is aimed at those with responsibilities at local, regional or national levels to better understand specific aspects of education and vocational training policies and to enrich the flow of information between the participating countries and at European level. A study visit is a short stay of three to five days in a host country for a group of 10 to 15 European education and vocational training specialists and decision-makers.

The visits hosted in Ireland in 2010 were the result of ongoing research by Léargas ensuring staff remain up to date with policy developments at National and EU levels, consultation with key stakeholders, and suggestions from previous participants at a knowledge sharing & dissemination seminar hosted by Léargas.

The following visits were offered:

- **The NFQ, Quality Assurance and Recognition of Prior Learning held from 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> February 2010.** This visit was under the theme of Implementing common European tools, principles and frameworks for lifelong learning. Ten participants from **10 European Countries attended.** *‘Participants should aim to use the channels available to them to feed back on the Irish experience to policy makers in their home countries, and drive greater engagement with the European framework.’*
- **Fostering Tolerance in Education and the Community held from 2<sup>nd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> March 2010** under the theme of Development of learning communities, involving all actors in education and training. Fifteen participants from 12 different countries attended. *‘A web site has been created with the name [www.tolerance.ning.com](http://www.tolerance.ning.com) to share materials, researches, results and good practices. As a second step, future Comenius or Leonardo projects are foreseen. An e-twinning project will be developed.’*
- **The Continuous Professional Development of Teachers and Trainers held from the 27<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> April 2010** under the theme of “Keeping teaching and training attractive and improving leadership.” Fourteen participants from 9 different countries attended and found that *‘Many examples of good practice within Ireland could be implemented via peer collaboration and development of local projects in our countries’*
- **The NFQ implementation, quality assurance and EQF referencing was held from 12<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> October 2010** under the theme of “Implementing common European tools, principles and frameworks for lifelong learning.” Thirteen participants from 11 different European countries attended the visit and reported that there is *‘An excellent example of a system for improving adult literacy is in place in Ireland, designed with care of citizens’ well-being, well-suited to the needs and specific requirements of the various target groups, good promotion and dissemination of information and a provision of training courses in literacy and other basic skills for adults’*
- **Supporting Access to Vocational Education and Training for Disadvantaged Groups was held from 9<sup>th</sup> November to 12<sup>th</sup> November 2010** under the theme of Improving access, equity, quality and efficiency in education and training. Thirteen participants from 10 different European countries attended and felt that *‘This visit demonstrated flexible and*

*diverse pathways in VET helping to integrate disadvantaged people in both jobs and social life, showing effective ways to remove barriers, to support access and to implement active learning methods at all levels of the education system and for all groups experiencing inequality'*

- **Inclusion in School Education was held from 23<sup>rd</sup> November to 26<sup>th</sup> November 2010** under the theme of Improving access, equity, quality and efficiency in education and training. Fifteen participants from 12 different countries participated in the visit and noted that the visit was *'A very beneficial experience and it was good to discover that in Ireland links between the schools, community and other organisations are working not only with students but also with parents and the local environment'*

### **Case Study**

#### **Workplace Learning for Employability**

A Programme Support Manager from Skillnets attended 'Workplace Learning for Employability' in the Netherlands under the theme of education and training for employability. The Study Visit examined how the skill levels of employees are continuously developed and the role of workplace learning in Vocational Education and Training for employability.

The participant was particularly impressed with the level of collaboration between stakeholders in the Netherlands. Government policy has an important role to play: for example, making municipal authorities responsible for VET provision on a regional basis in the Netherlands has created strong ties and increased regional collaboration between local authorities, employers and VET providers. The Study Visit provided an excellent example of a company taking a meaningful approach to corporate social responsibility: In the Phillips company 168 people are currently attending paid one-year work placements in the company. The company provides training to the unemployed who are then trained on-the-job by experienced staff but with limited qualifications. Once competence is achieved, a participant temporarily takes over the role of the staff member who then has the opportunity to gain a qualification. Unemployed participants and employed people with educational disadvantage all benefit from this win-win 'Combi Approach'. In an Irish context it would be worth exploring the extent to which this innovative approach could be promoted within existing schemes.

## **Quality Assurance**

QUALL (Quality Assurance in Lifelong Learning) focused on vocational education and training and adult education is the theme of a network within the Transversal Programme of the Lifelong Learning Programme. Léargas participates with fourteen other national agencies in this network which began in 2010. The aim is to highlight good practice in the field of QA, facilitate networking and mainstreaming of results and outcomes of LLP projects as well as fostering discussion of quality assurance related topics and developing recommendations for the varied stakeholders involved.

Among the projects selected to be featured by this network was one led by Ballymun Job Centre entitled eGUIDE. This was a pilot project of the Leonardo da Vinci Programme which aimed to pioneer the development of an Assessment Centre tailored specifically to facilitate the guidance, assessment and development needs of disadvantaged job seekers in the area of ICT. The project was selected by the panel of external experts for immediate dissemination and transfer.

## Comenius

Comenius seeks to develop knowledge and understanding among young people and educational staff of the diversity of European cultures, languages and values. It helps young people acquire the basic life skills and competences necessary for their personal development, for future employment and for active citizenship.

Comenius focuses on the first phase of education, from pre-school and primary to secondary schools. It is relevant for all members of the education community: pupils, teachers, public authorities, parents' associations, non-government organisations, teacher training institutes, universities and all other educational staff.

The Comenius programme deals with the following priority areas:

- Motivation for learning and learning-to-learn skills
- Key competences: improving language learning; greater literacy; making science more attractive; supporting entrepreneurship; and reinforcing creativity and innovation
- Digital educational content and services
- School management
- Addressing socio-economic disadvantages and reducing early school leaving
- Participation in sports
- Teaching diverse groups of pupils
- Early and pre-primary learning

Throughout 2010 a range of information, support and quality assurance activities were provided by Léargas including: Comenius Programme Information Workshops in Cork, Dublin, Donegal, Wexford and Portlaoise. Two Project Management meetings were held in Kilkenny and Dublin on project implementation and contract and grant management for successful Comenius Multilateral and Bilateral Partnerships. Other topics covered were evaluation and dissemination and presentations of good quality projects. Two preparatory meetings and one Project Management meeting for Comenius-Region partnerships was held in Dublin on project implementation and contract and grant management, financial management, reporting requirements and successful project management tips including evaluation and dissemination. The meeting was held on 25th August in Dublin.

### ***Comenius Impact***

The Comenius programme makes a tangible contribution to implementing the key competences in the national framework curriculum in participating schools. In the area of Foreign Languages, there is a direct impact arising from participation in mobility actions that involve preparation and use of modern foreign languages.

In the area of ICT, the curriculum framework is supported in participating schools by Comenius and eTwinning activities in terms of encouraging pupils to communicate collaboratively and creatively. Comenius and eTwinning activities. Comenius participation also promotes critical thinking and the development of foundational knowledge and concepts. All of these issues encapsulate the thematic areas of the national framework for ICT.

This was confirmed in 2010 in a Monitoring Report following a visit to Ireland by representatives of the EU Commission which states that the Comenius programme was having an impact on school practice and professional development and responds well to national educational priorities.

## Comenius School Partnerships

Comenius School Partnerships enable Irish schools to create partnerships with other European schools to work on projects which are pedagogically relevant and encourage intercultural exchange. Partnerships help students and teachers to acquire and improve skills not only in the subject area on which the project is focussed, but also in teamwork, social relations, planning and undertaking project activities and using information and communication technologies.

Applications for multilateral Partnerships were down on 2009 figures. A total of 63 projects applications were received with 40 projects receiving approval. One bilateral project was approved. The fall in numbers appears to be due in part to the current economic climate in Ireland. The embargo on recruitment in the public sector, an increase in the pupil-teacher ratio as well as a lack of sanctioned substitution provision during Comenius School Partnership mobility has created a perception of 'risk' amongst potential applicants. Schools are currently dealing with many challenges and it is possible that embarking on a Comenius School Partnership for some schools is simply not feasible at present.

The impact of Comenius School Partnerships is greatest on pupils in terms of a sense of heightened intercultural awareness, improved linguistic skills and a better knowledge of self. The impact on staff is considerable and the learning that occurs creates a ripple effect of new knowledge in their home school which is further enhanced by their colleagues engaging in similar activities. Many reports indicate that, for staff, involvement in Comenius School Partnerships is one of the highlights of their careers. In terms of wider impact Comenius projects are noted as being a good way of fostering integration at every level of the wider school community.

### *Case Studies*

**“OPTIC-OPTimising the Inclusive Classroom”** is a project to produce an 88 page full colour handbook on the design of the learning environment for children with visual impairment. This led to the redesign of classrooms and corridors at St Josephs Primary School for Children with Visual Impairment, Drumcondra, Dublin. The OPTIC project brought together partners from 7 European countries to identify the specific needs of school-aged learners with a visual impairment. For these students, the design of the learning environment can have a positive impact on their participation and performance. Blocks of colour and defined areas of flooring, for example, enable those with limited vision to navigate the classroom or other areas unassisted. The aim of the project was to provide recommendations as to how these and similar adaptations could improve learning outcomes for all students, with or without a disability.

**“Bare Necessities of Life - Children show the way forward.”** St. Conleth’s National School, Derrinturn, Co. Kildare partnered with two primary schools in Newtonabbey, Co Antrim, one a Roman Catholic School and the other a state school, along with partners schools in Germany, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey and Italy. In summer 2009 one of the Newtonabbey schools was totally destroyed in an arson attack and St Conleths along with the other school responded by having a Solidarity Concert in the town attended by local community leaders who acknowledged that the children were “showing the way forward.” When it appeared as if the Northern Ireland Minister for Education was not going to provide funding to have a new school built, a protest was organised by the three schools and within days funding was given for a new school. In October 2010 the principal teachers of the three schools were invited to share their story at an education conference in Italy where they performed a newly composed peace song.

**“You can do it”** is a partnership led by Marino College, Dublin for students with dyslexia. The partners shared methods and materials used to help pupils deal with the difficulty and succeed in the level of education which relates to their intellectual possibilities so that they "can do it". By visiting each other's school, attending classes and talking to staff and students, the participants got an insight into the different tools, approaches and difficulties in dealing with dyslexia. Students with dyslexia were involved in e-twinning and chat sessions with each other to overcome their fear of communicating in writing. They also worked together to create the front page of the website which will be used to communicate the results of the project, especially the content of the leaflet, designed to inform parents, students and teachers about the support they can expect from schools. The partners also agreed to introduce a notebook for dyslexic students to build up a vocabulary of common but difficult words they use in school.

### **Comenius Contact Seminars and Preparatory Visits**

A total of 36 beneficiaries were funded to attend contact seminars and 16 beneficiaries to undertake preparatory visits in 2010. . These allow teachers and educators to create partnerships with schools across Europe and enable participants to prepare for projects with their partners. Almost 90% of those funded to engage in preparatory visits or attend contact seminars in 2009 submitted applications for a Comenius Schools Partnership in 2010.

### **Comenius In-service Training**

There has been a steady increase in the number of applications received for in-service training in the past three years: 55 in 2008, 116 in 2009 and 120 in 2010. In 2009 72 applications were approved while in 2010 the number was 86. These increases are a direct result of successful targeted promotion of this action amongst teachers and schools nationally.

There is sustained interest from school management in the Comenius In Service Training action particularly around topics such as leadership in schools, interculturalism, migration, discrimination and more recently crisis management in schools. The number of applications for non language courses has also increased, such as ICT for collaborative based teaching and learning, ICT in the classroom, multigrade teaching, intercultural dialogue, crisis management in schools, environment, etc..

In 2010 the majority of approved beneficiaries travelled to France 55% followed by Malta at 8%, Czech Republic 5%, Finland 5%, Germany 5%, the remaining countries attended were Spain, Cyprus, Hungary, Austria, the UK and Iceland.

#### ***Case Study: How ICT Can Enhance Learning***

Brenda Walsh, a Primary school teacher from Convent Primary School, Listowel, Co. Kerry and Donal O'Mahony a Secondary-school teacher from Portmarnock Community School, Co. Dublin attended a course entitled 'ICT for collaborative and project based teaching and Learning' in St. Clare's College Secondary School near St. Julians, in Malta. The course was an excellent example of how ICT methodologies can be taught to teachers using interactive learning and group work. The participants reported that the course "challenged us to critically look at our teaching methodologies and to encourage us to move away from the more traditional methods to ones where all pupils would have equal opportunities to learn and where conditions are created so that all pupils have equal access to the learning process. Co-operative learning was promoted as a tool in practising intercultural competences as in this method the children need to value the contribution of all the group to complete a given task."

### **Comenius Assistantships**

Comenius Assistantships allow future teachers to spend 3-10 months as an assistant in a school abroad. Irish schools can also host assistants from other European countries. A total of 19 Assistantships were in 2010 only marginally down on 2009. An increasing trend is the number of non-language students/graduates applying and most applicants had no prior experience of European funding. Both of these factors are closely linked to the targets set out by Léargas.

42 Irish host schools were matched with Assistants in 2010, one more than in 2009. This level of sustained interest reflects the benefit that schools perceive in having native teachers from other EU member states, especially the newer ones. Most Assistants are engaged in Irish schools are engaged in cross-curricular activities.

The presence of a Comenius Assistant in the host school contributes to the curriculum but also opens a window to the language and culture of another European country. It is therefore not surprising that the majority of Irish schools hosting Assistants report a strengthening of the European Dimension in daily school life. This is allied to the value of employing a native speaker to teach a foreign language and extending the range of foreign languages offered, accompanied by an increased interest of staff members in foreign language learning.

In a 2010 EU Commission Survey, 44% of Irish host schools indicated that the presence of an assistant creased interest of other staff members in foreign language learning and 64% said that it contributed to an improvement of the content of subjects taught.

### **Comenius Regio Partnerships**

Comenius Regio promotes joint co-operation activities across Europe between local and regional authorities with a direct role in the management of schools. In Ireland, The partnerships are coordinated at regional level by the Vocational Education Committees and each partnership involves at least one school and one other relevant organisation such as the local library, training college, youth or sports club, parents associations, museums and other learning providers or community organisations. Four applications were received under the 2010 deadline (a 50% increase) and three approved.

The funded projects represent a diverse range of topics all linking with EU and National priorities. One project is based around the topic of restorative practices linked to social inclusion and Continuing Professional Development of teachers, another project centres around the integration of migrants and parental involvement in education and the third project represents active citizenship and sustainable development.

#### ***Example of Comenius-Regio Partnership:***

The RAINBOW project (Restorative Approaches - Bettering our work 2010-2012) is a collaboration between Dún Laoghaire VEC and a partner in Norfolk which will employ restorative approaches to establish, maintain and strengthen relationships as a model of conflict management. The project is examining similarities and differences in the two regions regarding the use of restorative approaches and practices in schools, communities and specialist provisions. Training has been provided for teachers and parents in order to: develop a new ethos and approach in relation to conflict within the school and the home; develop an understanding of where young people are coming from and what they are coming with; learn a practical approach to resolving conflict and to equip children with the necessary skills to move forward; find an alternative response to sanctions such as detention and/or suspension.

## eTwinning

A sub-action of the Comenius Programme, eTwinning is a simple and straightforward way to forge partnerships and work on projects with other schools in Europe using information and communication technology (ICT). It aims to help schools bring a European dimension to their activities and integrate ICT into the classroom. eTwinning provides partnerships with a TwinSpace which acts as the platform for project activities. To get started in eTwinning- a school just needs to register on [www.etwinning.net](http://www.etwinning.net) and find a partner school on the eTwinning desktop. eTwinning is very flexible - a project can last as long as a partnership wishes.

There were 178 registered schools and 95 registered partnerships in Ireland in 2010.

### ***Case Study:***

#### **'Filming the Poem'**

Students of Moyle Park College secondary school for boys, Dublin came up with the idea of making a film about a poem on the basis that it would help them understand the individual poem first, poetry in general second and then maybe get an insight into other poetry cultures and other cultures. The initial idea involved two schools making two films each but was later expanded to six schools due to a greater response than anticipated in the partner-finding section of the eTwinning Portal.

Making a film is a highly participative activity which brought life to the poem. Each class in the different schools selected a poem in their native language to make a film: two in Germany, two in Romania and one in Poland. The poem chosen by Moyle Park College students was 'Mid-Term Break' by Seamus Heaney. The films were embedded in a joint website developed by Conor Kelly, the Moyle Park teacher who co-ordinated the project, and linked to some of the material in TwinSpace. One of the schools from Romania also developed a website in both English and Romanian.

In Moyle Park College, the eTwinning project involved nine teachers and three other staff. The project was awarded a National Quality Label by Léargas and the web site won the Best Educational Website (Post-Primary) at the Junior Spider Awards 2009.

## Grundtvig

The Grundtvig Programme aims to respond to the challenge of an aging population in Europe and provide adults with pathways to improving their knowledge and competencies. The Grundtvig Programme invites any institution or organisation from community groups to universities working in the adult education context to participate in its range of European projects, professional development opportunities and networks.

In 2010 the Grundtvig Programme in Ireland saw an increased demand for funding overall with a wide range of participating organisations that are addressing the educational needs of those adults removed from education including older people, people with disability and migrant communities.

This year marked the 10th Anniversary of the Grundtvig Programme and to mark this Léargas has developed a DVD which showcases best practice projects and individual mobility conducted through the actions of the programme which is available from the Léargas website [www.leargas.ie](http://www.leargas.ie)

Léargas hosted a Project Management meeting in Dublin in September which included a presentation on the policy context of Grundtvig from Geraldine Libereau of the European Commission, who provided information and guidance on reporting requirements and financial regulations and useful tips for successful project management including project evaluation and dissemination activities.

A Grundtvig Partnerships Contact Seminar in November in Malahide, Dublin on the theme of Quality in Adult Education attracted 57 participants from 12 countries including Ireland.

Léargas hosted a range of meetings for various players in the Grundtvig programme throughout the year at various locations around the country. The Indecon Economic Consultants Interim Evaluation of the Lifelong Learning Programme in Ireland (published in June 2010) notes feedback from study participants including: “Léargas provides excellent advice and assistance to project participants and welcomes all sorts of questions ‘no question is too stupid!’

### Grundtvig Learning Partnerships

Grundtvig Learning Partnerships provide frameworks for small-scale cooperation activities between organisations working in adult education. There was an increase in the number of learning partnerships approved in 2010 for practical cooperation activities between adult education organisations—up to 22. Approved projects came from a wide range of organisations dealing with topics such as: the needs of adults in education with intellectual and physical disability; validating prior learning; carers; migrant education; diversity and interculturalism; and learning through different media including community radio and television, the arts and other technologies.

#### *Case Studies*

##### ***Hospital Youth Reach – Sustainable Development***

This project involved 4 partners, Hospital Youthreach Limerick, Finland, Denmark and Poland. The focus of the project was to exchange experience and best practice and develop new ideas around teaching environmental issues and recycling in formal and non formal adult education in an intercultural setting. Staff incorporated the learned practices and developed ideas into their environmental teaching in order to promote sustainable development successfully in their region. Learners who took part in mobilities were from disadvantaged backgrounds and would not have travelled outside Ireland before – consequently there was good learner impact in terms of the intercultural benefit. Staff

reported learning new pedagogical methods particularly the use of games/ quizzes etc. The project has had a wider impact—for instance recycling in particular has become more organised in the centre with staff and learner's involved.

### ***Universal Learning Systems - 'Sink or Swim – Succeed with in-College Mentoring'***

This project had partner countries, Denmark (coordinator), Spain and the UK, and looked at mentoring as an aid to teachers, trainers and other organisations who are considering setting up a mentoring scheme. The project developed a handbook of good practice and utilised the web-based FRONTER platform where mentors write about their experiences and document their work with their mentee. The Irish associate of ULS on the project Cultúr in Co. Meath which works with migrant learners, enhanced its future work training and capacity building with communities and marginalised groups.

### **Grundtvig In-service Training**

Applications for in-service training continue to increase year on year with 59 applications received in 2010 (41 received in 2009) of which 20 were approved (11 in 2009). The courses undertaken reflect the concerns of the sector covering topics such as methodology, diversity/interculturalism, ICT methodologies and other media, guidance counselling. An increased number of applications were received this year for courses around the topic of environment and sustainability.

An example of an in-service training assignment is that of Catherine Coakley who works as an art teacher/ deputy principal at the Education Unit in Cork Prison. She is also Chairperson of a national group – Prison Education In Service Training Committee which provides training for new and continuing teachers working in Irish prisons. The training she attended was being run by the Prison Education Association – Malta branch. The course consisted of plenary sessions, individual country presentations, video presentations, workshop sessions and a visit to a prison and a detention centre for refugees in Malta. Catherine disseminated her learning to Cork Prison staff and has also presented to all prison teachers including those new to prison education in Ireland.

### **Grundtvig Visits and Exchanges**

In this the second year of this action there was a decrease in the number of applicants because of the fixed deadline. In its first year the rolling deadline and the flexibility of the duration of the activity saw a much large number of applications.

There were 22 applications received under this action in 2010 (37 in 2009) of which 18 were approved. This year the areas/themes covered included: methodology, diversity training/ intercultural training, sustainability/ environment, maths, intellectual disability and Job shadowing.

### **Grundtvig Assistantships**

Grundtvig Assistantships enable present or future staff involved in adult education—whether formal, non formal or informal—to spend a period of 12-45 weeks as a Grundtvig Assistant at an adult education organisation in another European Country. Three applicants were approved for funding in 2010: a secondary teacher, an adult educator/volunteer tutor of asylum seekers, and a student of tourism and travel who wished to work with adults with special needs.

### **Grundtvig Senior Volunteering**

One application was received and approved under the Grundtvig Senior Volunteering Action in 2010. The approved organisation is the Third Age Foundation – based in Meath (east region). It is dedicated to providing opportunities, services and facilities for older people at a local, national and international level, through conferences, seminars, information sessions, innovative projects and

programmes that focus on lifelong learning, health, volunteering, information provision, intercultural and intergenerational activities – [www.thirdagefoundation.ie](http://www.thirdagefoundation.ie).

The theme of the activity is to bring together groups of volunteers from two different countries, namely Ireland and Italy to share their knowledge, recommendations and experience of volunteering on a helpline specifically established to support older people. The activities being undertaken are to exchange and share each individual's experience of volunteering on a listening service; to compare approaches taken by each organisation in delivering the listening service; to examine and analyse the training provided for volunteers; and to evaluate the delivery of each project in order to improve the service being offered by each organisation.

### **Grundtvig Workshops**

In 2010 one application was approved from the Older Women's Network (OWN). This organisation links older women (55+) and older women's groups together. OWN works to build the capacity of older women to have a voice in the policy and decision-making process. The Workshop supported is entitled 'Laughing Matters: The Benefits of Humour in Health Education'.

### **Grundtvig Case Studies**

Helen Ryan from the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) attended a launching conference of the European Basic Skills Network in June 2010. The conference was organised by Vox, the Norwegian Agency for Lifelong Learning and was held in Oslo, Norway. Helen received funding to participate under the Grundtvig In-Service Training Programme. Twenty-one organisations from across the EU attended.

The European Basic Skills Network is a network of national networks and member countries' educational authorities. The Network will contribute to European and national policies to enhance basic skills in the adult population. Below, Helen describes her experience and the benefits of attending the conference.

*"The conference was beneficial both from an information and networking perspective. I heard about interesting projects from different countries. For example, the UK Armed Forces are engaging in a longitudinal study over three years. This study will examine the impact of improving literacy, language and numeracy (LLN) skills of Service personnel on their professional and personal development and collectively on organisational performance. For more information on Armed Forces Basic Skills Longitudinal Study see <http://www.niace.org.uk/current-work/armed-forces-basic-skills-longitudinal-study>*

*I was particularly interested in the presentations and discussions that identified gaps in the research on basic skills. One particular piece of information that I brought back to my colleagues in NALA was about the forgotten literacy: writing! Ursula Howard from the UK gave a presentation on this and looked at reasons why this area is neglected. It appears that writing has been overlooked in research and in assessment. Most literacy research has focussed on reading, and writing is not assessed in multiple choice tests or in international studies. There is a need to put writing in the spotlight, look at it separately to reading and make it a priority in learning programmes. Ursula gave the last word to a learner "I don't know where the ideas come from, but they must have been there. Just not in words before."*

### **People with intellectual disability share and respect differences in Europe**

St. John of God Menni Services and partners in Spain and Germany focused on the theme of work, family, rights, hobbies and interests by developing interpersonal relations in an

intercultural context between learners with disabilities. Along with producing a DVD and a poster 22 mobilities were achieved. In preparation for each trip a lot of time was spent supporting the learners around key life skills relating to their mobility – money management/ presentation skills, and intercultural learning and activities (cooking/ dancing/ language lessons) around the countries to be visited. For many of the learners it was their first time to travel abroad. Significant learning occurred through the project for both learners and staff through intercultural experience and exposure to different models of service. Meaningful activities, employment opportunities and the integrated model of service offered within the Menni services was also explored.

***Creative Approaches to Intercultural Competence***

Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT) coordinated this project and had partners in Spain, Belgium, Norway, Turkey, Sweden ( x 2), Czech Republic and Lithuania. The project examined innovative and practical methods for enhancing intercultural competence through a conference, photographic exhibition and a website. Some outcomes included: sharing of pedagogical material/ quizzes/ workshops and learning on work with asylum seekers/ migrants. The Czech partner developed a workshop on ‘National stereotypes which was delivered in the Czech Republic and Ireland. Some of the learners from marginalised backgrounds went on mobility to Spain and Sweden.

## Youth in Action

Youth in Action is the EU Programme for young people aged 13-30. It aims to inspire a sense of active citizenship, mutual understanding, solidarity and tolerance among young Europeans and to involve them in shaping the Union's future. It promotes mobility within and beyond EU borders, non-formal learning and intercultural dialogue, and encourages the inclusion of all young people, regardless of their educational, social and cultural background.

The programme has five actions:

1. Youth for Europe (Youth Exchanges, Youth Initiatives and Youth Democracy projects)
2. European Voluntary Service (participation in unpaid voluntary activities)
3. Youth in the World (exchanges beyond the EU)
4. Youth Support System (seminars and feasibility studies for youth organisations)
5. Support for European Cooperation (support for youth policy development at EU level)

The Youth in Action Programme in Ireland in 2010 had a very high level of interest with close to 100% of funds being allocated to projects. Overall there were 226 more youth participants in programmes than the previous year—an increase of 11%. This was against a background of financial cuts for many youth organisations.

Projects were increasingly of a high standard bearing out the conclusions of the Goodbody Economic Consultants' interim evaluation of the Youth in Action Programme 2007-09 which found that: “the programme is operating successfully in Ireland and is delivering the intended impacts for young participants, youth workers and organisations for young people; and the activities supported have proved very relevant in Ireland, as they have usefully expanded the range of activities carried out by existing youth work organisations.”

### Key Areas of Work in 2010

#### *Communications Strategy*

During the year Léargas reviewed its communications strategy for YIA with the aid of an external facilitator. The revised strategy refocuses communications efforts by clarifying the target group, key messages as well as the tools used. A new guide for sending organisations entitled ‘Take Off’ was also produced. Following the production of the ‘Jargon Buster’ series on actions of the Programme Léargas has now produced a guide to completing final reports. This aims to help project promoters to give an accurate account of their projects and avoid some of the mistakes that have occurred in previous reporting from projects. A brochure on Protection and Safety was produced in cooperation with a project promoter that operates a volunteering project in the Palestinian territories.

#### *Young Person Protection in International Youth Exchange*

Léargas chaired a working group on risk and young person protection in International Youth Exchanges composed of National Agencies and the EU Commission which has been operating since 2004 and completed its work this year. The working group leaves a worthwhile legacy in terms of raised awareness of issues of risk and safety among national agencies and project promoters. The group has also developed resources and initiatives for action such as training for awareness raising. The training of trainer's module in good practice in Youth in Action Exchange projects has now been finalised. The module, based on the existing Irish training has been adapted for international use and piloted with trainers from different countries in seminars in Lisbon in Portugal and Antalya in

Turkey. During 2010 the finalised module was introduced to trainers from around Europe in Plovdiv in Bulgaria at a three day training course.

#### *Solidarity and Tolerance*

Léargas jointly ran a seminar with the City of Dublin Youth Services Board (CDYSB) on the theme of intercultural learning. The seminar was attended by 35 youth workers from projects involving young Irish people and young people from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. The seminar focused on how the Youth in Action Programme could promote issues of intercultural learning and solidarity and tolerance.

#### *Quality Youth Work Support Systems*

Activities continued during the year to intervene with key youth organizations at senior management level to highlight the value of international youth exchange. A presentation was made to the CEO's of Youth organizations running youth information centres in Rathnew Co Wicklow at a meeting organized by the National Youth Council of Ireland. The opportunities of the Youth in Action Programme were presented and the support of these senior managers for participation by their staff in the Programme was encouraged.

#### *Promoting European Cooperation in the Youth Field*

In ongoing promotional and training work the agency explains to project promoters and potential promoters what European co-operation can mean in their projects. This happened in meetings with organizations such as the National University of Ireland in Maynooth and the Arts Council and OMCYA which is responsible for 'Dail na n'Og' (the Irish youth parliament), and in also in regional meetings to promote Youth in Action.

#### *Inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities*

339 out of 1267 young participants in Youth in Action Projects in 2010 were young people with fewer opportunities. This represents 27% of the total. The highest proportion of young people with fewer opportunities was in Youth Initiative projects with 55%. The average proportion of participants who are young people with fewer opportunities for the three years 2007, 2008 and 2009 was 29.5%. Inclusion was a special feature of the Youth initiatives residential training.

#### *Cultural Diversity*

The Agency recognized the promotion of cultural diversity as a deficit area and worked to address the issue in 2010 by encouraging interest in this theme. The Agency cooperated with the intercultural strategy of the National Youth Council of Ireland to achieve inclusion for diverse groups in the Programme.

## **Youth Exchanges**

A total of 20 projects for youth exchanges were approved from 22 applications (a drop of two from 2009) while 38 Irish projects were approved for participation in other EU countries. Overall participant numbers increased by 83 to 571 which constitutes an of 30% on the previous year.

2010 saw the introduction of the one sided funding rule for this Action which was a positive factor in encouraging organisations to engage in Youth exchanges. To introduce the new changes in funding, a one day workshop was held in January and following this event a short information leaflet for Youth Exchanges entitled 'Hands on Guide to Youth Exchanges' was designed and published.

Youth Exchanges were promoted during workshops held in the south (Cork) and midlands (Portlaoise) regions as part of the overall strategy to promote the Youth in Action programme at regional level.

The Agency continued to support project promoters in finding partners through a monthly e-bulletin which was created using partner requests posted to the Léargas Intranet system - Youthnet.

**Case Studies:**

**Ballyfermot Youth Service** provided a volunteering opportunity for a young person from a disadvantaged area of Dublin to work in a project in Greece. The young volunteer worked in a team that helped to young people with less opportunities (emigrants, unemployed, people from "single parent families" and families with many children). The volunteer helped the young people in the Greek island of Chios to be open to new horizons. The young people of the island were given information about the opportunities they can have. Discussions between the participants built mutual understanding. That was of benefit to the volunteer and to the host community.

**Finglas Youth Resource Centre** hosted their first youth exchange in 2010 in partnership with Bradóg Youth Service and experienced youth exchange partner also based in Dublin. The youth exchange, entitled 'Eurojam' took place over eight days and involved young people from Ireland, UK, Sweden and Hungary. Eurojam used music as a tool to bring young people together for a shared experience of writing and performing. By using music the groups developed a dialogue that explored and celebrated elements all young people hold in common rather than what makes them different. Both the Finglas centre and Bradóg work in highly marginalized communities where there is a prevalence of early school leaving, high unemployment and high rates of crime and drug abuse. Because many of the young people had a negative perception of new communities preparation workshops were held that allowed participants to share their perceptions of other cultures. The exchange itself was workshop based and culminated in the full group delivering a show to the local community performing the songs and music they had created together. The exchange showcase was promoted through youth projects in Dublin and within the community. The recording of the material and an overview of the project is available online at <http://www.soundcloud.com/eurojam2010/intro-with-jamie>.

## Youth Initiatives

Youth Initiatives bring together groups of young people to design, develop and run projects to explore needs or ideas important to them. In 2010 there were 28 project applications (two less than 2009) with 23 being approved. 19 applications were from newcomer organisations. Most of the projects explored the priorities of Participation of Young People and the Inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities.

During 2010 projects included one from the Brothers of Charity in Cork that developed self advocacy skills for young people with a learning disability. Edenderry Youth Action project organised a multicultural fun day including different cultural groups in the community. Greise Youth Theatre, Ballitore, Co. Kildare created a filmed documentary of the Greise Players as part of their ten-year anniversary celebrations. Young people involved gained training in script writing, film editing and fundraising. They organised local community events such as parades and a disco to supplement the Youth Initiative grant they received and new skills in communication, conflict management, and organising a three-day event in the village which included screening the movie and a community garden party.

## Youth Democracy

In 2010 Léargas continued to promote Youth Democracy during regional information and training days. Three applications were submitted and approved in 2010, all from new organisations. The agency met with a representative of Comhairle na nOg (Youth parliament) within the Office of Minister for Children and Youth Affairs to discuss ways in which Youth Democracy could combine with this group who meet at local, regional and National level to discuss debate and lobby on youth issues.

The model to support Youth Democracy partnerships launched by Léargas in 2009 was repeated in 2010 as a model of best practice. This involves a two-step strategy for contact making and project development with the Agency hosting a National Contact Making Seminar to support the development of partnerships on a national level and to prepare partnerships to attend an International Contact Making Seminar together. This model is now being adopted by Netherland National Agency.

CrissCross - Youth consultation: as part of the approach to structured dialogue, the Agency in partnership with a variety of young people and youth organisation from across Ireland, commenced a youth consultation project together. This group of young people came from different communities, youth work organisations, cultural and social backgrounds, Some had been very engaged in the Youth Programmes and Youth In Action and others had little or no involvement but were interested in the exploring the consultation process and wanted to be involved. For 2010 Youth Democracy was identified as a topic for this consultation aiming to:

- explore the understanding and approach of young people to this topic,
- find out how they understand and identify with the topic of Youth Democracy
- ask what value do they feel the concept of Youth Democracy has
- ask how they think Youth Democracy could be made more accessible and relevant to other youth people.

The three approved projects promoted active citizenship, solidarity and tolerance and included young people with fewer opportunities:

**Raheen Youth Development Group**, Limerick partnered with a group in Latvia focusing on citizenship;

**Mountmellick Youth Development Centre** partnered with County Laois VEC and Youth Council and with partners in the UK examining the electoral process;

**Letterkenny Youth Information Center**, Co Donegal worked with a group of asylum seekers using tools such as Skype to communicate with their partner group in the Netherlands to run a 'Talk Show' together in which cultural issues could be discussed. The group could not travel out of Ireland for legal reasons and so this form of international co-operation is a much valued opportunity to compare cultures and experiences.

## Youth Support Systems

Youth Support Systems projects show steady levels of activity in comparison with previous years with little variation in the numbers of actual projects—6 in 2010 compared to 7 in 2009. Most of the activity is connected to training activity and/ or activities supporting exploration of partnerships such as feasibility studies, seminars and training courses.

### **Case Studies**

#### **“Action & Reaction- We need both”**

This Youth Work Ireland Galway training course involved participants from Ireland, Spain, Greece, Slovakia, Italy, Portugal, Austria, Latvia, Estonia & Romania. This course hosted in County Galway over 8 days developed skills for engaging and developing youth participation in the youth leaders’ clubs using the non-formal education methods, communication and motivational skills of Forum Theatre. All participants shared their ‘implementation experiences’ with others of the group through a specially developed e-platform enabling the creation of an electronic Peer Learning Community. Participants agreed to implement their learning within 6 months and feedback challenges and achievements.

#### **“Making Connections - Training Course”**

National Association for Youth Drama had previously been engaged in Youth Programme activities, but experienced difficulties with international partners. This training represented a new approach to activity in Youth in Action which began in 2009 with a Feasibility Visit. The training course was developed among the four main partner countries to focus on European Awareness and Arts and Culture, using theatre practice as a context. They developed participant’s skills and capacity to implement participative Youth Exchanges, building the skills of youth theatre leaders in this area. The training maximized the diversity of practice from within the partners using this as a platform to develop new practices and approaches to International activity among the participants. The training focused on sharing best practice, participation of young people, project management skills, Intercultural competences and practical aspects of planning.

#### **“Combating Homophobia- Strategies to build diversity”**

Irish Labour Youth has become more involved in educational work around gender and sexuality and the training was developed in partnership with a number of European youth-work organizations who specialize in work with Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender (LGTB) young people. The aim was to share methods of non-formal education in this area, to work with LGBT youth leaders to build strategies, and to explore new methods towards building an acceptance of diversity. The project aimed to produce concrete outcomes to be published in a manual outlining strategies, procedures and best practices for combating homophobia, both within organisations, and in society at large. Several of the participating organisations are affiliated to a group called EDU-NET, which will hold a “training for trainers” seminar in September 2011. This group agreed to hold a session on inclusion of LGBT people within that seminar, based on the manual produced during this training course.

## **European Voluntary Service**

European Voluntary Service (EVS) offers young people the opportunity for personal development along with practical experience through participating in unpaid volunteer projects abroad. The number of EVS projects funded by Ireland during 2010 was 46 (11 more than in 2009). As many of these projects are for multiple volunteers, this figure represents 103 volunteers.

In 2010 a pilot initiative was conducted into the introduction of social media to promote EVS. Direct links with young people from Ireland who may take part were made. Social media would provide an opportunity for EVS volunteers hosted in Ireland to network and share experiences. The pilot phase is now complete and the building of an EVS page within a social networking site will be completed in 2011.

Léargas plans to build on EVS events that have been organised in 2010 particularly those with returned EVS volunteers to develop peer to peer promotion of EVS. Returned volunteers will work with local youth organisations and with the Eurodesk relays that are located in youth information centres to stimulate interest in volunteering among Irish young people. The EVS training event that had to be postponed due to snow in 2010 was held in early 2011 and provides a basis for further promotion of EVS.

***Project examples include:***

A volunteer from Serbia worked as part of the **Galway Travellers Movement** education team based in Galway city with a specific focus on logging incidents of inequality for young travellers within the Education system. This work was part of a bigger project to log racist incidents against the traveller community. The volunteer was also actively involved in afterschool projects with traveller children.

The **Peter McVerry Trust** in central Dublin supports inclusion of young people facing extreme disadvantage. The Trust runs projects in short term EVS for some of the most disadvantaged of young people, i.e. young people who are homeless. A young volunteer from Dublin worked with three different groups addressing the needs of young people facing disadvantage in Latvia. These were:

- A young mothers' Group
- A teenage Group
- A drug treatment group

While working with these groups she built her own confidence and was able to teach English to the young Latvians. She also learnt some Latvian and describes the experience as having been life changing for her. In this way in addition to language skills she improved her insight into the learning process and the project through the work of the volunteer promoted the possibilities of European Voluntary Service to young people in the community from which she volunteered.

**Voluntary Service International (VSI)** in Ireland organized a youth exchange project involving 'separated children'. These are young people categorized as asylum seekers and generally excluded from society. They are housed in 'direct provision centres' located in the west of Ireland. This is in line with the national policy of dispersal of migrant groups to centres around the country. The VSI project enabled these young migrants to take part in a project as hosts and to learn from the experience of interacting with young people from different backgrounds.

## **Youthpass**

Youthpass is a tool for participants of projects funded by the Youth in Action (YIA) Programme to describe what they have done and to show what they have learnt. Youthpass is used to validate learning outcomes gained in YIA projects. Youthpass Certificates are available for European Voluntary Service, Youth Exchanges, Training Courses and for Youth Initiatives. In 2010 as part of its ongoing promotion of Youthpass Léargas hosted one day training event in April on how to incorporate Youthpass as both a process and a product into approved beneficiaries' projects.

Ten coaches attended the day and were brought through a series of activities that explored differences between formal, non-formal and informal education, Youthpass key competencies, reflective learning and identifying supports to offer young people delivering Youth Initiative projects.

## Eurodesk

Eurodesk is a free information service for young people providing access to comprehensive information on living, working, travelling and studying in Europe. It also operates a support desk which answers specific queries.

Léargas manages Eurodesk Ireland through a network of local Youth Information Centres (YIC's) which are administered and housed by a variety of youth organisations and receive separate funding from the Youth Affairs Section of the Department of Health and Children. These Centres operate as an integrated part of locally based youth services and provide a free, generalist, drop-in information service, in specially designed premises, to young people and those who work with them.

In 2010, the Eurodesk National Network in Ireland expanded from twenty-four to twenty-seven local relays (YIC's: Bray, Castlebar, Castleblayney, Donegal, Drogheda, Dungarvan, Dun Laoghaire, Ennis, Galway, Kilkenny, Letterkenny, Naas, Waterford, West Cork, Wexford, Tipperary, Thurles, Cork, Roscommon, Sligo, Clonmel, Dublin-Blanchardstown, Dublin-Tallaght, Dublin-Clondalkin, the Youth Information Bureau in Limerick, Cove Youth Café in Westport and the Gaf Café in Galway).

Most queries from young people are related to careers, education, employment matters, rights and entitlements, leisure, sport, travel and European opportunities. The current economic situation has led to a significant increase in queries about working and volunteering opportunities abroad and in Ireland.

The Eurodesk Conference in June 2010: *"Where to Now? Empowering Young People through Youth Information"* was organised in the context of the current high unemployment among young people in Ireland. The aim of the conference was to exchange ideas on current trends, including Unemployment, Migration, New Media etc. and to discuss ways of empowering young people through high quality information on opportunities that exist for them in Europe. The event also served to make organisations working with young people in Ireland aware of the useful information sources and tools that Eurodesk and its local relays offer to multipliers working young people.

Prominent speakers initiated debate on these issues and diverse organisations and projects working in Ireland with young people, including disadvantaged young people, added their own perspective. Over 160 people took part in this event, including a large group of young people - young volunteers and representatives of local youth councils.

As a follow-up to the conference, two new organisations joined the Eurodesk network of local relays and Eurodesk Ireland has started cooperation with the Library Council of Ireland – which hosts all Europe Direct Information Centres in Ireland - and SpunOut.ie, an NGO running the biggest national information website for young people.

## Europa Diary

The Europa Diary is both a school diary for students as well as a valuable classroom resource for teachers. In 2010 it was distributed free of charge to approximately 22,000 students in Ireland with funding from the European Commission. Produced in conjunction with The Generation Europe Foundation, Brussels, the diary contains a wealth of information for young people, including: the European Union, citizens' rights, health issues, the environment and more. Students can use it to write down their homework assignments and school activities. Each weekly view calendar page contains inspirational quotes, fun facts or thought-provoking questions.

The teacher's guide complements the Europa Diary with activities that can be run in conjunction with the diary content. Activities can be linked to citizenship, information and communication technology, business studies, economics, media studies, personal & social education and more. They address a range of skills such as critical thinking, communication and debate, problem solving and working with others. The information in the diary is in English and *as Gaeilge* with web addresses (Irish and European) for more in-depth information as well as quotes from fellow students across Europe.

## Mind Your Rights

Mind Your Rights is a classroom resource produced by Generation Europe Foundation in Brussels, with the help of Léargas in Ireland. The resource is a teaching module to help students learn about the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and to engage with the values embodied in it. Eighteen Irish schools were involved in piloting this resource in 2010. They were among 300 schools from five countries around Europe—Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Ireland and Romania—who participated in the project.

The students spent four classroom periods reading and analysing the Charter and looking at how it affects their lives and the lives of others. The project then moved into the art room where each student made an artistic representation of the "Right" most meaningful to them. Together, the images created by the class group combined to make a beautiful paper mural which was hung in a prominent place within the school.

The key objective of this pilot year was to gain feedback on the resources from the participating schools. The feedback from Irish schools was extremely positive and constructive. Teachers were particularly impressed with the inter-disciplinary nature of the project and the active participation by students. Students themselves were excited about being part of a pan-European project and enjoyed the participatory learning and working from their own booklets. Teachers expanded upon the project outline by including activities such as writing reflections, poems and songs; making posters; gathering newspaper clippings, literature and songs which resonated with the Charter; and blogging.

Based on the quality of the feedback received, St Ailbe's School in Tipperary town was selected as the Irish winner of the project. The project funded the students to create a permanent artwork, with the help of Irish artist, Niamh Synnott, as a celebration of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. The colourful mural was unveiled at the school in October 2010. It is situated on an external wall in the grounds of the school and features figures which personify each chapter of the Charter: Dignity, Justice, Freedoms, Equality, Citizens' Rights and Solidarity.

Two runner-up schools in Ireland also received a small grant to enable them complete a permanent artistic celebration of the Charter – Mary Immaculate Secondary School, Lisdoonvarna and Loreto Secondary School, Wexford.

## Language Teaching and Learning

The **European Language Label** (ELL) An Séala Eorpach Teanga—formerly known as the European Award for Languages—is an annual award given to projects where participants have found creative ways to improve the quality of language teaching, motivate students, and make the best use of available resources. It is simultaneously run in over 20 European countries and has been a major event in the languages calendar since 1998. The Label is coordinated by the European Commission and managed in Ireland by Léargas.

In 2010, eleven Irish projects were awarded the European Language Label by Professor Tom Collins, Dean of Teaching and Learning at NUI Maynooth, at an awards ceremony—held on the European Day of Languages—in the College.

Dr Muiris Ó Laoire, Chair of the Irish National Jury, commented that, as in previous years, innovation and excellence are clearly recognisable in the eleven projects, which covered a wide range of successful ideas and effectively attested approaches and methods in language learning. Award-winning projects like these provide a potential source of inspiration for others working with different languages and in different contexts.

In his keynote address, Professor Collins stated that with the shift in the global centre of gravity from the United States of America and Europe, assumptions that a proficiency in English would guarantee economic social and cultural mobility to Irish people, no longer holds. He added, “We must therefore become much more serious in our engagement with language learning and in our readiness to take on the challenges involved in it.”

The eleven winning projects are:

- Valuing Bilingualism in our School through the Creation of Dual Language Texts
- ClubLeabhar.com – Club leabhar Gaeilge ar líne
- EuroCatering Language Training
- Bunachar Logainmneacha na hÉireann: Placenames Database of Ireland
- Using a blog and a blend of other ICTs with learners of German to promote language learning, improve technology skills, heighten student engagement and provide formative feedback.
- The Influence of the Piñata on Spanish Culture
- Language Trap: An Adaptive Language Learning Video Game
- SpEakWise
- Getting to Grips with the English Language
- SCENARIO – a new bilingual, peer-reviewed online journal for drama and theatre in foreign and second language education
- Euromazing Languages

### Language Ambassadors of the Year 2010

Four Language Ambassadors of the Year were also honoured at this event. The Language Ambassador of the Year Award aims to recognise the achievements of individuals in the promotion of language learning, which is a powerful tool for building an inclusive multicultural society. These individuals, from the formal and non-formal education sectors, help to raise awareness of cultural diversity and encourage an understanding of different values and beliefs through their work teaching and promoting language learning.

The four Ambassadors were:

***Prof. David Little, Centre for Language and Communication Studies, Trinity College Dublin***

The range and depth of Professor Little's activities and achievements confirm his enormous contribution to the field of language learning. He is recognised worldwide as a leading proponent of the theory of language learner autonomy, and has been a driving force behind many significant language education initiatives nationally and internationally.

***Dr Konstantin Doulamis, Department of Classics, University College Cork***

Dr Doulamis' qualification for the post of Language Ambassador rests mainly upon his work teaching Ancient Greek at the annual UCC International Summer School and his successful promotion of Modern Greek in the University curriculum and beyond. But his linguistic skills encompass, beyond his extraordinary grasp of English, fluency also in French, Spanish and Italian.

***Art Ó Súilleabháin, Ionad Oideachais Mhaigh Eo***

Art Ó Súilleabháin is the Director of Mayo Education Centre and has worked tirelessly for the Irish language for over 25 years. He has committed a huge amount of voluntary time and energy for schools and teachers, developed teaching resources and promoted Irish to all age groups through both writing and broadcasting.

***Neasa Ní Dhomhnaill, Coláiste an Phiarsaigh***

Neasa Ní Dhomhnaill has been promoting English, Irish, French, Italian and Latin in an all-Irish secondary school environment for more than 30 years. She was responsible, with the help of the PPLI (Post-Primary Languages Initiative), for ensuring that Italian became a subject available to students at Coláiste an Phiarsaigh. As well as her formal teaching career, she also carries out volunteer work teaching English to people who have recently arrived in Ireland, and helps them to integrate into society.

Dr Muiris Ó Laoire, Chair of the Irish National Jury, praised the very significant achievements of each of these Language Ambassadors and said that their experience served to underline the importance and relevance of language learning in Ireland today.

## **European Day of Languages**

The European Day of Languages (EDL) is a Council of Europe initiative, held annually on 26 September, which aims to: alert the public to the importance of language learning; increase awareness and appreciation of all the languages spoken in Europe; and encourage lifelong language learning.

In 2010, Léargas ran two competitions to celebrate the day, a video competition and a cartoon scene competition. The results were:

### *Video Competition*

Once again, there was a great response to the 2010 competition with three winners:

- First Prize went to Rang 5 and 6, Scoil Iognáid Rís in Co. Kerry,
- Second prize went to Transition Year, Boherbue Comprehensive School in Co. Cork
- Third prize went to pupils from St Caimins Community School in Co. Clare.

The jury also gave a special mention to pupils from St. Aidans Primary School; Scoil Mhuire, Kanturk;



### **European Centre for Modern Languages**

The European Centre for Modern Languages in Graz, Austria, was created by the Council of Europe to encourage excellence and innovation in language teaching and to help Europeans learn languages more efficiently. In 2010 it celebrated its 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Léargas is the Irish contact point for ECML and maintains a database of more than 5,000 contacts involved in the field of language education, teaching and training in order to keep them informed of ECML activities, news and events.

Four Irish participants attended ECML workshops in Graz in 2010, as follows:

Margaret Condon

Department of Education and Skills

Workshop: Content and Language Integrated Learning through languages other than English - Getting started (CLIL-LOTE-START).

Carmel Nic Eoin

An tSeirbhís Tacaíochta Dara Leibhéal don Ghaeilge, An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna Ceardlann: Training in Classroom Assessment related to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

Dr Christiane Schönfeld

Mary Immaculate College

Guidelines for university language testing (GULT).

Jackie Thomson

Co Dublin VEC

Assessment of young learner literacy linked to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (AYLLIT).

## WorldWise

WorldWise is a Schools Linking and Immersion Scheme that aims to raise awareness of development issues among Irish students, teachers and the wider community, and to heighten interest in and relevance of development education within the post-primary curriculum.

WorldWise provides funding to second-level schools and colleges that are involved in immersion and linking projects with partner schools or organisations in developing countries. It is managed by Léargas on behalf of the Department of Foreign Affairs Irish Aid Programme of assistance to developing countries.

The programme enables teachers and schools to include development education as an integral part of linking and immersion projects within their schools. Students and teachers get the opportunity to form learning partnerships with their peers in their partner schools. Where immersion forms part of a project, students can experience at first hand the realities of the developing world.

In 2010 a total of €237,180 in funding was allocated to 43 participating Irish schools and €23,000 was allocated to four Irish networks of schools.

### ***Case Study – Working together for change***

Before WorldWise was set up in 2007, two teachers from Presentation College Carlow were invited by the Presentation Sisters to participate in Global Education Experience and travelled to Zambia in 2006 with twelve students. They made contact in Kaoma with a wide range of organisations e.g. the orphanages, community primary school, state primary school, state secondary school etc. On their return they introduced a development education course for the Transition year

When WorldWise began operating, Presentation Carlow applied in 2008 to host a visit by teachers, Beatrice Nosiku and Pythias Tembo from their partner school in Kaoma. *‘The partner teacher visit was a big turning point, it gave great energy to the project in the whole school, throughout all year groups, we saw new possibilities- not just a project focusing on a small group of Irish students’*. During the teacher visit a partnership agreement was drawn up to set out the joint projects on which the schools would work together. This learning partnership progressed in 2009 through sharing information on health and environmental issues.

At the WorldWise Student Teacher Forum in January 2010, the school won first prize for their stand and for their knowledge of development issues. Later in 2010, both schools applied to run the WorldWise Pilot Transition Year Unit in their schools and to give feedback on this. They also decided to work jointly on a project on HIV/AIDs for submission to the Young Social Innovators; the results of this will be known early in 2011. Presentation Carlow will host a further visit by teachers from Kaoma to coincide with the 2011 Student Teacher Forum; during their stay, the teachers will work with students and teachers from Pres Carlow on their joint projects. *‘There has been a huge impact on all levels, as a whole school: learning about development and challenges in Zambia, but also the huge positives of life there and questioning the way we do things here in Ireland and globally’*.

## **IAESTE Student Exchange**

### *International Association for the Exchange of Students for Technical Experience (IAESTE)*

Founded in Imperial College, London in 1948, IAESTE is an international non-profit organisation that now operates in 85 countries. It aims to provide students with paid work experience relevant to their studies, to provide employers with highly-qualified, well-motivated trainees, and to be a source of cultural enrichment to all participants.

The programme in Ireland is now managed by Léargas in partnership with the Department of Education and Skills. Since its founding, IAESTE Ireland has sent 2,200 young Irish students to gain valuable work and cultural experience overseas. 1,995 international students have been hosted by Irish employers in return, and have experienced the unique work and social culture of Ireland.

The IAESTE programme is open to students of Architecture, Engineering, Information Technology and Science who are currently registered in Irish third-level institutions. Some programme participants have gone on to work and study in the institutions which hosted their traineeships, while many return home to reinvest their experience in the Irish economy.

Traineeships can be offered by universities or private companies. Recent participants include LM Ericsson Ltd., Siemens Diagnostic Healthcare, and National University of Ireland, Galway.

In 2010, 18 Irish students from 8 different third-level institutions took up IAESTE traineeships in countries as diverse as Australia, Belgium, Canada, China, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ghana, Hong Kong, Japan, Sweden, Switzerland, Tunisia, and the USA. Five international students from Switzerland, Germany, Finland, and Sweden were hosted in Ireland.

## Causeway

The Causeway programme was developed as a means of helping to strengthen and improve relationships between young British and Irish people (both in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland).

Activities funded include: Youth Exchanges, Advance Planning Visits, Contact Exchanges and Special Projects. It has been designed to contribute to the development of strategies aimed at diminishing misunderstandings that have existed and which currently exist between the peoples of these islands.

The programme is successfully administered through a close relationship between Léargas, the British Council and the Youth Council for Northern Ireland.

An Information Day on Causeway was held on 27th May in Dublin. This was in preparation for a contact making seminar. Between 11th and 13th June the Causeway Contact Making Seminar was held in Malahide with participants from Ireland, Northern Ireland and Great Britain. The event was a success with several partnerships being formed between groups for future projects. A wide variety of youth organisations were represented at both events.

In 2010, the total funding allocated to six Irish-based projects involving 184 participants was €62,800. The projects funded were from: Leitrim Youth Project; Clare Youth Service; Killaloe/Ballina Youth Initiative; 1st, 3rd & 5th Longford Scouts; Ógras (Co. Kerry) and the County Meath based Seed of Advancement group.

Activities included:

- Building mutual understanding on the issues of drug abuse and alcohol abuse and how it furthers social exclusion.
- Bringing two youth clubs from either side of the border, one from a non-Irish speaking and one from the Gaeltacht (Irish-speaking area) together for an exchange.
- Organise and facilitate a number of workshops covering symbols and emblems that young people identify with in terms of music, sport and culture.
- To encourage young people to engage in musical expression that celebrates the cultural diversities and similarities.
- To create a sense of team-building and collective collaboration through recording and performance at a staged live event.
- To teach Scottish youth some about Irish Language and traditions.
- Building Self Confidence
- Develop Communication Skills
- Character building and the skills of self-discipline
- Community and cultural awareness
- Building awareness of opportunities beyond the environment in which they live
- To support young people and provide them with resources to build respect for each other
- To reduce isolation, fear and anxiety

## National Centre for Guidance in Education

The National Centre for Guidance in Education is an agency of the Department of Education and Skills, under the aegis of Léargas, with responsibility to support and develop guidance practice in all areas of education and to inform the policy of the Department in the field of guidance.

In February 2010, a new Director, Jennifer McKenzie was appointed. In July, the NCGE Management of Guidance Committee was nominated by the Minister for Education and Science Mary Coughlan and established as a subcommittee of the Board of Léargas with Mr. Barra O’Briain appointed Chair of the Management of Guidance Committee. The aims and objectives of NCGE were revised and the separate roles and responsibilities of the Board and the Management of Guidance Committee were clarified.

The strategic aims informing the work of the Centre as detailed in the Terms of Reference of the Management of Guidance Committee 2010 are outlined below.

### The aims of NCGE are to:

- Promote the implementation of best practice in guidance and counselling in schools, centres for education, and adult education settings in accordance with the requirements of the Education Act 1998
- Promote the implementation of best practice in guidance and counselling in both formal and informal settings in accordance with national priorities
- Advise on policy and strategies for the promotion of a continuum of guidance in the context of lifelong learning
- Provide advice, support, materials and resources for guidance and counselling in education
- Advise on high quality and relevant initial guidance counselling education and training and to provide Continuing professional development (CPD) for guidance practitioners
- Organise the provision of guidance to Irish nationals in the European Schools
- Contribute to the exchange of information on guidance and 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 NCGE, as a constituent part of Léargas, is committed to working in collaboration and partnership with relevant stakeholders including the Department of Education and Skills, Directors of Studies, the Institute of Guidance Counsellors, the Adult Education Guidance Association of Ireland, Higher Education Authority, FAS, National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals and other Government Departments and National and Employer agencies where appropriate.

NCGE provides support and development for guidance practitioners, in particular for the following: Support teachers in primary schools; Guidance counsellors in post-primary schools; Career advisers working in third-level education; Guidance practitioners working with adults in education, in Youthreach and in similar programmes.

In addition, NCGE promotes European mobility and the European dimension in education and training. The Centre also assists people seeking information on education and training opportunities in Europe. This service is one of the Centre’s activities as a member of the EUROGUIDANCE network,

funded by the Lifelong Learning Programme. On a wider scale, NCGE assists a range of organisations and individuals involved in education, training and employment in guidance matters.

## **Summary of Key Outputs for 2010**

### ***Management Activities***

With the appointment of the Management of Guidance Committee, Chair and new Director of NCGE, the activities of NCGE focused on the continuation of existing programmes and on the revised remit of the Centre and the Framework of accountability between NCGE and Léargas. The Chair and Director met with the Minister for State for Education and Science, Sean Haughey, to update him on the activities of the NCGE and its commitment to guidance in education. The Executive Director and staff of Léargas provided invaluable support to the new Director throughout 2010.

The NCGE logo was revised in 2010 to reflect the Irish Language Act 2003 incorporating the name 'National Centre for Guidance in Education' in Gaelige and English in the main logo.

### ***Post-Primary Activities***

Module 1: Reviewing Whole School Guidance was delivered to 12 participants who attended the programme in Limerick.

Guidance counsellors who successfully completed the module received a Single Subject Certificate from HETAC. The guidance counsellors who are contracted by NCGE to deliver Module 1 of the programme attended a day for CPD in assessment with Professor Phil Race, a UK expert in the field, in March.

Module 2: Module 2 of the Whole School Guidance Planning Programme on Action Planning was delivered in Limerick in September to 16 participants. Professor Jean McNiff and Paul Fields (Director, Kilkenny Education Centre) facilitated the Module on this occasion.

NCGE delivered an initial workshop on Whole School Guidance Planning to the City of Dublin VEC in March. Following consultation with CDVEC Psychological Services, and the CEO, it was agreed that NCGE would pilot the delivery of Module 1 to CDVEC CFE guidance counsellors in 2011, thus providing NCGE the opportunity to develop the WSGP programme specifically for the PLC sector.

### **Research into the Practice of Counselling by Guidance Counsellors in Second Level Schools**

The fieldwork for the National Counselling Research continued. The questionnaire for guidance counsellors was circulated, and focus groups with key stakeholders were held. The Researchers submitted the First draft of the Final report to the NCGE and the Counselling Research Steering Group in November for review.

### ***Adult Education Sector Activities***

NCGE co-ordinates the development of the Adult Educational Guidance Initiative (AEGI) on behalf of the DES. There are 40 AEGI Services nationally managed by the VECs and WIT. The Director represents NCGE and the AEGI on the DES IVEA Advisory group for the Intensive Tuition of Adult Basic Education (ITABE).

## **Overarching Evaluation of the Adult Educational Guidance Initiative**

The Overarching research was published by NCGE and launched by the Minister for State for Education and Science, Sean Haughey on 25th May. This report was commissioned to evaluate the support and development of the AEGI from 2000-2006; identify and document models of good practice emerging in the areas of support, development, management and guidance provision; make firm recommendations to the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and other stakeholders and managing agencies on the future development of AEGI to support lifelong learning. The report is available to download on [www.ncge.ie](http://www.ncge.ie)

NCGE worked with the DES Further Education Section on the responses to the Report recommendations.

### **General AEGI Activities**

In collaboration with AONTAS, NCGE facilitated the partnership between AONTAS and a small group of AEGI Guidance Co-ordinators to look at the development of an adult guidance section on the AONTAS website.

NCGE collaborated with NALA to set up referral procedures for the new NALA distance learning programme participants, to access their local AEGI for appropriate guidance.

NCGE co-ordinated the Continuing Professional Development programme for the AEGI Guidance Co-ordinators, Guidance Counsellors and Information officers in May and December.

### **AEGI Web Based Handbook**

NCGE launched the online AEGI web-based Handbook to coincide with the launch of the Overarching Research Report in May. This is available with secure staff access on [www.ncgeaegihandbook.com](http://www.ncgeaegihandbook.com)

### ***Primary Education and Non-formal Sector activities***

NCGE News includes articles on guidance issues in non-formal and primary education sector.

NCGE support for primary school support teachers continues through attendance at meetings. Articles were published in NCGE News highlighting guidance practice in primary education across the EU .

The Guidance Officer working on the Euroguidance network continues to research the level of formal guidance in the primary school system in other EU countries. Examples of good practice were disseminated in NCGE News.

NCGE Director attended meetings with Youthreach and NEPS to discuss current guidance provision in Youthreach, NCGE work within the non-formal sector to date and for the future.

### ***Higher Education Activities***

The NCGE Euroguidance Coordinator made presentations to post-graduate students of guidance counselling in the universities on areas of guidance policy and Euroguidance activities. NCGE

attended and presented at the postgraduate fairs in University of Limerick (UL) and University College Cork (UCC).

NCGE News includes articles on guidance issues in higher education and highlights examples of innovative practice and resources.

NCGE provides the Whole School Guidance planning programme as a HETAC accredited course. NCGE chaired the Internal Examiners meeting in July and the Board of External Examiners with the External Examiner Dr James O'Higgins-Norman (DCU) present in August.

The NCGE Director and Guidance Programme Coordinator met with Gearoid Ó Conluain (CEO, HETAC) as part of his meetings with HETAC-accredited course providers. This allowed NCGE the opportunity to discuss any issues arising and to clarify its position as an HETAC-accredited provider of Single Subject/Specific Purpose Award course.

## ***European Activities***

### **Euroguidance**

The Coordinator attended study visits and hosted visits as detailed in the Euroguidance programme of activities and attended Euroguidance Network training throughout the year. The coordinator was also involved in the collation of articles and editing the Euroguidance network newsletter, responding to all Euroguidance queries and the redevelopment of the Euroguidance website with other network partners.

The NCGE/DES representative Mark Deegan attended the PLOTEUS II co-ordination meetings in Brussels and reports to NCGE. NCGE submitted a proposal to DES on the work necessary for development of links for PLOTEUS II to national databases.

### **European Schools**

NCGE coordinated the provision of guidance by Irish guidance counsellors and through a phone service for the children of Irish parents, who are enrolled in European Schools in Brussels and Luxembourg.

### **Academia**

NCGE coordinated the Leonardo da Vinci funded Academia programme in Ireland in February. Irish guidance practitioners hosted small groups of visiting practitioners from Slovenia, Iceland, Sweden, France, Finland, Spain and Norway. Irish guidance counsellors went on exchange visits to Finland, Iceland, Norway, Slovenia, Sweden and France.

### **EU Conferences**

The Director was invited to present on adult guidance at the DG Education & Culture Action Plan on Adult Learning thematic workshop in Brussels in October.

## *European Lifelong Guidance Policy network (ELGPN)*

Jennifer McKenzie, Director, attended two meetings of the ELGPN as observer on behalf of DES / NCGE at Plenary Meetings in May and September.

During the latter half of 2010, the decision was made by DES for Ireland to apply for full membership of the ELGPN for the next phase 2011-2012. Application documents were forwarded on behalf of DES to ELGPN by NCGE / Léargas in this regard.

## *General*

### **Directors of Studies in Guidance Counselling (DSGC)**

NCGE convenes and chairs the Committee of the Directors of Studies in Guidance Counselling. In 2010 the Committee continued the work on the development of a statement around guidance counsellors' competence in counselling as a result of their initial education in counselling. The Committee met with the Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI) to discuss issues arising from the process for guidance counsellors to receive certification from the PSI in relation to their competence in psychometric testing. The Committee agreed a new framework for meeting with the IGC twice per year.

### **Committee of Psychometric Testing**

In June, NCGE convened the Committee on Psychometric Testing--on behalf of DES--to prepare the list of tests appropriate to use in post-primary schools; this was then made available on the DES website.

### **Publications and Conferences**

The electronic (e-zine) version of NCGE News was published and disseminated twice in 2010, in March and October. Providing NCGE News as an online magazine allows the opportunity to disseminate the publication both nationally and internationally. Electronic monitoring of use of the e-zine indicated a higher than average rate for educational publications. Autumn 2010 edition is available on: [http://www.ncge.ie/news/NCGEnews\\_issue34-Final.pdf](http://www.ncge.ie/news/NCGEnews_issue34-Final.pdf)

Following the publication of the DES guidelines for post-primary school management, NCGE collaborated with the Gay and Lesbian Equality Network (GLEN) to publish the supplement Supporting Lesbian, Gay Bisexual and Transgender Students: The Role of Guidance Counsellors, available on [www.ncge.ie](http://www.ncge.ie) and [www.glen.ie](http://www.glen.ie)

NCGE hosted stands at conferences of both the Institute of Guidance Counsellors in March, and Higher Options in September. This provided direct access to NCGE for guidance counsellors and other clients of the NCGE.

### **ICT developments in NCGE**

NCGE engaged the services of an IT advisor to support and advise NCGE on the development of the VLE and the website. NCGE initiated the Request for Tender process for the redevelopment of the

Virtual Learning Environment and NCGE staff worked with the IT advisor on the initial process of the development of the website.

Following the AEGI Overarching report recommendations, NCGE worked with the DES Further Education Section to identify required changes to the AEGI Adult Guidance Management System (the AGMS client database system), and liaised with the contracted software company on these changes.

NCGE began using SurveyMonkey for feedback and evaluation of the CPD Whole School Guidance Planning workshops.

## Léargas

Léargas is a not-for-profit organisation that operates under the aegis of the Department of Education and Skills and the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. Léargas also works closely with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Innovation and the Department of Foreign Affairs.

For more than twenty years Léargas has managed European, national and international exchange and cooperation programmes in education, training and youth and community work.

Its mission is to enable people to take their place as European and global citizens in a changing world through their participation in international and national collaborative programmes in formal and non-formal education and vocational training.

In carrying out its Mission, Léargas upholds the following core values:

- **Quality**  
we aim to provide an effective, efficient and responsive service to all with whom we work
- **Partnership**  
both within Léargas and in our work with others in the sector, our approach is one of collaboration and cooperation
- **Transparency**  
in all our work we value openness, integrity and honesty
- **Inclusion**  
we provide all our services fairly and equitably, with an emphasis on reaching disadvantaged groups and individuals
- **Development**  
we bring a developmental focus to all the work we do
- **Support**  
we recognise that our staff are our key resource and we support their professional and personal development

Internally, Léargas is divided into five teams:

- **Central Services**, which provides administrative, financial and information management services to the whole organisation.
- **The Education Service**, which manages most of the schools programmes (Comenius, eTwinning, East West Schools), Study Visits and adult education (Grundtvig).
- **Vocational Education and Training Services**, which manages the Leonardo da Vinci and IAESTE programmes.
- **Youth Work Services**, which manages the youth and community programmes (Youth in Action, Causeway and Eurodesk).
- **The WorldWide team**, which manages the Irish Aid schools linking and immersion programme.

In addition - The National Centre for Guidance in Education operates under the aegis of Léargas.

## Summary Accounts 2010

Léargas The Exchange Bureau – Income and Expenditure for the year ended 31 December 2010

	Income	Expenditure	Retained surplus/(deficit) for the year
Youth Work Services	884,591	884,591	-
Education Services	1,139,424	1,139,424	-
Vocational Education and Training	1,031,874	1,031,874	-
NCGE	750,122	750,122	-
WorldWise	198,441	198,441	-
Miscellaneous Projects	10,897	10,897	-
	4,015,349	4,015,349	-