

ECADOC 13th Summer School

Critical Perspectives within Lifelong Guidance



SHORT REPORT 2026

COCAG COST Training Event
17th - 21st August 2026
Trinity College Dublin, Ireland



13th Summer School Report

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Executive Summary

The **13th ECADOC Summer School / COCAG COST Training Event** was held at **Trinity College Dublin**, Ireland, from 17 to 21 August 2026 under the theme **“Critical Perspectives within Lifelong Guidance”**. The event brought together doctoral researchers, senior academics, career guidance scholars and practitioners in a five-day programme designed to strengthen doctoral research capacity, critical scholarship, international collaboration and connections between research, policy and practice.

Hosted by the Trinity Centre for People with Intellectual Disabilities (TCPID), School of Education, Trinity College Dublin, in collaboration with Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI), the Summer School was supported by the **COCAG COST Action CA23112 – Critical Perspectives on Career and Career Guidance**. The programme combined keynote and guest presentations, panel discussions, research-methodology workshops, Collective Academic Supervision (CAS), collaborative activities and a field visit to Wexford Further Education and Training Centre.

Key Outcomes

- **Very high overall satisfaction:** among the 31 PhD participants who completed the evaluation, the mean overall satisfaction score was 9.52/10; 90.3% rated the experience 9 or 10.
- **Exceptionally strong recommendation:** 100% of PhD respondents rated their likelihood of recommending an ECADOC Summer School at 9 or 10 out of 10 (mean 9.94/10).
- **CAS, networking and community-building** emerged repeatedly as core strengths, alongside the **quality and diversity of keynote sessions and workshops**.
- The event strengthened **engagement with COCAG**: 28 of 31 PhD respondents (90.3%) reported stronger connections, greater motivation to contribute, or a clearer understanding of the COST Action and its relevance to their research.

Developmental Impact

Beyond training outcomes, ECADOC continues to function as a **transnational learning and research community**, supporting early-stage researchers in navigating complex academic and professional pathways. Participants highlighted the programme’s role in overcoming research isolation, refining doctoral projects, and developing long-term scholarly collaborations.

Areas for Future Development

Participant feedback points to opportunities to **strengthen early-week networking and community-building**, **create more shared space for informal interaction and lunches**, provide **clearer practical information in advance**, and continue **developing interactive, hands-on workshops** tailored to doctoral researchers.

Strategic Contribution

The 2026 Summer School further demonstrates ECADOC's role as a **European doctoral ecosystem in Career Guidance and Counselling**, facilitating sustained collaboration between universities, research networks, and policy-oriented initiatives. By integrating doctoral training, international supervision, and critical scholarly dialogue, ECADOC contributes substantially to the development of the next generation of researchers and leaders in the field. The strong demand for participation, reflected in 59 doctoral applications and 44 research methodology workshop proposals, further demonstrates ECADOC's visibility and its capacity to engage both emerging and established researchers across Europe.

1. *Programme Overview*

Critical Perspectives within Lifelong Guidance **ECADOC 13th summer school in Ireland from August 17-21, 2026**

The **European Doctoral Programme in Career Guidance and Counselling (ECADOC)** aims to prepare future academic and practitioner leaders in career guidance and counselling as **interdisciplinary researchers with strong leadership and teaching competencies**. The 2026 Summer School was organised as a **COCAG COST Training Event**, linking ECADOC's doctoral training model with the wider European network created through COST Action CA23112.

The 2026 theme, **"Critical Perspectives within Lifelong Guidance"**, invited participants to interrogate established assumptions, engage with diverse theoretical and methodological perspectives, and consider **how lifelong guidance can respond to questions of inclusion, equity and social justice**. The programme explicitly sought to connect career theory, public policy, academic research and frontline practice.

Programme design

Across five days, participants engaged in a **varied programme** including an opening keynote, presentations on the Irish guidance context and COCAG, panels on academic publishing and research impact, guest lectures, three rounds of parallel research workshops, two CAS sessions, a field visit to Wexford Further Education and Training Centre, a cultural visit, and a final collaborative relationships workshop and reflection session.

The **methodological workshops** covered a broad range of approaches and doctoral-development needs, including participatory and ethnographic research, mixed methods, systems theory, GenAI, decolonial perspectives, embodied and sensory methods, survey research, academic writing, Universal Design, theory development, post-qualitative methodology and reflexive thematic analysis.

Collective Academic Supervision remained a central feature of the ECADOC model. Participants prepared a short presentation focused on a specific challenge in their doctoral research and used the CAS groups to seek focused feedback from peers and senior researchers.

Learning outcomes

- Analyse the dynamic intersections between career theory, public policy, academic research and frontline practice.
- Critique contemporary research designs, conceptual frameworks and methodologies within the career guidance field.
- Refine and stress-test doctoral research designs through rigorous critical analysis.
- Formulate actionable publication plans and build strategic networks for future research collaboration.



The **European Doctoral Programme in Career Guidance and Counselling (ECADOC)** aims to train future academic and practitioner leaders in the field of career guidance and counselling to become interdisciplinary researchers with strong leadership and teaching competences. The programme is a joint initiative of the European Society for Vocational Designing and Career Counseling (ESVDC) and the Foundation of the Network for Innovation in Career Guidance and Counselling in Europe (NICE Foundation) and is supported by higher education institutions from more than 10 European countries.

Over more than a decade of continuous activity, ECADOC has developed a sustained European network in Career Guidance and Counselling, connecting doctoral researchers, senior academics, professional networks and policy stakeholders across national contexts. Through recurring Summer Schools, collective supervision practices and alumni engagement, ECADOC supports doctoral socialisation, interdisciplinary collaboration and the long-term development of the European research community in the field.



Critical perspectives on career and career guidance (COCAG) Action gathers scholars across Europe and beyond to explore how careers are changing in the contemporary world and consider what response is required from public policy and practice. It explores the following research questions. (1) How can the challenges and changes that are happening to careers in the contemporary world be understood? (2) How can policymakers respond to contemporary challenges to individual's careers? (3) How can career guidance practice adopt a more critical stance to address the changing world more effectively?



The **European Society for Vocational Designing and Career Counseling (ESVDC)** aims to stimulate and promote European and international collaboration in research and development in the fields of life-designing, vocational guidance and career counseling. ESVDC brings together existing networks of researchers and networks of academic teachers in these fields, in order to facilitate the emergence of a new generation of specialists all over Europe.



The **Network for Innovation in Career Guidance & Counselling in Europe (NICE)** is an open European network for the academic training of people who practice career guidance and counselling (career practitioners). NICE is organized through the NICE Foundation. The mission of the NICE Foundation is to promote excellence and innovation in academic, research-based training of career practitioners in Europe; support the coordination of academic training in career guidance and counselling within Europe, and foster cooperation between the academic community and relevant stakeholders.

Local Organisers and Partners



Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin is Ireland's oldest and highest ranked university. It is internationally recognised for teaching and research, with a historic campus that includes the

famous Old Library and the Book of Kells. Today, Trinity combines its heritage with a modern, research-led university environment, attracting students and scholars from Ireland and around the world.



Education & Training Boards Ireland (ETBI) is concerned with the advancement of education and training, and specifically to collectively represent Education and Training Boards and promote the development of education, training and youth work in Ireland.

Partners and Supporters:

- SOLAS
- Department of Education and Youth
- Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science

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The Summer School **Organizing Committee** consisted of: Rosarii Molloy-Curan (ETBI), Jessica Mullen (ETBI), Donna Branigan (ETBI), Paul Fields (ETBI), Des Aston (TCPID, School of Education, TCD), Nina Sen Singh (TCPID, School of Education, TCD), Lorraine Hayes (SOLAS), Ghazal Vahidi (COST). We would like to express gratitude to everyone who was involved.

The ECADOC summer school/ COCAG COST Training Event was supported by **the Scientific ECADOC Committee members**: Dr. Miika Kekki (University of Derby), Prof. Valérie Cohen-Scali (Institute for the Study of Work and Career Counselling -INETOP of the Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers- CNAM, Paris), Assoc. Prof. Nikos Drosos (European University Cyprus), Prof. Laura Nota (University of Padova), Prof. Jérôme Rossier (University of Lausanne), Prof. Rie Thomsen (Aarhus University), and Prof. Peter C. Weber (University of Applied Labour Studies -HdBA Mannheim).

We are especially grateful to the invited speakers, panellists, workshop tutors and Collective Academic Supervision (CAS) supervisors who contributed to the 13th ECADOC Summer School / COCAG COST Training Event. Their expertise and commitment were central to creating a rich and collaborative learning environment for participating doctoral researchers.

Name	Affiliation
Conor Mc Guckin	Trinity College Dublin
James Eustace	Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI)
Deirdre Hughes	DMH Associates
Carol Guildea	Department of Education and Youth, Ireland
Nikos Drosos	European University Cyprus
Rie Thomsen	Aarhus University
Miika Kekki	University of Derby

Pete Robertson	Edinburgh Napier University
Aisling Murray Fleming	Dublin City University
Petra Elftorp	University of Limerick
Nuala Whelan	Maynooth University
Fiona Christie	Manchester Metropolitan University
Mariana Lucas Casanova	Polytechnic of Porto
Ghazal Vahidi	University of Derby
Michèle Kehoe	Trinity College Dublin
Marie Devitt	Trinity College Dublin
Kristina Mariager-Anderson	Aarhus University
Des Aston	Trinity College Dublin
Ingrid Bårdsdatter Bakke	University of Inland Norway
André Borges	University of Lausanne
Anne Chant	Canterbury Christ Church University
Derya Eryigit	Marmara University
Ricky Gee	Nottingham Trent University
Andronikos Kaliris	European University Cyprus
Dorela Konomi	Fan Noli University
Roland Lami	Mediterranean University of Albania
Ida Holth Mathiesen	University of Stavanger
Helle Nordentoft	Aarhus University
Anna Bilon-Piórko	DSW University
Mary Quirke	Griffith College Dublin
Kirsi Raetsaari	University of Eastern Finland
Teresa Maria Sgaramella	University of Padova
Anne-Mari Souto	University of Eastern Finland
Sanna Toiviainen	University of South-Eastern Norway

Participation and European Reach

The 2026 ECADOC Summer School / COCAG COST Training Event attracted considerable interest from both doctoral researchers and experienced academics. The open call for doctoral participants received **59 applications**, substantially exceeding the initially planned capacity of 30 places. In response to this demand, the Scientific Committee increased the number of available places to 35 and established a reserve list. The final programme included 34 doctoral researchers.

The selection of doctoral participants was guided by academic relevance and geographical diversity. Priority was given to applicants conducting doctoral research directly related to careers, career

development, and career guidance and counselling. To encourage broad European participation, the selection process also sought to ensure representation from different countries, generally limiting participation to three researchers per country. The final cohort reflected diverse institutional backgrounds, stages of doctoral development, and research interests.

Interest among potential instructors was equally encouraging. An open call for research methodology workshops attracted **44 proposals for just 12 workshop slots**, reflecting the strong willingness of academics across the field to contribute to ECADOC. Workshop proposals were selected based on their scientific quality, relevance to doctoral researchers' needs, methodological diversity, and complementarity within the overall programme. The selection sought to ensure a balance of qualitative, quantitative, mixed-methods, and other conceptual and practical approaches. Where possible, additional applicants were invited to contribute through plenary presentations, panel discussions, or other programme activities.

The strong response to both calls highlights ECADOC's continuing relevance and its capacity to mobilise a broad European research community, both as a doctoral training opportunity and as a platform for academic exchange and collaboration.

Thirty four (34) doctoral researchers representing 16 European countries and 27 universities participated in the summer school. Participants represented different stages of doctoral development and interdisciplinary research backgrounds connected to career development, career guidance and counselling.

The evaluation itself was completed by 31 PhD participants. Respondents also reflected a wide range of doctoral stages: 6 were defining their research goals and approach, 11 had completed their research plan and begun their investigation, 5 had completed more than half of their analysis, 8 were close to finalising the thesis manuscript, and 1 had already published initial articles related to the doctoral research.

Young researchers were strongly represented among the participants. Of the 31 PhD researchers who completed the evaluation, 14 (45.2%) were aged 40 or younger, reflecting the event's contribution to COST's objective of supporting the development and international networking of the next generation of researchers.

2. Overall Assessment

The following results refer only to the 31 respondents who identified themselves as PhD students. Responses from instructors, keynote speakers and workshop organisers were excluded from the analysis presented in this report.

2.1. Overall satisfaction of the ECADOC summer school/ COCAG training event

Participants rated their overall satisfaction on a 10-point scale. The results indicate **a very high level of satisfaction**: 21 respondents (67.7%) gave the maximum score of 10, 7 (22.6%) rated the experience 9, 2 (6.5%) rated it 8, and 1 (3.2%) rated it 6. The mean satisfaction score was 9.52/10. Overall, **90.3% of respondents rated the Summer School at 9 or 10.**

2.2. The chance that participants would recommend ECADOC summer school/ COCAG training event

Participants were asked how likely they would be to recommend an ECADOC Summer School to a fellow researcher. Twenty-nine of the 31 respondents (93.5%) gave a score of 10 and the remaining two (6.5%) gave a score of 9. The mean score was 9.94/10, meaning that **100% of PhD respondents rated their likelihood of recommending ECADOC at 9 or 10.**

Indicator	Mean	9–10 ratings
Overall satisfaction	9.52 / 10	90.3%
Likelihood to recommend	9.94 / 10	100%

3. Participant Experience and Developmental Impact

The open-ended responses reinforce the quantitative findings. Three themes were especially prominent in participants' descriptions of the strongest aspects of the Summer School: **Collective Academic Supervision, international networking and community**, and the **quality and diversity of the academic programme**. Participants frequently described CAS as particularly valuable for receiving focused feedback on their doctoral work, while informal conversations, breaks, dinners and collaborative activities were seen as important spaces for research exchange and relationship-building.

Feedback also highlighted the **supportive and inclusive atmosphere** of the event. Participants valued opportunities to encounter different research traditions, professional perspectives and national contexts, and to think more critically about their own topics and assumptions. Taken together, these responses suggest that **ECADOC's impact extends beyond discrete training sessions**: the Summer School functions as a temporary but intensive doctoral learning community in which research development, scholarly identity and international networking are closely connected.

4. COCAG COST Action Impact and European Added Value

The 2026 event also provided a direct route into the wider COCAG COST Action. When asked how participation in the Summer School had influenced their engagement with the COCAG COST Action, 14 respondents (45.2%) reported developing stronger connections within the COST Action network, 10 (32.3%) felt more motivated to contribute to future COST activities, and 4 (12.9%) reported a clearer understanding of the Action's goals and their relationship to their own research. Only 3

respondents (9.7%) indicated that their level of engagement had remained unchanged. **Overall, 28 of the 31 PhD respondents (90.3%) reported a positive influence on their connection to, motivation to engage with, or understanding of the COCAG COST Action.**

Participants also identified ways in which this engagement could be sustained. The most frequently selected forms of future support were **greater visibility of collaboration and publishing opportunities** (23 respondents), **more funding opportunities for early-career mobility** (21), **mentoring schemes connecting early-career and senior researchers** (19), **more targeted training and skill-development workshops** (14), and **clearer guidance on applying for COST Action roles or grants** (10). These findings point to the value of connecting the intensive Summer School experience with ongoing opportunities for mobility, mentoring, publication and collaborative research.

5. Future Development

Although the overall evaluation was exceptionally positive, the qualitative feedback identified several practical and pedagogical refinements. A recurring suggestion was to **introduce structured networking earlier in the week**, including brief opportunities for participants to learn about one another's doctoral topics before or at the start of the Summer School. **Shared lunches or a common informal space** were also suggested as ways of reducing fragmentation and supporting **community-building**.

Participants additionally asked for **clearer advance information on practical arrangements**, particularly lunches, accommodation and funding, and for workshop descriptions that make expected level and format more explicit. Several responses called for **more interactive, hands-on workshop time** and, in some cases, longer CAS sessions. Suggested future academic themes included further research-methods training, evaluation of career guidance, doctoral researcher well-being and the PhD process, policy-level perspectives, career transitions, quantitative and mixed methods, disability and social justice, and the implications of artificial intelligence for work and career guidance.

6. Conclusion

The 13th ECADOC Summer School / COCAG COST Training Event provided a **highly valued international doctoral learning environment centred on critical scholarship, methodological development, collective supervision and collaboration**. The evaluation indicates both very high satisfaction and an exceptionally strong willingness to recommend ECADOC to other researchers.

The 2026 edition also demonstrates **the value of linking ECADOC with the COCAG COST Action**. The Summer School did not only expose doctoral researchers to a wider European network; for most respondents it strengthened their connections, motivation to contribute, or understanding of the

Action. The combination of CAS, diverse methodological training, research-policy-practice dialogue and informal community-building continues to distinguish ECADOC as a shared European space for doctoral development in career guidance and counselling.

Interest among potential instructors was equally encouraging. The open call for research methodology workshops attracted **44 proposals, some involving more than one facilitator, for just 12 available workshop slots**. As each facilitator could be involved in only one proposal, the number of academics interested in contributing exceeded the number of submissions. Workshop proposals were selected based on their scientific quality, relevance to doctoral researchers' needs, methodological diversity, and complementarity within the overall programme. The selection sought to ensure a balance of qualitative, quantitative, mixed-methods, and other conceptual and practical approaches. Where possible, additional applicants were invited to contribute through plenary presentations, panel discussions, or other programme activities.

Looking ahead, ECADOC remains well positioned to respond to the changing intellectual, methodological, and societal challenges facing career guidance and counselling. By continuing to refine its model in response to participant feedback, while strengthening its collaboration with the COCAG COST Action and other European partners, ECADOC can further develop its role as a space for critical thinking, methodological innovation, international collaboration, and the development of the next generation of researchers in the field.

The 2026 evaluation also reinforces a broader conclusion that has emerged across successive Summer Schools: **ECADOC operates not simply as a periodic training event, but as a European doctoral learning community**. Through Collective Academic Supervision, methodological training, interaction with established scholars, and opportunities for formal and informal exchange, early-stage researchers are introduced into and connected with the wider academic community in career guidance and counselling. The changing thematic focus of each Summer School allows this model to remain responsive to developments in the field while bringing together researchers working across different theoretical traditions, methodologies, national contexts, and stages of doctoral study.

The partnership with the COCAG COST Action further strengthens this model by creating opportunities for relationships initiated during the Summer School to develop into longer-term networks, mobility, mentoring, publication, and research collaboration. The 2026 findings are particularly encouraging in this respect, with the large majority of PhD respondents reporting a positive influence on their connection to, motivation to engage with, or understanding of COCAG. Participants' suggestions for greater visibility of collaboration and publishing opportunities, mobility funding, mentoring, and continued methodological training also provide a clear direction for strengthening this continuity beyond the Summer School itself.

Taken together, the 2026 Summer School demonstrates ECADOC's continuing contribution to developing research capacity and connecting emerging researchers across Europe. As preparations begin for the next edition, the challenge is therefore not to substantially change a model that participants value highly, but to build on its strongest elements—critical scholarship, Collective Academic Supervision, methodological diversity, and community-building—while creating even stronger pathways for collaboration and scholarly exchange to continue after the Summer School has ended.