



Ireland

Overview of the Vocational Education and Training System

2008

eKnowVet – Thematic Overviews



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Abstract:

This is an overview of the VET system in Ireland. Information is presented according to the following themes:

1. General policy context - framework for the knowledge society
2. Policy development - objectives, frameworks, mechanisms, priorities
3. Institutional framework - provision of learning opportunities
4. Initial vocational education and training
5. Continuing vocational education and training for adults
6. Training VET teachers and trainers
7. Skills and competence development and innovative pedagogy
8. Accumulating, transferring and validating learning
9. Guidance and counselling for learning, career and employment
10. Financing - investment in human resources
11. European and international dimensions, towards an open area of lifelong learning

This overview has been updated in 2008 and its reference year is 2007. The latest versions can be viewed from October 2009 onwards at:

http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/etv/Information_resources/NationalVet/Thematic/ where more detailed thematic information on the VET systems of the EU can also be found.

Keywords:

training system; training policy, initial training, continuing vocational training, training of trainers, skill development, vocational guidance, recognition of competences, validation of non formal learning; financing of training

Geographic term:

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01 - GENERAL POLICY CONTEXT - FRAMEWORK FOR THE KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY

0101 - POLITICAL AND SOCIO-CULTURAL/ECONOMIC CONTEXT

Ireland is a parliamentary democracy which consists of a House of Representatives (*Da'il Eireann*) and a Senate. Laws passed by the Parliament must conform to the Irish Constitution and the President must sign legislation for it to become law. The Republic of Ireland comprises twenty-six of the thirty-two counties of the island of Ireland. The remaining six counties make up Northern Ireland which is part of the United Kingdom. Ireland has been a member of the European Community since 1973.

Over the past two decades a system of National Partnership has been in place, involving the government and the social partners and every three years these partners agree a national programme for social and economic development. This covers such policy issues as pay, taxation, social welfare, the environment and education and training. The current programme 'Towards 2016' runs from 2006-2016.

The responsibility for education and training policy lies with government ministries (known as departments). However, in the case of certain VET organisations, control has been devolved to regional or local areas.

0102 - POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

The population of Ireland increased by 520,000 or 13% since the 2002 census and now stands at 4.42 million¹. The total area of the country is 84,421 sq km. The major centre of population is Dublin city and county with 1.2 million inhabitants. The other major cities are Cork (119,000) and Limerick (53,000).

Ireland has had a high level of population growth due to a high birth rate. In the past this growth has been lessened by high levels of emigration. Since the mid 1990s, there has been an increase in the birth rate, a corresponding decrease in emigration and marked increase in immigration, resulting in a significant rise in the population. The 2006 census found that one in ten people in Ireland were born outside the country. Table 1 shows the demographic trends by age up to 2026. While the number in the 0-24 age group is expected increase by 148,000, the number aged 65 and over, is expected to increase by 395,000 (16%), leading to a significant ageing of the population.

¹ Central Statistics Office, Census 2006, Government Publications Office, Ireland 2007

Table 1: Population trends by age 2008-2026			
AGE-GROUP	2008	2026	CHANGE
0-24	1,530,000	1,652,000	+122,000
25-64	2,411,000	2,786,000	+375,000
65+	481,000	866,000	+385,000
TOTAL	4,422,000	5,304,000	+882,000

Source: Central Statistics Office (CSO) Ireland. Population and Migration Estimates (2008) and Population and Labour Force Projections* (2007)

(*Based on M1F2 Scenario)

0103 - ECONOMY AND LABOUR MARKET INDICATORS

The Irish economy experienced very strong growth over the decade 2000-07. GDP in 2007 is estimated to be EUR 190,603 million. This is a rise of over 6% on 2006. Inflation was 2.8% in 2007. Overall, prices have risen by 41% since 1996.

Table 1: GDP 2000/05 - 2007		
YEAR	GDP AT CURRENT MARKET PRICES (EUR MILLION)	GDP AT CONSTANT (2005) MARKET PRICES (EUR MILLION)
2000	148,975	157,644
2005	162,168	161,498
2006	177,286	177,286
2007	190,603	187,971

Source: CSO, Ireland, 2007.

GDP per capita (at market prices) in 2007 was EUR 43,103 a rise of over 50% in real terms since 1998. In 2007 Ireland had a balance of payments deficit of EUR 10.3 billion. In 2007 agriculture, manufacturing industry, and services accounted for 3%, 34% and 64% of the economy respectively. The percentage of GDP spent on education and training for 2003 was 4.4%². This compares with an OECD average of 5.9%.

² OECD Education at a Glance 2006 (Table b.2.1a).

EMPLOYMENT SECTOR (ANNUAL AVERAGES 000S)	2000	2005	2006	2007
AGRICULTURE	130	115	117	116
INDUSTRY	488	539	560	578
SERVICES	1,075	1,298	1,362	1,423
TOTAL	1,692	1,952	2,039	2,117

Source: CSO, Ireland, Quarterly National Household Survey, 2007.

Table 2 above, shows the numbers employed from 2000/05 - 2007 by sector. In 2007 there were 2.117 million persons in employment, (70%), an increase of 78,000 from 2006 and a 3.2% annual employment growth rate. The construction and services sectors accounted for all of this increase. The labour force (both employed and unemployed), stood at 2,241,000 in 2007, an increase of 89,000 in the year. Net inward migration accounted for approximately 63,000 (80%) of this demographic increase. The male employment rate was 77.1%, a slight decrease (77.5%) from 2006, while the female employment rate was 60% in 2007, an increase from (59.8%) in 2006. Female employment rose by 43,900 while male employment increased by 29,300. Female participation in the labour force, which has been low, has seen a marked improvement in recent years.

Until comparatively recently Ireland's unemployment rate was one of the highest in the EU. However, as Table 3 below shows, it fell rapidly between the years 2000-06, since 2007 the unemployment rate has begun to grow again. The unemployment rate was 4.4% in 2006, but mainly due to a contraction in the construction industry, it rose by 10,700 to 101,000 in 2007 (4.6%) and it is forecast to rise to over 6.1% in 2008.

	LIVE REGISTER	LFS UNEMPLOYED	% UNEMPLOYED ILO BASIS
1999	220	148	8.3
2005	160	89	4.4
2007	162	101	4.6

Source: ESRI, FAS Quarterly Labour Market Commentary, Third Quarter 2007.

0104 - EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF POPULATION

The percentage of young people participating in third level education has risen in recent years and therefore the level of the education profile of the population has increased.

Table 1: Educational attainment of the population aged 25-64, by ISCED level (2007)			
LEVEL OF EDUCATION			
	ISCED 0-2	ISCED 3-4	ISCED 5-6
EU-27	29%	47%	23%
IRELAND	31%	34%	31%

Source: Eurostat, EU Labour Force Survey; on-line database 22/11/06

As illustrated in Table 1, relative to the EU-27 Ireland has a greater percentage of people with third level qualifications.

Table 2 : The percentage of the population, aged to 18-24 years, who have left education and training with a low level of education (2002 -2007) ³		
IRELAND		
2002	2005	2007
14.7	12.3	11.5

Source: Eurostat, EU Labour Force Survey; May 2008.

The proportion of early school leavers in Ireland has fallen from 14.7% in 2002 to 11.5% in 2007 a slightly lower percentage than in 2006 (12.3%). This is a lower percentage than the EU average for 2007 of 14.8%.

³ Due to lack of harmonised concepts and definitions in previous surveys, figures for 2000 and 2002 are not available.

02 - POLICY DEVELOPMENT - OBJECTIVES, FRAMEWORKS, MECHANISMS, PRIORITIES

Vocational education and training (VET) in Ireland is seen both in policy and structural terms as one of the main pillars for the building and maintaining of a skilled workforce. The government's main human resource priorities in recent years, has been to:

- maintain a focus on education and training, and in particular lifelong learning;
- target those with low educational and vocational qualifications and skills, and
- ensure the development of a highly skilled workforce.

Within this context, the two main VET policy developments in recent years were the establishment of a National Framework of Qualifications in 2001 under the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999, in order to improve access, transfer and progression within the VET system, and the National Skills Strategy⁴, published in 2007.

0201 - OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES

Ireland's employment and human resource development programmes (EHRD OP) formed a major part of the government's National Development Plan (NDP) for 2000-06, which is the principal government framework for the allocation of funding for all VET programmes provided by the state. The EHRD OP for this period set out a range of programmes and services to be provided to improve access to employment opportunities; address skills and labour shortages and tackle social exclusion. Under the new NDP for 2007-2013, there are five strategic investment priorities.

- Economic Infrastructure
- Enterprise, Science and Innovation
- Human Capital
- Social Infrastructure
- Social Inclusion.

Some EUR 25.8 billion will be invested in Human Capital which is broken down into three programmes.

- Training and Skills Development.
- Schools Modernisation & Development.
- Higher Education.

⁴ Tomorrow's Skills -Towards a National Skills Strategy.

The 'Programme for Government', concluded by the government partners after the 2007 election, has devoted considerable attention to education. Priority will be given to introducing new curricula in various subjects including maths and the sciences. While higher rates of school completion will be encouraged, there will be increased access to alternative educational provision for young people who may find mainstream second level school is not suitable for them.

Changing demographic and economic circumstances are creating demand for new and higher skills and this will pose challenges and opportunities for the third level sector. In particular, universities and Institutes of Technology will have to deliver more flexible, labour market orientated qualifications. In order to unify the publicly funded higher education sector, the Institutes of Technology have being brought within the remit of the Higher Education Authority through the Institutes of Technology Act 2006. However their distinctive roles and functions will be maintained, in particular the applied and regional focus of the Institutes. Within the labour market context, government policy on vocational training is set out in the annual National Reform Programme-NRP, (formerly the Employment Action Plan), developed in the context of the European Employment Guidelines. Under this Programme, Irish labour market policy during 2005-08 will focus on:

- Sustaining a high level of employment and low unemployment;
- Ensuring an adequate supply of labour to meet the needs of the economy;
- Maintaining a strong focus on education and training including lifelong learning, to ensure the development of a high skilled, adaptable workforce.

A major factor influencing VET policy in Ireland during the last decade has been the significant financial support provided by the European Social Fund (ESF). This Fund has played an important policy-influencing role, emphasising the need for consistency with European VET and social policy, in particular the European Employment Guidelines. These policies are reflected in the Government's National Development Plan (NDP) for 2007-2013, where medium-term policy is set out, together with the complementary Human Capital Investment Operational Programme (HCI OP) 2007-2013. The latter sets out a range of programmes and services agreed with the EU Commission, which are co-funded by the ESF. The structure of the HCI OP is designed to address the Lisbon Agenda and the Operational Programme is the key delivery mechanism for employment, education and vocational training strategies. It has two priority objectives:

- Upskilling the workforce; and
- Increased participation in the labour force.

03 - INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK - PROVISION OF LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

The roles and responsibilities for the Irish education system, including for vocational education, are separate from the vocational training system, which is the responsibility of the labour market authorities.

There are three levels of administrative responsibility in the publicly funded VET sector and some organisations may operate at more than one of these levels. These are:

- Government departments (ministries), which set policy and overall direction, including providing the public funding for VET.
- Intermediate organizations who may be involved in implementing government policy, channelling funds or acting as a provider of VET programmes.
- VET provider bodies such as FAS, the National Training and Employment Authority.

0301 - LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The most important legislation within the vocational education system is the Vocational Education Act, 1930 and respective amendments, which led to the establishment of thirty-three regionally-based Vocational Education Committees (VECs). The Vocational Education (Amendment) Act, 2001, broadened the representative element of VECs to include public representatives, parents, teachers, local businesses and a requirement for the VECs to adopt education plans.

The Education Act 1998 provides for the education of every person in the State, including persons with a disability or special educational needs. It requires schools to give school students access to guidance in their educational and career choices and provides for continuing education opportunities for adults with low educational qualifications. The Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999, established structures for a national framework of qualifications to co-ordinate awards and promote access, transfer and progression within the VET system. To implement this process the Act established the National Qualifications Authority (NQAI), together with the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) and the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC).

The Education Welfare Act 2000 aimed to reduce educational disadvantage by promoting regular school attendance and tackling early school leaving. Young people aged 16-17 years who have left school early, must now register with the National Educational Welfare Board. The Act also raised the school leaving age to 16 years.

The Employment Equality Act 1998 established the Equality Authority, whose mandate was expanded under the 'Equal Status Act 2000', prohibiting discrimination in the provision of educational and training services. The rights of workers with disabilities has been re-enforced by the Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 and the passing of the Disability Act 2006.

In 2005 the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act introduced health and safety training requirements for employees in sectors such as the construction industry. The primary piece of legislation dealing with Universities is the 1999 Universities Act. In 2006 The Institutes of Technology Act, dealt with structural reform in third level education including the restructuring of the Higher Education Authority. In 2001 the Teaching Council Act was introduced to promote teaching as a profession.

The most significant legislation in vocational training relates to the establishment of a number of public bodies between 1960-70s, including AnCO (the Industrial Training Authority). In 1988 this body was replaced by FAS, the National Training and Employment Authority, followed by the setting up of *Failte Ireland*, with responsibility for training in the tourism and hospitality sectors, and the establishment of ACOT for the development of agriculture and horticulture, some of whose functions were incorporated into TEAGASC under the Agricultural (Research, Advisory and Training) Act, 1988. Other public bodies were established to advise on and/or implement training in the forestry, fisheries, marine and nursing sectors. Enterprise development bodies also have a role in VET - for example Enterprise Ireland set up in 1998.

With regard to the funding of training for the employed, a major development was the introduction of the National Training Fund Act, 2000, which replaced a previous apprenticeship levy system.

0302 - INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK: IVET

EUROPEAN UNION

Although the European Social Fund (ESF) now contributes much less funding to IVET, it remains an important influence on government policy. During the period of the Employment and Human Resource Development Operational Programme (EHRD OP) 2000-06, the ESF co-funded activities for IVET for young unemployed people and early school leavers. Similar policies are reflected in the National Development Plan (NDP) and the complementary Human Capital Investment Operational Programme for 2007-2013.

CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

The administration and implementation of government policy for IVET, falls mainly within the remit of the Departments of Education and Science (DES) and of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE), with the former being the

most significant player in the area of IVET. The provision of compulsory second level education in schools is the responsibility of the DES, which is responsible for general education at all levels, including further and university education. The State Examinations Commission is responsible for the setting and awarding of qualifications at second level.

In contrast to school based education, IVET is delivered at a number of different levels; in second level schools, in vocational training including apprenticeship and in further and higher non-tertiary education. It is mainly funded by the state either directly or through intermediary bodies. A number of other government departments have funding and administrative responsibilities for IVET in specific industry sectors, such as in the tourism agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors and for certain social groups. (See Chart 1 Education System of Ireland page 13).

ROLE OF INTERMEDIARY BODIES AND PROVIDERS OF IVET

Responsibility for the provision of initial vocational education in schools and centres and Institutes of further education is devolved from the DES to thirty-three Vocational Education Committees (VECs). These VECs together with FAS, provide programmes for early school leavers and manage IVET centres such as Youthreach centres and young Travellers⁵ Training Centres.

The Higher Education Authority (HEA) is responsible for the supervision and funding of educational programmes in universities and designated third-level education institutions, including Teacher Training Colleges and the fourteen Institutes of Technology (ITs). The latter play a role in the provision of the apprenticeship training, as well as providing initial vocational education for young entrants into the tourism, catering, agriculture, horticulture and forestry sectors.

The National Qualifications Authority (NQAI), together with the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) and the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC), provides accreditation and certification for all IVET courses in the state, other than awards made in respect of primary and secondary level schooling and third level university education.

Responsibility for the implementation of vocational training programmes for young entrants into the workforce, unemployed persons and early school-leavers is devolved to state funded bodies which include:

- *FÁS*, which provides training for new entrants into the workforce and in cooperation with the Institutes of Technology, for apprentices;
- *Fáilte* Ireland which trains new entrants for the tourism, catering and hospitality industries, either directly, or in cooperation with Institutes of Technology;

⁵ The Travelling Community in Ireland is a nomadic ethnic minority. There are estimated to be in excess of 25 000 Travellers in the Republic of Ireland.

- Irish Fisheries Board which provides initial training for the fishing and marine industries;
- Teagasc, the Agriculture and Food Development Authority, which trains new entrants into the agricultural and horticultural sectors.

REGIONAL/LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Due to its small size and population Ireland does not have strong regional authorities. However, several state organisations play a role in implementing IVET programmes at local level. Thirty-three Vocational Education Committees (VECs) at county and city levels, have statutory autonomy to identify and meet local needs for IVET. These bodies comprise representatives of local authorities. State agencies such as F&S also deliver initial vocational training locally, through their twenty countrywide training centres.

SOCIAL PARTNERS

Ireland's national partnership agreements have all included policies relating to VET, based on agreements between the government and the social partners. These partners also have a place in their representative capacity, within the structures established by the state, to meet the country's general VET needs. They are represented on the Boards of *FÁS*, *Fáilte* Ireland and *Teagasc*, and have a representative role on the awarding bodies established under the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act. They also have a consultative role in the allocation of funds for training schemes and programmes under employer-levied National Training Fund.

OTHER NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS

While the majority of IVET provision is publicly funded by the state, in recent years there have been a growing number of further, non-tertiary vocational education centres and colleges which are community based or privately run. These offer courses for young people who have left school without formal qualifications or who wish to add to their school qualifications. They also provide initial vocational training for many of the professions such as the legal and accountancy professions.

0303 - INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK: CVET

EUROPEAN UNION

While central government is the main source of funding for publicly-provided CVET, this area is also supported through ESF co-financing, although to a much lesser extent than in IVET. Within the former EHRD OP 2000-06 there were several CVET measures supported by ESF co-funding. These included second-chance education, adult literacy, the development of the national

qualifications framework and enterprise based training. The new Human Capital Investment Operational Programme (HCI OP) 2007-2013, has two relevant co-funded priority objectives – (i) up-skilling the workforce and (ii) increasing participation in the labour force.

CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

Administrative responsibility for funding and policy for publicly provided CVET falls mainly within the remit of the following bodies.

- The Department of Education and Science (DES), responsible the provision of continuing vocational and second chance adult education;
- The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, (DETE), responsible for policies to upgrade the skills and competences of the employed and unemployed population.

Other government departments make provision for CVET in their own specific sectoral areas - for example for the tourism, agriculture, fishery and forestry sectors and for some community-based adult education activities.

ROLE OF INTERMEDIARY BODIES AND PROVIDERS OF CVET

The DES supervises and funds further vocational education colleges and adult education centres run by the VECs. These have devolved responsibility for a range of continuing vocational educational programmes including:- literacy programmes, education provision for asylum seekers, prison education services, senior Traveller training and the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) for the long-term unemployed.

The National Qualifications Authority of Ireland, together with the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) and the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC), are responsible for the certification and accreditation of all CVET courses.

The DETE funds and supervises several semi-state organisations which deliver CVET programmes. These include FÁS which delivers continuous skills training directly and provides funds to other training providers; Enterprise Ireland which provides funding to support training within internationally traded companies and the 32 County and City Enterprise Boards.

State bodies which deliver continuing vocational training at sectoral levels include:- Fáilte Ireland which provides ongoing training for the tourism and catering sectors; the Irish Fisheries Board (BIM), for the fishing, processing and aquaculture industries; Teagasc, which provides training for farmers and for the food processing industry; Coillte, the Irish Forestry Board, which trains forestry workers and Bord Altranais, responsible for implementing CVET for the nursing profession.

REGIONAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Local and regional authorities play a less significant role in the provision of CVET. The VECs identify and meet local needs for both initial and continuing vocational education. Institutes of Technology (ITs), also have a role in supporting industry development and innovation at local level. Other state agencies which operate at this level include:

- Údarás Na Gaeltachta, a regional development agency which operates in Irish-speaking areas and aims to develop these areas through local enterprise and skills development.
- 35 County and City Enterprise Boards under the aegis of Enterprise Ireland, which provide training schemes mainly targeted at the development needs of micro-enterprises and their employees.
- County Development Boards, whose remit includes a consultative role in relation to CVET policies implemented within their areas, as do the country's four Territorial Employment Pacts.

SOCIAL PARTNERS

The social partners encourage employers to provide training for their employees through their participation in National Partnership Agreements, which have all included policies relating to CVET. They are represented on the Boards of FÁS and other industry sectoral advisory bodies, and have representatives on the Board of Skillnets Ltd, an industry-led company which facilitates training within groups of companies. They also have a consultative role in the allocation of funds for CVET under National Training Fund and are represented on VET bodies such as the National Qualifications Authority and the Further Education and Training and Higher Education and Training Awards Councils.

OTHER NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

Many social partner organisations are active in promoting training policies within their own industry or trade union associations. Some Chambers of Commerce, provide training opportunities for entrepreneurs, and professional bodies, such as those for accountants and lawyers, provide courses and advice on CVET practices for their members.

There are a small number of non-commercial training providers such as the Irish Management Institute (IMI) which trains managers, and the Institute of Public Administration (IPA), which is the national centre for training in public administration for employees in public sector. There are also many private training firms and consultants in Ireland, who provide training on a fee-paying basis for companies and training on a sub-contracted basis for state agencies such as FÁS and Enterprise Ireland.

VET PROVIDERS ACCORDING TO THE TYPES AND LEVELS OF PROVISION

Institutions and providers have different levels of emphasis between the three main types of VET generally. Table 1 below sets out the main VET providers and gives an indicative overview of the relative importance of these three types of VET for the different providers. It also indicates whether institutions deliver training directly or on a subcontracted basis. All the bodies referred to in this table have an education or training delivery role at regional level.

PROVIDERS	TYPES OF VET			DELIVERY	
	INITIAL	CONTINUING	UNEMPLOYED	DIRECT	CONTRACT
Secondary schools	XXX	X		*	
Community/Comprehensive schools	XXX	X		*	
Vocational schools (VECs)	XXX	X	X	*	
Institutes of Technology (ITs)	XXX	X		*	
FÁS, National Training and Employment Authority	XX	X	XXX	*	*
Teagasc (Agriculture)	XXX	X		*	
Fáilte Ireland (Tourism)	XX	X	XX	*	*
BIM (Fisheries)	XX	X		*	
Enterprises	X	XX		*	*
Social Partners		X	x	*	*
Private training bodies	X	XX		*	

Note: The 'Xs' show the relative concentration on different types of training by the organizations listed. The number of 'Xs' reflect the relative concentration within the organisation. The asterisks indicate whether the activity is conducted through institutions directly, or through subcontracted facilities.

Source: CEDEFOP Monograph: Vocational Education and Training in Ireland, 1998.

04 - INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

0401 - BACKGROUND TO THE IVET SYSTEM AND DIAGRAM

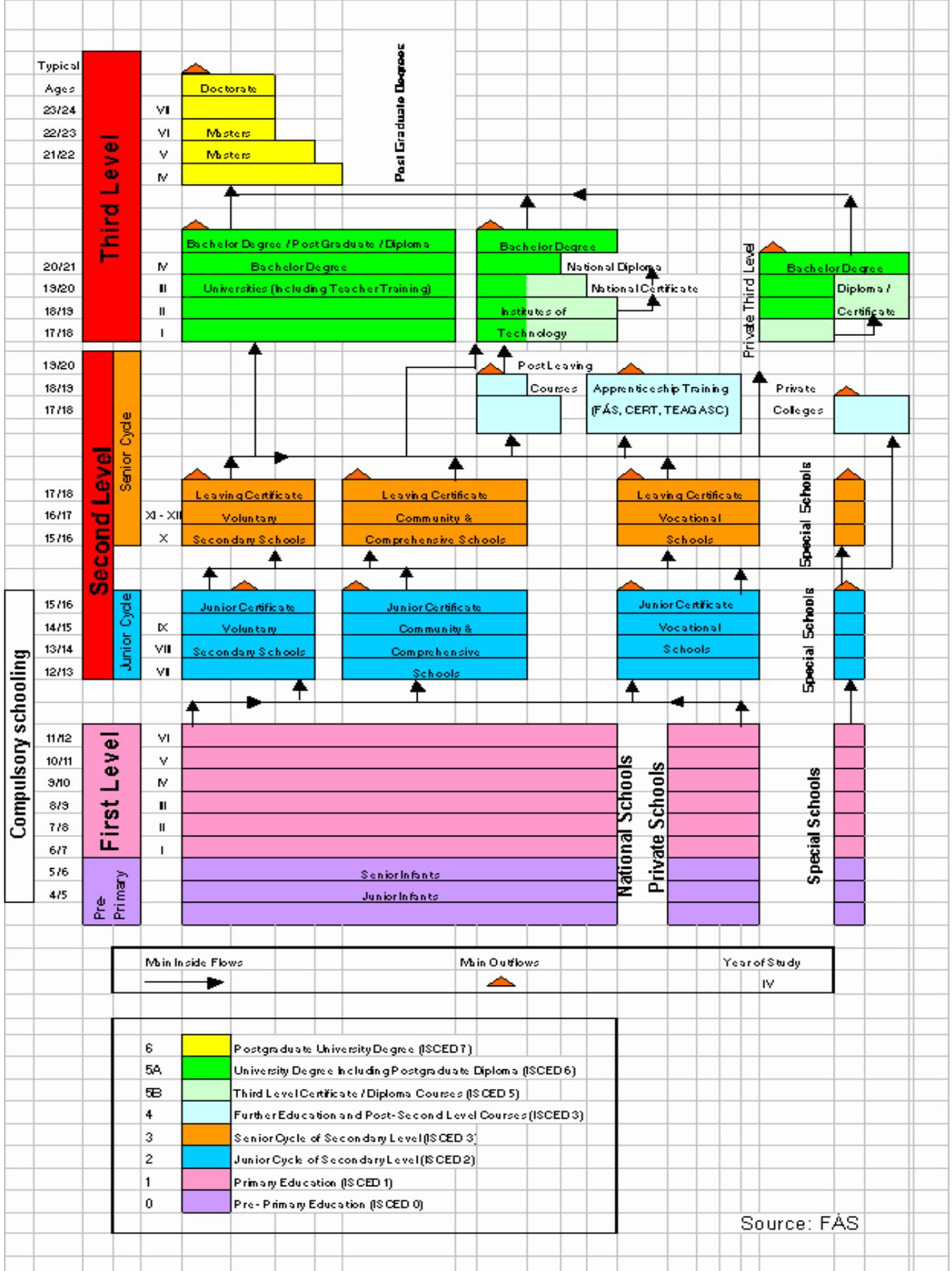
There is no legal definition of Initial Vocational Education and Training in Ireland. The Department of Education and Science (DES) defines IVET 'as education or training carried on from primary level onwards without interruption of more than one year'. IVET focuses primarily on the education and training of young persons, aged 15-20, who have generally completed compulsory second level education and who have not yet significantly engaged with the labour market, excluding apprenticeship. Because the roles and responsibilities for vocational education are separate from the vocational training system, which falls under the responsibility of the labour market authorities, there is not one system of IVET for young people who have completed compulsory schooling, but rather IVET policies and programmes implemented through different government departments and intermediary organisations. These programmes can be divided into the following four broad categories.

- School-based vocational education programmes and courses in non-tertiary colleges and centres for further education under the responsibility of the DES.
- Apprenticeship training, for which FÁS, the Training and Employment Authority, is responsible in co-operation with the DES.
- Other initial entry-level VET for various industry sectors is provided by publicly funded state agencies.
- Foundation and progression programmes, for those who have left school early without any formal qualifications. These are run both in the education and training systems.

An important feature of the Irish VET system in general, is that there is not a sharp distinction between initial and continuing vocational education and training for the unemployed. Rather, Government policy in general makes a distinction between programmes for young persons and school students, (mainly within the IVET system), programmes for the unemployed (whether young or older) and programmes for persons in employment. The majority of publicly-supported VET relates to initial vocational education and training and training for unemployed people.

The Chart of the Irish Education System (Figure 2) outlines the different levels and qualifications awarded within the formal and initial vocational education system in Ireland.

Figure 2: Structure of the education system



0402 - IVET AT LOWER SECONDARY LEVEL

According to Eurostat's study 'Key Data on Education in Europe 2002', 'In Ireland all school students are in compulsory general education as no separate vocational stream exists'. While this is the case at lower secondary education, if the Youthreach programme⁶ is not included, the system at upper secondary level is more complex, although general education still predominates at this level.

The main programmes followed at second level are the Junior Certificate (lower-secondary) and the Leaving Certificate (upper secondary). Both programmes are predominantly academic. The Irish education system involves education from the ages of six to 16 inclusive. Primary education can be commenced from the age of 4.5 years and lasts for up to 8 years finishing at age 11-12. Secondary education lasts for 5-6 years with the three year Junior Cycle from 12 to 15 years (i.e. 3 years) and then a further 2-3 years for Senior Cycle education.

Lower second level education (the Junior Cycle), consists of a three year programme, during which school students complete a broad, balanced curriculum. The Junior Certificate examination is taken at the end of the Junior Cycle, in seven to ten subjects including Irish, English, Mathematics, History and Geography. Schools at this level provide a variety of additional subjects such as modern languages, home economics, materials technology, e.g. woodwork etc. All education provided at this level is considered to be general in nature rather than focussed on a particular vocational or skill need (i.e. this is not considered as vocational education).

0403 - IVET AT UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION (SCHOOL-BASED AND ALTERNANCE)

At upper secondary level there are two distinguishable categories:

- General education leading to the possibility of entry to tertiary education.
- Vocational education which provides qualifications for both the preparation for working life and for pursuing further studies.

At the end of compulsory schooling at age 16, the majority of students proceed to upper secondary education (or the Senior Cycle). This consists of an (optional) Transition Year followed by one of three versions of the two-year Leaving Certificate Programme. In Ireland today 82% of persons complete upper second level education.

The Transition Year programme which is offered following completion of the Junior Cycle emphasises personal development and experiential learning

⁶ Youthreach provides integrated education, training and work experience for people aged 15 to 20 who have left school early without qualifications or vocational training.

opportunities. The Transition Year remains optional and some school students prefer to directly proceed to one of the Leaving Certificate Programmes. There are three options within the Leaving Certificate.

- The (established) Leaving Certificate Programme offers school students aged between 16-18 years a broad education while allowing for some specialisation. It is assessed primarily by written examination set by the State Examination Commission, at the end of a two-year programme and it is the terminal examination of post-primary education. The established Leaving Certificate is the accepted basis for entry into third-level education and is not vocationally orientated.
- The Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) consists of Leaving Certificate subjects, together with three modules on Enterprise Education, Preparation for Work and Work Experience. It is designed to give a vocational dimension to the Leaving Certificate (established). School students receive the same certificate as other Leaving Certificate students, but their certificate includes the results of the additional modules. The LCVP gives school students the same opportunity to proceed to third-level education as those taking the established Leaving Certificate. However, it combines academic study, with a focus on self-directed learning and enterprise and work related learning. This mix aims to be equally relevant to those preparing for further education, seeking employment or planning to start their own business.
- The Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) introduced in 1995, consists of Leaving Certificate subjects, together with three modules on Enterprise Education, Preparation for Work and Work Experience. The LCVP is designed to give a vocational dimension to the Leaving Certificate (established), and aims to prepare students for transition to adult and working life. School students are assessed over two years of study and receive the same certificate as other Leaving Certificate students, but their certificate includes the results of the additional modules. While the LCVP gives school students the same opportunity to proceed to third-level education as those taking the established Leaving Certificate and it can provide access to apprenticeships, it is principally designed for school students who do not wish to proceed directly to third level education or for those whose needs and aptitudes are not adequately catered for by the other two Leaving Certificate Programmes. It combines academic study, with a focus on self-directed learning and enterprise and work related learning. This mix aims to be equally relevant to those preparing for further education, seeking employment or planning to start own businesses.

According to the Department of Education and Science, the Leaving Certificate Applied Programme (LCAP) and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) are considered to have IVET elements, although the LCAP is more vocationally-oriented than the

LCVP. However, significantly none of these programmes are classified as initial vocational training⁷.

A survey undertaken by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) and published by the Higher Education Authority in 2007, found that the percentages of pupils studying these three options in 2003-04 were Leaving Certificate Traditional (63%), Leaving Certificate Vocational (30%) and Leaving Certificate Applied (7%) and in 2007 the number taking Leaving Certificate examinations was almost 54,000. The report also found that the percentage of those staying at school to take the different Leaving Certificate options has remained in the region of 80-82% during the last decade, despite the government policy aim that the percentage of young persons remaining on to take the Leaving Certificate should gradually increase to 90%. In relation to those that drop-out of school, the government aims to address their needs as comprehensively as possible through the promotion of strategies such as the 'School Completion Programme' and the *Youthreach*⁸ Programme. (See Section: 0405).

Table 1: School students in upper secondary education by programme orientation (general and prevocational) in 2005	
IRELAND	
Upper secondary education total enrolment	147,105
Upper secondary education vocational programmes (%)	3.8%
Upper secondary education general and pre-vocational programmes (%)	100%

Source: Eurostat, UOE data collection; online database, (download date 26/05/2008)

0404 - APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

ALTERNANCE TYPE IVET IN IRELAND

While the traditional type of alternance training combining a school-based environment and a real workplace (see CEDEFOP Glossary 2003), is not a feature of IVET at upper secondary level in Ireland, there are other forms of alternance type training in existence. These programmes can be divided into the following three broad categories.

⁷ The Post-Leaving Certificate Sector in Ireland: A multivariate Analysis of Educational and Employment Outcomes. ESRI, published by the HEA 2007.

⁸ Youthreach provides integrated education, training and work experience for people aged 15 to 20 who have left school early without qualifications or vocational training.

- School-based vocational education programmes and courses in non-tertiary colleges and centres of further education, e.g. Post Leaving Certificate courses under the responsibility of the Department of Education and Science (DES).
- Apprenticeship training provided by *FÁS*, the Training and Employment Authority in co-operation with the DES and Traineeships.
- Other initial entry-level VET for various industry sectors provided by publicly-funded agencies such as *Fáilte Ireland* for new entrants into the tourism industry.

APPRENTICESHIP

The two main forms of alternating type training in Ireland are the apprenticeship system and the new traineeship system developed by *FÁS*. Apprenticeship is the recognised means by which individuals are trained to become crafts persons. The apprenticeship system is managed by *FÁS*, in co-operation with the DES, the employers and the trade unions under the aegis of the National Apprenticeship Advisory Committee. A recent outcome of this co-operation has facilitated *FÁS* in co-operation with the Institutes of Technology, to develop protocols for the recognition of Prior Learning for the apprenticeship process, thus allowing increased access to this programme.

Apprentices receive alternating on and off-the-job training in 26 designated occupations including the construction, engineering, motor, furniture and printing trades, all of which come within the scope of a standards-based statutory system. Under the National Development Plan 2007-2013, it is planned to introduce apprenticeships in additional occupations. The apprenticeship system comprises seven phases over a period of four years and the curricula are based on pre-specified standards which are agreed with industry. All new apprentices are required to be registered with *FAS eCollege* where they will have access to a range of online learning materials relevant to their course.

Three of the phases are off-the-job, and are they delivered in *FÁS* Training Centres and Institutes of Technology over a total of forty weeks. The four on-the-job phases take place with the employer. On successful completion of this training, an apprentice receives an Advanced Certificate, awarded at Level 6, by FETAC, the Further Education and Training Awards Council. Recent years have seen a rapid expansion in total apprentice registrations from 16 125 in 1998 to 29 801 in 2006, with approximately 11 900 companies, participating in the scheme. The profile of apprenticeships is dominated by the construction and electrical trades, which account for over 80% of all apprenticeship starts in 2006.

Apprentices are recruited and employed by companies and receive wages when training on-the-job. This is based on a percentage of the full craft wage, while the funding of apprentices during off-the-job training phases is provided by the state. Apprentices must be at least 16 years of age and the minimum entry requirement into an apprenticeship is successful completion of the

Junior Certificate. However, the majority of apprentices have completed upper secondary level education. About 10-15% of all school leavers follow the apprenticeship route. A similar apprenticeship model is found in some other areas of initial vocational training, e.g. in the farming, tourism and hospitality sectors and Defence Forces. In addition, many professional bodies also operate apprenticeship-style schemes, involving full-time employment with day release or evening course provision, for example in accountancy and law.

TRAINEESHIPS

Traineeships involve employers, union representatives and FÁS working together to devise occupational-specific training programmes for jobseekers. The training content and occupational standards are based on consultation with employers and lead to certification by FETAC. Traineeships combine structured on-the-job training with formal off-the-job tuition in a FÁS Training Centre. In host companies trainees are assigned a mentor or skills coach who supervises workplace training. Traineeships vary in duration from six to twenty-four months, depending on the scope of the curriculum, the skill requirement of the occupation and the entry level of the trainees. Example of these programmes include, retail and legal secretary traineeships. In 2006, 2 067 persons completed traineeship.

0405 - OTHER YOUTH PROGRAMMES AND ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS

A specific policy focus of the government over a number of years has been alleviating educational disadvantage, with particular attention been given to young disadvantaged persons with low educational attainment. In recent years several strategies have been put in place to address the IVET needs of those who drop-out of school without any qualifications, as well as the other transition or progression issues associated with this group. A variety of measures and legislation have been introduced to tackle early school leaving, such as the Education Welfare Act 2000 and the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004. The National Anti Poverty Strategy had a specific target to reduce the number of young people who left school early so that the percentage of those who complete upper second level or equivalent will reach 90 % by 2006 from a baseline figure of 81.6 % in 1999. Table 2 indicates the reduction in the percentage of early school leavers from 2002-07.

COUNTRY	2002	2007
Ireland	14.7	11.5
EU 27	16.6	14.8

Source: Eurostat, EU Labour Force Survey ; May 2008. Eurostat Labour Market Database 2007 data for 2007 shows that 86.7% of the Irish population aged 20-24 have completed at least upper secondary level education (EU27 78.1%). The rate of early school leaving for 2007 was 11.5% (EU27 14.8%), showing a drop on the last few years.

The Youthreach programme, introduced in 1989, is a joint initiative between the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. It provides two years' full-time integrated education, training and work experience for young people between 15-20 years who have left school early without qualifications or vocational training and a training allowance is paid to participants. In 2007 in response to the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004, the special educational needs initiative was introduced as part of the Youthreach Programme for those with educational disabilities. The Youthreach programme, which is managed locally by Vocational Education Committees (VECS) and FÁS regional management, consists of two distinct phases.

- Foundation phase to help overcome learning difficulties; develop self-confidence and a range of competences essential for further learning.
- Progression phase which provides more specific development through a range of education, training and work experience options.

Certification is provided by FETAC and progression options to the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate Applied Programmes are also available.

In 2006 a comprehensive five-year Strategy for Traveller⁹ education was developed with the assistance of the Educational Disadvantage Committee and the Advisory Committee on Traveller Education. One of the issues it addresses relates to how existing educational supports for Traveller children might best be integrated into mainstream IVET provision.

The Youthreach and Young Traveller Programmes are defined as IVET programmes at lower secondary level and are designed as part of an integrated strategy to ensure that young people who have left school with no or few qualifications, have a second chance to gain access to, and benefit from education of sufficient quality to allow them to find employment, or to progress to further education and training. Another progression option developed by FÁS is 'Linked Work Experience', an employer-supported training and work experience initiative intended for trainees who have completed the Foundation phase of Youthreach, or who do not require foundation training and can benefit from structured on-the-job training.

At the end of 2007 there were 3,133 young persons attending Youthreach programmes in vocational education centres and 1,089 attending Traveller training centres, while 1,790 early school leavers completed FÁS programmes delivered mainly in 41 Community Training Centres, as well as those completing other training courses. A survey of outcomes from the Youthreach (VEC) centres found that 71% had obtained employment or had progressed to further education or training. The comparable percentage for Travellers training centres was 42% and for Community Training Centres was 46%. Programmes such as Youthreach and the Foundation (Bridging) Programme, which aim to facilitate labour market access for young educationally disadvantaged young people, support approximately 4,600 persons annually. The School Completion Initiative combining the Early School Leaver and the

⁹ The Travelling Community in Ireland is a nomadic ethnic minority. There are estimated to be in excess of 25 000 Travellers in the Republic of Ireland.

School Retention Initiatives, were a number of other measures established to enhance support for the continued participation of young people in school.

Table 2 below sets out the broad range of supports for early school leavers.

Table 2: Range of Supports for Early School Leavers (ELS) in addition to Established Training or Local Initiatives		
INITIATIVE	TARGET GROUP	DELIVERY MECHANISM
GATEWAY – provides part-time training including appraisal of career potential leading to return to school, training or a job.	15–18 year ESLs who cannot attend full-time Community Training Centre (CTC) Foundation Programmes.	Delivered in Community Training Centres or community-based facilities.
Customised Training – Provides a fund, which may be used to enable ESLs access training directly linked to their career plan and not otherwise available through state agencies.	ESLs in progression within YOUTHREACH or who have attained Foundation level certification and who have identified a career path.	Available in Community Training Centres, (CTCs) FÁS/Dept of Justice Workshops and YOUTHREACH Centres.
Bridging Training – specially designed programmes or modules including pre-apprenticeship, available from FÁS for ESLs who have completed Foundation level certification but who require special additional qualifications to gain entry to a mainstream programme.	ESLs in Progression within YOUTHREACH or who have attained Foundation level and who have identified a career path.	Available in CTCs and FÁS Training Centres.
Advocacy – a tailor-made approach to career path planning for ESLs who are experiencing difficulties in progression within YOUTHREACH, and for those who have attained Foundation level certification and have identified a career path.	YOUTHREACH participants who are in or about to enter progression and who are experiencing difficulties.	Available to all in the four strands of the YOUTHREACH programme in CTCs, YOUTHREACH Centres or FÁS/Dept of Justice workshops.
Linked Work Experience – provides YOUTHREACH participants with the opportunity to develop specific abilities through sustained structured on-the-job training.	Trainees who have completed the Foundation phase or who do not require foundation training.	Available through CTCs or directly through YOUTHREACH Centres or through external trainers.
Counselling, Guidance, and Psychological Supports – a service to YOUTHREACH participants who require specialist support in dealing with personal issues.	Trainees who are referred by CTC staff and who are in need of specialist support.	Delivered locally and involves the VEC making a budget available to find a suitable provider.
Mentoring – provides YOUTHREACH participants with services to (a) help the young person identify the best way forward, (b) negotiate on behalf of the young person with training or education providers (c) support and track the young persons progress.	ESLs that experience difficulties in deciding the way forward or are assessing options.	All YOUTHREACH strands can choose this or another (e.g. Advocacy) support for their group.

Source: Cedefop: Initial Vocational Education and Training in Ireland, K. Mc Ginn, FÁS, 2005

(Table 1: Section: 0406 lists the main programmes available at the different levels of IVET in Ireland and their providers. Table 2: Section: 0407 sets out the main types of accreditation and certifying bodies for IVET programmes).

0406 - VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING AT POST-SECONDARY (NON TERTIARY) LEVEL

There is a range of further IVET possibilities for persons who have completed compulsory secondary education and who wish to enhance their post-school qualifications. The two largest programmes are the Post-Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses for young people seeking to upgrade their qualifications and FÁS training for young job-seekers.

POST-LEAVING CERTIFICATE COURSES (EDUCATION SYSTEM)

Post Leaving Certificate courses (PLCs) aim to provide a bridge between school and work for those who need further initial vocational education to enhance their employment opportunities. The programme has grown considerably and there are now over 1,000 courses in some 225 schools and specialist centres throughout the country. The programme options are designed to be broadly based to allow entry into a series of possible occupations, and provide a foundation for lifelong learning. A wide range of disciplines are covered including Business Studies, Electronics, Engineering, ICT, Catering, Horticulture, Sport and Leisure, Theatre and Stage, Childcare, Equestrian Studies and Media Studies. Programmes are (usually) of one to three years duration and courses adopt an integrated approach, focusing on technical knowledge, core skills and work experience which can lead to certification at Levels 5 or 6 from the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETEC).

PLC programmes are provided in second level schools and further education centres and colleges and 92% of provision is in the VEC sector. Some 40.8% of all participants are over 21 years accordingly. The courses are an important re-entry route to learning for adults, as well as catering for some 18% of all school leavers each year. While courses offer an alternative to programmes available in higher education, certain PLCs are accepted as bridges into higher university education through e.g. the Higher Education Links scheme. They can also provide an alternative route to third level education in the Institutes of Technology for those who have completed the Leaving Certificate Applied Programme. (See Section: 0403). There are approximately 30,000 persons enrolled on PLC courses¹⁰ which is the largest non-tertiary, post second-level, initial vocational education programme in Ireland.

INITIAL VOCATIONAL TRAINING AT POST-SECONDARY

The majority of publicly-supported initial vocational training in Ireland is for new entrants into the labour market. One of the main publicly-funded providers of post-secondary vocational training is FÁS the Training and Employment Authority. While many of FAS courses cater for young persons receiving initial vocational training, these courses are also open to all age groups, for example both Specific Skills training courses (SST) and

¹⁰ Department of Education and Science Statistical Report 2004/05.

Traineeships (See Section 0404), and are designed to enable participants to directly enter the labour market. The duration of these full-time courses varies, but usually they last for four to six months. In 2007, 5,704¹¹ persons completed SST courses, while another 5,480 completed bridging-foundation-type courses. The FETAC qualifications awarded – a Specific Skills Certificate for SST participants and the National Skills Certificate for Traineeships (see Section 0404)- are placed at Levels 4, 5 and 6 (depending on the course followed) in the National Framework of Qualifications, (See Section 0801). They do not lead to direct entry into third-level education. IVET is also provided through the following publicly-supported sectoral agencies.

- Fáilte Ireland, the National Tourism Development Authority, provides full-time day and block release courses, for craft and management trainees, in the hotel, catering and tourism industry. These courses are mainly for young entrants pursuing careers in tourism and related occupations. The trainees are generally aged from 17 to 24 years, and the courses range from one to four years, depending on whether they are full-time, block or day-release courses. Formal instruction is mainly delivered in Institutes of Technology and it is complemented by periods of industry work experience. A total of 3,936¹² received training and or participated, for instance, in full-time craft programmes in nine Institutes of Technology nationwide and in the Tourism College, Killybegs during 2006.
- Teagasc, the Agriculture and Food Development Authority, provides training for young people wishing to pursue a career in agriculture, horticulture and equine studies. Many of the courses extend over two years and include course work at college and work experience. A FETAC Certificate is awarded to successful students completing the first year. Student completing the optional year two are awarded a level 6 FETAC Advanced Certificate and participants have the option to transfer to higher level courses. Teagasc courses are also accredited by HETAC, the Higher Education and Training Authority. The agency delivered twenty four full time programmes in 2006 – eleven in higher education (in combination with the Institutes of Technology), and 13 in further education – across a range of subjects and specialisations. The total number of trainees who enrolled for further level I training in 2006 was 645¹³ with an overall total of 3,384 participating on all Teagasc courses...
- Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM), the Irish Fisheries Board, offers initial vocational training courses in sea and fish farming. Attendance at BIM

¹¹ FÁS Annual Report, 2007, FÁS, Dublin. Ireland 2007.

¹² EHRD OP 2000-06 Monitoring Committee Report, 2006. Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment.

¹³ EHRD OP 2000-06 Monitoring Committee Report, 2006. Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment.

training centres for 2006 amounted to 1,635¹⁴. There are currently in excess of one hundred individual BIM training modules/courses available to the seafood industry at both initial and continuing training level. Modular FETAC Certificates are awarded in Commercial Fishing, Aquaculture and Seafood Processing and Certificates of Competency for deck and engineer officers, are awarded by the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources. Mobile coastal training units play a significant role in the delivery of BIM training.

Údarás Na Gaeltachta is a regionally-based economic development agency, which operates in Irish-speaking areas. Education and training are core elements of Údarás na Gaeltachta's development strategy for the Gaeltacht and the level of funding being provided to underpin this sector has been significantly increased in recent years. Collaborative initiatives have commenced with a number of third-level institutions, with an emphasis on third-level education through Irish.. In addition to continuing training and lifelong learning directed specifically at improving the competitiveness and productivity of businesses within the Gaeltacht, at initial VET level there are four main priorities aimed at raising skill levels and improving educational achievements at individual or community level:- Management Development, Apprentice Development and third Level Education through Irish, and the Second Level Schools Programme. These schemes were operated throughout the Gaeltacht. Excluding second level students, nearly 3,000¹⁵ persons completed these training and education programmes in 2006.

Other forms of initial vocational training include training for new entrants into the civil service and public service such as the defence and police forces, and for the professions such as accountancy and law.

Table 1 below lists the main programmes and non-tertiary courses available at the different levels of IVET in Ireland.

¹⁴ EHRD OP 2000-06 Monitoring Committee Report. 2006. Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment.

¹⁵ EHRD OP 2000-06 Monitoring Committee Report. 2006. Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment.

Table 1: IVET programmes and non-tertiary courses for school leavers and new entrants into the workforce

IVET LEVELS	EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMMES	EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROVIDERS
INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN THE SCHOOL-BASED SYSTEM		
Upper & post-secondary school level	Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme. Leaving Certificate Applied Programme. Post-Leaving Certificate courses. (*)	Secondary Schools, Community/ Comprehensive Schools, Vocational Schools, Community Colleges, (VECs). Further Education Centres (VECs).
POST-SECONDARY SCHOOL IVET		
Apprenticeships Other alternance type training such as FÁS Traineeships	26 craft apprenticeship courses. Certified occupational training eg. for retail assistants.	Off-the-job training in FÁS and Institutes of Technology. On-the-job training by employers, FÁS and on-the-job training by employers.
Foundation and progression training for early school leavers	Youthreach and young traveller training.	VEC Youthreach centres, Community Training Centres and other FÁS training provision, Traveller Training Centres
INDUSTRY SECTOR ALTERNANCE TYPE IVET (**)		
Initial vocational training for new entrants	Courses for the tourism, catering and hospitality sectors.	Fáilte Ireland, Institutes of Technology, in-house hotel training provision
Initial vocational training for new entrants	Courses in agriculture, horticulture and equine studies.	Institutes of Technology, agricultural and horticultural colleges, Teagasc training centres
Initial vocational training for new entrants	Courses in sea fishing and fish farming	BIM centres
OTHER POST SECONDARY NON-TERTIARY IVET		
Initial vocational training for new entrants into the professions and public service.	Courses mainly following an alternance type approach, similarly for certain public services training e.g. for the police and defence forces etc.	Specialist training centres e.g. the Institute of Public Administration; in-house Departmental training units; Institutes of Technology and Colleges of Further Education (VECs); Colleges for law and accountancy etc.

(*) PLC courses are also available to adults.

(**) IVET courses are also available for new entrants into the forestry sector.

Source: CEDEFOP Thematic Series 10 – Investment in Human Resources, Ireland. M Barry, FÁS, Ireland, 2006.

0407 - VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING AT TERTIARY LEVEL

The third-level education sector is principally funded by the state, mainly via the Higher Education Authority (HEA), which has overall statutory authority for advising on, planning and developing higher education and research. This sector comprises the Universities (7), the technological sector (Institutes of Technology) and the Colleges of Education

The Institutes of Technology, (ITs) are the main third-level educational institutions providing courses aimed at the IVET sector. There are fourteen ITs run by independent boards of management with a large element of funding and direction from the Department of Education and Science. ITs play a significant role in providing the off-the-job educational elements for those participating in the statutory apprenticeship schemes, (see Section: 0404), and provide initial vocational courses for young entrants into the tourism, agriculture, horticulture and forestry sectors.

Other significant providers of initial vocational education at third level are the five Primary Teacher Training Colleges and the two Home Economics and a Physical Education Colleges in the University of Limerick. Teachers of art and of music are trained in the National College of Art & Design (NCAD) and the Royal Irish Academy respectively. Teachers of Religion are trained in the Mater Dei Institute of Education in Dublin. In addition, there are a number of independent private colleges offering third level qualifications.

Entry into third-level education is based mainly on results in the Leaving Certificate examination. A 'points' system, computed on six subjects in the Leaving Certificate, operates where there are more eligible applicants than places on the courses. Third level honours degree programmes are normally of three or four years duration with higher certificates and ordinary degree courses being two and three years respectively. While the universities make their own awards, accreditation for students participating in full-time third level education in ITs is mainly awarded by HETAC, the Higher Education and Training Awards Council. There has been a significant expansion of higher education over the past two decades in terms of participation and investment, approximately 31% of those aged 25-64 had a third level qualification in 2007¹⁶, an increase of 6% on 2005. The numbers in full-time third-level education from 2006 -2007 were 138,362¹⁷. The vast majority of third-level students attend institutions funded by the state. There were 8 002 students in non-aided colleges (i.e. fee paying colleges, dependent on private funds only). According to the 2007 OECD 'Education at a Glance', Report (Tables C. 2.1/3.), 15% of the relevant cohort in Ireland entered Tertiary Type B (Certificate/ Diploma/Degree) education and 44% entered Tertiary Type A (A Primary Degree/Masters) in 2005. This can be compared with the OECD average rates of 16% and 53% respectively for a similar cohort. Changing demographic and economic circumstances are creating demand for new skills and this poses challenges and opportunities for the third level sector. In particular universities and Institutes of Technology will have to deliver more flexible, labour market orientated qualifications. The national system of innovation and the higher education system is strongly research and

¹⁶ Eurostat; EU Labour Force Survey; 27/05/08.

¹⁷ Department of Education and Science Website 2007.

innovation oriented, aiming for mutually beneficial interaction with the enterprise sector, with two overarching goals:

- To build up a sustainable system of world class research teams in terms of people and supporting infrastructure;
- To double the output of PhDs by 2013.

One of the ways of achieving this is through the Strategic Innovation Fund (EUR 510 million) which is intended to be a major catalyst in bringing about substantial change and quality improvement in the higher education institutions and promoting system-wide collaboration that draws on all institutions collective strengths.

Table 1 below shows the number of full-time students in publicly funded third level education during 2005-06.

Table 1: Number of full-time students in institutions aided by the Department of Education and Science in 2006 -2007	
LEVEL	NO. OF STUDENTS
Third Level	138,362
Institutes of Technology/Technological Colleges	53,358
Universities and other HEA Colleges (excluding Royal College of Surgeons of Ireland)	82,488
Other Aided (including teacher training colleges)	2,516

Source: Education Statistics, Department of Education and Science Website, August 2007.

The new ESF Human Capital Investment Operational Programme 2007-13 contains a measure- Undergraduate Skills- which relates to the provision of additional third-level places in response to identified skill needs in the labour market, (e.g. ICT, engineering and other related science courses). The 4th Report of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs noted that there would still remain a skills shortage in the ICT and biotechnology industries in the near future. Funding has been made available from the Information Technology Investment Fund to assist Institutes of Technology to increase capacity. Demand for places on science courses in the universities has remained consistent over the last five years. In 2007, there were no vacancies on any undergraduate science programme¹⁸. Table 2 below outlines all the main publicly-funded IVET programmes and courses within the State which are available for young people who have left compulsory schooling. The table also sets out (a) the main qualifications awarded, (b) the certifying bodies for these courses and (c) the government departments responsible for funding the principal providers of these IVET programmes.

¹⁸ Human Capital Investment Operational Report 2007-13. Annual Implementation Report 2007.

Table 2: All the Main IVET Accredited Programmes in Ireland

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE	
Programme and Qualification	Course Description/Provider
*Leaving Certificate Applied Programme (LCA) Certifying body-State Examinations Commission (School awards)	2 year programme to meet the needs of students who choose not to opt for established Leaving Certificate programme. Objective is to prepare students for working life through emphasis on vocational and technical subjects. Providers- secondary /community/comprehensive/VEC schools.
*Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) Certifying body-State Examinations Commission	2 year programme with teaching of vocational/technical/business disciplines. Includes 3 Link Modules on enterprise education, preparation for work and work experience. Providers- secondary/community/comprehensive/VEC schools.
Post-Leaving Certificate Courses (PLC) Certifying body- Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETEC)	Courses of 1 to 3 years, for persons who have completed secondary education and who wish to enhance their post-school qualifications. Programmes lead to certification at Levels 5 or 6 from FETEC. Providers- second level schools and colleges, 92% of provision is in the VEC sector.
Middle Level Technician Higher Technical Business Skills Certifying body Higher Education and Training Authority (HETAC)	2 year course to National Certificate Level. 3 year course to National Diploma Level or 1 year with a National Certificate awarded by HETAC. Providers-Institutes of Technology.
JOINTLY FUNDED BY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION & SCIENCE AND ENTERPRISE & EMPLOYMENT	
Youthreach and Young Traveller training Programmes. Certifying bodies FETAC/State Examinations Commission	Aimed at disadvantaged early school leavers without qualifications. Aim re-integration into mainstream activities. 2 year courses which can be extended to facilitate access to the Leaving Certificate or equivalent qualification. Providers-VECs/FAS
Post-graduate Conversion Courses Certifying body-HETAC	1 year in 'skills shortage' disciplines. Providers-Universities and Institutes of Technology.
DEPARTMENT OF ENTERPRISE TRADE AND EMPLOYMENT	
Apprenticeship training leading to the award of the FETAC Advanced Certificate. Traineeships which lead to Certification by FETAC	Alternating on and off-the-job training over four years in 26 designated occupations, all of which come within the scope of a standards-based statutory apprenticeship system. Traineeships combine structured on-the-job workplace training with formal off-the-job tuition in a FAS Training Centre. Providers-FAS, with Institutes of Technology for apprenticeships.
FUNDED BY OTHER RELEVANT GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS	
Certificate and Advanced Diploma courses for craft and management trainees in the hotel, catering and tourism industry. Certifying bodies-FETAC/ HETAC	Full-time day and block release courses for craft trainees in the hotel, catering and tourism industry. Courses range from one to four years. They are funded by the Department of Arts, Sports & Tourism. Providers- Failte Ireland and Institutes of Technology.
Certificate/Diploma course in farming and farm apprenticeships. Certifying bodies FETAC/ HETAC	Training for young people in agriculture and horticulture. Courses extend over two years and can lead to A third level qualifications. Courses funded by the Department of Agriculture & Food. Providers- Teagasc, the Agriculture and Food Development Authority and the Institutes of Technology.
Certificates in Commercial Fishing and in Aquaculture and other Marine related courses. Certifying body FETAC	Training Courses at both initial and continuing levels in sea and fish farming. Courses funded by the Department of Communications, Marine & Natural Resources. Provider- Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM), The Irish Fisheries Board.

* Within the National Framework of Qualifications these programmes lead to certification at level 5. See Section: 0702, for the Diagram illustrating the National Framework of Qualifications Awards.

Source: Cedefop: Initial Vocational Education and Training in Ireland, K. Mc Ginn, FAS, Ireland, 2005.

05 - CONTINUING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR ADULTS

0501 - BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON CONTINUING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Irish VET system and over 30,000 are currently studying for further education qualifications¹⁹ It caters for a diverse range of learners and fields of learning and takes place in a range of locations, including Institutes of further education, training centres, community-based learning centres and in the workplace.

In Ireland there is not a sharp distinction between what comprises further or continuing vocational education and training (CVET), as opposed to initial vocational education and training. Government policy in general makes distinctions between:

- programmes for young persons and students (mainly within the IVET system);
- programmes for the unemployed (whether young or older); and
- programmes for persons in employment.

The Department of Education and Science (DES) defines further education and training (FET) as 'embracing education and training which occurs after second level schooling but which is not part of the third level system'²⁰, while it is defined by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs as 'education which is post-compulsory and of a vocational nature'. It is evident from the above definitions that CVET in Ireland is easier to define by indicating the traditional categories of education and training which it excludes, rather than those categories which it includes. A distinctive feature of further education generally is its diversity and breadth of provision, The Department of Education and Science provides for programmes such as:

- Post-Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses
- Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) for the unemployed
- Youthreach for early school-leavers
- Senior Traveller training centre programmes for young and adult Travellers who have left school early
- Adult literacy
- The Back-to-Education Initiative
- Community education
- Self-funded part-time adult education programmes.

¹⁹ Irish Times Supplement-Guide to Adult and Further Education, 7/9/2007.

²⁰ A Brief Description of the Irish Education System. Department of Education and Science. 2004.

These further education programmes are generally provided locally by the Vocational Education Committees (VECs) and by second-level schools. Programmes at this level are also provided through other Government Departments by a range of training agencies, such as FÁS, the Training and Employment Authority, Failte Ireland the Tourism Development Authority and Teagasc, the Agriculture and Food Development Authority and by community organisations. National certification is provided by the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC), and programmes can also be offered that lead to awards under the Junior or Leaving Certificate Programmes.

POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

The state has traditionally played a much less significant role in the provision of CVET for the employed and for adult learners generally, in comparison to its interventions for the training and education for the unemployed and for young people. The publication of the 'White Paper on Adult Education-Learning for Life' in 2000, marked the adoption of lifelong learning as an important principle of educational policy and the official recognition by the state that its educational commitment extends to include not only those people in school and university, but also that part of the population which has left the initial education system. There has also been a growing awareness by the Government and among the social partners, that in an emerging knowledge economy, the workforce needs to become more competitive, and that on-going education and training will be required to ensure that their skills are kept up-to-date and relevant. The Enterprise Strategy Group in their 2004 report 'Ahead of the Curve', identified the need to increase skills training for low-skilled and unskilled employees, and support for lifelong learning has been prioritized in the National Development Plan for 2007-2013. As a result there has been a significant increase in state funding for schemes to encourage in-company training and training for people in employment.

The National Development Plan 2007-2011, the National Partnership Agreement-Towards 2016, the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016 and the Programme for Government 2007, have all restated the Government's commitment to Lifelong Learning, with a focus on enhancing access to training, the development of new skills, the acquisition of recognised qualifications and progression to higher level qualifications. The Government recently appointed a Minister of State for Lifelong Learning with responsibility for improving access as well as overseeing and ensuring a co-ordinated approach to lifelong learning.

Under the current Social Partnership Agreement a "lifecycle approach" to employment and training has been set out with the supports available to the individual at each stage of the life cycle. Priorities in the implementation of the framework for Lifelong Learning include:

- Addressing skill needs and widening access to lifelong learning in the context of an integrated approach to education and training;
- Tackling disadvantage in terms of literacy and numeracy, early school leaving and providing second chance education and training for those with low skills;

- Addressing access barriers through the strengthening of financial supports, guidance, counselling and childcare services and increased flexibility of provision.

The lifecycle framework, as set out in Towards 2016, includes transitions between non-employment (unemployed/inactive), employment and within employment, with training/upskilling acting as the catalyst for such transitions.

LIFELONG LEARNING (LLL)

In the overall context of progressing the Lifelong Learning Agenda, which is part of the National Skills Strategy, priorities include tackling disadvantage in terms of literacy and numeracy, early school leaving and providing second chance education. Among the significant developments that have occurred recently in this area have been the establishment of 'The Taskforce on Lifelong Learning' in 2002, which gave official sanction to funding community education. The introduction of the 'Back to Education Initiative' (BTEI) in 2002 provided further opportunities for second chance education. Other developments have included the establishment of the 'Adult Guidance Initiative' to offer information and counselling to adult learners, and a National Adult Literacy Programme which was set up to address the low literacy level of some of the Irish adult population, identified in OECD International Adult Literacy Survey²¹. Eurostat²² data for 2007 shows that 7.6% of all persons in Ireland aged 25-64 participated in lifelong learning (EU 27 9.7%).

NEW WAYS TO ACCESS LEARNING

There has also been increased financial investment by both the commercial and public sectors in alternative modes of learning such as open, distance and e-learning. FÁS, the Training and Employment Authority, has established FAS eCollege to provide online courses for adults who wish to avail of a more flexible learning approach. Recently both Failte Ireland the National Tourism Development Authority and Teagasc, the Agriculture and Food Development Authority have also established eLearning programmes with 500 adults completing programmes in Teagasc in 2007. There are currently a number of public and private providers of this type of learning in Ireland.

PLANNING AND FORECASTING MECHANISMS

There are a number of mechanisms for skills anticipation in Ireland, and one of the principal is the 'Expert Group on Future Skill Needs', established in 1998. The Expert Group, which includes representatives of the government, social partners, industrial development agencies and education and training bodies, has undertaken research into the supply of skills in a range of areas and examined the skill needs of the labour market generally. (See Section: 0701).

²¹ Literacy Skills for the Knowledge Society in International Adult Literacy Survey, Paris: OECD, 1997.

²² Eurostat: Labour Market Database 2007.

0502 - PUBLICLY PROMOTED CVET FOR ALL

CVET, including adult learning takes several forms. These include:

- Training within enterprises;
- Ongoing occupational and general skills training provided by public training and educational institutions;
- Re-entry by adults into higher education;
- Community education, which is generally publicly funded;
- Self-funded night-classes and general part-time provision;
- Education and training for unemployed and redundant persons.

The features of the CVET sector which distinguish it from the higher, mainly university, education sector include the following:

- Courses are provided by a variety of institutions, these include:- further education centres and colleges under the remit of Vocational Education Committees (VECs); state agencies such as FÁS, the national Training and Employment Authority, institutes of further education and training, such as the Irish Management Institute and the Institute of Public Administration; CVET courses provided by professional bodies for their members; private training companies and networks which provide fee-based training for companies and in-company training for employees within both enterprises and the public sector.
- The courses typically have a vocational focus and reflect national, regional or sectoral economic needs. They also aim to develop personal skills and, in general, are open to all learners.
- The cohort undertaking any one course does not fit a prescribed profile i.e. in terms of age, existing qualifications etc.

There are currently approximately 1,300 further education and training centres registered with the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC), these include:

- Adult Education and Community Training Centres.
- Adult Literacy Centres.
- Centres for Learners with Special Needs.
- Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) Centres and Further Education Colleges (VECs).
- Workplace Learning Centres.

The courses offered by these centres cover a broad field of CVET within the following categories.

SECOND CHANCE AND COMMUNITY CVET

This caters for learners at all levels from pre-foundation to higher, non-tertiary level and is generally open to all. This provision is not confined to CVET and mainly addresses the educational deficits of those people who have not completed upper second-level education. Examples are courses provided under the Community Strand of the Back to Education Initiative (BTEI), where 10 % of places are exclusively for the community sector.

(See Section: 0503), and literacy programmes. There are also publicly provided part-time courses and evening classes which are targeted mainly at adults interested in non-job-related learning. While there is no comprehensive national database of statistics for participation in this sector, AONTAS—The National Association of Adult Education, collects some relevant statistics on an ongoing basis.

The Back-to-Education Initiative (BTEI) was a central element in the lifelong learning strategy outlined in the 2000 White Paper on Adult Education. It aims to build on existing further education programmes and to facilitate a significant expansion of flexible part-time options within these programmes. The BTEI is intended to make further education more accessible, and it places a considerable emphasis on engaging with “hard-to-reach” groups—those that are more difficult to engage in the formal (and full-time) learning process. The programme is designed to increase the participation of young people and adults with less than upper second-level education in a range of flexible part-time learning opportunities. An important function of the BTEI is ensuring that progression opportunities are available to students from the Adult Literacy Service, and there is also provision for entry at higher levels.

An important area of second chance education are Post-Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses which, although principally directed at school leavers, also are an important re-entry route to learning for adults, with 30.18% of all participants in 2004-05 over 25 years of age²³. The Post-Leaving Certificate programme was introduced in 1985 to provide appropriate vocational training for young people to bridge the gap between school and work. The programme integrates training for vocational skills in particular disciplines and the development of general skills necessary in all jobs. It also includes work experience to give relevance to the skills learnt. (See Section: 0406). Post-Leaving Certificate courses are of one or two years' duration. They can be taken on a full or part-time basis and focus on ICT, language learning and technical training, accreditation is at FETAC, Foundation levels 1, 2 and 3, (see Section: 0801, Table 2). The courses are locally based and mainly facilitated by the regionally-based Vocational Education Committees (VECs). These courses are publicly funded under the 'Back to Education Initiative' (BTEI).

²³ Source: Department of Education and Science – Further Education Unit 2005.

PUBLICLY FUNDED CONTINUING OCCUPATIONAL AND SKILLS TRAINING

This is available for industry in general and it is provided mainly by state agencies. The following are the main providers of this type of training.

- FÁS, which provides training for adults who wish to enter or re-enter the workforce or to generally update their skills within it. Courses range from full-time specific skills training, part-time evening class provision, to the eLearning opportunities provided by FAS eCollege.
- The Crafts Council of Ireland (CCI) is responsible for the development of the Irish craft industry and provides courses for those wishing to take up full-time employment in the industry.
- Údarás Na Gaeltachta, a regionally-based development agency, facilitates training for companies and employees within the Irish speaking Gaeltacht areas.
- Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM), the Irish Sea Fisheries Board, provides continuing training for those employed in the fishing, fish processing and aquaculture industries. Mobile Coastal Training Units target the needs of remote rural and island fishing communities.
- Coillte, the Irish Forestry Board, provides ongoing training for all forestry workers in its own training centres. The industry formed a company, Forestry Training & Education Ireland to identify the training needs of the sector.
- Teagasc, the Agriculture and Food Development Authority, operates a range of continuous training courses for farmers in its network of 80 local training centres and employees in the food processing industry through its National Food Centre. In 2007 11,738 adult farmers completed short training courses with 2,000 food industry personnel completing training.
- Fáilte Ireland, the National Tourism Development Authority, provides continuous training for owners, managers and employees in the tourism and hospitality sectors. Courses are delivered through full-time off-the-job certified training, short training interventions and distance and e-learning. The Authority also has set up learning networks bringing learning closer to the industry operators.
- Bord Altranias, the regulatory body for the Irish nursing profession, is responsible for supervising CVET for this sector.
- 35 County and City Enterprise Boards, fund training programmes and schemes which are mainly targeted at the development needs of micro-enterprises and their employees. Government departments provide in-service training directly for their own employees e.g. for civil servants, public service employees and teachers, police and defence forces etc.

Until 2003, the most common award system in further education and training was that developed by the National Council for Vocational Awards (NCVA). Agencies such as FAS, Fáilte Ireland and Teagasc, had each developed separate systems for the recognition of learning taking place under their responsibility. FETAC the Further Education and Training Awards Council has now assumed these awarding functions bringing together all certification for these areas under one banner.

Table 1 below, sets out a comparison between the years 2002-05, of the numbers of persons aged 25-64 who received lifelong learning opportunities.

Table 1: Life Long Learners * (in thousands)		
MALES	2002	2005
% male life long learners	6.4%	6.5%
FEMALES		
% female life long learners	8.7%	9.4%
ALL PERSONS		
Total % life long learners	7.6%	7.9%

*Life Long Learners are defined as persons aged 25 to 64 in receipt of education (either formal or non-formal).

Source: Quarterly National Household Survey: Educational Attainment 2002-05, Ireland, May 2006.

0503 - TRAINING FOR UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE AND OTHERS VULNERABLE TO EXCLUSION IN THE LABOUR MARKET

Government priorities for publicly-funded training programmes for the unemployed and socially-excluded are set out in the annual Reform Programme, formerly the National Employment Action Plan (NEAP), which has been developed within the framework of the European Employment Guidelines. The National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016, Building an Inclusive Society, which was launched in 2007, sets out a wide-ranging and comprehensive programme of action to address poverty and social exclusion. The plan, together with the social inclusion commitments in the National Social Partnership agreement "Towards 2016", and the National Development Plan 2007-2013, constitute Ireland's strategic process for addressing social inclusion objectives.

The governments' National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS), has identified education and training as central to addressing poverty, and targeted investment and support for individuals and groups with inadequate literacy and numeracy skills. In 2005 the Educational Disadvantage Committee (EDC), issued a report entitled, 'Moving beyond Educational Disadvantage'. This looked at disadvantage on a lifelong curve and made specific recommendations in relation to adult and community education.

PUBLICLY PROVIDED CVET FOR THE UNEMPLOYED AND SOCIALLY EXCLUDED

There are a range of educational programmes available for unemployed people and those vulnerable to exclusion in the labour market, to help them re-enter or upgrade their skills within the labour market. The Department of Education and Science (DES) is responsible for a number of these programmes which include:

a. The 'Back to Education Initiative' (BTEI) Part-Time Options, introduced in 2002, has resulted in a major expansion of second-chance for young disadvantaged people and adults with low education qualifications, as it provides them with flexible learning opportunities to gain general qualifications and specific skills that enable progression to further education and training. It makes provision for those who find full-time programmes inaccessible and are least likely to take part in courses in formal education settings. A high priority is to target individuals and groups that experience particular and acute barriers to participation in the labour market and the Guidelines for the BTEI (Part-time) identify a number of specific target groups. (See Section: 0502). These Guidelines advocate strategies to promote innovation, learner centredness, equality, accessibility and inclusiveness, the recognition and accommodation of diversity, quality assurance, local consultation and an area based approach.

b. The Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) is a "second chance" education and training programme that provides courses for unemployed people. The Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) facilitates full-time, work-related second-chance VET for adults aged 21 or more, who have been receiving specific social welfare payments for at least six months. Lone parents and persons with disabilities who satisfy these criteria are also eligible. The courses are education-led and vocationally-oriented and are provided free of charge, are full-time and can last up to two years, with thirty hours' attendance per week. The scheme has proved successful in opening up learning and progression opportunities for people who have been marginalised by unemployment. VTOS trainees can pursue subjects in the Junior or Leaving Certificate programmes or modules or awards certified by the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC). Certification is available at a range of levels, including Junior Certificate, Leaving Certificate and FETAC Foundation Levels 1, Level 2 and Level 3. Participants may also acquire a portfolio of qualifications in line with their needs and interests. By 2007 a total of over 5,000 participants had enrolled in VTOS courses and 70% of those who completed these courses in 2007 went on to employment or returned to further education and training²⁴. VTOS is funded by the Department of Education and Science and it is delivered in over 100 locations throughout the country by the thirty-three VECs (Vocational Education Committees).

c. The Educational Equality Initiative (EEI) supports education for very disadvantaged men and women, such as those in treatment for substance dependence and other groups experiencing learning difficulties. The Initiative supported 27 projects from 2000-06 and a range of innovative approaches

²⁴ Department of Education and Science Press Release on VOTOS 20th Anniversary Conference ,6/03/09.

have been piloted to attract the most disadvantaged adults through outreach activities and neighbourhood worker schemes. d. The Senior Traveller Training Programme provides Travellers²⁵ with the skills to successfully make the transition to work and to participate fully in their communities. The programme is aimed at young and adult Travellers who have left school early and places emphasis on the core skills of literacy and numeracy in order to respond to the needs of this group. Certification by FETAC, of courses provided in Traveller Training Centres ensures a range of progression opportunities for participants. The main facilitators of the above courses are the Vocational Education Committees (VECs), who have responsibility for a range of continuing vocational educational programmes aimed at the disadvantaged including:

- Literacy programmes.
- Education provision for asylum seekers and refugees.
- Prison education services and senior Traveller training.

While most entrants to third-level and higher education are school leavers, government policy is to encourage greater participation by mature and second-chance learners. Priority has been given to increasing participation from persons from traditionally under-represented groups such as students from disadvantaged backgrounds and Travellers. To achieve this special arrangements have been put in place in various universities, including access officers, alternative entrance qualification requirements and special foundation or preparatory courses. A number of other initiatives have been established, including the special links with second-level schools. Students with disabilities are supported with technical education aids and supports.

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE) is responsible for developing continuing vocational training (CVT) policies for the unemployed. These are delivered through several public providers. The largest of these is FAS, which provides a range of CVT programmes through its network of Training Centres and contracted training providers for short and long-term unemployed people, seeking to re-enter the labour market after an absence. The courses cover a range of technical, practical and soft skills. FAS also provides a range of services in co-operation with different community groups that focus on the integration/re-integration into the labour market of long-term unemployed and other marginalised people.

In 2007 approximately 20,300²⁶ unemployed persons and jobseekers²⁷ completed FAS training courses. These include the following:

²⁵ The travelling community in Ireland is a nomadic ethnic minority. There are estimated to be in excess of 25,000 Travellers in the Republic of Ireland.

²⁶ FAS Training and Employment Annual Report, 2007.

²⁷ As FAS provides both initial and continuing training, depending on the age and status of the trainee, it is not possible to disaggregate trainees into those who have worked prior to entry onto a course. In this context it is assumed that those aged over 25 who have worked are consequently receiving continuing vocational training.

(a) Foundation Training for Jobseekers which comprises:

- (1) Alternance (Return to Work) training;
- (2) the Local Training Initiative;
- (3) Linked Work Experience and
- (4) the Skills Foundation Programme.

These courses are open to all age groups and concentrate on basic skills development. They are seen as bridging courses with a view to progression to specific skills training. FAS Community Training Centres²⁸ also offer the opportunity for trainees to improve their basic skills. In 2007 an estimated 5,480 completed FAS bridging and Foundation training courses.

(b) FAS Skills Training is designed to meet the needs of unemployed jobseekers both young and older and includes the following programmes:

- Specific Skills training comprise employment-led courses that lead to qualifications which offer learners both generic and advanced skills. In 2007, 5 704 completed this type of training.
- Traineeships run in co-operation with employers, concentrates on occupational skill development, targeting new labour market entrants and unemployed persons. In 2007, 1,1995 persons completed this programme. (See Section: 0404).
- Technical Employment Assistance Grant Schemes provide more flexible and immediate training options for unemployed jobseekers. Where the training required is not immediately available in FAS, a training fund is available to purchase the required training.
- FAS provides an integrated support service for people being made redundant because of company restructuring or closures. This involves skills analysis, training and retraining courses and job placement. In the delivery of these services,

(c) FAS also provides specific training for older, long term, unemployed adults, and for those who for various reasons, such as family responsibilities or disabilities, have been excluded from the workforce. These programmes include:

- The Community Employment Programme (CE), targets long-term unemployed and the socially excluded persons. It offers part-time employment of one year's duration, provided by a range of voluntary and community organisations, and includes core skills training. Literacy programmes for the unemployed can also be accessed by

²⁸ There is some crossover in the type and age of participants attending Community Training Centre courses and Youthreach Programmes, although the latter is designed for early school leavers.

FAS CE participants. By the end of 2007 there were 22 992 participants involved in this programme.

Expanding the Workforce (ETW) is a FAS initiative aimed at persons outside the workforce. It is a tailored and flexible response to the training needs of lone parents and women returnees seeking a gateway into the labour market, and assists them in progressing to higher level positions once they are in employment

Training for those with disabilities is a key component of the employment aspect of the Sectoral Plan 2006-2010 under the Disability Act, 2005 and the National Disability Strategy. . While FAS mainstream training and employment programmes are open to people with disabilities, it also administers several grant schemes designed to assist those with a disability to access employment. These include the Disability Awareness and Training Support Grant Schemes, aimed at increasing support for the employment of persons with a disability and the Adaptation of Training Equipment and the Employee Retention Grant Scheme, designed to help employees who acquire a disability to continue at work. FAS, also subcontracts the delivery of some programmes for persons with disabilities who require a greater level of support than may be available in a mainstream programme, these are undertaken by specialist training providers. These programmes have similar FETAC certification as mainstream training programmes.

Other publicly funded agencies which facilitate or provide vocational training for those excluded or marginalised from the labour market, include the following.

- An Pobal, (formerly Area Management Ltd), which is responsible for measures to combat social inclusion at local level, allocates funds to around seventy six community organisations including Local Area Partnerships, which implement locally identified training projects.
- The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform in conjunction with FAS, provides training workshops for people with low educational attainment who have been in prison, to help them entry the labour market and improve their literacy and numeracy skills.
- The Department of Social and Family Affairs operates a Community Development Programme which includes training for urban and rural disadvantaged communities throughout the country.
- The County Development Boards, whose remit includes a consultative role regarding CVET policies implemented within their areas, together with the four Territorial Employment Pacts in Dublin, Westmeath, Limerick and the North East, facilitate schemes for lone parents to access employment and training at local level. The Pacts also run courses for marginalised and socially excluded persons.

Training for unemployed jobseekers seeking employment in specific industry sectors, such as in agriculture, fisheries and the tourism and hospitality sector, is provided by a range of publicly-funded agencies. (See Section: 0502).

COMMUNITY-BASED CVET FOR UNEMPLOYED ADULTS AND OTHERS VULNERABLE TO EXCLUSION IN THE LABOUR MARKET

Increasingly, community and voluntary groups are seen as important providers of CVET for unemployed adults. These groups operate mainly in disadvantaged areas and facilitate access to training and employment opportunities. Many of these community-based CVET activities are now publicly-funded and co-ordinated by public authorities such as the VECs and courses are generally free and open to all.

Community education is an innovative and empowering approach to education and is gaining recognition as a strategy that has considerable potential for addressing the systematic causes of poverty and educational disadvantage. Community Education strategies have proven very effective in reaching out to non-traditional learners and are purposely designed to build up and maintain resources within communities.

In 2002 the Government increased funding to this sector through the introduction of a Community Strand under the BTEI, ensuring that a proportion i.e. 10% of all funding for this initiative should be given to education activities organised by local community groups. A team of thirty seven Community Education Facilitators have been recruited to support this non-formal adult education sector and to build links between community groups and the VECs.

Adult learning opportunities for the unemployed are also provided by the trade unions. There is currently a network of thirty seven Centres for the Unemployed, established by the Irish Congress of Trades Unions (ICTU), which offer learning opportunities for unemployed people.

With regard to migrant jobseekers living in Ireland, FAS provides employment and training advice and information through its Employment Services offices, including a telephone interpretation service. The Department of Education and Science in conjunction with the Office of the Minister for Integration, has recently commissioned an independent review to assist in the development of a national English language training policy and framework for legally resident adult immigrants.

One of the priority VET policies of the government is the provision of a national adult literacy strategy. This is being implemented through the 'National Adult Literacy Scheme' managed by FAS and the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) under the supervision of a Steering Committee. The scheme provides free tuition to those who wish to access literacy programmes. In addition to reading and writing, adult literacy provision now extends to basic education such as numeracy, social and personal development, learning to learn and IT skills. Programmes are available nationwide and mainly delivered by the Vocational Education Committees (VECs) adult literacy service. The number of learners amounted to 44,000

participants in 2007. Accreditation at FETAC Levels 1 & 2, of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), became available for learners in 2007²⁹.

In addition, in 2007, 2,054 employed persons participated in 251 courses related to communications, literacy and numeracy, funded through the Workplace Basic Education Fund (WBEF). FAS in association NALA and the VECs operate this scheme, which is designed to deliver basic skills training in the workplace at FETAC Level 3, to employees in low skilled and low paid employment. Since its inception 3,370 people have registered for participation in the programmes operated under the fund.

The Disability Act, 2005, together with government plans to further mainstream employment and training for people with disabilities by FAS, form key elements of a new National Disability Strategy which sets out to address the barriers to employment experienced by those with physical and mental disabilities. The National Training and Development Institute (NTDI), which is Ireland's largest non-Government disability training organisation, caters for over 4,500 trainees each year. The main certifying body for these courses is FETAC.

0504 - CVET AT THE INITIATIVE OF ENTERPRISES OR SOCIAL PARTNERS

Government policy has long been that CVET for persons at work is primarily the responsibility of employers, who are the main source of funds for training for the employed, through their direct funding of in-company training and their financial contributions to the National Training Fund (NTF). (See Section 1003).

There is no statutory obligation on companies to provide CVET for their workforce and no specific sectoral agreements in respect of CVET within enterprises. Employers generally provide training on the basis of their own requirements and this is usually provided in-house or sub-contracted on a commercial basis to private training providers. Various sectoral committees, which include representatives of the social partners, promote and advise on initiatives to provide training for the different industrial and service sectors. In some cases companies will pool resources to identify and make provision for training needs. An industry-led initiative "Skillnets" encourages and fosters this kind of co-operation.

GOVERNMENT FUNDED EMPLOYER AND EMPLOYEE CVT SCHEMES

While in the past government sponsored CVET schemes were largely aimed at the unemployed, now work-based learning initiatives are seen as critical to maintaining the employability and job-security of many of the workforce. It is recognised that educational disadvantage among adults is no longer concentrated among the unemployed, but exists also among workers in low-paid, low-skilled employment. According to the National Economic and Social

²⁹ Human Capital Investment Operational Programme, Annual Monitoring Report 2007.

Forum - NESF[1], 'Ireland has a high proportion of low-skilled workers compared to other best performing countries and our level of lifelong learning remains low.' Approximately 39% of all working age persons have less than upper second level qualifications.

New strategies to meet the skill needs of the workforce have been identified in response to reports of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, which in 2007 published a National Skills Strategy. This has identified trends that point to increasing demand for those with high level skills and a relative decline in demand for those with low-level skills, and included the need to increase the upskilling of 500,000 people in employment as over 70% or 1.43 million of the Irish current workforce will still be in employment in 2020.

In recent years the government has played a significant role in helping and encouraging employers' to meet their responsibilities to train their employees, principally through the services of a range of publicly-funded state agencies, who offer financial and other incentives, such as training advice, to encourage companies to meet their employees' training needs.

The state agency FÁS, through its Services to Business advisers, assists companies meet their training needs. It co-operates with industry representatives in the identification of sectoral training needs, and in the development of suitable training programmes, supported by financial incentives.

The following are some of the programmes and incentives that FAS makes available to employers in order to promote enterprise-based training.

- The Competency Development Programme administered by FÁS, aims to raise the skills level of employees throughout the country. The Programme provides a training subsidy to reduce the costs of training for the employers, and to enhance the competences of employees in particular occupations and skill areas in the industrial and services sectors, including in the areas of management, retail sales, marketing, IT and contract cleaning. Training programmes, based on local and national needs, are agreed after consultation between FÁS and the relevant industry organisations. These are open to all companies in the private sector. A total of 37,532 persons were trained under the FAS Competency Development Programme in 2007.
- In 2005, in response to recommendations in the Enterprise Strategy Group report[2], FAS launched the One Step Up Initiative, which includes up to 100% training support for low skilled and vulnerable workers. All FÁS programmes and initiatives for training for the employed are now aligned to the One Step Up Initiative which aims to encourage employee training to increase employee's competency levels and promote an ethos of lifelong learning in the workplace as well as obtaining a recognised qualification within the National Framework of Qualifications. The initiative achieves this by providing easy access to a range of learning initiatives such as tutor-led training and e-learning. It will also enable employees to cope with frequent and ongoing changes in work practices. A new approach to enterprise-

based training is featured in Strategic Alliance Programme', whereby FÁS contracts with major national organisations such as Chambers of Commerce, to deliver a suite of suitable training courses. In 2007 approximately 47,000 training days were delivered to 7,752 employed people under this programme at a cost of EUR 10.8 million.

- The FAS Excellence through People Programme (ETP), is Ireland's national standard for human resource development to improve a company's operational performance through staff training. It is a voluntary initiative to encourage companies to identify and plan their staff training activities. The number of organisations with ETP rose to 600 in 2006 and in 2007, 59 new companies were assessed.
- Through its Specific Sectoral Skills Training Programme, FÁS consults with Advisory Committees, representing sectoral groups such as the Engineering, Construction and Film/TV sectors and carries out regular reviews of national skills and training needs. It has developed and co-funds programmes for specific sectors such as management training for owner-managers in the services sector and the Construction Skills Certification Scheme, designed to raise standards of safety among construction industry employers. FÁS also provides a range of environmental and health and safety courses for industry employees in response to EU and national legislation.
- Recently an Essential Skills for Work Certificate Programme was introduced by FÁS in co-operation with the trade unions, to improve the literacy and numeracy skills of vulnerable employees in low-skilled occupations. The Programme, which is 100% grant-aided, is funded under the Workplace Basic Education Fund and had a budget of EUR 7 million in 2006.

Together with the National Centre for Partnership and Performance (NCP), FÁS has initiated a project called 'Implementing a Learning Strategy in Irish Organisations'. This aims to identify how organisations learn, and how they use their learning to improve processes and meet changing business needs. The Institutes of Technology, together with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, have also set up a programme of workforce up-skilling called 'Reaching into the Workforce' in 2006, this is part of the 'One-Step-Up initiative' and aims to enhance Ireland's ability to attract and retain an increasingly mobile workforce in a knowledge-based global economy.

Other state agencies also provide financial incentives and advice to support and promote enterprise-based training in specific industry sectors. In particular Fáilte Ireland operates a training subsidy scheme known as RETAIN to train employees in companies in the tourism and hospitality sectors. During 2006, a total of 5,695 tourism industry personnel also completed training at advanced, supervisory and management level.

Enterprise Ireland, which has offices throughout the country, advises and provides grants towards management development and training within indigenous companies involved in the manufacturing and internationally-traded services, and the County and City Enterprise Boards, fund training

schemes which are mainly targeted at the development needs of micro-enterprises and their employees.

Table 2 sets out the total numbers of companies supported and employees trained under the ESF-supported In-Company Training Measures of the EHRD Operational Programme 2000-06.

0505 - CVET AT THE INITIATIVE OF THE INDIVIDUAL

There is no legislative entitlement to paid CVET leave in Ireland and in general no public funds are distributed directly to the population for adult learning or CVET, which usually is paid for directly by the individuals themselves. However, some public and large commercial companies provide paid release for employees to participate on training courses. While participation in full-time further (e.g. PLC courses), and higher education, does not require the payment of tuition fees, this is not the case for part-time participants. In this regard tax relief of up to EUR 5,000 per annum (2006-07) is available for persons attending recognised 3rd level courses and limited tax relief (up to EUR 1,270), is also available for the fees paid for attendance at approved CVET courses aimed at improving ICT and foreign language skills.

A further important strand of further education refers to part-time adult education courses that take place in vocational, community and comprehensive schools. A substantial range of such part-time courses is on offer throughout the country, relating primarily to hobby, leisure and remedial learning. The courses are generally self-funded, which means that adults pay fees to attend, (there is a fee reduction for some categories. While participants may receive some form of certification for these courses, they will not, as a rule, be following a formal course of study. These courses have proved extremely popular and have consistently attracted large numbers of participants over the years.

VECs also run basic literacy and numeracy courses which are free to all participants (see Section 0503). Part-time course provision also offered by universities and the Institutes of Technology (ITs). These courses tend to be at Degree, Diploma or Certificate level.

FÁS runs a range of fee-paying evening courses in its training centres aimed at employed workers and the general public who wish to update their skills. If the trainee is unemployed or is from a recognised disadvantaged group no fee is charged. In many cases the employer sponsors the training or pays or reimburses the cost of these courses. In addition to the publicly-provided CVET, commercial training providers offer courses to the general public and individual learners can avail of fee paying courses in for instance, language and IT skills provided by these companies.

Another form of adult learning which can be pursued at the initiative of the individual is open, distance and e-learning. FÁS e-College offers on-line flexible e-learning opportunities to employed and unemployed persons. Courses are available for a fee or free of charge to certain groups such as the unemployed. There are also a number of private providers of this type of e-learning in Ireland and recently, increased interest is being shown by

employers in this approach to learning. The Open University (Ireland), and the National Distance Education Centre (OSCAIL), based in Dublin City University, both have a network of study centres throughout the country. Table 3 gives figures for the number of participants attending part-time adult education, FÁS evening and eCollege courses during 2003-04.

COURSES	TOTAL
PART-TIME ADULT EDUCATION (DAYTIME)*	24,960
PART-TIME ADULT EDUCATION (EVENING)*	121,744
FAS EVENING COURSES**	8,000
FAS ECOLLEGE**	12,000

Source: Report on Gender in Irish Education, Department of Education and Science, Ireland, 2007.

*Figures for 2003/04

**Figures refer to 2007 . FAS eCollege registered participants totalled 8 000 in 2007, but that number included apprentices and other FAS trainees and employment programme participants which are included in the data for IVET or other CVET. The figures shown above exclude these groups.

06 - TRAINING VET TEACHERS AND TRAINERS

In general, the main types of training required by teachers and trainers are pedagogical and professional. However, the extent and level of this education and training depends on whether the person is a teacher or a trainer. Traditionally the roles and responsibilities for the education system, including vocational education, have been separate from the vocational training system in Ireland which is the responsibility of the labour market authorities. Therefore, while teachers are regulated by the Department of Education and Science (DES), there is no similar state organisation regulating vocational trainers.

0601 - TYPES OF TEACHERS AND TRAINERS IN VET

In Ireland, teachers are primarily concerned with the education of young people within the formal school system at either primary or secondary level. The term teacher also refers to persons employed to teach in non-tertiary colleges such as colleges of further or continuing education and these are usually managed by local Vocational Education Committees (VECs). At third level in academic institutions, such as universities and Institutes of Technology, persons providing teaching are generally known as lecturers or professors.

The Teaching Council Act, 2001, led to the establishment of a Teaching Council in 2006. The Council seeks to promote and develop teaching as a profession at primary and post-primary levels, and to ensure that priorities are set for the professional training of an adequate number of teachers in the various subjects. Its functions are as follows:

- To promote teaching as a profession.
- To promote the continuing professional development of teachers.
- To provide for the establishment of standards, policies and procedures for the education and training of teachers.
- To provide for the registration and regulation of teachers and to enhance professional standards and competences.

The Council also provides a forum for presenting the views of the profession on all aspects of teaching as a career, from initial recruitment to in-career professional development.

In contrast, there is no legal description of the role of a vocational trainer, nor is there any requirement for them to have any educational qualifications or pedagogical skills. Trainers are involved in the skills training and development of trainees of all ages outside of the formal education system. This training is generally provided either by private companies or within semi-state organisations such as FAS, the Training and Employment Authority. Trainers may also operate as independent practitioners, or private training consultants, who offer training to companies. As there are no authenticated figures

available, it is difficult to establish exact numbers of this latter group of trainers. However those trainers who wish deliver training on FAS funded courses must now be registered on the FAS Register of Trainers Table 1 lists the types of teachers operating in the formal second level education system and trainers at IVET and CVET levels.

Table 1: Categories of teachers and trainers in the second level education system and at IVET and CVET levels	
OCCUPATIONAL TYPE	TYPE OF LOCATION
Teachers in the second level school education system*	Secondary schools; Community schools or colleges Vocational schools; Comprehensive schools.
IVET teachers	Non-tertiary Education Centres, Colleges of Further Education.
CVET teacher	VTOS (Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme for unemployed persons), which is delivered in vocational education schools and centres. Also adult education courses in Colleges or Institutes of Further Education.
CVET lecturer	Institutes of Technology; universities; privately run professional colleges and other private institutions.
CVET trainer or instructor**	FÁS and other state training agencies in specific industry sectors e.g. for the tourism and agricultural sectors.
CVET private trainer or training consultant	In-Company training centres in all types of enterprises and private training companies.

*The types of secondary level schools differ on the basis of administration and sources of funding, but the same curriculum applies to all these schools. Community schools and colleges operate the same curricula but differ only in that the schools are operated by local committees and the colleges are operated by the city and county VEC's.

**The terms trainer and instructor are used interchangeably. Trainers are generally persons providing training on an independent basis or within private companies, while persons providing training within state organisations such as FAS are usually referred to as instructors.

0602 - TYPES OF TEACHERS AND TRAINERS IN IVET

Primary school teachers are trained in Colleges of Education and this training consists of a four-year degree course. Second level teachers pursue a degree course (or equivalent), at a university or at a relevant third level institution in the subjects that they intend to teach. This must be followed by a one year course, which includes supervised practical classroom work, which leads to a Postgraduate Diploma in Education. This is directed towards teaching school students at 12 to 18 years of age. Teachers in secondary schools are required to be registered with the Registration Council for Secondary Teachers, a statutory body under the Intermediate Education (Ireland) Act 1914. The Council prescribes the conditions for teaching in voluntary secondary schools in Ireland. Teachers in Vocational Schools must have properly authenticated

skills qualifications, together with a Diploma or Degree in the in their teaching subject.

The In-Career Development Unit of the DES funds and develops a national programme of in-service training and continuing professional development (CDP), for teachers, tutors and school managers at all levels in the education system. These programmes are provided in Teacher Training Colleges, Universities and by other state agencies and include support for teachers in schools in the context of changes in curricula and school programmes at first and second levels. A Leadership Development Programme has been developed for principals and deputy principals at primary and post-primary levels.

There are also programmes for teachers in specific areas of learning support and special needs, for example the Substance Misuse Prevention Programme. Integrate Ireland Language Training Ltd. provides training for teachers in primary and post-primary schools responsible for the English language development of non-English speaking school students.

A nationwide network of Education Centres, are key partners in the provision of teacher CDP. Under the remit of the DES, the centres host the national Programmes of Curriculum Reform and offer support services on a range of issues relating to teaching and learning, in particular the identified needs of teachers and schools in their various catchment areas.

At third level, there is no formal recognised course of training provided for those who pursue a career as a teacher, i.e. tutor or lecturer. However, there are minimum entry requirements in terms of education and training. In the case of lecturers in universities, they are required to have:

- An honours degree in their subject or an equivalent professional qualification, followed by a Masters Degree and evidence of published research in the applicant's field of expertise.
- Three years relevant post-qualification work experience which can include teaching experience. (There is no requirement for any qualification in teaching for third-level lecturer posts).

Persons applying for teaching (lecturing) posts in the Institutes of Technology must possess a primary degree, or better, in the subject they are to lecture in but are not required to have any teaching qualification.

There are many opportunities for teachers and lecturers working in third-level education to avail of further education and training. In response to the broadening of higher education opportunities, the 'Training of Trainers' Measure for third-level education in the Employment and Human Resource Development Operational Programme (EHRD OP) 2000-06, provided funding for development programmes for staff in this sector. These programmes were designed to enable staff to adapt to new technology, while also focusing on pedagogical training, teacher evaluation and appraisal and the development of management skills. The Centre for Teaching and Learning in University College Dublin (UCD), has a website to support their academic staff develop

and improve their skills and knowledge in the areas of teaching, curriculum design and student assessment. The website also acts as a research centre for study and support for third level teachers and lecturers generally.

With regard to trainers in the area of IVT, as already noted, there is no requirement for them to have any educational qualifications or pedagogical skills to establish themselves as trainers. Trainers in state-funded institutions and in industry and commerce, are usually experienced in their trade or commercial sector, but may not necessarily have any formal qualifications or pedagogical skills.

Training instructors working in the state agency FAS at both IVET and CVET levels are required to have:

- A qualification in the discipline in which they will provide training, i.e. a minimum of the Senior Trades Certificate for craft instructors, or the City and Guilds equivalent.
- In 'non-craft' areas a qualification equivalent to an undergraduate diploma is required and further in-house development.
- Employment experience in their area of training for a minimum of 2 years after the date of qualification, including a minimum of one year's experience in a supervisory or management post in the area of their discipline.

FAS instructors training apprentices must be qualified as a craftsman in the area in which they provide training. However, they do not require any training or teaching qualification.

For those employed by public agencies to work as trainers, instructors or training advisors some further general professional competences are also taken into account, namely:

- technical competence (the skills and knowledge which are relevant and up to date in relation to the subject being taught),
- pedagogical competence, (the skills and knowledge in the principles of instructing and training, which are relevant and up to date),
- social skills and competence, (the ability to effectively manages personal inter-relationships within the group represented by the course participants).

With regard to contracted-out training, FAS and the state agency Enterprise Ireland, require that private training organisations or individual trainers must meet certain criteria set out by them to be eligible for listing on their register of approved trainers. The minimum educational qualification to register as approved trainer is a Certificate in Training and Development awarded by a recognised awarding body.

Recently FAS decided that it would be beneficial for its own trainers and instructors to have access to formal qualifications in training and development. A series of programmes from Foundation, Certificate to Degree and Master level, were set up in co-operation with Maynooth and Galway Universities and accredited by the National University of Ireland (NUI). These programmes were initially designed for FÁS instructors, but are now available to those practicing or planning a career as trainers in vocational colleges as well as the commercial, voluntary and community sectors. Programme delivery combines open learning and self-instructional modules, along with attendance at workshops and practical assignments. The DES provides funding for this type of training for trainers.

Entry criteria or minimum qualifications for trainers involved in the training for persons with disabilities are determined by the individual employing organisation. FÁS working with Maynooth University has developed a Diploma in Social Inclusion which addresses the wider issues of social inclusion, including those groups listed in the Equal Status Act.

Other state organisations involved in training for specific industry sectors such as: - Failte Ireland (for the tourism and hospitality sector); Bord Iascaigh Mhara (Irish Fisheries Board); Coillte (Irish Forestry Board) and Teagasc (Agriculture and Food Development Authority), all have their own training programmes for their sector employees, and trainers delivering these programmes would be skilled in their own occupational areas. The Further Education and Training Awards Council – FETAC, has now assumed the awarding function for teacher training in these sectoral areas, bringing together all teacher and instructor certification for these occupational areas under one banner awarding a FETAC Special Purpose Award at Level 6.

0603 - TYPES OF TEACHERS AND TRAINERS IN CVET

Teachers participating in CVET programmes in non tertiary Centres and Colleges of Further and Continuing Education managed by the Vocational Education Committees (VECs), must have properly authenticated skills qualifications together with a Diploma or Degree in the theoretical dimension of their subject.

While there is no formal training path for those wishing to work as trainers in private industry, many companies provide training for employees who show an aptitude for the role of company trainer. In the majority of larger companies there are training managers who are responsible for organising in-company training. Many of these may have some formal trainer qualification which they may have obtained on a part-time basis. (See Section: 0602 for the minimum trainer qualification required to become an approved trainer on the register of public organisations such as FAS and Enterprise Ireland).

The Irish Institute of Training and Development (IITD), is a professional body which develops and monitors standards in training and development in Ireland. The IITD organises Certificate and Diploma part-time courses in training and development in co-operation with a number of Institutes of Technology. In 2006 the IITD, in association with the National College of Ireland, launched a part-time three year BA Degree in Training and

Development, aimed human resource practitioners or consultants working in small, medium and large enterprises. The degree aims to develop skills and knowledge in specialist training areas such as the design and delivery of training.

The staffing of the adult and community-based education sector reflects its complexity, and an increasing number of people are now working in roles that could roughly be classified under the following three categories:

THOSE WORKING DIRECTLY WITH LEARNERS

These include volunteers in the literacy and community education sectors i.e. teachers who work with the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS); the Back to Education Initiative (BTEI); Post-Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses; the Youthreach service; adult education teachers and tutors who work with community education groups, as well as guidance personnel.

ORGANISERS AND CO-ORDINATORS OF SERVICES

Staff whose role is to organise and co-ordinate the development of programmes and those involved in their delivery. These include:- Community Education Facilitators (CEFs); Adult Literacy Organisers Guidance Coordinators; BTEI Coordinators; community group leaders, as well as a range of personnel within the higher education system such as Access Officers and Mature Student Officers.

MANAGEMENT PERSONNEL

Personnel, whose role is to develop the strategic thinking and planning for CVET services such as, Adult Education Officers; Education Officers and Chief Executive Officers within the VEC system; managers and management committees of community groups, as well as directors of adult and community education services.

Support services for CVET teachers across the adult vocational education sector are varied in their quality. Within the VEC service, adult education staff have developed their own support services, with different categories of staff requiring different types of professional development depending on their roles, skills, and qualifications. The DES has funded Certificate and Diploma programmes, on an in-service basis, for staff involved with the Youthreach, Senior Traveller Training and Adult Literacy programmes. The National Adult Literacy Agency provides training for literacy personnel within the VEC service.

Training for community education staff is provided through a variety of sources. Maynooth University, offers students a Higher Diploma and MA Degree in Adult and Community Education. The National Collective of Community-based women's networks, also provides support for community learning strategies and the Community Education Facilitators' Training Support Programme, is delivered by AONTAS-The National Association of Adult Education

0701 - MECHANISMS FOR THE ANTICIPATION OF SKILL NEEDS

Irish VET organisations use a mixture of formal consultation, informal feedback and research, to identify skill needs and there are several key players involved in this process.

(a) The Expert Group on Future Skill Needs (EGFSN)

The Expert Group on Future Skill Needs (EGFSN) provides a national research and co-ordination mechanism that includes representatives of the social partners, government departments, industrial development organisations and education and training bodies. Its objectives include the following:

- Identify the skills needs of different sectors and advise on the actions to address them;
- Consider strategic issues in developing partnerships between business and the CVET sectors to meet skill needs at national and local levels;
- Advise on how to improve the career awareness of job seekers to areas where the demand for skills exist, of the qualifications required, and of how they can be obtained.

The Group has undertaken research on a range of occupational areas including ICT, engineering, construction and the labour market generally. This research has underpinned the development of a National Skills Strategy, published in the 2007 as the report 'Tomorrow's Skills -Towards a National Skills Strategy'. This report sets out the potential skills needs of the economy over the next decade, the likely supply and demand for skilled labour and the key policy issues required to address these skills needs. The skills Strategy aims to achieve a significantly improved educational and skills profile for the labour force with the objective of:

- Upskilling an additional 500,000 people by at least one level on the National Framework of Qualifications by 2020. The National Skills Strategy (NSS) has a key focus on targeting the lower skilled, as of the additional half a million people to be upskilled, 330,000 of these do not have a leaving certificate or an equivalent qualification.
- Increasing participation rates in upper secondary level to 90% and progression rates to third level to 70%.
- Address the skills needs of the immigrant population and those re-entering employment.

The focus will now be on implementing the recommendations contained within the NSS including the identification of the precise mechanisms that will be

used to implement these recommendations. The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs will report annually on progress in relation to the findings contained within the Strategy and the National Framework of Qualifications will provide the framework to benchmark the NSS implementation.

(b) The Training and Employment Authority, FÁS

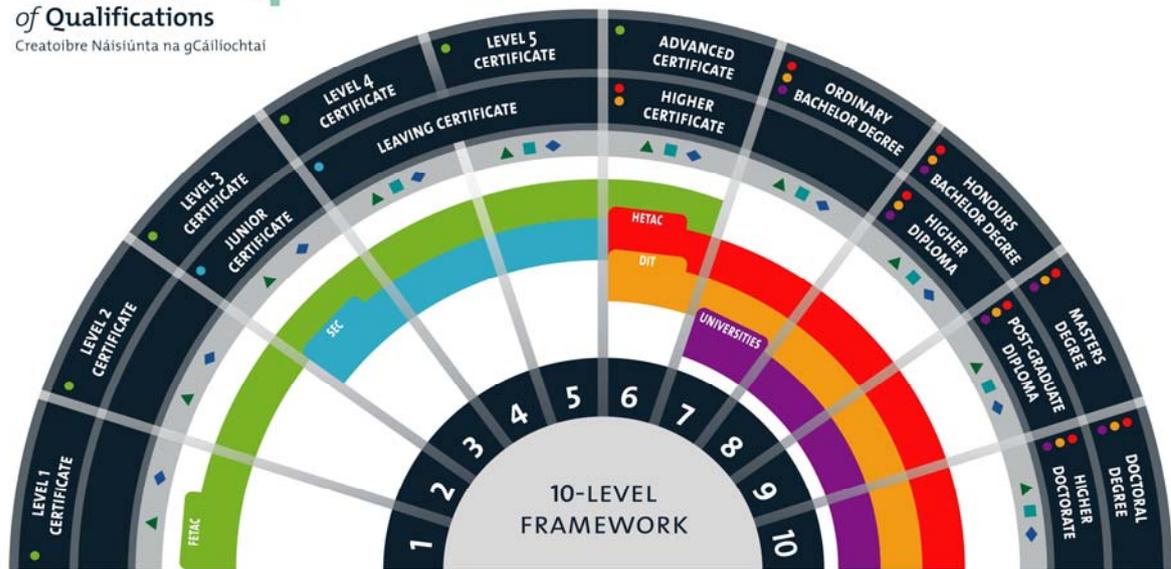
FÁS has a Board and advisory committees representing a number of sectors, to inform it of sectoral training needs. FÁS also has a Planning and Research Department, which undertakes studies of employment trends and skills needs in order to inform VET provision. The FAS Skills and Labour Market Research Unit, regularly produces studies on different occupations and provides a research facility for the EGFSN. A series of Manpower Forecasting Studies carried out by the Economic Social Research Institute (ESRI) in co-operation with FÁS, also forecasts the occupational employment trends in about 40 different occupational groups for 5-10 year periods. In 2007 FAS commenced the publication of a National Skills Bulletin providing details on skills and occupational trends in Ireland. The objective of the Bulletin is to outline key labour market statistics in order to assist policy formulation in the areas of employment, education and training, and immigration.

0702 - BRIDGING PATHWAYS AND NEW EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

BRIDGING PATHWAYS STRATEGIES WITHIN THE VET SYSTEM.

In 2001 the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) was established to promote access, transfer and progression within the education and training system for all learners. Following this in 2003 a National Qualifications Framework was established, covering all awards in the state from initial schooling to higher doctorate level. The Framework provides a system for co-ordinating and comparing awards, thereby facilitating progression and mobility for learners irrespective of the entry point or the education or training path followed. Under the Framework strategy, all IVET and CVET programmes must have provision for access and transfer. The following link contains a diagram which shows the various awards and levels within the National Framework of Qualifications.

<http://www.nfq.ie/nfq/en/images/FanDec2006.jpg>



KEY

- FETAC - Further Education and Training Awards Council
- SEC - State Examinations Commission (Department of Education & Science)
- HETAC - Higher Education and Training Awards Council
- DIT - Dublin Institute of Technology
- Universities

AWARDS IN THE FRAMEWORK

There are four types of award in the National Framework of Qualifications:

- ◐ Major Awards: are the principal class of awards made at a level
- ▲ Minor Awards: are for partial completion of the outcomes for a Major Award
- Supplemental Awards: are for learning that is additional to a Major Award
- ◆ Special Purpose Awards: are for relatively narrow or purpose-specific achievement

A series of progression interventions are available to meet the needs of early school leavers for access to higher skills training, such as foundation and bridging training programmes, advisory supports to assist progression and flexible part-time and work-based options. Increased investment has expanded the number of places in further education courses in the past five years by 5,000 to a current level of 49,000 in 2007. Both the education and training systems run bridging courses to facilitate progression onto mainline education and training programmes, for the long-term adult unemployed or those who have become marginalised due to disabilities or other social problems. These include:

- The Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) which funds Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses makes further education more accessible for those with low initial educational levels.
- The Youthreach and Young Traveller Programmes assists young people who have left school with no qualifications, benefit from further education and training.
- The VTOS 'Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme' which opens up learning and progression opportunities for adults marginalised by unemployment.

While there has been a lack of sharp distinction between initial and continuing VET in Ireland, in contrast, there has been a clear separation between the higher education (university) and the VET sector, with few progression routes facilitating transfer between these areas. In recent years there have been several initiatives to increase progression from the VET sector into higher education, in particular the introduction of Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses, which increasingly link into third-level programmes. For example FETAC Level 5 PLC courses in community and health services subjects have progression links to nursing degree courses in universities and Institutes of Technology. Several higher education institutions, including universities, have a range of schemes to facilitate direct progression from PLC courses to degree level courses, and third level colleges such as Institutes of Technology (ITs), now reserve a number of places for those with Further Education and Training Awards, under the Higher Education Links Scheme. In 2007, 6,999 FETAC applicants applied through the Central Applications Office for a variety of third level courses. This number represents an increase of 1,420 on the number of applicants in 2006.

INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERSHIPS WITHIN THE VET SYSTEM

To encourage greater institutional partnership across all sectors, the government will propose in its new action plan on the knowledge society, an approach which will include working groups with strong industry involvement to be established in the areas of enterprise, environment, and education.

At IVET level, there has traditionally been close co-operation between the Department of Education and Science (DES) and FÁS in the delivery of apprenticeship programmes for which they are jointly responsible. Similarly, both the education and training sectors co-operate in addressing the needs of early school leavers as in the Youthreach programme. FÁS also provides an integrated support service for people who have been made redundant because of company restructuring or closures. In the delivery of these services, FÁS liaises with other relevant agencies such as Enterprise Ireland, The Industrial Development Authority - IDA Ireland, the City and County Enterprise Boards and the Department of Social and Family Affairs. Where required, FÁS may set up an inter-agency Task Force to mobilise the totality of the supports available through the relevant agencies.

At CVET level, FÁS manages of the Workplace Basic Education Fund in association with the National Adult Literacy Association and the Irish Vocational Education Association (IVEA), to develop the literacy and numeracy levels of employees. This project is overseen by a National Steering Group which includes representatives from the educational, business and trade union sectors.

The employer-led Skillnets agency and the Strategic Alliance Programme, which comprises partnerships between FÁS, the employers, unions and other bodies such as the Chambers of Commerce, are examples of co-operative partnerships between the public and private sectors to promote CVET within enterprises. The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, which includes representatives from the social partners and higher education and training

bodies, and the Programme for University Industry Interface, established to forge greater links between the learning needs of industry and third-level institutions, are also examples of collaboration between the government, education and training organisations, industry and the social partners generally, to progress and promote CVET within enterprises.

At local level, a number of local community partnership structures have been established in recent years which facilitate consultation between relevant groups and the main VET authorities.

0703 - RENEWAL OF CURRICULA

In 2001 the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) was established to advise the Minister for Education and Science (DES) on 'matters relating to curriculum for early childhood education, primary and post primary schools and the assessment procedures employed in schools and examinations on subjects which are part of the curriculum'.

The Council membership represents teachers, school managers, parents, business and trade unions and other educational interests including the State Examination Commission. At upper secondary level, the NCCA is engaged in the review and revision of the Leaving Certificate examination subjects to ensure:

- an outcomes-based approach to expressing course and assessment objectives;
- increased focus on the vocational aspects of subjects; and
- the broadening of the basis and methods for the assessment of achievement.

The Educational Research Centre is another agency involved in curriculum research into issues, such as factors associated with early school leaving. A network of Education Centres, hosts the national 'Programmes of Curriculum Reform' and provides support services at local level, on a range of issues relating to teaching and learning.

The 2007 'Programme for Government' gave considerable attention to 'curricular change to meet skill needs and ensure a broader range of educational opportunities'. Under proposals in this Programme, the government will introduce new curricula in subjects such as engineering, economics and technology in the second level school curricula, and there will be greater focus placed on maths and science education at all levels, supported by teacher training

Important changes to the science education curriculum at primary and secondary level are already in the process of being introduced to increase and improve outputs and throughput to higher levels. This will be tackled by:

- Reform of the Leaving Certificate science curricula to ensure a continuum from the Junior Certificate and to increase the emphasis on project and hands-on activity,

- Increased investment in teacher professional development and consideration of technical assistance,
- Improved information and awareness activities.

The latter is supported by the Government's integrated awareness programme 'Discover Science and Engineering' (DSE) whose budget has tripled from 2004 its first full year of operation, to €5 million in 2007. Reform in second level technology and mathematics subjects is also being implemented to encourage more students to take up higher level mathematics. Training for teachers is undergoing enhancement, both in the Colleges of Education and via in-service training.

In the higher education sector, the Institutes of Technology have established processes and systems in place for reviewing their courses. This involves researching the needs before commencing new programmes of study. The Centre for Teaching and Learning in University College Dublin (UCD), has a website to support academic staff develop and improve their skills and knowledge in areas such as curriculum design and student assessment.

In the area of CVET, courses are generally modular in design and credit-based with a variety of assessment methods. They are also flexible in terms of course delivery and are generally focused on learner needs.

FAS, in its' role as the national training authority, develops curricula for all its courses, including for apprenticeship training. It is also responsible for the quality assurance and conformance of its training materials with the requirements of the National Framework of Qualifications. The curriculum of FÁS apprenticeships is standards-based, focusing on learning outcomes and structured on a modular format. Apprenticeship curricula, is reviewed regularly by subject expert committees, representing the social partners and education and training organisations, under the direction of the National Apprenticeship Advisory Committee. FÁS has recently revised its curricula for all the apprenticeship trades and it is developing five additional apprenticeships and new 'Generic Common Modules', for example basic IT awareness.

At local level FAS training programmes are based on course demand, expected recruitment from new or expanding companies, the success of existing courses in terms of job placement and the views of various local organisations. Other approaches to the delivery of training include FÁS eCollege (www.fas-netcollege.com), which offers on-line flexible learning opportunities to employers, the employed and unemployed persons. There are currently over 50 courses available with 31 certification options.

FAS, together with the National Adult Literacy Association and the VECs, have developed learning materials for the Workplace Basic Education Fund (WBEF). This features an integrated curriculum approach to the delivery of workplace education.

08 - ACCUMULATING, TRANSFERRING AND VALIDATING LEARNING

Education in Ireland has traditionally comprised three strands; Primary, Second Level, and Higher Education or Third Level. Higher education comprises Universities on the one hand, and on the other, Institutes of Technology, National Institutions and other third level colleges. The State Examinations Commission under the aegis of the Department of Education and Science (DES), is responsible for the development, assessment, accreditation and certification of all qualifications taken in second levels schools. In higher education, the universities and the Dublin Institute of Technology make their own awards.

The formal VET system covers qualifications in a wide range of occupational fields. While specific qualifications are not a legal pre-requisite for entry to most occupations, many employers require that employees have either relevant or related further education or third-level qualifications. There are relatively few regulated professions in Ireland with approximately seventy occupations regulated. Access to these professions is confined by law, regulation or administrative procedure, to persons who hold specific qualifications or registration from a specific competent authority or professional body. Examples of such professions include teaching, the law and medicine.

0801 - ACCUMULATING, ACCREDITING AND VALIDATING FORMAL LEARNING

Until recently one of the gaps in the provision of education and training in Ireland was the absence of a unified framework for the validation and certification of qualifications. The introduction of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act (1999), which in turn led to the establishment of the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) in 2001, was designed to fill this gap. NQAI covers all awards in the State from initial schooling to further education and training including higher doctorate level, and has an overarching role in regard to the development and implementation of a National Framework of Qualifications.

The remit of the NQAI covers three main functions.

- To establish and maintain a framework of qualifications based on standards of knowledge, skill or competence to be acquired by learners, regardless of where, when or how such learning takes place.
- To facilitate lifelong learning through the promotion of access, transfer and progression for all learners including those who have special needs.
- To establish and promote the maintenance and improvement of the standards of awards of the further and higher education and training sectors, other than in the universities, and to liaise with bodies outside the state for the mutual recognition of awards at transnational level.

The NQAI has defined policies and procedures under four themes, through which it meets its objectives. These are:

- Credit
- Transfer and progression routes
- Entry arrangements
- Information provision

The policy on credit facilitates credit accumulation, transfer and processes for the recognition of prior learning, as well as accord with developments in Europe, in relation to credit systems. Learners on achieving awards should also have eligibility to transfer or progress. The NQAI have set out procedures for providers for the identification and specification of the requirements of these routes.

Traditionally, formal qualifications were a pre-requisite for access to higher education. Access to IVET and further education is less restrictive and young people with no school leaving qualifications can avail of further education and training provided by the Vocational Education Committees (VECs), FÁS and the various sectoral training agencies such as Failte Ireland for the tourism industry. Generally however, these qualifications do not entitle them to progress to higher education. The NQAI policy regarding eligibility for entry arrangements is designed to extend accessibility on the achievement of an award. This requires procedures for providers to be fair, with consistent arrangements for entry, appeals processes, and statements of the knowledge, skill and the competences required.

Following the establishment of the NQAI, the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) and the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) were set up in 2001. The new awarding Councils are responsible for the certification of all education and training in the State, other than awards made in respect of primary and second-level education, the Dublin Institute of Technology and the Universities. Members of these Councils include learners and providers of further and higher education and training and the social partners. The Councils, which have separate but inter-dependent roles, have three principal functions.

- The establishment of policies and criteria for the making of awards, the validation of programmes and the setting and monitoring of standards.
- The determination of standards of knowledge, skill or competence to be acquired by learners, before an award may be made by a Council or recognised by a Council.
- The making and recognition of awards where persons have achieved the required standards.

The awarding Councils must also inform themselves of the education, training, skills and qualifications requirements of industry, including agriculture and the professions, the level of knowledge, skill and competence to be acquired by learners, and promote practices in education and training which meet those requirements.

Any provider can apply to the relevant Council for validation of a programme of education or training. Such programmes can take place in institutions, in the workplace or in the community and be either part-time or full-time. The Councils also have a quality assurance role and providers wishing to register with FETAC and HETAC for the first time must first agree their quality assurance procedures with the Councils before offering awards.

Over 640 providers of further education and training, incorporating 1,363 separate centres, have agreed their quality assurance systems with FETAC and can offer programmes leading to FETAC awards at Levels 1 to 6 of the National Framework of Qualifications. In 2007 the total number of awards issued by FETAC since it was established in 2001 exceeded the 500,000 while HETAC issued 23842 awards in 2006.

The Councils can also provide for the progression and transfer of trainees to further third level Institutes and Universities. For example FETAC level 5 Post Leaving Certificate courses in community and health services subjects, have progression links to nursing degree courses in universities and Institutes of Technology.

Until 2003, the Institutes of Technology and other third level institutions and colleges availed of awards made by the National Council for Educational Awards (NCEA). HETAC has now assumed this awarding function. Likewise, until 2003, the most common award system in further education was that developed by the National Council for Vocational Awards (NCVA), and bodies such as FAS and other industry agencies involved in vocational training had each developed separate systems for the recognition of learning taking place under their responsibility. FETAC has now assumed these awarding functions bringing together all certification for these areas under one banner.

Table 1: FETAC Awards 2006, which were formerly given by the following agencies					
NCVA	NCEA	FÁS	FÁILTE IRELAND	TEAGASC	TOTAL
63,563	214	41,466	2,060	2,993	110,296

Source: ESF Monitoring Committee Report, 2006.

Since 2007 FETAC has implemented a new Common Awards System for the development of awards. All existing systems for developing awards (FÁS, Fáilte Ireland, Teagasc, and NCVA) has now ceased operation. The new Common Award System will ensure awards are relevant to both employers and learners needs, coherent with the national framework of qualifications, responsive to demand and nationally available to registered providers. FETAC currently has over 2000 named awards within its existing Directory of Awards. By 2010 all existing awards will be converted, harmonised and reviewed to the Common Awards System.

In 2003 a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) was established by the NQAI covering all awards in the State. The Framework focuses primarily on learner needs and promotes the setting of standards for awards. Under the Framework strategy, all IVET and CVET programmes must have provision for access, transfer and mobility. FÁS, the Department of Education and Science (DES) and other providers must ensure their courses qualify for appropriate awards within the new Framework, which has set criteria for the level and award type available for all programmes that are submitted for its recognition. The Framework also facilitates international comparisons between awards.

Within the Framework there are 10 levels of awards from Foundation (Level 1) to Doctoral Level (Level 10). (See Section 0702, Diagram). FETAC is responsible for all vocational courses and further education leading to certification from level 1 up to level 6 (Advanced Certificate). The awards at Levels 1 – 6 are available for both CVET and IVET (depending on the status of the trainee), (see Table 2 below). HETAC is responsible for academic type courses from level 6 to level 10, which are provided by the Institutes of Technology and other private institutions of higher education (private colleges or business schools). Many of the qualifications available in the further education sector are modularised to allow students and trainees to accumulate units towards full qualifications. Table 2 shows the 10 levels at which the two Councils provide awards.

LEVEL	AWARDING BODIES AND STANDARD OF AWARDS
One	FETAC – Foundation Certificate; Introductory Vocational Skills Certificate; National Craft Certificate; National Foundation Certificate; National Skills Certificate; National Vocational Certificate.
Two	FETAC - National Vocational Certificate.
Three	FETAC - National Vocational Certificate; Specific Skills Certificate. Examination Commission– Junior Certificate at secondary level.
Four	FETAC – Certificate; Examination Commission–Leaving Certificate at secondary level.
Five	FETAC – Certificate; Examination Commission–Leaving Certificate at secondary level.
Six	FETAC – Advanced Certificate; HETAC & Dublin Institute of Technology – Higher Certificate.
Seven	HETAC & Dublin Institute of Technology & Universities – Ordinary Bachelor Degree.
Eight	HETAC & Dublin Institute of Technology & Universities – Higher Diploma; Honours Bachelor Degree.
Nine	HETAC & Dublin Institute of Technology & Universities – Masters Degree; Post – Graduate Diploma.
Ten	HETAC & Dublin Institute of Technology & Universities – Doctoral Degree

Source: CEDEFOP Monograph Theme 8 Accumulating, Transferring and Validating Learning, K. Mc Ginn, FAS, Ireland, 2007

0802 - ACCUMULATING, ACCREDITING AND VALIDATING NON-FORMAL/INFORMAL LEARNING

Over the past number of years, new informal learning routes, offer a variety of learning opportunities for adults. Until recently mobility within the Irish education system has been vertical and only in limited circumstances was informal and non-formal learning accepted for entry to higher education. In recent years, policies regarding non-formal and informal learning organised on a sub-tertiary basis, and with particular reference to community-based education and workplace learning, have been given formalised accreditation, and these will allow for greater access, transfer and progression in learning. The introduction of the National Framework of Qualifications, (see Diagram Section: 0702), also allows progression routes to be developed from the community education sector into formal education. Awards will become more flexible to fit with the non-linear way in which adults progress through education and will be more relevant to community-based learners. The NQAI has established policies to ensure that non-formal learning is recognised and accredited, and providers of further and higher education and training leading to awards must follow a set of procedures, (see Section 0801 above), which include the following statements concerning informal learning:

- A statement of arrangements to assess a learner's eligibility to enter a specific programme and further selection arrangements.
- A statement of arrangements for recognition of prior learning for entry into their programmes.
- Possibilities for transfer and/or progression associated with the programme, including any relevant specific progression linkages.
- Details of learning support available for specific learners, such as for learners with disabilities.

The remit of The Further Education and Training Awards Council, (FETAC), includes the validation of prior and experiential learning and work-based learning, community and private sector education also come under its aegis. In order to facilitate the recognition of prior learning, the awards council may also make awards to persons who apply for such and who, in the opinion of the Council, have achieved the relevant standard. It is thus possible for a learner to achieve an award without having participated in a specific formalised programme of learning.

Recently FÁS, in co-operation of the Institutes of Technology, has developed protocols and procedures for the recognition of Prior Learning for the apprenticeship process, thus facilitating increased access to apprenticeship. Other FÁS initiatives to accredit prior learning have taken place in the retail, construction and childcare sectors including the co-funding of the 'Lionra - Accreditation of Prior Learning' (APL) project, 2006-07, which sought to accredit prior learning in Information Technology (IT).

0803 - IMPACT OF EU POLICY COOPERATION

Ireland has participated in the development of a European Framework of Qualifications and a European credit system for vocational education and training (ECVET). The NQAI has worked with the Department of Education and Science (DES) on drafting (EU) Council conclusions on Common European Principles on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (2004). In 2004 the NQAI published 'Principles and Operational Guidelines for the implementation of a national approach to credit in Irish Higher education and Training'. These provide a framework for learners to accumulate credits towards awards, including for prior and experiential learning. This builds on and is compatible with the developments under the Bologna process and the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), a key component for the development of the European Higher Education Area, as well as facilitating student mobility and international curriculum development. Ireland has now verified the compatibility of its National Framework of Qualifications with the Bologna Framework, (the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area). The NQAI has also issued a publication regarding policies and criteria on the inclusion in, or alignment with, the National Framework of Qualifications of the awards (or the learning outcomes associated with them) of certain international and professional awarding bodies.

In 2006 the European Commission formally launched a consultation on the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET). In Ireland, the Department of Education and Science requested FETAC as the single national awarding body for further education and training in Ireland, to carry out the consultation on their behalf. FETAC organised a consultation seminar in February 2007 and compiled a national response which was submitted to the European Commission. FETAC is representing Ireland on the EU Commission's ECVET Technical Working Group to prepare an Explanatory Memorandum on ECVET with recommendations for presentation to EU Council.

0804 - FACILITATING EU MOBILITY

The NQAI has set up a national qualifications recognition service, "Qualifications Recognition-Ireland" to facilitate the recognition of international qualifications, and which encompasses the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention. The service provides:

- advice on the recognition of international qualifications in Ireland;
- represents Ireland in the National Reference Point Network of Centres; and
- consults with appropriate awarding body in Ireland (FETAC, HETAC, DES etc.) and professional bodies, in order to assess the learner's qualifications and to determine their comparability within the Irish education system.

While the decisions of the Qualification Recognition Service do not have any legal effect, as the Service itself does not have a direct recognition function, it can facilitate access to education and training and the labour market

generally. By the end of 2006 approximately 1200 applications had been received by the Authority's Service³⁰. The service has played an important role in providing advice on the recognition of international qualifications for recent recruitment drives to the police and the Defence Forces, as well as offering advice to migrants seeking access to further learning or employment.

The following web address facilitates a link to this Service.

http://www.qualificationsrecognition.ie?recognition/prof_rec/index.html

Further and higher education providers have developed independent recognition and evaluation processes for the admission of international students to their institutions. While working within the overall context of the awarding body policies and the Qualifications Recognition service, in addition they assess whether a candidate has attained the relevant entry criteria which include:

- the identification of appropriate levels of English language proficiency; and
- the establishment of the legitimacy of submitted academic documentation.

In November 2006, Ireland became the first European country to verify the compatibility of its National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) with the Bologna Framework. This alignment, and the anticipated future alignment of the NFQ to the proposed European Qualifications Framework, will greatly facilitate the recognition of foreign qualifications between signatory countries. Table 1 below shows a tentative referencing of the Irish Framework levels to the EQF levels:

Table 1: NFQ and EQF Levels	
NFQ (IRELAND) LEVELS	EQF LEVELS
1 & 2	1
3	2
4	3
5	4
6	5
7 & 8	6
9	7
10	8

Source: NQAI. Consultation on the European Commission Proposal for a European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning. Response from Ireland. CEDEFOP: Accumulating, Transferring and Validating Learning, K. Mc Ginn, FAS, Ireland, 2007.

³⁰ These figures refer to applications only and do not include enquiries received by 'Qualifications Recognition-Ireland' that did not progress to applications. In addition, the service also handles an extensive number of recognition queries by e-mail and telephone, and makes available a growing body of information on international qualifications on its website.

Ireland has already entered into a number of bilateral initiatives and agreements which facilitate the recognition of qualifications with other countries. The document, 'Qualifications can cross boundaries – a rough guide to comparing qualifications in the UK and Ireland' published in 2005, is a guide for employers and learners, designed to enable broad comparisons to be drawn between qualifications and their levels in Ireland, England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

http://www.qualificationsrecognition.ie/recognition/int_qual_database/uk/documents/QualificationsCanCrossBoundaries.pdf

The Europass³¹ programme which is designed to enable people to gain access to learning and employment throughout Europe, was officially launched in Ireland in 2005. NQAI is the designated National Europass Centre working in collaboration with the relevant agencies and providers.

³¹ All relevant information relating to instruments, transparency, mobility and developments along with the Europass documents are available in electronic format at www.europass.ie

09 - GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING FOR LEARNING, CAREER AND EMPLOYMENT

Ireland does not have an integrated and comprehensive structure for providing career guidance and advice. Recent reports on guidance provision in Ireland by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs and the Department of Education and Science (DES), have revealed many strengths but also significant gaps. The 'Task Force on Lifelong Learning', set up in 2002, by the government, stated that: "An integrated strategy for development is seen as vital with all relevant agencies participating in supporting co-ordinated actions-particularly through joint approaches by FÁS, the Training and Employment Authority, the National Centre for Guidance in Education and second level, further and third level providers".

0901 - STRATEGY AND PROVISION

In 2004 a National Guidance Forum was jointly established by the DES and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE), in response to an OECD review of career guidance policies in Ireland in 2002. The Forum brought together key stakeholders from across the education and labour market spectrum, and for the first time an agreed cohesive strategy for a national lifelong guidance service was developed. The Forum's report and recommendations entitled 'Guidance for Life: An Integrated Framework for Lifelong Learning in Ireland' published in 2007, has provided an opportunity for the DES and DETE to plan the provision of a guidance service that would underpin national priorities in lifelong learning. The Forum's report noted:

- the role of guidance practitioners in the dissemination of quality educational and careers information; and
- provided a national lifelong guidance framework which outlines the knowledge, skills and competencies that guidance aims to develop among individuals, covering the life stages from early childhood to adulthood, and
- recognised that guidance should be needs-based rather than age-based.

The implementation of this framework is to be supported by quality standards for service delivery and by qualified practitioners, as well new interlinked structures. At national level the Forum proposes a National Guidance Agency and a National Guidance Forum to promote and implement a lifelong guidance strategy, and at local level a Lifelong Guidance Co-ordination Board and a Local Guidance Forum, to ensure that the delivery of guidance by labour market and education providers is co-ordinated and delivered effectively. It is intended that this proposed framework should deliver a comprehensive lifelong guidance service that will drive a quality-assured service.

The Forum has also agreed a common vision and definition of guidance across the education, labour market and community sectors, supported

research on careers information and announced its participation in the European-funded project for the establishment of a European network of guidance forums.

Guidance services in Ireland are available within both the education and labour market sectors, and are located within educational institutions and in the FAS Employment Services offices. In the educational area, guidance services are based in post-primary schools, higher and further education institutions and through second chance education programmes such as the Youthreach programme. (See Section 0405).

GUIDANCE SERVICES AT SECOND LEVEL

The Education Act (1998) required schools to ensure that school students have access to guidance to assist them in their educational and career choices. Under the Guidance Enhancement Initiative, 2001, each school was granted an additional teaching resource to assist it with its guidance provision and later schools received additional staffing for guidance purposes in response to proposals to establish links with the local and business community, promote the uptake of science, and focus on the disadvantaged. In recent years priority has been given to additional elements of guidance in the curriculum e.g. 'substance abuse' programmes and 'stay safe' programmes. In some schools, support teachers are available to support the needs of children with social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties.

Guidance at primary, and at second and third level is available free of charge as is guidance in the adult education sector. However, there are also a small number of private providers where fees are charged - usually on an individual basis for professional advice, guidance and counselling in relation to career options.

GUIDANCE AT POST SECONDARY LEVEL

At post secondary school level, guidance and counselling provision is provided mainly within further education colleges and centres operated locally by Vocational Educational Committees (VEC) and in community education settings. All universities and most Institutes of Technology (ITs) have careers and counselling services available to students.

Youth Information Centres, managed by a variety of youth organisations, also offer information to young people on a wide number of issues, including employment matters, local community services and education and training opportunities. A counselling service is also available in the adult education sector to help clients assess their current situation and look at the options open to them for the future. In 2000 an Adult Educational Guidance Initiative (AEGI) was established to pilot and eventually mainstream, a guidance, information and counselling service, which would include outreach provision for adult learners from disadvantaged backgrounds with low educational attainment.

The National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE), funded by the Department of Education and Science (DES), plays a role in developing quality career guidance in Ireland. Its main functions are to develop and evaluate guidance practice and material in all areas of education, provide technical advice and organise in-career development training, as well as contributing to policy formation in the field of guidance. The Centre acts as Secretariat to the National Guidance Forum and provides co-ordination activities for the Adult Education Guidance Initiative (AEGI), referred to above. It makes available information on best practice in guidance education and systems in Europe, as well as education and training opportunities for practitioners in Ireland.

In the labour market context, FÁS, the Training and Employment Authority, is responsible for the provision of guidance, advice and information in respect of employment and career choices. In recent years both the National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCCGE) and FÁS have been active in guidance developments at European level and are members of the Euroguidance Network of national resource centres throughout Europe, funded under the European Commission's Lifelong Learning Programme.

The State agency Enterprise Ireland has a voluntary mentoring and guidance service to provide advice for the growth and development of entrepreneurs (the Mentor network), and the City and County Enterprise Boards provide similar mentoring and support programmes at local level for those seeking to set up small businesses. In the community sector, guidance and counselling services are mainly provided by Area-based Partnerships and the Territorial Employment Pacts, which work with local employment services education and other voluntary agencies to provide guidance and counselling services to individuals in local communities with social problems.

Table 1 sets out the main support and co-ordination agencies for the provision of guidance and counselling services in Ireland.

Table 1: Support and Co-ordination Agencies for the Provision of Guidance and Counselling Services		
PROGRAMME TYPE	CONTENT AND FOCUS OF PROVISION	TARGET CLIENT GROUPS
NATIONAL CENTRE FOR GUIDANCE IN EDUCATION (NCGE)	Supports and develops guidance practice in all areas of education; informs DES policy.	Provides support to the DES and to guidance practitioners in education.
EUROGUIDANCE CENTRES	Provides information on educational opportunities within the EU. Promotes European mobility.	Supports the guidance community, in cooperation with a network of 65 centres in 31 countries.
INSTITUTE OF GUIDANCE COUNSELLORS (IGC)	Liaison and advocacy role with government departments, trade unions and education and training institutions. Continuing professional development for guidance professionals.	Professional body representing 1200 practitioners in second level schools, third-level colleges, consultancy practice and other settings.
NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICE (NEPS)	Agency of DES. Provides psychological services to pupils in primary and post-primary schools	Services are not yet available in all schools and priority is for pupils with learning disabilities.
ASSOCIATION OF GRADUATE CAREERS SERVICES IN IRELAND (AGCSI)	Develops the career services for students and graduates, provides resource/ and information materials and the website <i>Gradireland</i> .	Members are guidance professionals in publicly funded third-level institutions.
INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY CAREERS ADVISERS' NETWORK (ITCAN)	Supports the operation of career advisory services and provides a forum for sharing best practice.	Members are career advisers in 14 Institutes of Technology.
ASSOCIATION FOR HIGHER EDUCATION ACCESS AND DISABILITY (AHEAD)	Advocates improvement in access and participation of students with disabilities in higher education; research and informs national policy on the education and employment of graduates with disabilities.	Advises Higher Education Authority, education institutions and others in education sector.
IRISH ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE COUNSELLORS	Representative body for counselling services in third level education.	Counsellors work with individuals or groups to provide support in personal and academic issues.
ADULT EDUCATIONAL GUIDANCE ASSOCIATION	Identifies guidance staff training and development needs in association with the NCGE.	Represents staff participating in the Adult Educational Guidance Initiative pilot projects.

Source: Report on Lifelong Guidance in Ireland, National Guidance Forum, 2007, Ireland.

0902 - TARGET GROUPS AND MODES OF DELIVERY

The provision of guidance in Ireland is currently quite fragmented, with many different providers delivering services to various target groups in a wide range of educational and labour market settings. Within the educational context the main target groups for the provision of guidance and counselling are:

- young people in the secondary school system;
- early School Leavers;
- university students at undergraduate and post graduate level;
- adult and second chance learners.

In the educational area, guidance services are based in post-primary schools, higher and further education institutions and through second chance education programmes such as *Youthreach*. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) published in January 2007, a draft curriculum framework for guidance in post-primary education, for the areas of Personal Guidance, Educational Guidance and Career Development. The framework reflects the importance of a balanced approach to guidance provision, both in terms of the coverage of a broad range of topics and skills, and in terms of student access to guidance across all the years of post-primary education.

Within the *Youthreach* programme for early school-leavers, there are measures for guidance, counselling and psychological services. An Advocacy Service managed by FÁS, provides a tailor-made approach to career planning in order to meet the specific guidance, training and work experience needs of disadvantaged early school leavers as they move from *Youthreach* centres to mainstream training, education or employment. There are currently 27 advocates in the country, providing career guidance and other related supports to over 1 600 early school leavers. The advocates provide services to trainees in *Youthreach* centres, Community Training Centres, FÁS and Department of Justice Workshops and Senior Traveller Training Centres. (See Table 3, Section: 0405).

In the adult education sector a range of services are available to assist people make choices about their careers and lives generally. The National Centre for Guidance in Education provides a support service for adult guidance projects, run mostly under the auspices of the Vocational Education Committees (VECs). The Adult Educational Guidance Initiative (AEGI) set up in 2000 to pilot guidance information and counselling services for adult learners, currently serves 36 areas throughout the country. The main target groups are adult literacy students, community education and 'Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme' (VTOS) participants, (see Section: 1004), and other learners participating in adult education. Since the programme began, over 30,000 individuals have accessed AEGI services, including significant numbers of adults from outside the designated target groups, for example some people with learning difficulties, physical and mental disabilities, unemployed people and foreign nationals.

Career guidance and counselling is provided by FAS for its clients as part of its overall national employment and training service, in over 134 locations countrywide, with an additional 25 services operating in disadvantaged areas. This service is provided by Employment Services Officers, and includes:

- individual interviews;
- ICT - career information databases, and
- occupational testing.

A Local Employment Service (LES) affiliated to FAS, also provides vocational guidance and counselling through the services of trained mediators, for individuals most distanced from the labour market. Through this process individual needs are identified and an action plan developed which may involve placement in employment or referral to vocational training programmes. Recent initiatives undertaken by FAS to support and develop their guidance systems include:

- the establishment of a national internet-based job vacancy call centre
- CALLNET' and
- the development of a multimedia careers package - Career Directions.

The latter is a web-based career guidance tool which hosts a database on careers information. It is an interactive programme accessible nationwide, which allows users to perform self-assessments and access information on over 720 careers. Career Directions has links to all current vacancies and training courses on the FÁS website, and is available in multimedia CD format and online at www.careerdirections.ie. It is also accessible in FÁS Employment Offices and Training Centres, Youth Information Centres, second-level schools and in careers services in third-level institutions.

0903 - GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING PERSONNEL

The Department of Education and Science (DES) gives schools an allocation equivalent to one guidance counsellor for every 500 students. These are normally qualified teachers who have obtained a post-graduate Diploma in Guidance and Counselling. These counsellors are not all employed full-time in careers work and may also spend some of their time on teaching duties. A post-graduate qualification in guidance is also one of a range of qualifications required for those working in guidance in higher education. Other recognised qualifications include qualifications in psychology, social sciences, counselling and personnel management. Unlike guidance services in schools, careers services in tertiary education are normally specialist careers services.

Career guidance and counselling is part of the work of a FAS employment officer. While currently no specific formal guidance qualifications are required, prior relevant experience is taken into account and matched against the required competences. Recently recruited FÁS employment officers are required to undertake a one-year, part-time open-learning Certificate

Programme in Adult Guidance and Counselling in the National University of Ireland, Maynooth, with an option of applying to progress to diploma level. FÁS has also made provision to train relevant staff in guidance and counselling skills to enable them to provide guidance services to persons with disabilities, while staff involved in the Youthreach programme are trained in non-formal guidance skills.

The report of the National Guidance Forum has formulated a competency framework for guidance practitioners, which is designed to fit within the Irish National Framework of Qualifications. This framework gives an overview of the competencies practitioners will require to work within the broad context of the lifelong guidance service, and will enable practitioners at any stage in their career, to study and qualify in additional modules so that they will be competent to take on new guidance roles.

Organisations that represent guidance practitioners, (See Table 1 in section 0901), also play a vital role in professional development. The Institute of Guidance Counsellors is the professional body representing over 900 practitioners in second-level schools and in other settings. The Institute has a liaison and advocacy role on behalf of its members, with government departments and management and trade unions within the education, employment and training areas. It promotes standards for entry into the profession, best practice for guidance and counselling, and supports the professional development of its members through in-career training. The National Committee for Guidance in Education provides a support service for adult guidance personnel.

10 - FINANCING - INVESTMENT IN HUMAN RESOURCES

1001 - BACKGROUND INFORMATION CONCERNING FINANCING ARRANGEMENTS FOR TRAINING

The majority of funding for vocational education and training (VET) in Ireland for individuals not in employment is provided by the State. This applies for both young persons before they enter employment, and unemployed adults.

Under the National Development Plan (NDP) for 2007-2013, which provides the framework for the allocation of public funding for VET in Ireland, there are five strategic investment priorities, which include Human Capital. Some EUR 25.8 billion will be invested in the following three programmes under the complementary Human Capital Investment Operational Programme (HCI OP) 2007-2013.

- Training and Skills Development (EUR 7.7 billion).
- Schools Modernisation & Development (EUR 5.1 billion).
- Higher Education (EUR 13 billion).

The Training and Skills Development Programme of the NDP has been allocated EUR 7.7 billion funded as follows:- the Exchequer (EUR 4.8 billion); the National Training Fund (EUR 2.8 billion) and State bodies (EUR 100 million). This Programme will focus on the following areas:

- 'Upskilling the Workforce' - EUR 2.8 billion will be invested in training for people in employment, helping to upskill those affected or likely to be affected by industrial re-structuring, improve and enlarge the apprenticeship system and provide progression opportunities for school leavers.
- 'Activation and Participation of Groups outside the Workforce' - EUR 4.9 billion will be provided for measures to provide targeted training and services to groups outside the workforce such as the unemployed, people and to promote opportunities for a wide range of socially excluded groups, i.e. the unemployed, people with disabilities, lone parents, Travellers³², ex-offenders, as well as encouraging the increased participation of women, older workers, part-time workers and migrants in the workforce.

A major factor influencing VET funding policy in Ireland has been the significant financial support provided by the European Social Fund (ESF), which has enabled the government to spend at higher levels than they otherwise could have done. The Employment and Human Resources

³² The travelling community in Ireland is a nomadic ethnic minority. There are estimated to be in excess of 25,000 Travellers in the Republic of Ireland.

Development Operational Programme, (EHRD OP), was Ireland's largest European Social Fund (ESF) supported programme in the 2000-06 round of Structural Funds, with EUR 892 million in ESF aid allocated to this Programme. In the future however, EU funding for VET in Ireland is likely to remain important but at a lower level. The National Strategic Reference Framework for Ireland sets out the objectives agreed between Ireland and the European Commission for the period 2007-13. In respect of the ESF, the priority identified for investment under this Framework is that of upskilling the workforce and increasing the participation of groups outside the workforce, The allocation of the ESF within this period is 61% for the BMW region and 39% for the S & E region.

1002 - FUNDING FOR INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Expenditure on initial vocational education and training (IVET) is considerable and has been growing over the last two decades as young people stay longer at secondary school and a greater proportion attend post-school education and training. Funding for IVET is very largely from central government, with only small contributions from employers or individuals. The ESF, which previously was a major contributor to government VET expenditure, now contributes much less funding to IVET. It remains, however, an important influence on Government policy and expenditure for IVET for young unemployed people and early school leavers.

FUNDING OF IVET IN SECOND AND THIRD LEVEL, HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

The Department of Education and Science (DES) is responsible for the funding of publicly provided school education at second-level. Funds are allocated on a formula, based on a standard pupil-teacher ratio. There is also a per-pupil non-pay grant. Responsibility for the provision of funding of vocational schools, community colleges and further education centres is devolved from the Department of Education and Science, (DES), to thirty-three city and county based Vocational Education Committees, (VECs), (see Section: 0302). The funding for programmes such as Youthreach, to address the needs of early-school leavers, is distributed jointly by the DES and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE). An increase of EUR 8 million for Youthreach was provided for in 2007 for the expansion of the number of places by 400, bringing the total number of participants to over 3,600 and total expenditure to EUR 59.3.

The higher education sector is principally funded by the state. The Higher Education Authority, which operates under the remit of the DES, is the main funding body for universities and for the designated higher education institutions, such as the 14 Institutes of Technology and teacher training colleges. Since 1995 no fees have been charged for under-graduate education in publicly funded third-level institutions and a system of means-tested grants towards the cost of living for students is in existence. The total expenditure on Higher Education in 2007 was EUR 2.5 billion. The national system of innovation and the higher education system is strongly research and innovation oriented, aiming for mutually beneficial interaction with the

enterprise sector. One of the ways of achieving this is through the Strategic Innovation Fund (EUR 510 million) which is intended to be a major catalyst in bringing about substantial change and quality improvement in the higher education institutions and promoting system-wide collaboration that draws on all institutions collective strengths.

A major emphasis was placed in the National Development Plan (NDP) for 2000-06 on broadening access to third level education, particularly for those from disadvantaged backgrounds, and significant investment continues to be allocated to this area. There are nine different funding programmes in place, as well as grant schemes and allowances to support students, including mature students, into higher education.

FUNDING OF IVET IN FURTHER EDUCATION CENTRES AND COLLEGES

School leavers attending full-time Post Leaving Certificate Courses (PLC) and Institutes of Technology (ITs) courses of at least one year's duration in publicly funded colleges, do not pay fees. A means-tested maintenance grant is available for those school leavers registered on PLC courses of not less than one year's duration, and for full-time students in ITs, taking courses at Certificate and Diploma levels. These grants are funded by the DES and administered by the local authorities. The grant levels are set annually and there are other supplementary means-tested grants for school leavers from low-income and socially-disadvantaged groups e.g. the disabled, to attend PLC courses.

These courses are publicly funded under the 'Back to Education Initiative' (BTEI). The BTEI eligibility criteria were amended with effect from September 2007 to allow free tuition to any adult with less than upper second level education. This change encompassed those who were previously eligible (people with a social welfare entitlement or medical card), and extended eligibility for free tuition to unwaged people and those in employment. In making this change, the key priority was to remove barriers to access by adults who do not have the Leaving Certificate or its equivalent, and so increase participation by this group in further education without incurring tuition costs. In particular, this change in eligibility criteria extends access to free tuition to women in the home and men in low paid employment.

Funding for apprenticeship training is sourced from the employer-levied, National Training Fund (NTF), together with central Government funds. The NTF funds most of the costs of apprenticeship training undertaken in FÁS, whereas the government funds most of the costs of the apprentices training undertaken in the education system, i.e. in the Institutes of Technology.

Apprentices are employees of companies under an apprenticeship contract. During the phases of on-the-job training, employers contribute to their support through the payment of wages, which are a percentage of the full (adult) craft worker wage. During the periods of off-the-job training and education, the state, through FÁS, pays an allowance to the apprentices, equivalent to their

wages. FÁS resources for apprenticeship training were increased by €15m for 2007, bringing their total allocation to EUR 129 million.

The training costs for trainees attending Traineeships programmes, designed to enable the unemployed access the labour market, are paid by the state with a contribution from the NTF. The trainees receive training allowances paid by FÁS.

Guidance services at second and third-level and in the adult education sector, are available free of charge. There are also a small number of private providers who charge fees for professional advice, guidance and counselling in relation to career options.

FUNDING FOR IVET IN SPECIFIC INDUSTRY AND SERVICES SECTORS

Central government provide funds for IVET for new entrants into specific industry sectors, through its funding of several public bodies³³ such as Fáilte Ireland, which provides IVET for the tourism industry and Teagasc, the Agriculture and Food Development Authority, which provides IVET for the agriculture and horticulture industries. The Institutes of Technology (ITs), who jointly provide initial vocational education courses for the tourism and agricultural sectors, receive their funding from the DES, together with contributions from Fáilte Ireland and Teagasc. Two other state supported agencies, Bord Iascaigh Mhara (the Irish Sea Fisheries Board) and Coillte (the Irish Forestry Board), fund training for new entrants into the fishing and aquaculture sectors and the forestry industry respectively.

1003 - FUNDING FOR CONTINUING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING, AND ADULT LEARNING

PUBLICLY-FUNDED CVET

The state plays a smaller role in the funding of CVET for the employed and for adult learners, in comparison to its funding for the training of the unemployed and for young people. While central government is the principal source of funding for all publicly provided CVET, it is also supported through ESF co-financing.

The Department of Education and Science, (DES) provides funding for continuing vocational education in further (VEC) education colleges and adult education centres. Funding for continuing vocational training is distributed by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, (DETE), to state agencies such as FÁS and other government departments fund ongoing CVET for specific industrial sectors such as tourism.

³³ For detailed description of funding and trainee allowances see CEDEFOP Thematic Report 10 - Investment in Human Resources, M. Barry, FAS, Ireland, 2006.

No public funds are distributed directly to the population for CVET, and there is no system of paid education and training leave. In general CVET for adults is paid for directly by the individuals themselves, and while participation in full-time further and higher education does not require the payment of tuition fees, adults attending part-time or evening courses normally pay the full cost.

Many publicly funded organisations such as FAS are permitted to charge fees. However, often the employer reimburses the cost of these courses, or if the trainee is unemployed or from a recognised disadvantaged group, no fee is charged. For adults attending part-time courses in third-level colleges, some assistance is provided through tax relief. Tax allowances are also available for the fees paid for attendance at approved courses in ICT and foreign language skills. There are three main strands of publicly funded CVET and adult learning provision.

(a) Second chance and community-based education and training.

This is now more accessible since funding was provided in 2002, for part-time learning under 'Back to Education Initiative' (BTEI), together with the introduction of the Community Strand of the BTEI. Regarding the latter Strand, a proportion (10%), of all BTEI funding must be given to community-based education activities. In 2007 the eligibility criteria under the BTEI were amended to allow free tuition to any adult with less than upper second level education. (See Section 1002). This change encompassed those who were previously eligible and extended eligibility for free tuition to unwaged people and those in employment.

The Vocational Training Opportunities (VTOS) courses, a "second chance" education and training programme providing courses for unemployed people, are provided free of charge. VTOS participants who receive unemployment assistance or benefit, get a training allowance. Lone-parents or those eligible for disability payment, also receive a payment. There is a meals and travel allowances for those who reside at a distance from the VTOS centre, and books and materials are free of charge, childcare support may also be available. A bonus payment of EUR 31.80 is payable for those in receipt of certain eligible social welfare payments for at least one year directly before they join VTOS. In 2007 total expenditure on this programme was EUR 68 3 million.

(b) Literacy training programmes.

The government provides funding for literacy training courses which are provided free of charge to participants. In 2007, it is expected that EUR 30 million will be spend on Adult Literacy Activities (up EUR 7 million on 2006), with 3,000 additional places available.

(c) Government funded employer and employee CVT schemes.

Several publicly funded state organisations are involved with the delivery of CVET programmes for the employed and unemployed population. These include FÁS, Enterprise Ireland and the 35 County and City Enterprise Boards.

There are a number of state financial mechanisms to encourage investment in training by enterprises. The main schemes are as follows.

- The Competency Development Programme (CDP,) provides a training subsidy from 50% up to 100%, to companies to reduce the costs of training for employers in a range of skills. Funding for the CDP increased from EUR 8.5 million in 2004 to over EUR 48.6 million in 2007³⁴.
- Enterprise Ireland, funds schemes to support in-company management training and advisory services for approved firms within the manufacturing and internationally-traded services sectors. In 2006 the agency spent EUR 4.6 million on these activities.
- The Industrial Development Authority (IDA), responsible for securing new industries from overseas in the manufacturing and internationally-traded services sector, was allocated EUR 2.5 million for training and development activities in 2005.
- Údarás Na Gaeltachta, a regional development agency which operates in Irish-speaking areas, spent EUR 5.84 million on training in 2006.
- County and City Enterprise Boards fund training programmes and schemes mainly targeted at the development needs of micro-enterprises and their employees.

State funding is also available for ongoing occupational skills training for employees in specific industry and services sectors.

- Fáilte Ireland, spent EUR 8.86 million in 2006 on ongoing training for employees in the tourism and hospitality sectors. The agency also receives a small contribution from the tourism industry and charges fees for employees' attendance on courses.
- Teagasc, the Agriculture and Food Development Authority, spent over EUR 1.28 million on continuing training in 2007. The agency charges a fixed fee to run ongoing courses for farmers. It also provides training courses at cost, for persons working in the food processing industry.
- Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM), the Sea Fisheries Board, provides training for those employed in the fishing, fish processing and aquaculture industries. In 2006 it spent EUR 0.96 million on ongoing training activities.
- Coillte, the Irish Forestry Board, provides training for forestry workers. In 2006 it spent EUR 0.8 million on ongoing training for its workforce.
- Crafts Council of Ireland offers financial and other incentives such as training advice and courses for the craft industry. These courses are free and a training allowance is paid to participants.

³⁴ Total expenditure for FAS Service to Business for 2007

Funding for CVET for public servants, teachers, the police and defence forces etc., is sourced from the 'normal' budget of the relevant government department. The state also allocates some funding to a number of non-commercial training providers such as the Irish Management Institute (IMI) and the Institute of Public Administration (IPA), for the training of employees in the public sector. These Institutes are also funded through their membership subscriptions, as well as by course fees paid by companies and the individual learners.

Under the 2007 Programme for Government EUR 2.8 billion has been provided for upskilling the workforce, to improve training for people in employment and help upskill those affected by industrial restructuring. During 2007, FAS increased its support for the training of people in employment. Total direct expenditure was EUR 54.1 million compared to EUR 40 million in 2006. The FAS 'One Step Up' Initiative which aims to encourage employee training in order to increase competency levels, had a budget of EUR 43 million in 2007 and is subsidised through two primary funding mechanisms:

- The Competency Development Programme (CDP) which offers many different types of training programmes directed at various skill levels of those in employment across multiple sectors and
- The Workplace Basic Education Fund which targets employees with the lowest skills levels (including early school leavers) and particularly those with difficulties with literacy and numeracy. Expenditure from the fund in 2007 was EUR 3.7 million.

In 2000 a new National Training Fund (NTF) was established, resourced by a levy on employers of 0.7% of earnings of employees. It applies to the main kinds of employment and covers approximately 75% of all insurable employees. The monies collected can be used to fund training schemes and programmes for the employed, (including apprenticeship training), and for those seeking employment. The Social Partners have a role to play in the allocation of the NTF they are consulted by the government in relation to the allocation of NTF funds for training programmes. The Government-sponsored, the Expert Group on Future Skill Needs, is the forum used to fulfil this requirement.

STATE AGENCIES	2005*	2005*	2007**
FÁS	11,713	12,573	12,573
IDA-IRELAND	0 900	1,269	1,000
ENTERPRISE IRELAND	2,500	3,550	3 160
SHANNON DEVELOPMENT LTD	0 000	0 161	0 000
SKILLNETS LTD	7,500	8,500	13,500
INSTITUTE OF ENGINEERS	0 300	0 300	0 405
OTHER IN-COMPANY TRAINING	3,408	23,854	26,660
TOTAL	25,122	49,746	59,579

Sources: *CEDEFOP Monograph: Investment in Human Resources–Theme10. M. Barry, FÁS, 2006. ** Government Estimates 2008. Expenditure for 2007 is estimated.

ENTERPRISE-BASED CVET TRAINING

Government policy views the training of persons at work as primarily the responsibility of employers, who are the main source of funds for training for the employed, through their funding of in-company training or indirectly through their contributions to the NTF.

The extent of employer direct investment in in-company training is difficult to ascertain given the lack of comprehensive information on in-company training expenditure. While no definitive statistics exist, figures on training expenditure from different sources, indicate that employee training is growing. A report by the Economic and Social Research Institute found that spending by the state on training for the employed amounted to about EUR 49 million in 2003³⁵ in comparison to an estimated EUR 1 billion spent by companies and commercial trainers. The latter amount includes the employer contributions to the National Training Fund. In 2005 total expenditure by companies was estimated at EUR 1.5 billion— though only EUR 420 million of this cost was on the direct costs of training courses³⁶.

The EU-wide CVTS3 survey³⁷ found that 69% of companies, employing ten or more persons had carried out some training in 2005 and companies spent, on average, 2.5% of labour costs on training. This was the highest rate among EU countries. Employers also participate in the industry-led 'Skillnets' Training Networks Programme (TNP), which has been allocated EUR 55 million from the NTF for 2005-10, to support enterprise-based training networks. The budget for the TNP was increased in 2007 to EUR 13 million from EUR 8.5 million. The ACCEL scheme which is aimed at groups of companies and also operated by Skillnets, has a budget of EUR 16 million for 2006-08.

1004 - FUNDING FOR TRAINING FOR UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE AND OTHER GROUPS EXCLUDED FROM THE LABOUR MARKET

Government funding priorities for VET for the unemployed and socially excluded, is set out in policy documents which have been incorporated into the National Development Plan (NDP) 2007-13. These include the annual Reform Programme, developed within the framework of the European Employment Guidelines, and the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS), both of which target major investment for individuals with inadequate literacy and numeracy skills. The majority of expenditure on VET for the unemployed comes from central government, and this includes contributions from the National Training Fund (NTF) and the European Social Fund (ESF). The social partners are consulted on the allocation of funding for programmes for the unemployed that receive financial support from the NTF, and intermediary

³⁵ Data Analysis of In-Employment, Education and Training in Ireland, Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, Forfas, 2005.

³⁶ Company Training in Ireland 2005, R. Fox FAS 2005.

³⁷ Continuing Vocational Training Survey (CVT3) 2005, Central Statistics Office, Ireland. 2007.

implementing bodies such as FÁS and the VECs, make annual submissions to their parent government departments outlining the number of unemployed they intend to train and the associated costs. There has also been increasing public funding for the community and voluntary sectors which provide CVET for marginalised or unemployed adults. Under the National Development Plan 2007-13, EUR 4.9 billion is available to provide targeted training and services to groups outside the workforce as well as encouraging increased participation of women, older workers and migrants in the workforce

In general unemployed persons and those from other socially-excluded groups are given financial assistance to undertake VET programmes. A portion of the budget allocated to the state agencies providing VET, is set aside for the payment of trainee allowances. In the area of vocational training, FAS is the main provider of these allowances.

VET for the unemployed and socially-excluded falls into the following categories.

THE FORMAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION SECTOR

In 2002 increased funding was made available for an expansion of the 'Back to Education Initiative' (BTEI), for further educational opportunities, for young people and adults with low qualifications. Under the BTEI, school leavers attending full-time Post-Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses of at least one year's duration, in publicly-funded colleges do not pay fees. BTEI eligibility criteria were amended in 2007 to allow free tuition to any adult with less than upper second level education. This change encompassed those who were previously eligible (people with a social welfare entitlement or medical card), and extended eligibility for free tuition to unwaged people and those in employment. In 2007 BTEI participants were included for the first time in the childcare scheme operated for Further Education students. The grants for BTEI participants were made available on the same terms as for participants in full time programmes such as VTOS, Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training Centres, but at a pro-rata rate based on the number of hours attended, to reflect the part-time nature of the initiative. The payment of such childcare supports to some women has been crucial in facilitating their participation.

An education allowance is available for persons following full-time third-level or PLC courses, who receive unemployment benefit, lone parent's allowance or disability benefit, (the latter group can also obtain special financial support). There are also other supplementary means-tested maintenance grants, known as 'Top-Up Grants', for school leavers from low-income families attending PLC courses. These grants are funded from the Student Assistance and Third-Level Access Funds, administered by the local authorities.

Other financial assistance includes the 'Back to Education Allowance' (BTEA), which is available for adults aged 21 and over, who wish to upgrade their general level of education. The 'Education Equality Initiative' was allocated EUR 4.4 million in 2006, to meet the needs of specific marginalized groups

e.g. those in treatment for substance dependence and Travellers³⁸ etc. A major educational measure aimed at those with low educational levels, is the 'Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme' (VTOS), whereby unemployed trainees receive a training allowance linked to unemployment payment rates. No course fees are payable and books and materials are provided free. Funding is also available for childcare to encourage parents to participate in VTOS. In 2007 total expenditure on this programme was EUR 68.3 million compared with EUR 62 million in 2006.

The state provides financial support to encourage participation by mature learners in third level higher education, in particular for students from disadvantaged backgrounds such as Travellers, or those with disabilities. Financial assistance for this category of person is distributed from the Third Level Access fund. A Student Assistance Fund is also available to students experiencing financial hardship while studying. A total of EUR 6.038 million was allocated in 2006-07 and 9,631 students benefited from this fund in 2004-05. A Fund of EUR 81 million for students with disabilities, benefited 2,032 persons in 2005-06.

THE FORMAL VOCATIONAL TRAINING SECTOR

FAS, offers a range of CVT programmes for young and older people seeking to enter or re-enter the labour market after an absence due to unemployment, disability or other reasons. Training allowances equivalent to unemployment payments, are provided to unemployed persons attending full-time FAS courses. Training courses are free and a 'training bonus' is paid to long-term unemployed persons. A contribution is also available for approved childcare costs and trainees can receive travel and accommodation support. Expenditure on FAS training and integration programmes for the unemployed and disadvantaged amounted to EUR 2.198 million³⁹ in 2006.

FÁS also administers a Technical Employment Support Grants Scheme which provides training options for unemployed jobseekers, where the type of training required was not immediately available in a training centre. A training fund of EUR 1.270 , and in exceptional circumstances EUR 2.500 per person, is available to purchase this training. Funding is available for a 12 month period.

FÁS subcontracts some training for the unemployed to approved private trainers following a tendering process. It also administers several grant schemes to assist those with a disability to access employment. The expenditure on FÁS programmes and schemes for people with disabilities in 2007 amounted to EUR 74 million, representing an increase of EUR 3 million over the 2006 expenditure. The 2007 expenditure for specialist training providers amounted to EUR 52 million, while EUR

³⁸ The Travelling Community in Ireland is a nomadic ethnic minority. There are estimated to be in excess of 25,000 Travellers in the Republic of Ireland.

³⁹ FAS Annual Report, 2006. (Refers to direct costs only).

8.2 million was expended on supported employment services. The Wage Subsidy Scheme, introduced in 2005, continues to be promoted by FÁS to encourage employers and potential employees to avail of the incentives under the schemes and to maximise take-up. The total expenditure on this programme for 2007 was EUR 7.6 million.

INFORMAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING SECTOR

The community and voluntary sectors are important providers of VET, including adult literacy programmes, for unemployed adults. Generally these programmes are provided free of charge and are funded by public authorities such as the VECs. In 2002 the Government increased funding to this sector through the introduction of the Community Strand under the 'Back to Education Initiative' (BTEI).

Financing for CVET at community level, is mainly distributed by the government agency Pobal, (formerly Area Development Management Ltd.), which funds Local Area Partnership Companies and the four Irish Territorial Employment Pacts, both of whom facilitate CVET for marginalised groups. Some community groups and partnership companies give small allowances to learners whose parents are on social welfare, other groups provide services such as transport, childcare facilities and learning materials.

The National Adult Literacy Scheme provides free tuition to those who wish to access literacy programmes. Under the 2000-06 NDP, EUR 73.8 million was allocated to literacy courses. The DES funds the cost of running the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA), which co-ordinates these programmes. In 2007, 44,000 participants availed of adult literacy tuition at a cost of EUR 30 million.

Adult learning opportunities for the unemployed are also provided by many trade unions in their networks of adult education centres. These centres are funded from union members' subscriptions and some receive a grant from FÁS.

Table 1 below, shows expenditure for the main IVET and CVET programmes and activities provided by FÁS, Skillnets, the Departments of Education and Science* and Social and Family Affairs, for both the employed and those seeking employment from 2006-07.

The following table shows expenditure for employment and training supports provided by FÁS, Skillnets and the Departments of Education and Science and Social and Family Affairs in 2005, 2006, and 2007 (actuals).

Table 1: Expenditure on Vocational Training Supports in EUR 000's for 2005-07			
		€000's	€000's
FÁS			
TRAINING	2005	2006	2007
Apprenticeship	101,800	113,034	129,030
Traineeship	20,633	22,699	25,191
Training & Sectoral Initiatives and Sponsored Training	19,359	38,777	49,813
Evening Courses / FÁS eCollege	2,689	2,013	1,836
Specific Skills Training	37,985	37,586	37,364
Local Training Initiatives	26,103	26,326	30,736
Workplace Basic Education Scheme	1,070	1,163	3,732
Bridging Foundation	21,863	20,561	21,226
Foundation/Progression in CTCs	38,904	42,435	46,793
Return to Work	2,684	2,753	2,833
Specialist Training Providers	44,889	49,371	52,009
TOTAL	317,979	356,718	400,563
SKILLNETS			
	7,500	14,000	24,500
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND FAMILY AFFAIRS			
Back to Education Allowance	46,695	52,070	64,140
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE			
Youthreach	45,334	51,679	59,343
VTOS	56,981	61,942	68,300
Senior Traveller Training Centres		24,219	26,314
Back To Education Initiative*		15,049	17,510
Total	102,315	152,889	171,467
OVERALL TOTAL	474,489	577,724.9	660,670

* Expenditure on the Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) and senior Traveller Centres is not included for 2005.

Source: Lisbon Agenda-Integrated Guidelines for Growth and Jobs, Implementation of the National Reform Programme. Annual Progress Report, Department of the Taoiseach, Ireland. 2008.

1005 - PERSPECTIVES AND ISSUES: FROM FUNDING TO INVESTING IN HUMAN RESOURCES

Central government funding for VET is now more structured and readily available, as it is allocated within the framework of the National Development Plan (NDP) to the various publicly-funded VET providers. Human resource development (HRD) continues to be an important element of NDP policy, as shown by the investment (EUR 25.8 billion), allocated to HRD programmes in the current Human Capital Investment Operational Programme (HCI OP) 2007-2013.

Over past decades the ESF provided significant co-funding for VET in Ireland, the amount of funding is now much less, but ESF support is still a factor in shaping VET policy, and EU funding priorities continue to be reflected in the recently published NDP 2007-2013, together with the complementary HCI OP 2007-2013. In 2007 FAS for example received EUR 783,000 in funding from the ESF.

Over the period of the National Development Plan 2007-2013, the Government will invest EUR 7.7 billion in public funds to support training and skills development. This is a significant increase when compared with the level of spending over the previous seven year period (2000-2006) of EUR 5.9 billion. EUR 2.8 billion is provided for upskilling the workforce, to improve training for people in employment and help upskill those affected by industrial restructuring. EUR 4.9 billion is available to provide targeted training and services to groups outside the workforce as well as encouraging increased participation of women, older workers and migrants in the workforce. This level of investment reflects the importance the Government attaches to maintaining an educated, skilled and adaptable work force in Ireland. At primary and second level the government continues to make a number of important changes to science education and a range of measures have been introduced to further strengthen science and mathematics teaching and learning in schools. These measures will continue to be supported by the government's integrated awareness programme Discover Science and Engineering (DSE) whose budget has tripled from its first full year of operation in 2004 to EUR 5 million in 2007. Higher Education spending has almost quadrupled in current terms over 10 years and is now at the EU and OECD average levels. This investment is having a significant impact in terms of human capital development, attraction of foreign direct investment and commercialisation.

Recent statistics however, show that early school-leaving continues to be a problem in Ireland, despite the large amounts of money invested in special educational initiatives at school level. Over the last few years there has been an expansion of VET programmes paying allowances, to encourage a greater take-up or return to education and training of disadvantaged persons, particularly early school leavers with low qualifications, (e.g. the expansion of the Youthreach Programme and the Back to Education Initiative).

Another policy priority at IVET level concerns broadening access to third level education for those from disadvantaged backgrounds. In 2003 a National

Office for Equity of Access to Third Level Education was established, and it has since published a Plan for 2005-07⁴⁰ to progress the third level access agenda. This plan recommends provision for student childcare facilities, information on financial support for students and a costed proposal to financially support mature students in part-time education.

In recent years there have been a number of financial incentives and measures to support CVET for adults, targeting in particular, those with low skills and educational qualifications. CVET for adult learners is now more accessible since the Government provided funding under the 'Back to Education Initiative' in 2002 for part-time learning and for community-based education, as well as providing increased public funding for childcare costs, which are now recognised as a potential barrier to participation in CVET.

Some cost barriers still remained for those in full or part-time employment who wished to access courses to gain further qualifications and there have been various attempts to rectify these barriers. In 2007 funding eligibility criteria under the Back to Education Initiative were amended to allow free tuition to any adult with less than upper second level education. In making this change, the key priority was to remove barriers to access by adults who do not have the Leaving Certificate or its equivalent, and so increase participation by this group in further education without incurring tuition costs. In particular, this change in eligibility criteria extends access to free tuition to women in the home and men in low paid employment.

While training for employed people is essential for the building of a skilled workforce, there remains a significant number of employed people who are poorly-qualified and vulnerable to unemployment. To overcome this problem, in recent years, there has been a significant increase in state funding for training for the employed and a substantial increase in funding has been allocated to support training and skills development over the next number of years in the National Development Plan 2007-2013. An example of this investment is the FAS 'Competency Development Programme', which aims to raise the skills level of employees and provides a training subsidy to reduce the costs of training for employers with a particular focus on the low-skilled in SMEs where 40% of the workforce are employed.

The changes in migration flows relating to Ireland over a relatively short period have been dramatic. High levels of economic growth led to a situation where nearly 12% of our population are immigrants. The contribution of migrants, particularly in terms of labour and skills, to the economic and social fabric of Irish society has been significant over the past number of years. The key challenge now facing both Government and Irish Society is to integrate these migrants.

To address this challenge, a Minister of State with specific responsibility for the development of integration policy was appointed in June 2007. The Office is involved in setting up new funding lines to address integration priorities and

⁴⁰ Higher Education Authority, (HEA), 'Progressing the Action Plan: Funding to Achieve Equity of Access to Higher Education', 2005.

to develop “principles” of integration. The Department of Education and Science provides for English language training for adult immigrants from its adult literacy budget. There were 44,000 students in the adult literacy programme in 2007, of whom 13,000 were immigrants. The Government has commissioned an independent review to assist in the development of a national English language training policy and framework for legally-resident adult immigrants.

The education and training system has played a critical role in Ireland’s economic development by equipping the Irish workforce with the skills and qualifications that have supported the development of the internationally traded manufacturing and services sector. Increasing globalisation and technological advancement are continuously changing the business environment. Skills, training and education will remain a key factor in the country’s economic performance.

In 2007 the Government published a National Skills Strategy, on future skills needs in Ireland up to 2020. Among recommendations for the funding of VET, the report proposed that:

- VET for adults up to upper secondary level or Leaving Certificate equivalent should be free, with some subsistence provided by the State, for full time study where appropriate. (The former has been in part addressed through the introduction of free tuition to any adult with less than upper second level education under the Back to Education Initiative in 2007).
- New funding mechanisms should be introduced to encourage participation in continual learning, such as Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs), paid learning leave and co-financing. (FAS, in response to this recommendation has proposed a scheme which would provide low-skilled employees with the means to purchase training of their choice).

11 - EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL DIMENSIONS, TOWARDS AN OPEN AREA OF LIFELONG LEARNING

Ireland's National Reform Programme sets out the key labour market policies that will contribute to the achievement of the Lisbon Agenda. It states that the country will focus in particular on two major challenges:

- Ensuring an adequate supply of labour to meet the needs of the economy and to sustain economic growth. Labour will be supplied through a number of sources: the underlying population increase; increased participation by the unemployed and other groups outside the labour force, and migration.
- Maintaining a strong focus on education and training, including lifelong learning and training for those in employment to ensure the development of a high skilled, adaptable workforce.

The activities contained in the Human Capital Investment Operational Programme 2007-13 continue to provide various means through which these objectives have been pursued, The National Development Plan 2007-2011, the National Partnership Agreement-Towards 2016, the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016 and the Programme for Government 2007, have all restated the Government's commitment to Lifelong Learning, with a focus on enhancing access to training, the development of new skills, the acquisition of recognised qualifications and progression to higher level qualifications. The Government recently appointed a Minister of State for Lifelong Learning with responsibility for for improving access as well as overseeing and ensuring a co-ordinated approach to lifelong learning. Under the current Social Partnership Agreement a "lifecycle approach" to employment and training has been set out with the supports available to the individual at each stage of the life cycle. Priorities in the implementation of the framework for Lifelong Learning include:

- Addressing skill needs and widening access to lifelong learning in the context of an integrated approach to education and training;
- Tackling disadvantage in terms of literacy and numeracy, early school leaving and providing second chance education and training for those with low skills;
- Addressing access barriers through the strengthening of financial supports, guidance, counselling and childcare services and increased flexibility of provision. The lifecycle framework, as set out in Towards 2016, includes transitions between non-employment (unemployed/inactive), employment and within employment, with training and upskilling acting as the catalyst for such transitions.

The National Skills Strategy also sets out to progress the Lifelong Learning Agenda. The Strategy set out long-term objectives to achieve a significantly improved educational profile for the labour force:

- Increase the upskilling of 500,000 people in employment as over 70% or 1.43 million of our current workforce will still be in employment in 2020.
- Ensure that the output from the education system reaches its potential, through improving participation rates in upper secondary level to 90% and ensuring the progression rate to third level increases to 70%.
- Address the skills needs of the immigrant population and those re-entering employment.

Engagement in lifelong learning (LLL) has been identified as one of the key ways by which the goals of the Lisbon Agenda can be achieved. The Eurostat data⁴¹ for Ireland for 2005, showed that 8% of all persons aged 25-64 participated in lifelong learning in 2005, (EU average 11%), compared to the Lisbon target of 12.5%. Eurostat data for 2007 shows that 7.6% of all persons in Ireland aged 25-64 participated in lifelong learning (EU 27 9.7%).

Table 1: Life Long Learners - Comparison with EU position 2007			
	MALES	FEMALES	TOTAL
IRELAND	6.5%	9.4%	7.6 %
EU 27	10.0%	11.7%	9.7%
EU 15	11.0%	12.8%	11.9%

Source: Eurostat : Labour Market Database, 2007

1101 - NATIONAL STRATEGIES RELATED TO POLICY PRIORITIES, PROGRAMMES AND INITIATIVES AT EU LEVEL

The EU has played a significant role as a co-funder of VET in Ireland and EU policy and initiatives continue to strongly influence Irish VET policy. The EHRD OP for 2000-06, which was strongly influenced by the European Employment Strategy, included most of the activity of the public education and training systems. Under the new Human Capital Investment Operational Programme 2007-13, expenditure will be EUR 25.8 billion, of which the ESF will contribute EUR 375 million and 75% of this expenditure, is to be on actions that support and promote the Lisbon Agenda.

The National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) and Operational Programmes (OPs) reflect the overall goals of the Lisbon Agenda as well as the National Reform Programme. The NSRF and O Ps build on the aims of "Towards 2016" and have a strong focus on competitiveness and supporting and enabling dynamic regions. To this end, Ireland has earmarked 83% of its expenditure on actions that support and promote the Lisbon Agenda which is in excess of the 75% target set out in the regulations. The National Reform

⁴¹ Eurostat, EU Labour Force Survey, Principal Results News Release. 11/3/2006.

Programme for 2005-08, sets out the key labour market policies that will contribute to the achievement of the Lisbon Agenda and the EU Employment Guidelines.

The Government focus is on improved employability, specifically by increasing the skills levels of the unemployed and those in employment and reducing the number of low skilled in the workforce through the implementation of the National Skills Strategy and participation in Active Labour Market Programmes. The EU 2010 targets for education are that at least 85% of 22 year olds in the EU should have completed upper secondary education and that the average rate for early school leavers should be no more than 10%. Eurostat⁴² data for 2007 shows that 86.7% of the Irish population aged 20-24 have completed at least upper secondary level education (EU27 78.1%). The rate of early school leaving for 2007, as indicated by Eurostat⁴³, was 11.5% (EU27 14.8%), showing a drop on the last few years. Actions being undertaken to increase participation in education and training reflect the policies outlined in the European Youth Pact on the need to provide education and training to address the labour market challenges facing young people.

1102 - IMPACT OF EUROPEANISATION/INTERNATIONALISATION ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Ireland has participated fully in the European education and training policy agenda, notably the Bologna and Copenhagen processes, and a major goal for the qualification system is to improve access, transfer and progression. To progress this goal the government has introduced a national framework of qualifications which covers all awards in the state. The general approach in the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) has many parallels with the Irish approach.

Ireland has also co-operated with EU countries on the development of qualification recognition agreements, and has introduced a framework for learners to accumulate credits towards awards. This builds on and is compatible with the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), a key component for the development of the European Higher Education Area under the Bologna process.

The EU Commission has acknowledged guidance as a key component to advance the European policy objectives of LLL. Arising from the EU Guidance Resolution of 2004, the Commission has set up two pilot European Networks of National Forums for Lifelong Guidance which include Ireland.

Several new Irish VET processes have been developed utilising EU funding, available under the former Leonardo, Grundtvig and Socrates programmes. Also Cross-border, North South co-operative initiatives were funded under the EU Interreg Programme, which also funds VET partnerships between Ireland and Wales. Considerable funding has also been utilised under the EQUAL

⁴² Eurostat: Labour Market Database 2007.

⁴³ Eurostat: Labour Market Database 2007.

Programme, to develop initiatives dealing with social inclusion and unemployment and under this programme a total of EUR 34 million of ESF funding was allocated to 43 Irish projects. Supporting the integration of those who have difficulty in accessing and being integrated into the labour market was a key priority of the EQUAL initiative and one of the target groups within this priority was the migrant community. To facilitate mobility within the EU, there have been a number of developments in areas such as apprenticeship curriculum and the transparency of qualifications. Some of these have involved participation in specific EU VET networks, for example the European Vocational Training Association (EVTA) network, and education and training professionals have also been involved in study visits within the EU for the exchange of 'Best Practices' in VET.

Following a European Council decision, Europass was officially launched in Ireland in late 2005 and the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) was designated the National Europass Centre and represents Ireland in the European network for Europass. The NQAI has also set up a "Qualifications Recognition-Ireland" service to facilitate the recognition of international qualifications under the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

To promote language learning in higher education, students are encouraged to spend a period of time overseas under for example the former Erasmus Programme. Also some school students, who participated in the Comenius Programme, spent some time in a European country to improve their language skills. Under the former LINGUA Programme several Irish projects were funded to develop the quality of language learning. Ireland also participated in the Leonardo Da Vinci funded Young Worker Exchange Programme, which facilitated language training, together with periods of work placement in EU member states.

In order to make VET services more accessible to EU nationals residing in Ireland, FÁS has a telephone interpretation line service available in all European languages. The FAS 'Know before you go campaign', launched in 2006 in the new Member States, provides relevant information to jobseekers before coming to Ireland.

1103 - AUTHORS, SOURCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

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