

The Reach Fund

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

PRACTICAL MEASURE/INITIATIVE

 IRELAND

Timeline

2020 **Approved/Agreed**

2021 **Implementation**

2022 **Completed**

ID number 39973

Background

The Mitigating against educational disadvantage fund (MAEDF) was initially designed to support the most disadvantaged learners throughout the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. It was meant to address literacy, numeracy or digital skills among adults in Ireland. Some people may not have got the help they needed earlier in their lives, however there are services all over Ireland, which will assist with these skills.

Objectives

The purpose of the fund is to support community education provision targeted at adult learners, who have the highest level of need. It aims to increase the participation of disadvantaged learners, particularly those on literacy and basic skills programmes at NFQ levels 1-3 (EQF levels 1-2). The fund aims to provide funding to support educationally disadvantaged learners in accessing and participating in community education.

The fund emphasises:

- (a) community education as a mechanism to continue to support and engage with disadvantaged learners;
- (b) reaching out, encouraging and supporting learners to re-engage with education and training;
- (c) attracting new learners to engage with education and training opportunities;
- (d) enabling investment in building the digital infrastructure of providers and their capability to ensure that online learning can be delivered in a way that meets the complex needs of all learners.

Description

A budget of EUR 8 million was announced as part of the 2021 budget. Its main target is supporting adult learners (in community education), especially those with the highest level of need and who are undertaking literacy and skills programmes. The fund focuses strongly on the digital infrastructure of community education providers, including providing devices and software, and increasing their capacity to deliver online learning.

Community Education providers can apply for funding across several categories, including:

- (a) digital technologies to supply devices, software and systems, or continuing

- professional development (CPD) training, to facilitate high quality learning and delivery;
- (b) a learner assistance fund to help, where appropriate, with costs associated with course participation, such as books and class materials
- (c) an outreach, engagement and mentoring fund to assist with costs associated with activities such as awareness raising, and services to promote re-engagement;
- (d) a COVID-19 exceptional circumstances fund for community education to address educationally disadvantaged learners.

Around the country, the projects supported by the Reach Fund helped to support online learning, connect communities and providing social supports to the most vulnerable groups. These priority cohorts include the long-term unemployed; young people; people with disabilities; members of the Traveller and Roma communities; migrants and refugees; women wishing to return to the labour market; and lone parents.

2020 Approved/Agreed

The fund was launched by the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science in 2020.

2021 Implementation

In March 2021, the education minister announced further support to those schools catering for children and young people who are experiencing the highest levels of educational disadvantage.

2022 Completed

MAEDF has been named the Reach Fund and has been mainstreamed into annual funding. The Reach Fund is open for new applications.

Bodies responsible

- Further Education and Training Authority (SOLAS)
- Department of Education and Skills (until 2020)
- Department of Education

Target group

Learners

Adult learners

Entities providing VET

VET providers (all kinds)

Thematic categories

Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Optimising VET funding

Modernising VET infrastructure

Improving digital infrastructure of VET provision

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Diversifying modes of learning: face-to-face, digital and/or blended learning;

adaptable/flexible training formats

Acquiring key competences

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Financial and non-financial incentives to learners, providers and companies

Providing for individuals' re- and upskilling needs

Ensuring equal opportunities and inclusiveness in education and training

Subsystem

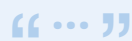
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Further reading

[Minister announces increased funding for community education](#)

[New measures to tackle educational disadvantage](#)

[The Reach Fund replaces the Mitigating Against Educational Disadvantage Fund \(MAEDF\)](#)



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<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/39973>