

Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science Strategy 2021-23

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

STRATEGY/ACTION PLAN

 IRELAND

Timeline

2021 **Approved/Agreed**

2022 **Implementation**

2023 **Completed**

ID number 39969

Background

This is the first strategy from the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS).

Objectives

The strategy sets out the vision, mission and strategic goals that guide the department's work programme in 2021-23.

To achieve this vision and mission, the strategy sets out three high level goals:

- (a) support the provision of high-quality education and improve the learning experience to meet the needs of all students in schools and early years settings;
- (b) ensure equity of opportunity in education and that all students are supported to fulfil their potential;
- (c) together with its partners, provide strategic leadership and support for the delivery of the right systems and infrastructure for the sector.

These three high level goals are underpinned by a range of strategic actions. The goals take account of the challenges facing the system at present. The principal among those is the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had, and will continue to have, on teaching and learning in schools across the system. The goals also consider the political, economic and societal context, in which schools and the education system operate and the importance of education as a basic human right under international law.

Description

DFHERIS funds and creates policy for the higher and further education and research sectors. It also oversees the work of the State agencies and public institutions operating in these areas. It ensures that these sectors support and encourage Ireland's social and economic development and that public investment and policy in these areas give opportunities to everyone, including the most vulnerable in society.

2021 Approved/Agreed

Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, Simon Harris, and Minister of State for Further Education and Skills, Niall Collins, launched the strategy in March 2021.

The preparation of the strategy was preceded by a public consultation, in which the department received over 130 submissions and has set six overarching strategic goals - talent, innovation, inclusion, international, governance and capacity.

2022 Implementation

As set in the strategy, the following has been accomplished.

A new National Tertiary Office (NTO) established to develop joint further and higher education degree programmes. School leavers are now able to access information on traineeships from the Central Applications Office portal.

New partnership on research between DFHERIS and the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) was established to help drive ambition on skills and talent. The ESRI, in partnership with the department, will undertake research on developments in the labour market and the shifting nature of skills.

The government approved publication of the Construction Safety Licensing Bill 2022. The Bill is to modernise and reform the existing accreditation model and provide for a licensing model for construction and quarrying activities. The government's policy proposals published on unifying the third-level system. The vision is for a more unified system to align the further education and training, higher education and research and innovation sectors.

The fourth National Access Plan, A strategic action plan for equity of access, participation and success in higher education, was launched. The plan covers the period of 2022-28 and is a national priority and a key commitment in the Programme for Government. A new gender-based bursary for apprenticeship employers was introduced. The bursary, which is worth EUR 2 666, is available to employers who employ apprentices on any national apprenticeship programme with greater than 80% representation of a single gender.

2023 Completed

In 2023, this Strategy reached the end of its cycle and was updated with the next three-year strategy.

Bodies responsible

- Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS)

Target group

Other

All actors in further education, higher education, research, innovation and science

Thematic categories

Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Coordinating VET and other policies

Optimising VET funding

Engaging VET stakeholders and strengthening partnerships in VET

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Reinforcing work-based learning, including apprenticeships

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Providing for individuals' re- and upskilling needs

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Further reading

[DFHERIS website](#), [Statement of Strategy 2021-23](#)

Related policy developments

2025 Completed

Erasmus+ VET Mobility as a Route to the Acquisition of Transversal Skills and Development of Transversal Skills Competency Framework

The above report was carried out under the direction of the National VET Team. VET Team is a national panel of key experts from across the Further Education and Training sector that advises Léargas on VET practice, policy, recognition and accreditation of skills.

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Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Completed

Green Devolved Capital Grant to Improve Energy Efficiency and Decarbonisation across VET Estate

The Green Devolved Capital Grant is to be distributed to the 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs) who deliver VET to assist them to hit their targets for 2030 as set out in the Public Sector Climate Action Mandate.

 IRELAND

Type of development

Practical

measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Implementation

Further Education and Training (VET) Funding Model Review

The process of review started in 2019 with the agreement on the guiding principles and approach. An international expert panel was appointed, with an internal funding model review advisory group and data modelling working group established to support the panel's work.

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Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Implementation

Tertiary Degrees in Further Education and Training, guaranteeing progression to Higher Education.

Creating a unified tertiary system is one of the strategic priorities of the National FET strategy 2020-24.

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Strategy/Action
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Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Implementation

Further Education and Training Colleges of the Future (CotF): Capital Call

The National FET Strategy defined that CotFs should have the following characteristics:

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Strategy/Action
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2025 Completed**The Action Plan for Apprenticeship 2021-25**

Ireland's Action Plan for Apprenticeship 2021-25 was launched in 2021 by the Ministers for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science and the Minister of State for Skills and Further Education.

 IRELAND**Type of development**Strategy/Action
plan**Subsystem**

IVET CVET

2025 Implementation**QOI and ETBs: Evolving Quality Assurance following Inaugural Review: Quality Dialogue Meetings and Annual Quality Reporting (AQR)**

The external review is conducted by review teams. National and international external reviewers are selected for their expertise in one or more specific areas, providing perspectives from education and training, quality assurance, learner voice, community and industry.

 IRELAND**Type of development**

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Completed**Strategic Performance Agreements for FET System National Targets 2022-2024**

Each SPA set out plans for the development and innovation of the VET system and include each ETB's contribution to the national FET system targets agreed with the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS).

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2023 Completed

Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025

The 2025 National skills strategy is targeted at ensuring relevance of education and training to the needs of learners, society and the economy. It is based on active involvement of employers and quality teaching and learning, with a perspective of lifelong learning and inclusion.

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Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2021 Completed

Expanding apprenticeship and traineeship

The Action plan to expand apprenticeship and traineeship 2016-20 in Ireland focuses on the actions required to achieve some of the goals set out in the National skills strategy 2025, the current programme for government in which Ireland aims to significantly grow work-based learning using the app

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2025 Design

Public Consultation on Tertiary Education Strategy to Identify the Objectives and Outputs of Further Education and Training in Tertiary Education

Respondents to the public consultation were asked to consider a number of questions, which were:

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“ ... ” **Cite as**

Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science Strategy 2021-23: Ireland. In Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). *Timeline of VET policies in Europe* (2025 update) [Online tool].

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/39969>