

Transforming Learning 2020-24: Ireland's National Further Education and Training Strategy

POLICY DEVELOPMENT**REGULATION/LEGISLATION** **IRELAND**

Timeline

2020 **Legislative process****2021** **Approved/Agreed****ID number 35767**

Background

Every five years, under the Further education and training Act 2013, SOLAS (Further Education and Training Authority) must propose a strategy for the development of further education and training (FET) in Ireland to the education minister. The strategy must reflect government policy in relevant areas, the evolving environment and the future world of education and work. The FET strategy (most VET training occurs within FET) steers the system to respond to this context over the following five years.

A new and reformed FET system was established in 2013 and the concept of an integrated model of FET was introduced. Over the past six years the FET sector has been in a development and establishment phase, which involved the embedding of systems and processes to support planning, funding and gathering of learner data. This was reflected in Ireland's first further education and training strategy (FET) 2014-19; the strategy was all-encompassing and focused on clarifying roles and responsibilities across multiple stakeholders. The development path that followed established an integrated and devolved FET system, which over the last six years has delivered significant achievements.

Objectives

The FET strategy 2020-24, by simplifying the FET structure, aims to:

- improve access to it;
- support its learners consistently;
- build its provision around a distinct, diverse and vibrant community-based FET college of the future.

Description

The FET strategy 2020-24 was developed in consultation with the FET sector and other key stakeholders. Consultation was wide-ranging and included bilateral meetings, regional workshops and a public call for submissions. Strategy development also involved developing an understanding of the policy context, the evolving environment and the nature of FET provision in Ireland, and then benchmarking this against other international

approaches to further and vocational education and training.

A strategy has been developed which sets out a vision for FET's development over the next five years, based around three key priorities: skills, pathways and inclusion. The framework for success of FET in the next five years will be based on these strategic priorities. However, it is recognised that to deliver real reform, integration and performance improvement, there must also be a parallel focus on key enabling themes. Enabling themes are other areas that need to be addressed to realise the vision of future FET. The strategy sets out four enabling themes:

- staffing;
- capabilities and structures;
- learner and performance-centred;
- digital transformation of FET and capital infrastructure.

A focused approach to implementation of these strategic priorities *and* enabling themes will be key in bringing the strategy to fruition.

A strategy with a vision of improving lives for citizens, while also shaping the future world of work and the skills needed to fuel it, is more relevant than ever, particularly as Ireland rebuilds and recovers from the social and economic shocks as a result of COVID-19.

2020 Legislative process

The further education and training (FET) strategy has been drafted and awaits final approval pending the formation of a government in Ireland.

2021 Approved/Agreed

The further education and training (FET) strategy was formally launched by the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science in July 2020.

A dedicated project management office and a steering group [comprised of key stakeholders including the DFHERIS, Quality and Qualifications Ireland, Education and Training Boards(ETBs), Education and Training Boards Ireland(ETBI)] were established in 2021 to provide oversight and to ensure progress on actions outlined in the *FET strategy implementation plan*.

Bodies responsible

- Further Education and Training Authority (SOLAS)
- Department of Education
- Department of Education and Skills (until 2020)
- Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS)

Target group

Learners

Learners in upper secondary, including apprentices
Young people (15-29 years old)
Young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs)
Learners with migrant background, including refugees
Learners at risk of early leaving or/and early leavers
Learners with disabilities
Adult learners
Older workers and employees (55 - 64 years old)
Unemployed and jobseekers

Persons in employment, including those at risk of unemployment
Low-skilled/qualified persons
Learners from other groups at risk of exclusion (minorities, people with fewer opportunities due to geographical location or social-economic disadvantaged position)

Education professionals

Teachers
Trainers
School leaders
Adult educators
Guidance practitioners

Entities providing VET

Companies
Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)
VET providers (all kinds)

Other stakeholders

Social partners (employer organisations and trade unions)

Thematic categories

Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Engaging VET stakeholders and strengthening partnerships in VET

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Acquiring key competences

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Providing for individuals' re- and upskilling needs

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Further reading

[FET strategy 2020-24](#)

[Funding for further education and training sector](#)

[FET strategy announcement - press release](#)

[FET Strategy Update: Transforming Learning. E-zine Q1 2022](#)

[FET Strategy Update: Transforming Learning. E-zine 2021](#)

Related policy developments

2024 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.

 IRELAND

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2024 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.

 IRELAND

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2024 Implementation

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

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

 IRELAND

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2024 Implementation

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

2024 Completed

Green Skills for Further Education and Training (FET) Roadmap 2021-2030

The policy roadmap 'Green Skills for FET 2021-30' sets a strategic direction for green skills initiatives throughout the Irish FET sector and points to key areas for the FET Sector in the transition to a green economy.

 IRELAND

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2024 Implementation

Review of Education and Training Boards (ETBs) Quality Assurance

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

2020 Completed

Digital skills requirements of workers in Ireland

This report details further analysis of the Cedefop's European Skills for Jobs Survey data for Ireland to give a more in-depth picture of the situation for workers in Ireland.

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET

2020 Completed

Barriers to participation in VET

This report contributes to the development of the evidence-based FET, in policy and practice, by providing the voice of the stakeholders, learners from some of the most vulnerable groups in society, educators, and employers.

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2020 Completed

Research on delivery of integrated literacy and numeracy (ILN) in VET

A study was commissioned to support the ambitions set out in the FET strategy (2014-19) for a FET sector where 'literacy and numeracy are being addressed effectively and are not a barrier to participation in FET or in achieving employment or education and training progression outcomes'.

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2019 Completed

Strategy for technology-enhanced learning in further education and training

In 2016, SOLAS and ETBI published a Strategy for technology-enhanced learning in further education and training 2016-19. The strategy examines ways of bringing technology into

the further education and training sector to facilitate innovative teaching and learning practices.

 IRELAND

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2022 Completed

FET graduate tracking and data collection

The PLSS is a suite of software applications that are designed to provide an integrated approach to the collection and processing of personal data of users of PLSS and FET programmes funded through SOLAS, and the outputs, outcomes and performance of such programmes. The data are informing the SPAs

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Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

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IVET CVET

2022 Completed

The External evaluation of VET programmes and consequent measures

Various FET programmes (some of which include VET) have undergone external evaluation. For example, in 2017 the post-leaving certificate (PLC) programme underwent an evaluation by Ireland's Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI).

 IRELAND

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2024 Implementation

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).

 IRELAND

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

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.

 IRELAND

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2024 Implementation

New Green Devolved Capital Grant to Improve Energy Efficiency and Decarbonisation across VET Estate for 2024

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

2023 Implementation

Adult Literacy for Life (ALL): Innovation and Collaboration Fund

The 2023 Innovation and Collaboration Fund was EUR 1 million, with the maximum grant of EUR 50 000.

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Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2024 Implementation

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.

 IRELAND

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2024 Approved/Agreed

Community Education: A Framework for Learning, Providing, Co-ordinating and Funding

Developing the framework was a collective and collaborative process by the whole of the FET sector, focussing on the needs of learners, who were also a key stakeholder and consulted during the process of drafting the framework.

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Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2024 Completed

First National Further Education & Training (FET) Strategy for the Green Transition: Green Skills 2030

The strategy was developed by SOLAS, in partnership with consultants KPMG and in consultation with Ireland's sixteen (16) Education and Training Boards (ETBs), public bodies, government departments and key industry stakeholders.

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Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2024 Design

**Learner Support in Further Education And Training (FET):
Towards a Consistent Learner Experience**

The position paper of this policy is underpinned by a Universal Design (UD) approach and aligns with the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty.

The Framework to implement the policy outlines the enhancement of the overall learner experience within FET by:

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Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2024 Legislative process

**Construction safety and workforce skills: publication of draft
legislation to make the construction industry safer and more
attractive to future workers through up-skilling and licencing of
construction workers**

The legislation was developed as a matter of urgency following targeted consultation with key construction industry stakeholders in 2022. The draft legislation was published in 2023 and is progressing through the Irish Parliament to pass into law.

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Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2024 Implementation

New Prison Education Taskforce: Education, Training and Apprenticeship Opportunities to support Rehabilitation and Post-Release Access to Employment

The Prison Education Taskforce is co-chaired by the Minister for Law Reform and the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research Innovation and Science.

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Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

“ ... ” Cite as

Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2025). Transforming Learning 2020-24: Ireland's National Further Education and Training Strategy: Ireland. In Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2025). *Timeline of VET policies in Europe* (2024 update) [Online tool].

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