

# Skills development opportunities for the employed individuals

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

PRACTICAL MEASURE/INITIATIVE

 IRELAND

## Timeline

2017 Implementation 2018 Implementation 2019 Implementation  
2020 Implementation 2021 Implementation 2022 Implementation  
2023 Completed

ID number 28684

## Objectives

The aim is to have 40 000 workers and 4 500 SMEs engaging in state-supported upskilling programmes by 2021.

## Description

In line with the national skills strategy, SOLAS prepared a further education and training (FET) policy framework for the skills development of employed people. It addresses provision for the skills development of the employed at levels 1-6 on the national framework of qualifications (NFQ) (levels 1-5 on the EQF). This policy framework outlines how the FET sector can ensure that employees' skills are current and relevant and thus contribute to Ireland's future growth. Drawing up the policy framework involved consultation with a range of stakeholders, including government departments (e.g. Education and Skills; Enterprise, Business and Innovation), Government agencies (e.g. the industrial development agency, Enterprise Ireland), business associations and representatives, education and training providers (e.g. skillnets, education and training boards, the national adult literacy association), among many others. The document was officially launched in September 2018.

### 2017 Implementation

Enterprise Ireland launched, in December 2017, its Spotlight on skills programme to train Irish companies in identifying their skills needs over the short to medium term. Two persons from each company attend a workshop to identify and plan solutions to their skills requirements, within the context of their companies' business strategies. Following the workshop, interested companies may also avail themselves of targeted engagement with their local regional skills forum (RSF) manager to address any education and training related skills needs.

### 2018 Implementation

In October 2018, SOLAS published, in October 2018, its strategy Supporting working

lives and enterprise growth in Ireland 2019-21 to support the upskilling of the adult working age population. It outlines the ways, in which those in employment could avail themselves of upskilling opportunities through the engagement between Education and Training Boards (ETBs, FET providers in Ireland) and employers.

### **2019 Implementation**

The first relevant programme Skills to advance was launched. This is a national initiative that provides upskilling and reskilling opportunities to employees in jobs undergoing change and to those currently employed in vulnerable sectors. The Skills to advance aims to equip employees with the skills they need to progress in their current role or to adapt to the changing job market. Working closely with small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), the programme helps employers identify skills needs and invest in their workforce by providing subsidised education and training to staff.

### **2020 Implementation**

The SOLAS Skills to compete initiative was launched to support those who have lost their jobs as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In support of the Government's programme and the post-COVID-19 recovery plan, the FET sector is prioritising the reskilling and retraining of those unable to return to their previous employment following the COVID-19 crisis. The Skills to compete should lead this reskilling and retraining response by combining and ramping-up three strands of FET provision, linked to tailored advice and support: transversal skills development to help employability; building the digital capabilities now required for almost every job; and specific level 4-6 (EQF levels 3-5) courses targeting growth sectors and occupations.

The Skills to compete responds to this situation by addressing gaps within individual skill sets via targeted modular provision that can improve employability and ability to compete for opportunities arising. It is interesting to note that both modular provision and a greater use of digital methods of delivery and micro- and digital credentialing within the certification mix are key elements of the transformational agenda set out in the new draft strategy for FET provision.

Each ETB shapes its own Skills to compete provision to reflect the labour market characteristics of its region and the responses that will be most effective for their local community.

During 2020, 15 000 places in FET were refocused through Skills to compete. The initiative planned to develop additional 50 000 places over 2020 provision.

### **2021 Implementation**

An online web portal was launched. It is a one-stop shop for businesses, employees or unemployed persons and outlines the third level options available to them. These options may be a short part-time course, a course for an individual in employment or an option to return to the third level. The portal outlines the FET places and the courses in higher education on offer, and information for those on a social welfare payments. Business owners are also encouraged to explore the range of upskilling options available from Skillnet Ireland, including enterprise-led business support, targeted upskilling opportunities for employees in businesses, free online training programmes and virtual job placements.

### **2022 Implementation**

National digital skills promotional campaign was launched in October 2022. A regional campaign ran until the end of November to support the roll out of the first micro qualification (MQ) in Digital Skills for Business by the Tipperary Education Training Board (TETB). The Digital skills campaign included national press ads, national and local radio and a targeted digital media campaign on Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram

and Twitter as well as digital audio, Spotify and online news sites. It targeted both employers and employees. The full suite of Skills to Advance new visual identity assets is available on Moodle, including artwork files and brand guidelines. The Digital skills promotional assets have also been shared on Moodle for ETBs to use in their own localised campaigns.

On 28 November 2022, an online skills assessment tool and the central repository were launched as a dedicated web page on the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE) website. It gives access to the online skills assessment tool and signposts the agencies provision for leadership and management upskilling. The work has been accomplished with DETE, other departments and agencies including higher education and Skillnet Ireland on SME Management Development Group.

### **2023 Completed**

Skills development opportunities are now mainstreamed in Further Education and Training (FET) provision nationally and regionally.

## **Bodies responsible**

- Further Education and Training Authority (SOLAS)

## **Target group**

### **Learners**

Unemployed and jobseekers  
Persons in employment, including those at risk of unemployment  
Low-skilled/qualified persons

### **Entities providing VET**

Companies  
Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)

## **Thematic categories**

### **Governance of VET and lifelong learning**

Engaging VET stakeholders and strengthening partnerships in VET

### **Modernising VET offer and delivery**

Modernising VET standards, curricula, programmes and training courses  
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  
Lifelong guidance

## **Subsystem**

IVET CVET

## **Further reading**

'Skills to advance'

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'Skills to compete'

## Related policy developments

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**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.

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**Type of development**

Practical  
measure/Initiative

**Subsystem**

IVET

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**2022 Completed**

### The network of regional skills forums

To take on board skills needs at regional level, the Department of Education and Skills set up and funded nine regional skills forums in May 2016. The forums are part of the National skills strategy.

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**Type of development**

Regulation/Legislation

**Subsystem**

IVET CVET

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“ ... ” **Cite as**

Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). Skills development opportunities for the employed individuals: 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->

