

# Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025

**POLICY DEVELOPMENT**      **STRATEGY/ACTION PLAN**       IRELAND

## Timeline

2016 **Approved/Agreed**    2017 **Implementation**    2018 **Implementation**  
2019 **Implementation**    2020 **Implementation**    2021 **Implementation**  
2022 **Implementation**    2023 **Completed**

**ID number 28294**

## Description

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. The strategy points to the need for employers – especially small and medium enterprises (SMEs) – to provide work placement opportunities for learners.

### 2016 Approved/Agreed

The strategy was published in January 2016.

### 2017 Implementation

Implementation continuing.

### 2018 Implementation

No major developments; implementation continuing.

### 2019 Implementation

In 2019, the Further Education and Training Authority of Ireland (SOLAS) launched the programme and learner support system (PLSS) to provide a platform for reporting on all further education and training outputs and outcomes.

SOLAS continues to promote diversity and lifelong learning among adults. It continues to provide training for workforce development through the network of Education and Training Boards (ETBs) on initiatives like Skills to advance, a national initiative that provides upskilling and reskilling opportunities to employees in jobs undergoing change and to those currently employed in vulnerable sectors).

### 2020 Implementation

In 2020, following the COVID-19 crisis, the Skills to advance initiative was launched to

In 2020, following the COVID-19 crisis, the Skills to Compete initiative was launched to lead the reskilling and retraining response to the pandemic. 15 000 places were refocused through the Skills to Compete initiative.

## 2021 Implementation

In line with the 2025 National Skills Strategy, a special report was published which set a comprehensive set of educational indicators for the education system in Ireland.

The data in the report cover all levels of education, starting with early years and working through school, further and higher education to lifelong learning. The report provides an overview of the work of both the Department (Ministry) of Education and the Department (Ministry) of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.

This updated indicators report provides data up to and including the academic year 2019/20 (where possible) as well as a look back at how our education system has progressed over the five years from 2015 to 2019.

The OECD is working with the Government of Ireland and Irish stakeholders on a collaborative OECD skills strategy project to ensure Ireland has the skills it needs to succeed today and tomorrow. The OECD skills strategy Ireland: Assessment and recommendations report will be published in 2023.

## 2022 Implementation

The National Skills Council (NSC) is the high-level platform for partnership between the education and training system, and industry representatives. It's made up of officials from public and private organisations, who participate voluntarily. The council was established in 2017, under the Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025.

The council:

- (a) brings together education and training providers with representatives from business, to effectively respond to skills needs;
- (b) advises the minister and department on priority skills needs, the direction of skills and knowledge development in line with emerging global trends, and the opportunities and challenges for learning and work;
- (c) oversees research, and approves reports and publications, by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN), and the Skills and Labour Market Research Unit of SOLAS.

In 2022, the NSC held three meetings and their work included:

- (a) receive and consider costed proposals for the annual research/work programme of the EGFSN in advance of the programme being formally submitted for approval for funding by the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS), or the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment as appropriate;
- (b) receive, consider and approve prior to publication agreed action plans based on EGFSN research findings;
- (c) receive, consider and publish research and reports on skills and labour market data from the Skills and Labour Market Research Unit of SOLAS (Ireland's National Agency for Further Education and Training);
- (d) receive reports on the work of the Regional Skills fora and consider assessments from the regional fora in relation to skills development in their regions;
- (e) receive reports from SOLAS, HEA and the chairs of the council of presidents of the universities and institutes of technologies on the delivery of responses to identified skills needs;
- (f) receive reports from DFHERIS, HEA and SOLAS on overall funding allocations for education and training provision;
- (g) provide updates as required from other government departments on related strategies;

- (h) receive regular updates from other relevant stakeholders (IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, Science Foundation Ireland) on developing sectoral opportunities and potential target areas for increased foreign direct investment and consider and advise on issues associated with the availability of skills to support such employment opportunities;
- (i) prepare an annual prioritisation of identified skills needs to inform decisions on allocation of funding across further education and training (VET), higher education and Skillnets. This prioritisation includes reference to levels and discipline areas and delivery mechanisms, for example: mainstream provision/targeted funds;
- (j) present an annual statement of the work of the Council to the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.

In addition, the project undertaken by the OECD Skills Strategy Project for Ireland met with the National Skills Strategy in October 2022 in an extraordinary meeting to inform the NSC on project progress and facilitate stakeholder discussion paying particular attention to priority area 'strengthening the governance to build a joined up skills ecosystem'.

There are four priority areas of the OCED project:

- (a) securing balance in skills through a responsive and diversified supply of skills;
- (b) fostering greater participation in lifelong learning in and outside of the workplace;
- (c) strengthening the governance across a joined up skills ecosystem;
- (d) leveraging skills to drive innovation and strengthen the performance of firm.

The final OCED Report for Ireland will be published in 2023.

### **2023 Completed**

The OCED report was published in 2023.

## **Bodies responsible**

- Department of Education and Skills (until 2020)
- Department of Education
- Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS)
- National Skills Council (NSC)

## **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

## Entities providing VET

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

## Thematic categories

### Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Coordinating VET and other policies

### 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

[The 2025 National skills strategy document](#)

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[Information about the Skills to advance initiative](#)

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[The National Skills Council](#)

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[National Skills Council meets with OECD on plans to drive Ireland's ambition for skills and talent and announce roadshow across the country](#)

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[Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025](#)

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[Expert Group on Future Skills Needs](#)

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[Skills and Labour Market Research Unit](#)

## Related policy developments

**2025 Completed**

### **The National Skills Council (NSC): new partnerships and first strategic advice to government, following OCED Report on Ireland's Skills Strategy**

A review was conducted in partnership with the OECD. The review concentrated on four areas:

- balance in skills;
- lifelong learning;
- innovation;
- governance.

The report identified four priorities:

 IRELAND

**Type of development**

Strategy/Action  
plan

**Subsystem**

IVET CVET

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**2023 Completed**

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

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.

 IRELAND

**Type of development**

Strategy/Action  
plan

**Subsystem**

IVET CVET

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**2021 Approved/Agreed**

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

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.

 IRELAND

**Type of development**

Regulation/Legislation

**Subsystem**

IVET CVET

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**2022 Completed**

## **Validation Arrangements for Recognition of Prior Learning**

The 2016-19 action plan for education includes the aim to develop a national policy on the recognition of prior learning (RPL) (objective 2.1, action No 44) by 2018.

 IRELAND

**Type of development**

Strategy/Action  
plan

**Subsystem**

IVET CVET

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**2019 Completed**

## Review of career guidance services

In early 2018, the education minister launched a review of the career guidance services available to learners across three of the four sectors of the Irish education and training system (second level schools, FET providers and tertiary level institutions).

 IRELAND

**Type of development**

Practical  
measure/Initiative

**Subsystem**

IVET CVET

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**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).

 IRELAND

**Type of development**

Strategy/Action  
plan

**Subsystem**

IVET CVET

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**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

**Type of development**

Strategy/Action  
plan

**Subsystem**

IVET CVET

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“ ... ” **Cite as**

Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025: 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/28294>