

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

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

STRATEGY/ACTION PLAN

 IRELAND

Timeline

2023 Design

2024 Implementation

2025 Completed

ID number 48925

Background

The National Skills Council and nine Regional Skills fora, created under the National Skills Strategy, encourage engagement and collaboration between government departments and agencies, the education and training system, and enterprises.

As part of the Government of Ireland's Covid Economic Recovery Plan, there was a commitment to review Ireland's skill strategies, structures and approaches to ensure the system continues to evolve and remain flexible.

The review was conducted in partnership with the OECD.

Objectives

The OCED report reviewed Ireland's existing National Skills Strategy to 2025 and how it may need to be adapted, identifying priorities and recommendations specifically for the Irish context. The report itself was not intended as an implementation plan, and further work was required by Irish stakeholders to progress the recommendations in the OECD report.

The National Skills Council (NSC) was established following the recommendations of the OECD Skills Review for Ireland, with the objective of representing a new strategic partnership between government, industry and social partners, and delivering the objective of providing strategic and expert advice on skills development for Ireland for the four priorities identified in the OECD Skills Review.

Description

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:

Priority 1: Securing a balance in skills through a responsive and diversified supply of skills.

Priority 2: Fostering greater participation in lifelong learning in and outside the workplace.

Priority 3: Leveraging skills to drive innovation and strengthen firm performance.

Priority 4: Strengthening skills governance to build a joined-up skills ecosystem.

2023 Design

In 2023, report '*OECD Skills Strategy Ireland: Assessment and Recommendations*' was published.

2024 Implementation

Minister launches partnership on skills with the establishment of the new National Skills Council.

The new National Skills Council held its first meeting in September 2024.

2025 Completed

Following the implementation of the OECD report's recommendations, and the convening of new Board, the National Skills Council has resumed its work in 2025 with the publication of its first paper providing strategic advice to government of skills priorities.

In its report '*Skills Matter Priorities to Shape Our Future Capabilities*', the Council recommended:

- the establishment of a National Skills Observatory (NSO) to achieve a coherent repository of skills and labour market information to inform policy making;
- targeted leveraging of the National Training Fund (NTF), to provide a forum for the optimisation of enterprise engagement, for the maximal effectiveness of NTF expenditures;
- embedding micro-credentials into the mainstream of higher education practice to provide more flexible learning pathways.

The Council will now deliver its recommendations annually in future years.

Bodies responsible

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

Target group

Learners

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)
National, regional and local authorities

Thematic categories

Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Coordinating VET and other policies
Optimising VET funding
Engaging VET stakeholders and strengthening partnerships in VET
Establishing and developing skills intelligence systems

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Reinforcing work-based learning, including apprenticeships

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Financial and non-financial incentives to learners, providers and companies
Providing for individuals' re- and upskilling needs

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Further reading

[OECD Skills Strategy Ireland: Assessment and Recommendations - 2023 Report](#)

[Minister launches partnership on skills with the establishment of the new National Skills Council](#)

[National Skills Council](#)

[ReferNet Ireland, & Cedefop \(2024, November 27\). Ireland: establishment of new National Skills Council. National news on VET.](#)

Related policy developments

2025 Completed

Advanced Manufacturing Training Centre of Excellence (AMTCE) Opens in Dundalk, Ireland's Border Region with Northern Ireland

The AMTCE is part of LMETB's FET provision as a centre of excellence, delivering a range of learning options with world class facilities for Industry 4.0 standard, funded by SOLAS as the national agency for FET.

 IRELAND

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Design

Future Proofing the National Qualifications Framework: NQF Levels 5-6 (EQF 4-5) Proposal for Intermediate Awards in European Higher Education Area

The consultation process for QQI is similar to the Irish parliamentary processes of Green and White Papers. Where QQI issues a Green Paper, this is the first consultation of policy proposals for debate and discussion as part of the consultation with stakeholders.

 IRELAND

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Design

Public and Stakeholder Consultation on National Further Education and Training Strategy 2025-2029

The stakeholder consultation process, which included both workshops and bilateral

meetings commenced in Q4, 2024. The public consultation opened on 31st January 2025 and was published by both the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science and SOLAS.

 IRELAND

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2022 Completed

The National Skills Council (NSC)

As stipulated in the National skills strategy 2025, a National Skills Council (NSC) was launched in April 2017 and is chaired by the education minister. It oversees and advises on identified skills needs and how to ensure delivery of the corresponding skills.

 IRELAND

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

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

“ ... ” **Cite as**

Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). The National Skills Council (NSC): new

partnerships and first strategic advice to government, following OECD Report on Ireland's Skills Strategy: 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/48925>