



Skillnets

Skillnets



Ireland

1 DESCRIPTION

Timespan

Skillnets was established in 1999, and is still running.

Stage

FULLY OPERATIONAL

Focus area



MATCHING SKILLS FOR TODAY'S JOB MARKET



MATCHING SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE OF WORK

2 FOUNDATIONS

Policy Area



ACTIVE LABOUR MARKET POLICIES

Skillnets is dedicated to promoting and facilitating training and upskilling in Ireland by engaging groups of companies in the same region/sector with similar training needs, as well as offering training networks for businesses and employees, and offering free training to eligible unemployed people. As part of Skillnets, other programmes have been implemented such as: Skillnets' Future Skills Needs Programme (FSNP). FSNP aims to develop new programmes that address emerging skills gaps within growth sectors. Other programmes that fall under the instrument are: the Training Networks Programme (TNP), the Finuas Programme, Jobseekers Support Programmes (JSSP) and ManagementWorks. The instrument targets both the labour market's existing and emerging needs through these programmes.

Policy Goal

The policy instrument aims to address skills mismatch/gaps and to meet the evolving needs of the labour market through training and upskilling, with company groups, businesses, employees and the unemployed. The goal of Skillnets is to sustain Ireland's national competitiveness. The current rationale behind Skillnets is based on Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025, which is to increase the supply of skills to the labour market, and to strengthen the role of employers and training providers. Through its different programmes, it meets the policy goal by offering support and funding to all levels of the labour market, e.g. by developing new programmes that address emerging skills gaps with FSNP, or supporting management development training opportunities and mentoring support for SME managers with ManagementWorks.

Mismatch

EXPLICITLY DESIGNED TO ADDRESS SKILL MISMATCH

By investing in talent strategies and training networks led by the enterprises who then deliver specific training programmes across a broad range of industry and service sectors nationwide tailored to their own needs. For example, through Skillnets' FSNP, the development of new training programmes that directly address skill gaps is supported. To gain support from Skillnets in this area, proposals must demonstrate a clear demand from enterprise, identify a proven gap in supply, and represent an innovative response in terms of programme design and effectiveness.

Aim of policy instrument



UPSILL AND MATCH SKILLS OF UNEMPLOYED



ADDRESS SKILL SHORTAGES



FACILITATE JOB/CAREER TRANSITIONS

Legal basis

MINISTERIAL ORDER

Administrative level

NATIONAL

Main responsible body

The Department for Social Affairs and Protection, with funding from the Department of Education and Skills (DES).

Stakeholders



TRAINING PROVIDERS (PUBLIC/PRIVATE)



EMPLOYER FEDERATIONS



GOVERNMENT (CENTRAL & REGIONAL)



SOCIAL PARTNERS



TRADE UNIONS

Skillnets is funded from the National Training Fund (NTF) through the Department of Education and Skills (DES). The Department of Jobs, Enterprise, and Innovation (DJEI) highlighted the policy priorities for Skillnets to address through its coordination of Action Plan for Jobs. The Department of Social Protection (DSP) offered collaborative support in the implementation of the Job-seekers Support Programme (JSSP). The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) identified specific skills needs and the capacity to add new jobs in specific sectors. Skillnets is actively supported and guided by national employer and employee bodies such as Ibec, Small Firms Association (SFA), Construction Industry Federation (CIF), Chambers Ireland and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU). Other stakeholders include: industry representative groups, employee representative groups, training providers, and HE/FE institutions, who had input in the learning networks and training programmes.

Funding

The instrument is funded through the NTF in Ireland. The total funds committed between 2008-2017 are €167,412,000. The breakdown of these funds is as follows: Year: 2017 Funding Level: €18,200,000 No of networks: 63 Year: 2016 Funding Level: €16,200,000 No of networks: 63 Year: 2015 Funding Level: €16,200,000 No of networks: 62 Year: 2014 Funding Level: €15,690,000 No of networks: 60 Year: 2013 Funding Level: €14,500,000 No of networks: 64 Year: 2012 Funding Level: €14,500,000 No of networks: 57 Year: 2011 Funding Level: €14,500,000 No of networks: 72 Year: 2010 Funding Level: €15,000,000 No of networks: 78 Year: 2009 Funding Level: €16,595,000 No of networks: 107 Year: 2008 Funding Level: €26,027,000 No of networks: 123

Intended beneficiaries

The intended beneficiaries are companies wishing to upskill and train their businesses and employees, as well as job-seekers hoping to re-enter the labour market. For job-seekers, benefits are gained through the initial training, as well as available work experience through Skillnets' JSSP programme. For companies wishing to upskill, benefits are found through tailored training specific to their needs, whether they be financial training, managerial training, or industry specific training.

3 PROCESSES

Use of labour market intelligence

● ● ● OTHER

A wide variety of data sources are utilised. The priorities of Skillsnets are set by the DJEI, drawing on analysis undertaken by, for instance, the EGFSN.

Financial schemes

Skillnets receives funding from the National Training Fund (NTF), and supports/funds groups of companies with similar training needs through subsidised training networks. Additionally, free training opportunities are also offered to eligible unemployed people under the scheme, including those receiving job-seekers allowance.

Frequency of updates

Annually

Development

Skillnets programmes are adjusted year-on-year, based on recommendations put forward through an evaluation process and published evaluation reports. From the 2016 evaluation, adjustments such as new key performance indicators have been put forward, as well as the priority to adapt to the challenge of Brexit, in terms of assisting enterprises to prepare as well as proposing the establishment of a dedicated, cross-sectoral programme that exclusively addresses Brexit-related skills requirements. In each evaluation, the need to address 'deadweight' is included (referring to instances where the outputs or outcomes of a programme would have occurred in the absence of the programme), and each year changes are made to minimise its occurrence.

Barriers

JSSP faced barriers due to declining unemployment levels in Ireland, resulting in less demand for unemployment training. Brexit also worked against the Training Network Programme, due to high degrees of uncertainty by Member Companies. As stated in the 2016 report, 42% of firms had already seen an impact from exchange rate fluctuations after the Brexit referendum. To overcome this, suggestions on how to prepare for Brexit have been put forward in 2017 for Skillnets implementation. From the 2016 evaluation of Skillnets, the remaining challenges faced include the need for a rigorous focus on ensuring relevancy and quality of training, developing capacity within the networks to respond rapidly to increasing demand, and continuing to demonstrate value for money in the deployment of NTF funds.

Success factors

The instrument was praised by the OECD for its decentralised model, which generates highly specialised knowledge on employment and training related issues, resulting in better alignment between labour market needs and the supply of skills. For example, the instrument funds and supports groups of companies in the same region/sector with similar training needs, through training networks. These networks are led and managed by the enterprises themselves to design, manage and deliver specific training programmes across a broad range of industry and service sectors nationwide.

Monitoring

The indicators used to measure progress vary between each of Skillnets' programmes. For example, TNP considers the number of trainees on the programme, the number of training days, and then compares this to previous years in order to check progression. The progress of the overall instrument is also measured through surveys with managers, trainees etc in each programme, the findings of which are compiled in the final evaluation.

Innovativeness

VERY INNOVATIVE

The instrument's model is free to adapt to the changing needs of each enterprise, which makes it innovative and able to have a larger impact. Many of the programmes also promote lifelong learning and skills acquisition, as well as targeting future skills needs for priority sectors in the Irish economy. Therefore, increasing the future impact of the instrument in relation to the labour market.

4 SUSTAINABILITY

Evidence of effectiveness

From the 2016 evaluation, Skillnets delivered a total of 344,434 training days to 50,373 trainees, exceeding the overall targets set by the DES by 20% and 38% respectively, which impacted the accelerating recovery in the Irish economy by helping to address the increased demand and growth in training activity. The evaluation also highlighted continued positive employment retention and progression outcomes for trainees. The benefits of Skillnets exceeded expectations in 2016 in relation to the training offered, as follows: - Total Trainees = 50,373 in 2016 (vs. DES target of 42,000), an increase of 3% from 2015 - Total Training Days = 344,434 (vs. DES target of 250,000) - In-Employment Training Days = 277,701 (vs. DES target of 195,000), an increase of 6% from 2015 - 66,733 training days to 5,915 Unemployed/Jobseeker Trainees (vs. DES target of 55,000 days)

Engagement of stakeholders

By including employers and training providers in the decision making process, the role of stakeholders is seen to be prominent. Additionally, a renewed Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies was launched by the Irish Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform in 2016. Skillnets adopted the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies in conjunction with the renewal of its mandate and funding agreement with the Department of Education and Skills (DES), and as a consequence Skillnets' boards (Evaluation & Performance Monitoring, Audit, Finance & General Purpose) have meetings to ensure their compliance (17 were held in total in 2017: 6 with the core board, 4 with evaluation, 5 with audit, and 2 with finance).

Transferability

EASILY TRANSFERABLE

This instrument could be transferred to any MS wishing to increase the supply of skills to the labour market and to strengthen the role of employers in training provision. As Skillnets' training networks are led and managed by the enterprises themselves to design, manage and deliver specific training programmes, the instrument could be easily transferred. As all learning networks are composed of clusters of companies from the same sector, geographical location, or a combination of both it is easy to bring the firms together and for the networks to be created.

Sustainability

The instrument has developed and been successful (with Governmental backing) since it began. At present Skillnets has a planned strategy until 2019.
