

# Ireland

## VET in Europe - Country Report

2011

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**Abstract:**

This is an overview of the VET system in Ireland. Information is presented according to the following themes:

1. General context – framework for the knowledge society
2. Policy development – objectives, frameworks, mechanisms, priorities
3. Legislative and Institutional framework – provision of learning opportunities
4. Initial vocational education and training
5. Continuing vocational education and training for adults
6. Training VET teachers and trainers
7. Matching VET provision with labour market needs
8. Guidance and counselling for learning, career and employment
9. Financing - investment in human resources
10. National VET statistics – allocation of programmes
11. Authors, sources, bibliography, acronyms and abbreviations

This overview has been prepared in 2011 and its reference year is 2010. Similar overviews of previous years can be viewed at:

<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Information-services/vet-in-europe-country-reports.aspx>

More detailed thematic information on the VET systems of the EU can also be found at:

<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Information-services/detailed-thematic-analyses.aspx>

**Keywords:**

vocational education and training (VET) systems; initial vocational training; continuing vocational training; lifelong learning; VET policy development; financial crisis and VET policies; VET legislative and institutional frameworks; validation of non-formal and informal education; teachers and trainers; anticipation of skill needs; vocational guidance and counselling; VET financing mechanisms; allocation of national VET programmes; national and international qualification systems.

**Geographic term:**

Ireland

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<sup>1</sup> Internationalisation of education is understood as the process of integrating an international, intercultural, and/or global dimension into the goals, functions (teaching/learning research, services) and delivery of education (adapted after Internationalisation of Higher Education: New Directions, New Challenges, IAU 1995 Survey).

<sup>2</sup> Transnational mobility for learning purposes in VET is understood as the movement of students and/or teachers in vocational education and training (VET) to another institution outside their own country to study or teach for a limited time. Students' studies abroad may or may not result in recognition of the acquired KSC.

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## Theme 1: General Context – framework for the knowledge society

### 1.1 Political and socio-economic context

Ireland is a parliamentary democracy which consists of a House of Representatives (Dáil Eireann) and a Senate. Laws passed by the Parliament must conform to the Irish Constitution and the President must sign legislation for it to become law.

The Republic of Ireland comprises twenty-six of the thirty-two counties of the island of Ireland. The remaining six counties make up Northern Ireland which is part of the United Kingdom. Ireland has been a member of the European Community since 1973. Membership of the EU led to the adoption of the NUTS regions in Ireland in 1993. In 1999, the Irish Government divided the country into two NUTS 2 regions for structural funds purposes, the BMW (Border, Midlands and West) region; and the SE (South East) region. The SE Region includes Dublin, Cork, Waterford and Limerick and is the wealthier of the two regions. The BMW region is the more rural of the two regions with less industry and services (particularly financial) and a greater reliance on government expenditure.

Following the 2011 general election the Fine Gael Party supported by the Labour Party formed the current Irish Government. The president, who serves as head of state in a ceremonial role, is elected for a 7-year term and can be re-elected only once. Michael Higgins was elected President on November 11, 2011.

### 1.2 Population and demographics

The total area of the Republic of Ireland is 84.421 sq km. The major centre of population is Dublin city and county and the other major cities are Cork, Galway and Limerick.

Since the mid 1990s, there has been an increase in the birth rate, a corresponding decrease in emigration and a marked increase in immigration, resulting in a significant rise in the population. The 2006 census found that the population of Ireland had increased by 322,000 or 8% since the previous census in 2002.

Table 1 below sets out the Eurostat figures for the trends in total population for the EU-27 countries and Ireland up to 2010.

<b>GEO\TIME</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>
<b>EU-27</b>	486647831	493226936	499723520(p)	501105661(p)
<b>IRELAND</b>	3,963,665	4,209,019	4,450,014	4,467,854

Source: Eurostat; Date of extraction: 19 May 2011. (p) – provisional. (pre 2011 preliminary Census results)

The 2011 Census (preliminary results published in June 2011<sup>3</sup>) found that the population of Ireland on Census Night 10 April 2011 has reached its highest level in 150 years. A total of 4,581,269 persons are now living in the Republic, compared with the 2006 Census figure of 4,239,848

<sup>3</sup> The definitive results for the 2011 Census are expected in Spring 2012.

persons, an increase of 341,421 persons or 8.1 per cent. The Central Statistics Office (CSO) said the results were about 100,000 more than predicted. The population growth has been driven by a high birth rate, with more than 70,000 births a year, and a strong inward migration until the economic downturn hit the country. While officials estimate that significant numbers are now emigrating, these numbers are more than off-set by the high birth rate. While population growth has been growing at about 1.6%, CSO officials forecast that it is likely to continue to grow over the coming years, but at a slower pace.

Table 2 below sets out the demographic trends in Ireland by age up to 2026. Although Ireland currently has the youngest age profile in the EU nevertheless the estimated number of persons aged 65 years and over now exceeds a half a million for the first time ever. While the population cohort aged 25 – 64 is expected to increase by 790,000 over the period, the numbers aged over 65 is also expected to increase rapidly leading to a significant ageing of the population by 2026.

<b>Table 2: Preliminary Population Trends by Age 2010 - 2026</b>			
<b>Age-Group</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2026</b>	<b>Change</b>
0 - 24	1,508,000	1,759,000	+251,000
25 – 64	2,453,000	3,243,000	+790,000
65+	509,000	918,000	+409,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,471,000</b>	<b>5,920,000</b>	<b>+1,449,000</b>

Source: Central Statistics Office (CSO) Ireland. Population and Migration Estimates (2010) and Population and Labour Force projections\* (2008) (\*Based on MIF2 Scenario).

Table 3 shows the projected number of persons aged 65 years and over, expressed as a percentage of the projected number of persons aged 15–64. Although Ireland currently has the fewest dependent older people in the EU - approximately 17% in 2010, this proportion is forecast to increase steadily to just under 44% in 2060.

<b>TABLE 3: PROJECTED OLD-AGE DEPENDENCY RATIO, 2010-2060</b>							
<b>GEO\TIME</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2030</b>	<b>2040</b>	<b>2050</b>	<b>2060</b>
EU 27	25.9	28.26	31.05	38.04	45.36	50.42	53.47
IRELAND	16.67	18.37	20.23	24.63	30.6	40.4	43.57

Source: Eurostat; Date of extraction: 19 May 2011

The bigger than expected population increase reported in the preliminary findings of the 2011 Census will have strong policy implications for the Irish Government and will place additional pressure on services, such as education and training, at a time when the Government is trying to reduce spending.

During the economic boom years, Ireland for the first time in its history experienced significant inward migration. The 2006 National Census showed that 10% of the people resident in the State were classified as non-Irish nationals from 188 countries (an increase of 87% compared to the previous census in 2002). Since then, because of the economic crash, Ireland is perceived as a less attractive destination and consequently, some migrants are leaving and the number of newcomers has declined. Nevertheless there are still a large number of migrants – from very heterogeneous backgrounds, who remain in the country and if they are to achieve the desired levels of integration they will have to be afforded the same access to education, employment and enterprise as Irish citizens within the context in cutbacks in government spending.

### 1.3 Economy and Labour Market Indicators

The downturn in the Irish economy continued in 2010, although at a slower pace than before. Having contracted by almost 11% in 2009, Gross National Product (GNP) is estimated to have fallen by a further 2% in 2010. Most of this decline took place in the early part of the year, with some signs that GNP was levelling off towards year-end. While the export sector (especially services exports), has continued to perform strongly, consumption and investment levels fell further, with continued weakness in the demand for housing and services. Economic output growth and employment (volume) growth have had similar paths both prior to and during the recession however, this was no longer the case in 2010, with the economy recovering at a faster pace than the labour market. This is largely due to the export-led nature of our nascent economy, which has not been very labour-intensive.

The numbers at work in Ireland continued to decline in 2010 albeit, again, at a slower place than in 2009. Employment fell by 42% (-81,000) during the year, and the decline continued to be largest in the construction sector, with a fall of 27,000 to 119,000.

**TABLE 4: EMPLOYED PERSONS AGED 15+ BY ECONOMIC SECTOR OF ACTIVITY (IN THOUSANDS AND AS % OF TOTAL EMPLOYMENT), 2010**

GEO	PRIMARY SECTOR AND UTILITIES		MANUFACTURING		CONSTRUCTION		DISTRIBUTION AND TRANSPORT		BUSINESS AND OTHER SERVICES		NON MARKETED SERVICES	
	PERSONS	%	PERSONS	%	PERSONS	%	PERSONS	%	PERSONS	%	PERSONS	%
EU-27	15175.8	7.0	33992.7	15.7	16573.2	7.7	57099.0	26.4	38733.1	17.9	53694.1	24.8
IE	115.2	6.2	209.7	11.4	118.5	6.4	552.4	30.0	350.0	19.0	489.3	26.5

Source: Eurostat (Labour Force Survey); extracted on: 19 May 2011.

As Table 4 indicates, construction accounted for 6.4% of total employment compared to the 7.7% share in the EU-27. While job losses in the manufacturing sector have continued, the rate of job decline slowed significantly compared to the 2007-2009 period. In 2010, the proportion of jobs accounted for by the manufacturing sector stood at 11.4% which was significantly less than the EU-27 average of 15.7%. This partly reflects Ireland's continuing shift from manufacturing exports to services exports. Despite a drop in service sector employment in 2010 of 1.3%, services continues to account for the majority (over two-thirds) of employment in Ireland. Specifically, the distribution & transport sector, the business and other services sector, and the non-marketed services sector accounted for 30%, 19% and 26.5% of total employment respectively in 2010 (Table 4). These were all above the respective EU-27 averages for these sectors (26.4%, 17.9% and 24.8%).

The employment rate<sup>4</sup> has fallen across all age categories between 2006 and 2010. This is not surprising given that this period covers most of the severe recession and jobs downturn that took place in Ireland. The largest fall was for the youngest age group (15-24). This can be accounted for by the fact that young people fared worst from the jobs downturn and by the fact that young people have decided to stay in education longer in response to the weaker jobs market.

	<b>TIME</b>	<b>2003</b>			<b>2006</b>			<b>2010</b>		
<b>GEO</b>	<b>ISCE D / AGE</b>	<b>15-24</b>	<b>25-49</b>	<b>50-64</b>	<b>15-24</b>	<b>25-49</b>	<b>50-64</b>	<b>15-24</b>	<b>25-49</b>	<b>50-64</b>
<b>EU-27</b>	<b>0-2</b>	25.1(i)	66.1(i)	41.9 (i)	24.8	66.9	43.5	21.5	62.8	43.1
	<b>3-4</b>	47.2 (i)	79.1 (i)	54.9 (i)	48.1	80.5	57.9	45.0	79.7	59.6
	<b>5-6</b>	62.0 (i)	88.0 (i)	72.4 (i)	60.5	88.5	74.2	57.1	87.4	74.5
	<b>NO A.</b>	14.9 (i)	72.6 (i)	39.1 (i)	5.1	76.0	5.6	5.2	72.8	62.2
	<b>TOTAL</b>	36.0 (i)	77.4 (i)	51.5 (i)	36.6	79.1	54.4	34.1	78.1	56.7
<b>IE</b>	<b>0-2</b>	22.8	64.1	47.8	24.0	66.0	50.5	9.2	49.3	44.3
	<b>3-4</b>	58.3	79.5	61.5	64.5	80.4	66.4	42.5	68.1	61.7
	<b>5-6</b>	76.7	88.1	77.8	79.2	88.3	78.3	61.7	82.7	74.3
	<b>NO A.</b>	57.1	70.2	59.0	69.8	76.4	67.5	46.2 (u)	63.9	49.4
	<b>TOTAL</b>	45.4	77.4	56.2	50.0	79.5	60.1	30.5	70.6	56.8

Source: Eurostat (Labour Force Survey); extracted on 19-05-2011.

No A.: No answer

In proportional terms, the most pronounced fall in the youth employment rate has occurred at the lower educational levels (ISCED levels 0-2) declining from 24.0% in 2006 to just 9.2% in 2010. As indicated by Table 5, in 2010 Ireland had a significantly lower employment rate for ISCED levels 0-2 for those aged 15-24 (9.2%), in comparison to the EU-27 average (21.5%). For the same age group in 2010, the employment rate was much closer the EU average at ISCED levels 3-4, (42.5% in Ireland and 45% for the EU27). At the ISCED levels 5-6, Ireland's employment rate of 61.7% continues to be higher than the EU-27 average (57.1%) despite the significant jobs downturn experienced in Ireland over recent years. For the age group 25-49, at all three ISCED levels, Ireland's employment rate is lower than the EU-27 average, while for those aged 50-64 it is broadly comparable to the EU-27 average at all ISCED Levels.

The unemployment rate rose from 11.4% in 2009 to 13.6% in 2010 with the numbers unemployed rising by 42,000 from 250,000 to 292,000. Table 6 below shows the unemployment rates (%) by age groups and highest level of education attained. For the 15-24 age group

<sup>4</sup> The employment rate is the percentage of the population aged 15-64 who are in employment.

Ireland's unemployment rate is higher than the EU average at all ISCED levels, which represents a dramatic reversal from 2006 when Irish unemployment rates for the 15-24 age group were lower than the EU average across ISCED levels. This pattern is repeated across the other two age categories (25-49 and 50-64), which serves to highlight the severity of the Irish unemployment crisis relative to the EU experience as a whole.

**TABLE 6. UNEMPLOYMENT RATES BY AGE GROUPS AND HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION ATTAINED (%), 2003, 2006 AND 2010**

GEO	TIME ISCED / AGE	2003			2006			2010		
		15-24	25-49	50-64	15-24	25-49	50-64	15-24	25-49	50-64
EU-27	0-2	20.2 (i)	11.6 (i)	7.2 (i)	21.2	11.2	7.5	27.4	16.3	10.2
	3-4	17.7 (i)	8.4 (i)	7.7 (i)	15.4	7.3	6.9	18.1	8.2	6.7
	5-6	12.0 (i)	4.8 (i)	3.7 (i)	13.4	4.3	3.6	16.2	5.3	3.6
	NO A.	13.9 (i)	7.8 (i)	7.4 (i)	20.1	:	:	:	8.2	:
	TOTAL	18.0 (i)	8.3 (i)	6.6 (i)	17.2	7.3	6.3	20.8	8.9	6.9
IE	0-2	14.3	7.6	3.8	15.7	7.1	3.7	44.9	24.7	13.0
	3-4	6.9	3.0	:	7.2	3.4	2.3 (u)	26.3	15.3	8.2
	5-6	4.6 (u)	2.6	:	5.2 (u)	2.3	:	18.4	7.3	4.7
	NO A.	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	15.0	:
	TOTAL	8.1	4.1	2.9	8.6	3.9	2.8	27.5	13.0	9.1

Source: Eurostat (LFS); extracted on: 19-05-2011; last update: 12-05-2011. (u) – Unreliable or uncertain data.

Notes: (i) See explanatory text in Eurostat at

[http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY\\_SDDS/EN/lfsq\\_esms.htm](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_SDDS/EN/lfsq_esms.htm)

The economy has yet to recover from the recent recession largely due to the scale of the banking and fiscal crises. And while our export sector seems to be performing strongly again, further upward revisions in estimates of the scale of the banking crisis have taken place in recent months. When combined, short-term forecasts from the Central Bank, the Department of Finance and the Economic and Social Research Institute point towards very modest GNP growth in the range of 0.0 to 0.5% in 2011 followed by somewhat faster growth in the order of 2% in 2012. The improvement in 2011 is largely predicated on the belief that the recent recovery in our export sector will continue in 2012. While such a scenario would be welcome, a continued compositional shift towards the export sector will not necessarily translate into a significant improvement in the labour market in the short-term, given that this sector is relatively capital intensive. Perhaps of greater significance to the short-term employment outlook will be the impact of the banking and fiscal crises on both government and private consumption. During the 'boom-to-bust' period there appeared to be little or no lag-period between economic output and employment growth. This may be indicative of how dependent the economy was on labour-intensive sectors. It seems that the compositional shift towards more capital-intensive sectors has led to the re-emergence of this lag period. If this proves

to be the case over the forecast period, then it may be some time before we see any economic upturn translated into a corresponding increase in employment.

The employment impact of the retrenchment in both government and private consumption is expected to be greatest in the services sector, with employment in the retail and public sectors likely to be the worst affected.

The percentage of public expenditure spent on secondary level education in Ireland has increased from 1.64% in 2002 to 2.03% in 2007. While this is less than the 2.2% average for the EU27, the rise over the period contrasts with the downward trend in the EU (Table 7).

<b>TABLE 7: TOTAL PUBLIC EXPENDITURE ON EDUCATION AS % OF GDP, AT SECONDARY LEVEL OF EDUCATION (ISCED 2-4), 2002-2008</b>							
<b>GEO</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>
EU27	2.32 (s)	2.35 (s)	2.29 (s)	2.25 (s)	2.23 (s)	2.20 (s)	:
IE	1.64	1.73	2.02	2.04	2.00	2.03	:

Source: Eurostat (UOE); extracted on: 19-05-2011.

s – Eurostat estimate

#### **1.4 Educational attainment of population**

Educational attainment has risen significantly in Ireland over recent years at all levels of the education system. The EU ‘2010’ policy targets for education are that at least 85% of 22 year olds in the EU should have completed upper secondary education and that the average rate for early school leavers should be no more than 10%. With regard to early school leavers, the Eurostat figures outlined below indicate that in Ireland, 11.3% of those aged 18-24 were defined as early school leavers in 2009 i.e persons aged 18-24 with at most lower secondary education and not in further education or training. (According to the Quarterly National Household Survey<sup>5</sup> (QNHS), December 2010, the numbers classified as early school leavers continued to decline to 10% in the second quarter of 2010). The number of early school leavers has decreased steadily from 14.6% in 2002. The corresponding early school leaver figure for the EU 27 member states in 2009 is 14.4%.

<sup>5</sup> Quarterly National Household Survey, *Educational Attainment, Quarter 2 2000 to Quarter 2 2010*, Central Statistics Office (CSO).

<b>TABLE 8: EARLY SCHOOL LEAVERS (%), 2002-2009</b>								
<b>GEO /TIME</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>
EU-27	17.0	16.6 (b)	16.1	15.8	15.5	15.1	14.9	14.4
IE	14.6	13.1 (b)	13.1	12.5	12.1	11.6	11.3	11.3

Source of data: Eurostat (LFS); extracted: 19-05-2011; (b) - break in series.

Description: Percentage of the population aged 18-24 with at most lower secondary education and not in further education or training.

Eurostat data for 2009 shows that 87% of the Irish population aged 20-24, have completed at least upper secondary level education which exceeds the EU '2010' policy target and compares well to the EU 27 countries percentage of 78.6% (Table 9).

<b>TABLE 9: YOUTH EDUCATION ATTAINMENT LEVEL BY SEX (%), 2002, 2005, 2009</b>									
<b>TIME</b>	<b>2002</b>			<b>2005</b>			<b>2009</b>		
<b>GEO</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>M</b>
EU-27	76.7	79.3	74.0	77.5	80.2	74.8	78.6	81.4	75.9
IE	84.0	87.3	80.7	85.8	88.9	82.6	87.0	90.5	83.4

Source: Eurostat (LFS); extracted: 19-05-2011; last update: 01-04-2011.

Description: Youth education attainment level - Percentage of the population aged 20 to 24 having completed at least upper secondary education.

According to the Quarterly National Household Survey<sup>6</sup>, in the second quarter of 2010, over one-third (37%) of 25-26 year olds had attained a third level qualification compared to just one-fifth (22%) in quarter 2 of 2000. The younger age groups reported the highest percentage of persons with third level qualifications, with over 40% of the 25-34 and 35-44 year olds in this category (48% and 42% respectively meeting the EU 2020 policy target of 40% of 30-34 year olds attaining tertiary qualifications.

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*

Table 10 Percentage of persons aged 25-64 that have attained a third level qualification, classified by age group, April-June 2000, April-June 2005 and April-June 2010					
Year	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	Total
2000	30	22	17	13	22
2005	41	31	22	17	30
2010	48	42	30	22	37

Source: CSO, QNHS, Educational Attainment, Derived from Table 1.1, 10 December 2010.

Table 11a below illustrates the number of graduates at ISCED Level 3 and Level 4 by level of education, programme orientation and sex in 2007 and 2009. These ISCED Levels equate to secondary and post-secondary, non-tertiary education and training in Ireland.

TABLE 11 A: GRADUATES AT ISCED LEVEL 3 AND LEVEL 4 BY LEVEL OF EDUCATION, PROGRAMME ORIENTATION AND SEX (NUMBERS), 2007, 2009													
YEAR		2007						2009					
GEO	S	3 GEN	3 PV	3 VOC	4 GEN	4 PV	4 VOC	3 GEN	3 PV	3 VOC	4 GEN	4 PV	4 VOC
IE	T	40128	31856	:	:	:	6552	39106	36954	:	:	:	6895
	M	19362	11041	:	:	:	5759	19750	14049	:	:	:	5546
	F	20766	20815	:	:	:	793	19356	22905	:	:	:	1349
EU-27*	T	2393291	:	2595569	49493	:	424537	2319746	:	2480373	:	:	394682
	M	1022202	:	1400317	23958	:	194372	995733	:	1344532	:	:	188195
	F	1371089	:	1195251	25535	:	230165	1324013	:	1135842	:	:	206487

Source: Eurostat (UOE Data collection); extracted: 19-05-2011.

\* Available total – calculated by Cedefop;

The term graduate in Ireland is normally used with reference to those who have completed third level education.

S= sex; T= total; M=males; F=females; GEN=general; PV=pre-vocational; VOC=vocational

As illustrated in the above Table, there was an overall increase in Irish people attaining ISCED Levels 3 and 4 between 2007 and 2009. At ISCED Level 3 GEN (non-vocational, upper secondary education) the proportion of male and female graduates is quite evenly divided. At ISCED Level 3 PV, female graduates are outnumbering their male counterparts by approximately 2:1 but at ISCED Level 4 VOC, while the vast majority of graduates are male, the proportion of female graduates increased from 12% in 2007 to approximately 20% in 2009.

Table 11b below illustrates the number of graduates at ISCED Level 5 and Level 6 by level of education, programme destination and sex in 2007 and 2009. In Ireland, these ISCED Levels equate to third level, non-university and university education.

<b>TABLE 11 B: GRADUATES AT ISCED LEVEL 5 AND LEVEL 6 BY LEVEL OF EDUCATION, PROGRAMME DESTINATION, 1ST/2ND STAGE AND SEX (NUMBERS), 2007, 2009</b>													
<b>YEAR</b>		<b>2007</b>						<b>2009</b>					
<b>GEO</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>5 A1</b>	<b>5 A2</b>	<b>5 B1</b>	<b>5 B2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5 - 6</b>	<b>5 A1</b>	<b>5 A2</b>	<b>5 B1</b>	<b>5 B2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5 - 6</b>
IE	T	29448	13193	15335	:	1035	59011	27412	14770	14441	:	1211	57834
	M	12092	5074	7904	:	559	25629	11058	5843	7396	:	658	24955
	F	17356	8119	7431	:	476	33382	16354	8927	7045	:	553	32879
EU-27*	T	2348435	916150	691661	10355	109512	4076113	2465221	915360	706581	10850	100723	4198735
	M	971270	357768	280571	2703	59335	1671647	1020740	365808	278346	2568	54413	1721875
	F	1377165	558382	411090	7652	50177	2404466	1444481	549552	428235	8282	46310	2476860

Overall, in both 2007 and 2009 females accounted for 57% of the graduates at ISCED Levels 5 and 6. At ISCED Level 5A1 (Honours Primary Degree), and 5A2 (Masters Degree and Post-Graduate diplomas and certificates) females accounted for approximately 60% of the graduates in both periods. The gender breakdown at ISCED Level 5B1 (Pass Primary Degree and Undergraduate Diploma) was more evenly balanced – males made up 52% of the cohort while males outnumbered their female counterparts (57% to 43%) at ISCED Level 6 – PhD programmes.

Eurostat data relating to lifelong learning for the years 2002, 2005 and 2009 is illustrated below.

<b>TABLE 12: LIFELONG LEARNING-ADULT PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING BY SEX (%), 2002, 2005, 2009</b>									
<b>TIME</b>	<b>2002</b>			<b>2005</b>			<b>2009</b>		
<b>GEO</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>M</b>
EU-27	7.2	7.8	6.6	9.8	10.5	9.0	9.3 (p)	10.2 (p)	8.5 (p)
IE	5.5	6.4	4.7	7.4	8.6	6.2	6.3	7.0	5.7

Source: Eurostat (LFS); extracted on: 19-05-2011; (p) - provisional value.

Table 12 shows the percentage of the population aged 25-64 participating in education and training over the four weeks prior to the survey. Irish engagement with lifelong learning, while below the EU-27 countries' average over the period had been increasing gradually up until 2007 (when it reached 7.6%). However, since 2005, it has fallen back by over 1 percentage point and falls way behind the EU 2010 benchmark for lifelong learning at 12.5% and the EU 2020 benchmark at 15%.

### 1.5 Definitions

The majority of definitions of VET terms have not been established on any formal or legal basis in Ireland. The following are general definitions as 'normally applied' in Ireland. Where there is a 'formal' definition, the source is indicated, for example where VET terms/outcomes were defined in

relation to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), as part of the work to establish the Irish National Framework of Qualifications.

**Alternance Training.** While the traditional type of alternance training combining a school-based environment and a real workplace (see CEDEFOP Glossary 2003), is not a feature of IVET at upper secondary level in Ireland, there are other forms of alternance type training in existence. These programmes can be divided into the following three broad categories.

- Vocational education programmes and courses in non-tertiary colleges and centres of further education, e.g. Post Leaving Certificate courses under the responsibility of the Department of Education and Skills (DES).
- Apprenticeship training provided by FÁS, the Training and Employment Authority in co-operation with the DES, and Traineeships.
- Other initial entry-level VET for various industry sectors provided by publicly-funded agencies such as Fáilte Ireland for new entrants into the tourism industry.
- Foundation and progression programmes, for those who have left school early without any formal qualifications. These are run both in the education and training systems.

**Apprenticeship.** The Irish Training and Employment Authority, FÁS, defines the term “apprenticeship” on its official website as follows; ‘Apprenticeship is the recognised means by which people are trained to become craftspeople in Ireland. The main craft trades (see [listing](#) on FÁS website), have been designated by FÁS and come within the scope of the Statutory Apprenticeship system, which is organised in Ireland by FÁS in co-operation with the Department of Education and Skills, employers and unions. Apprenticeship is a demand-driven, (alternating on and off-the-job), workplace and classroom, educational and training programme for employed people, aimed at developing the skills of the apprentice to meet the needs of industry and the labour market. The [Curriculum](#) for each apprenticeship programme is based on uniform, pre-specified standards which are agreed and determined by industry. Apprentices are paid an agreed [Industrial Apprentice Wage Rate](#) by the employer. During off-the-job training, all apprentices are paid an [Apprentice Allowance](#) by FÁS. The apprenticeship cycle is deemed to be complete when an apprentice has completed all of the alternating on-the-job and off-the-job phases of their apprenticeship, within the minimum time frame from the date of registration, as well as achieving the qualifying standard throughout their apprenticeship. Successful completion of the apprenticeship is a compulsory requirement in order to be awarded the FETAC Advanced Certificate’. *Source:* <http://www.FÁS.ie/en/Training/Apprenticeships/default.htm>

In Ireland apprenticeship is governed by the Rules of Apprenticeship and covers 26 designated occupations, all of which come within the scope of a standards-based statutory system set out in the Labour Services Act 1987 and Industrial Training Act 1967. The apprentice is contractually linked to the employer. Apprentices are assessed on a structured ongoing basis throughout their apprenticeship. FÁS has statutory authority for the administration and management of the apprenticeship programme<sup>8</sup>.

**Competence** is the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and other abilities to perform a function against a given standard in work or study situations and in professional and/or personal development. *Source: the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland. (In the EQF competence is described in terms of responsibility).*

**General Education.** Education in Ireland has traditionally comprised three main strands; Primary, Post-primary or Second Level, and Higher Education or Third Level. Higher education is further divided into a binary system, comprising Universities on the one hand, and on the other, Institutes

of Technology, National Institutions and other colleges. Over the past number of years, a new Further Education strand has been formalised comprising a variety of learning opportunities for adults – a range of mainly vocational provisions usually organised on a sub-tertiary basis, workplace training and many community-based programmes. According to *Eurostat's study 'Key Data on Education in Europe 2002'*, 'In Ireland all school students are in compulsory general education as no separate vocational stream exists'.

**Initial and Continuing Education and Training.** There is no legal definition for 'Initial Vocational Education and Training' and 'Continuing Vocational Education and Training' in Ireland as these terms are not normally used in the context of the Irish VET system. An important feature of the Irish VET system in general, is that there is not a sharp distinction between initial and further and continuing vocational education and training for the unemployed and new entrants into the workforce, whether they are young or older people. Rather, Government policy in general makes a distinction between programmes for young persons and school students, (mainly within the IVET system), programmes for the unemployed (whether young or older) and programmes for persons in employment, (mainly CVET).

There is no IVET element in formal lower school- based secondary education. In Ireland IVET is focused primarily on the education and training of young persons, aged 15-20, who have generally completed compulsory secondary level education and who have not yet significantly engaged with the labour market, excluding apprenticeship. It also includes for example initial training for the professions such as for lawyers and accountants.

CVET generally caters for a diverse range of adult learners and fields of learning and takes place in a range of locations, including institutes of further education, training centres, community-based learning centres and in the workplace. It is often undertaken on a part-time basis. The largest providers of both IVET and CVET are the regionally-based Vocational Education Committees (VECs), which mainly provide Post Leaving Certificate (PLCs) courses as well as the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) a 'second chance' education programme that provides courses for unemployed people, and FÁS, the Irish Training and Employment Authority, which provides occupational and skills training for adult unemployed and jobseekers. Learning that takes place at the initiative of the individual e.g. evening classes, and enterprise-based training, would also fall under the category of CVET.

**First Stage of Tertiary or Higher Education (ISCED 5).** Includes tertiary programmes with: (a) academic orientation (type A), which are largely theoretical; (b) occupational orientation (type B), usually shorter than type A and geared towards either entry to the labour market or on to higher qualifications.

ISCED 5A programmes provide access to advanced research studies and professions with high skill requirements. Programmes at level 5A in Ireland lead to an Honours Bachelor Degree (NQF<sup>7</sup> Level 8, a Post-Graduate Diploma or a Master's Degree (both at NQF Level 9). Level 5 A programmes with academic orientation are typically outside the scope of VET.

ISCED 5B programmes prepare students for direct entry into a specific occupation or entrance to higher qualifications. Programmes at level 5B lead to awards such as Higher Certificate (NQF Level 6 HETAC awards) or Ordinary Bachelor Degree (NQF Level 7 award).

Entry to ISCED level 5 normally requires successful completion of ISCED levels 3 or 4.

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<sup>7</sup> NQF awards relate to awards on the *Irish Framework of Qualifications*.

**Lower Secondary Education (ISCED 2).** Lower secondary education generally continues the basic programmes of primary, although teaching is typically more subject-focused, often employing more specialised teachers to conduct classes.

Programmes at ISCED Level 2 comprise students enrolled in the Junior Cycle of second level education and lead to awards such as the Junior Certificate at NQF Level 3.

**Occupation.** Group of activities that necessitate a homogeneous series of techniques and skills within a specific field and speciality. *Source:* Cedefop, working definition.

**Post-secondary (non-tertiary) education (ISCED 4).** In Ireland, further education and training (FET) falls within this category. ‘Further education’ is defined by the Government sponsored *Expert Group on Future Skills Needs* as ‘education which is post-compulsory and of a vocational nature’. According to the definition contained in the ‘*Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999*’ ‘further education and training’ means education and training, other than primary or post-primary education *or* higher education and training’.

Further education and training generally embraces education and training which occurs outside the general and higher education systems, and it provides vocationally focused learning, based on the needs of individuals and it also seeks to provide education and training that reflects national, regional, community and sectoral skills needs, such as those required for the tourism and agricultural sectors. It is characterised by flexible modes of delivery, and is built upon modular/unit systems that provide opportunities for credit accumulation. (Many of the qualifications available in the further education sector are modularised to allow students and trainees to accumulate units towards full qualifications).

Programmes at ISCED level 4 include - students enrolled on Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses, Teagasc and Secretarial courses as well as FETAC Advanced Certificate (NFQ Level 6) which includes Apprenticeships.

**Pre-vocational or pre-technical education** focuses on basic skills, such as numeracy and literacy and is generally at NFQ Level 3 FETAC Awards.

**Profession.** Professional activity or group of professional activities, access to which, the pursuit of which, or one of the modes of pursuit of which is subject, directly or indirectly, by virtue of legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions to the possession of specific professional qualifications.

*Source:* European Parliament and Council of the European Union (2005). Directive 2005/36/EC of the European parliament and of the Council of 7 September 2005 on the recognition of professional qualifications.

**Qualification.** The Irish National Framework of Qualifications is required in law to be based on learning outcomes. Section 7 of the Qualifications Act requires the Qualifications Authority ‘to establish and maintain a framework . . . for the development, recognition and award of *qualifications* in the State based on standards of knowledge, skill or competence’. Under section 8, the Authority is required to ‘establish policies and criteria on which the framework of qualifications shall be based’. In its *Policies and Criteria for the Establishment of the National Framework of Qualifications* (2003), the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) determined that award standards are the expected outcomes of learning, inclusive of all education and training. They concern the knowledge, skill and competence that are expected from the learner who is to receive an award. They concern both general standards (for a level in the Framework or an award-type) and the specific standards for named awards in particular subjects or fields of learning’.

*Source:* European Qualifications Framework – Referencing of the Irish Framework of

Qualifications (NFQ) to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). National Report. June 2009.

**School-based programmes.** The term is not used in the Irish VET context.

**Skills** are the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems. Source: the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland. (In the EQF, skills are described as cognitive (use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) and practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments)).

**Upper Secondary Education (ISCED 3).** According to Eurostat's study *Key data on Education in Europe 2002*, at upper secondary level, 'In Ireland all students are in general education as no separate vocational stream exists' (Eurostat, p.86, 2002). While this is certainly the case at lower secondary education, the system at upper secondary is more complex although general education still predominates at this level. At the end of compulsory schooling, the majority of students proceed to upper secondary education (or the Senior Cycle) – ISCED 3. This consists of an (optional) Transition Year<sup>8</sup> followed by one of three versions of the two-year Leaving Certificate programme although not all versions are offered in every school. There are three, two-year, ring-fenced, full-time Leaving Certificate programmes - the Leaving Certificate (established), the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and they all equate to NFQ Levels 4 and 5.

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<sup>8</sup> The Transition Year is generally seen as the first year of a three-year Senior Cycle programme. The mission of the Transition Year, as set down by the Department of Education and Science, is to promote the personal, social, educational and vocational development of the students and to prepare them to participate as responsible members of society.

## **Theme 2: Modernising VET to support Life Long Learning, internationalisation and mobility**

### **2.1 VET policy developments and priorities in supporting LLL**

The promotion of lifelong learning is a governing principle of education and training policy in Ireland. Lifelong learning policy is developed in collaboration with the Department of Education and Skills in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders<sup>9</sup>. Reports such as The White Paper on Adult Education, the Task Force on Lifelong Learning and the National Skills Strategy all provide for a continuum from early childhood through to adulthood, with an extensive range of adult learning programmes taking place in the further and higher education and training sectors. Key features of the overall approach are the:

- removal of barriers to access;
- provision of a continuum of education, from pre-school right through to enabling older people to continue to engage in education and training;
- seamless transfer and progression for all learners, with accreditation through the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

A key focus in this context is to prioritise investment in favour of those most at risk and to optimise access, participation and outcomes at every level of the system for disadvantaged groups. This approach is reflected in a number of Ireland's national strategies developed in the last number of years, e.g. Towards 2016 Ten Year Framework Social Partnership Agreement, the National Development Plan 2007 – 2013 and the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007 – 2016.

Key elements encompassed by these strategies are to:

- promote flexible delivery options in further and higher education and training, including provision for vulnerable groups;
- enhance the coherence and coverage of adult guidance services;
- promote access, transfer and progression at all levels of the system;
- provide improved services for the recognition of international qualifications;
- strengthen the provision of workplace learning, recognition of prior learning, and accumulation of credits towards awards;
- continue to embed the use of the NFQ across the system in formal, non-formal, workplace and community learning;
- enhance the strategic capacity of higher education to support innovation, research and development, and to significantly increase participation in fourth level education.

The re-orientation of the system of qualifications in Ireland to meet the needs of learners in a lifelong learning context, has been a key objective for Government. Progress towards this objective was significantly enhanced with the introduction of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999, which in turn led to the setting up of the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI). Following this, in 2003, a National Qualifications Framework was established, covering all awards in the state from initial schooling to higher doctorate level, thereby providing pathways to facilitate transfer between the different levels of the education and training system.

The Governments' key priorities for the implementation of a framework for Lifelong Learning are set out in the 'National Skills Strategy' (NSS) published in 2007. These include:

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<sup>9</sup> The early part of this section is derived from the *'Preparation of the 2010 Joint Report on the implementation of the Education and Training 2010 work programme; 2009 national reports: Ireland.*

- addressing skill needs and widening access to lifelong learning in the context of an integrated approach to education and training;
- tackling disadvantage in terms of literacy and numeracy, early school leaving and providing second chance education and training for those with low skills;
- addressing access barriers through the strengthening of financial supports, guidance, counselling and childcare services and increased flexibility of provision.

The National Skills Strategy seeks to achieve a significantly improved educational profile for the labour force through setting out the following targets:

- The setting of a long-term target for 500,000 adults to increase their levels of education attainment by at least one level on the National Framework of Qualifications. The aim is to up-skill 250,000 people from NFQ level 3 to level 5; 140,000 from level 5 to level 6/7 (advanced certificate/ordinary degree); 70,000 from level 1 or 2 (school dropout) to level 3 and 30,000 from level 4/5 to level 8 (honours degree or above)<sup>10</sup>.
- Ensure that the output from the education system reaches its potential, through improving participation rates in upper secondary level to 90% and ensuring the progression rate to third level increases to 70%.

## Current Debates

As noted above, the Government has introduced numerous VET lifelong learning related initiatives and the focus now lies on the implementation and follow up of these initiatives. However, there are currently two issues of immediate concern regarding VET - improving overall literacy and numeracy levels; and preparing people for work in new sectors and providing them with specific skills which match identified labour market needs.

The OECD PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) study 2009 found that the performance of Irish 15 year olds in mathematics and reading had deteriorated markedly since the previous survey in 2006. Irish scores now stand at average OECD levels (reading) or below (maths). As a result, Government are currently directing education and training resources towards remedying this situation. The national strategy, *Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life, 2011-2020*<sup>11</sup>, was launched in July 2011. The Strategy aims to ensure that teachers and schools maintain a strong focus on literacy and numeracy skills, within a broad and balanced curriculum. The strategy sets out a wide-ranging programme of reforms in initial teacher education courses, in professional development for teachers and school principals, and in the content of the curriculum at primary and post-primary levels in order to achieve these vital skills. Every school is required to have a literacy action plan, with demonstrable outcomes. Responsibility for achieving these outcomes is vested in the school principals, who will also receive continuous professional development to support the implementation of the strategy. Pre-service and in-service training in teaching of literacy for all primary and secondary school teachers will be improved, with dedicated literacy mentors to work intensively with teachers in most disadvantaged primary schools.

As part of its labour market policy, the Government has made literacy and basic workplace skills a national priority, with literacy training incorporated into a wide variety of further education and

<sup>10</sup> An implementation statement for the Skills Strategy circulated by DES in 2010 found that while good progress had been made, more needed to be done particularly in regard to upskilling those at levels 1-3 to Levels 4 and 5 on the NFQ (EQF levels 3 and 4).

<sup>11</sup> *Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life, The National Strategy to improving literacy and numeracy among children and young people, 2011-2020* DES 2011.

training programmes. The literacy problem is being addressed through the integration of literacy in vocational training and through community education.

A much greater focus of attention is now being placed on matching VET provision with the identified skill needs of the labour market at both initial and continuing levels of vocational education and training. In the secondary school sector, maths and science teaching is being reformed, including making science a compulsory Junior Cert subject by 2014. A bonus points system for maths, which is linked to specific maths or science courses, will be introduced to encourage greater participation in courses where skills shortages currently exist. (See 8.2).

‘Springboard’ was launched in May 2011 as part of the Government’s Job Initiative. It offered nearly 6,000 free, part-time places in higher education leading to awards in the national framework of qualifications, in identified skills areas where there are known to be employment opportunities. These areas include information and communications technology (ICT); the green economy; biopharma-pharmachem; the food and beverage sector, international financial services, the medical devices sector and entrepreneurship. These places are aimed at unemployed people with a leaving Certificate, PLC or equivalent (NFQ levels 5/6) and a previous history of employment in sectors unlikely to recover to pre-recession levels and unemployed people with a degree and who may require additional up-skilling or re-skilling to re-enter employment.

## **2.2 Implementation of European tools and principles<sup>12</sup>**

In 2001 the Government set up the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI). The NQAI covers all awards in the State from initial schooling to further education and training including higher doctorate level and promotes access, transfer and progression within the education and training system for all learners including those who have special needs. It also promotes the maintenance of the standards of awards in the further and higher education and training sectors, and liaises with bodies outside the State for the mutual recognition of awards. The NQAI has policies and procedures under four themes, through which it meets its objectives. These are:

- Credit systems i.e. credit accumulation, transfer and processes for the recognition of prior learning, and accord with developments in Europe.
- Transfer and progression routes for learners on achieving awards.
- Entry arrangements. This requires procedures for providers to be fair, with consistent arrangements for entry and appeals processes.
- Information provision such as statements of the knowledge, skill and the competences required.

Following the establishment of the NQAI, the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) and the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) were set up in 2001. The awarding Councils are responsible for the certification of all education and training in the State, other than awards made in respect of primary and secondary-level education, the Dublin Institute of Technology and the Universities. The Councils have separate but inter-dependent roles and three principal functions.

- The establishment of policies and criteria for the making of awards, the validation of programmes and the setting and monitoring of standards.
- The determination of standards of knowledge, skill or competence to be acquired by

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<sup>12</sup> Part of this section is derived from the *‘Preparation of the 2010 Joint Report on the implementation of the Education and Training 2010 work programme; 2009 national reports: Ireland.*

learners, before an award may be made by a Council or recognised by a Council.

- The making and recognition of awards where persons have achieved the required standards.

Ireland was one of the first Member States in the EU to have a National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). Ireland's NFQ was introduced in 2003 as the key element in a broad reform of the system of qualifications in Ireland, arising out of the 1999 Qualifications (Education and Training) Act. It is the single structure through which Irish qualifications can be defined and compared. The Framework is based on learning outcomes, organised around the concepts of knowledge, skill and competence. The NFQ is an important step in meeting the needs of a lifelong learning community with more diverse learners who have different learning needs. A key element of the NFQ is to improve *access* (entry) to education and training, *transfer* within and between education and training and *progression* within and between education and training.

The NFQ comprises ten levels of qualifications, with each level based on nationally agreed standards, skills and competence. These standards define the learning outcomes to be achieved by learners seeking qualifications at each level. The ten levels include qualifications gained in settings from schools, to places of work, the community, training centres and to colleges and universities, from basic literacy awards to doctoral degrees. The framework includes many existing qualifications and values those awards made in the past. Awarding bodies will also develop new qualifications within the NFQ. These new qualifications will be made on the basis of 'learning outcomes' defined in terms of standards of knowledge, skill and competence. The outcomes-based nature of qualifications in the framework is a significant change from the input-based (e.g. time served) nature of qualifications prior to the introduction of the NFQ. Learning outcomes continue to be introduced into standard setting, programme design and into teaching, learning and assessment. They are incorporated in to all new awards in the Framework.

A major objective of the NFQ is the recognition of all learning achievements – whether through formal, non-formal or informal learning. It aims to do this by supporting the development of alternative pathways to qualifications (or awards) and by promoting the recognition of prior learning. Ireland is one of a few countries where full awards can be gained by recognition of prior learning although cases where full awards are given are the exception; the greatest use of recognition of prior learning is directed at entry and credits or exemptions.

A diagram of the National Framework of Qualification can be viewed by clicking on the following link which shows the various awards and levels within the National Framework of Qualifications. The existing and former awards placed on the Framework are also listed in the outer segments of the fan structure, as well as the various bodies making awards in the Framework, such as FETAC and HETAC. <http://www.nfq.ie/nfq/en/images/LegacyFan.JPG>

Ireland has now completed the process of referencing the Irish NFQ to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and Ireland's NFQ was referenced to the Bologna Framework in 2006.

Ireland also participated in and actively contributed to the debate concerning the development of a European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET), an EU initiative to improve the transparency of vocational qualifications within and between Member States. The approach to ECVET has many parallels with the Irish approach to qualifications frameworks, credits and VET in general. The NQAI and its partners the awarding Councils FETAC and HETAC are currently working towards a national approach to credit that will facilitate a seamless transfer between further education and training and higher education and training, similar to the approach for the ECVET system. The credit system currently being introduced by FETAC - the Common

Awards System is also compatible with ECVET. By 2014 every FETAC award will be part of this system.

The EU-wide Europass programme, ([www.europass.ie](http://www.europass.ie)), which helps people make their skills and qualifications more easily understood in Europe and promotes geographic mobility for learners, was officially launched in Ireland in November 2005. The National Europass Centre (NEC) was established in the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI). The role of the NEC is to promote and develop the Europass programme in Ireland, and to act as an information point for both learners and employers looking for access to mobility documentation on VET qualifications and experience. The provision of this mobility documentation has become an obligatory requirement for those who receive funding for exchange visits and study and work placements under the Leonardo da Vinci Mobility programmes. With this provision in place, NEC expects a significant increase in the number of mobility documents issued to learners from 2010.

## **2.3 Internationalisation and transnational mobility in VET**

### **2.3.1. Policy framework for internationalisation and transnational mobility in VET**

In 2009 the Government established a new framework for the promotion, quality assurance and coordination of international education. Enterprise Ireland was given sole responsibility for the promotion and branding of international higher education, while the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland was given responsibility for quality assurance, including the recognition of English-language programmes and management of the internationalisation register (which regulates labour market access by non-EEA students) pending the establishment of a new Quality Mark for international education. The Government also established the High-Level Group (HLG) on International Education and gave it responsibility for national co-ordination and the development of an international education strategy. The HLG comprises representatives of the relevant Government Departments and State agencies as well as the university, institute of technology and English language sectors.

The Government launched the HLG's report - *Investing in Global Relationships*<sup>13</sup> Ireland's International Education Strategy 2010-15, in September 2010. The Strategy states that as its primary objective, Ireland will become internationally recognised and ranked as a world leader in the delivery of high-quality international education by providing a unique experience and long-term value to students. The Government also launched a new immigration regime for international students - reforming entry requirements but imposing safeguards to prevent abuse of the system at the same time. The international education strategy and the new student immigration rules were developed in tandem and are mutually complementary.

The strategy sets out 10 strategic actions to improve Ireland's performance, including a partnership-based approach between Government and the education sectors and a rejuvenated national education brand which is being managed by Enterprise Ireland. The strategy is available at [www.educationireland.com](http://www.educationireland.com).

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<sup>13</sup> *Investing in Global Relationships*, Report of the High-Level Group on International Education to the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills, September 2010.

The strategic actions are:

1. Ireland will enhance its performance through partnership and collaboration. This will involve strengthened co-ordination mechanisms, including the establishment of four thematic working groups, to complement the work of the High Level Group on International Education and the targeting of priority markets where collaborative actions will take place. The High Level Group will work in co-operation with the standing Interdepartmental Committee on Student Immigration, chaired by the Department of Justice and Law Reform, to facilitate a co-ordinated national approach.
2. The "Education Ireland" brand will be redeveloped and national promotion and marketing will be strengthened. Enterprise Ireland will take the lead in redeveloping the national brand, to be supported by financial contributions from the education sector.
3. Quality will be at the heart of Ireland's offering. A statutory Code of Practice and a Quality Mark, to be awarded to educational institutions that meet certain criteria, will provide the basis for quality assurance of education and related services provided to international students. Institutions will need to put appropriate supports (including pastoral care) in place for international students.
4. Ireland's visa, immigration and work policies will be strong and competitive. Implementation of the student immigration reforms and of related proposals by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service of the Department of Justice and Law Reform to enhance Ireland's student visa system, will enhance Ireland's general competitiveness in the area of international education.
5. Ireland's higher education institutions will be globally competitive and internationally-oriented. Institutions will articulate their international vision as part of their wider mission and will put in place the appropriate structures to make it a reality.
6. Ireland will develop targeted and relevant international offerings. Specific categories of international student who are likely to become the next generation of leaders, entrepreneurs and decision makers will be targeted, and educational programme offerings will be tailored to their needs and interests.
7. Government policies and actions will be consistent and supportive. The High Level Group and its four working groups will be used to facilitate consistency of policy and approach by Government departments and agencies. New scholarship programmes, which will replace the existing Department of Education and Skills bilateral schemes, will be operated and funded in partnership between the Department and education institutions. The Department will also maintain a small strategic fund to support one-off specific research and other initiatives designed to improve Ireland's position as a centre for international education.
8. Ireland will strengthen its Networks of Influence. A more strategic approach will be taken to maintaining relationships with the Irish-educated diaspora.
9. Outward Mobility by Irish staff members and students will be encouraged. Balanced internationalisation must include outward mobility, which will enhance the intercultural skills and international expertise of both staff members and students of Irish educational institutions.
10. North-South and EU co-operation will enhance Ireland's performance. The potential for mutually beneficial North-South collaboration in the area of international education will be explored. Ireland will actively participate in the development of a proposed EU international higher education strategy and in EU mobility programmes.

The High-Level Group will be responsible for overall implementation and progress towards the national objectives and targets will be monitored through publication of an annual report on internationalisation of Irish education. Implementation will be phased over the full course of the five-year strategy.

The key targets for 2015 are to:

- Increase overall international student numbers in higher education institutions by 50% to 38,000. Increase the number of English language students by 25% to 120,000.
- Increase the proportion of full-time international students in higher education undertaking research or taught postgraduate programmes to 35%, from 23% currently.
- Enhance the economic impact of international education to over €1.2 billion.

Students from India, China and the Middle East, Brazil and the USA will be specifically targeted and post-graduate students will be allowed work in Ireland for up to a year after they complete their studies. High-value research students will be permitted to bring families if they are staying more than two years.

### **2.3.2 Transnational mobility programmes and schemes in VET**

There have been arrangements for transnational VET partnerships and networks for the exchange of ‘best practices’ between training providers in Ireland and other European countries, and several new VET processes have been jointly developed, utilising EU funding for these partnerships. There have for instance been co-operative developments and partnerships in areas such as apprenticeship, trainer development curriculum and the transparency of qualifications<sup>14</sup>. Many partnership projects have been facilitated under the EU Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-13 (LLL), whose aims are to foster exchange, co-operation and mobility between education and training systems within EU member states. Léargas is the Irish National Agency for three actions of the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) - Leonardo da Vinci (LdV) for vocational education and training; Comenius for schools and Grundtvig for adult education. The fourth sub-programme Erasmus for higher education is managed in Ireland by the Higher Education Authority. Ireland has been allocated € 11,118, 000 for the duration of the current EU LLL programme.

The target for the LdV mobility programme for 2010 was to fund 450 participants across all three categories of initial vocational training (IVT), people in the labour market (PLM), and vocational education and training professionals (VETPro). This target was far exceeded as 727 bursaries were funded across all categories. In the IVT category 469 persons were funded across 12 projects: an increase of 153 from 2009. Although the number of projects funded in the PLM category was reduced from 7 in 2009 to 4 in 2010, these were larger in size and the total number of persons increased from 115 to 118. Significant increases were seen in the VETPRO category where the number of projects doubled from 5 in 2009 to 10 in 2010 and the number of persons supported by the programme rose from 80 to 140.<sup>15</sup>

A number of inter-related factors have influenced the upward trend in mobility of learners from Ireland. More VET programmes and courses now incorporate a period of work placement and provide opportunities for this to be undertaken in a company located in Europe with the financial support from LLL-LdV programme. The majority of these work placements are fully accredited by the sending institution and are eligible for Europass certification. Also with the economic decline in recent years, it has become more difficult to find suitable work experience at home and Irish people are more motivated to locate this experience abroad. The main obstacles to mobility for Irish learners are limited foreign language skills, the pre-departure language and cultural preparation that has to be undertaken, and reluctance on the part of some learners to travel abroad for training or education purposes.

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<sup>14</sup> A bridge to the future: European VET policy 2002-10. National Policy Report – Ireland. Margaret Barry, FÁS. Pg 23.

<sup>15</sup> *Leargas Annual Report 2010*.

The European region action scheme for the mobility of university students (ERASMUS) is a programme that enables higher education students to study or do a work placement for three to 12 months in one of 30 other European countries as part of their studies. Almost 29,500 students from Irish Higher Education Institutes have benefited from the programme since its inception in 1987/88. Students on ERASMUS programmes are usually registered students in their home universities.

Between 2004/05 and 2006/07 there were on average 1,550 outgoing Irish Erasmus students annually. The number then rose by 19% in 2007/08, due largely to approximately 300 students going abroad on work placements as part of their course (the number of students at foreign universities actually declined slightly to 1,514). In 2008/2009, the number of ERASMUS students reached their highest number to date: 1,836 students went abroad, of which 415 were work placement students.<sup>16</sup>

In 2008/09, over a quarter of all Erasmus students went to France, followed by Spain (17%) and Germany (14%). The most notable changes observed over the five-year period 2004-9 include a fall in the share going to France from 31% to 26% while the share going to the UK increased to 12% (up from 3% in 2004/05).

Other Irish participation in transnational projects has included cross-border, co-operative initiatives in VET between the North and South of Ireland and with Wales, funded under the EU INTERREG Programme. A non-EU funded mobility programme *Wider Horizons*, funded by the International Fund for Ireland (IFI), targets disadvantaged unemployed people between the ages of 18 and 28 in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, and aims to promote mutual understanding and reconciliation between the two traditions in Ireland. It involves training and work experience both at home and abroad with most overseas placements in the USA and Canada. Approximately 570 young people participated in this programme across 29 projects in 2010<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup>*Monitoring Ireland's Skills Supply; Trends in Ireland's Education and Training Output.* SLMRU, July 2011

<sup>17</sup> FÁS Annual Report, 2010.

**Table 2.3.2. - Overview of VET transnational mobility programmes and schemes**

Title of program/scheme and geographical coverage	Managing authority	Sources of funding <sup>(18)</sup> and corresponding level of funding for the programming period	Start – end date (programming period)	Target groups <sup>(19)</sup>	Average duration of mobility per target group (in months)	Number of participants <sup>(20)</sup>	Implementation mechanisms <sup>(21)</sup>	Practices to recognize the KSC acquired abroad	Sources of information (including evaluation reports)
<b>EU programs</b>									
1. Leonardo da Vinci (LLP)	Léargas	European Commission, DG Education and Culture	Jan.2007-Dec.2013	IVET Students People in the Labour Market	IVET Students*2 weeks Others (please specify).....	IVET Students*469..... People in the Labour Market:118	Standard procedures apply	Fully accredited by the sending Institution and eligible for Europass certification	Léargas
2. Leonardo da Vinci (LLP)	Léargas	European Commission, DG Education and Culture	Jan.2007-Dec.2013	VET Professionals	1 – 2 weeks	VET Professionals:140	Standard procedures apply	No specific practices	Léargas
<b>1.</b>									

<sup>(18)</sup> EU programmes, EU Structural Funds (e.g. ESF), National budget, Employer contribution, Individuals' funds/savings, etc.

<sup>(19)</sup> E.g. students, apprentices, VET professionals, etc.

<sup>(20)</sup> The number of students who have spent a period abroad in one single year (please specify year). In case statistics are collected differently, please specify.

<sup>(21)</sup> Please briefly present the application procedure & the eligibility requirements for the applicants. In case of EU programs, please indicate if standard procedure is applied. In case of exceptions, please briefly describe.

### **2.3.3 Arrangements to secure work placements for transnational mobility in VET**

There are no specific arrangements or measures targeted to employers. Employers are usually involved through international projects and mobility actions.

## **Theme 3: VET to support recovery from the crisis**

### **3.1 Overview**

Four years on from the start of the recession, there is, as yet, still no unambiguous evidence that either the economy or the labour market are recovering. The numbers in employment in Ireland have fallen by over 300,000 since employment peaked at 2.14 million in 2007 with employment continuing to decline in 2011. However, the rate of decline was slower than the decline in 2010. Unemployment has more than tripled since the second half of 2007 from 100,000 to 315,000 in third quarter of 2011. The average unemployment rate for the year 2011 was 14.2% up slightly on 13.7% for 2010.

Since the peak in employment in 2007, more than three men have lost their jobs for each woman – there were 242,000 less males in employment at the end on 2010 - when compared to 2007 and 76,000 less females. Sixty per cent of the jobs lost by men were in the construction sector, and a further 15% in industry. The sectoral distribution of job losses for women were more varied – 30% occurred in retail, 17% in accommodation and food services, 17% in administration and support services and 16% in finance, insurance and real estate.<sup>22</sup>

The collapse in employment in construction impacted on young people and nationals from the EU Accession States in particularly large numbers. The number of young people aged 20-24 in employment fell by 45% between early 2008 and late 2010.

Employment held by nationals of other countries was concentrated in both Construction and in the Hotels and Restaurant sectors – two sectors which were particularly badly hit by the recession. By the end of 2010, the number of foreign nationals in employment fell by 36% compared to 2008. A large number have since returned to their native countries.

The Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) provides information on the skill content of the jobs that were lost across the economy and educational attainment of those who were employed in them. While jobs were lost in every occupational group since the peak in employment, those most badly affected were those employed in lower level skill jobs (craft and related -44.9%; plant and machine operatives -25.4% compared to professionals -3% and associate professional and technical -3.3%<sup>23</sup>).

Despite the disproportionate impact of the recession on the lower-skilled, the recession has affected everyone. A large proportion of those now unemployed are well educated. However those most adversely affected have been those with very low formal education attainment and those with just a Post Leaving Certificate qualification.

### **3.2 Effects of the crisis on VET and corresponding measures**

#### **3.2.1 Trends in learners behaviour**

There are indications that the effects of the economic crisis in Ireland, have impacted on the retention rates of young people in second level schools. The recent ‘Report on the Retention Rates of Pupils in Second Level Schools – 1991-2004 Entry Cohort’, published by the Department of

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<sup>22</sup> *Supports and Services for Unemployed Jobseekers: Challenges and Opportunities in a Time of Recession*. NESC No. 123, August 2011.

<sup>23</sup> *Quarterly Household National Survey*, Q4, 2010.

Education and Skills in May 2011 presents the retention rates of pupils in second level schools; it provides data relating to pupils who entered the first year of the junior cycle in the years from 1991 to 2004 and completed second level schooling no later than 2010. The analysis is limited in that it relates to students entering the state-aided post primary sector only and does not take account of important educational pathways outside this system such as Youthreach and apprenticeship training. The following are the main findings of the study:

- Overall when an adjustment is made for pupils from in the original 2004 entry cohort who left the state-aided post primary sector, emigrated or died, the national retention rate is 87.7%. This compares to 81.3% in 1996 (the first year for which an adjusted rate is available).
- The percentage of students who sit the Leaving Cert overall has risen by more than 6% to 87.7% in 8 years.
- The national unadjusted Leaving Certificate retention rate slowly increased up to the 2003 entry cohort. The 2004 entry cohort showed the biggest annual increase (+2.3%) since the analysis began in 1991. The increase is mostly due to pupils not leaving school in the final years of senior cycle in 2009 and 2010 and this is likely to be associated with changed labour market conditions.
- While a gender gap (4.1%) remains at national level between male and female cohorts. The unadjusted retention rate to Leaving Certificate for males in the 2004 cohort was 82.4%, compared with 86.5% for females. The gender gap is far lower than in previous years. The number of young men staying in secondary school has risen dramatically by 11.4% in 8 years.
- On average, voluntary secondary schools continue to have the highest retention rates at both the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate stage. However the gap between the different types of schools is closing. VEC schools have, on average, lower rates of retention to Leaving Certificate, especially for males (retention rate for 2004 was 77.5%) although it should be noted that many of these transfer to apprenticeships and other forms of training.
- Retention rates to Leaving Certificate in the cities tend to be lower than in other areas.
- The rate of retention comparable to completion of upper second-level education (equivalent to NFQ levels 4,5 and 6 Advanced), is higher than presented in the report as participation in apprenticeship, out-of-school programmes and other training within the first year of leaving school is not taken into account in the retention analysis.
- The percentage of students who sit the Leaving Cert overall has risen by more than 6% to 87.7% in 8 years.

There are also indications that the number of first year enrolments in Post Leaving Certificate courses has increased since the start of the down-turn (reflecting the lack of job opportunities for this cohort) while new registrants for FÁS apprenticeships have decreased dramatically since the collapse of the construction sector

**Table 14: PLC Enrolments (1st year) and FÁS Apprenticeship New Registrations 2006-2010<sup>24</sup>.**

Year	PLC (1 <sup>st</sup> Year Enrolments)	FÁS Apprenticeships (New Registrations)
2006	24,942	8,318
2007	24,572	6,767
2008	28,160	3,764
2009	32,401	1,532
2010	32,880	1,197

Source: Derived from Table 2.2. Monitoring Irelands Skills Supply, 2011 SLMRU.

<sup>24</sup> PLC data is per academic year, FÁS data is per calendar year

The number of first year PLC course enrolments grew by almost one-third to reach almost 33,000 in 2010 and in contrast the number of new registrants on FÁS apprenticeships declined by nearly 7,000. This fall coincides with the sharp downturn in the construction industry where most apprentices are employed. It should be noted that apprenticeship registrations are a reflection of skills' demand rather than skills supply as individuals must be in employment in order to register as an apprentice.

Table 15 below shows the number of new entrants to higher education in the academic years 2007/08, 2008/09 and 2009/10.

<b>Table15: New Entrants to Full-time Undergraduate Higher Education by Age 2007-2010</b>					
<b>Age</b>	<b>2007/08</b>	<b>2008/09</b>	<b>%difference 07/08-08/09</b>	<b>2009/2010</b>	<b>%difference 08/09-09/10</b>
19 and under	26,843	28,700	7%	29,756	4%
20-22	4,913	5,346	9%	5,032	-6%
23+	4,196	4,782	14%	6,027	26%
<b>Total</b>	<b>35,952</b>	<b>38,828</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>40,815</b>	<b>5%</b>

Source: Derived from Tables 2.1: Monitoring Irelands Skills Supply 2010 and 2011 SLMRU.

In the academic year 2008/09 almost 39,000 people were new entrants to higher education, the majority of whom (almost three-quarters) were aged 19 years or less – the age corresponding to the typical school leaving age in Ireland. Although the number of mature students entering higher education for the first time increased by 14% in the same period, their overall share of places remained constant at 12%. In 2009/10, the number of new entrants to higher education totalled 40,815 – 5% more than the preceding year. While the majority again were aged 19 or less, the number of students age 23 or more grew by 26% during the period and accounted for over 14% of all new entrants. The number of students aged 23 or more grew by 44% over the period. This may reflect the increasing numbers of recently unemployed people returning to education in order to improve their qualifications in an effort to improve their job opportunities and avoid unemployment.

This is reinforced by figures published by the Department of Social Protection (DSP)<sup>25</sup> which show that the demand for higher education from adults, especially unemployed adults, continues to increase. In the 2009/2010 academic year a total of 20,808 people (10,457 at 2<sup>nd</sup> level and 10,351 at 3<sup>rd</sup> level) were in receipt of a Back to Education Allowance. This represents an overall increase of 79% on 2009 figures.

### **3.2.2 Trends in enterprises behaviour.**

There is no statutory obligation on companies to provide CVET for their workforce and no specific sectoral agreements in respect of CVET within enterprises. Employers generally provide training on the basis of their own requirements and this is usually provided in-house or sub-contracted on a commercial basis to private training providers. Some public and large commercial companies also provide paid release for employees to participate on education and training courses. (See also 6.3).

Due to the growth in the economy in Ireland from 1998-2006, there was a rapid expansion in total apprentice registrations from 16,125 in 1998 to 29,801 in 2006, with approximately 11,900

<sup>25</sup> DSP Annual Report 2010.

companies participating in the scheme. During these years the profile of apprenticeships was dominated by the construction and electrical trades, which accounted for over 80% of all apprenticeship starts in 2006. Since the collapse of the construction sector in 2007 the total number of apprentices has fallen dramatically and in 2010 the total number of apprentices across all phases of training was 17,578. The population of redundant apprentices notified to FÁS by employers at the end of December 2010, was 7,407 across all trades. The number of people entering apprenticeship in 2010 was 1,204, which was 22% less than the 2009 level and 68% less than the level in 2008<sup>26</sup>. This reduced level of registrations arose mainly in the construction-related trades, but reductions were also recorded in the electrical and engineering sectors which reflect the lower level of activity across the wider economy. Employment in the sector has fallen by over 150,000 persons during the same period.

A number of measures have been taken to help unemployed apprentices (See 5.4) however, these have been taken by public authorities in response to the crisis as opposed to enterprises.

### **3.2.3 Measures taken to address the negative effects or as a result of the crisis (by Public authorities at national, local and by social partners).**

According to the National Economic and Social Council Report<sup>27</sup>, *Supports and Services for Unemployed Jobseekers: Challenges and Opportunities in a Time of Recession*, “The labour market response to the crisis to date can be fairly described as *government-led and departmental-driven*.” The report notes that the national level institutions of social partnership have had no formal role as yet in shaping and implementing the policy responses. The report cites institutional reconfiguration as one of the main significant adjustments made in response to the crisis.

Until March 2010, FÁS – the National Training and Employment Authority, under the auspices of the Department of Trade, Enterprise and Innovation, was responsible for training unemployed people and people in employment either directly in its own network of centres and/or by contracting courses from external providers; for ensuring specialist training for people with disabilities; for providing placement and guidance services to job changers and the unemployed and for supervising direct employment schemes for those distant from the labour market. In March 2010, the Government first announced its decision to fundamentally reconfigure departmental responsibilities.

Responsibility for FÁS Training and the national Statutory Apprenticeship Scheme were moved to the Department of Education and Skills (DES). In July 2011, the Minister for Education and Skills announced the setting up of a new Further Education and Training Authority – SOLAS. The new Authority will co-ordinate and fund the wide range of training and further education programme in the country and will report to the DES. SOLAS will act as an overarching management structure for FET and will ensure that further education and training (FET) will provide learners and job seekers with new skills needed for jobs in growth areas like the services, ICT, medical devices as outline in the National Skills Strategy (See 2.1) and away from traditional skills. FÁS will be disbanded and over time FÁS training centres and regional staff will be transferred to the Vocational Education Committees (VECs) – who are also being significantly restructured and rationalised, so that the VECs will ultimately be responsible for the delivery of an integrated FET service. The integration of FET will ensure that unnecessary duplication and fragmentation will not take place.

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<sup>26</sup> FÁS Annual Report 2010.

<sup>27</sup> *Supports and Services for Unemployed Jobseekers: Challenges and Opportunities in a Time of Recession*. NESC. No. 123, August 2011.

Responsibility for FÁS Employment Services and FÁS Employment Programmes (principally the Community Employment Scheme) were moved to the Department of Social Protection (DSP). A newly established National Employment and Entitlements Service (NEES) within the DSP will provide a one-stop-shop for people seeking to establish their benefit entitlements and those looking for a job and seeking advice on their training options. Jobseekers requiring training/education will be referred to the VECs who will play a key role in identifying their best education and training options.

Amalgamations of other State agencies involved in education and training are also taking place. The Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Bill, was introduced in 2011. This legislation will amalgamate the existing national qualifications and quality assurance bodies (NQAI, HETAC, FETAC and the Irish University Quality Board) for learners into one new agency - Quality and Quality Assurance Ireland (QQAI), which will be responsible for a wide range of functions, and will provide a more integrated, efficient and coherent range of services to learners across the further and higher education and training sectors. It is anticipated that QQAI will be established in 2012. It will be responsible for:

- the maintenance and implementation of the National Framework of Qualifications,
- the setting of procedures for how learners gain access to programmes of education and training and transfer and progress between programmes,
- the recognition of Irish awards internationally and the recognition of international awards in Ireland,
- the review of the effectiveness of the quality assurance systems of educational providers,
- the validation of programmes of education and training and the making of awards, and
- the regulation of providers of education services to international students.

A further response by the Irish Government to the crisis was to significantly increase training capacity in order to offer increasing numbers of unemployed people opportunities for training. They identified four cohorts among the unemployed to receive priority access to the state's training, education, guidance and work experience opportunities. These priority cohorts are:

- Those with lower skills or education levels;
- Those on the Live Register for more than one year;
- Younger people (under 25 years but also up to age 34); and
- Those made redundant from sectors that will not return to their previous levels of activity even after economic recovery (e.g., construction, manufacturing, and the retail and wholesale trade).

A huge increase in the numbers receiving training was achieved, in two principal ways. First, the completion of modules rather than longer courses was introduced; for example, participation on *FÁS Specific Skills Training (SST)* trebled to just over 20,000 between 2008 and 2009, principally by reorganising a greater part of it to take the form of ten - to twenty-week, stand-alone courses leading to minor certification awards and reducing the share of the longer SST courses lasting twelve to fifty-two weeks. Second, more evening courses, online courses and blended learning initiatives were provided: in 2010, half of over 81,000 new starts on FÁS training programmes were on such courses.

A total of €34.2m has been allocated under the *European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF)* to provide up-skilling and retraining supports for redundant workers from three companies – Dell (Limerick), Waterford Crystal and SR Technics (Dublin). A further application was submitted in February 2011 for EGF support of €55m for former workers in three construction sub-sectors;

As noted previously, the economic downturn and the collapse of construction activity has resulted in the number of registered apprentices falling sharply. FÁS has worked with the Institutes of Technology, the social partners and ESB Networks to introduce several measures that assist redundant apprentices in completing on- and off-the-job training phases of their apprenticeships.

In June 2011 the Minister for Education and Skills announced the provision of 1,000 additional Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) places as part of the Government's Jobs Initiative bringing the total number of approved PLC places available nationwide to 32,688. The additional places are part of the almost 16,000 additional places in education and training announced as part of the Jobs Initiative. The remainder of the places are being provided in the FÁS Specific Skills Training programmes (5,000 short and 1,000 long), the Higher Education Springboard programme providing part-time, higher-education opportunities for unemployed people (5,900 places) and the Back to Education Initiative (3,000 part-time places).

## **Theme 4: Historical background, Legislative and Institutional framework**

### **4.1; 4.2: Historical Background and Legislative framework for IVET**

There is no legal definition of IVET in Ireland and an important feature of the Irish VET system is that there is not a sharp distinction between initial and continuing vocational education and training for jobseekers and new entrants into the workforce, whether they are young or older people. There is also no single system in Ireland delivering either IVET or CVET but rather a range of organisations who deliver programmes both for young people who have just completed their compulsory education and for those who wish to upgrade their skills having completed initial education and training. It is the status of the trainee that determines whether the education/training is initial or continuing rather than the system itself. Subsequently, a considerable amount of the legislation regulating VET in Ireland applies to both IVET and CVET.

The Legislative framework of the Irish VET system is principally set out under specific Acts of the Irish Parliament

The most important legislation at upper secondary education level relating to IVET is the **Vocational Education Act, 1930** and respective amendments, which led to the establishment of thirty-three regionally-based Vocational Education Committees (VECs). The Vocational Education (Amendment) Act, 2001, broadened the representative element of VECs to include public representatives, parents, teachers, local businesses and a requirement for the VECs to adopt education plans.

**The Education Act 1998** provides for the education of every person in the State, including persons with a disability or special educational needs. It requires schools to give school students access to guidance in their educational and career choices, and provides for continuing education opportunities for adults with low educational qualifications.

**The Education Welfare Act 2000** aims to reduce educational disadvantage by promoting regular school attendance and tackling early school leaving. Young people aged 16-17 years who have left school early, must now register with the National Educational Welfare Board. The Act also raised the school leaving age to 16 years.

At further tertiary education level, **the Regional Technical Colleges Acts 1992-1999** and the Dublin Institute of Technology Act 1992 gave statutory recognition to the development and expanding role of Regional Technical Colleges. In 1998 all these colleges were re-designated as Institutes of Technology. In order to unify the publicly funded higher education sector, the **Institutes of Technology Act, 2006** dealt with structural reform in third level education and the Institutes of Technology were brought within the remit of the Higher Education Authority, (set up under the Higher Education Authority Act, 1971), although their distinctive roles and functions will be maintained, in particular the applied and regional focus of the Institutes. At higher education level the primary piece of legislation dealing with Universities is the **1997 Universities Act**.

The most significant legislation in both the areas of initial and continuing vocational training relates to the establishment of a number of public bodies between 1960-70s, including AnCO (the Industrial Training Authority) set up under **the Industrial Training Act**. In 1988 this body was replaced by FÁS, the National Training and Employment Authority, under the **1987 Labour Services Act**. FÁS (together with the Institutes of Technology) has statutory responsibility for the administration and management of the National Apprenticeship programme. The other principle functions of FÁS include the operation of training and employment programmes; the provision of an employment and recruitment service; an advisory service for industry, and support for

community based employment. FÁS initially reported to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Innovation (previously named Enterprise, Trade and Employment). The vocational training and placement element of the former National Rehabilitation Board was devolved to FÁS during 2000. In May 2010 responsibility for FÁS as an Agency and its funding related to training and skills transferred from the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Innovation to the Department of Education and Skills. Responsibility for the employment services and community services activities' transferred to the Department of Social Protection in January 2011. (See 3.2.3)

In the 1980s, Fáilte Ireland, was set up with responsibility for training in the tourism and hospitality sectors, and ACOT for the development of agriculture and horticulture, some of whose functions were incorporated into TEAGASC under the Agricultural (Research, Advisory and Training) Act, in 1988. Other public bodies were established to advise on and/or implement training in the forestry, fisheries, marine and nursing sectors. With regard to the funding of training for the employed, a major development was the introduction of the National Training Fund Act, 2000, which replaced a previous apprenticeship levy system.

The **Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999**, established structures for a national framework of qualifications to co-ordinate awards and promote access, transfer and progression within the both the initial and continuing VET system. To implement this process the Act established the National Qualifications Authority (NQAI), together with the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) and the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC). The Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Bill was introduced in 2011 which amalgamates these bodies along with the IUQB into one new agency. (See 3.2.3)

The **Employment Equality Act 1998** established the Equality Authority, whose mandate was expanded under the '**Equal Status Act 2000**', prohibiting discrimination in the provision of educational and training services. The rights of workers with disabilities have been re-enforced by the **Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004** and the passing of the **Disability Act 2006**. In 2005 the **Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act** introduced health and safety training requirements for employees in sectors such as the construction industry.

#### **4.3 Institutional framework for IVET**

The administration and implementation of government policy for IVET falls mainly within the remit of the Department (Ministry) of Education and Skills (DES). The Department is responsible at policy level for decisions made in relation to lower secondary education, upper secondary education, apprenticeship, post-secondary non tertiary education, and tertiary education.

The Department of Education and Skills sets down a broad regulatory framework within which Schools in receipt of State funding are required to operate. The regulatory framework includes the curriculum to be followed by schools, the governance structures for individual schools and the timeframe within which, schools are required to operate. The Department pays salaries directly to teachers, but schools are their legal employers, except in the vocational system where local education committees have a high degree of administrative control in local areas. Aside from the vocational system, grants are paid directly to schools by the Department of Education and Skills to meet their day-to-day running costs. Schools largely determine their own enrolment policy, having regard to legislative requirements, they choose the textbooks to be used in the school and they have considerable autonomy in deciding on the teaching methods and assessment methods to be used. However, national externally set and marked examinations run by the State Examinations Commission; apply to all students at the end of lower second level education and on completion of upper second level education.

The only legally constituted local administration of post-primary education in Ireland is for those vocational schools and colleges administered by the Vocational Education Committees (VECs)

under the Vocational Education Act, 1930. At present, 33 VECs exist under the Act. The Vocational Education (Amendment) Act 2001 was a defining piece of legislation for the Vocational sector in that it provided for a more inclusive VEC structure through the participation of staff and parents' representatives. It also made provision in relation to the performance by the VECs of their functions and in relation to expenditure by the VECs.<sup>28</sup>

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment was established in 1987. It became a statutory body in 2001. The brief of the Council as outlined in the Education Act, 1998 is to advise the Minister for Education and Skills on matters relating to the curriculum for early childhood education, primary and post-primary schools and the assessment procedures employed in schools and examinations on subjects which are part of the curriculum. The members of the Council, (appointed by the Minister), represent teachers, school managers, parents, business, trades unions and other educational interests. Other members include representatives of the Department of Education and Skills, the State Examinations Commission and one nominee of the Minister. The Minister appoints the Chairperson.

Higher education in Ireland is provided mainly by the universities, institutes of technology and colleges of education. In addition, a number of other third level institutions provide specialist education in such fields as art and design, medicine, business studies, music and law. Most of the third level education is provided in institutions that are supported substantially by the State, e.g. university and teaching colleges, which receive over 70% of their income from the State. At present, the Higher Education Authority (HEA) facilitates the funding and accountability between the State and the universities. In addition, specific provisions in the National University of Ireland (NUI) Acts, 1908, provide for the colleges of the NUI.<sup>29</sup>

In contrast to school-based education, IVET is delivered at a number of different levels; in secondary level schools, in vocational training including apprenticeship and in further and higher non-tertiary education. It is mainly funded by the State either directly or through intermediary bodies. A number of government departments have funding and administrative responsibilities for IVET in specific industry sectors, such as in the tourism agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors.

Responsibility for the provision of initial vocational education is devolved from the DES to thirty-three Vocational Education Committees (VECs) who have statutory autonomy to identify and meet local needs for IVET. These bodies comprise representatives of local authorities. The State training agency FÁS, together with VECs provide programmes for early school leavers and manage IVET centres for the Youthreach and young Travellers Training programmes.

The third level education sector in Ireland comprises the country's seven universities, fourteen institutes of technology and the colleges of education who undertake teacher training courses. The Higher Education Authority (HEA) established in 1968, is responsible for the supervision and funding of educational programmes in universities and designated third-level education institutions, including the Teacher Training Colleges and the Institutes of Technology (ITs). The latter, along with FÁS, the State Training Agency, play a role in the provision of apprenticeship training, as well as providing initial vocational education for young entrants into the tourism, catering, agriculture, horticulture and forestry sectors.

Responsibility for the implementation of initial vocational training programmes for young entrants into the workforce, unemployed persons and early school-leavers is devolved from the DES to State funded bodies which include:

- FÁS, which provides training for new entrants into the workforce and in co-operation

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<sup>28</sup> *Organisation of the Education System in Ireland, 2009/2010*, Eurydice.

<sup>29</sup> *Organisation of the Education System in Ireland, 2009/2010*, Eurydice.

with the Institutes of Technology, for apprentices;

- Fáilte Ireland which trains new entrants for the tourism, catering and hospitality industries, either directly, or in cooperation with Institutes of Technology;
- Irish Fisheries Board which provides initial training for the fishing and marine industries;
- Teagasc, the Agriculture and Food Development Authority, which trains new entrants into the agricultural and horticultural sectors.

The National Qualifications Authority (NQAI) set up two Awards Councils - the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) and the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC)<sup>30</sup> in 2003, both of which provide accreditation and certification for all IVET courses in the State, other than awards made in respect of primary and secondary level schooling and third level university education. Through the NQAI, FETAC, HETAC, and the Higher Education Authority for the tertiary sector, the Department of Education and Skills has established mechanisms for quality assurance in further and higher education.

Over the past two decades a system of National Partnership Agreements has been in place, involving the government and the social partners and every three years these partners agree a national programme for social and economic development which have also included policies relating to VET. The current programme 'Towards 2016' runs from 2006-2016. The social partners also have a place in their representative capacity, within the structures established by the State, to meet the country's general VET needs. They are represented on the Boards and/or Advisory Committees of FÁS, Fáilte Ireland and Teagasc, and have a representative role on the awarding bodies FETAC and HETAC. They also have a consultative role in the allocation of funds for training schemes and programmes under the employer-levied National Training Fund.

#### 4.4 Legislative framework for CVET

As noted above, a considerable amount of the legislation regulating VET in Ireland applies to both IVET and CVET (see Section 4.2 above). Up until 1997 limited resources were invested in adult education. In 1997 the government, in response to the findings from an OECD report that 25% of Irish adults didn't have basic literacy skills, decided to invest heavily in literacy provision and in adult education generally. Following this, in 1998, the Government published a Green Paper with proposals for developing Adult Education<sup>31</sup>. This was followed by the:

- **White Paper on Adult Education 2000**<sup>32</sup>. The key goal of the White Paper was to set out a comprehensive policy for the future structure and development of adult learning and training in Ireland. Lifelong learning became the governing principle of educational policy. For the first time, the State extended its educational commitment to include the population which has left the initial education system.
- **Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning 2002**<sup>33</sup> which focused on the labour market aspects of lifelong learning and concentrated on developing and implementing a National Framework of Qualifications; ensuring basic skills for all; providing comprehensive

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<sup>30</sup> Arrangements are currently being put in place to amalgamate these bodies into a single national entity for quality assurance and accreditation of all further and higher education and training awards.

<sup>31</sup> *Adult Education in an Era of Lifelong Learning*, Green Paper on Adult Education, Department of Education and Science. Dublin. The Stationer Office, 1988.

<sup>32</sup> *Learning for Life*, White Paper on Adult Education, Department of Education and Science. Dublin. The Stationery Office, 2002.

<sup>33</sup> *Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning*, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. Dublin: Stationery Office, 2002.

guidance, counseling and information; addressing delivery, access and funding measures and providing better opportunities for workplace learning, and learning for workers.

- **The National Skills Strategy**<sup>34</sup> **2007** highlighted that if Ireland was to be successful in tackling the challenge of unemployment and see a return to sustainable export-led growth, it was vital to concentrate on developing the skills base of the labour force. It concluded that there was a need to up-skill 500,000 employed people to the next level within the National Framework of Qualifications. It also called for adult literacy programmes to deliver basic skills training to employees in low skilled and paid employment.
- **The National Strategy for Higher Education, 2011** makes proposals for a national strategy for higher education until 2030 and sets out recommendation for a new funding model that aims to eliminate the disadvantages experienced by part-time adult learners.

Together these documents provide a blueprint for the development of adult education in Ireland.

#### **4.5 Institutional framework for CVET and organigram**

Adult learning is the responsibility of the Further Education Section of the Department of Education and Skills (DES). In early 2010 the DES was given responsibility for skills and training policy in addition to its existing responsibility for further education which includes adult education and post-secondary education for young people who have recently completed upper secondary education. Other government departments also fund a range of programmes. These include the Department of Social Protection; the Department of Justice and Law Reform; the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs, the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Department of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

The DES supervises and funds further vocational education colleges and adult education centres run by the thirty-three Vocational Education Committees. These have devolved responsibility for a range of continuing vocational educational programmes including:- literacy programmes; education provision for asylum seekers; prison education services; senior Traveller training; the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) for the long-term unemployed and the Post Leaving Certificate courses, which although principally directed at school leavers, are also an important re-entry route to learning for adults. The 14 Institutes of Technology (ITs) also have a role in supporting industry development and innovation at local level. Other state agencies which operate at this level include:

- FÁS which delivers continuous skills training directly and provides funds to other training providers to undertake training.
- Enterprise Ireland provides funding to support training within internationally traded companies.
- Fáilte Ireland provides ongoing training for the tourism and catering sectors.
- The Irish Fisheries Board (BIM), for the fishing, processing and aquaculture industries.
- Teagasc, which provides training for farmers and for the food processing industry.
- Coillte, the Irish Forestry Board, which trains forestry workers.
- Bord Altranais, responsible for implementing CVET for the nursing profession.
- The Crafts Council of Ireland which is the national design and development organization for the craft industry in Ireland.
- Údarás Na Gaeltachta, a regional development agency which operates in Irish-speaking areas and aims to develop these areas through local enterprise and skills development.
- 35 County and City Enterprise Boards which provide training schemes mainly targeted at the development needs of micro-enterprises and their employees.

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<sup>34</sup> *Expert Group on Future Skill Needs, Tomorrow's Skills: Towards a National Skills Strategy*, FORFÁS , 2007.

- County Development Boards, whose remit includes a consultative role in relation to CVET policies implemented within their areas.

There is no statutory obligation on companies to provide CVET for their workforce. Various sectoral committees, which include representatives of the social partners, promote and advise on initiatives to provide training for the different industrial and services sectors. In some cases companies will pool resources to identify and make provision for training needs. The enterprise-led, learning networks initiative "Skillnets" encourages and fosters this kind of co-operation. Skillnets is funded by the DES from the National Training Fund (NTF). It aims to increase participation in enterprise training by firms to improve competitiveness and provide improved access for workers to industry-specific skills development. (In 2010, Skillnets extended its trainee profile to include job-seekers, who train with those in employment).

The Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) and the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) are responsible for the certification and accreditation of all CVET courses and through these Councils, the Department of Education and Skills has established mechanisms for quality assurance.

The general role of the social partners in advising on VET policy is outlined in Section 4.3. With regard to CVET the Social Partners have a consultative role in the allocation of funds for training schemes and programmes funded under the employer-levied National Training Fund. The Government-sponsored, Expert Group on Future Skill Needs, is the forum used to fulfill this consultation requirement.

Central government is the main source of funding for publicly-provided CVET. However, this area is also supported through ESF co-financing, although to a much lesser extent than in IVET. The Human Capital Investment Operational Programme (HCI OP) for 2007-2013, has two relevant co-funded priority objectives - upskilling the workforce and increasing the participation in the labour force.

## **Theme 5: Initial Vocational Education and Training**

### **5.1 Background to the IVET system and diagram of the education and training system**

The Irish primary and compulsory secondary education system involves education from the ages of 6 to 16 years inclusive. Primary education in Ireland serves the early stages of compulsory education from age 6 to age 12 and the two years from age 4 to age 6 before compulsory education commences. Students normally move to post-primary schools at age 12. Secondary education lasts for 5-6 years; with the first three year, the Junior Cycle, compulsory and then a further 2-3 years for Senior Cycle education. There is no IVET element in the compulsory lower school-based (Junior Cycle) secondary education.

At the end of compulsory schooling, the majority of students proceed to upper secondary education (or the Senior Cycle). This consists of an (optional) Transition Year followed by one of three versions of the two-year Leaving Certificate programme although not all versions are offered in every school.

There are three, two-year, ring-fenced, full-time Leaving Certificate programmes - the Leaving Certificate (established), the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP).

The focus of the established Leaving Certificate is primarily academic and its main emphasis is on providing students with the necessary education required for entry into third-level and higher education. The Leaving Certificate established is followed by the majority (nearly three-quarters) of Irish students in the senior cycle.

The LCA is structured around three elements – Vocational Preparation, Vocational Education and General Education. On completion of the programme, participants generally proceed to Post-Leaving Certificate vocational education and training courses or directly to the labour market.

The LCVP is vocational in nature and its objective is to prepare learners for further and continuing education and for the world of work. The LCVP is based on combinations of Leaving Certificate (established) subjects (two of which must be vocational) and students must take three Link Modules in Enterprise Education, Preparation for the World of Work and Work Experience.

On completion of the senior cycle, students sit for the established Leaving Certificate, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme or the Leaving Certificate Applied examinations. In the main, students are assessed by a terminal examination although some subjects (such as art and music) have a practical dimension. Languages include an oral as well as a written test. Students who participate in the LCA accumulate some credit over the two years of study as well as completing a terminal examination. The examinations are organised by the State Examinations Commission, a body independent of the DES.

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) is responsible for defining the curricula in early childhood education and in primary and post-primary schools. The work of the NCCA is carried out by a number of specialist committees, comprising teachers, inspectors, representatives of teacher unions and school management bodies, parent and subject associations and higher education interests including universities and other colleges. These committees draw up the syllabus or course for each subject or part of the curriculum.

A process of reviewing and revising the syllabus of Leaving Certificate (established) subjects has been ongoing since the mid-1990s. The NCCA are currently in the process of reviewing senior cycle education in its totality and how it should develop into the future. The Junior Certificate programme is also under review.

The promotion of quality in the educational system is the responsibility of the Inspectorate which is a Division of the Department of Education and Skills (DES). The range of approaches that the Inspectorate use to promote quality assurance in the Irish educational system include:

- The promotion of school self-evaluation.
- Support for school development and planning.
- Teacher in-career development and support in the context of ongoing curricular/syllabus change and development.
- External evaluation of schools by the Inspectorate.
- Programme evaluations by the Inspectorate focusing on aspects of curricular provision.
- System evaluation through participation in international studies such as TIMMs, PISA, etc. and periodic national surveys of attainment.
- The State Certificate examinations which are organised by the State Examinations Commission, a body independent of the DES.

Under the Europe 2020 strategy, Ireland has set a target to reduce the percentage of 18-24 year olds with at most lower secondary education and not in further education and training to 8%. Its current share of early school leavers is 11.3% (based on Eurostat data for 2009). Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) is a national action plan for educational inclusion. Focusing on the needs of 3 to 18 year olds from disadvantaged communities, DEIS adopts an integrated approach with early intervention as a core principle.

Among the key issues and needs addressed by DEIS are:

- improved identification of disadvantage enabling resources to be targeted more effectively;
- targeted reductions in pupil teacher ratios and additional non-pay allocations for schools based on level of disadvantage;
- access to additional literacy/numeracy supports and programmes;
- access to Home/School/Community Liaison and School Completion Programme (SCP) services;
- enhancing research and evaluation of outcomes.

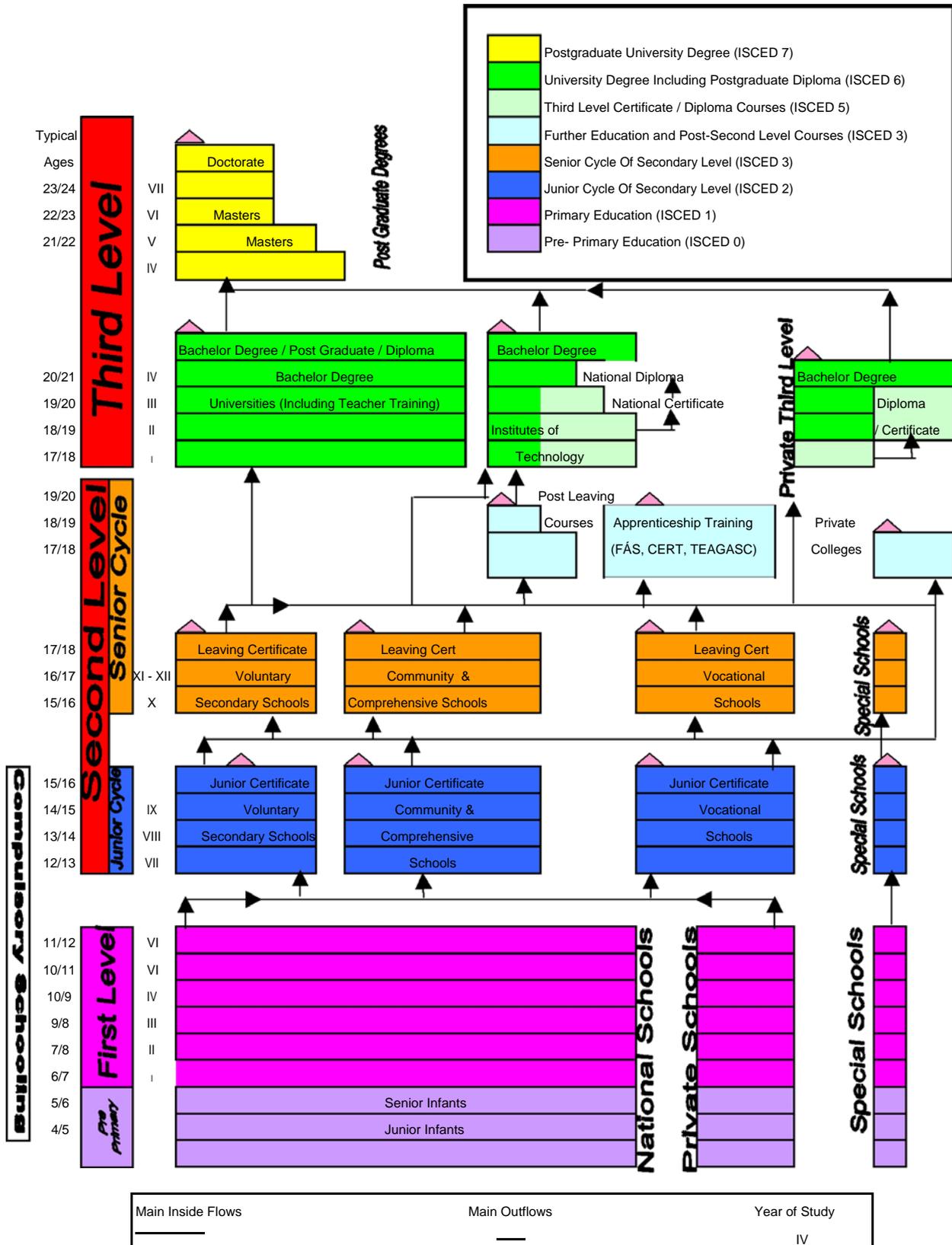
The Educational Research Centre has been commissioned to conduct an independent evaluation of DEIS, to assess its impact and to inform the direction of future policy. A report is expected to be finalised shortly.

There is not one system of IVET for young people who have completed compulsory schooling, but rather IVET policies and programmes which are implemented through different government departments and intermediary organisations. These programmes can be divided into the following four broad categories.

- Vocational education programmes and courses in non-tertiary colleges and centres for further education under the responsibility of the VECs.
- Apprenticeship training, for which FÁS, the Training and Employment Authority, is responsible in co-operation with the DES.
- Other initial entry-level VET for various industry sectors provided by publicly funded state agencies.
- Foundation and progression programmes, for those who have left school early without any formal qualifications. These are run both in the education and training systems.

The Chart below outlines the different levels and qualifications awarded within the formal and initial vocational education system in Ireland and corresponding ISCED levels.

# Education System Of Ireland



## **5.2 IVET at lower secondary level**

Ireland does not have initial vocational education and training at this level in the education system. Lower second level education consists of a three-year Junior Cycle for ages 12 to 15/16 years. At the end of the three years, the Junior Cycle is assessed by the Junior Certificate examination. This marks the completion of compulsory education in Ireland.

A Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) was introduced in 1996 and is particularly targeted at lower secondary students who are at risk of early school leaving. It is not an alternative to the Junior Certificate programme but is a curriculum framework that assists schools in making the Junior Certificate more accessible to learners who may otherwise leave school without formal qualifications.

## **5.3 IVET at upper secondary level (mainly school-based)**

According to Eurostat's study 'Key Data on Education in Europe 2002', 'In Ireland all school students are in compulsory general education as no separate vocational stream exists'. While this is definitely the case at lower secondary level, the system at upper secondary level is more complex, although general education still predominates.

At the end of compulsory schooling at age 16, the majority of students proceed to upper secondary education (or the Senior Cycle). In Ireland today 87% of persons complete upper secondary level education. In Ireland all education at this level is free.

Upper secondary education consists of an (optional) Transition Year followed by one of three versions of the two-year Leaving Certificate Programme. The Transition Year programme which is offered following completion of the Junior Cycle, emphasises personal development and experiential learning opportunities. The Transition Year remains optional and some school students prefer to directly proceed to one of the Leaving Certificate Programmes. There are three options within the Leaving Certificate.

- The (established) traditional Leaving Certificate Programme offers school students aged between 16-18 years a broad education while allowing for some specialisation. It is assessed primarily by written examination set by the State Examination Commission at the end of a two-year programme and it is the terminal examination of post-primary education. The established Leaving Certificate is the accepted basis for entry into third-level and university education and is not vocationally orientated.
- The Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) consists of Leaving Certificate subjects, together with three modules on Enterprise Education, Preparation for Work and Work Experience. The LCVP is designed to give a vocational dimension to the Leaving Certificate Programme and aims to prepare students for transition to adult and working life. School students are assessed over two years of study and receive the same certificate as other Leaving Certificate students, but their certificate includes the results of the additional modules. While the LCVP gives school students the same opportunity to proceed to third-level education as those taking the established Leaving Certificate and it can provide access to apprenticeships, it is principally designed for school students who do not wish to proceed directly to third level education or for those whose needs and aptitudes are not adequately catered for by the other two Leaving Certificate Programmes. It combines academic study, with a focus on work related learning and aims to be equally relevant to those preparing for

further education or seeking immediate employment.

- The Leaving Certificate Applied Programme (LCAP) adopts a less academic approach to learning. School students are assessed over two years of study on the completion of practical modules (44) and activities, which allows them to integrate their learning from the different courses. The LCAP is a distinct, self-contained programme, aimed at preparing students for transition to adult and working life. While it is designed for school students who do not wish to proceed directly to third level education, (although school students with LCAP can go onto a variety of further IVET programmes), it is principally aimed at those whose needs and aptitudes are not adequately catered for by the other two Leaving Certificate Programmes.

According to the Department of Education and Science, the Leaving Certificate Applied Programme (LCAP) and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) are considered to have IVET elements, although the LCAP is more vocationally-oriented than the LCVP. However, significantly neither of these programmes are classified as initial vocational training. As with the traditional Leaving Certificate both the Programmes are assessed by an examination set by the State Examination Board.

**TABLE 16: TYPES OF VOCATIONALLY ORIENTATED EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES AT UPPER SECONDARY LEVEL\***

<b>TYPE OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME</b>	<b>MAIN ECONOMIC SECTORS</b>	<b>CORRESPONDING ISCED LEVEL AND ORIENTATION</b>	<b>BALANCE BETWEEN GENERAL AND VOCATIONAL SUBJECTS</b>	<b>BALANCE BETWEEN SCHOOL-BASED AND WORK-BASED TRAINING</b>	<b>AVERAGE DURATION OF STUDIES</b>	<b>TRANSFER TO OTHER PATHWAYS</b>
<b>LEAVING CERTIFICATE VOCATIONAL PROGRAMME</b>	All sectors	ISCED 3A/3B  orientation to  ISCED level  4A/B	3/4 general subjects  and 1/4 vocational subjects	100% school-based	2 years	Apprenticeships and educational pathways into tertiary and higher education
<b>LEAVING CERTIFICATE APPLIED PROGRAMME</b>	All sectors	ISCED 3C  orientation to  ISCED level 4C	3/4 vocational subjects  and 1/4 general subjects	100% school-based	2- years	educational pathways into non tertiary further education and training

\*This Table does not include the established Leaving Certificate Programme which is academically orientated.

The State Examinations Commission (SEC) is responsible for the development, assessment, accreditation and certification of the second-level examinations of the Irish State. The SEC is a non-departmental public body under the aegis of the Department of Education and Skills.

With regard to assessment, **the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP)**, consists of Leaving Certificate subjects, together with compulsory link modules. The Link Modules are assessed in a written examination representing 40% of total marks and a portfolio of coursework representing 60% of total marks. Students receive the same certificate as other established Leaving Certificate students, but their Leaving Certificate includes an additional statement of the results of the Link Modules (Pass, Merit or Distinction). The LCVP gives students the same opportunity to proceed to universities and colleges as the students taking the established Leaving Certificate.

Assessment of the **Leaving Certificate Applied** is continuous throughout the course and there is also a final examination. Assessment takes place on the completion of modules and practical activities that allow the student to integrate the learning from different courses.

Table 17 below shows the distribution of Leaving Certificate sits by programme type over the period 2006-2010. The Leaving Certificate Established is the most popular examination and is taken by just over two thirds of examination candidates each year; this is followed by the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme, with over a quarter of candidates annually. The Leaving Cert Applied Programme accounts for the remaining 6% of candidates. The number of candidates taking the LCVP have increased each year in the five year period examined.

Year	Leaving Cert Established	Leaving Cert Vocational Programme	Leaving Cert Applied Programme	Total
2006	36,932	1,023	3,115	41,110
2007	36,790	14,080	3,056	53,926
2008	37,639	14,505	3,445	55,589
2009	39,112	15,084	3,259	57,455

Source : Monitoring Ireland's Skills Supply, Trends in Ireland's Education and Training Output, SLMRU, June 2011

The curriculum for all three Leaving Certificate Programmes is sanctioned by the Department of Education and Skills and the quality assurance of the programmes is supervised by the Departments' Schools Inspectorate branch. In 2001 the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) was established to advise the Minister for Education and Skills (DES) on 'matters relating to curriculum for early childhood education, primary and post-primary schools and the assessment procedures employed in schools and examinations, on subjects which are part of the curriculum'. The Council membership represents teachers, school managers, parents, business and trade unions and other educational interests including the State Examination Commission. At upper secondary level, the NCCA is engaged in the review and revision of the Leaving Certificate examination subjects to ensure:

- an outcomes-based approach to expressing course and assessment objectives;
- increased focus on the vocational aspects of subjects; and
- the broadening of the basis and methods for the assessment of achievement.

Performance in the Leaving Certificate examination is used for purposes of selection and progression into further and higher education. Application for almost all full-time undergraduate courses (Degree, Diploma and Certificate courses) in the universities and Institutes of Technology

is made through a single agency – the Central Applications Office (CAO). There is no central applications body for Post-Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses. Students apply directly to the individual colleges.

Students who have taken the Leaving Certificate established and LCVP are allocated points for the results they get in their 6 best subjects, at a single sitting of the Leaving Certificate. Examinations take place at Higher and Lower Level. Grades are awarded ranging from A1 (90-100%) to D3 (40-44%) and points are awarded to these grades. The points awarded depend on the level of achievement in the subject. The number of entry-level points needed for any course depends on the number of places and the number of applicants for those places so the entry level varies from year to year. Higher points are awarded for Higher-Level papers than for Ordinary-Level papers and Link Modules.

The LCA certificate is awarded at three levels: pass, merit and distinction. The LCA does not provide direct entry to third level education, however, LCA students who proceed to PLC courses and gain FETAC qualifications at Level 6 in the National Framework of Qualifications are eligible for some third-level courses in the Institutes of Technology and the National University of Ireland (NUI).

**TABLE 18: STUDENTS ENROLLED IN UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION BY PROGRAMME ORIENTATION (VALUES AND SHARE OF THE TOTAL), 2009**

<b>GEO</b>	<b>TOTAL ISCED3</b>	<b>ISCED3GEN N (NUM)</b>	<b>ISCE3 GEN (%)</b>	<b>ISCED3PV (NUM)</b>	<b>ISCE3PV (%)</b>	<b>ISCED3VOC C (NUM)</b>	<b>ISCED3 VOC (%)</b>
EU-27	20633767	10946188	53.0	:	:	9687579	47.0
IE	152375	99882	65.6	50245	33.0	2248	1.5

The introduction of the National Framework of Qualifications in 2003 covering all awards in the State from initial schooling to higher doctorate level, provides a system to co-ordinate and compare awards thereby facilitating progression and mobility for learners irrespective of the entry point or the education or training path followed. Under the Framework strategy, all IVET and CVET programmes must have provision for access, transfer and progression. All the above Leaving Certificate programmes lead to certification at levels 4 and 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications. The following link shows the various awards and levels within the NFQ.

<http://www.nfq.ie/nfq/en/images/LegacyFan.JPG>

#### **5.4 Alternance training including Apprenticeship**

Alternance IVET training combining a school-based environment and a real workplace is not a feature of IVET at upper secondary level in Ireland.

**Apprenticeship** is the recognised means by which individuals are trained to become craftspersons. The apprenticeship system is managed by FÁS, in co-operation with the Department of Education and Skills (DES), the employers and the trade unions, under the aegis of the National Apprenticeship Advisory Committee. Funding for apprenticeship training is sourced from the employer-levied, National Training Fund (NTF), together with central government funds. The NTF funds most of the costs of apprenticeship training undertaken in FÁS, whereas the government

funds most of the costs of the apprentices training undertaken in the education system, i.e. in the Institutes of Technology.

Apprentices receive alternating on and off-the-job training in 26 designated occupations including the construction, engineering, motor, furniture and printing trades, all of which come within the scope of a standards-based statutory system. The apprenticeship system comprises seven phases over a period of four years and the curricula are based on pre-specified standards which are agreed with industry. All new apprentices are required to be registered with FÁS *eCollege* where they will have access to a range of online learning materials relevant to their course. Three of the apprentice phases are off-the-job, and are they delivered in FÁS Training Centres and Institutes of Technology over a total of forty weeks. The four on-the-job phases take place with the employer.

Table 19 below outlines the main characteristics of apprenticeship training in Ireland.

<b>TABLE 19: MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING</b>						
<b>Alternance Programme</b>	<b>MAIN ECONOMIC SECTORS</b>	<b>CORRESPONDING ISCED LEVEL/ ORIENTATION</b>	<b>BALANCE BETWEEN GENERAL AND VOCATIONAL SUBJECTS</b>	<b>BALANCE BETWEEN SCHOOL-BASED AND WORK-BASED TRAINING</b>	<b>AVERAGE DURATION OF STUDIES</b>	<b>TRANSFER TO OTHER PATHWAYS</b>
Apprenticeship	26 designated occupations including construction, electrical, engineering, motor, furniture and printing.	ISCED 4 oriented to level 5B	100% vocational subjects.	80% work-based 20% training/education based.	4 years	Tertiary and Non-tertiary further Vocational education and training and pathways to possible entrepreneurship.

Apprentices are recruited and employed in their chosen occupation by companies approved by FÁS, and receive wages when training on-the-job. This is based on a percentage of the full craft wage. Funding of apprentices during off -the-job training phases is provided by the state and apprentices receive a trainee allowance (equivalent to their wage) from FÁS.

The minimum entrance requirements laid down for apprenticeship are that apprentices must be at least 16 years of age and have a minimum of five passes in 5 subjects in the Junior Certificate (State examination at the end of the lower secondary cycle) or equivalent grades in other approved examinations. If the educational requirements are not met, an interview or preparatory training course may provide an alternative entry pathway. Persons over 25 years of age, who have a minimum of 3 years work experience relevant to their chosen occupation, may also be accepted.

School leavers entering apprenticeships over the last number of years have tended to have had Leaving Certificate qualifications. A similar apprenticeship model is found in some other areas of initial vocational training, e.g. in the farming, tourism and hospitality sectors and defence forces. In addition, many professional bodies also operate apprenticeship-style schemes, involving full-time employment with day release or evening course provision, for example in accountancy and law.

FÁS develops curricula for all its courses, including apprenticeship training. It is also responsible for the quality assurance and conformance of its training materials with the requirements of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and the Further Education and Training Awards Council, FETAC. Apprentices, on successfully completing their apprenticeships, are awarded a FETAC Advanced Certificate at Level 6 on the NFQ. The curriculum of FÁS apprenticeships is standards-based, focusing on learning outcomes and structured on a modular format. Apprenticeship curricula, is reviewed regularly by subject expert committees, representing the social partners and education and training organisations, under the direction of the National Apprenticeship Advisory Committee. FÁS has recently revised its curricula for all the apprenticeship trades and it has developed five additional apprenticeships in areas such as print media, industrial installation, jewellery, electronic security systems and farriery as well as new ‘Generic Common Modules’, for example basic IT awareness.

Due to the growth in the economy from 1998-2006, there was a rapid expansion in total apprentice registrations from 16,125 in 1998 to 29,801 in 2006, with approximately 11,900 companies participating in the scheme. During these years the profile of apprenticeships was dominated by the construction and electrical trades, which accounted for over 80% of all apprenticeship starts in 2006. Since the collapse of the construction sector in 2007 the total number of apprentices has fallen dramatically and in 2010 the total number of apprentices across all phases of training was 17,578. The number of people entering apprenticeship in 2010 was 1,204, which was 22% less than the 2009 level and 68% less than the level in 2008<sup>35</sup>. Employment in the sector has fallen by over 150,000 persons during the same period.

**TABLE 20: STUDENTS IN VOCATIONAL UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION BY TYPE OF PROGRAMME, 2008 [%]**

<b>GEO</b>	<b>B E</b>	<b>C Z</b>	<b>D K</b>	<b>D E</b>	<b>E E</b>	<b>I E</b>	<b>E S</b>	<b>F R</b>	<b>C Y</b>	<b>L V</b>	<b>L U</b>	<b>H U</b>	<b>N L</b>	<b>A T</b>	<b>P L</b>	<b>S I</b>	<b>S K</b>	<b>F I</b>	<b>S E</b>
<b>SCHOOL BASED</b>	96	55	1	26	99	94	96	72	N	N	77	43	70	55	88	N	60	80	N
<b>COMBINE D</b>	4	45	99	74	1	6	4	28	:	:	23	57	30	45	12	:	40	20	:
<b>TOTAL VET</b>	<b>100</b>																		

Source: Cedefop’s calculation based on Eurostat, UOE data collection on education systems, date of extraction 25.7.2010.

(:) - not available (N) - negligible

Note: According to the method adopted in the UOE data collection on education systems, vocational programmes may be defined as: a) school-based programmes (if at least 75 % of the programme curriculum is presented in the school environment); b) combined school- and work-based programmes (if less than 75 % of the curriculum is presented in the school environment). Data presented here originate from the UOE data collection on education systems and are subject to its methodology. VET Students: Regardless, of such distinction, VET students are counted if the school-based component accounts for at least 10 percent of the study over the whole length of the programme (Usual UOE coverage).

<sup>35</sup> FÁS Annual Report 2010.

## 5.5 Programmes and alternative pathways for young people

A variety of measures and legislation have been introduced to tackle early school leaving, such as the 'Education Welfare Act 2000' and the 'Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004'. The National Education Welfare Board was established to address early school-leaving. Both the 2007 National Skills Strategy and the National Anti -Poverty Strategy have a specific target to reduce the number of young people who leave school early so that the percentage of those who complete upper secondary level or equivalent will eventually reach 90% from a baseline figure of 81.6 % in 1999. Table 7 in Section 1.4 indicates the reduction in the percentage of early school leavers from 2002-07.

The Junior Certificate School Programme was introduced in September 1996 in order to cater for the needs of a small group of pupils whose needs were not being adequately addressed by the existing Junior Certificate Programme. The programme offers an alternative approach to achieve the aims and educational standards of the Junior Certificate Programme. Schools offering this programme are entitled to an additional allocation of teaching hours. In 2009, the programme was operating in over 240 schools throughout the country.

In recent years several strategies have been put in place to address the IVET needs of those who drop-out of school without any qualifications, as well as the other transition or progression issues associated with this group.

Youthreach is the national response to the needs of unqualified early school leavers in Ireland. It seeks to provide people in its target group, who are between the ages of 15 and 20, with the knowledge, skills and confidence required to participate fully in society and progress to further education, training and employment. It offers a programme of integrated general education, vocational training and work experience, which aims to give participants a "basket" of vocational and social skills, structured around two key phases:

- a foundation phase, which helps to overcome learning difficulties, develop self-confidence and gain a range of competencies essential for further learning;
- a progression phase, which provides for more specific development through a range of educational, training and work experience options.

By 2010, Youthreach was being offered in about 110 centres catering for nearly 3,400 places. Basic skills training, practical work training and general education are all features of the current programme, and the application of new technology is integrated into all aspects of programme content. The programme provides a strong emphasis on personal development, on the core skills of literacy, numeracy, communications and information technology, along with a choice of vocational options such as catering, hairdressing, computers, woodwork, photography, video, sports, art and craft and vocational work experience. A weekly training allowance is also paid, which varies depending on age.

Courses are full-time and are available on a year-round basis, and part-time options are currently being developed. Centres and workshops are distributed throughout the country, mostly in disadvantaged areas, in both urban and rural communities. In addition, Youthreach is generally delivered in out-of-school settings. National certification is available through the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC), usually up to Levels 3 and 4, while participants are also entitled to enter Department of Education and Skills (DES) examinations as mature or external applicants. In addition, certification is available on a modular basis to allow participants to learn at their own pace.

Youthreach is administered at a local level by the Vocational Education Committees (VECs) and FÁS regional management on behalf of the DES. In addition, VECs are supported by a Youthreach National Co-ordinator.

Senior Traveller Training (STT) seeks to provide an opportunity for members of the Traveller<sup>36</sup> community and others to engage in a programme of learning that affirms their cultural identity and helps them to acquire the knowledge, skills and confidence to participate fully in society and progress to further education, training and employment.

Senior Traveller Training Centres (STTCs) were established in 1974 to provide basic compensatory education for Travellers between the ages of 15 and 25, although the upper age limit has since been abolished. The target group is people who have left school with either minimal or no qualifications, and there is a network of 33 centres and three outreach centres throughout the country. Particular efforts are also made to encourage Traveller parents into centres because of the impact this can have on their children's education.

Training focuses on essential skills such as literacy, numeracy, social and life skills, woodwork, metalwork and home economics. As well as providing essential education in a more holistic-centred approach, they also try to break down the barrier of discrimination and engender more co-operation and respect between the Travelling community and the "settled" community. The programme is delivered in a 44 week duration over two years, and this training period can be extended if necessary to facilitate access to Leaving Cert qualifications or equivalent. The increased adoption of educational programmes accredited by FETAC has also resulted in more broad-based educational provision that is designed to prepare students for future full-time paid employment.

The STTCs are administered at a local level by the VECs on behalf of the DES, with support from an STTC National Co-ordinator.

In line with Traveller Education Strategy and the 2008 Value for Money (VFM) Review of Youthreach and STTCs, it was announced in Budget 2011 that an integrated further education provision for Travellers will be implemented through the phasing out of STTCs by June 2012 and replacement places, prioritised for Travellers, will be provided by the Back to Education Initiative (BTEI). This means there will be no new enrolments in STTCs from 1 January 2011.<sup>37</sup>

FÁS provides Community Based Training which is designed for unemployed early school leavers; people with disabilities; and unemployed people who are unable, due to personal, social or geographic reasons, to access FÁS mainstream training. Community Based Training is accessed through FÁS funded Community Training Centres (CTCs), Specialist Training Providers (STPs) and Local Training Initiatives (LTIs). These programmes cater for the needs of learners who are given the opportunity to take part in education and training ranging from FETAC levels 3 to level 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). All training programmes delivered through these interventions address both the generic and vocational skills requirements of participating learners.

At the end of 2009-10, there were 3,452<sup>38</sup> young persons attending Youthreach programmes in vocational education centres and 1,020<sup>39</sup> attending Traveller training centres, while an average of 2,300 early school leavers were availing of FÁS CTC-training at any one time, and a total of just

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<sup>36</sup> The Travelling Community in Ireland is a nomadic ethnic minority. There are estimated to be in excess of 25,000 Travellers in the Republic of Ireland

<sup>37</sup> *Organisation and Current Issues, A Brief for the Information of the Minister for Education and Skills*, March 2011. Department of Education and Skills

<sup>38</sup> *Department of Education and Skills Statistics 2009/2010*

<sup>39</sup> *Department of Education and Skills Statistics 2009/2010*

over 2,100 finished their training.<sup>40</sup> A total of 3,791<sup>41</sup> participants completed training on LTIs during 2010.

Table 21: Main Types of other VET Programmes for young people

Name of IVET programme	Admission requirements	Main economic sectors	Corresponding ISCED level and orientation/destination	Balance between general and vocational subjects	Balance between school- and work-based training (share in %?)	Average duration of studies	Transfer (horizontal/vertical) to other pathways
Youthreach	Unqualified early school leavers aged between 15 and 20 years	All sectors	Level 2 Orientation to Level 3B	25% / 75%	90% training-based, 10% work-based	2 Years	Further non-tertiary VET up to FETAC Level5 on the NFO
Senior Traveller Training Programme	Travellers who have left school with either minimal or no qualifications and who are aged between 15-25 years	All sectors	Level 1/ 2 Orientation to Level 3B	15% / 85%	100% training-based	44 weeks over 2 years	Further non-tertiary VET
Community-based training	Unqualified early school leavers aged between 15 and 20 years	All sectors	Level 2 Orientation to Level 3B	25% / 75%	100% training-based		Further non-tertiary VET up to FETAC Level5 on the NFO

## 5.6 Vocational education and training at post-secondary (non-tertiary) level

There is a range of IVET programmes for people who have completed compulsory secondary education. The two largest programmes are the Post-Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses for young people seeking to upgrade their qualifications and FÁS training for young job-seekers. Post Leaving Certificate courses (PLCs) aim to provide a bridge between school and work for those who need further initial vocational education to improve their employment opportunities. The programme has grown considerably and there are now over 1,000 course options. A wide range of disciplines are covered including Business Studies, Electronics, Engineering, ICT, Catering, Horticulture, Sport and Leisure, Theatre and Stage, Childcare, Equestrian Studies and Media Studies. Programmes are of one to three years duration and courses adopt an integrated approach, focusing on technical knowledge, core skills and work experience which can lead to certification from the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETEC) at levels 5 or 6 on the National Framework of **Qualifications (NFQ)**

<sup>40</sup> FÁS Annual Report 2010.

<sup>41</sup> FÁS Annual Report 2010.

Over 90% of PLC course provision is within the Vocational Education Committee (VEC) sector. Over 50% of all participants are over 21 years, and accordingly the courses are an important re-entry route to learning for adults, as well as catering for some 18% of all school leavers each year. While the courses offer an alternative to programmes available in higher education, certain PLCs are accepted as bridges into university education through e.g. the Higher Education Links scheme. They can also provide an alternative route to third level education in the Institutes of Technology for those who have completed the Leaving Certificate Applied Programme. (See Section: 5.3). In 2009-10 there were approximately 30,528<sup>42</sup> persons enrolled on full-time PLC courses. The programme is the largest non-tertiary, post secondary-level, initial vocational education programme in Ireland.

One of the main publicly-funded providers of post-secondary vocational training is FÁS the Training and Employment Authority. While many of FÁS courses cater for young persons receiving initial vocational training, these courses are also open to all age groups. Both Specific Skills training courses (SST) and Traineeships are designed to enable participants to directly enter the labour market. Traineeships involve employers, union representatives and FÁS working together to devise occupational-specific training programmes for jobseekers. The training content and occupational standards are based on consultation with employers and lead to certification by FETAC at levels 3-5 on the NQF. Traineeships combine structured on-the-job training with formal off- the-job tuition in a FÁS Training Centre. In host companies trainees are assigned a mentor or skills coach who supervises workplace training. Traineeships vary in duration from six to twenty-four months, depending on the scope of the curriculum, the skill requirement of the occupation and the entry level of the trainees. Example of these programmes include, retail assistants, beauty therapists, pharmacy and legal secretary traineeships. In 2010 4,371<sup>43</sup> persons completed traineeships, an increase from 2,228 (49%) in 2008.

SST courses concentrate on high-level technical skills and soft skills (e.g. communications, team-working, career planning). The duration of these full-time courses varies, but usually they last for four to six months. In 2010, 20,618<sup>44</sup> persons completed SST courses, while another 3,789 completed bridging/foundation-type courses<sup>45</sup>. The Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) award a 'Specific Skills Certificate' at levels 4/5 for SST participants and the 'National Skills Certificate' for Traineeships. These are placed at levels 4, 5 and 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications. They do not lead to direct entry into third-level education.

IVET is also provided through the following publicly-funded sectoral agencies:

- **Fáilte Ireland**, the National Tourism Development Authority, provides full-time day and block release courses, for trainees, in the hotel, catering and tourism industry. These courses are mainly for young entrants pursuing careers in tourism and related hospitality occupations. The trainees are generally aged from 17 to 24 years, and the courses range from one to four years, depending on whether they are full-time, block or day-release courses. Formal instruction is mainly delivered in Institutes of Technology and it is complemented by periods of industry work experience. Despite the reduction in employment levels in the sector over the past few years, there remained a demand, although reduced, for skilled staff in specific tourism and hospitality disciplines. As a consequence, Fáilte Ireland continued to provide accredited training and educational support to both school leavers and adults seeking employment in the tourism industry. In total, 2,600 persons participated - 650 on skills programmes and 1,997 in college-based programmes, in 2009.<sup>46</sup> The latter courses

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<sup>42</sup> Department of Education and Skills Statistics 2009/2010.

<sup>43</sup> FÁS Annual Report 2010

<sup>44</sup> FÁS Annual Report 2010

<sup>45</sup> FÁS Annual Report 2010

<sup>46</sup> Fáilte Ireland Annual Report 2009.

were accredited by both FETAC and the Higher Education and Training Authority-HETAC at levels 6-8 on the NFQ.

- **Teagasc**, the Agriculture and Food Development Authority, provides training for young people wishing to pursue a career in agriculture, horticulture and equine studies. Enrolments in the seven Teagasc colleges and twelve Regional Education Centres increased by 4% in 2009. A total of 809 students enrolled in further education programmes at colleges while the total overall number participating in these programmes was 2,180. Teagasc also delivers 11 higher level education programmes in conjunction with various higher level institutions. A total of 279 students enrolled in higher level programmes in 2009 while the overall number participating in these programmes was 1,042. Participants in further education programmes can transfer into higher level courses if they achieve a merit or distinction and all higher level students can progress to level 8 on the NQF and beyond. In 2009, 94 students progressed from further level programmes to higher level programmes. A total of 2,651 participants in Teagasc programmes were put forward for FETAC awards in 2009, this comprised 1,288 Major Awards, 375 Special Purpose Awards and 988 Minor Awards.<sup>47</sup>
- **Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM)**, the Irish Fisheries Board, is responsible for the development of the sea fishing industry. It has responsibility for all aspects of the industry's training needs, including promoting awareness of careers within the seafood industry and in human resource development. Total training provision in 2009 was 1,570 of which 867 people attended Safety at Sea courses; 264 attended Radio communications courses; 242 attended Modular FETAC Certificate courses and 197 attended Department of Transport certificate courses.<sup>48</sup>
- **Údarás Na Gaeltachta** is a regionally-based economic development agency, which operates in Irish-speaking (Gaeltacht) areas. It provides education and training which are considered core elements of the agency's development strategy for the Gaeltacht areas. Collaborative initiatives have commenced with a number of third-level institutions, with an emphasis on third-level education through Irish. At initial VET level there are four main priorities aimed at raising skill levels and improving educational achievements at individual or community level. These are: management development and summer work experience schemes; apprentice development and third level education provision through Irish.<sup>49</sup>

Other forms of initial vocational training include training for new entrants into the civil service and public service such as the defence and police forces, and for the professions such as accountancy and law. Table 23 overleaf sets out the main types of non-tertiary IVET.

Table 22 below shows the number of students enrolled in post-secondary non-tertiary education by orientation. There is no education/training classified at ISCED level 4 Gen in Ireland. All students involved in apprenticeship, PLC courses, traineeships, SST training and those undertaking training at sectoral level and IVET for the professions and public services are categorised at ISCED level 4 Voc.

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<sup>47</sup> *BIM Annual Report 2009*

<sup>48</sup> *Teagasc Annual Report 2009*

<sup>49</sup> *Údarás Na Gaeltachta Annual Report 2009.*

**TABLE 22: STUDENTS ENROLLED IN POST SECONDARY NON TERTIARY EDUCATION BY PROGRAMME ORIENTATION (VALUES AND SHARE OF THE TOTAL), 2009**

<b>GEO</b>	<b>TOTAL ISCED4</b>	<b>ISCED4GEN (NUM)</b>	<b>ISCE4 GEN (%)</b>	<b>ISCED4VO C (NUM)</b>	<b>ISCED4 (%)</b>
EU-27	1501995	173928	11.6	1328067 (s)	88.4
IE	65678	:	0.0	65678	100.0

**Table 23: Main types of non-tertiary VET Programmes**

<b>Name of programme</b>	<b>Admission requirements</b>	<b>Main economic sectors</b>	<b>Corresponding level of study</b>	<b>Balance between general and vocational subjects</b>	<b>Balance between school- and work-based training (share in %?)</b>	<b>Average duration of studies</b>
<b>Post Leaving Certificate Programme (PLC)</b>	Completion of any of the 3 Leaving Certificate Courses or relevant work experience.	All Sectors	ISCED 4A/B orientated to level 5A/B	65% vocational subjects and 35% general subjects	90% school-based. 10% work-based	1-3 years
<b>Traineeships</b>	Completion of Junior Certificate (Many have completed Leaving Certificates)	Occupation specific eg Retail, legal	ISCED 4B orientated to level 5B	100% vocational subjects	50% work-based and 50% formal training	6 months - 1 year
<b>Specific Skills Training (SST)</b>	Completion of Junior Certificate (Many have completed Leaving Certificates)	All Sectors	ISCED 4B orientated to level 5B	100% vocational subjects	100% formal training	3 months - 1 year
<b>Bridging, Foundation Courses</b>	No minimum education requirements	All Sectors	ISCED 2 orientated to level 3B	100% vocational and vocationally oriented general subjects	100% formal training	4- 6 months
<b>IVET at Sectoral Level</b>	Usually completion of any of the 3 Leaving Certificate Programmes	Hotel/Catering/Tourism, Agriculture, Horticulture, Forestry, Fishing and Marine	ISCED 4B orientated to 5A/B	Variable - depending on programme and institution concerned	Varies according to sectoral needs. Some programmes contain a large amount of work-based training	1-4 years
<b>IVET for the Professions</b>	Successful completion of	Law and Accountancy	ISCED 4B/5A orientated to	100% vocational	50% work-based	

and for the Public Services	the Leaving Certificate - mainly established and vocational	Police and Defence forces	level 6	subjects	training and 50% school-based	
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Source: Cedefop, (derived from) Ireland, VET in Europe, Country Report 2009, M. Barry, FÁS, 2009.

### 5.7 Vocational education and training at tertiary level

The third-level education sector is principally funded by the state, mainly through the Higher Education Authority (HEA), which has overall statutory authority for advising on, planning and developing higher education and research. This sector comprises the Universities (7), the technology sector (Institutes of Technology) and the Colleges of Education (7). Table 24 shows the numbers of full-time students in third-level education aided by the Department of Education and Skills.

TABLE 24: NUMBER OF FULL-TIME STUDENTS IN INSTITUTIONS AIDED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS IN 2009/2010	
LEVEL	NOS. OF STUDENTS
UNIVERSITY SECTOR	87,623
TECHNOLOGY SECTOR (IOTs/DIT)	59,832
TEACHER TRAINING INSTITUTIONS	6,732
OTHER AIDED (INCLUDING BY OTHER DEPARTMENTS)	3,759
TOTAL THIRD LEVEL	157,946

Source: Education Statistics, Annual Report 2009-10 Department of Education and Science.

Entry into third-level education is based mainly on results in the Leaving Certificate examination. A 'points' system, computed on six subjects in the Leaving Certificate, operates where there are more eligible applicants than places on the courses. Third level honours degree programmes are normally of three or four years duration with higher certificates and ordinary degree courses being two and three years respectively. While the universities make their own awards (which are placed in the NFQ), accreditation for students participating in full-time, third level higher education in ITs and other private institutions of higher education (private colleges or business schools), is mainly awarded by HETAC, the Higher Education and Training Awards Council.

The Institutes of Technology (ITs) are the main third-level educational institutions providing courses aimed at the IVET sector. There are fifteen ITs run by independent boards of management with a large element of funding and direction from the Department of Education and Skills. The institutes provide a comprehensive range of courses including the off-the-job educational elements for those participating in the statutory apprenticeship schemes, (see Section: 5.4 above), and provide initial vocational courses for young entrants into the tourism, agriculture, horticulture and forestry sectors (section 5.6). They also provide higher technical and technological education through two-year Higher Certificate, three-year Ordinary Bachelor Degree and four-year Honours Bachelor Degrees. All training includes a significant practical element and an element broadly related to the new technologies. Courses do not focus on narrowly-defined skills; instead they impart a broad education and occupational training with an emphasis on theoretical understanding as well as practical skills. This approach provides a basis for subsequent education, training and lifelong learning as skill requirements change and become more complex. Courses in the institutes are

certified by the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC). In 2009/10, 38% of full-time students enrolled in third level institutions aided by the DES were attending ITs.

Other significant providers of initial vocational education at third level are the four Primary level Teacher Training Colleges, the two Home Economics Colleges and a Physical Education Colleges in the University of Limerick. Teachers of art and of music are trained in the National College of Art & Design (NCAD) and the Royal Irish Academy respectively. Teachers of Religion are trained in the Mater Dei Institute of Education in Dublin. In addition, there are a number of independent private colleges offering third level qualifications. The Open University (Ireland), and the National Distance (learning) Education Centre (OSCAIL), based in Dublin City University, both have a network of study centres throughout the country.

The Irish university system offers degree programmes – at Bachelor, Masters and Doctorate level – in the humanities, in the sciences (including technological and social) and in medicine. The majority of courses are full-time. Most universities have introduced semesterisation and modularisation of courses, giving greater flexibility to students. Typically, teaching at undergraduate level is by way of a programme of lectures supplemented by tutorials and, where appropriate, practical demonstrations and laboratory work. Assessment is normally by examination with some element of course work being taken into account. Undergraduate courses take three to four years to complete. Masters degrees are usually taken by course work, research work or a combination of both. Doctoral degrees are awarded on the basis of research. Universities award their own degrees using external examiners to ensure consistency of standards. The courses generally take place in the university and college campuses

**Table 25: VET at tertiary level**

Name of programme	Admission requirements	Main economic sectors	Corresponding level of study	Balance between general and vocational subjects	Balance between school- and work-based training (share in %?)	Average duration of studies
Honours Bachelor Degree NQF Level 8	Relevant Leaving Certificate Points	Various. Almost all occupation areas	ISCED 5A	Various	Mainly college-based but elements of work-based	3 - 4 years
Ordinary Degree NQF Level 7	Relevant Leaving Certificate Points	Various. Almost all occupation areas	ISCED 5B	Various	Mainly college-based but elements of work-based	Generally 3 years
Higher Certificate NFQ Level 6 HETAC	Relevant Leaving Certificate Points	Various. Almost all occupation areas	ISCED 5B	Various	Mainly college-based but elements of work-based	Generally 2 years

The OECD 2010 'Education at a Glance' (Table A2.4, page 57) shows that 20% of the cohort in Ireland entered Tertiary Type B (certificate/diploma/degree) education and 46% entered Tertiary Type A (primary degree/masters) in 2008. This can be compared with the OECD average rates of 16% and 56% respectively for a similar cohort.

The latest available Eurostat data (2009) shows that for ISCED 5A level the participation rates were lower than the EU average (69% and 84% respectively), but higher for ISCED level 5B (27% and 13% respectively).

<b>TABLE 26: STUDENTS AT ISCED LEVEL 5 BY PROGRAMME DESTINATION (VALUES AND SHARE OF THE TOTAL) AND AT ISCED LEVEL 6 (VALUES), 2009</b>						
<b>GEO</b>	<b>TOTAL ISCED5</b>	<b>ISCED5A (NUM)</b>	<b>ISCED 5A (%)</b>	<b>ISCED5B (NUM)</b>	<b>ISCED 5B (%)</b>	<b>TOTAL ISCED 6</b>
EU-27	19505749	16370782	83.9	2617882	13.4	517085
IE	182609	126794	69.4	48494	26.6	7321

Source: Eurostat (UOE); extracted on: 19-05-2011; last update: 13-05-2011.

Description: Students at ISCED level 5 by programme destination (values and share of the total) and at ISCED level 6  
Additional note: Totals and percentages are Cedefop's calculation.

## 5.8 Language learning in IVET

In Ireland the learning of foreign languages<sup>50</sup> is not compulsory at any stage in the education system. For most second level students, English and Irish are compulsory subjects and in 2010, 95% of students sat the Leaving Certificate English examination and 82% sat the Irish examination. The majority of students at upper secondary level study a foreign language, most often French – 51% in 2010. The take-up rates for German and Spanish were smaller at 13% and 7%, respectively. Italian, Russian and Japanese are also offered. The high proportion of Irish students studying foreign languages at the end of the second cycle is attributed primarily to the National University of Ireland's matriculation requirement for a foreign language – a third language is required for access to each of the four constituent universities of the National University of Ireland. However, in recent years this rule has been relaxed in the case of some programmes.<sup>51</sup> Competence in a third language is not required to access programmes in the remaining universities or in the Institutes of Technology except where those programmes involve the study of a particular language at advanced level.

Almost 1,000 students sat two foreign languages in the Leaving Certificate examination in 2010. Overall, the majority (80%, or 757 students) of those who sat two foreign languages in 2010 had taken French with one other language, mostly either German or Spanish<sup>52</sup>.

Candidates may also sit examinations in a non-curricular EU language. A non-curricular EU language does not form part of the normal school curriculum but students who are from an EU

<sup>50</sup> In this context, the term 'foreign' is used to denote a language that is not generally spoken in Ireland and as such excludes English and Irish.

<sup>51</sup> For example, with effect from 2003/4, NUI Maynooth accepts any recognised subject in place of the third language for engineering courses.

<sup>52</sup> *Monitoring Ireland's Skills Supply, Trends in Education and Training Outputs*, July 2011 EGFSN.

member state and who speak the language as a mother tongue may opt to be examined in that language. Candidates may sit only one non-curricular language subject for the Leaving Certificate examination. In 2010, 1,050 students sat a non-curricular language examination. Of these, 43% sat an exam in the Polish language followed by Lithuanian (20%) and Romanian (12%)<sup>53</sup>.

Students who opt to study for the Leaving Vocational Programme are obliged to take either a modern language or a vocational language module as one of their subject options.

In Ireland, language curricula at upper-secondary level are defined at national level. Teachers have considerable latitude within the curriculum framework to choose their own teaching methods, textbooks and other teaching tools. Teachers are free to adopt the approaches that they deem most appropriate. The factors most commonly taken into account by teachers when deciding on approaches and methodologies are the aims of the curriculum; attainment targets; the interests, abilities and motivation of students; and modes of assessment<sup>54</sup>.

The Leaving Certificate language examinations are centrally set and comprise an oral, an aural (listening) and a written examination.

Specialist inspectors of languages evaluate the teaching and learning of the languages and they write reports that are issued to schools and also published on the web site of the Department of Education and Skills. The emphasis is on evaluating the subject in a whole-school context, not on the work of individual teachers.

There are a number of language courses offered by the PLC sector. Examples include Language and European Studies and Pre-University Languages.

In modern language teaching in tertiary institutions, efforts are made to teach using the target language as the medium of instruction. Courses at undergraduate and post-graduate level on European Studies, combine language study with subjects such as history, geography, art and philosophy. Special efforts are made to support students who have a limited standard in the target language for such courses. Most universities have language centres which specialise in supporting students to develop a functional knowledge of languages required in their academic studies. European Studies has become an increasingly attractive option. Course pairings such as a European Language combined with Business, Law, and Economics have also become more popular<sup>55</sup>.

The EU Erasmus Programme is also an important mechanism for developing language capability along with a professional third level qualification. The programme gives students the opportunity to spend up to a year abroad to improve their language skills and cultural awareness. However the number of third level students availing of the programme is very small relative to the numbers taking foreign languages at Leaving Certificate. Overall enrolment in third level language courses has been in decline in recent years, particularly in the institutes of technology.

The report by the Expert Group on Future Skill Needs<sup>56</sup> states that there is a pressing requirement for a national languages policy and they recommend that this policy should be formulated by the relevant stakeholders. A more recent report published by the Royal Irish Academy<sup>57</sup> re-emphasises

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<sup>53</sup> *Monitoring Ireland's Skills Supply, Trends in Education and Training Outputs*, July 2011 EGFSN.

<sup>54</sup> *Evaluating Languages. Report of the Evaluation of Foreign Languages at Upper Secondary Level (EFLUSL)*, Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Skills, Ireland, 2009.

<sup>55</sup> *Organisation of the education system in Ireland. 2009/2010*. Eurydice.

<sup>56</sup> *Languages and Enterprise. The Demand and Supply of Foreign Language Skills in the Enterprise Sector*. Forfás. 2005 Ireland.

<sup>57</sup> *National Languages Strategy*. Royal Irish Academy National Committee for Modern Language, Literary and Cultural Studies August 2011. Ireland.

this point and states that a lack of such policy in primary and secondary schools is damaging Ireland's competitiveness internationally. This latter report recommends that "the DES, in consultation with language-teaching experts at all stages of the educational system, and on the basis of the many expert reviews produced in recent years, formulate a coherent languages-in-education policy".

## Theme 6 – Continuing vocational education and training

### 6.1 General background

There is no single system in Ireland delivering either IVET or CVET but rather a range of organisations who deliver programmes both for young people who have just completed their compulsory education and for those who wish to upgrade their skills having completed initial education and training. As a result of this, there is a significant crossover between the IVET and CVET qualification systems as they are not designed as separate systems. For example, most VEC courses and courses provided by publicly-funded agencies (eg FÁS, Teagasc etc) can and do equally serve for both IVET and CVET. It is the status of the learner that determines whether the education/training is initial or continuing rather than the system itself.

Ireland's CVET policies reflect the Government's commitment to Lifelong Learning. They focus on improving access to training, the development of new skills, the acquisition of recognised qualifications and progression to higher level qualifications. As noted in Section 4.4. above, **the main legislation** governing CVET includes the White Paper on Adult Education 2000, the Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning 2002, the National Skills Strategy 2007 and the National Strategy for Higher Education 2011. Currently, the Governments' key priorities for the implementation of a framework for Lifelong Learning are set out in the 'National Skills Strategy'<sup>58</sup> (NSS) published in 2007. These priorities include:

- addressing skill needs and widening access to lifelong learning in the context of an integrated approach to education and training;
- tackling disadvantage in terms of literacy and numeracy, early school leaving and providing second chance education and training for those with low skills;
- addressing 'access' barriers through the strengthening of financial supports, guidance, counselling and childcare services and increased flexibility of provision.

The National Skills Strategy seeks to achieve a significantly improved educational profile for the labour force through setting out the following targets:

- The setting of a long-term target for 500,000 adults to increase their levels of education attainment by at least one level on the National Framework of Qualifications. The aim is to up-skill 250,000 people from NFQ level 3 (Junior Cert equivalent) to level 5 (Leaving Cert equivalent); 140,000 from level 5 to level 6/7 (advanced certificate/ordinary degree); 70,000 from level 1 or 2 (school dropout) to level 3 and 30,000 from level 4/5 to level 8 (honours degree or above)<sup>59</sup>.
- Ensure that the output from the education system reaches its potential, through improving participation rates in upper secondary level to 90% and ensuring the progression rate to third level increases to 70%.

**Funding** for adult education and training (see also 10.3) has been substantially increased since 2000, with specific emphasis on a range of existing and new initiatives designed to improve the participation of adults with low levels of education attainment. Historically many of these initiatives were co-financed through the European Social Fund, but since 2000 the main source of funding for adult education is the Irish Exchequer.

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<sup>58</sup> *The National Skills Strategy*.

<sup>59</sup> An implementation statement for the Skills Strategy circulated by DES in 2010 found that while good progress had been made, more needed to be done particularly in regard to upskilling those at levels 1-3 to Levels 4 and 5 on the NFQ (EQF levels 3 and 4).

Central government funds providers directly through the Department of Education and Skills. Other Departments such as Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and Transport, Tourism and Sport also provide funding for their sectors. Funding for work-based learning is also provided through the National Training Fund administered by FÁS.

Over the past two decades a system of National Partnership Agreements has been in place<sup>60</sup>, comprising the government and the **social partners** (trade unions, employers, farming organisations and the community and voluntary sector). Every three years the social partners agreed a national programme for social and economic development which included policies relating to VET. The National Social Partnership Agreement ‘Towards 2016’, the ‘National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016’ and the current Programme for Government 2011, have all re-emphasised the government’s commitment to lifelong learning. The social partners also have a place in their representative capacity, within the structures established by the State, to meet the country’s general VET needs - they are represented on the Boards and/or Advisory Committees of FÁS, Fáilte Ireland, Teagasc, the National Apprenticeship Advisory Committee and the Expert Group on Future Skill Needs. They also have a representative role on the NCCA, on the awarding bodies FETAC and HETAC and the NQAI. They also have a consultative role in the allocation of funds for training schemes and programmes under the employer-levied National Training Fund.

There are a number of support bodies and institutions who are involved in bringing learning closer to learners. These include:

**AONTAS** - the Irish National Adult Learning Organisation, a voluntary organisation supported mainly by public funding. Its main goal is the promotion of the development of a learning society through the provision of a quality and comprehensive system of adult learning and education which is accessible to and inclusive of all.

The **National Adult Literacy Agency** (NALA) is also a voluntary organisation supported mainly by public funding. It lobbies for policy development in adult literacy and provides a range of services to adults with literacy difficulties and to adult literacy trainers in the Vocational Education Committees and other bodies.

The **Irish Vocational Education Association** (IVEA) is the national representative body charged with representing Vocational Education Committees. The IVEA is charged with protecting, promoting and enhancing the interests of vocational education and training within Ireland. The General Secretary of the IVEA also sits on the Board of FÁS.

**AEGIS** (The Adult Education Guidance and Information Service) provides an education guidance service for adults, which is about connecting adults with learning opportunities, especially related to adults who left school early and wish to re-enter the formal education system.

The **National Centre for Guidance in Education** (NCGE) is funded by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and plays a role in developing quality career guidance in Ireland. Its main functions are to develop and evaluate guidance practice and material in all areas of education; provide technical advice and organise in-career development training, as well as contributing to policy formation in the field of guidance, including supporting teachers and guidance counsellors. The management committee is appointed by the Minister for Education and Skills.

The **Up-skilling Co-ordination Group** was established in 2007. The purpose of the group is to

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<sup>60</sup> Ireland’s social partnership model has recently been weakened to some extent as a result of the severity of the recession and the deterioration of the Irish economy leading to scarce public resources.

provide a forum for providers of training and vocational education to exchange information and to discuss common issues. It also assists in overseeing the effective co-ordination of different education and training provision funded by the DES and delivered by FÁS, Skillnets, the VECs and the Institutes of Technology. The Group met once in 2010. The Group updates the Senior Officials Group on the implementation of the National Skills Strategy on progress on improving co-ordination of the State's Education and Training provision. Membership of the Group comprises or representatives from the following organisations; The Department of Education and Science, the Higher Education and Training Authority, the Further Education and Training Authority, FÁS, FORFAS, Enterprise Ireland, County Enterprise Boards, County Development Boards, Institutes of Technology, NALA, the IVEA and Skillnets.

The **National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education** which facilitates and monitors participation of under-represented groups in higher education.

## 6.2 Formal Learning in CVET

As noted in 6.1 above, there is no single system delivering either IVET or CVET in Ireland and as a consequence there is a significant crossover between the two educational systems as they are not designed as separate systems. There is also no legislative distinction between formal, non-formal and informal continuing vocational education and training in Ireland.

The definitions of formal and non-formal learning are described in the NQAI report, *Principles and Guidelines for the Recognition of Prior Learning in further and higher education and training*<sup>61</sup>. This report follows these definitions

- **Formal learning** which takes place through programmes of study or training that are delivered by education or training providers, and which attract awards.
- **Non-formal learning** takes place alongside the mainstream systems of education and training. It may be assessed but does not normally lead to formal certification. Examples of non-formal learning are: learning and training activities undertaken in the workplace, voluntary sector or trade union and in community-based learning.

### Main Characteristics of Formal CVET Training Programmes

In Ireland formal CVET takes several forms. These include:

- Second chance/re-entry by adults into further non-tertiary or higher non-university level continuing education;
- Ongoing publicly funded occupational and general skills training provided by public training and educational institutions;
- Self-funded education and training and general part-time provision;
- Education and training for unemployed and redundant persons<sup>62</sup>.

**Second chance vocational education** caters for learners at all levels from pre-foundation to higher, non-tertiary level and is generally open to all. It mainly addresses the educational deficits of those people who have not completed upper second-level education and provision is not only confined to CVET. The Further Education (FE) colleges are the largest players in this form of VET. FE colleges are general purpose institutions, covering both general and vocational education; they are all-age institutions with a large number of adults enrolled and normally they provide a range of both

<sup>61</sup> NQAI (2005), *National Principles and Operational Guidelines for the Recognition of Prior Learning*.

<sup>62</sup> CVET programmes to help job-seekers and people vulnerable to exclusion from the labour market is covered under 6.5 below:

short and long courses. Examples of second chance vocational education provision are the Post Leaving Certificate programme (PLCs) and the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) for the unemployed.

The **PLC** programme was originally introduced to provide appropriate vocational training for young people to bridge the gap between school and work (See 5.6). Although principally directed at school leavers, it also is an important re-entry route to learning for adults, with 52% of all award recipients in 2010 over 30 years of age. The PLC programme integrates training for vocational skills in particular disciplines with the development of general skills necessary in all jobs. It also includes work experience to give relevance to the skills learnt. Courses are of one or two years' duration, they can be taken on a full or part-time basis and they focus on ICT, language learning and technical training. The courses are locally-based and mainly facilitated by the Vocational Education Committees (VECs). The majority of PLC courses are offered at further non-tertiary level, (ISCED level 3/4) and lead to certification by the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC), at levels 3, 4 and 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), although in certain situations they can facilitate progression to further education at tertiary (non-university) level 6-7 on the NFQ, leading to certification by the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC). For example the Post-Leaving Certificate courses in health care can facilitate progression to a degree in nursing.

**VTOS** - The Vocational Training Opportunity Scheme is funded by the Department of Education & Skills and operates through the 33 Vocational Education Committees (VECs). VTOS is a spectrum of education-led, vocationally-oriented and progression-focused learning opportunities. VTOS courses are offered between levels 3 and 6 on the National Qualifications Framework. It aims to raise general education levels, give access to national qualifications, and provide progression opportunities to employment and/or further education and training leading to employment.

VTOS provides full-time second-chance education and training opportunities for unemployed adults who are over the age of 21 and in receipt of specified social welfare payments for at least six months. From the 2008/2009 academic year, the six month requirement does not apply to those in receipt of a specified social welfare payment who received statutory redundancy.

There are 5,000 VTOS places available nationally each year. *Core VTOS* (3500 places) is delivered over a 2 year fulltime course in stand-alone groups of up to 20 VTOS participants. *Dispersed VTOS* (1500 places) is generally delivered over a 1 year full-time PLC course where VTOS students learn alongside a range of other learners<sup>63</sup>.

**Publicly funded continuing occupational and skills training** is provided mainly by the following publicly funded state agencies:

- **FÁS** provides training for adults who wish to enter or re-enter the workforce or to generally update their skills within it. Courses range from full-time specific skills training, part-time evening class provision, to the e-learning opportunities provided by the FÁS eCollege.
- **Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM)**, the Irish Sea Fisheries Board, provides continuing training for those employed in the fishing, fish processing and aquaculture industries. Mobile Coastal Training Units target the needs of remote rural and island fishing communities.
- **Coillte**, the Irish Forestry Board, provides ongoing training for all forestry workers in its own training centres. The industry formed a company, Forestry Training & Education Ireland to identify the training needs of the sector.

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<sup>63</sup> Eurydice

- **Teagasc**, the Agriculture and Food Development Authority, provides integrated research, advisory and training services for the agriculture and food industry in Ireland. It also provides third-level and vocational courses for students entering the agricultural, horticultural or agri-food industry. Established farmers form an essential part of the Teagasc client-group and appropriate courses are provided through its countrywide network of educational centres.
- **Fáilte Ireland**, the National Tourism Development Authority, provides continuous training for owners, managers and employees in the tourism and hospitality sectors. Courses are delivered through full-time off-the-job certified training, short training interventions and distance and e-learning. There are Fáilte Ireland approved courses available in the vast majority of Institutes of Technology. These are largely full-time courses, ranging in duration from one to three years. These courses are accredited by the individual institutions, the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) and by the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC). There are also postgraduate courses available in Management and other areas. Fáilte Ireland is currently in the process of developing and expanding its e-learning capacity.
- **The Crafts Council of Ireland (CCI)** is responsible for the development of the Irish craft industry and provides continuing training courses for those employed in the industry.
- **Údarás Na Gaeltachta** is the state agency with responsibility for the economic, social and cultural development of the indigenous Irish speaking regions called the Gaeltacht. The Training and Education Section of Údarás aims: "To encourage the Gaeltacht community towards lifelong learning, so as to derive full benefit from training and educational opportunities, thereby adding to their employment options and to their personal development, and to take a lead in the provision of those opportunities." Údarás offers a Development Scheme for managers and specialists in order to ensure that there is a sufficient supply of expertise in the Gaeltacht. The training usually lasts between one and a half and two and a half years, and up to 75% of the costs are paid by Údarás. Údarás also facilitates training for companies and employees. The principal requirements for training arise from existing Údarás companies, although Údarás are continually attracting new companies to the Gaeltacht. There is considerable demand for quality control training, information technology, management development programmes and the various aspects of aquaculture. In-company training, in all areas of industrial technology, is ongoing.
- **Bord Altranais**, the regulatory body for the Irish nursing profession, is responsible for supervising CVET for this sector.

The third form of formal CVET in Ireland is **self-funded education and training** which may or may not be part-time. Both continuing and initial vocational education and training can take place outside the public education and training system. Private schools, colleges and other bodies provide various types of education and training within the FET sector, the higher education sector and professional level training. Examples of private colleges include the Dublin Business School, Griffith College, the Irish Management Institute, the Institute of Purchasing and Materials Management whilst examples of professional bodies providing training include the Institute of Bankers, the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Ireland and the Irish Tax Institute. There are also an increasing number of private training companies that provide training on a commercial basis for enterprises – many of these are members of the Irish Institute of Training and Development.

Part-time fee-paying evening courses are run both in FÁS training centres and in the VEC Further Education Colleges. The FÁS evening courses were originally aimed at employed workers and the general public who wished to update their skills. In many cases, employer sponsored the training of the learner and paid or reimbursed the cost of the course. Since 2008, in response to the economic downturn, FÁS waived course fees for unemployed learners and increased the number of evening course places on offer. In 2010, almost 40,000 people (both employed and unemployed) completed

FÁS<sup>64</sup> evening courses. The majority of the FÁS and VEC evening courses lead to qualifications awarded by FETAC.

Part-time adult course provision is also offered by universities and the Institutes of Technology (ITs), however these courses tend to be at Degree, Diploma or Certificate level and lead to qualifications awarded by HETAC.

A number of part-time non-fee paying educational opportunities for **unemployed and redundant** people were introduced as a result of the economic downturn. A Back to College Initiative (BCI) was introduced as a temporary measure in the April 2009 Supplementary Budget. It was to provide up to 2,500 part-time third-level places to people on the Live Register for at least six months; participants were entitled to retain their social welfare entitlements. Providers were to offer courses in areas identified by the Expert Group on Future Skill Needs (EGFSN) as supporting the goals of the 'Smart Economy'. Experience with the BCI was built on in the May 2011 Jobs Initiative, which introduced a new 'Springboard Programme' to provide part-time, higher-education opportunities for unemployed people. It is envisaged that the Springboard Programme will help some 5,900 jobseekers, principally unemployed people with a Leaving Cert., PLC or equivalent (NFQ levels 5/6) and a previous history of employment in sectors unlikely to recover to pre-recession levels; and unemployed people with a degree and who may require additional upskilling or reskilling to re-enter employment (NFQ levels 6 to 9).<sup>65</sup>

There have been other initiatives on a smaller scale boosting the capacity of higher education institutions to take in more of those currently unemployed, e.g., the provision of an additional 1,500 places on Post-Leaving Certificate Courses, of 930 places on a range of new short part-time transition programmes in the IT sector to assist unemployed people develop some of the necessary skills for studying at third level and 280 places on the accelerated certificate programmes run by the ITs<sup>66</sup>.

**Course curriculum** in CVET is generally modular in design and credit-based with a variety of assessment methods. The modules are based on learning outcomes which are in turn structured under the three principal headings of knowledge; skills and competence. The course content is flexible in terms of delivery, and generally focuses on learner needs and is designed to advance progression to further and higher levels of qualifications.

A new national awards system is currently being introduced<sup>67</sup> for all further education and training. The new system - the Common Awards System (CAS) provides awards at level 1-6 on the National Framework of Qualifications. The CAS will replace all FETAC awards over time - existing awards are becoming part of the FETAC legacy and are being referenced against the new Common Awards.

The Common Awards System is a national outcomes-based awards system for all further education and training. The Common Awards System provides a coherent architecture for all awards, including:

- A credit system, reflecting the typical amount of learner effort, including directed and self directed effort. The credit system enables learners to accumulate recognition over time and

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<sup>64</sup> FÁS Annual Report 2010.

<sup>65</sup> *Supports and Services for Unemployed Jobseekers: Challenges and Opportunities in a Time of Recession*. National Economic & Social Council. August 2011. Ireland.

<sup>66</sup> *Supports and Services for Unemployed Jobseekers: Challenges and Opportunities in a Time of Recession* National Economic & Social Council. August 2011. Ireland.

<sup>67</sup> *A Common Awards System for Further Education and Training* FETAC.

to navigate a range of programmes leading to awards on the National Framework of Qualifications.

- Breadth and balance within the structure so that learners achieve specific vocational expertise alongside general knowledge, skill and competence, in line with the National Skills Strategy.
- A clear relationship with other FETAC awards to help plan pathways in learning - known as access, transfer and progression arrangements.

Common Awards share characteristics including:

- A common format. Awards Specifications set out the structure, requirements and standards of the award.
- Explicit reference to the award types and levels indicators of the National Framework of Qualifications.
- A focus on outcomes of learning - what learners will be able to do on achievement of the award. Standards of knowledge, skill and competence are expressed as learning outcomes
- Accessibility for all providers who have agreed quality assurance arrangements with FETAC.

**Quality assurance** of further education and training programmes and awards is regulated by the Qualifications Act 1999 and is administered by the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC). FETAC's role in this regard includes responsibility to determine national standards for qualification awards, validate providers' learning programmes, monitor the quality of programmes and ensure providers operate fair and consistent assessment of learners. Registered providers who have agreed quality assurance systems with FETAC will design and offer programmes leading to the new CAS awards. All programmes must be validated by FETAC prior to delivery. Awards are systematically evaluated and reviewed. Providers also have to evaluate and review programmes. FETAC will monitor the programmes to assure continuous improvement across the system. Agreement by FETAC on the potential efficacy of a provider's quality assurance procedures is a prerequisite for gaining and retaining registration to offer FETAC awards.

The majority of adult educational institutions provide opportunities for **distance and e-learning**. These are being further enhanced and developed in line with technological advancement. The Open University (Ireland), and the National Distance Education Centre (OSCAIL), based in Dublin City University, both have a network of study centres throughout the country.

The National Distance Education Centre (NDEC) is located at Dublin City University (DCU). Its aim is to offer students the flexibility to study for an Irish university qualification while meeting work and domestic demands. The NDEC offers a variety of undergraduate diploma and degree courses and three Postgraduate courses at present. This ensures that adults throughout the country, regardless of geographical impediments or previous education, have access to further education. The courses are certified by a variety of Irish universities, including their host university DCU and also National University of Ireland (NUI) Galway, NUI Maynooth, University College Cork and Trinity College Dublin. NDEC receives a dedicated budget from the Higher Education Authority (HEA). Entry to NDEC programmes is open to all students over 23 years of age regardless of previous qualifications. There is a Student Support System in operation for those who may not have participated in the education system for a long period of time, including special introductory

modules, regional study centres and tutorial and student networking. Each student is assigned to a tutor for each course module. The student-tutor ratio is 15:1. Course tutors are drawn from other universities and from industry. Students are allocated to local study centres for tutorials, laboratory practicals, access to computers, videos, and libraries. Evaluation is a key element in ensuring the quality of learning in distance education. NDEC has an active research programme and participates in a range of international projects. Oscail has an international reputation as a research centre and has carried out consultancies on behalf of the World Bank, the OECD and the EU. It has also led and participated in a number of EU funded research programmes, including DELTA, COMETT, EUROFORM, ADAPT, TEMPUS, PHARE and SOCRATES.<sup>68</sup>

The Open University is one of the biggest providers of Distance Education in the UK and Ireland. The OU offers more than 360 undergraduate and post graduate courses in Arts, Modern Languages, Social Sciences, Health and Social Care, Science, Maths, Computing, Technology, Business and Management, Education and Law. The average time taken for a degree is six years. The programmes are run with combinations of online and 'face-to-face' tutorials.

FÁS, the Training and Employment Authority, has established *FÁS eCollege* to provide online courses for adults who wish to avail of a more flexible online learner-centred approach. These e-learning courses are available to both employed persons who pay a course fee and to unemployed persons for whom online training is free. The courses can be pursued at the initiative of the individual, and are also increasingly popular among companies. In 2010, over 12,000 learners took part in on-line courses.<sup>69</sup> The majority of the courses on offer from *FÁS eCollege* are modularised and are in the areas of word processing, IT, web design and multimedia, and participants are awarded industry recognized certification such as ECDL and Microsoft certification. Recently, targeting unemployed participants, *FÁS eCollege* has moved towards offering a blended e-learning approach, in which online learning is combined with tutor support and some in-centre training support. In 2010, 2,400 learners took part in blended courses. Also in 2010, a pilot e-Tutor Service was developed and implemented for online learners participating on some of the Business, Office Applications and Technical Hardware courses. On completion of the pilot, the service was expanded to include 29 different online courses delivered through *FÁS eCollege*. This service provides learners with access to an e-Tutor for the duration of their course.

Both Fáilte Ireland, the National Tourism Development Authority and Teagasc, the Agriculture and Food Development Authority, have also established e-learning programmes.

The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) has developed a distance learning service Writeon, to increase literacy awareness, encourage greater participation and provide non-traditional learning opportunities. A distance tutoring telephone service also operates supported by a website with learning materials leading to awards on the National Framework of Qualifications.

### **Participation in lifelong learning**

In its Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS), the Central Statistics Office (CSO) normally captures the number of people who stated they had engaged in lifelong learning in the four weeks prior to the survey. However, the lifelong learning module in the QNHS<sup>70</sup> - quarter 3, 2008, was a special survey module which extended the range to cover the 12 months prior to the survey. The survey includes both formal and non-formal learning and its findings regarding formal learning are detailed below:

- 5% of adults aged 25 years and over in Ireland reported receiving formal education in the

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<sup>68</sup> *Organisation of the education system in Ireland. 2009/2010* Eurydice.

<sup>69</sup> *FÁS Annual Report 2010*.

<sup>70</sup> *QNHS, Quarter 3, 2008 – Lifelong Learning*. CSO (2010).

year to quarter 3 2008.

- Participation rates were highest at 11% for the 25 – 34 year old age group and decreased to 1% for those aged 65-74.
- Those who were unemployed were more likely to be in receipt of formal education than those in employment (10% versus 6%)
- Of those in employment, employees were more likely to be in receipt of formal education with 7% doing so in the last 12 months compared to 2% - 3% of self-employed.
- Most of those who received formal education (86%) cited a job-related reason as the main reason for participating. The main type of support reported was where the employer paid in part or in full for tuition, registration, exam fees.
- Participation in formal education among adults in Ireland in the 12 months prior to Q3 2008 was equal to the average of 6% from the European Adult Education Survey (AES) 2007 and Ireland ranked joint 10<sup>th</sup> among the 26 countries for whom data from 2007 are available.

### 6.3 Non-Formal Learning in CVET

As stated in 6.2 above, non-formal learning takes place alongside the mainstream systems of education and training. It may be assessed but does not normally lead to formal certification<sup>71</sup>. In the 2010 CSO Quarterly National Household Survey lifelong learning module, non-formal education refers<sup>72</sup> to all organised learning activities outside regular or formal education. Examples of types of non-formal education include:

- Attending or participating in a course or seminar to get or to improve skills, knowledge and competence. This includes both courses leading to certification and not leading to certification. The courses can be attended to improve job-related knowledge or to improve skills for social and personal purposes.
- Attending/participating in a correspondence course, a tele-teaching or a comparable measure of teacher-supported distance learning to improve skills, knowledge or competence.

In Ireland these definitions of non/informal education cover the following CVET activities:

- General part-time learning options and adult education courses.
- Adult literacy schemes.
- Community-based education and training.
- Workplace learning
- Training within enterprises and government funded employer and employee schemes.
- CVET provided by the social partners.

**Part-time learning options and adult education:** An important strand of non-formal continuing education, are part-time adult education courses that take place in vocational, community and comprehensive schools. The principle routes for learning under this category of continuing education are the Part-time Options Strand of the Back-to-Education Initiative (BTEI). This initiative makes provision for those who find full-time programmes inaccessible and are unlikely to take part in courses in formal education settings. It is specifically designed to increase the participation of young people and adults with less than upper secondary-level education. The BTEI Part-time courses are generally open to all and free for the unemployed and in 2010 almost 28,000 people participated in part-time learning under this initiative. The Initiative promotes formal recognition of learners' achievements through awarding of qualifications on the National Framework of Qualifications and facilitates transfer and progression in learning.

There are also a substantial range of part-time and evening adult courses on offer throughout the

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<sup>71</sup> *National Principles and Operational Guidelines for the Recognition of Prior Learning*, NQAI (2005).

<sup>72</sup> *QNHS, Quarter 3, 2008 – Lifelong Learning*, CSO (2010).

country, targeting adults mainly interested in non-job-related courses and relating primarily to hobby, leisure and remedial learning. While courses are generally self-funded, many are funded under the Community Strand of the BTEI. While participants may receive some form of certification for these courses, they will not as a rule, follow a formal course of study. These courses have proved extremely popular and have consistently attracted large numbers of participants over the years. There is no comprehensive national database of statistics for participation in this sector, although AONTAS–The National Association of Adult Education, collects some relevant statistics on an ongoing basis.

**Adult Literacy:** The Vocational Education Committee’s adult literacy service runs basic literacy and numeracy courses which are free to all participants. The new Programme for Government contains commitments in relation to the improvement of adult literacy levels in two key areas. As part of its Labour Market Policy, the Government will make literacy and basic workplace skills a national priority, with literacy training incorporated into a wider variety of further education and training programmes. The Government will also address the widespread and persistent problem of adult literacy through the integration of literacy in vocational training and through community education under its lifelong learning policy.<sup>73</sup>

Ireland is currently participating in the OECD Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) which will measure the skills and competencies needed for individuals to participate in society and for economies to prosper. The survey is taking place between August 2011 and March 2012 and the results will be published in 2013. (For further information on the national Adult Literacy Strategy see Section 6.4).

**Community-based CVET:** Increasingly community and voluntary groups, who operate mainly in disadvantaged areas, are seen as important providers of CVET for unemployed hard-to-reach adults. Community education is an innovative and empowering approach to education which has gained recognition as a strategy that has considerable potential for addressing the systematic causes of poverty and educational disadvantage. Community education strategies have proven very effective in reaching out to non-traditional learners and they are purposely designed to build and maintain learning resources within communities. This type of CVET mainly targets unemployed adults and others vulnerable to exclusion in the labour market. According to the *Organisation of the education system in Ireland*<sup>74</sup> report, “community education refers to education and learning, generally outside the formal education sector, with the aims of enhancing learning, empowerment and contributing to civic society. It is firmly community-based, with local groups taking responsibility for, and playing a key role in, organising courses, deciding on programme-content and recruiting tutors”. It is provided in a number of forms: as accredited (or non-accredited) education in the community through the VEC supported Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) community or the ALCES budget. Every VEC operates a community education programme, which is managed by a Community Education Facilitator (CEF). CEFs are involved in the promotion and development of community based learning groups. They build links between community groups and the Vocational Education Committees (VECs) who co-ordinate the courses, which are generally free and open to all. Many of these learning activities are now publicly-funded under the Community Strand of the BTEI, (in 2002 the government increased funding to this sector through the introduction of a Community Strand under the BTEI, ensuring that a proportion i.e. 10% of all funding should be given to education activities organised by local community groups). In 2010, 2,163 (8%)<sup>75</sup> of the total number of participants (25,796) in the BTEI were accommodated under the Community Strand.

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<sup>73</sup> Address by Minister for Education and Skills to the Delegates at the National Adult Literacy Agency AGM, March 2011.

<sup>74</sup> *Organisation of the education system in Ireland. 2009/10.* Eurydice. Eurybase.

<sup>75</sup> HCI-OP 2007-13 *ESF Monitoring Committee Report for 2010, Ireland.*

FÁS co-operates with local community organisations to provide flexible **Local Training Initiatives** (LTIs) for unemployed persons. The LTI programme is designed to provide opportunities for marginalised clients who are unable to access other FÁS training interventions for personal, social or geographical reasons. Target clients are primarily people under 35 years of age, with no formal qualifications or incomplete secondary-level qualifications. LTIs provide vocational training opportunities and learning supports to assist participants achieve awards on the National Framework of Qualifications and to develop capacity to progress to further training, education and work. A total of just over 3,500 participants completed training on LTIs during 2010. Over 13,300 minor awards at Levels 3, 4 and 5 were attained and over 670 FETAC major awards were achieved by those participating in LTI training<sup>76</sup>.

Community education is also provided as accredited (and non-accredited) education in independent community education groups who have a focus on social change “... *education in the community, with the community and by the community*”.<sup>77</sup> This form of community education generally takes place outside institutions and responds to the needs of the community. The Aontas Community Education Network (CEN) supports and works for this form of community education. The CEN was established in 2007. It comprises over 130 Community Education organisations which work collectively to gain recognition for community education, raise its profile and lobby to ensure it is adequately resourced and recognised as a distinctly funded sector of the Irish Education system.

An Pobal (formerly Area Management Ltd), is a State agency responsible for measures to combat social exclusion at local level, also allocates funds to around 37 Local Development Companies. The Local Community Development Programme, through which the LDCs are funded devotes 40% of its funding on improving people’s work readiness and employment prospects. (NESC pg 49) In December 2010, the government introduced *Tús*, a new work-placement initiative for the community sector. This initiative is managed by the Local Development Companies and *Údarás na Gaeltachta* for the Department of Social Protection. It is anticipated that, at full capacity, *Tús* will provide up to 5,000 short-term working opportunities (19.5 hrs per week) for unemployed people. Participants are paid the maximum rate of their underlying social welfare payment plus an additional €20 per week.

**Workplace learning:** Over the past number of years a number of work placement schemes and places on direct employment programmes have been created to provide unemployed people with work experience. A new FÁS **Work Placement Programme** was introduced in 2009 to offer up to 2,000 unemployed people the opportunity of a nine-month placement in a public, private or community/voluntary sector workplace. The programme has two streams, one for unemployed graduates and another open to all unemployed individuals; participants are not paid but, if in receipt of social welfare payments for more than three months, may be entitled to retain them.

A new National Internship Scheme – **Job Bridge**, started in July 2011. Job Bridge is charged with providing 5,000 work experience placements to unemployed people in the private, public and voluntary sectors. The scheme is open to individuals who are on the Live Register and have been in receipt of Jobseeker’s Allowance/Benefit or signing on for credits for the last three months. Participants will receive a weekly allowance of €50 on top of their existing social welfare entitlement and may keep any secondary benefits (e.g., medical card, rent supplement) for the six to nine months duration of their internship. In order to participate on the scheme the host organisation and intern(s) must sign a Standard Internship Agreement before commencing on the scheme. The Host Organisation must assign a mentor to the intern for the duration of the internship; provide ongoing support to the intern during the programme; provide an induction and ensure the

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<sup>76</sup> FÁS Annual Report 2010.

<sup>77</sup> *The Aontas Community Education Network*. Position paper on creating an effective funding mechanism for community education. Aontas. February 2011.

opportunity to learn/apply skills in the workplace described in the Standard Agreement are available to the intern.

The Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC) launched its **Gradlink** programme in 2009 to support unemployed graduates during the current downturn. Gradlink is an internship programme designed to help graduates to gain real-life work experience and improve their employment potential, while employers have the talent of the graduates for a specific time period or project. Participants are not paid but, since 2010, Gradlink participants are treated similarly to the graduates participating in the FÁS Work Placement Programme in terms of retaining their eligible social welfare benefits.

Skillnets, which fosters the provision by groups of companies of employee training, has been required, since 2010, to have a minimum of ten per cent of its trainees sourced from among the unemployed; 4,800 unemployed individuals benefited in 2010, and a target of 8,000 has been set for 2011 of whom up to 50 per cent are to be low skilled.

**Training within enterprises and government funded employer and employee schemes:** There is no statutory obligation on companies to provide CVET for their workforce and no specific sectoral agreements in respect of CVET within enterprises. Employers generally provide training on the basis of their own requirements and this is usually provided in-house or sub-contracted on a commercial basis to private training providers. Some public and large commercial companies also provide paid release for employees to participate on education and training courses.

Surveys of Irish companies have found that enterprise-based training mainly takes place in larger and multinational companies rather than in SMEs, where the majority of low skilled workers are located. The EU-wide CVTS3 survey<sup>78</sup> found that 69% of companies employing 10 or more persons, had carried out some training in 2005, and companies spent, on average 2.5% of labour costs on training - this is the highest percentage in the EU. The survey found that training was most prevalent in the manufacturing and financial sectors, whereas construction companies, hotel and restaurants were less likely to train their employees. Results from the Employee Skills, Training and Job Vacancies Survey 2006<sup>79</sup>, found that in 2006, 45.5% of all enterprises provided internal and/or external training courses for their employees. This ranged from 25% of enterprises in the Hotels and restaurants sector to 93.2% in Public administration and defence. While 100% of large enterprises provided such courses, this was only the case for 43% of small enterprises. The number of employees who attended such courses in 2006 represented 45% of all employees and there was almost an equal split between males and females.

Almost 23% of enterprises said that on-the-job training was one of their preferred methods of addressing the skills gaps of their manager, professional and associate professional staff. The equivalent figure for clerical, sales and service employees was 25.9%, and 19% for production, transport, craft and other manual employees. The hiring of experienced staff and/or the use of training courses were also popular methods of addressing skills gaps.

When employees were asked how they acquired their skills for their current job, 48% stated that they acquired their skills by on-the-job training. 42% said they were hired as an experienced worker, while just under a quarter (24%) said they attended training course and. 16% of employees used self-directed learning. There was little difference between employees in enterprises of different sizes, except that whereas 16% of employees in small enterprises acquired at least some skills via training courses, this rose to over 30% of employees in large enterprises.

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<sup>78</sup> *Continuing Vocational Training Survey, 2005*, Central Statistics Office, Ireland. 2007.

<sup>79</sup> *Employee Skills, Training and Job Vacancies Survey 2006*, Central Statistics Office. Ireland February 2009.

The FÁS **Excellence Through People** Programme, is Ireland's national standard for human resource development to improve a company's operational performance through staff training. It is a voluntary initiative to encourage companies to identify and plan their staff training activities. In 2010, 29 new companies/associations were assessed at Standard level and a further 37 companies/associations were re-assessed at Standard, Gold and Platinum levels. Twenty-one one-day "Introduction to Excellence Through People" programmes were conducted for small and medium enterprises with a total of 226 participants. Eight networking events, involving 90 companies, were also conducted for Excellence Through People client companies<sup>80</sup>. Following the restructuring of FÁS, responsibility for the Excellence Through People Programme will transfer to the National Standards Authority of Ireland in January 2012.

**Skillnets** is a state funded, enterprise-led support body dedicated to the promotion and facilitation of training and upskilling. It supports and funds networks of enterprises to engage in training under the Training Networks Programme (TNP). These networks, referred to as 'Skillnets', 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.<sup>81</sup> Stakeholders include leading employer and employee representative bodies such as IBEC, Chambers Ireland, Construction Industry Federation (CIF), Small Firms Association (SFA) and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU). Since 1999, Skillnets has facilitated over 60,000 Irish enterprises, in over 350 networks to improve the range, scope and quality of training and allowed over 275,000 employees to upskill and take part in training.

In the Training Networks Programme (TNP) 2010/11 Skillnets networks are also providing training to job-seekers, who are training with those in employment. By training with those in employment, job-seekers can access networking opportunities and keep up to date with their sector while participating in relevant industry-specific training programmes.

**CVET provided by the social partners:** The social partners, through their participation in National Partnership Agreements, generally encourage employers to provide access for employees to ongoing training. Under the 'Towards 2016' National Agreement, the social partners agreed on the need to increase the levels of workplace learning and up-skilling. The trade unions have also been active in supporting non-job-related training. The People's College, a voluntary adult education institution working closely with the Irish Congress of Trades Unions (ICTU), provides a range of courses from basic education to personal development. The ICTU, Congress Centres Network, offers training to workers to re-train or to up-skill, and to unemployed people seeking to access the labour market. The Services Industrial Professional and Technical Trade Union (SIPTU) also operates a training facility for its members, providing courses ranging from health and safety at work to employment rights. Employer organisations' such as IBEC (Irish Business and Employers Confederation), ISME, (Irish small and medium-sized enterprises), and the Irish Construction Industry Federation (CIF), all provide either financial or other incentives to promote training practices among their membership. They also contribute to enterprise-based CVT activities through their participation in the industry-led 'Skillnets' Training Networks Programme.

As noted in 6.1 above, there is no legislative distinction between formal, non-formal and informal continuing vocational education and training in Ireland. As a consequence there is a significant crossover between the agencies delivering formal and non-formal training. The **distance learning** programmes described in the last section (6.2) for formal learning also apply to the non-formal education and training sector.

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<sup>80</sup> FÁS Annual Report, 2010.

<sup>81</sup> In 2010, an allocation of €16.6m supported an average of about a week's training for 37,200 employees (DES, 2011).

## Accreditation of Non-Formal/Informal Learning

As part of the National Skills Strategy Implementation Statement, the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) was requested by the Department of Education and Skills to investigate the potential of **Recognition of Prior Learning** (RPL) in assisting in the upskilling objectives of the National Skills Strategy<sup>82</sup>. The report<sup>83</sup> which followed (April 2011) was prepared by the EGFSN with significant input and material from the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI). In addition, a wide range of stakeholders were consulted in the process (education and training providers, unions, qualifications bodies, guidance/adult education organisations and the Department, employer organisation).

[http://egfsn.ie/media/egfsn110411-developing\\_recognition\\_of\\_prior\\_learning.pdf](http://egfsn.ie/media/egfsn110411-developing_recognition_of_prior_learning.pdf)

Part of the research involved investigating the extent to which RPL is practiced in Ireland and the following is brief extract from their findings:

All providers of **Further Education** who register with FETAC to access its awards are required to offer RPL for access, credit and/or exemptions. Providers who wish to offer RPL for the purposes of achieving a FETAC award must agree an additional sub strand of quality assurance for RPL. (In June 2010, 12 providers were quality assured to offer RPL for full awards). Data on the practice of RPL by providers and on learner use of RPL for entry, exemptions or full awards is not systematically gathered or published by FETAC or individual providers.

All HETAC registered providers are required to have RPL policies in place. Most **higher education** institutions practice some form of RPL and have institutional policies which support this activity. Most universities also have institutional policies in place, although some of these are limited to the recognition of certified learning. The focus, scale and organisation of RPL vary from institution to institution. It is largely restricted to access and to certain disciplines of learning (e.g. nursing, adult education and social care) and to design programmes for the workplace. Dedicated RPL officers and support staff are in place in some institutions. In the vast majority of cases, the universities do not make awards solely on the basis of RPL.

In the past two decades, a number of partnerships of education and training providers and workplace representatives have used RPL to encourage participation in training, to increase professionalisation, to access to relevant qualifications, to identify workplace needs, and to design and deliver appropriate programmes. Partnerships with providers have included Skillnets, SIPTU, the Construction Industry Federation as well as individual companies. For example, Fáilte Ireland, the National Tourism Development Authority has for some years operated RPL, involving, with the support of an RPL mentor, a 'skills and knowledge audit' (a highly detailed checklist which an individual completes to demonstrate relevant knowledge and competencies against the award standard), interviews and practical demonstrations to enable individuals to access qualifications in relation to chef, bar tender/supervisor, waitress/waiter, restaurant supervisor, accommodation assistant/supervisor (NFQ Levels 4-6).

Under Recognition of Prior Learning arrangements put in place by FÁS, apprentices not currently meeting the minimum on –the –job training period but with verifiable work experience from home or abroad can submit an application and portfolio of evidence to the FÁS Redundant Accreditation Committee for assessment and with a view to the award of their Advanced Craft Certificate.

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<sup>82</sup> *Tomorrow's Skills: Towards a National Skills Strategy, Expert Group on Future Skill Needs, FORFÁS. Ireland. 2007.*

<sup>83</sup> *Developing Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). The role of RPL in delivering on the National Skills Strategy Upskilling Objectives.* EGFSN. Ireland. April 2011.

There is also demand from enterprise and public sector employers for RPL as a basic building block in the development of specific or targeted programmes for the workplace. For example, this has been integral to the development of programmes in the IBEC Retail Skillnet, the Citizens Advice Bureau, and in the tourism and hospitality sector. The scale of demand is difficult to estimate as this is largely directed towards education and training providers, in particular, the Institutes of Technology. The integration of RPL in programme design and involvement of employers in this can involve employer support for certain RPL activities such as learning mentors in the workplace.

The main finding of the report is that while significant experience of RPL has been developed in Ireland, a co-ordinated national policy approach is required and the recommendations which issued from the report aim to provide the basis for a more integrated and national policy for RPL in Ireland.

**Participation in lifelong learning.** In its Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS), the Central Statistics Office (CSO) normally captures the number of people who stated they had engaged in lifelong learning in the four weeks prior to the survey. However, the lifelong learning module in the QNHS<sup>84</sup> - quarter 3, 2008, was a special survey module which extended the range to cover the 12 months prior to the survey. The survey includes both formal and non-formal learning and its findings regarding non-formal learning are detailed below:

- One in five adults (20%) received **non-formal** education (i.e. organised learning activities outside the regular education system) with similar rates of participation by both males (19%) and females (20%).
- As age increased there was a decrease in the participation rate - while approximately 25% of those aged 25-44 had received some non-formal education, this fell to 4% of those aged 75 years and over.
- Only 5% of those adults who had a primary cert or lower level of education received some non-formal education, but this increased to 41% for those with a third level degree or higher.
- Over a quarter of adults in employment (28%) were in receipt of non-formal education while 60% received some form of informal education. Professionals were most likely to be in receipt of non-formal and informal education at 50% and 77% respectively with plant and machine operatives being the least likely at 14% and 45% respectively. Those working in the Education sector were most likely to be in receipt of non-formal education (43%) while those working in the Agriculture, forestry and fishing sector were again the least likely to have participated (8%).
- Most of those who received non-formal education (79%) cited a job-related reason as the main reason for participating. The main type of support reported was where the employer paid in part or in full for tuition, registration, exam fees. However, 26% of those pursuing non-formal education had no support.
- Participation in non-formal education among adults in Ireland (23%) in the 12 months prior to Q3 2008 was less than the European average of 33% and Ireland ranked joint 20<sup>th</sup> among the 26 countries. for whom data from 2007 are available.

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<sup>84</sup> QNHS, *Quarter 3, 2008 – Lifelong Learning* CSO (2010).

## 6.4 Language learning in CVET

As noted in 5.8 the learning of a foreign language is not compulsory at any stage in the Irish education system and while there is a high proportion of Irish students studying foreign languages at the end of secondary education this is primarily due to the National University of Ireland's matriculation requirement for a foreign language.

With regard to language learning at further education and training level, a total of 914 awards were made by FETAC for languages in 2010. The vast majority of these awards were minor awards. Of these, 46% of the awards were at NFQ Level 4; 30% at Level 3 and just over one-quarter were at Level 5. French accounted for 41% of the awards followed by Spanish at 30%.

Table 27: Number of FETAC Awards in Languages 2010			
Award Type	NFQ Award Level	Award	Awards
Minor	3	EFO106 French	91
Minor	3	EFO10d German	26
Minor	4	EI10106 French	211
Minor	4	E10107 German	66
Minor	5	E20106 French	77
Minor	5	E20107 German	6
Major	5	ELESX Language and European Studies	14
Minor	3	EF0109 Italian	21
Minor	4	E10109 Italian	31
Minor	5	E20024 European Studies	86
Minor	5	E20109 Italian	2
Minor	3	EF0108 Spanish	134
Minor	3	EF0171 Polish	2
Minor	4	E10108 Spanish	112
Minor	4	E10171 Polish	2
Minor	5	E20108 Spanish	32
Minor	5	E20171 Polish	1
<b>Total</b>			<b>914</b>

Source: FETAC

With regard to language learning in the FET sector by those aged 25 years and over, 63% of the awards were received by those aged between 25 and 44 years, 34% by those aged 45 to 64 and 4% by those aged over 65 years. The majority of the awards were at NFQ Level 4 (44%), followed by awards at Level 3 (34%). Spanish was the most studied language (37%) followed by French (35%).

Award	Level 3	Age 25-44	Age 45-64	Age 65+	Total Level 3
EF0106 French	NQF3	17	15	2	34
EF0107 German	NQF3	10	4	1	15
EF0108 Spanish	NQF3	53	27	5	85
EF0109 Italian	NQF3	9	5		14
EF0171 Polish	NQF3		2		2
<b>Total Level 3</b>	<b>NQF3</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>150</b>
E10106 French	NFQ4	64	27	2	93
E10107 German	NFQ4	18	8		26
E10108 Spanish	NFQ4	31	26	4	61
E10109 Italian	NFQ4	7	5	1	13
E10171 Polish	NFQ4	2			2
<b>Total Level 4</b>	<b>NFQ4</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>195</b>
E20024 European Studies	NFQ5	29	12		41
E20106 French	NFQ5	20	10		30
E20107 German	NFQ5	1	2		3
E20108 Spanish	NFQ5	14	4	1	19
E20109 Italian	NFQ5	1			1
E20171 Polish	NFQ5				
ELESX Language and European Studies	NFQ5	2	2		4
<b>Total Level 5</b>	<b>NFQ5</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>98</b>
<b>Total all Levels</b>		<b>278</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>443</b>

Source: FETAC

Up until the academic year 2009/2010, enrolments in third level language courses had been in decline. However as can be seen in Table 29 below, enrolments in higher education language courses increased slightly in 2009/2010. The data pertains to all higher education in Ireland – universities and institutes of technology. The Enrolments on foreign language courses capture the people enrolled on other courses but are taking a language as part of that course. However, these numbers are only an estimate, as much of the data is unavailable.

Academic Year	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010
Foreign Languages or ISCED 22	1,276	1,238	1,441
Enrollments on Foreign Language Courses	170,305	177,388	188,166
Overall enrolments in HEA funded Institutions	0.75%	0.70%	0.77%
Foreign Language Enrolments as % of Overall	12.90%	-	-

Source: Higher Education Authority

The IBEC (Irish Business Employers Confederation) Export Orientation Programme (EOP) is targeted at recent third level graduates and offers candidates an opportunity to work towards gaining a postgraduate qualification during the EOP process. It also assists companies in building up a valuable portfolio of relevant export material for future reference. The EOP is typically twelve months duration, usually with a minimum of six months spent outside of Ireland. However, the EOP can now provide placements that are based in Ireland, but working on International Markets with companies such as Apple, EMC and Hertz. Over 2000 graduates have used the EOP programme since it started in 1983.

## The Common European Framework for Languages

The Common European Framework for Languages is not yet used in Ireland as a means of assessment and certification for the learning of languages. However, the first step towards establishing a relationship between the Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) was undertaken by the National Qualifications Authority and reported on in 2007<sup>85</sup>.

The Report found that it was possible to establish relationships between the CEFR levels and the NFQ levels. It found a strong correspondence between CEFR level A1 and NFQ level 3, between CEFR B1 and NFQ level 5 (Leaving Certificate Level) and between CEFR C1 and NFQ level 8 (Honours Primary Degree), with less reliable correspondences at other levels as illustrated:

**Table 30: Correspondences between CEFR levels and NFQ levels**

NFQ	CEFR	Correspondence
9	C2	weak
<b>8</b>	<b>C1</b>	<b>strong</b>
6	B2	medium
<b>5</b>	<b>B1</b>	<b>strong</b>
4	A2	weak
<b>3</b>	<b>A1</b>	<b>strong</b>

Source: NQAI

It is concluded that it is both possible and desirable to set out how the two frameworks correspond and that it can be demonstrated that CEFR, NFQ and EQF, while all different and designed for different purposes, are nevertheless compatible and able to function together as a suite:

- EQF at the meta, European level, as a translator between systems
- NFQ at the national level, a means of defining and comparing qualifications
- CEFR at the subject or field level, as a means of improving teaching and learning of languages and describing individual attainment of language skills.

The EGFSN Report<sup>86</sup> (2005) on languages recommend linking the CEFR with the National Framework of Qualifications “as this would be an important step in developing a route-map to

<sup>85</sup> *Towards the establishment of a relationship between the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and the National Framework of Qualifications*. 2007. NQAI. Ireland.

<sup>86</sup> *Languages and Enterprise. The Demand and Supply of Foreign Language Skills in the Enterprise Sector*. Forfás. 2005. Ireland.

language learning with a flexible award system”. The 2011 Report<sup>87</sup> recommends that work on the alignment of the two Frameworks be continued “with a view to facilitating and encouraging the inclusion of *ab initio* level language modules on third-level programmes.

## **6.5 Training Programmes to help job-seekers and people vulnerable to exclusion from the labour market.**

There are a range of education and training programmes available for those vulnerable to exclusion from the labour market to help them upgrade their skills in order to re-enter the labour market. Those most excluded include unemployed people and people with disabilities or special needs, people in prison, people with literacy problems and people in the travelling community.<sup>88</sup>

**Training Programmes for the unemployed:** The Government has identified four cohorts among the unemployed to receive priority access to the state’s training, education, guidance and work experience opportunities. These priority cohorts are:

- Those with lower skills or education levels;
- Those on the Live Register for more than one year;
- Younger people (under 25 years but also up to age 34); and
- Those made redundant from sectors that will not return to their previous levels of activity even after economic recovery (e.g., construction, manufacturing, and the retail and wholesale trade).

The main education and training measures for the unemployed have been described in detail in previous sections. They are:

### **FÁS Programmes:**

- Specific Skills Training (5.6)
- Community Training Centres (5.5)
- Local Training Initiatives (6.3)
- Traineeships (5.6)
- Bridging (5.5)
- Redundant Apprentices (5.4)
- Evening Courses
- TESSG

### **Full-time VEC Programmes**

- PLCs - Post Leaving Cert Courses (5.6/6.2)
- VTOS - Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (6.2)
- Youthreach (5.5)

### **Part-time VEC Programmes**

- Adult Literacy (6.3)
- BTEI - Back to Education Initiative Community Education (6.3)
- Community Education (6.3)

In order to target the priority cohorts described above, the Department of Education and Skills instructed FÁS to offer 80 per cent of its training and work experience places for the unemployed to

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<sup>87</sup>*National Languages Strategy. Royal Irish Academy National Committee for Modern Language, Literary and Cultural Studies. August 2011. Ireland.*

<sup>88</sup>The Travelling Community in Ireland is a nomadic ethnic minority with numbers estimated in excess of 25,000.

individuals from one of the priority cohorts. At the end of June 2010, over 90 per cent of FÁS trainees came from these four priority cohorts. This large-scale increase in the numbers receiving training was achieved, in two principal ways. First, the completion of modules rather than longer courses was introduced; for example, participation on *FÁS Specific Skills Training (SST)* trebled to just over 20,000 between 2008 and 2009, principally by reorganising a greater part of it to take the form of ten - twenty week, stand-alone courses leading to minor certification awards and reducing the share of SST that took the form of linked courses lasting twelve to fifty-two weeks. Second, more evening courses, online courses and blended learning initiatives were provided: in 2010, half of over 81,000 new starts on FÁS training programmes were on such course.<sup>89</sup>

A total of €34.2m has been allocated under the *European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF)* to provide upskilling and retraining supports for redundant workers from three companies – Dell (Limerick), Waterford Crystal and SR Technics (Dublin). A further application was submitted in February 2011 for EGF support of €55m for former workers in three construction sub-sectors.<sup>90</sup>

Skillnets (see 6.3), which fosters the provision by groups of companies of employee training, has been required, since 2010, to have a minimum of ten per cent of its trainees sourced from among the unemployed; 4,800 unemployed individuals benefited in 2010, and a target of 8,000 has been set for 2011 of whom up to 50% are to be low skilled.<sup>91</sup>

### **Training programmes for other cohorts vulnerable to exclusion from the labour market.**

**Rehabilitative Vocational Training.** The National Learning Network (NLN) is Ireland's largest non-Government training organisation and it provides training and employment services to people with disabilities in over 50 locations nationally. People with mental health difficulties (35%) and intellectual disabilities (24%) represent a significant proportion of the overall client group.

Training staff are highly skilled in the provision of bespoke training solutions to meet the needs of individual learners and unique learner groups. The organisation offers over 40 different vocational programmes for people with disabilities which carry nationally and internationally recognised certification and are designed to lead directly to jobs or progression to further education. National Learning Networks is a registered provider of nationally recognised FETAC accredited programmes since 2006.

All NLN programmes are based within the community and utilise NLN's strong links with employers to find work placements and employment for students. As a result NLN programmes have above average outcomes with 90% of participants progressing to employment or further education.

NLN also provides Continuous Professional Development courses, Assessment Services for children, adolescents and adults with specific learning difficulties, and a Disability Support Service for VEC colleges in Dublin.

FÁS also contracts with a number of **Specialist Training Providers (STP)** to deliver training for people with disabilities. The features of this specialist vocational training include:

- Additional training duration
- Adapted equipment
- Transport arrangements

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<sup>89</sup> *Supports and Services for Unemployed Jobseekers: Challenges and Opportunities in a Time of Recession*. National Economic & Social Council. August 2011. Ireland.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid*

- Enhanced programme content
- Enhanced trainer-learner ratio

In 2010, FÁS funded 20 Specialist Training Providers, in 47 locations, to provide a total of 2,104 STP learner places, of which 1,804 are provided by the National Learning Network (NLN).

**The Prison Education Service** consists of a partnership between the Irish Prison Service and a range of educational agencies from the community, including the Vocational Education Committees and the Public Library Service. The Department of Education and Science provided an allocation of approximately 215 wholetime teachers to the prisons in the 2008/2009 academic year.

Other agencies also contribute to prison education including the Open University, which caters for approximately 80 prisoners annually completing degree-level distance education courses and the Arts Council provides writers' and artists' workshop.

The aims of the prison education service is to provide a high quality, broad and flexible programme of education to help those in prison to cope with their sentence, to achieve personal development, to prepare for life after release and to establish an appetite for lifelong learning. The objectives, methods and course content are largely those of adult education. The majority of the courses are accredited by the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) and the service accommodates the special needs and interests of prisoners and for the high turnover in the prison population. Courses provided include basic education (including literacy and numeracy), general subjects (including English, Mathematics, Languages); the Arts (including Music and Drama); practical subjects (including Woodwork, Metalwork) and specific courses such as Addiction Awareness, Parenting and Anger Management.

A number of pre-release courses are available to prisoners to assist the transition into the community and a number of post-release programmes on offer to ex-prisoners. These were initiated due to the rate of recidivism of a large cohort of prisoners and provide educational and training opportunities to facilitate reintegration into society.

There is also a programme of Work and Training within the prison system. The primary focus of this programme is to assist prisoners to get a job on leaving prison, and thus enhance their reintegration process. Areas covered include catering and laundry, computers, woodwork, construction, craft work and electronics. Courses are accredited by a number of bodies, including FETAC, FÁS and City and Guilds of London.

Adult literacy programmes and Traveller training programmes have been described in sections 6.2, and 6.3 and 5.5 respectively.

## Theme 7: Training VET teachers and trainers

In Ireland, teachers are primarily concerned with the education of young people within the formal school system at either primary or secondary and vocational level. At third level in academic institutions, such as universities and Institutes of Technology, persons providing teaching are generally known as lecturers or professors.

Trainers are involved in the skills training and development of trainees of all ages outside of the formal education system. This training is provided at both initial and continuing vocational training levels. Training is generally provided either by private companies or within semi-state organisations such as FÁS, the Training and Employment Authority and other State training agencies in specific industry sectors

### 7.1 Priorities in training VET teachers and trainers

#### Latest developments in the provisions for entering and developing careers as teachers/trainers

The Teaching Council is the statutory professional body for teaching in Ireland. The Council has a range of functions relating to teacher education which span the entire teaching career including entry to initial teacher education programmes, accreditation of such programmes, induction of newly qualified teachers into the profession and the continuing professional development of teachers. In all its deliberations, the Council actively engages with the education partners, the Higher Education Institutions and the Minister for Education and Skills. In November 2009, the Teaching Council published the Teaching Council (Registration) Regulations, 2009 which set out the Council's requirements for persons wishing to become registered teachers in Ireland. Among the objectives of the regulations is the achievement of consistent standards in the qualifications required to be registered as a teacher, irrespective of whether the teacher will teach in the primary, post-primary, or further education sectors.

Within the context of the overarching policy on the teacher education continuum, a focus is currently being placed on the stage of **initial teacher education**. There is a recognition that the role of teachers has changed and while they continue to impart knowledge, they also need to adopt the broadest range of methodologies which will ensure the active engagement of all learners. Moreover, it is recognised that teachers have responsibilities as members of staff where collaboration and teamwork between teachers, as well as an approach to teaching that goes beyond subject boundaries, is now accepted as the norm<sup>92</sup>.

In June 2011, the Council published its *Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education*<sup>93</sup>, which provides the framework within which the Council will implement its functions relating to teacher education. The following are examples of a number of changes the Council is advocating:

With regard to Initial Teacher Training (ITE), the Council considers:

- There should be a review of entry requirements and selection procedures to include consideration of: the use of aptitude tests and structured interviews; the significance of previous relevant experience; subject quotas; the standard of academic achievement required. Such a review would also explore ways of facilitating entry to the profession by underrepresented groups and alternative ways of assessing competence in numeracy, literacy and Gaeilge (Irish), as appropriate, prior to entry.

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<sup>92</sup> *Preparation of the 2010 Joint Report on the implementation of the Education and Training 2010 work programme.* 2009 national reports: Ireland.

<sup>93</sup> *Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education*, The Teaching Council, June 2011.

- The duration of concurrent programmes should be a minimum of four years while post-graduate programmes of teacher education should take place over two years. The additional time available should be devoted to core areas, rather than academic subject electives, and should allow for: extended school placement periods; an increased emphasis on professional development portfolio work, reflective practice and research/enquiry-based learning; an increased emphasis on the key strategic priorities of literacy and numeracy, ICT and inclusion and enhanced modes of delivery to enable wider access to programmes of teacher education.
- All student teachers should be required to complete courses in the teaching and assessment of literacy and numeracy. Assessment should evaluate their own levels of literacy and numeracy and as well as their ability to teach and assess them.
- The school placement should take place in a variety of settings and incorporate a variety of teaching situations and school contexts: different age groups of students; different sectors, (primary/post-primary/FE), as appropriate; various socio-economic and cultural environments; multi-class and mixed ability teaching situations and team teaching/co-teaching situations. In all of these contexts, the placement should afford student teachers the opportunity to plan and implement lessons and receive constructive feedback.

The Council believes that the reconceptualised, extended programmes should be in place no later than 2012/2013 in the case of concurrent programmes and 2014/2015 in the case of consecutive programmes<sup>94</sup>.

Until recently, there was no provision in Ireland for all Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) to access a formal **Induction Programme** (teacher education which takes place during the period at the beginning of the newly qualified teacher's career, usually the first year after qualifying as a teacher). In 2002, the National Pilot Project for Teacher Induction (NPPTI) was established with the aim of developing proposals for an effective national programme of induction for NQTs in primary and post-primary schools.

In September 2010, a Department of Education and Skills Circular<sup>95</sup> set out interim arrangements whereby an induction programme was made available in Education Centres for all newly qualified teachers with immediate effect. The programme provides professional support and advice in areas such as classroom management skills, planning and preparation of work, the use of teaching methodologies suited to the learning needs of students, assessment of student progress and managing relationships with parents. The programme may be delivered in a variety of modes including face-to-face sessions, workshops and seminars, online support and self-help groups. At present, participation by NQTs in the national induction programme is voluntary. However, the Minister for Education and Skills has communicated that it is intended to commence section 7(2)(f) of the Teaching Council Act, 2001, in relation to the induction of teachers into the teaching profession, in September 2012<sup>96</sup>. The Teaching Council is now preparing for its role in that area and is working towards the establishment of induction procedures for newly qualified teachers from that date. As part of that work, the Council is considering how such procedures might dovetail with the probationary process.

Currently, there are no specific teacher education qualifications required for IVET teachers. However, in general, the PLC programmes provided by the Further Education (FE) Colleges are

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<sup>94</sup> *Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education*, The Teaching Council, June 2011.

<sup>95</sup> *Circular number 0058/2010*.

<sup>96</sup> *Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education*, The Teaching Council, June 2011.

conducted by qualified post-primary teachers. The Teaching Council recently published the *General and Programme Requirements for the Accreditation of Teacher Education Qualifications (Further Education)*<sup>97</sup>. From April 2013, all teachers, including those in the FE sector, wishing to be registered must have a recognised teacher education qualification.

The DES has a policy to integrate provision for **special education needs** into mainstream education wherever possible. In public schools, students with special needs (students having serious learning or special learning difficulties) attending mainstream classrooms receive special educational support. In-service optional training programmes, seminars and meetings are provided to teachers of special education by the Special Education Support Service (SESS). The aim of the service is to enhance the quality of teaching and learning, with particular reference to special educational provision. The service co-ordinates, develops and delivers a range of professional development initiatives and support structures for school personnel working with students with special educational needs in mainstream primary and post-primary schools, special schools and special classes. The SESS operates under the remit of the Teacher Education Section (TES) of the Department of Education and Skills.

## 7.2 Teachers and trainers in IVET

As noted previously in this report, there is not a sharp distinction between initial and continuing vocational education and training in Ireland. There is also no single system in Ireland delivering either IVET or CVET but rather a range of organisations and institutions who deliver programmes both for young people who have just completed their compulsory education and for those who wish to upgrade their skills having completed initial education and training. It is the status of the trainee that determines whether the education/training is initial or continuing rather than the system itself. Subsequently, the teacher education qualifications for IVET teachers and trainers described below apply equally for CVET teachers and trainers.

### 7.2.1 Teachers, trainers and training facilitators in IVET

Table 31 below sets out the different categories of teachers and trainers in Ireland and the areas in which they work.

Occupational Type	Type of Location	Regulatory Bodies
Teachers in the secondary level education system	Secondary schools; Community schools or colleges; Vocational schools; Comprehensive schools	The Department of Education and Skills The Teaching Council Higher Education Institutes Teacher Education Section
IVET Teachers	Non-tertiary Education Centres, Colleges of Further Education	Vocational Education Committes The Teaching Council FETAC
IVET Lecturer	Institutes of technology,	Universities

<sup>97</sup> The Teaching Council, *Further Education, General and Programme Requirements for the Accreditation of Teacher Education Qualifications*, March 2011.

	universities, private colleges	Higher Education Institutes HETAC
IVET trainer or instructor	FÁS and other state training agencies in specific industry sectors, eg for the tourism and agriculture sectors. FÁS and the Institutes of Technology also have responsibility for apprenticeship training.	FETAC

## 7.2.2 Pre-service and in-service training of IVET teachers and trainers

### Pre-service training

Initial teacher education programmes for post-primary teachers are facilitated through a range of concurrent and consecutive programmes. The concurrent route (completing a primary degree which specialises in a particular subject as well as teaching skills) to a teaching qualification is offered for a wide range of programmes, typically those with practical, laboratory and workshop elements. The post-primary consecutive route is the one-year post-graduate diploma in education and entry requirements include a degree in at least one subject which meets the criteria for registration with the Teaching Council. At further education level, a requirement to have a teacher education qualification is expected to be in place in the coming years and the design and structure of that qualification is currently the subject of ongoing deliberations between the Teaching Council and relevant stakeholders. Programmes of post-primary teacher education must include practice in teaching in a recognised second level school. For the purposes of fulfilling that requirement, an applicant must have an overall school experience of circa 200 hours duration, and a minimum of 100 hours must involve personal experience of directly teaching a class or classes in one or more approved subjects. The practice must have been mentored and supervised by the university or college concerned.

As stated above in 7.1, currently, there is no specific teacher education qualification required for IVET teachers. However, in general, the PLC programmes provided by the Further Education (FE) Colleges are conducted by qualified post-primary teachers and from April 2013, all teachers, including those in the FE sector, wishing to be registered must have a recognised teacher education qualification.

At third level (IVET Lecturer), there is no formal recognised course of training provided for those who pursue a career as a tutor or lecturer. However, there are minimum entry requirements in terms of education and training. In the case of lecturers in universities, they are required to have:

- An honours degree in their subject or an equivalent professional qualification, followed by a Masters Degree and evidence of published research in the applicant's field of expertise.
- Three years relevant post-qualification work experience which can include teaching experience. (There is no requirement for any qualification in teaching for third-level lecturer posts).

Persons applying for teaching (lecturing) posts in the Institutes of Technology must possess a primary degree or better, in the subject they are to lecture in but are not required to have any

teaching qualification.

Trainers/instructors in state-funded institutions and in industry and commerce, are usually experienced in their trade or commercial sector, but may not necessarily have any formal qualifications or pedagogical skills. Training instructors working in the state agency FÁS at both IVET and CVET levels are required to have:

- A qualification in the discipline in which they will provide training, i.e. a minimum of the Senior Trades Certificate for craft instructors, or the City and Guilds equivalent.
- In 'non-craft' areas a qualification equivalent to an undergraduate diploma is required and further in-house development.
- Employment experience in their area of training for a minimum of 2 years after the date of qualification, including a minimum of one year's experience in a supervisory or management post in the area of their discipline.

FÁS instructors training apprentices must be qualified as a craftsman in the area in which they provide training. However, they do not require any training or teaching qualification.

With regard to contracted-out training, FÁS and the state agency Enterprise Ireland, require that private training organisations or individual trainers must meet certain criteria set out by them to be eligible for listing on their register of approved trainers. The minimum educational qualification to register as approved trainer is a Certificate in Training and Development awarded by a recognised awarding body.

Other state organisations involved in training for specific industry sectors such as: Fáilte Ireland (for the tourism and hospitality sector); Bord Iascaigh Mhara (Irish Fisheries Board); Coillte (Irish Forestry Board) and Teagasc (Agriculture and Food Development Authority), all have their own training programmes for their sector, and trainers delivering these programmes at both initial and continuing levels are skilled in their own occupational areas. The Further Education and Training Awards Council – FETAC, has now assumed the awarding function for teacher training in these sectoral areas, bringing together all teacher and instructor certification for these occupational areas under one banner, awarding a FETAC Special Purpose Award at NFQ Level 6.

### **In-service training**

The main focus of state-provided Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is perceived as critical in ensuring that teachers are prepared to meet the challenges of expanding fields of knowledge, diverse student populations, higher social expectations of schools and new types of responsibilities. Sustained opportunities to reflect on the processes of learning, teaching and assessment (through ongoing engagement with content, pedagogy, innovation, research and the social and cultural dimensions of education) are seen as central to ensuring quality in the development of a profession which is responsive to emerging needs, and to school improvement.

The Teacher Education Section (TES) of the Department of Education and Skills has official responsibility for CPD, including the provision of support for national priorities such as school development planning, school leadership and management, the introduction of new and revised curricula and syllabi and particular projects and initiatives related to priority areas such as disadvantage and inclusion, education for students with special educational needs, positive behaviour management and language support for newcomer students. The Education Centre network plays a significant role in such provision. Generic and more targeted CPD programmes are provided by the Colleges of Education, universities and other third level bodies, as well as by a range of private providers.

The TALIS (Teaching and Learning International Survey)<sup>98</sup> survey, found that the participation rates of Irish teachers in professional development (90% in the 18 months prior to the TALIS survey) were on a par with other countries surveyed, the courses attended related to changes in subject syllabi and the implementation of national programmes, with relatively little emphasis on the professional development needs of individual teachers and schools. TALIS identified the most significant professional development needs of Irish teachers in terms of teaching students with special learning needs, ICT teaching skills, student counselling and teaching in a multi-cultural setting.

The induction teacher education programme (see 7.1) was made available in Education Centres for all newly qualified teachers (NQTs) in 2010. The programme provides professional support and advice in areas such as classroom management skills, planning and preparation of work, the use of teaching methodologies suited to the learning needs of students, assessment of student progress and managing relationships with parents. The programme may be delivered in a variety of modes including face-to-face sessions, workshops and seminars, online support and self-help groups. At present, participation by NQTs in the national induction programme is voluntary.

There are many opportunities for teachers and lecturers working in third-level education to avail of further education and training. Earlier in the decade and in response to the need to broaden higher education opportunities, the 'Training of Trainers' Measure for third-level education in the Employment and Human Resource Development Operational Programme (EHRD OP) 2000-06, provided funding for development programmes for teaching staff in this sector. These programmes were designed to enable staff to adapt to new technology, while also focusing on pedagogical training, teacher evaluation and appraisal and the development of management skills.

The majority of universities and institutes of education have websites to support their academic staff develop and improve their skills and knowledge in the areas of teaching, curriculum design and student assessment. These websites also act as research centres for study and support for third level teachers and lecturers - for example, the Centre for Teaching and Learning in University College Dublin (UCD).

FÁS encourages its own trainers and instructors to access formal qualifications in training and development. A series of programmes from Foundation, Certificate to Degree and Master level, were set up in co-operation with the Maynooth and Galway Universities and are accredited by the National University of Ireland (NUI). These programmes were initially designed for FÁS instructors, but are now available to those practicing or planning a career as trainers in vocational colleges as well as the commercial, voluntary and community sectors. Programme delivery combines open learning and self-instructional modules, along with attendance at workshops and practical assignments. The Department of Education and Science provides funding for this type of training for trainers.

### **7.3 Types of teachers and trainers in CVET**

As noted previously in this report, there is not a sharp distinction between initial and continuing vocational education and training in Ireland. There is also no single system in Ireland delivering either IVET or CVET but rather a range of organisations and institutions who deliver programmes both for young people who have just completed their compulsory education and for those who wish to upgrade their skills having completed initial education and training. It is the status of the trainee that determines whether the education/training is initial or continuing rather than the system itself.

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<sup>98</sup> Gilleece, L., Perkins, R., & Shiel, G., (2009). *Teaching and Learning International Study (TALIS) -Summary Report for Ireland*. OECD. [http://www.oecd.org/document/54/0,3343,en\\_2649\\_33723\\_42980662\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/54/0,3343,en_2649_33723_42980662_1_1_1_1,00.html).

Subsequently, the teacher education qualifications for IVET teachers and trainers described in 7.2 above apply equally for CVET teachers and trainers.

### 7.3.1 Teachers, trainers and training facilitators in CVET

Table 32 below sets out the different categories of teachers and trainers in Ireland and the areas in which they work.

Table 32: Categories of Teachers and Trainers in the Secondary Level Education System and in the CVET Sector		
Occupational Type	Type of Location	Regulatory Bodies
CVET Teachers	Non-tertiary Education Centres, Colleges of Further Education	Vocational Education Committees The Teaching Council FETAC
CVET Lecturer	Institutes of technology, universities, private colleges	Universities Higher Education Institute FETAC/HETAC
CVET trainer or instructor	FÁS and other state training agencies in specific industry sectors, eg for the tourism and agriculture sectors.	FETAC
CVET Trainers Organisers and Co-ordinators of services	Adult and Community-based training.	
CVET private trainer or training consultant	In-company training centres in all types of enterprises and private training companies	

### 7.3.2 Pre-service and in-service training of CVET teachers and trainers

The pre-service and in-service teacher education qualifications for IVET teachers, lecturers and trainers described in 7.2 above, apply equally for the first three categories of CVET teachers, lecturers and trainers detailed in Table 32 above.

Qualifications requirements for appointment as adult education organisers, co-coordinators and managers (Section 4, Table32) employed by the Vocational Education Committees are growing. For example, the NALA/Waterford Institute of Technology Higher Certificate in Arts in Adult Education (NFQ Level 6) or equivalent qualification is part of the criteria for appointment as an Adult Literacy Organiser.

Community Education Facilitators must have a qualification of at least national certificate standard in order to meet the recruitment criteria. Adult Education Officers are required to hold qualifications recognised for the purposes of appointment as teachers in post-primary schools.

While there is no formal training path for those wishing to work as trainers in private industry, many companies provide training for employees who show an aptitude for the role of company trainer. In the majority of larger companies there are training managers who are responsible for organising in-company training. Many of these may have some formal trainer qualification which they may have obtained on a part-time basis. (See Section: 7.2.2. above for the minimum trainer qualification required to become an approved trainer on the Trainer register of public organisations

such as FÁS and Enterprise Ireland).

The Irish Institute of Training and Development (IITD) is a professional body which develops and monitors standards in training and development in Ireland. The IITD organises Certificate and Diploma part-time courses in training and development in co-operation with a number of Institutes of Technology. In 2006 the IITD, in association with the National College of Ireland, launched a part-time three year BA Degree in Training and Development, aimed human resource practitioners or consultants working in small, medium and large enterprises. The degree aims to develop skills and knowledge in specialist training areas such as the design and delivery of training.

## **Theme 8: Matching VET provision (skills) with labour market needs (jobs)**

### **8.1 Systems and mechanisms for the anticipation of skill needs (in sectors, occupations, educational level)**

The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) is a body appointed by the Irish Government to advise it on aspects of education and training related to the future skills requirements of the enterprise sector of the Irish economy. The Group is composed of representatives of business, employees, education, training, Government departments and State agencies.

The Group's mandate<sup>99</sup> provides that it will act as the central national resource on skills and labour supply for the enterprise sector and on overall strategy for enterprise training in Ireland. Specifically, the Group carries out systematic and detailed analyses in order to:

- Advise Government on projected skills requirements at national and sectoral levels and make recommendations on how best to address identified needs;
- Advise Government on associated priority training requirements and the most cost effective ways of responding to them;
- Advise on any skills requirements that cannot be met internally in Ireland at a given time and so must be met through inward migration;
- Advise on developments in content and delivery systems that support excellence in training quality elsewhere and on adaptations necessary to incorporate such developments into training provision here;
- Respond to any request for advice from the relevant Minister on training programmes that are supported through the National Training Fund; and
- Report on progress made in the implementation of its recommendations.

The FÁS Skills and Labour Market Research Unit (SLMRU), regularly produces studies on different occupations and provides a research facility for the EGFSN. The Unit has established a National Skills Database which acts as an electronic database, gathering all the data which is collected by FÁS and other public bodies in Ireland including the Central Statistics Office, which are relevant to the issue of skills demand and supply. The FÁS SLMRU together with the EGFSN continues to highlight current skills shortages through the *National Skills Bulletin*; 'difficult to fill vacancies' through the *Recruitment Agency Survey* and provides a detailed picture of output from across the education and training system through the *Monitoring Ireland's Skills Supply* publication.

FÁS also has a Planning and Research Department, which undertakes studies of employment trends and skills needs in order to inform VET provision, for example, the FÁS Quarterly Labour Market Commentary.

A series of economic and sectoral employment Manpower Forecasting Studies are carried out every three years by the Economic Social Research Institute (ESRI). These forecasts are then translated by the SLMRU into occupational employment forecasts for 43 different occupational groups over a

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<sup>99</sup> *EGFSN Statement of Activity, 2010*, Ireland. April 2011.

5-10 year periods. The studies aim to provide guidance to policy makers, career advisors and they were also used in the development of the National Skills Strategy regarding medium-term occupational employment trends.

### **Emerging and New Skills**

In July 2005, the Minister for Enterprise, Trade & Employment asked the EGFSN to identify the skills required for Ireland to become a competitive, innovation-driven, knowledge-based, participative and inclusive economy by 2020. In response, the EGFSN carried out a detailed programme of research which resulted in the publication in 2007 of the report *Tomorrow's Skills – Towards a National Skills Strategy*.

The **National Skills Strategy** (NSS) sets out the potential skills needs of the economy up to 2020, the likely supply and demand for skilled labour and the key policy issues required to address these skills needs, as well as the existing provision of training and the benefits of investment in training for individuals, employers and the nation as a whole. It details specific targets to achieve a significantly improved educational and skills profile for the Irish labour force with the objective of:

- Upskilling an additional 500,000 people by at least one level on the National Framework of Qualifications by 2020.
- Increasing participation rates in upper secondary level to 90% and progression rates to third level to 70%.
- Addressing the skills needs of the immigrant population and those re-entering employment.

While the National Skills Strategy (NSS) has a key focus on targeting the lower skilled, it also examined the existing supply of labour in Ireland in terms of quantity and quality (as per educational levels). In its recommendations, it identified information and communications technology (ICT), pharmaceuticals, biotechnology as well as high value engineering as areas within the Irish economy which had potential for future growth. The EGFSN reports annually on progress in relation to the recommendations, and the National Framework of Qualifications provides the framework to benchmark the implementation of the Strategy.

Since 2007, the Expert Group has observed a number of skills issues consistently emerging that impact on the ability of enterprises to reach their potential. The key policy requirements<sup>100</sup> emerging are to:

- **Improve the quality of learning experience at primary and second level education:** The origins of an effective National Skills Strategy are traceable to the quality of the learning experience within the primary and second-level school system. Reform of teaching methods and curriculum content, especially for the learning of maths and science, and the development of critical thinking, problem solving and independent learning skills will have a positive impact on educational outcomes.
- **Increase the STEM skills supply pipeline at second and third level:** There is continuing strong demand for graduates who are competent in ICT, engineering, mathematics, science, financial and multi-lingual skills. Currently there are a range of specific skills recruitment difficulties for ICT companies due in large part to the continued business growth of their Irish based operations. A number of initiatives are being explored including one to sustain

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<sup>100</sup> EGFSN *Statement of Strategy 2010*, Ireland. April 2011.

the number of CAO acceptances at third level ICT and engineering courses, and measures to address shortages including utilising the labour market programmes to upskill the current labour.

- **Develop Mathematical Proficiency:** The quality and level of mathematical knowledge outcomes for all levels of national mathematical proficiency needs to improve. Specifically, the numbers of students taking Higher Level Leaving Certificate maths must be increased. This will ensure a sufficient supply pool from which to attract students into science, engineering and technology and business courses.
- **Alignment of Programmes with Skills Needs:** Upskilling and reskilling education and training programmes must be based on employer and employee identified training needs and be aligned with national labour market policy objectives, with a focus on outcomes.
- **Management Development:** Improved management practice will lead to increased performance in productivity and output. Management capability has a positive effect on the level of upskilling undertaken by employees.
- **Work Placements:** Structured internships and opportunities providing work experience opportunities within enterprise are hugely valuable in improving the employability of students and job-seekers. Internships should have identified goals and outcomes with credits awarded towards the achievement of qualifications.

The Expert Group believes that a focused and integrated approach by Government in tackling these issues will make considerable in-roads to addressing enterprise skills needs and contribute to economic recovery.

### **Recent Studies on Skill Needs**

In recent years there have been several important research and policy reports and reviews issued by the Government and its agencies. The following are a list of some the publications produced by the EGFSN:

- Raising National Mathematical Achievement (2008)
- Future Requirements for High-Level ICT Skills in the ICT Sector (2008)
- Future Skill Needs of the Irish Medical Devices Sector (2008)
- Future Skill Requirements of the Food and Beverage Sector (2009)
- Skills in Creativity, Design and Innovation (2009)
- A Quantitative Tool for Workforce Planning in Healthcare: Example Simulations (2009)
- Future Skill Needs of Enterprises within the Green Economy in Ireland (2009)
- Future Skill Requirements of the Biopharma-Pharmacen Sector (2009)
- Future Skill Needs of the Wholesale and Retail Sector (2009)
- Developing Recognition of Prior Learning (2010)
- Vacancy Overview (2010)

A study on **Key Skills for Enterprise to Trade Internationally** is planned for 2011.

### **8.2 Practices to match VET provision (skills) with skill needs (jobs)**

The responsibility for curriculum and qualifications in the school sector lies with the government and relevant statutory bodies. The **Department of Education and Skills** (DES) has overall responsibility for policy related to curriculum, assessment and qualifications; the **National Council for Curriculum Assessment** (NCCA) advises the DES on developments, specifications and standards in these areas; and the **State Examinations Commission** (SEC) runs the State

examinations and acts as the awarding body for schools awards/qualifications which are accommodated in the National Framework of Qualifications.

With regard to measures that have been taken during the last number of years to facilitate the matching of VET provision with the identified skill needs of the labour market outlined above (8.1), the 2011 'Programme for Government' states that with regard to second level education:

- Maths and science teaching at second level will be reformed, including making science a compulsory Junior Cert subject by 2014. Professional development for maths and science teachers will be prioritised.
- A bonus points system for maths, which is linked to specific maths or science courses, will be introduced to encourage greater participation in courses where skills shortages currently exist.
- A national literacy strategy for children and young people will be developed as a matter of urgency, with school-level targets that are related to national targets. Every school will be required to have a literacy action plan, with demonstrable outcomes. Responsibility for achieving these outcomes will be vested in the school principals, who will also receive continuous professional development to support the implementation of the strategy.
- Pre-service and in-service training in teaching of literacy for all primary and secondary school teachers will be improved, with dedicated literacy mentors to work intensively with teachers in most disadvantaged primary schools.
- A new plan to develop ICT in teaching, learning and assessment will be developed. This plan will incorporate the integration of ICT policy across other agencies, such as the Professional Development Services for Teachers, the State Examinations Commission, and Project Maths.

The senior educational cycle is currently undergoing a significant phase of review. A number of areas are prioritised for development and are at various stages of progress. These include the development of more flexible programmes of learning, outcomes-based syllabuses for subjects and short courses and the development of key skills and new ways of assessing them.

'Project maths' (which commenced in 24 schools in 2008) is being rolled out in all schools since September 2010. This initiative is not only revising the entire second-level Mathematics syllabus but is doing it in a new way, involving an intense engagement by schools and teachers in the actual process of course design and development. The significance of Project Maths therefore lies not only in its outputs, but in its very processes. The maths teachers in the 24 initial schools are being supported by a full-time team, through seminars and workshops, school visits and online resources for teaching and learning. Teachers in all other schools have had a series of workshops and seminars and will continue to receive regular professional development. Additional support will also be provided and the range of online resources will be extended, based on the developments and refinements in the initial 24 schools.

Language syllabuses are also undergoing review and committees are currently considering the assessment of the languages. Resource materials have been developed for the embedding of key skills in teaching and learning.

The 2011 ‘Programme for Government’ states that with regard to adult and further education, “Lifelong learning, community education and vocational training for jobseekers will be a high priority. We will expand training options for jobseekers across the VEC, further and higher education sectors to facilitate upskilling of the labour force. We will address the widespread and persistent problem of adult literacy through the integration of literacy in vocational training and through community education”.

At IVET and CVET level a very wide range of courses are provided through the VECs and FÁS including a range of adult and community education courses which cater for the literacy, numeracy and ICT needs of adults. On an annual basis, with advice from its Skills and Labour Market Research Unit, and inputs from the EGFSN (see 8.1 above), FÁS arranges for the provision of a range of courses and in recent years FÁS has developed new courses to meet emerging labour market and skills needs in the areas of services, ICT, medical devices, food, biopharma occupations and green energy.

The VECs deliver further education programmes in line with operational guidelines (for part-time programmes) and circulars (full-time programmes). The VECs network with local and regional stakeholders, including employers and non-governmental organisations, as well as nationally, with various representative organisations, through the Irish Vocational education Association, in order to inform delivery. Both the VECs and FÁS have been developing and re-developing curricula to meet the needs of FETAC’s new Common Awards System (CAS).

As noted in section 8.1 above, in conjunction with enterprise, the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs identifies the specific skills needs for many key sectors of the economy. The steering groups for the following EGFSN reports will reconvene in 2011 to review progress on implementation of the recommendations made in the reports :

- Future Skills Needs of Enterprise within the Green Economy in Ireland (published November 2010)
- Future Skills Requirements of the Biopharma-Pharmachem Sector (published November 2010)
- Future Skills Needs of the Wholesale and Retail Sector (published May 2010)

The social partners have always played a role in VET in Ireland. The setting up of the National Training Fund (NTF) in 2000 gave the social partners, and in particular employers, a policy consultation forum regarding the allocation of funding for skills training for the employed. Employers and unions are represented on the Board and sub-Boards of the main vocational training providers and both employers and unions are also represented on the EGFSN to assist in the identification of specific skill and qualification needs. They also have representation on the Awards Councils FETAC and HETAC.

## **Theme 9: Lifelong guidance for lifelong learning and sustainable employment**

### **9.1 Strategy and provision**

Ireland does not have an integrated and comprehensive structure for providing career guidance and advice. Recent reports on guidance provision in Ireland by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs and the Department of Education and Skills (DES), have revealed many strengths but also significant gaps. The ‘Task Force on Lifelong Learning’, set up in 2002, by the government, stated that: "An integrated strategy for development is seen as vital with all relevant agencies participating in supporting co-ordinated actions- particularly through joint approaches by FÁS, the Training and Employment Authority, the National Centre for Guidance in Education and secondary level, further and third level providers”.

In 2004 a National Guidance Forum was established in response to an OECD review of career guidance policies in Ireland in 2002. The Forum brought together key stakeholders from across the education and labour market spectrum, and for the first time an agreed cohesive strategy for a national lifelong guidance service was developed. The Forum’s report and recommendations<sup>101</sup> published in 2007, provided the opportunity for planning the provision of a guidance service that would underpin national priorities in lifelong learning. The Forum adopted the following definition of guidance:

*Guidance facilitates people throughout their lives to manage their own educational, training, occupational, personal, social, and life choices so that they reach their full potential and contribute to the development of a better society.*

Based on this definition, the Forum proposed a strategy for lifelong guidance in Ireland that includes four main elements:

- A national lifelong guidance framework, outlining the knowledge, skills and competencies that guidance aims to develop among individuals at different times of their lives;
- A competency framework for guidance practitioners;
- A quality framework for guidance services;
- A coherent framework of organisational structures to deliver a coordinated and comprehensive lifelong guidance service.

The implementation of the framework is to be supported by quality standards for service delivery and by qualified practitioners, as well new interlinked structures. At national level the Forum proposes a National Guidance Agency and a National Guidance Forum to promote and implement a lifelong guidance strategy, and at local level a Lifelong Guidance Co-ordination Board and a Local Guidance Forum, to ensure that the delivery of guidance by labour market and education providers is co-ordinated and delivered effectively. It is intended that this proposed framework should deliver a comprehensive lifelong guidance service that will drive a quality-assured service. The Forum has also agreed a common vision and definition of guidance across the education, labour market and community sectors, supported research on careers information and announced its participation in the European-funded project for the establishment of a European network of guidance forums. The National Forum on Guidance was established in October 2011 and aims to provide a forum for dialogue, exchanging information and exploring possibilities for co-operation and co-ordination. Discussions will be informed by National Priorities, activities of the European Lifelong Guidance

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<sup>101</sup> *Guidance for Life: An Integrated Framework for Lifelong Learning in Ireland*, National Guidance forum Report, 2007.

Policy Network (ELGPN) and developments in guidance in line with EU Council Resolution 2008 and Education and Training “ET” 2020.

### **Guidance Services**

Guidance services are education and labour-market based and, are located within educational institutions and in local employment centres. Within educational settings, guidance services are based in post-primary schools, higher and further education institutions and through second chance education programmes. In the labour market sector FÁS, the training and employment authority, is responsible for the provision of guidance services. Guidance services are offered through local employment centres which offer services to the unemployed/jobseekers, persons with disabilities and asylum seekers around the country.

**Guidance services at secondary level:** The Education Act (1998) required schools to ensure that school students have access to guidance to assist them in their educational and career choices. In second level schools, guidance is a universal entitlement. Each school is granted an additional teaching resource to assist it with its guidance provision, ranging from approximately eight hours per week in small schools (<200 students), to approximately two full-time posts in schools >1000 students.<sup>102</sup> Guidance also forms part of the curriculum in senior cycle through the Transition Year Programme (TYP), Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) and Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP). In recent years priority has been given to additional elements of guidance in the curriculum e.g. 'substance abuse' programmes and 'stay safe' programmes. In some schools, support teachers are available to support the needs of children with social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties.

**Guidance at post-secondary level:** At post-secondary school level, guidance and counselling provision is provided mainly within further education colleges and centres operated locally by Vocational Educational Committees (VECs) and in community education settings. The VEC network is the primary mechanism through which the Department of Education and Skills funds the Adult Education and Guidance Initiative (AEGI). From some forty locations at present, Guidance Counsellors and Information Officers under the AEGI provide personal, educational and career guidance, and provide a contact point within the education system for FÁS Employment Service Officers.

**Third Level** – All Universities and Institutes of Technology (IoTs) have career and counselling services available to students. Career services are based in Career Advisory/and Appointments Offices, and counselling services are offered through the Student Counselling Service.

**In adult education**, a counselling service is also available to help clients assess their current situation and look at the options open to them for the future. In 2000 an Adult Educational Guidance Initiative (AEGI) was established to pilot and eventually mainstream, a guidance, information and counselling service, which would include outreach provision for adult learners from disadvantaged backgrounds with low educational attainment.

Guidance at primary, and at secondary and third level is available free of charge as is guidance in the adult education sector. However, there are also a small number of private providers where fees are charged - usually on an individual basis for professional advice, guidance and counselling in relation to career options.

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<sup>102</sup> As a result of cutbacks introduced in the Budget 2012, from September 2012, schools will have to provide their guidance service from within their general teacher allocation.

**FÁS Employment Services** provides guidance and placement services to all jobseekers. They act as the gateway to all training and employment programmes run by FÁS itself, and as a referral point to the guidance, placement, training, education and direct employment services provided by others. FÁS Employment Services are also proactive in engaging with employers, encouraging them to notify them of their job vacancies and to fill them with FÁS referred candidates. Since 2003, it has operated the National Contact Centre, where all vacancies are centrally collated and employers are provided with a one-stop contact point for recruitment.

The **Local Employment Services (LES)** Network was established in the mid-1990s in response to evidence that significant concentrations of the long-term unemployed were to be found in disadvantaged areas and that it was proving particularly difficult for FÁS mainstream services to reach them effectively. The LES model aims to provide a tailored and holistic service to people particularly disadvantaged in the labour market, sourcing whatever personal development, training, education or placement service might help them, regardless of whom the provider is. By the beginning of 2011, there were twenty-three Local Employment Services within the network. They funded by FÁS.

Since the early 1990s, a large number of community-based organisations also developed services to unemployed job-seekers and received public funds to do so. In 2007 these organisations were restructured into thirty seven Local Development Companies. The Local Community Development Programme through which the LDCs are funded, has the promotion of social inclusion as its core remit and in response to the surge in unemployment since 2008, 40 per cent of LDCP funding has been spent on increasing people's work readiness and employment prospects.

The role of Department of Social Protection Facilitator (DSP) was first established to promote take-up of the Department's back to work and education schemes. An Activation Unit was established in 2008, with the specific aim of supporting all people of working age on social welfare benefits to progress towards employment, either directly or via an education/training scheme. Some seventy Facilitators are now located in Social Welfare Local Offices, and provide advice on progression options and how to avail of them. In addition to promoting the Department's own schemes, Facilitators also refer clients on to VEC adult guidance and education, FÁS and the LES.

The Citizens Information Board, operating under the aegis of the DSP, supports the provision of information, advice and advocacy on a broad range of public and social services including social welfare benefits and employment, training and education programmes. It is currently responsible for the operation of one hundred and six Citizen Information Centres across the state (about half full-time and half part-time) which, particularly in rural areas and smaller towns, are the first and most accessible source of advice and support to unemployed people seeking to become aware of their entitlements and the supports available.

The Youth Information Centres, managed by a variety of youth organisations, also offer information to young people on a wide number of issues, including employment matters, local community services and education and training opportunities

The National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE), funded by the Department of Education and Skills (DES), plays a role in developing quality career guidance in Ireland. Its main functions are to develop and evaluate guidance practice and material in all areas of education, provide technical advice and organise in-career development training, as well as contributing to policy formation in the field of guidance. The Centre acts as Secretariat to the National Guidance Forum and provides co-ordination activities for the Adult Education Guidance Initiative (AEGI), referred to above. It makes available information on best practice in guidance education and systems in Europe, as well as education and training opportunities for practitioners in Ireland. In recent years

both the National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCCGE) and FÁS have been active in guidance developments at European level and are members of the Euroguidance Network of national resource centres throughout Europe, funded under the European Commission's Lifelong Learning Programme.

### Challenges

According to the recent National Economic & Social Council (NESC) report,<sup>103</sup> the recent rapid rise in unemployment, decline in employment opportunities combined with the severe fiscal crisis has profoundly challenged the public service providers of employment and guidance services in Ireland. The report identifies the following as some of the main challenges facing the guidance services:

- 1 Responding to the increase in demand for employment services has created pressures for service professionals, which has led to a reduction in the time they spend with clients on an individual basis. Measures adopted to use the time of frontline staff more effectively have included a resort to group interviews and appointments-only systems to improve scheduling and reduce client waiting time. There is a concern among frontline staff themselves that an overt focus on processing more people through the system has potentially limited the effectiveness of the advice they offer.
2. The scale of the unemployment crisis has resulted in larger numbers of people with post-Leaving Cert. or third-level qualifications, high occupational status and/or considerable work experience engaging with the Public Employment Services. This increased diversity has generated a number of specific pressures. It has meant that frontline professionals are dealing on a daily basis with more individuals who display a palpable sense of shock at having lost their jobs, a shock accentuated in many instances by significant levels of personal debt. Being thrust into an important counselling role for vulnerable and distressed individuals is draining for the staff involved and has exposed the lack of appropriate professional and institutional back-up supports in many instances. It needs to be appreciated that even relatively well-qualified and/or job-ready individuals can benefit from quality counselling and guidance, the provision of hard information on benefit entitlements, and the opportunity to revisit and retool their basic job-search skills. Relatively advantaged individuals presenting to the PES can feel highly uncertain about their future employment prospects precisely because their previous career plans and established employment paths have been severely disrupted by the speed and scale of the economic downturn. They, too, rapidly experience how potentially isolating and wearing the process of job-search can be (NYCI, 2010<sup>104</sup>).
3. All providers of employment services are aware that their traditional clients – the more socially disadvantaged now face greater competition in accessing the types of employment, further education and training opportunities that could prevent them from slipping into long-term or very long-term unemployment.
4. Another difficulty for employment services providers is the fact that the scale and pace of the economic downturn since early 2008 has accelerated longer-term structural changes in the Irish economy. This means that employment services professionals now operate in the context of a national labour market where areas of future job growth are more difficult to decipher, as are the training and educational courses that most assist people in accessing emerging employment opportunities. The guidance function has become more difficult to

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<sup>103</sup> *Supports and Services for Unemployed Jobseekers: Challenges and Opportunities in a Time of Recession*. NESC. 2011. Pg.s 71-72.

<sup>104</sup> *Youth Unemployment in Ireland – The Forgotten Generation*: National Youth Council of Ireland, Dublin.

perform as the anticipated profile of future jobs and their likely skill requirements change, and a much wider range of programmes, courses and opportunities come on stream to which unemployed jobseekers can be directed.

Despite severe budgetary pressures, employment services providers have innovated significantly to meet the scale, diversity and intensity of the demands thrust on them by the recession – the introduction of group interviews, the adoption of more flexible delivery mechanisms (evening classes, online courses and blended learning), the design of new courses in emerging green and smart technology areas (particularly for unemployed craft workers) and the reconfiguration of long courses into shorter, modular forms, are prominent examples.

## **9.2 Target groups and modes of delivery**

The provision of guidance in Ireland is currently quite fragmented, with many different providers delivering services to various target groups in a wide range of educational and labour market settings. Within the educational context the main target groups for the provision of guidance and counselling are:

- young people in the secondary school system;
- early School Leavers
- young people in further education
- university students at undergraduate and post graduate level
- adult and second chance learners

Within the labour market context the main target groups for the provision of guidance and counselling are all unemployed job-seekers and people marginalised from the labour market.

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) published in January 2007, a draft curriculum framework for guidance in post-primary education, for the areas of Personal Guidance, Educational Guidance and Career Development. The framework reflects the importance of a balanced approach to guidance provision, both in terms of the coverage of a broad range of topics and skills, and in terms of student access to guidance across all the years of post-primary education.

The guidance counsellor offers the following services:

- **Counselling:** This may involve personal counselling, educational counselling, career counselling, or combinations of each.
- **Support:** The guidance counsellor consistently provides support to students, parents, school teachers, the school principal, Board of Management and various referral agencies in assisting the personal and social, career and educational development of students.
- **Assessment:** The guidance counsellor is trained to use a range of psychometric tests and other evaluative instruments in order to support the goals and objectives of the school guidance programme.
- **Information:** The guidance counsellor facilitates and helps students to acquire, interpret and use information relevant to their personal and social, educational and career development.
- **Classroom Guidance Activities:** It is the role of the guidance counsellor to plan classroom based learning experiences which are relevant to the objectives of the school guidance programme, for example information and communication technologies (ICT) or skills development (e.g. planning, decision making and study skills).
- **Referrals:** The guidance counsellor organises referrals for students seeking the assistance of non-school based professionals e.g. National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) and the Health Service Executive (HSE), following standard procedures.

At third level Careers services provide one-to-one interviews, psychometric testing, e-guidance, workshops, seminars, presentations, liaising with academic staff on student career management and skills highlighting, mentoring and volunteering schemes and career fairs.

Most careers services have their own website and some services enable students to email queries and receive 'virtual' careers advice. Some colleges also have specific career advisers for students with disabilities. Many services' websites now incorporate an e-learning module on career management skills and most, if not all, offer an e-guidance service to both current and former students.

Each college in the university and IT (Institute of Technology) sector provides a counselling service for students on campus. The counsellor may work with individuals or groups on issues in the following areas: therapeutic, developmental, preventative and practical. This can encompass support in personal issues, transitions, stress management, study and exam skills, and peer mentoring programmes.

Career guidance and counselling is provided by FÁS and LES Employment Services Officers for clients as part of its overall national employment and training service and includes:

- individual interviews;
- ICT - career information databases, and
- occupational testing.

Other initiatives undertaken by FÁS to support and develop their guidance systems include:

- the establishment of a national internet-based job vacancy call centre, and
- the development of a multimedia careers package - Career Directions.

The latter is a web-based career guidance tool which hosts a database on careers information. It is an interactive programme accessible nationwide, which allows users to perform self-assessments and access information on over 720 careers. Career Directions has links to all current vacancies and training courses on the FÁS website, and is available in multimedia CD format and online at [www.careerdirections.ie](http://www.careerdirections.ie). It is also accessible in FÁS Employment Offices and Training Centres, Youth Information Centres, secondary-level schools and in careers services in third-level institutions.

### **9.3 Guidance and counselling personnel**

The Department of Education and Skills (DES) gives schools an allocation equivalent to one guidance counsellor for every 500 students. These are normally qualified teachers who have obtained a post-graduate Diploma in Guidance and Counselling. These counsellors are not all employed full-time in careers work and may also spend some of their time on teaching duties. A post-graduate qualification in guidance is also one of a range of qualifications required for those working in guidance in higher education. Other recognised qualifications include qualifications in psychology, social sciences, counselling and personnel management. Unlike guidance services in schools, careers services in tertiary education are normally specialist careers services. According to the Institutes of Technology Careers Advisers' Network (ITCAN), all careers advisers have a third level qualification and there is an increasing expectation that advisers have a post-graduate qualification in career guidance and counselling.

Career guidance and counselling is part of the work of a FÁS employment officer. While currently no specific formal guidance qualifications are required, prior relevant experience is taken into account and matched against the required competences. Recently recruited FÁS employment officers are required to undertake a one-year, part-time open-learning Certificate Programme in

Adult Guidance and Counselling in the National University of Ireland, Maynooth, with an option of applying to progress to diploma level. FÁS has also made provision to train relevant staff in guidance and counselling skills to enable them to provide guidance services to persons with disabilities, while staff involved in the Youthreach programme are trained in non-formal guidance skills.

The report of the National Guidance Forum has formulated a competency framework for guidance practitioners, which is designed to fit within the Irish National Framework of Qualifications. This framework gives an overview of the competencies practitioners will require to work within the broad context of the lifelong guidance service, and will enable practitioners at any stage in their career, to study and qualify in additional modules so that they will be competent to take on new guidance roles.

Organisations that represent guidance practitioners, (See Table 33), also play a vital role in professional development. The Institute of Guidance Counsellors is the professional body representing over 900 practitioners in secondary-level schools and in other settings. The Institute has a liaison and advocacy role on behalf of its members, with government departments and management and trade unions within the education, employment and training areas. It promotes standards for entry into the profession, best practice for guidance and counselling, and supports the professional development of its members through in-career training. The National Committee for Guidance in Education provides a support service for adult guidance personnel.

Table 33 sets out the supports available for the provision of Guidance and Counselling Services in Ireland and Table 34 shows an overview of the Guidance Services in Ireland describing the service provided, the target group it is aimed at and the qualifications of the personnel providing the Service.

**TABLE 33: SUPPORT AND CO-ORDINATION AGENCIES FOR THE PROVISION OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING SERVICES**

<b>PROGRAMME TYPE</b>	<b>CONTENT AND FOCUS OF PROVISION</b>	<b>TARGET CLIENT GROUPS</b>
<b>NATIONAL CENTRE FOR GUIDANCE IN EDUCATION (NCGE)</b>	Supports and develops guidance practice in all areas of education; informs DES policy.	Provides support to the DES and to guidance practitioners in education.
<b>EUROGUIDANCE CENTRES</b>	Provides information on educational opportunities within the EU. Promotes European mobility.	Supports the guidance community, in cooperation with a network of 65 centres in 31 countries.
<b>INSTITUTE OF GUIDANCE COUNSELLORS (IGC)</b>	Liaison and advocacy role with government departments, trade unions and education and training institutions. Continuing professional development for guidance professionals.	Professional body representing 1200 practitioners in secondary level schools, third-level colleges, consultancy practice and other settings.
<b>NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICE (NEPS)</b>	Agency of DES. Provides psychological services to pupils in primary and post-primary schools	Services are not yet available in all schools and priority is for pupils with learning disabilities.
<b>ASSOCIATION OF GRADUATE CAREERS SERVICES IN IRELAND (AGCSI)</b>	Develops the career services for students and graduates, provides resource/ and information materials and the website Gradireland.	Members are guidance professionals in publicly funded third-level institutions.
<b>INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY CAREERS ADVISERS' NETWORK (ITCAN)</b>	Supports the operation of career advisory services and provides a forum for sharing best practice.	Members are career advisers in 14 Institutes of Technology.

<b>ASSOCIATION FOR HIGHER EDUCATION ACCESS AND DISABILITY (AHEAD)</b>	<p>Advocates improvement in access and participation of students with disabilities in higher education; research and informs national policy on the education and employment of graduates with disabilities.</p>	<p>Advises Higher Education Authority, education institutions and others in education sector.</p>
<b>IRISH ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE COUNSELLORS</b>	<p>Representative body for counselling services in third level education.</p>	<p>Counsellors work with individuals or groups to provide support in personal and academic issues.</p>
<b>ADULT EDUCATIONAL GUIDANCE ASSOCIATION</b>	<p>Identifies guidance staff training and development needs in association with the NCGE.</p>	<p>Represents staff participating in the Adult Educational Guidance Initiative pilot projects.</p>

Source: Report on Lifelong Guidance in Ireland, National Guidance Forum, 2007, Ireland

**Table 34: OVERVIEW OF GUIDANCE SERVICES IN IRELAND**

	<b>GUIDANCE SERVICE</b>	<b>ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>CLIENTS</b>	<b>ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROL</b>	<b>PROVIDED BY</b>	<b>TRAINING AND QUALIFICATIONS</b>
1.	Guidance and Counselling in post-primary schools	Personal and social, educational and career guidance. Guidance delivered through modules on TYP, LCA, LCVP by subject teachers under supervision of the guidance counsellor	Age 12/13-18: pupils attending post-primary schools	Department of Education and Skills (DES)	Guidance Counsellor Subject teachers	Guidance Counsellor - Degree + Teaching Qualification + Recognised Guidance
2.	Careers Advisory Services in third-level institutions	Career and educational guidance – concentration on further educational and employment opportunities	Majority aged 18/19-22: students attending most major third-level institutions	Universities and Colleges	Careers & Appointments Officer / Adviser	Preferably Qualification in Guidance
3.	Adult Educational Guidance Initiative	Educational and career guidance	Literacy, VTOS and Community Education & <u>BTEI</u> participants	Department of Education and Skills (support, training and evaluation role: NCGE)	Guidance <u>Co-ordinator</u> , Guidance Counsellor/ Information Officer	Guidance Counsellor Degree + Recognised Guidance Qualification (see overleaf) No specific qualifications for Information Officers
4.	Youth Information Service	Information and referral	Age 15-25	Local voluntary agencies	Youth Information Officer	Various
5.	National Employment Service	Career guidance with emphasis on placement and training	<i>Aged 15+</i> , Long-term unemployed, jobseekers, persons with disabilities, asylum seekers eligible to work	National Training and Employment Authority (FÁS)	Employment Services Officer / Mediator	Higher Diploma/ Diploma/Certificate in Guidance and Counselling and various
6.	Employment Support Service	Information and referral	Unemployed	DSCFA <sup>105</sup>	Social Welfare Staff	Various
7.	Unemployment resource centres	Information, counselling and advice	Aged 18+: unemployed	Irish Congress of Trade Unions	Information Officer	Various
8.	Private guidance agencies	Personal and social, educational and career guidance	All ages	Private	Psychologist / Guidance Counsellor	Degree and Masters in Psychology, Guidance qualifications, and various programmes

<sup>105</sup> DSFA – Department of Social and Family Affairs

## Theme 10: Financing: Investment in Human Resources

### 10.1 VET Financing Policy

The majority of funding for vocational education and training (VET) in Ireland for individuals not in employment is provided by the State. This applies for both young persons before they enter employment, and unemployed adults.

Following formal revisions made in 2009, the OP provides for total expenditure of just over €906m, made up of €528m in national public funding, a Community (ESF) contribution of €375m and private funding of €3m. The current allocation of OP financial resources across its three priorities is shown in Table 35.

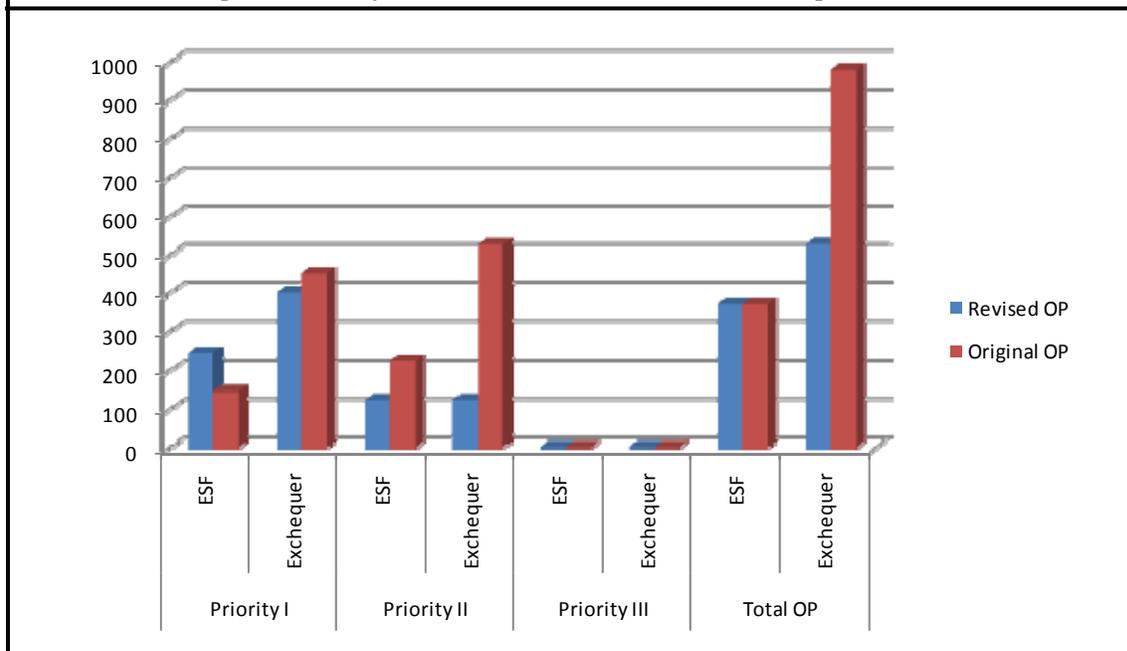
	<b>ESF (€M)</b>	<b>Exchequer (€M)</b>	<b>Total Public (€M)</b>	<b>Private (€M)</b>	<b>Total (€M)</b>	<b>% of total</b>
Priority I - Increasing Activation of the Labour Force	247	400	647	3	650	71.7%
Priority II - Increasing Activation and Reducing Inequality in the Labour Force	125	125	250	0	250	27.6%
Priority III - Technical Assistance	3	3	6	0	6	0.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>528</b>	<b>903</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>906</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: HCIOP Operational Programme, Revised 21/10-2009

This financial framework follows revisions made in 2009, which involved a reduction in the exchequer contribution to the overall OP, a substantial increase in the total (national and ESF) financial allocation to Priority 1 and a reduction in the allocation to Priority 2 (Figure 1). The revisions reflected the changed socio-economic context and substantial growth in unemployment since the OP was originally framed, and the need to put greater emphasis on activation measures for those within the labour market, particularly those recently unemployed<sup>106</sup>.

<sup>106</sup> *Human Capital Investment OP (2007-13) Mid-Term Evaluation – Final Report*, Fitzpatricks and Associates, 2011.

**Figure 1: Priority Level Revisions to HCIOP (€m, Public Expenditure)<sup>107</sup>**



Source: Human Capital Investment OP (2007-13) Mid-Term Evaluation – Final Report, Fitzpatrick & Associates, 2011

With regard to funding mechanisms linked to quality assurance indicators, FÁS which receives a significant percentage of the ESF budget, to co-fund training activities under the relevant Operational Programme priorities listed above, monitors and reports on training programmes which receive co-funding from the ESF, under an agreed list of indicators which include quality assurance targets, such as the numbers of trainees obtaining certification.

## 10.2 Funding for initial vocational education and training

Expenditure on initial vocational education and training (IVET) is considerable and has been growing over the last two decades as young people stay longer at secondary school and a greater proportion attend post-school education and training. Funding for IVET is very largely from central government, with only small contributions from employers or individuals. The ESF, which previously was a major contributor to government VET expenditure, now contributes much less funding to IVET. It is significant to note that the level of ESF funding available to Ireland in the current Operational Programme is EUR 375 million, much reduced on the EUR 1.2 billion approximately, for the period 2000-06. The ESF remains, however, an important influence on Government policy and expenditure for IVET for young unemployed people and early school leavers.

### Funding of IVET in secondary level, institutions

The Department of Education and Skills (DES) is responsible for the funding of

<sup>107</sup> The OP also included a private contribution of €3m, which wasn't affected by the 2009 OP revisions.

publicly provided school education at secondary-level. Funds are allocated on a formula, based on a standard pupil-teacher ratio. There is also a per-pupil non-pay grant. Responsibility for the provision of funding of vocational schools, community colleges and further education centres is devolved from the Department of Education and Skills, (DES), to thirty-three city and county based Vocational Education Committees, (VECs), (see Theme 3 Section: 3.2). The funding for programmes such as Youthreach, to address the needs of early-school leavers, is distributed jointly by the DES and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE). In 2010 the Budget for Youthreach was increased by EUR 6 million in order to provide for 400 additional places on the Programme, bringing the total number of Youthreach participants to over 3 600. Total expenditure for Youthreach in 2010 amounted to EUR 65 million. With regard to funding mechanisms and links to quality assurance, the Department of Education and Skills carries out Value for Money Surveys on several of the programmes.

### **Funding of IVET in non-tertiary further education and training centres and colleges**

A major emphasis was placed in the National Development Plan (NDP) for 2000-06 on broadening access to further non-tertiary and third level education, particularly for those from disadvantaged backgrounds, and significant investment continues to be allocated to this area. There are nine different funding programmes in place, as well as grant schemes and allowances to support students, including mature students, into further and higher education.

School leavers attending full-time Post Leaving Certificate Courses (PLC) and Institutes of Technology (ITs) courses of at least one year's duration in publicly funded colleges, do not pay fees. A means-tested maintenance grant is available for those school leavers registered on PLC courses of not less than one year's duration and for full-time students in ITs, taking courses at Certificate and Diploma levels. These grants are funded by the DES and administered by the local authorities. The grant levels are set annually and there are other supplementary means-tested grants for school leavers from low-income and socially-disadvantaged groups e.g. the disabled, to attend PLC courses.

Funding for apprenticeship training is sourced from the employer-levied, National Training Fund (NTF), together with central Government funds. The NTF funds most of the costs of apprenticeship training undertaken in FÁS, whereas the government funds most of the costs of the apprentices training undertaken in the education system, i.e. in the Institutes of Technology.

Apprentices are employees of companies under an apprenticeship contract. During the phases of on-the-job training, employers contribute to their support through the payment of an agreed ' industrial apprentice wage rate', which is a percentage of the full (adult) craft worker wage which may vary depending on the occupation and employer. Generally, rates are based on the year of apprenticeship and increase during the apprenticeship. During off-the-job training, all apprentices are paid an allowance by FÁS and, where appropriate, a contribution towards travel or accommodation costs. During the periods of off-the-job training and education, the state, through FÁS, pays an allowance to the apprentices, equivalent to their wages. There are also grants

to encourage employers to recruit and register female apprentices. In 2010, due to the impact of the economic recession on the construction industry, funding for the apprenticeship programme was reduced to EUR 68.4 million down from 93.9 million in 2009<sup>108</sup>. The training costs for trainees attending Traineeships programmes, designed to enable the unemployed access the labour market, are paid by the State. In 2010 expenditure by FÁS on this programme amounted to EUR 33.1 million up from 28.5 million in 2009<sup>109</sup>. The trainees also receive training allowances paid by FÁS.

Guidance services at secondary and third-level and in the adult education sector, are available free of charge. There are also a small number of private providers who charge fees for professional advice, guidance and counselling in relation to career options.

### **Funding of IVET in third level and higher education institutions**

The third level and higher education sector is principally funded by the State. The Higher Education Authority, which operates under the remit of the DES, is the main funding body for universities and for the designated higher education institutions, such as the 14 Institutes of Technology and the teacher training colleges. Since 1995 no fees have been charged for under-graduate education in publicly funded third-level institutions and a system of means -tested grants towards the cost of living for students is in existence. The total expenditure on Higher Education in 2007 was EUR 1.9 billion

The national higher education system is strongly research and innovation oriented, aiming for mutually beneficial interaction with the enterprise sector. One of the ways of achieving this is through the Strategic Innovation Fund amounting to EUR 510 million over the period of 2006-2013. This fund, administered by the Higher Education Authority, is intended to be a major catalyst in bringing about substantial change and quality improvement in higher education institutions and promoting innovation and system-wide collaboration that draws on all the institutions collective strengths.

### **Funding for IVET in specific industry and services sectors**

Central government provide funds for IVET for new entrants into specific industry sectors, through its funding of several public bodies such as Fáilte Ireland, which provides IVET for the tourism industry and Teagasc, the Agriculture and Food Development Authority, which provides IVET for the agriculture and horticulture industries. In most cases funding by these agencies includes financial support for students through the payment of tuition and capitation fees but not student grants. The Institutes of Technology (ITs), who jointly provide initial vocational education courses for the tourism and agricultural sectors, receive their funding from the Higher Education Authority via the DES, together with contributions from Fáilte Ireland and Teagasc. Two other state supported agencies, Bord Iascaigh Mhara (the Irish Sea Fisheries Board) and Coillte (the Irish Forestry Board), fund training for new entrants into the fishing and aquaculture sectors and the forestry industry respectively.

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<sup>108</sup> FÁS Annual Report 2010.

<sup>109</sup> FÁS Annual Report 2010.

## **10.3 Funding for continuing vocational education and training and adult learning**

### **10.3.1 Public funding schemes and mechanisms to finance CVET (excluding those specifically targeted at unemployed)**

The state plays a smaller role in the funding of CVET for the employed and for adult learners, in comparison to its funding for the training of the unemployed and for young people. The Department of Education and Skills, (DES) provides funding for continuing vocational education in further (VEC) education colleges and adult education centres. Funding for continuing vocational training is distributed by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, (DETE), to state agencies such as FÁS and other government departments fund ongoing continuing training for specific industrial sectors such as tourism. Between 1997 and 2010 it is estimated that expenditure in the area of further education has increased by over 400% to EUR 439 million, enabling almost 200,000 learners to access further education learning opportunities in 2010.

No public funds are distributed directly to the population for CVET, and there is no system of paid education and training leave. In general CVET for adults is paid for directly by the individuals themselves, and while participation in full-time further and higher education does not require the payment of tuition fees, adults attending part-time or evening courses normally pay the full cost. As a result of proposals in the 2007 'Programme for Government' eligibility criteria under the Back to Education initiative were amended to allow free tuition to any adult with less than upper secondary level education.

In line with Government policy, FÁS continued during the year to focus on training for unemployed people and to reduce its involvement in the funding of training for people in employment. Total direct expenditure in 2010 was €3.1m compared to €12.0m in 2009, €36.7m in 2008 and €48.7m in 2007. Training interventions for 1,860 primarily low skilled workers were grant aided in 2010. (FAS Annual Report 2010)

Many publicly funded organisations such as FÁS are permitted to charge fees. However, often the employer reimburses the cost of these courses, or if the trainee is unemployed or from a recognised disadvantaged group, no fee is charged. For adults attending part-time courses in third-level colleges, some assistance is provided through tax relief. Tax allowances are also available for the fees paid for attendance at approved courses in ICT and foreign language skills. There are three main strands of publicly funded CVET and adult learning provision.

### **10.3.2 Public-private cost-sharing**

Government policy views the training of persons at work as primarily the responsibility of employers, who are the main source of funds for training for the employed, through their direct funding of in-company training or indirectly through their contributions to the National Training Fund (NTF). The NTF was established in

2000 and it is resourced by a levy on employers of 0.7% of earnings of employees. It applies to all the main kinds of employment and covers approximately 75% of all insurable employees. The monies collected can be used to fund training schemes and programmes for the employed, (including apprenticeship training), and for those seeking employment. The Social Partners have a role to play in the allocation of the NTF and they are consulted by the government in relation to the allocation of NTF funds for training programmes. The Government-sponsored, the Expert Group on Future Skill Needs, is the forum used to fulfil this requirement. Table 29 below, sets out the NTF funding utilized by State and other bodies, on training for the employed from 2005-10.

The Government uses a number of financial and other incentive mechanisms to support and encourage employers to invest in training to improve the skills of their staff. The level of this support depends on a number of factors including region, type and size of company, sectoral grouping or type of employee (e.g. low skill operatives in declining industries), and the stage of company development. Under the 2007 'Programme for Government' EUR 2.8 billion was provided for up-skilling the workforce to improve training for people in employment and help up-skill those affected by industrial restructuring. In particular subsidies are provided by state-funded agencies to reduce the costs of training for SME companies. The agencies that support and advise companies to undertake further training for their employees include FÁS, Enterprise Ireland, IDA-Ireland and the thirty-five County and City Enterprise Boards whose role is to develop local indigenous enterprise in the micro-business sector at city and county levels, and who provide training to start up businesses, as well as training in management, e-commerce and IT skills. Sectoral specific support assistance is provided by Fáilte Ireland for ongoing training in the tourism and hospitality industry, by Teagasc for training in the agricultural and food sector and by the Crafts Council of Ireland for the craft sector.

Enterprise Ireland, funds schemes to support in-company management training and advisory services for approved firms within the manufacturing and internationally-traded services sectors. According to the Department of Enterprise, Trade Innovation Government Estimates for 2010, the agency was allocated EUR 2.9 million from the National Training Fund for these activities. In total in 2010 this agency spent EUR 15.6 million<sup>110</sup> on management development and training.

(The Industrial Development Authority (IDA), responsible for securing new industries from overseas in the manufacturing and internationally-traded services sector, was allocated EUR 3.0 million from the National Training Fund for training and development activities in 2010<sup>111</sup>.

Údarás Na Gaeltachta, a regional development agency which operates in Irish-speaking areas, spent EUR 9.3 million on training in 2010, up from EUR 4.9 million in 2009<sup>112</sup>.

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<sup>110</sup> *Enterprise Ireland Annual Report 2010.*

<sup>111</sup> Department of Finance. *2011 Estimates for Public Services and Summary Public Capital Programme*

<sup>112</sup> *Údarás Na Gaeltachta Annual Report 2010*

The thirty-five County and City Enterprise Boards (CEBs) fund training programmes and schemes mainly targeted at the development needs of micro-enterprises and their employees. CEBs receive their funding from Enterprise Ireland.

State funding is also available for ongoing occupational skills training for employees in specific industry and services sectors.

- Fáilte Ireland, spent EUR 12,664 million in 2009 in comparison to EUR 15,103<sup>113</sup> million in 2008 on training for people seeking employment or employed in the tourism and hospitality sectors. The agency also receives a small contribution from the tourism industry and charges fees for employees' attendance on courses.
- Teagasc, the Agriculture and Food Development Authority, spent approximately EUR 25 million<sup>114</sup> in total on education and training in 2009. The agency charges a fixed fee to run ongoing courses for farmers. It also provides training courses at cost, for persons working in the food processing industry.
- Crafts Council of Ireland offers financial and other incentives such as training advice and courses for employees in the craft industry. These courses are free and a training allowance is paid to participants. The Council receives its funding from the Enterprise Ireland agency. In 2010 expenditure by the Council on education and training amounted to EUR 12.7 million

Funding for CVET for public servants, teachers, the police and defence forces etc., is sourced from the 'normal' budget of the relevant government department. The state also allocates some funding to a number of non-commercial training providers such as the Irish Management Institute (IMI) and the Institute of Public Administration (IPA), for the training of employees in the public sector. These Institutes are also funded through their membership subscriptions, as well as by course fees paid by companies and the individual learners.

### **10.3.3 Collective (employer, employee) investment to finance CVET**

The extent of employer direct investment in in-company training is difficult to ascertain given the lack of comprehensive information on in-company training expenditure. While no definitive statistics exist, figures on training expenditure from different sources, indicate that employee training grew rapidly over the last decade. A report by the Economic and Social Research Institute found that spending by the state on training for the employed amounted to about EUR 49 million in 2003 in comparison to an estimated EUR 1 billion spent by companies and commercial trainers. The latter amount includes the employer contributions to the National Training Fund (NTF). In 2005 total expenditure by companies was estimated at EUR 1.5 billion though only EUR 420 million of this cost was on the direct costs of

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<sup>113</sup> 2009 Fáilte Ireland Annual Report

<sup>114</sup> Teagasc Annual Report 2009.

training courses.<sup>115</sup> Employers also participate in the industry-led ‘Skillnets’ Training Networks Programme (TNP), which has been allocated EUR 55 million from the NTF for 2005-10, to support enterprise-based training networks. Total expenditure on Skillnets amounted to EUR 17.3 million, (EUR 8.9 million was invested from the National Training Fund and EUR 8.4 million by member companies).

#### **10.3.4 Reaching the groups at risk through funding schemes and mechanisms**

The Workplace Basic Education Fund targets employees with the low skills levels (including early school leavers), and particularly those with difficulties with literacy and numeracy. Expenditure from the fund was EUR 209,000 in 2010.<sup>116</sup>

### **10.4 Funding for training for the unemployed**

In general in Ireland unemployed persons and those from other socially excluded groups are provided with financial assistance to undertake education and training programmes. Government funding priorities for VET for the unemployed and socially excluded, are set out in policy documents which have been incorporated into the National Development Plan (NDP) for 2007-13, which has made available EUR 4.9 billion to provide targeted training and services to groups outside the workforce, as well as encouraging increased participation of women, older workers and migrants in the workforce. The NDP is implemented under the annual Reform Programme and the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS), which targets major investment for individuals with inadequate literacy and numeracy skills.

The majority of expenditure on VET for the unemployed comes from central government, and includes contributions from the National Training Fund (NTF) and the European Social Fund (ESF). The social partners are consulted on the allocation of funding for programmes for the unemployed which receive financial support from the NTF, and intermediary implementing bodies such as FÁS and the VECs, make annual submissions to their parent government departments outlining the number of unemployed they intend to train and the associated costs. There has also been increasing public funding for the community and voluntary sectors which provide

#### **CVET for marginalised or unemployed adults**

In general unemployed persons and those from other socially-excluded groups are given financial assistance to undertake VET programmes. A portion of the budget allocated to the state agencies providing VET, is set aside for the payment of trainee allowances. In the area of vocational training, FÁS is the main provider of these allowances. VET for the unemployed and socially-excluded falls into the following categories.

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<sup>115</sup> *Data Analysis of In-Employment, Education and Training in Ireland*, Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, Forfás ‘05 <sup>79</sup> *Company Training in Ireland 2005*, R. Fox. FÁS 2005.

<sup>116</sup> <sup>116</sup> Department of Finance. *2011 Estimates for Public Services and Summary Public Capital Programme*

Courses funded under the Vocational Training Opportunities (VTOS) scheme, a “second chance” education and training programme for unemployed people, are provided free of charge. VTOS participants, who receive unemployment assistance or benefit, get a training allowance. Lone-parents or those eligible for disability payment, also receive a payment. There is a meal and travel allowance for those who reside at a distance from the VTOS centre, and books and materials are free of charge, childcare support may also be available. A bonus payment is payable for those in receipt of certain eligible social welfare payments for at least one year when they join VTOS. In 2010 total expenditure on this programme was EUR 7xx million. VTOS is funded by the Department of Education and Skills.

### **The formal vocational training sector**

FÁS, the national Training and Employment Authority, offers a range of CVT programmes for young and older people seeking to enter or re-enter the labour market after an absence due to unemployment, disability or other reasons. Training allowances equivalent to unemployment payments, are provided to unemployed persons attending full-time FÁS courses. Training courses are free and a 'training bonus' is paid to long-term unemployed persons. A contribution is also available for approved childcare costs and trainees can receive travel and accommodation support. Expenditure on FÁS training and integration programmes for the unemployed and disadvantaged amounted to EUR 279 million for training for employment in 2010<sup>117</sup>.

FÁS, also administers a Technical Employment Support Grants Scheme which provides flexible training options for unemployed jobseekers, where the type of training required is not immediately available in a training centre. FÁS in suitable situations also subcontracts some training for the unemployed to approved private training providers following a tendering process.

FÁS administers several grant schemes to assist those with a disability to access employment. FÁS expenditure for specialist training providers who provide training for people with disabilities who require more intensive support, amounted to EUR 53.1million in 2010 while EUR 8.5 million was expended on Supported Employment Services in 2010. The Wage Subsidy Scheme, introduced in 2005, continues to be promoted by FÁS to encourage employers and potential disabled employees to avail of the incentives under the schemes and to maximise take-up. The total expenditure on this programme for 2010 was EUR 10.9 million in comparison to EUR 10.3 million in 2009.<sup>118</sup>

### **Informal education and training sector**

The community and voluntary sectors are important providers of VET, including adult literacy programmes for unemployed adults. Generally these programmes are provided free of charge and are funded by public authorities such as the Vocational Education Committees. In 2002 the Government increased funding to this sector through the introduction of the Community Strand under the *'Back to Education Initiative'* (BTEI). Financing for CVET at community level, is mainly distributed by the government agency Pobal, (formerly Area Development Management Ltd.),

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<sup>117</sup> FAS Annual Report 2010.

<sup>118</sup> FAS Annual Report 2010.

which funds Local Area Partnership Companies and the four Irish Territorial Employment Pacts, both of whom facilitate CVET for marginalised groups. Some community groups and partnership companies give small allowances to learners whose parents are on social welfare, other groups provide services such as transport, childcare facilities and learning materials.

The National Adult Literacy Scheme provides free tuition to those who wish to access literacy programmes. The Department of Education and Skills funds the cost of running the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA), which co-ordinates these programmes.

Adult learning opportunities for the unemployed are also provided by many trade unions in their networks of adult education centres. These centres are funded from union members' subscriptions and some receive a grant from FÁS.

### **The formal vocational education sector**

Second-chance and community based education is funded through the 'Back to Education Initiative' (BTEI). In 2007 the BTEI funding eligibility criteria were amended to allow free tuition to any adult with less than upper secondary level education. This change encompassed those who were previously eligible (people with a social welfare entitlement or medical card), and extended eligibility for free tuition to unwaged people and those in employment with low education levels. In making this change, the key priority was to remove barriers to access by adults who do not have the Leaving Certificate or its equivalent, and so increase participation by this group in further education without them incurring tuition costs. In particular, this change in eligibility criteria extended access to free tuition to women in the home. The funding allocation for BTEI in 2010 was EUR 17 million.

School leavers and adults attending full-time Post-Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses of at least one year's duration, in publicly-funded colleges do not pay fees. An education allowance is available for persons following full-time third-level or PLC courses, who receive unemployment benefit, lone parent's allowance or disability benefit, (the latter group can also obtain special financial support). There are also other supplementary means-tested maintenance grants, known as 'Top-Up Grants', for school leavers from low-income families attending PLC courses. These grants are funded from the Student Assistance and Third-Level Access Funds, administered by the local authorities.

Other financial assistance includes the 'Back to Education Allowance' (BTEA), which is available for adults aged 21 and over, who wish to upgrade their general level of education. Expenditure under this programme came to EUR 180 million in 2010 up from EUR 107 million in 2009. The 'Education Equality Initiative' was allocated EUR 44 million in 2006, to meet the needs of specific marginalized groups e.g. those in treatment for substance dependence and Travellers.

A major educational measure aimed at those with low educational levels, is the 'Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme' (VTOS), whereby unemployed trainees receive a training allowance linked to unemployment payment rates. No course fees are payable and books and materials are provided free. Funding is also available for

childcare to encourage parents to participate in VTOS. In 2010 total expenditure on this programme was EUR 79.7 million compared with EUR 72.3d million in 2009 and EUR71.2 million in 2008.

The State provides financial support to encourage participation by mature learners in third level higher education, in particular for students from disadvantaged backgrounds such as Travellers, or those with disabilities. Financial assistance for this category of person is distributed from the Third Level Access fund. In 2008 a new National Access Plan for 2008-13 was published by the National Access Office and the (HEA).

Table 36 below, shows expenditure for the main IVET and CVET programmes and activities provided by FÁS, Skillnets, the Departments of Education and Skills\* and Social and Family Affairs, for the employed and those seeking employment from 2005-08.

<b>Table 36: Expenditure on Vocational Educational Training Supports</b>			
	<b>€000's</b>	<b>€000's</b>	<b>€000's</b>
	2008	2009	2010
<b>FÁS</b>			
Apprenticeship	126,842	93,937	68,395
Traineeship	29,221	28,531	33,101
Training & Sectoral Initiatives and Sponsored Training	37,531	12,486	3,540
Evening Courses / FAS eCollege	1,820	5,937	8,884
Specific Skills Training	41,367	64,471	73,465
Local Training Initiatives	32,676	33,553	37,742
Workplace Basic Education Scheme	1,069	2,372	2,800
Bridging Foundation	23,635	16,611	13,604
Foundation/Progression in CTCs	49,756	48,580	44,134
Return to Work	3,004	1,437	1,123
Specialist Training Providers	55,191	55,628	53,117
Technical Employment Support	3,122	5,812	5,582
Lifelong Learning/FAS eCollege	285	82	4
Film & TV Sector	1,451	512	335
Online & Blended Learning	-	1,881	3,975
Short-Time Working Pilot Scheme	-	55	93
Redundant Apprentice Scheme	-	2,518	1,839
European Globalisation Fund			3,568
Part-Time Third Level Programme			2,728
<b>FAS Total</b>	<b>€406,970</b>	<b>€374,403</b>	<b>€358,029</b>
<b>Skillnets</b>	<b>€26,734</b>	<b>€16,595</b>	<b>€17,300</b>
<b>Department of Social and Family Affairs</b>			
Back to Education Allowance	70,840	107,316	179,851
<b>Department of Education and Science</b>			
Youthreach	65,306	64,128	68,385
VTOS	71,200	72,252	78,947
Senior Traveller Training Centres	26,290	24,936	23,814
Back To Education Initiative	18,537	18,000	17,029
<b>Department of Education and Science TOTAL</b>	<b>181,333</b>	<b>179,316</b>	<b>188,175</b>
<b>Overall Total</b>	<b>€685,877</b>	<b>€677,630</b>	<b>€743,355</b>

Sources: Lisbon Agenda-Integrated Guidelines for Growth and Jobs, Implementation of the National Reform Programme. Annual Progress Report, Department of the Taoiseach, Ireland. 2009, FAS Annual Report 2010, Government Budget Estimates, Department of Education & Science. Department of Social Protection Annual Statistical Report 2010.

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### 11.3 List of acronyms and abbreviations

<b>AEGI</b>	Adult Educational Guidance Initiative
<b>AONTAS</b>	National Adult Learning Organisation <a href="http://www.aontas.com">www.aontas.com</a>
<b>APL</b>	Accreditation of Prior Learning
<b>BIM</b>	Irish Sea Fisheries Board <a href="http://www.bim.ie">www.bim.ie</a>
<b>BTEI</b>	Back to Education Initiative
<b>CAO</b>	Central Applications Office <a href="http://www.cao.ie">www.cao.ie</a>
<b>CAS</b>	Common Awards System
<b>CCAI</b>	Crafts Council of Ireland <a href="http://www.ccoi.ie">www.ccoi.ie</a>
<b>CDP</b>	Competency Development Programme
<b>CEFR</b>	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
<b>CIF</b>	Construction Industry Federation <a href="http://www.cif.ie">www.cif.ie</a>
<b>CPD</b>	Continuing Professional Development
<b>CSO</b>	Central Statistics Office <a href="http://www.cso.ie">www.cso.ie</a>
<b>CTC</b>	Community Training Centre
<b>CVET</b>	Continuing Vocational Education and Training
<b>DES</b>	Department of Education and Science (until May 2010)
<b>DES</b>	Department of Education and Skills (from May 2010) <a href="http://www.education.ie">www.education.ie</a>
<b>DETE</b>	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (until March 2011)
<b>DJEI</b>	Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (from March 2011) <a href="http://www.djei.ie">www.djei.ie</a>
<b>DSFA</b>	Department of Social and Family Affairs (until May 2010)
<b>DSP</b>	Department of Social Protection (from May 2010) <a href="http://www.welfare.ie">www.welfare.ie</a>

<b>ECVET</b>	European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training
<b>EGF</b>	European Globalisation Fund
<b>EGFSN</b>	Expert Group on Future Skills Needs <a href="http://www.skillsireland.ie">www.skillsireland.ie</a>
<b>EHRD OP</b>	Employment and Human Resources Development Operational Programme
<b>EQF</b>	European Qualifications Framework
<b>ESRI</b>	Economic and Social Research Institute <a href="http://www.esri.ie">www.esri.ie</a>
<b>ETP</b>	Excellence through People
<b>FÁS</b>	Training and Employment Authority <a href="http://www.fas.ie">www.fas.ie</a>
<b>FET</b>	Further Education and Training
<b>FETAC</b>	Further Education and Training Awards Council <a href="http://www.fetac.ie">www.fetac.ie</a>
<b>HEA</b>	Higher Education Authority <a href="http://www.hea.ie">www.hea.ie</a>
<b>HETAC</b>	Higher Education and Training Awards Council <a href="http://www.hetac.ie">www.hetac.ie</a>
<b>HCI OP</b>	Human Capital Investment Operational Programme
<b>IBEC</b>	Irish Business and Employers Confederation <a href="http://www.ibec.ie">www.ibec.ie</a>
<b>ICTU</b>	Irish Congress of Trade Unions <a href="http://www.ictu.ie">www.ictu.ie</a>
<b>IDA</b>	Industrial Development Authority Ireland <a href="http://www.idaireland.com">www.idaireland.com</a>
<b>IITD</b>	Irish Institute of Training and Development <a href="http://www.iitd.ie">www.iitd.ie</a>
<b>ISCED</b>	International Standard Classification of Education
<b>ISME</b>	Irish Small and Medium Enterprises Association <a href="http://www.isme.ie">www.isme.ie</a>
<b>ITs</b>	Institutes of Technology Ireland <a href="http://www.ioti.ie">www.ioti.ie</a>
<b>ITE</b>	Initial Teacher Education
<b>IUQB</b>	Irish Universities Quality Board <a href="http://www.iuqb.ie">www.iuqb.ie</a>
<b>IVEA</b>	Irish Vocational Education Association <a href="http://www.ivea.ie">www.ivea.ie</a>
<b>IVET</b>	Initial Vocational Education and Training
<b>JCSP</b>	Junior Certificate School Programme
<b>LCA</b>	Leaving Certificate Applied
<b>LCVP</b>	Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme
<b>LES</b>	Local Employment Service
<b>LTI</b>	Local Training Initiative
<b>NAAC</b>	National Apprenticeship Advisory Committee
<b>NALA</b>	National Adult Literacy Agency <a href="http://www.nala.ie">www.nala.ie</a>

<b>NAPS</b>	National Anti-Poverty Strategy
<b>NCCA</b>	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment <a href="http://www.ncca.ie">www.ncca.ie</a>
<b>NCGE</b>	National Centre for Guidance in Education <a href="http://www.ncge.ie">www.ncge.ie</a>
<b>NCTE</b>	National Centre for Technology in Education <a href="http://www.ncte.ie">www.ncte.ie</a>
<b>NDP</b>	National Development Plan
<b>NEC</b>	National Europass Centre <a href="http://www.europass.ie">www.europass.ie</a>
<b>NEETS</b>	National Employment and Entitlements Service
<b>NESC</b>	National Economic and Social Council <a href="http://www.nesc.ie">www.nesc.ie</a>
<b>NFQ</b>	National Framework of Qualifications <a href="http://www.nfq.ie">www.nfq.ie</a>
<b>NLN</b>	National Learning Network
<b>NPPTI</b>	National Pilot Project for Teacher Induction
<b>NQAI</b>	National Qualifications Association of Ireland <a href="http://www.nqai.ie">www.nqai.ie</a>
<b>NTF</b>	National Training Fund
<b>NUI</b>	National University of Ireland <a href="http://www.nui.ie">www.nui.ie</a>
<b>NUTS</b>	Nomenclature Units for Territorial Statistics
<b>OSCAIL</b>	National Distance Education Centre <a href="http://www.oscail.ie">www.oscail.ie</a>
<b>PLC</b>	Post Leaving Certificate
<b>QNHS</b>	Quarterly National Household Survey
<b>QQAI</b>	Qualifications and Quality Assurance Authority of Ireland <a href="http://www.qualificationsandquality.ie">www.qualificationsandquality.ie</a>
<b>RPL</b>	Recognition of Prior Learning
<b>SFA</b>	Small Firms Association <a href="http://www.sfa.ie">www.sfa.ie</a>
<b>SIPTU</b>	Services Industrial Professional and Technical Union <a href="http://www.siptu.ie">www.siptu.ie</a>
<b>SLMRU</b>	Skills and Labour Market Research Unit
<b>SPT</b>	Specialist Training Provider
<b>SST</b>	Specific Skills Training
<b>STTC</b>	Senior Traveller Training Centre
<b>TALIS</b>	Teaching and Learning International Survey
<b>TNP</b>	Training Networks Programme
<b>VEC</b>	Vocational Education Committee
<b>VTOS</b>	Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme

