

The vocational education
and training system in Ireland
Short description

FÁS

Cedefop Panorama series; 83

Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2004

A great deal of additional information on the European Union is available on the Internet. It can be accessed through the Europa server (<http://europa.eu.int>).

Cataloguing data can be found at the end of this publication.

Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2004

ISBN 92-896-0287-2

ISSN 1562-6180

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Printed in Belgium

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Introduction

This short description of vocational education and training (VET) in Ireland is part of a series featuring vocational training in different countries. It has been prepared to coincide with the Irish EU Council presidency. It is also an element in Cedefop's continuing work on VET systems in EU member states, which is changing from being mainly based on hard copy descriptions of each national system ⁽¹⁾ to an electronic-based system.

E-knowVET, the new Cedefop database, offers on-line information on initial and continuing vocational training in partner countries. The standard entry format allows country-specific and multi-country searches covering eleven thematic areas in overview (thematic overviews) and in detail. The database is regularly updated by Cedefop's reference network (ReferNet).

This document is a shortened and edited version of the thematic overview on Ireland provided by FÁS during 2003. The resulting text prepared by Cedefop was then the subject of a short consultation process between Cedefop, FÁS and the Irish members of Cedefop's Management Board.

Due to the need for brevity, it was not possible to include all elements of the Irish VET system. We therefore decided to focus on policy and development issues rather than on more descriptive information about how the system functions. Further details in regard to the latter can be found in E-know VET ⁽²⁾. More detailed information on the education system can be found in Eurybase, the website of Eurydice ⁽³⁾.

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January 2004

⁽¹⁾ <http://www2.trainingvillage.gr/etv/vetsystems/report.asp>

⁽²⁾ http://www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/Information_Resources/nationalvet/

⁽³⁾ Eurydice, the information network on education systems in Europe:

http://www.eurydice.org/Eurybase/frameset_eurybase.html

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1. General policy context

1.1. Political and administrative structure

The Republic of Ireland (referred to as Ireland) comprises 26 of the 32 counties of the whole island of Ireland. The remaining six counties make up Northern Ireland which is part of the United Kingdom.

Ireland is a parliamentary democracy. The National Parliament (Oireachtas) consists of the President and two houses; a House of Representatives (Dáil Éireann) and a Senate (Seanad).

Responsibility for education and training lies with government ministries known as departments. In the case of certain education and training functions, control has been devolved to a number of regional, local and community structures established in recent years. However, none of these have extensive powers and in general terms the system is a centralised one.

Ireland has been a member of the European Community since 1973 and was among the first group of countries to form the European Monetary Union (EMU) in January 1999. During the last 15 years, Ireland has experienced a period of intense economic, social and cultural change which has, for example, resulted in the reversal of long-established demographic trends, rapid economic and employment growth and changes in social patterns and behaviour. Over this period a system of national partnership has been in place involving government, the social partners and other relevant interest groups. This has resulted in a series of three-year national agreements covering issues such as pay, taxation, social welfare and social policy.

1.2. Population

Traditionally a high birth rate was counter-balanced by high levels of emigration. The number of births fell in the 1980s but has increased slightly since the mid 1990s. This combined with a marked decrease in emigration has resulted in the significant rise in the population since 1996.

The total population in April 2002 was estimated at 3.917 million. This represents an increase of 391 000 since 1991 and is the highest population level since 1871.

The major centre of population in Ireland is Dublin city and county with 1.1 million inhabitants. The other major cities are Cork (123 000) and Limerick (54 000).

In contrast to the traditional pattern of net emigration, since 1997 there has been increasing net immigration. The proportion of non-nationals has increased from 3.4 % of the labour force in 1998 to 6.3 % in 2003.

Table 1: Population by age group, 2001 and 2025

Age group	2001	2025	Change
0-24	1 479 000	1 427 000	-52 000
25-64	1 922 000	2 402 000	+480 000
65+	426 000	734 000	+308 000
Total	3 827 000	4 563 000	+736 000

Source: Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI), Medium-term Review, 2003

1.3. Economy, labour force and unemployment

The Irish economy has experienced very strong growth over the last decade. GDP in 2002 is estimated to have grown by 7 %. This follows increases of 11.2 % in 2001 and 14.6 % in 2000. GDP in real terms in 2002 was 80 % higher than in 1996.

GDP per capita (at market prices) in 2002 was forecast to be EUR 32 563 and to have risen by 33 % in real terms since 1998. A positive trade balance in goods and services of EUR 23.4 billion (18.3 % of GDP) was forecast for 2002. The employment breakdown by sector is given below in Table 2.

Table 2: Employment in April, 1998 to 2003 (in thousands)

Sector	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Agriculture	0131	0129	0130	0123	0121	0120
Industry	0412	0430	0488	0504	0494	0492
Services	0852	0880	1075	1114	1150	1154
Total	1395	1439	1692	1741	1765	1766

Source: Quarterly National Household Survey 2002 and ESRI Quarterly Economic commentary

Employment rose over the period 1998 to 2002 by 26.5 %. The rate of growth slowed in 2001 and 2002. The overall employment rate in 2002 was 65.0 % (for males 74.7 %, for females 55.2 %). Until comparatively recently Ireland's unemployment rate was one of the highest in the European Union. However, as Table 3 shows it fell rapidly in recent years reaching 4.4 %

in 2002 compared to an EU average of 7.7 %. The male unemployment rate at 4.6 % was slightly higher than the female rate of 4.2 %.

Table 3: Unemployment, trends and forecasts

	In 000s	As % of labour force
1998	160	9.3
1999	148	8.3
2000	76	4.3
2001	71	3.9
2002	82	4.4
2003	100	4.8

Sources: ESRI Quarterly Economic Commentary Spring 2003, FÁS Labour Market Quarterly Commentary March 2003(various issues).

Female participation of those aged 15-64 in the labour force, which has traditionally been low, has increased sharply in recent years and stood at 57.8 % in 2002, slightly below the EU average of 60.9 %.

1.4. Educational attainment level of the population

Table 4 below shows the educational attainment level of the population of Ireland compared to that of a number of other countries. The percentage of persons with no more than lower secondary education is high, but the educational attainment of young people is increasing steadily. Thus 73 % of 25-34 year olds in 2001 had obtained at least upper secondary education, while nearly 50 % of 25-34 year olds had attained tertiary level education in 2001 – a rate only bettered by Canada (OECD Education at a Glance, 2002, Chart A 2.3). However, compared to other countries, many of these were on two to three year sub-degree programmes rather than university or advanced degree programmes.

Table 4: Educational attainment of population aged 25-64, 2000 in %

	Primary or lower secondary	Upper secondary	Non-university higher education	University
Ireland	43	22	22	14
UK	17	57	8	18
Sweden	19	49	15	17
Germany	18	55	15	13
Italy	55	33	2	10
Spain	60	17	7	17
USA	13	50	9	28

Source: Education at a Glance, OECD, 2002, Table A3.1.a

2. Policy development

2.1. Objectives and priorities

In Ireland, vocational education and training (VET) is seen, in both policy and structural terms, as one of the essential components in building and maintaining a highly skilled work force operating within a knowledge society.

VET policy falls within the remit of several government departments (ministries) but no comprehensive statement of policy has been produced. Within the education sector the two main developments in recent years were the White Paper on adult education 2000, *Learning for life*, and the new national framework of qualifications. Within the labour market context, government policy on training has been set out in the annual national employment action plans (NAP) developed in the context of the European employment guidelines. Ireland's three-year national partnership agreements, involving government, social and community partners, have all included agreed policies in relation to education and training. In Partnership 2000, lifelong learning was given strong emphasis and this resulted in the Task Force on Lifelong Learning which reported in 2002. In the subsequent agreement, the Programme for prosperity and fairness, this theme was developed considerably.

Employment and human resource development programmes form a major part of the 2000-06 national development plan. The Employment and human resources development operational programme (EHRDOP) sets out the range of programmes and services to be provided with the objective of promoting economic growth, improving access to employment opportunities, addressing skills and labour shortages and tackling social exclusion. As well as the traditional goals of VET policy, the programme emphasises a number of horizontal objectives, such as rural development, poverty, the environment, equality and cooperation with Northern Ireland.

The most recent Programme for government, agreed by the coalition parties in 2002, makes a commitment to carry out a fundamental review of training and employment measures to ensure that they focus on the needs of the most marginalised and disadvantaged groups and help them to progress to the open labour market. There is also a commitment to introduce new supports, including training funding of up to EUR 2 500 per person, for those experiencing severe employability barriers.

Developments over the last decade have indicated the need for certain changes in the VET systems, for example:

- (a) flexible hours;
- (b) provision for a wider age group;
- (c) access at varying levels;
- (d) an integrated and transparent accreditation system of qualification.

Given the deadline of June 2006 for the implementation of the national framework of qualifications and the range of groups contributing to the development of the debate on various aspects of vocational education and training policy, it is probable that over the next five years, VET programmes and services will undergo further change in order to provide improved access, better progression and more transparent and transferable accreditation.

The new deal – a plan for educational opportunity launched by the Department of Education in 1999 set out a range of initiatives at every level of the system, from early childhood through to adult literacy and third level education, to take place over the period 2000-02.

A White Paper on adult education *Learning for life* was published in 2000. It reflected on the role of adult education in society and, in setting out principles, policies and strategies, built on the very wide consultation process which had followed the publication in 1998 of the Green Paper, *Adult education in an era of lifelong learning*.

The policies outlined were complemented by the work of the task force on lifelong learning, which was established by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment in collaboration with the Department of Education and Science, and reported in 2002. Eight government departments with responsibilities for education, sectoral training, welfare and social and community development policies were represented on the task force, as well as education, training, social partner, community and voluntary interests and industrial development agencies.

The focus of the task force's report was on labour market aspects of lifelong learning such as:

- (a) developing and implementing a national framework of qualifications;
- (b) ensuring basic skills for all;
- (c) providing comprehensive guidance, counselling and information;
- (d) addressing delivery, access and funding measures;
- (e) providing better opportunities for workplace learning, and learning for workers.

2.2. Framework and mechanisms

The Minister of Education and Science is responsible for the provision of vocational education and training (mainly initial, but also continuing) in schools and colleges at second and at further and higher education levels.

The Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment has responsibility for policies to upgrade the skills and competencies of the adult population within a framework of lifelong learning. These policies are implemented, *inter alia*, through the National Training and Employment Authority (FÁS). Other ministers have responsibility for aspects of sectoral training, such as agriculture, fisheries, tourism.

Policy implementation issues are addressed by government ministries, known as departments, in consultation with the social partners. National forums to facilitate these processes have supported enhanced collaboration between education, training, industry and community interests, and local structures (e.g. county/city development boards, area partnerships) to provide for integrated delivery at local level.

In 1999 the *Qualifications (Education and Training) Act* was passed. This Act led to the establishment of the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI). The main focus of this body is the establishment of a national framework of qualifications for non-university education awards at further and higher level, taking account of education, training, social partner, voluntary organisation and learner interests. Two award councils have been set up under the provisions of the Act; FETAC, the Further Education and Training Awards Council, and HETAC, the Higher Education and Training Awards Council. Their role in their respective areas is to determine the standards of knowledge and skill or competence to be acquired by learners for awards that they make. There are separate but interdependent roles for the awards councils and the qualifications authority under the Act. The role of the awards councils is to develop policies and criteria for the making of further/higher education and training awards and the validation of programmes of further/higher education and training and to implement such policies (see also Section 8).

To further develop lifelong learning and adult education, a National Adult Learning Council has been established. Both the National Development Plan (2000-06) and the National Employment Action Plan 2000 make provision for substantial funding to enhance educational and training opportunities and to make these more widely available, e.g. expansion of part-time options across PLC, Youthreach and VTOS programmes (see Section 4 for details). The National Employment Action Plan primarily targets the long-term unemployed and, by assisting this group back to work, it is hoped to address labour and skill shortages.

The *National Training Fund Act 2000* set up a dedicated fund financed from a levy on employers (see Section 10.1) for those in employment and those who wish to take up employment. To better align education and training provision to future skill needs, the Expert Group on Future Skill Needs was established comprising representatives from economic and educational interests (see Section 7.1).

Services for persons with a disability have been mainstreamed. Since 2000, when the National Rehabilitation Board was abolished, a number of organisations have provided services, with FÁS responsible for those connected with vocational training and employment. The Equality Act 1998 extended equality legislation to cover nine categories of persons. An Equality Authority was established to address issues in this area resulting in additional emphasis on equality issues in the education and training arena.

3. Institutional framework

3.1. Administrative framework

Ireland does not have strong regional authorities. Accordingly the vast majority of decisions about VET and its funding are made by central government departments and bodies.

Vocational education and training is provided in a multiplicity of centres funded by the State either directly or through intermediary bodies. These centres include universities, institutes of technology, further education colleges, local vocational education and training centres, Youthreach and Traveller training centres, FÁS community training workshops and dedicated sectoral training centres e.g. for agriculture or tourism. There is also a wide range of private providers including some private third level colleges and commercial training bodies. However, the vast majority of vocational education and training provision is within the State sector.

Figure 1 presents the administrative structure and indicates three levels:

- (a) government departments which set policy and overall direction;
- (b) intermediate organisations which may be involved in channelling funds or in other ways helping to implement government policy;
- (c) the main VET providers.

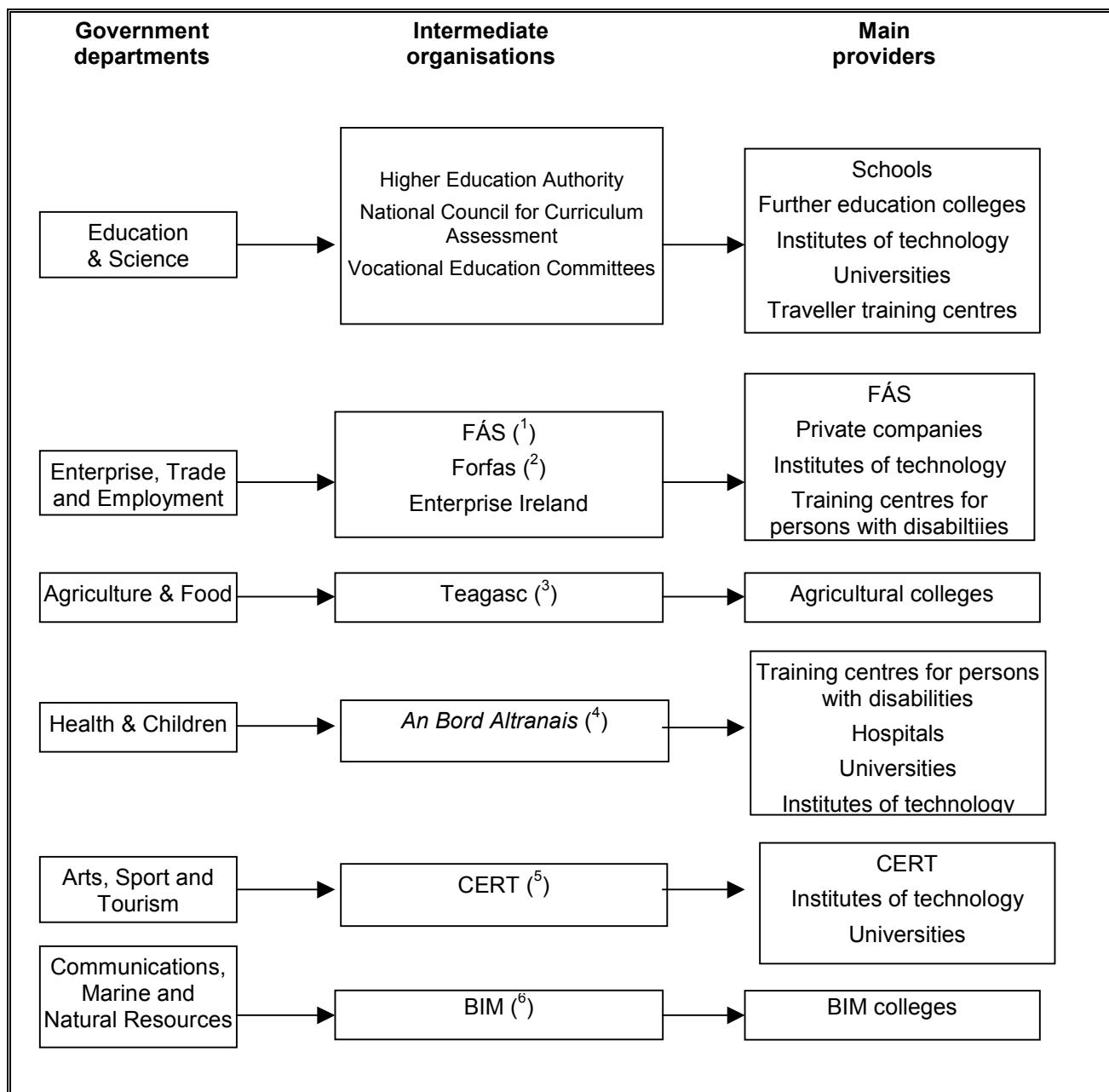
3.1.1. Intermediary bodies

The Higher Education Authority (HEA) is the statutory body responsible for the funding of universities and designated third-level education institutions. Its functions, under the terms of the Higher Education Authority Act, 1971, include the development of third level education to meet the needs of the community and an advisory role in relation to all third level education. Teacher training colleges are also funded through the HEA.

Vocational education committees (VECs) are statutory committees of county councils and other local authorities. There is a VEC for each county and county borough in Ireland - 33 in total. They operate in accordance with the provisions of the *Vocational Education Act 1930* and *Amendments*, which give them authority to identify and meet local needs for vocational education. However, they are reliant on national exchequer funding for the majority of their expenditure. They provide a wide range of education, training and support services within local communities, including second level, adult, community and second chance education, post-leaving certificate programmes and education for prisoners and travellers.

FÁS is the national Training and Employment Authority. It has 20 training centres and also delivers training through subcontracting training providers. It provides initial vocational

Figure 1: Vocational education and training: administrative structure



Legend:

- (1) The Training & Employment Authority.
- (2) The National Policy Board for Enterprise, Trade, Science, Technology and Innovation.
- (3) Agriculture and Food Development Authority.
- (4) The Nursing Board
- (5) Council for Education, Recruitment, Training (Hotels, Catering and Tourism Industry), now Failte Ireland.
- (6) The Sea Fisheries Board

Source: FÁS

training, training for unemployed people and continuing vocational training. Its 2002-2005 strategy emphasises improving the employability of both the employed and unemployed, the need to give increased attention to persons at work and the importance of focusing on the most disadvantaged.

CERT (since 2003 Fáilte Ireland) is responsible for training and recruitment in the tourism industry. It provides either directly, or in cooperation with institutes of technology, initial vocational training, training for unemployed people and support for continuing training in the tourism sector. It has a small number of training centres but most training takes place in institutes of technology or at the workplace.

Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM) provides training for the fishing industry. Teagasc is the state agency responsible for training in the agricultural sector.

The majority of publicly supported vocational training relates to initial vocational training and training for unemployed people. However, different institutions have different levels of emphasis between the three main types of training; initial, unemployed and continuing.

3.2. Legislative Framework

Legislation is the responsibility of the Irish parliament and provides the broad operational framework. It is generally implemented through secondary legislation (detailed statutory instruments and ministerial orders.)

In respect of vocational training within the education system, the most important piece of legislation is the *Vocational Education Act, 1930* and amendments (see Section 3.1.1 above). For other vocational training, the most significant pieces of legislation relate to the establishment of a number of public bodies in the 1960s and early 1970s. The legislation which established AnCO (the Industrial Training Authority) in 1967 was the first legislation to subject employers to a levy. In 1988, FÁS, the National Training and Employment Authority, was established. More recently, legislation in 1994 introduced a levy system to fund apprenticeship but this has since been replaced by the *National Training Fund Act (2000)*.

The *Education Act 1998* makes provision for the education of every person in the State, including any person with a disability or who has other special educational needs and generally for primary, post-primary, adult and continuing education and vocational education and training. It makes specific provision for the promotion of continuing educational opportunities for adults, in particular those who, as children, did/could not avail of, or benefit from, education in schools.

The *Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999*, set up structures for a national framework of qualifications and came into full force in June 2001 (see Section 8).

The *Education Welfare Act, 2000* provides a framework for promoting regular school attendance and tackling problems of absenteeism and early school leaving. It forms an important part of government policy to reduce disadvantage in Irish society. Under the Act, the school leaving age has been raised to 16 years or on completion of the first 3 years of post primary whichever is the later and the Act also established a National Welfare Board.

3.3. Role of the social partners

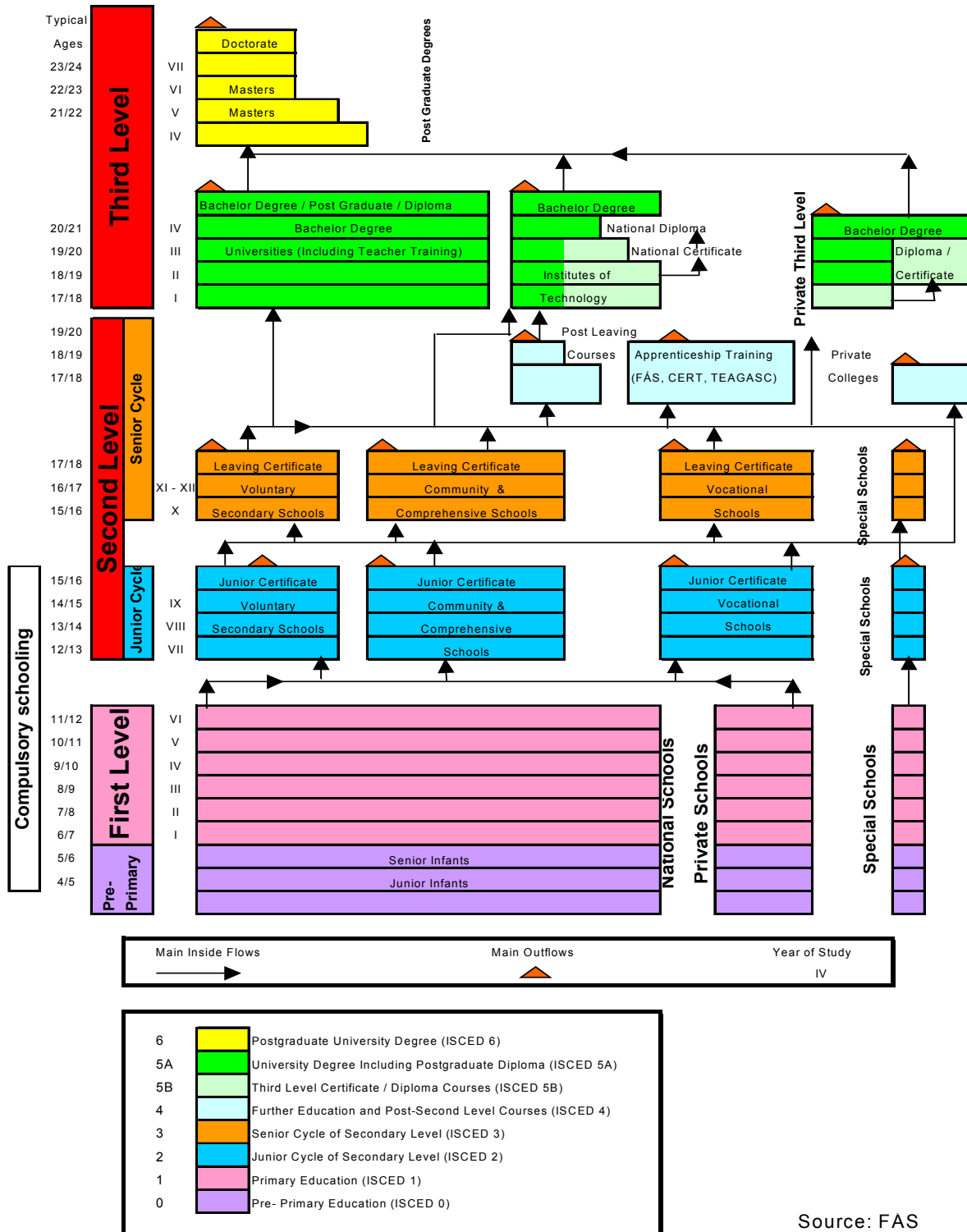
The social partners play a key role and have an established place in those structures created by the State to meet the country's training needs. Specifically, the social partners have seats on the board of FÁS, on its advisory bodies and on those of other sectoral training bodies. They play an important role in relation to award bodies established under the *Qualifications Act (1999)*. They are also represented on the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (see Section 7.1 below).

Since 1987, Ireland has had a series of three-year 'national partnership agreements' covering a range of economic and social policy issues. These agreements have been negotiated by government and the social partners and establish overall policy objectives in a range of areas including vocational training, for example, policies in relation to apprenticeship, the needs of early school leavers, persons with disabilities and long-term unemployed people. The 2000 – 02 agreement included a specific section on lifelong learning. The agreements do not have any legal standing but are nevertheless important in guiding policy development.

The role of the social partners as direct training providers has been concentrated on training in industrial relations and human resources matters. However in more recent years they have developed a role in the provision of vocational training on a pilot basis in order to popularise the idea of training in the workplace. This is exemplified by the 'training awareness campaign' run jointly by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) and the Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC) under the ADAPT programme.

Two specific initiatives have been introduced during the last few years. The Skillnets programme is an industry-led initiative, which aims to encourage networks of companies to identify and meet their training needs (see Section 5.2.1 below). The Education and Training Services Trust (Ltd.) was established in 1993 by trade unions as a non profit-making company to provide safety, technical, partnership and organisational development training to industry and trade unions in Ireland.

Figure 2: Structure of the education and training system



Source: FAS

4. Initial education and training

4.1. Overview

Education is compulsory from the ages of 6 to 16 inclusive. Primary education can be commenced from the age of 4.5 years and lasts for up to 8 years, finishing at age 11-12. Secondary education begins at age 12 and lasts for 5 to 6 years with a three year junior (or lower secondary) cycle followed by a 2-3 year senior (or upper secondary) cycle.

Up to the 1960s the majority of pupils finished school with primary education only. However, participation levels at second level increased considerably following the removal of school fees. The resulting increasing demand for higher levels of education has led to greater emphasis on academic performance. Vocational relevance is also increasing.

Table 5: Number of persons in full-time education by educational level, 2000/2001

	ISCED Level	Number
Pre-primary education	00	001 165
Primary education	01	443 617
Junior cycle of secondary education	02	180 998
Senior cycle of secondary education	03	140 519
Further education and post-second level courses	04	027 757
Third level certificate/ diploma courses	5B	040 174
University degree including postgraduate diploma	5A	083 694
Postgraduate university degree	06	02 432
	Total	920 356

ISCED: International Standard Classification of Education

Source: Department of Education, Statistical Report 2000/2001

The education system is very broadly based. Schools can choose curricula from a menu of more than 30 subjects incorporating civic, social, personal, cultural, academic and vocational dimensions.

Since 2000 there has been increased emphasis by Government on the importance of teaching natural science in schools. Additional funds have been provided in the current and forthcoming budget to upgrade the facilities in schools for the provision of natural science subjects up to the end of senior cycle.

4.2. Pre-primary education

Pre-primary attendance at school is not compulsory. Prior to the publication in 1999 of the White Paper on early childhood education, most pre-school education was at the discretion of parents and generally had to be financed by them. A number of programmes are provided for three year olds. There is a considerable amount of pre-primary education provision within local communities often part-funded from public funds. There is also a substantial private pre-school education sector which attracts tax incentives.

4.3. Primary education

Primary education is free and lasts approximately eight years. All pupils follow the national curriculum set out by the Department of Education and Science. Its aim is to develop the child as an individual and a strong emphasis is placed on child-centred learning techniques. Pupils with special needs are largely integrated in primary schools, with a small minority catered for in special schools or in special classes within primary schools.

4.4. Secondary level education

Secondary level education is provided in (voluntary) secondary, vocational, community and comprehensive schools. Voluntary secondary schools are privately owned and managed. The trustees of the majority of these schools are from religious communities or boards of governors. Vocational schools are administered by vocational education committees (see Section 3.1.1), while community and comprehensive schools are managed by boards of management composed of relevant community interests.

4.4.1. Lower secondary education

Lower secondary level education (the junior cycle) consists of a three-year programme from 12 to 15/16 years. The principal objective is for students to complete a broad, balanced, and coherent curriculum composed of a variety of courses incorporating a core and optional areas

of study. The junior certificate examination is taken at the end of the junior cycle. This is a national state examination comprising written papers and relevant oral/aural and practical tests. Typically students sit the examination in 7 to 10 subjects including Irish, English, mathematics, history and geography. Schools provide a variety of additional subjects such as modern languages, art, music, home economics, materials technology (wood), woodwork, metalwork and technical graphics. All junior cycle students follow a social, personal and health education programme. Guidance and counselling is provided as well as physical education. There were 180 998 young persons attending the junior cycle in 1999/2000.

Most pupils proceed to upper secondary education while a substantial number pursue an apprenticeship (see Section 4.6).

4.4.2. Upper secondary education

At the end of compulsory schooling, the majority of students proceed to upper secondary education (the senior cycle). This consists of an (optional) transition year followed by one of three versions of the two-year Leaving certificate programme.

The transition year focuses on active learning, which emphasises personal and interpersonal development and experiential learning opportunities. Students are encouraged to explore their own particular academic, leisure, career and vocational interests as well as developing greater personal, social and cultural awareness of school, community and wider issues. The programme is now taken by a majority of the student sector and is offered by most second level schools, but it remains optional.

There are three options within the Leaving certificate:

- (a) the traditional Leaving certificate programme is taken by the majority of students. It is the accepted basis for entry into third level education institutions. The curriculum can be selected from an extensive range of subjects including languages, arts, humanities, sciences and technology. Typically, students take from six to eight subjects in the Leaving certificate examinations;
- (b) the Leaving certificate vocational programme (LCVP) is more vocationally- oriented. The LCVP aims to provide students with the opportunity to engage in self-directed learning and to promote innovation and enterprise. These objectives are largely achieved through the requirement to follow two activity-driven (link) modules – Enterprise education and Preparation for the world of work. These are designed to develop communication skills, research and report writing and team working. The use of active teaching and learning methodologies is encouraged across the LCVP curriculum. The LCVP is fully accepted as a basis for entry to third level;
- (c) the Leaving certificate applied (LCA) programme is a separate, distinct and innovative programme designed for those who do not wish to take the direct route to third level education. Key principles underlying the programme are activity-based learning and teaching and maximising the student's involvement with the local community.

Continuous assessment is used as the basis of about two thirds of the final examination result. Those who successfully complete the programme are eligible for entry into a wide variety of Post-leaving certificate courses from which entry to third level may subsequently be gained if appropriate.

The percentages of pupils studying the three options in 2000/2001 were traditional (67 %), vocational (27 %), applied (6 %).

4.5. Youthreach

Youthreach is a joint initiative between the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. It was introduced in 1989 and provides two years integrated education, training and work experience for young people aged 15 to 20 years, who have left school early without qualifications or vocational training. These comprise about 7 % of the age group. The programme consists of two distinct phases:

- (a) a foundation phase to help overcome learning difficulties, develop self-confidence and a range of competences essential for further learning;
- (b) a progression phase which provides more specific development through a range of education, training and work experience options.

Courses are full-time, of 35 hours duration per week and available on a year-round basis. A training allowance is paid to participants and training focuses on personal development with a strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy, work experience and vocational skills (e.g. hairdressing, catering, woodwork and metalwork) and new technology skills.

The programme is provided in over 100 locations throughout the country and is managed locally by the VECs and FÁS regional management. Under the Back to education initiative (part-time options measure) arrangements are being made to introduce more flexible delivery options. There is a strong emphasis on individual personal needs. By far the greatest number of places is taken up by young people from disadvantaged areas, the programme's prime target.

Expenditure on the Youthreach programme in 2002 amounted to EUR 24.5 million in centres run in the education system and EUR 29.1 million in Community Training Workshops and other FÁS facilities. Over 2 600 early school leavers participated in the programme in Youthreach centres and about 3 300 completed FÁS training courses. National certification is provided at FETAC (NCVA) foundation level and level 1 (see Section 8), while options in the Junior certificate and Leaving certificate applied are also available.

4.6. Alternating training

This section covers two main forms of alternating training: the apprenticeship system and the new traineeship system developed by FÁS.

4.6.1. Apprenticeship

Apprenticeship is the recognised means by which people are trained to become craft persons. In the early 1970s a new apprenticeship ‘time-served’ system was established and implemented for apprentices in construction and other designated industrial trades. This reduced the training period to four years and established an ‘off-the-job’ first year of full-time training.

The Minister for Labour introduced a new ‘standards based’ system of apprenticeship in 1991. The system is managed by FÁS with the support of the National Apprenticeship Advisory Committee, which consists of representatives of the social partners, FÁS and the Department of Education and Science.

An apprenticeship normally lasts four years. On successful completion of training an apprentice receives the National craft certificate awarded by FETAC (see Section 8). The curricula for apprenticeships are based on uniform pre-specified standards which are agreed with industry. They are written by experts nominated by employers, trade unions, the Department of Education and Science and FÁS.

The standards-based apprenticeship has seven phases, three off-the-job and four on-the-job. Phases 1, 3, 5 and 7 take place with the employer. Phases 2, 4 and 6 take place off-the-job. The duration of off-the-job phases is approximately 40 weeks in total.

The first (on-the-job) phase is an introduction to apprenticeship, safety, the world of work and the basic skills of the trade. The remaining phases of on-the-job training entail the practice and further development of skills learned in the off-the-job phases. Each off-the-job phase is delivered in a single institution to ensure integration of practical training with the necessary theory, maths, science, technical drawing and personal skills.

Apprentices are recruited and employed by companies and receive wages based on a (varying) percentage of the full craft wage. Apprentices must be at least 16 years of age and have gained a pass in the Junior certificate or equivalent.

FÁS offers a bursary to employers to encourage an increased level of recruitment of women apprentices. However, the number of female apprentices remains very small.

There are 26 trades designated by FÁS under the standards-based system. Table 6 shows that recent years have seen a rapid expansion in apprentice registrations, from 21 004 in 1999 to 25 380 in 2002. About 10-15 % of all school leavers follow the designated apprenticeship routes.

There is a three-year Farm apprenticeship scheme administered by Teagasc-Agriculture and Food Authority. The objective is to train farm managers. Entrants must have completed a one-year course at a residential agricultural college and have reached the set standard in its examinations. Apprentices are placed for one year on each of three master farms. In 2001 a total of 105 young persons started farm apprenticeships. In addition, many professional bodies also operate apprenticeship-style schemes involving full-time employment with day release or evening courses. They set standards and examinations for their profession, for example in accountancy and law.

Table 6: Number of apprentices by trade groups, 1999 to 2002

Group	01999	02000	02001	02002
Construction	0013 658	0016 043	00 117 825	0018 028
Engineering	003 887	0414 112	003 946	003 539
Motor	02 366	02 577	02 668	02 604
Furniture	0783	01 031	01 119	01 046
Printing	0302	0259	0213	0162
Other	08	06	04	1
Total	21 004	24 028	25 775	25 380

Source: FÁS Annual Report

4.6.2. Traineeships

Traineeships involve employers and FÁS working together in a dual system of occupational training leading to a qualification. The training content and occupational standards are based on employer consultation and lead to certification by FETAC. Traineeships combine workplace training with formal off-the-job tuition in a FÁS training centre. In the host company, trainees are assigned a mentor/skills coach, who supervises on-the-job training to an agreed workplace training plan which allows trainees to build on skills learned in the FÁS training centre.

Traineeships vary in duration from 6 to 24 months. About 1 400 persons completed traineeship in 2002. However, the programme is growing with over 2 000 starters in 2002 and an expenditure by FÁS of EUR 14.9 million.

4.7. Post-secondary non-tertiary education

There is a range of training possibilities for persons after completing secondary education. The two largest programmes are the Post-leaving certificate courses (PLCs), run by the VECs and some secondary schools and training by FÁS and sectoral organisations for young job-seekers.

4.7.1. Post-leaving certificate courses (provided within the education system)

Post-leaving certificate courses were introduced in 1985 with European Social Fund support to provide a bridge between school and work for those who needed vocational training to enhance their chances of gaining employment. Programmes are of one and two year duration and most lead to certification from the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC). 92 % of provision is through the VECs (see Section 3.1.1). The scope of the programmes has widened considerably since 1985 and 40.8 % of all participants are now aged over 21. The programmes are accordingly an important re-entry route to learning for adults, as well as catering for some 18 % of all school leavers each year. In addition, it is possible to proceed from PLC to third-level education. At present, about 1 000 places are reserved annually in the institutes of technology for students who have FETAC awards. This allows access for persons who do not have the requisite qualifications of third-level applicants.

The programme continues to grow and offers over 1 000 courses in some 229 centres. These courses offer an alternative to programmes available in higher education, in subject matter and approach. Certain PLCs are accepted as bridges into higher education. In 2001 the number of full-time PLC students who completed and gained certification was 21 819.

Post-leaving certificate courses adopt an integrated approach, focusing on technical knowledge, core skills and work experience. Almost 50 % of the time spent on these courses is devoted to knowledge and skill training related to employment, with a further 25 % on relevant work-based experience. A key feature of the courses is the adoption of an approach which enables schools and colleges to respond flexibly to the needs of the locality.

Students do not pay fees to attend PLCs courses and, since 1998/99, grants are available for students on PLC courses. The conditions and rates for grants are the same as those for third-level courses (see Section 4.8 below).

4.7.2. Other provision for young job-seekers

FÁS provides training for unemployed persons and other job-seekers in its training centres and on programmes provided on contract by external providers of training. Courses provided range from specific occupational skills, through enterprise training for entrepreneurs, to remedial/foundation training for the socially disadvantaged. Their duration varies, but usually they last for about four to six months. All training costs, including training allowances, are

paid by FÁS. The majority of full-time participants are young persons although courses are open to all age groups. In 2002 about 10 000 persons started such training courses.

Fáilte Ireland, the State tourism authority, provides full-time day/block release courses for craft and management trainees in the hotel, catering and tourism industry. These courses are geared for first-time young (aged 17 to 24) entrants who wish to pursue careers in tourism, catering and related occupations. The courses range from one to four years, depending on whether they are full-time, block or day-release courses. In 2002 a total of 2 282 persons attended such courses.

Teagasc provides training for young people wishing to pursue a career in agriculture. The main programme taken up is the Certificate in farming – general agriculture. It also runs a wide range of programmes in agriculture, horticulture, rural development and food production. In 2001, for the first time, agricultural and horticultural training was brought into the mainstream education system. All Teagasc courses were upgraded and nationally accredited. An important component of the new system is the possibility for progression to university degree level.

Enrolment in courses was just over 900 in the 2001/2002 academic year. Teagasc also provides a comprehensive range of short courses for adult farmers. A total of 5 907 participants took part in these in 2002.

Bord Iascaigh Mhara provides training courses related to the fishing and fish processing industries. These are run in special facilities and mobile training units. Attendance at its centres amounted to 1 867 in 2002. Training for forestry workers is organised by Coillte, the State forestry agency, while the Equine Institute provides training for persons working in the horse industry.

4.8. Third level education

Publicly funded third level education is provided by seven universities, 14 institutes of technology (previously regional technical colleges) and other specialised institutions, including five teacher training colleges, two home economics colleges and a physical education college in the University of Limerick. Teachers of art are trained in the National College of Art and Design in Dublin.

Institutes of technology are run by independent boards of management with a large element of funding and direction from the Ministry of Education and Science. Their main function is the provision of initial vocational training for young persons. All third level colleges have a specific remit to support industry and to provide for industry liaison and business innovation.

There is strong competition to gain entrance to universities and colleges, especially for certain popular disciplines. Entry into third level education is based on results in the Leaving

certificate examination (see Section 4.4.2), using a 'points' system based on grades in each subject.

Third level degree programmes are normally of three or four year's duration with sub-degree certificates and diplomas being two and three years respectively. Numbers in full-time third level education grew from 18 500 in 1965 to 119 991 in 2000/2001. Of these 54 % were attending universities. The vast majority of third-level students attend publicly-funded institutions. In 2000/2001 there were 6 309 students in non-aided colleges (that is fee paying colleges, dependent on private funds only).

In 1995 the Government decided to abolish under-graduate tuition fees in public third level bodies. Students from families on low incomes, who comply with the academic criteria and means conditions, continue to receive assistance towards their cost of living.

The Higher Education Authority (HEA) produced a study on the issue of non-completion in undergraduate university courses in 2001. The report shows that of all first-time entrants to universities in the academic year 1992/93, 67.9 % graduated on time and a further 15.3 % graduated late. This gives an overall completion rate of 83 %. Following a national seminar on course completion in higher education in 2001, the Educational Research Centre has undertaken further research with a view to developing appropriate strategies to deal with the issue and new initiatives are now underway.

5. Continuing vocational education and training for adults

5.1. Policy Overview

Due to the pace of economic and technological change and the recognition of the increasing importance of lifelong learning, continuing vocational training (CVT) has, in recent years, moved to a more prominent place on the political agenda. Although there is not a sharp distinction in Ireland between initial and continuing vocational training, government policy makes a distinction between programmes for:

- (a) young persons and students;
- (b) the unemployed (whether old or young);
- (c) persons in employment.

The 2000 White Paper on adult education (*Learning for life*) put strong emphasis on the provision of new and enhanced learning opportunities for both unemployed and employed adults. It marks the adoption of lifelong learning as the governing principle of educational policy and officially recognises that the educational commitment of the State includes not only those in schools and colleges but also those that have left the initial education system.

From the economic and labour market perspectives, government policy has long been that the training of persons at work is primarily the responsibility of employers themselves. Government should help and encourage employers to meet this responsibility.

The national partnership agreements in recent years acknowledge the importance of workplace and lifelong learning. Under the *Programme for prosperity and fairness 2000-2002* the Government and social partners agreed a series of actions to enhance the extent of continuing education and training. In the latest national agreement – Sustaining progress – the social partners have agreed to implement the recommendations of the 2002 report by the task force on lifelong learning, which identified the following elements as essential to develop accessible, structured opportunities in this area:

- (a) developing and implementing the national framework of qualifications;
- (b) ensuring basic skills for all;
- (c) providing comprehensive and coherent guidance and information;
- (d) addressing delivery access and funding issues;
- (e) facilitating better learning opportunities in the workplace and for workers generally.

Government policy in relation to continuing vocational training is primarily a matter for the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, which largely approaches the issue from an

economic and labour market perspective. Policy is developed in collaboration with the Department of Education and Science. Other government departments have an interest in their own special areas – for example in relation to agriculture, fishing or tourism.

In terms of prioritisation, government policy is to give particular attention to disadvantaged groups and persons with low educational attainment. For example, the 2000 White Paper on adult education calls for a major investment in adult literacy, while the Back to education initiative (BTEI) is providing a major expansion of part-time options principally aimed at persons with less than upper secondary education.

5.2. Delivery mechanisms and providers

There is a wide range of organisations involved in the provision and delivery of continuing education and training. They cater for people with different needs and status (e.g. unemployed, employed, other), and focus on different content and skills e.g. literacy, computer skills, sectoral skills.

The main providers of continuing vocational education and training are the vocational education committees (VECs) and FÁS. VECs provide a range of programmes, including adult literacy, second chance education for unemployed persons, post-leaving certificate programmes for school leavers and adults and education for prisoners and travellers. In relation to the continuing training of unemployed people, FÁS provides a comprehensive range of training courses. In addition companies provide a considerable amount of training for their own employees and more recently, employers and trade unions have combined to provide continuing training for workers in some areas.

5.2.1. Training of the employed

Employers generally provide training on the basis of their own requirements and needs, mainly through private training organisations. However, in specific instances there is financial support through FÁS or Enterprise Ireland (see below).

The Europe-wide continuing vocational training survey (CVTS) found that 79 % of companies in Ireland carried out some training in 1999 with nearly all those employing 50 or more persons providing training. Training was most prevalent in manufacturing and financial/business services, whereas construction and transport/communication companies were less likely to train. Even taking account of size and sector, overseas subsidiaries were more likely to train than Irish-owned companies.

About 41 % of all employees attended formal training courses during the year with those working in larger companies more likely to receive such training. Overall, a higher proportion of females than males attended training courses. 1.4 million days on training courses were recorded; the equivalent of 2.4 days per employee. Managers/professionals and

clerical/services workers were more likely to receive training, whether formal or otherwise, than craft and other manual workers.

In some cases, companies pool resources to identify and meet training needs. An industry-led initiative, Skillnets, was established in 1999 to encourage and foster this kind of cooperation. Its pilot training networks programme has made a significant contribution to in-company training over the last few years. Since 1999, the programme has funded 40 training networks and 20 research networks. Over 2 300 companies have been involved and through it, in excess of 12 800 people have benefited.

A total of 456 courses were delivered through the training networks programme. 129 of these were newly developed courses and 218 were significantly customised. Nearly 25 % of all courses/modules were certified. The programme has had a significant impact in encouraging small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to invest in training – 73 % of the participating companies had less than 50 and 38 % less than 10 employees. The programme was due to finish at the end of March 2002, but in the light of the positive programme evaluation a decision was taken to continue Skillnets until the end of 2005.

Enterprise Ireland is a government organisation charged with assisting the development of Irish enterprises. It works in partnership with client companies in manufacturing and internationally-traded services. It provides services in human resource development areas and runs a mentor network involving experienced managers advising young SMEs. It also provides financial support to selected companies as part of a business development plan.

FÁS provides a range of supports to different sectors of industry, to improve the skills and capabilities of employees and hence company performance. The Training support scheme, until 2002, provided financial grants to SMEs (up to 150 employees) seeking to improve the skills of their employees at all levels within the company. In 2002 the scheme supported a total of 2 133 companies in relation to the training of 10 316 employees. Alongside the Training support scheme (which in 2002 covered companies in the commercial, financial and transport sectors), FÁS operated a Training incentive scheme for companies in the construction sector. In 2002, 34 710 employees were trained under this scheme.

FÁS is strongly committed to helping the development of companies through human resource development. Excellence through People (ETP) is Ireland's national standard for human resource development. This voluntary initiative aims to improve a company's operation through staff training and improving employee communication and involvement in the company.

In cooperation with industry representatives, FÁS is also involved in the identification of sectoral training needs and in response, the development of suitable training programmes, supported by financial incentives. In 2003 FÁS launched a new Competency development programme aimed at raising the key skills level of employees. The programme will be targeted at a limited number of key skill needs identified and will focus on employees who require up-skilling, cross-skilling and portable skills development. For skill needs identified

under the programme, financial subsidies will be provided to reduce the cost of approved training courses.

5.2.2. Training for the unemployed

Reference has been made in Section 4.7 to training programmes for young unemployed persons. In this section programmes oriented to older unemployed persons are considered. However, it must be emphasised that most FÁS training programmes are availed of by both young and older persons.

FÁS runs two training programmes particularly utilised by older persons: Return to work for women and Enterprise training. The former is aimed at women who have been out of the workforce for some time (usually to look after children) and now wish to return to work. The programme is typically of 12 weeks duration and provides social and interpersonal skills, confidence-building and up-dating of skills as required. Trainees proceed to either work or further training after the course. Enterprise training is designed to help unemployed persons start their own business. Normally, persons on the course have the technical skills and experience required to do so but need training in such aspects as planning, marketing, finance and business law.

FÁS also runs a major programme known as Community employment for the long-term unemployed and other socially-disadvantaged groups (e.g. persons with disabilities and lone parents). Part-time employment for one year is provided through a wide range of voluntary and community (non-profit) organisations. The work carried out includes physical/environmental improvements, assistance in hospitals, personal services, community advice, and sporting, artistic and theatrical activity. The training provision takes two forms; structured, project-based, training and core skills training. Although targeted at the most-difficult-to-employ group, Community employment has been successful in providing work and training to many persons and a significant minority of them have gained 'normal' employment or proceeded to further education or training. There were about 25 000 people on this programme at the end of 2002.

The Vocational training opportunities scheme (VTOS) provides second chance education and training for adults aged 21 or more, who have been receiving an unemployment payment for at least six months. Lone parents, dependent spouses and persons with disabilities who satisfy these criteria are also eligible. The programme is of one to two year's duration. Trainees receive an allowance in lieu of welfare entitlements.

Grants are paid to VECs towards the cost of community education programmes and special initiatives for disadvantaged adults to enable them to access learning at moderate or no cost. The funds, EUR 6.28 million in 2002, are mostly used to offset course fees and to provide tuition hours to a range of community education programmes. These programmes are provided either directly by the VECs or by community groups.

5.2.3. Literacy

According to the International adult literacy survey, undertaken in 1995, about 25 % of the Irish population score at the lowest level. The survey showed substantially lower levels of literacy in the older age groups and those with low educational attainment. Twice as many unemployed people scored lower than those in employment but literacy was also identified as one of the key skills deficits for a large number of employed people. However, only 5 % were aware that this impeded their advancement.

Adult literacy services are provided by the VECs (see Section 2 above) and funded by the Department of Education and Science. Each VEC employs adult education organisers to manage the overall delivery of adult education in their area and adult literacy organisers to manage the literacy aspect of the service. Literacy tutors teach group classes and train volunteers to provide free tuition on a 1:1 basis.

The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) is a voluntary body, funded by the Department of Education and Science, which advises on quality and provides training for staff across a range of agencies particularly the VECs, FÁS, TEAGASC, and Employment and Welfare Services. NALA commissions research and has an extensive network of contacts with similar agencies in other countries.

The financial provision in the education sector for adult literacy increased from a base of IEP 0.85 million (ca EUR 1.0 million) in 1997 to EUR 17.9 million in 2003, thus enabling a very significant expansion in provision with more flexible learning options. The number of clients catered for annually has increased from 5 000 in 1997 to over 28 000 in December, 2002. Specific target groups accessing literacy programmes include family groups involving adults and their children, travellers, non-nationals and unemployed people participating in social employment programmes. A national referral directory on adult literacy services has been published and disseminated.

Literacy has been identified as one of the key areas needing specific attention for a large number of employed people. To assist in addressing this problem, NALA has been working with companies at workplace level to develop suitable programmes. There are also many other initiatives involving a mix of organisations (including schools, colleges, FÁS training centres, employees associations, trade unions and local development organisations).

Programmes are available nationwide and clients catered for have increased from 5 000 to 13 000 between 1997 and 2000. Family literacy groups involving both adults and their children are running successfully and a number of open learning centres are being piloted along with literacy groups for migrant workers and travellers. Programmes for the unemployed can be accessed by FÁS Community employment programmes participants (see Section 5.2.2). The 2000-2006 National development plan has allocated EUR 73.8 million to literacy training.

5.2.4. Back to education initiative

The Back to education initiative (BTEI) comprises a range of second-chance educational and training options for adults to re-enter the labour market or upgrade their skills within it. There is an emphasis on flexibility of delivery and a particular focus in the areas of ICT and technical training.

The priority target group is the one million adults with less than upper second level education. An adult ICT skills module is part of the programme with free tuition for means tested welfare recipients and a 30 % fee reduction for unwaged adults with less than upper second level education. All others pay fees.

In 2002, 6 000 places were made available under the BTEI. This number will increase on a phased basis with a view to having 20 000 extra places each year by 2006.

5.3. Access to learning opportunities and programmes

The present policy on lifelong learning and adult education aims to put in place a structure whereby any person irrespective of age, educational attainment or employment status can avail of a suitable opportunity when they want it (see also Section 8).

There is no legal entitlement to education/training leave. However, some of the bigger organisations provide paid release for employees to participate in approved courses. The lifelong learning task force report (see Section 2.1) noted that a majority of its members considered that a strong case exists in principle for the introduction of a learning leave entitlement, which would be underpinned in law.

There are special arrangements for accessing third level courses for mature students. These include assessment of individual achievement and a judgement on the potential benefit to the particular person.

Both FÁS and the VECs provide an extensive range of evening courses. In 2002, 12 518 people attended FÁS evening courses and of these 4 098 obtained certificates. A total of 140 409 persons attended part-time adult education courses in vocational, community or comprehensive schools in 1999/2000.

6. Training of teachers and trainers

6.1. Training of teachers/trainers in educational establishments

The Teaching Council of Ireland, provided for in the *Teaching Council Act, 2001*, has the task of promoting teaching as a profession and ensuring that priorities are set for the training of an adequate number of teachers in the various subjects. Measures will include promoting teacher development, maintaining and improving the quality of teaching and providing for the establishment of standards, policies and procedures for the education and training of teachers.

A Teachers' induction pilot project for newly qualified teachers has commenced. There are also substantial programmes in the areas of learning support and special needs and these continue to receive priority.

All organisations responsible for the training of teachers aim to ensure that teachers and trainers are regularly updated in terms of new skills and developments by providing on-going in service training.

A wide range of in-career development opportunities has been provided under the Operational plan for human resources development 2000-06. These include support for teachers in the context of changes in curricula and school programmes. A Leadership development programme has been developed for principals and deputy principals at primary and post-primary levels. The Substance misuse prevention programme has been extended with specific emphasis on local drug task force areas.

Primary school teachers are trained in dedicated colleges of education. Places are awarded on the same points system used to allocate places in universities and other third level colleges. The training consists of a four-year degree course which includes periods of practical classroom work.

Secondary level teachers pursue a degree course in one of the universities in the subjects that they wish to teach followed by a one-year course leading to a higher diploma in education. This year includes periods of practical classroom work, which is supervised and monitored and forms part of the marks for the diploma. Recognised teachers in voluntary secondary schools are required to be registered by the Registration Council for Secondary Teachers. Other second level teachers are appointed to positions advertised for the teaching of particular subjects and again a relevant third level qualification (a degree or equivalent) in the specified subjects is the essential requirement. Teachers in vocational schools must have properly authenticated skills qualifications together with a diploma or degree in the theoretical dimension of their subject.

There is no formal recognised course of training for those who wish to pursue a career as a teacher (tutor, lecturer) in the third level of the education system. However there are minimum

entry requirements. These consist of a basic degree followed by a Masters and evidence of published research in the applicant's field of expertise. There are many additional opportunities for teachers working in third level education to avail of further education, training and development. The aim is to enable staff to adapt to new technological, scientific and organisational challenges, in response to the broadening of higher education and training opportunities.

6.2. Training of trainers in vocational training establishments

There is no national system for the pre-service and in-service training of trainers and tutors employed outside the education system. The majority of those employed have been recruited on the basis of a second level teaching qualification or a trade or business qualification. Significant work has been undertaken by FÁS in the area of training of trainers, in the registration of approved trainers and in leading the establishment of a trainers' network.

Individual universities have provided programmes for trainers working with specific target groups (e.g. people with disabilities). The Department of Education and Science has funded certified in-service programmes for staff working with marginalised groups in Youthreach, literacy services etc. The White Paper *Learning for life* (see section 2 above) recognised the need to explore the feasibility of a generic training programme, to be implemented initially in a modular format on an in-service basis, but ultimately to be available as a pre-service training programme.

Within FÁS, instructors and trainers are state employees and must comply with the standards as laid down in the statutory acts. Trainers entering FÁS are required to have a qualification in the discipline in which they will train or, in 'non-craft' areas, a qualification equivalent to an undergraduate diploma with further in-house development.

In addition FÁS is working with the National University of Ireland (NUI) Maynooth to develop a diploma in social inclusion. The approach will integrate the experiences gained from the Foundation in training programme and the work done by the National Rehabilitation Board to develop a diploma which would qualify people in the training of those with a disability.

In recent years a number of organisations have developed programmes to provide training for their trainers. FÁS now has a suite of open-learning based programmes which help trainers to improve their skills and acquire recognised certification.

6.3. Trainers in the workplace

In relation to the on-the-job training of apprentices, trainers must themselves be qualified as a craftsman or master craftsman. However, they do not require any training or teaching qualification.

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 or interest in this work. Similarly, many managers with responsibility for the organisation of training had little formal 'trainer training' when they started in the job but subsequently obtained training qualifications on a part-time basis.

The Irish Institute of Training and Development (IITD) was founded in 1968 and aims to develop and monitor standards in training. It organises certificate and diploma part-time courses in training and human resource development in cooperation with a number of institutes of technology.

7. Skills and competence development

7.1. Skills anticipation mechanisms

Increasingly, the requirements of the national system of certification are demanding that training/education organisations align their courses in a systematic manner to identified needs.

The Expert Group on Future Skill Needs was established in 1998 by the Government in the context of increasing concerns about labour and skill shortages in Ireland. The Expert Group provides a research and coordination mechanism at national level and reports jointly to the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and the Minister for Education and Science. It contains representatives of the social partners, government departments, industrial development organisations and education/training bodies. It has undertaken research on a wide range of skill areas including ICT, engineering, biotechnology, construction, pharmaceuticals, e-business, research and the labour market as a whole. Its recommendations have been influential in increasing public investment in ICT and other scientific fields. In general, the Expert Group has concentrated on issues of the number of persons required and has not examined details of curricula.

Education and training organisations use a mixture of formal consultation, informal feedback and research to identify future skill needs.

FÁS has a long established planning and research department. It has carried out a series of studies on employment trends and skills developments, often on a sectoral basis and jointly with the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI). The FÁS/ESRI manpower forecasting studies describe occupational employment trends in about 40 different occupational groups for 5 to 10 year periods. In 2001 a skills and labour market research unit was established in FÁS to provide a research facility for the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs. The unit has established a comprehensive database on skills and employment in Ireland and aims to produce a series of forward looking studies in relation to different occupational groups.

Overall development of the apprenticeship systems is coordinated by the National Apprenticeship Coordination Committee. It provides a consultative forum for FÁS, the Department of Education and Science and employer and union representatives. From time to time it reviews apprenticeship standards and curricula.

7.2. New pathways and new education partnerships

There is a need to develop more flexible forms of delivery of education and training. However, many people do not have regular access to the Internet and the development costs of

creating suitable open learning programmes should not be underestimated. To be fully effective, open and distance learning methods need to be supplemented by support mechanisms that allow direct teacher-learner contact.

There are currently two main providers of open and distance learning (ODL) opportunities, the National Distance Education Centre (Oscail) and the Open University. The National Distance Education Centre based in Dublin City University was established as a collaborative structure for higher education and other providers in the early 1980s. The report of a symposium on the future of ODL in higher education, published in July 2000, suggests the establishment of a national centre for open and distance learning in higher education. This centre should be seen to be independent of any one institution and its mode of governance should include representatives of all key institutional interests, including the social partners.

In its *Statement of strategy 2002-05* FÁS has indicated its intention to invest in the development of its Net College as a vehicle to promote the increasing use of e-learning. The college provides a range of course options, mainly in computer subjects, which are available for a fee or free of charge to certain groups such as the unemployed. In 2002, 3 170 persons followed its courses.

A further measure to enhance the education and training opportunities available has been the establishment of the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) (see Section 8 below).

8. Validation of learning: recognition and mobility

8.1. National Qualifications Authority

One of the gaps in the provision of vocational education and training in Ireland until recently was the absence of a unified comprehensive framework for validation and certification. The *Qualifications (Education and Training) Act (1999)* established the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI). The remit of the Authority encompasses further and higher education and it has three main functions:

- (a) establish and maintain a framework of qualifications based on standards of knowledge, skill or competence to be acquired by learners regardless of where, when or how such learning takes place, whether in institutions or colleges of education and training or in the workplace or the community;
- (b) facilitate lifelong learning through the promotion of access, transfer and progression for all learners including those who have special needs;
- (c) establish and promote the maintenance and improvement of the standards of awards of the further and higher education and training sector, other than in the universities and to liaise with bodies outside the state for the mutual recognition of awards at transnational level.

The national framework of qualifications is a new development and is not just an amalgam of existing awards and systems. It is an outcomes-based approach to the recognition of learning. It embodies a vision for learning, which recognises all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective.

It focuses primarily on learner needs and through setting standards for awards in a coherent and transparent way promotes the quality of both programmes and awards. The framework will create a coherent and understandable system for coordinating and comparing awards. It will facilitate international comparisons between awards. By broadening the possibilities for recognising learning, the framework will facilitate access, transfer and progression and thus lifelong learning

On 11 June 2001, the remaining parts of the Act were enacted and the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) and the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) were established. The two new awarding councils will make national certification available for all education and training in the State, other than awards made in respect of primary and second-level education and by the Dublin Institute of Technology and the universities.

The two awards councils have three principal functions:

- (a) establishment of policies and criteria for the making of awards and the validation of programmes;
- (b) determination of standards of knowledge, skill or competence to be acquired by learners, before an award may be made or recognised, by a Council;
- (c) making and recognition of awards, where persons have achieved the required standards.

The two councils have separate but inter-dependent roles. Members of the councils include learners and providers of further and higher education and training and the social partners. Under the terms of the Act, any provider can apply to either of the councils for validation of an education or training programme regardless of where it is provided and whether it is part-time or full-time. Ensuring the quality of awards is central. The awards made should be fully recognised both nationally and internationally, so as to provide for the progression and transfer of students, with full recognition for their studies to date to institutes and universities.

FETAC's remit includes validation of further education and training programmes and the establishment of quality assurance mechanisms. The validation of prior and experiential learning, work-based learning and community and private sector education comes under its aegis. It takes over the functions of the National Council for Vocational Awards and the certification functions of the main training institutions.

HETAC, which assumes the functions of the former National Council for Educational Awards, is the awarding body for the non-university third-level sector. It will, like FETAC, undertake the validation of programmes and set and monitor standards. It is to ensure the fairness and consistency of student assessment procedures within institutions and academic and financial protection for students in commercial educational institutions providing HETAC validated programmes.

8.2. Facilitating the recognition of qualifications

A major policy goal of the qualifications system is to improve access, transfer and progression. The NQAI has defined specific policies, actions and procedures through which it will meet its objectives in this regard. They are set out under four themes:

- (a) credit;
- (b) transfer and progression routes;
- (c) entry arrangements;
- (d) information provision.

A national approach to credit should meet the needs of learners in a lifelong learning context, facilitating credit accumulation, credit transfer and processes for the recognition of prior learning.

Under the heading of transfer and progression routes, learners achieving awards should have eligibility to transfer or progress. All awards should have some associated possibilities for transfer or progression, and should enable learners to transfer or progress.

Under the heading of entry arrangements, the NQAI policy is designed to extend accessibility and to focus the concept of access on the achievement of an award (rather than on entry to a programme), through the definition of factors necessary as a basis for successful participation.

Finally, information provision procedures are designed to ensure that all relevant institutions and organisations contribute to the provision of high-quality, comprehensive and accessible information for learners.

8.3. Recognition of prior learning

The White Paper on adult education recognised the need for improvements in this area, with particular reference to community-based education and workplace learning. In addition to certification system developments, the White Paper noted the need for systemised supports to guide learners. To give full effect to lifelong learning it is important to recognise the value of all learning irrespective of how it was acquired. The NQAI has therefore introduced policies to ensure that non-formal learning is recognised and duly accredited. Specifically, providers of further and higher education and training must follow a set of procedures which include statements covering arrangements:

- (a) on eligibility to enter;
- (b) to assess learner's eligibility to enter;
- (c) for further selection processes, where applicable;
- (d) for recognition of prior learning for entry to each of their programmes and for access to an award;
- (e) for transfer and/or progression associated with the programme;
- (f) for learning support available for specific learner groups such as learners with disabilities or learners whose mother tongue is not English.

9. Guidance and counselling for learning, career and employment

9.1. Strategy and provision

Guidance services in Ireland are both education and labour market based, located within educational institutions and in employment services offices. In the labour market sector, FÁS is statutorily responsible for the provision of guidance services (see Section 9.3 below).

The primary target groups in relation to the provision of career guidance advice are the following:

- (a) early school leavers;
- (b) the long-term unemployed;
- (c) redundant workers;
- (d) people re-entering the workforce after a prolonged absence;
- (e) workers seeking a change of employment.

9.2. Guidance within the education system

Guidance in second level education is a universal entitlement as per the *Education Act, 1998*. 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 (< 250 students) to approximately two additional posts in schools with more than 1 000 students. Guidance forms part of the curriculum in senior cycle through the Transition year programme (TYP), Leaving certificate applied (LCA) and Leaving certificate vocational programme (LCVP) (see Section 4.4.2 above). Under the 2001 Guidance enhancement initiative, schools submitted proposals for additional staffing resources for guidance purposes. 103 schools benefited. Proposals that established links with the local and business community, promoted the uptake of science at senior cycle and focused on disadvantage, were given priority.

In the further education sector, the guidance and counselling provision is within the VEC system and in community education settings. The guidance allocation to vocational schools is the same as for secondary schools. In addition, information regarding Post-leaving certificate (PLC) courses (see Section 4.7.1 above) and community education programmes is provided to students by the course tutor.

All universities and most Institutes of Technology (ITs) have careers and counselling services available to students.

In the adult education sector, a range of services is available. Assessment helps clients to obtain a structured understanding of their own development. A counselling service is also available to help clients explore their thoughts and feelings on their present situation and the options open to them for the future.

Guidance at primary, second and third level is available free of charge as is guidance in the adult education sector. In addition, there are 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.

The National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE), an agency of the Department of Education and Science, supports and develops guidance practice in all areas of education and contributes to policy formation in the field of guidance. In the 2000 White Paper on adult education, the Government proposed to put in place a National Adult Guidance and Counselling service and EUR 35 million was to be provided for this service over the period 2000-06. The planned service includes personal, educational and career guidance and will cover the pre-entry, entry, on-going and pre-exit stages.

The 2002 report of the Task force on lifelong learning recommended that a single national source of learning information (the National learning line) should be developed. The service would compile information on lifelong learning, and provide it via a telephone service and the Internet and in disability-friendly media. The learning website should also provide links to other relevant websites.

9.3. Other guidance provision

A National employment service is provided by FÁS in over 134 locations with an additional 25 services operating in disadvantaged areas. Vocational guidance and counselling is provided as a basic universal entitlement for clients of FÁS. Career guidance includes individual interviews, ICT – career information databases, telephone information, psychological testing and workplace experience.

Recent initiatives include the establishment of a national Internet-based vacancy-taking call centre Callnet and the development of a multimedia careers package, *Career directions*. The latter was updated during 2002 and now hosts an extensive database on careers information. This interactive programme allows users to perform self-assessments and provides access to its careers database which contains information on over 720 careers. *Career directions* is available on multimedia CD, online at www.careerdirections.ie and through the FÁS website.

There are over 30 Youth information centres (YICs) nationwide, managed by a variety of youth organisations. YICs offer an information service on a wide number of issues including employment matters, local community services and education and training. Within the

Youthreach programme for early school-leavers (see Section 4.5), there is a pilot measure for guidance, counselling and psychological services.

9.4. Guidance and counselling personnel

Career guidance personnel in second-level schools are trained teachers (see Section 6.2) who have completed a post-graduate qualification in guidance and counselling. They are employed as teachers and may spend some of their time on normal teaching duties.

The Institute of Guidance Counsellors, established in 1968, is a professional body representing over 900 practitioners in second level schools and in other settings. It has a liaison and advocacy role with government departments, management and trade union organisations, national parent bodies, higher and technical education institutions, employment and training agencies, representatives of industry and a wide range of non-government organisations. The institute has a code of ethics and it promotes standards for entry into the profession. It supports the professional development of its members through in-career training.

FÁS Employment services staff have experience of working life. They have an aptitude for providing advice and guidance in this regard but a formal qualification is not essential. However, FÁS has developed, in conjunction with NUI Maynooth, a National certificate in guidance and counselling and a higher level diploma/higher diploma in adult guidance and counselling. FÁS staff are encouraged and enabled to obtain these qualifications.

Youthreach staff have been trained in non-formal guidance skills under the EU Employment initiative programme.

10. Financing investment in human resources

10.1. General overview and funding policy

The vast majority of funding for vocational training for young persons before entering employment and for unemployed persons comes from public resources. This funding is mainly channelled through the Departments of Education and Science, and of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. These departments receive an annual allocation announced by the Minister for Finance and approved by parliament. They in turn allocate the money to intermediary organisations (see Section 3.1.1) which either spend it directly on delivering training programmes or by providing funds to the next level of delivery.

Ireland also benefits from European Union funds provided by the European Social Fund under the Employment and human resources development operational programme (EHRDOP). This is part of the National development plan/Community support framework 2000-06.

Government policy is that the prime responsibility for training employed persons rests with employers. Consequently employers pay most of the costs of employee training although there is public financial support for some forms of employee training (see Section 5.2.1).

The National training fund (NTF) act, 2000 established a dedicated fund to support the training of both those in employment and those who wish to take up employment. Section 7 of the act provides for payments to be made from the Fund:

- (a) to raise the skills of those in employment;
- (b) to provide training to those who wish to acquire skills for the purposes of taking up employment;
- (c) to provide information in relation to existing or likely future, requirements for skills in the economy.

The National training fund is resourced by a levy on employers of 0.7 % of the earnings of employees. It applies to approximately 75 % of all insurable employees and is collected as part of the national Pay-related social insurance scheme administered by the Department of Social Welfare and Family Affairs. In 2002, a total of EUR 204.5 million was spent from the fund on approved schemes administered by organisations such as FÁS and Enterprise Ireland. Enterprise-led schemes, such as those operated by Skillnets (see Section 5.2.1 above), are also supported from the NTF. The schemes to be funded are approved by the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment. The Minister for Finance sanctions the amounts to be allocated to the various schemes.

No comprehensive statistics on VET expenditure are collected in Ireland however, most VET forms part of the National development plan/EHRDOP 2000 – 06 framework. Table 7 below

includes all measures within the EHRDOP except those of a primarily employment type, e.g Community employment and Employment support services. The measures are basically grouped within the four ‘pillar’ classification of the European employment guidelines. Broadly speaking the data includes all publicly funded vocational training activities for the unemployed, post-second level further education and below degree-level higher education. Total expenditure in 2002 was EUR 1 507 million, compared to EUR 1 137 million in 2000.

Table 7: Funding of training through the Employment and human resources development operations programme, 2000 to 2006, in million euro

Pillar	Total expenditure			ESF expenditure		
	2000	2001	2002	2000	2001	2002
Employability	362	502	560	89	88	62
Entrepreneurship	30	18	21	11	7	8
Adaptability	402	400	420	15	20	24
Equality	0	1	2	0	0	1
Other	342	509	504	0	0	0
Total	1137	1430	1507	115	115	95

Source: FÁS

The employability pillar relates to preparing persons for employment – typically either young persons or the unemployed. Entrepreneurship relates both to business start-ups and supports for training within existing companies. Adaptability includes various measures broadly oriented to life-long learning or further education/training. The equality pillar is a small measure funding special initiatives. Mainstream gender equality initiatives are included in the other three pillars. The ‘other’ group of measures relates primarily to investment in physical infrastructure within the education system.

10.2. Funding for initial vocational training ⁽⁴⁾

10.2.1. Funding for vocational education and training at second level

The State is the dominant funder of all initial vocational training (IVT) carried out within the education system. The European social fund provides a significant level of support, while a small amount is raised from individuals and business sources.

In the case of secondary and community/comprehensive schools, each school's board of management receives funds directly from the Department of Education and Science. In the case of vocational schools the funds go to the VECs (see Section 4.2 above) which distribute them to the vocational schools under their responsibility. There is an annual application process in which schools and VECs apply to the Department of Education and Science and are issued with an approval to provide a certain number of places. Funding is allocated using a formula based on a standard pupil-teacher ratio.

Schools are required to raise a percentage of the non-staff pay grant they receive from State sources as a 'local contribution'. They must also pay the first portion of each teacher's salary. These monies are raised by miscellaneous fund-raising activities organised by school boards of management and may also include a contribution from church sources. Schools run by vocational education committees (VECs) receive a small (additional) amount of funding from VEC funds. Schools and more particularly, third-level colleges also receive occasional donations of money or equipment from local businesses.

10.2.2. Funding for third level vocational education and training

Each institute of technology produces a five-year strategic plan. It needs to obtain approval from the Department of Education and Science prior to introducing new courses. Each year, every institute is given an allocation of places and an approved level of staffing by the Department of Education and Science. It also gets a grant covering non-pay costs and a grant known as the ESF tuition fee in respect of each student.

Means-tested maintenance grants are available for students at institutes of technology and for those on Post-leaving certificate courses. Each local authority is responsible for paying maintenance grants to students whose home residence is in its area and is then refunded the costs by the Department of Education and Science. Persons with disabilities can obtain special financial support. There are also supplementary grants for students from very socially-disadvantaged groups.

⁽⁴⁾ Amounts spent on specific VET programmes and activities are often indicated elsewhere in the text, particularly in sections 4 and 5 above.

10.2.3. Funding for apprenticeship

Funding for apprenticeship comes from the government, employers and, indirectly, apprentices themselves. Apprentices are employees of companies with an apprenticeship contract. They receive a wage which varies by year of apprenticeship and is a percentage of the full (adult) craft worker wage. During the phases of on-the-job training, the employer pays apprentices' wages and bears whatever other costs are incurred. During the periods of off-the-job training and education, the State, through FÁS, pays an allowance to apprentices, equivalent to their wages. Apprenticeship training costs are funded through the National training fund. Total public expenditure on the apprenticeship system in 2002 was EUR 159 million, made up of EUR 131 million in FÁS and EUR 28 million in the education system.

10.3. Funding for continuing education and training for adults

In general, continuing education and training for adults is paid for directly by the individuals. There is no comprehensive system of paid education/training leave. Adults attending part-time or evening courses normally pay the full cost. The main exceptions to this are where the employer pays the cost or the trainee is unemployed or is from a recognised disadvantaged group (see below). The Department of Education and Science provides funding for a range of adult literacy programmes with support from the European social fund. All programmes are provided free of charge.

Support for persons attending part-time courses at third-level is provided through income tax relief. Under the social inclusion measures in the National development plan there is provision for a third level access fund totalling EUR 120 million over the period 2000-06 aimed at students from disadvantaged areas, mature students and students with disabilities.

A number of additional social welfare payments are being made available and it is expected that the number of students qualifying for assistance under this programme will double to 7 000 in the 2002/03 year.

10.4. Funding for enterprise-based continuing vocational education and training

Enterprise-based continuing vocational training (CVT) is purely voluntary. However, the State provides financial support to encourage training in companies. Until the end of 2002, FÁS ran the Training support scheme for small and medium-sized companies in certain sectors of industry. This provided a financial subsidy towards the cost of attendance at approved training centres. The scale of subsidy varied, depending upon the size of the company, from 70 % for small companies to 50 % for companies with 51 to 150 employees. A similar scheme operated in the construction industry. These schemes were replaced in 2003 by a new Competency

development programme to support the training of employees in a range of sectors (see Section 5.2.1).

Enterprise Ireland provides funding to support training, as part of company development, in approved firms within the manufacturing and internationally-traded services sectors. The level of support depends upon a number of factors including region, size of company and stage of development.

The CVTS 2 survey (see Section 5.2.1 above) found that companies in Ireland spent EUR 364 million on training courses in 1999. This represented 2.4 % of their labour costs. Average expenditure per employee was EUR 600. The major components of costs were fees to external training providers (EUR 118 million), the labour costs of employees while on training courses (EUR 145 million) and the labour costs of company staff involved with training (EUR 85 million). Companies also paid EUR 5 million in levies to FÁS and received EUR 9 million in grants and subsidies.

10.5. Funding of training for unemployed and other socially-excluded people

In general, unemployed persons and those from other socially-excluded groups are provided with financial assistance to undertake education and training programmes. The Back to education initiative scheme (see Section 5.2.4 above) provides a financial allowance to certain persons following full-time third-level or Post-Leaving Certificate courses, e.g. the unemployed, lone parents and the disabled. In addition they receive an amount to cover any additional costs of studying.

The VTOS scheme (see Section 5.2.2 above) provides financial support for the unemployed and other socially-disadvantaged groups to attend second level or further education courses. Unemployed persons receive a training allowance equivalent to the maximum rate of unemployment benefit. Other social welfare categories continue to receive their payment. There is an additional bonus payment for persons who have received social welfare payments for over one year. In 2002, EUR 46 814 million was provided to fund 5 708 persons availing of the programme.

FÁS provides training allowances to all non-employed persons attending its full-time training courses. These allowances are set at approximately the same level as unemployment benefit and there are extra payments for persons with adult or child dependants. Fáilte Ireland courses for unemployed persons follow the same principles of free tuition and an allowance for trainees, linked to unemployment benefit rates.

Funding for these payments is made through the standard route from the Department of Finance to the relevant government department and then to the implementing agency.

Over the last few years, there has been an expansion of provision in programmes paying allowances to try to encourage more disadvantaged persons to take-up or return to education. Another trend has been the increased recognition of childcare costs as a potential barrier to participation and hence a willingness to provide public funding to meet them.

11. International dimension - towards a European area of lifelong learning

11.1. National strategy related to policy and programme initiatives at EU level

The EU plays a major role in VET in Ireland. It is both a major funder of VET (see Section 10.1) and a major contributor to VET policy. This takes the form of discussion, agreement and monitoring in relation to programmes for Structural fund support, and the support for innovation and best practice deriving from various EU-programmes such as Leonardo da Vinci and its predecessors. EU VET policy, as developed by the European Commission and agreed in Council policy documents, also strongly influences Irish policy-makers.

The National development plan 2000-06 sets out government strategy for development and in particular that part which is supported by European Union funds. Education and training activities are covered in the Employment and human resources development operational programme 2000-06 (EHRDOP). This programme was strongly influenced by the European employment strategy.

In June 1999, European education ministers meeting in Bologna signed up to a programme to establish a European area for higher education by the year 2010. There has been much progress since Bologna in developing a two-cycle system of higher education, introducing a system of easily recognisable and comparable degrees, developing a credit system, promoting quality assurance, promoting mobility and encouraging a European dimension to higher education. Steps are underway in Ireland to support these objectives and to input into further cooperation in the Bologna process.

A parallel process of Europe-wide cooperation in vocational education and training is envisaged in the Copenhagen Declaration (2002). This involves work on transparency, guidance, recognition of competences and qualifications, credit, quality assurance and the development of a European dimension in vocational education and training. Ireland is contributing to work in these areas, notably on credit and quality.

The 2000 European Commission's Memorandum on lifelong learning strongly influenced Irish policy makers. An extensive consultative process was undertaken in respect of the Memorandum, which also provided a focus for the Task force on lifelong learning (see Section 2.1).

11.2. Impact of Europeanisation/internationalisation on education and training

While generally Irish education and training follows nationally devised curricula, there have been a large number of relatively small-scale initiatives involving partnerships with other EU countries. Many of these were developed within the framework of EU funded initiatives such as Leonardo, Socrates and Adapt. In relation to language learning in higher education, students are encouraged and financially supported to spend one year overseas. Some transition year (see Section 4.4.2 above) students are facilitated by their schools to spend up to a month in a European country to improve their language skills. Some FÁS programmes, including an up to three-month period of placement overseas, provide language training.

A number of programmes involve work experience abroad as a form of further development. Graduates are placed in jobs overseas where their work will help them to develop their language skills and give them valuable overseas business experience. The employers association (IBEC) and FÁS are both involved in such initiatives.

The Wider horizon programme is a training and work experience programme aimed at disadvantaged young people aged 18 to 28 years. It is primarily aimed at fostering intercommunal relationships within Northern Ireland and with the Republic of Ireland. The programme involves mixed groups of trainees who undergo pre-departure training and overseas training/work experience. In 2001 there were 54 projects involving 1 130 young people. The overseas locations were Australia, Canada and the USA. Another cross-border initiative in this area is the Interact programme aimed at severely disadvantaged 16 and 17 year olds. The focus is generic and foundation training and lasts 30 days.

The European computer driving licence (ECDL) has become the standard qualification for people doing computer applications courses. FÁS provides an option for all training centre trainees to acquire ECDL qualifications either as part of their normal course work or through the Internet-based FÁS Net College.

Annex 1 – Acronyms/Abbreviations

AnCO	Industrial Training Authority (later known as FÁS)
BTEI	Back to education initiative
CERT	State Tourism Training Agency
CVT	Continuing vocational training
ECDL	European computer driving licence
EHRDOP	Employment and human resources development operational programme
ESRI	Economic and Social Research Institute
FÁS	Training and Employment Authority
FETAC	Further Education and Training Awards Council
Forfás	National Policy and Advisory Board for Enterprise, Trade, Science, Technology and Innovation
HEA	Higher Education Authority
HETAC	Higher Education and Training Awards Council
IBEC	Irish Business and Employers Confederation
ICT	Information and communication technologies
ICTU	Irish Congress of Trade Unions
IITD	Irish Institute of Training and Development
ISCED	International standard classification for education
IT	Institute of technology
LCA	Leaving Certificate Applied
LCVP	Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme
NALA	National Adult Literacy Agency
NALC	National Adult Learning Council

NCGE	National centre for guidance in education
NCVA	National Council for Vocational Awards (replaced by FETAC)
NQAI	National Qualifications Authority of Ireland
NTCB	National Tourism Certification Board
NTF	National training fund
NUI	National University of Ireland
Oscail	National distance education centre
PLC	Post leaving certificate
Teagasc	Agriculture and Food Development Authority
VEC	Vocational Education Committee
VET	Vocational education and training
VTOS	Vocational training opportunities scheme
YIC	Youth information centre

Annex 2 – Sources for further information

A. Legislation

Agriculture Research, Training and Advice Act, 1988

<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/ZZA18Y1988.html>

Education Act, 1998

<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/ZZA51Y1998.html>

Education (Welfare) Act, 2000

<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/ZZA22Y2000.html>

Employment Equality Act, 1998

<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/ZZA21Y1998.html>

Equal Status Act, 2000

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Industrial Training Act, 1967

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Labour Services Act, 1987

<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/ZZA15Y1987.html>

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Annex 3 – Main organisations

A. Ministries

Department of Education and Science,
Marlborough Street,
IRL-Dublin 1.
Tel: (353-1) 873 47 00
Fax: (353-1) 878 79 32
Website: <http://www.education.ie>

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment,
Kildare Street,
IRL-Dublin 2.
Tel: (353-1) 631 21 21
Fax: (353-1) 631 28 27
Website: <http://www.entemp.ie>

B. Intermediary and sectoral organisations

Fáilte Ireland,
89-91 Amiens Street,
IRL-Dublin 1.
Tel: (353-1) 18 50 25 62 56
Website (temporary address): <http://193.95.150.11>
E-mail: info@failteireland.ie

FÁS – Training and Employment Authority,
27-33 Upper Baggot Street,
IRL-Dublin 4.
Tel: (353-1) 607 05 00
Fax: (353-1) 607 06 00
Website: <http://www.fas.ie>
E-mail info@fas.ie

FETAC – Further Education and Training Awards Council,
East Point Plaza,
East Point Business Park,
IRL - Dublin 3.
Tel: (353-1) 865 95 00
Fax: (353-1) 865 00 67
Website: <http://www.fetac.ie>
E-mail: information@fetac.ie

HETAC – Higher Education and Training Awards Council,
26-27 Denzille Lane,
IRL-Dublin 2.
Tel: (353-1) 631 45 67
Fax: (353-1) 631 45 77
Website: <http://www.hetac.ie>
E-mail info@hetac.ie

Higher Education Authority (HEA),
Marine House,
Clanwilliam Court,
IRL-Dublin 2.
Tel: (353-1) 661 27 48
Fax: (353-1) 661 04 92
Website: <http://www.heai.ie>
E-mail: info@hea.ie

National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI),
Jervis House, (5th Floor),
Jervis Street,
IRL-Dublin 1.
Tel: (353-1) 887 15 00
Fax: (353-1) 887 15 95
Website: <http://www.nqai.ie>
E-mail: info@ngai.ie

Teagasc- Agriculture and Food Development Authority,
19 Sandymount Avenue,
IRL-Dublin 4.
Tel: (353-1) 637 60 00
Fax: (353-1) 668 80 23
Website: <http://www.teagasc.ie>
E-mail: info@hq.teagasc.ie

C. Social partner organisations

Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC),
Confederation House,
84-86 Lower Baggot Street,
IRL-Dublin 2.
Tel: (353-1) 605 15 00
Fax: (353-1) 638 15 00
Website: <http://www.ibec.ie>

Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU),
31-32 Parnell Square,
IRL-Dublin 1.
Tel: (353-1) 889 77 77
Fax: (353-1) 887 20 12
Website: <http://www.ictu.ie>
E-mail: congress@ictu.ie

D. Other organisations

Economic and Social Research Institute
4 Burlington Road,
IRL-Dublin 4.
Tel: (353-1) 667 15 25
Fax: (353-1) 668 62 31
Website: <http://www.esri.ie>
E-mail: admin@esri.ie

Irish Vocational Education Association (IVEA),
McCann House,
99 Marlborough Road,
Donnybrook,
IRL-Dublin 4.
Tel: (353-1) 496 60 33
Fax: (353-1) 496 64 60
Website: <http://www.ivea.ie>
E-mail: ivea@indigo.ie

Léargas – The Exchange Bureau
189-193 Parnell Street,
IRL-Dublin 1.
Tel: (353-1) 873 14 11
Fax: (353-1) 873 13 16
Website: <http://www.leargas.ie>
E-mail: info@leargas.ie

National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE),
42-43 Prussia Street,
IRL-Dublin 7.
Tel: (353-1) 869 07 15
Website: <http://www.ncge.ie>
E-mail: info@ncge.ie

National Centre for Technology in Education (NCTE)
Dublin City University,
IRL-Dublin 9.
Tel: (353-1) 700 82 00
Fax: (353-1)700 8210
Website: <http://www.ncte.ie>
E-mail: info@ncte.ie

Cedefop (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training)

The vocational education and training system in Ireland: Short description

FÁS

Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities

2004 – VI, 62 pp. – 21 x 29.7 cm

(Cedefop Panorama series; 83 – ISSN 1562-6180)

ISBN 92-896-0287-2

Cat. No: TI-58-04-829-EN-C

Free of charge – 5145 EN –

