

Ireland

VET in Europe - Country Report

2009

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Abstract:

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

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

This overview has been prepared in 2009 and its reference year is 2008. Similar overviews of previous years can be viewed at:

<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Information-services/browse-national-vet-systems.aspx>

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

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

Keywords:

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

Geographic term:

Ireland

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THEME 1: GENERAL CONTEXT - FRAMEWORK FOR THE KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY

1.1. POLITICAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT

Ireland is a parliamentary democracy which consists of a House of Representatives (Dáil Éireann) and a Senate. Laws passed by the Parliament must conform to the Irish Constitution and the President must sign legislation for it to become law. The Republic of Ireland comprises twenty-six of the thirty-two counties of the island of Ireland. The remaining six counties make up Northern Ireland which is part of the United Kingdom. Ireland has been a member of the European Community since 1973.

Over the past two decades a system of National Partnership has been in place, involving the government and the social partners and every three years these partners agree a national programme for social and economic development. This covers such policy issues as pay, taxation, social welfare, the environment and education and training. The current programme 'Towards 2016' runs from 2006-2016. The responsibility for education and training policy lies with government ministries (known as departments). However, in the case of certain VET organizations', control has been devolved to regional or local areas.

The Irish economy is in the middle of a major downturn with unemployment having doubled to 8.6% by the end of 2008, employment falling and redundancies at record levels. There will not be enough jobs for everyone in the next few years and unemployment will rise further. To date most of the impact in Ireland has been on the private sector, but the Government now needs to make major reductions to its projected budget deficit. This will include reductions in public sector spending on services and staffing which will impact on public sector employment numbers in 2009 and the next few years.

1.2. POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

The 2006 census found that the population of Ireland had increased by 322,000 or 8% since the last census in 2002¹. By 2008 the population had increased by 520,000 or 13% since 2002, and was 4.42 million. The total area of the country is 84,421 sq km. The major centre of population is Dublin city and county with 1.2 million inhabitants. The other major cities are Cork (119,000) and Limerick (53,000).

Table 1 below sets out the total population for both the EU-27 and 25 countries and Ireland.

		2002	2005	2009
EU 27	(b)	49,1023,535	495,090,294	499,673,325(s)
EU 25	(b)	46,1603,958	465,845,885	470,574,546(s)
IRELAND		4,109,173	4,312,526	4,517,758(s)

Source: Eurostat, 26th February 2009. b=Break in series s=Eurostat estimate

Ireland has had a high level of population growth due to a high birth rate. In the past this growth has been lessened by high levels of emigration. Since the mid 1990s, there has been an increase in the birth rate, a corresponding decrease in emigration and marked increase in immigration, resulting in a significant rise in the population. The 2006 census found that one in ten people in Ireland had been born outside the country. Table 2 below shows the demographic trends by age

¹ Central Statistics Office, Census 2006, Government Publications Office, Ireland 2007

up to 2026. While the number in the 0-24 age group is expected increase by 148,000, the number aged 65 and over, is also expected to increase by 385,000 (16%), leading to a significant ageing of the population by 2026.

Table 2 below sets out the population trends in Ireland by age from 2008-2026.

TABLE 2: POPULATION TRENDS BY AGE 2008-2026			
AGE-GROUP	2008	2026	CHANGE
0-24	1,530,000	1,652,000	+122,000
25-64	2,411,000	2,786,000	+375,000
65+	481,000	866,000	+385,000
TOTAL	4,422,000	5,304,000	+882,000

Source: Central Statistics Office (CSO) Ireland. *Population and Migration Estimates (2008) and Population and Labour Force Projections* (2007)* (*Based on M1F2 Scenario).

Table 3 shows the projected number of persons aged 65 and over expressed as a percentage of the projected number of persons aged between 15-64. In 2010 16.67% of the population will be aged over 65, while by 2060 this percentage will have increased to 43.57% of the population.

TABLE 3: PROJECTED OLD-AGE DEPENDENCY RATIO %											
	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050	2055	2060
EU 27	25.9	28.26	31.05	34.23	38.04	42.07	45.36	48	50.42	52.45	53.47
IRELAND	16.67	18.37	20.23	22.27	24.63	27.21	30.6	35.27	40.4	42.93	43.57

Source: Eurostat extracted 10/3/2009

1.3. ECONOMY AND LABOUR MARKET INDICATORS

In 2008, the Irish economy went into a recession after a 12-year period when the annual GNP growth rate averaged 7%. However GDP per capita (at market prices) in 2008 was EUR 43,103 a rise of over 50% in real terms since 1998. In 2008 Ireland also had a balance of payments deficit of EUR 9.4 billion. The Irish labour market also entered a new phase of rising unemployment, after over a decade of unprecedented job creation. The numbers in employment fell by 87,000 (-4%) to 2,030 million in 2008² compared to 2,117 million persons in 2007, while the number unemployed at the end of 2008 - 170,600 rose by 70% (69,600) to 8.6% compared to 101,000 (4.6%) in 2007³. The sectors most affected were construction, other production industries and the wholesale and retail trade sectors. Sectoral employment in construction fell by 16.5% (-45,900) in the year to the fourth quarter of 2008, all of this decrease is attributable to males. Wholesale and retail trade showed a decrease of (-18,200); other production industries (-12,400); financial and other business services (-11,600); hotels and restaurants (-10,500) and agriculture, forestry and fishing (-2,700). In 2008, agriculture, manufacturing industry, and services accounted for 3%, 34% and 64% of the economy respectively. Sectors showing an increase in employment included education (6,300), health (3,500) and other services (3,100).

As indicated by Table 4 below employment at sectoral level is currently the highest in the distribution and transport sectors at 26.5% and lowest in the primary and utilizes sectors at 6.4%.

² FAS Annual Report 2008.

³ Department of Enterprise and Employment - Annual Human Capital Investment Operational Programme Implementation Report 2008

However with regard to the EU-27 countries, the largest difference is in the construction sector where the EU employment average is 7.3%, while in Ireland it is 12.1%.

	PRIMARY SECTOR AND UTILITIES		MANUFACTURING		CONSTRUCTION		DISTRIBUTION AND TRANSPORT		BUSINESS AND OTHER SERVICES		NON MARKETED SERVICES	
	PERSONS	%	PERSONS	%	PERSONS	%	PERSONS	%	PERSONS	%	PERSONS	%
EU 27	11508.8	5.2	34500.5	15.5	16225.2	7.3	49200.5	22.2	38025.2	17.1	47045.7	21.2
IE	145.2	6.4	262.5	12.4	255	12.1	558.5	26.5	407.7	19.3	469	22.2

Source: Eurostat Data.

Table 5 shows the numbers employed in Ireland from 2000/05-2008 by sector.

EMPLOYMENT SECTOR	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008
AGRICULTURE	130	109	110	110	115
INDUSTRY	488	523	554	564	521
SERVICES	1,075	1,331	1,384	1,448	1,464
TOTAL	1,692	1,963	2,048	2,117	2,030

Source: CSO, Ireland, Quarterly National Household Survey, Quarter No.1 2009.

As indicated in Table 5 above, in 2008, there were 2,030 million persons in employment, a decrease of 4.4% from 2007. The construction and services sectors accounted for much of this decrease. The labour force (both employed and unemployed), decreased by 17,200 (7%) to 2,222,700 by the end of 2008 compared to 2,239,900 at the same time in 2007, the first annual labour force decline since 1989. In 2008 the number of men in employment decreased by 54,200 (85.2%) from 2007, while the number of females in employment decreased by 15,400 (41%) from 2007. The overall employment rate fell from 69.0% to 65.8% during 2008. However Female participation in the labour force, which has been low, has seen a marked improvement in recent years.

As indicated by Table 6 below, in 2007 Ireland had a slightly lower percentage of those in employment at ISCED levels 0-2 for those aged 15-24 (22.6%), in comparison to the EU-27 average (25.3%). For the same age group in 2007 employment was considerably higher at ISCED levels 3-4, (65.4%) than the EU-27 average (48.9%) and similarly at ISCED levels 5-6 at 79.5% in comparison to the EU-27 average of 62%. At age group 25-49 at all the three ISCED levels Ireland's employment rate is generally similar to the EU-27 average, while for those aged 50-64 it is higher at all three ISCED Levels in comparison to the EU-27 average.

Table 6 below shows the percentage rates (%) of employment by age groups and highest level of education attained.

TABLE 6: EMPLOYMENT RATES BY AGE GROUPS AND HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION ATTAINED (%)										
	YEAR	2002			2005			2007		
	AGE GROUP	15-24	25-49	50-64	15-24	25-49	50-64	15-24	25-49	50-64
EU27	TOTAL	36.7(i)	77.3(i)	50.2(i)	36.1	78.1	53.3	37.4	80	55.6
	ISCED 0-2	25.7(i)	65.9(i)	40.5(i)	24.7	66.2	42.5	25.3	67.5	44.2
	ISCED 3-4	47.8(i)	79.1(i)	54.3(i)	47.1	79.4	56.8	48.9	81.4	59.2
	ISCED 5-6	61.7(i)	88.2(i)	71.8(i)	60.5	88	73.6	62	89	74.9
	NO ANSWER	15.3(i)	73.4(i)	37.9(i)	4.6	73.7	5	5.1	74.6	6.6
IRELAND	TOTAL	44.9	78.1	55.4	48.7	79.1	5.8	49.9	79.7	60.8
	ISCED 0-2	24.6	64.9	47.0	23.9	65.7	50.0	22.6	65.2	51.5
	ISCED 3-4	57.1	80.9	62.3	63.2	80.2	64.3	65.4	80.2	66.5
	ISCED 5-6	73.8	89.0	75.1	76.6	88.8	77.8	79.5	88.5	77.9

Source: Eurostat, date of extraction: 17th March 2009.

Note: (i) See explanatory text in Eurostat at

http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_SDDS/EN/lfsq_esms.htm

Until the late 1990s Ireland's unemployment rate was one of the highest in the EU. However, as Table 7 below shows, it fell rapidly between the years 2000-06, since 2007 the unemployment rate has begun to grow again. The unemployment rate was 4.4% in 2006, but mainly due to a contraction in the construction industry, it rose by 10,700 to 101,000 in 2007 (4.6%) and during 2008 it continued to rise sharply to over 8.6% (223,000⁴ by the first quarter of 2009), in fact the numbers unemployed in 2008 were at their highest level since 1993.

TABLE 7 - UNEMPLOYMENT TRENDS 1999/2005-08 (IN THOUSANDS)			
	LIVE REGISTER	QNHS* UNEMPLOYED	% UNEMPLOYED ILO BASIS
1999	220	148	8.3
2005	160	89	4.4
2007	162	101	4.6
2008	227	143.5	6.4

*Quarterly National Household Survey. Source: FAS Labour Market Review 2008

In contrast to Table 7 above, Table 8 below sets out the unemployment rates by age groups and highest level of education attained.

⁴ FAS Quarterly Labour Market Commentary Summer 2009

		2002			2005			2007		
		15-24	25-49	50-64	15-24	25-49	50-64	15-24	25-49	50-64
EU27	TOTAL	17.8(i)	8.2(i)	6.6(i)	18.5	8	6.7	15.4	6.4	5.5
	ISCED 0-2	19.8(i)	11.3(i)	7.4(i)	21.7	11.6	7.8	19.9	10.3	6.9
	ISCED 3-4	17.5(i)	8.4(i)	7.5(i)	17.2	8.2	7.6	13.3	6.1	5.8
	ISCED 5-6	12.5(i)	4.5(i)	3.5(i)	14.1	4.7	3.8	11.3	3.7	3.2
	NO ANSWER	14(i)	7.1(i)	6.7(i)	27.5	:	:	20.1	:	:
IE	TOTAL	7.8	3.8	2.8	8.6	3.7	3.1	9.1	4.1	2.9
	ISCED 0-2	13.5	7.1	3.7	15.9	7.3	4	17.5	7.8	3.7
	ISCED 3-4	6.3	2.9	:	6.5	3.2	2.8(u)	7.4	3.8	2.5(u)
	ISCED 5-6	4.8(u)	2	:	6.4	2	:	5.5(u)	2.4	:

Source: Eurostat, date of extraction: 10th March 2009.

Notes: (i) See explanatory text in Eurostat at

http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_SDDS/EN/lfsq_esms.htm

(u) - Unreliable or uncertain data.

As illustrated by Table 8 above, for persons in the age group 15-24, Ireland has a slightly lower rate of unemployed (17.5%) for those with education levels at ISCED 0-2 in comparison to the EU-27 average (19.9%) for 2007. At ISCED levels 3-4 for the same age group, Ireland's unemployed rate (7.4%) was considerably lower than the EU-27 average (13.3%) for 2007, and also for ISCED levels 5-6 with an unemployment rate of 5.5% in comparison to 11.3% for the EU-27. Ireland's unemployment rate in 2007 for those aged 25-49 at ISCED levels 0-2 in 2007 was also lower (7.8%) than the EU-27 average of 10.3%, while this was similar for this age group for those at ISCED levels 3-4 at 3.8% in comparison to the EU-27 rate of 6.1% and at ISCED levels 5-6 at 2.4% in comparison to the EU-27 rate of 3.7%. For those persons in the age group 50-64, the Irish unemployment rate was also lower at all ISCED levels for 2007 in comparison to the EU-27 average rate.

	ISC 234			ISC 234_GEN			ISC 234_PVOC		
	IN MILLION EUR PPS	AS % OF GDP	AS % OF TOTAL PUBL. EXP.	IN MEUR PPS	AS % OF GDP	AS % OF TOTAL PUBL. EXP.	IN MEUR PPS	AS % OF GDP	AS % OF TOTAL PUBL. EXP.
EU25	247.426.0	2.3	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
IRELAND	2.736.8	2.0	:	:	:	:	:	:	:

ISC 234 Secondary and post secondary non-tertiary levels of education.

Source: Eurostat.

In 2003 the percentage of GDP spent in Ireland on all education and training was 4.4%⁵. This compares with an OECD average of 5.9%. The figures shown in Table 9 above for 2005 refer only

⁵ OECD Education At a Glance, 2006. Table b.2.1a

to the percentage of expenditure for secondary and post secondary non-tertiary levels of education.

1.4. EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF POPULATION

Actions taken to increase participation in VET in Ireland reflect the need to provide education and training to address the labour market challenges facing young people. The EU '2010' policy targets for education are that at least 85% of 22 year olds in the EU should have completed upper secondary education and that the average rate for early school leavers should be no more than 10%. Eurostat data for 2007 shows that 86.7% of the Irish population aged 20-24, have completed at least upper secondary level education compared to the EU 27 countries percentage of 78.1%. The rate of early school leaving for 2007, as indicated by Eurostat, was 11.5% compared to the EU27 of 14.8%, showing a drop on the last few years.

The percentage of young people participating in third level education has risen in recent years and therefore the level of the educational profile of the population has increased. As illustrated by Tables 10 and 12 below, relative to the EU-27 countries Ireland has a greater percentage of people with third level qualifications.

LEVEL OF EDUCATION	ISCED 0-2	ISCED 3-4	ISCED 5-6
EU-27	29%	47%	23%
IRELAND	31%	34%	31%

ISCED 0-2: Pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education

ISCED 3-4: Upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education

ISCED 5-6: Tertiary education. Source: Eurostat, EU Labour Force Survey : on-line database 22/11/07.

Table 11 below shows that the proportion of early school leavers in Ireland has fallen from 14.7% in 2002 to 11.5% in 2007 a slightly lower percentage than in 2006 (12.3%). This is a lower percentage than the EU-27 average for 2007 of 14.8%.

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
EU 27	17.1	16.6	15.9	15.5	15.2	14.8
EU 25	16.6	16.1	15.4	15.1	15	14.5
IRELAND	14.7	12.3 (b)	12.9 (p)	12.3(p)	12.3	11.5

b=Break in series; p=provisional value. Source: Eurostat; EU Labour Force Survey. Date of Extraction 29 May 2008.

COUNTRY	SEX	2002			2004			2006		
ISCED LEVEL		ISCED 3VPV	ISCED 4VPV	ISCED 5-6	ISCED 3VPV	ISCED 4VPV	ISCED 5-6	ISCED 3VPV	ISCED 4VPV	ISCED 5-6
EU 27	t	2,293,348	379,912	3,165,155	2,366, 69	42,1341	3,595,504	2,853,434	428,945	3,846,498
	m	1,244,986	171,634	1,335,544	1,263,141	195,713	1,482,590	1,545,275	199,261	1,573,072
	f	1,063,240	208,279	1,829,612	1,103,528	225,628	2,112,914	1,308,159	229, 685	2,273,425
IRELAND	t	58,401	13,645	45,028	61,552	17,205	55,852	32,120	7,001	59,184
	m	27,717	6,343	19,312	29,421	10,102	24,009	11,333	6,196	26,011
	f	30,684	7,302	25,716	32,131	7,103	31,843	20,787	895	33,730

* The term graduate in Ireland is normally used with reference to those who have completed third level education. Source: Eurostat. Date of extraction 9th March 2009.

As illustrated by Table 12 above, while there was an increase in Irish people attaining ISCED Levels 3 and 4 between 2002-04, (in Ireland these levels equates to secondary and post-secondary, non-tertiary education and training,) there was a decrease in numbers from 2004-06 and an increase in those attaining ISED levels 5-6 (further and third level non university education and training), over the 2002-06 period. This particularly is noticeable in the case of females.

	2002			2005			2007		
	TOTAL	FEMALES	MALES	TOTAL	FEMALES	MALES	TOTAL	FEMALES	MALES
EU 27	76.7	79.3	74	77.5	80.2	74.9	78.1	80.8	75.5
IRELAND	84	87.3	80	85.8	88.9	82.6	86.7	89.7	83.7

Source: Eurostat. Date of Extraction 27th February 2009.

Table 13 above shows that Ireland has a higher percentage of young people aged 20-24 who have completed at least secondary education (83.7% in 2007), in comparison to the average percentage (75.5% in 2007) in the EU-27 countries.

	2002			2005			2007		
	TOTAL	FEMALES	MALES	TOTAL	FEMALES	MALES	TOTAL	FEMALES	MALES
EU 27	7.2	7.8	6.6	9.8	10.5	9	9.5	10.3	8.6
IRELAND	5.5	6.4	4.7	7.4	8.6	6.2	7.6	9.0	6.2

Source: Eurostat. Date of extraction 27th February 2009

* Percentage of the population aged 25-64 participating in education and training over the four weeks prior to the survey

While Table 14 above indicates that the percentage of those participating in lifelong learning from 2002-07 in Ireland was lower than the average in the EU-27 countries, the percentage of Irish women participating in lifelong learning has grown considerably over this period from 6.4% to 9%. This increase is in part due to the growth of adult learning at community level, which has been a particularly popular learning route for women returning to education.

1.5 DEFINITIONS

While the majority of definitions of VET terms have not been established on any formal, legal, basis in Ireland, and therefore it is not meaningful to compare all the definitions in Annex 1 with the position in Ireland. However the following are general definitions as ‘normally applied’ in Ireland. Where there is a ‘formal’ definition, the source is indicated, for example where VET terms/outcomes were defined in relation to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), as part of the work to establish the Irish National Framework of Qualifications.

General Education and Vocational Education and Training - The roles and responsibilities for the Irish education system, including for vocational education, are separate from the vocational training system, which is the responsibility of the labour market authorities. According to *Eurostat's study 'Key Data on Education in Europe 2002'*, 'In Ireland all school students are in compulsory general education as no separate vocational stream exists'.

Technical Education - This type of education now falls mainly under the category of further education and training at tertiary non-university level. (see definition of “Tertiary and Higher Education” below). Originally technical education fell under the ambit of the Regional Technical Colleges set up under the Regional Technical Colleges Acts 1992-99. However in 1998, in order to unify the publicly funded higher education sector, all these colleges were re-designated as Institutes of Technology (ITs), and were brought within the remit of the Higher Education Authority, although their distinctive roles and functions are maintained, in particular the applied and regional focus of the Institutes. The Dublin Institute of Technology and the Colleges of education who undertake teacher training courses, also fall within this category.

Tertiary and Higher education - According to the definition contained in the ‘*Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999*’, “higher education and training” means ‘Education and training, other than primary or post-primary education or higher education and training, which is determined by the National Qualifications Authority under Section 10 to be higher education and training’.

The third level education sector in Ireland comprises the countries eight universities, fourteen institutes of technology and the colleges of education who undertake teacher training courses. The Institutes of Technology, (ITs) are the main third-level educational institutions providing courses aimed at the IVET sector. There are fourteen ITs run by independent boards of management with a large element of funding and direction from the Department of Education and Science. ITs for instance play a significant role in providing the off-the-job educational elements for those participating in the statutory apprenticeship schemes, (see Theme 4. Section: 4.4), and provide initial vocational courses for young entrants into the tourism, agriculture, horticulture and forestry sectors. Entry into third-level education is based mainly on results in the Leaving Certificate examination. Third level honours degree programmes are normally of three or four years duration with higher certificates and ordinary degree courses being two and three years respectively. At higher university level the primary piece of legislation dealing with Universities is the 1997 Universities Act.

Further education and training (FET) - The term “further education and training” in Ireland covers a broad range of education and training that occurs after secondary-level schooling but that is not part of the third-level system. A distinctive feature of further education generally is its diversity and breadth of provision, as well as its links with other services, such as employment, training, youth, school, community and voluntary interests⁶.

The Irish *Department of Education and Science (DES)* defines “further education and training” (FET) as ‘embracing education and training which occurs after secondary level schooling but which is not part of the third level system if the Youthreach programme is not included’

⁶ Report on Gender in Irish Education. Department of Education and Science, 2007.

(Youthreach provides integrated education, training and work experience for people aged 15 to 20 who have left school early without qualifications or vocational training), While “further education” it is defined by the Government sponsored *Expert Group on Future Skills Needs* as ‘education which is post-compulsory and of a vocational nature’. According to the definition contained in the ‘*Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999*’ ‘further education and training’ means education and training, other than primary or post-primary education or higher education and training’. Under this Act, the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland has the authority to validate programmes of further education and training.

In Ireland FET generally embraces education and training which occurs outside the general and higher education systems, and which provides vocationally focused learning, based on the needs of individuals. It is characterised by flexible modes of delivery, and built upon modular/unit systems that provide opportunities for credit accumulation. (Many of the qualifications available in the further education sector are modularised to allow students and trainees to accumulate units towards full qualifications).

The FET sector also seeks to provide education and training that reflects national, regional, community and sectoral skills needs, such as those required for the tourism and agricultural sectors, and to facilitate social inclusion and accessibility⁷ e.g. literacy and numeracy courses and the Youthreach programme. It is evident from the above definitions that this type of CVET in Ireland is easier to define by indicating the traditional categories of education and training which it excludes, rather than those categories which it includes. (See Theme 5.) The main types of courses that fall under this category are outlined below.

Post-secondary non-tertiary education - In Ireland this level of education mainly consists of a range of further IVET possibilities for persons who have completed compulsory secondary education and who wish to enhance their post-school qualifications and is available for both young entrants to the workforce and adults. In general, it mainly falls under the category of “Further Education and Training” described above. The largest programme under this category are the Post-Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses for young people seeking to upgrade their qualifications. PLCs, aim to provide a bridge between school and work for those who need further initial vocational education to enhance their employment opportunities. Programme options at this education level are generally designed to be broadly based to allow entry into a series of possible occupations, and provide a foundation for lifelong learning. However some 40.8% of all participants in PLC courses are over 21 years, and accordingly these courses are an important re-entry route to learning for adults, as well as catering for some 18% of all school leavers each year. While the courses offer an alternative to programmes available in higher education, certain PLCs are accepted as bridges into higher university education. The primary providers of PLC courses are the Vocational Education Committees which operate at a regional level through dedicated Further Education Colleges and Vocational Schools.

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

While there is no IVET element in formal lower school-based secondary education (See Theme 4), in Ireland IVET is focused primarily on the education and training of young persons, aged 15-20, who have generally completed compulsory secondary level education and who have not yet

⁷ NQAI Country Education Profile – Ireland.

significantly engaged with the labour market, excluding apprenticeship. It also includes for example initial training for the professions such as for lawyers and accountants.

CVET generally caters for a diverse range of adult learners and fields of learning and takes place in a range of locations, including Institutes of further education, training centres, community-based learning centres and in the workplace (See Theme 5). It is often undertaken on a part-time basis. The largest providers of both IVET and CVET are the regionally-based Vocational Education Committees, which mainly provide PLC courses referred to above, as well as The Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) a “second chance” education programme that provides courses for unemployed people, and FÁS, the Irish Training and Employment Authority, which provides occupational and skills training for adult unemployed and jobseekers, as well as supporting and assisting companies, undertake continuing training for their employees. In Ireland learning taking place at the initiative of the individual e.g. evening classes and enterprise-based training would also fall under the category of CVET.

School-based programmes - As noted above in *Eurostat's study 'Key Data on Education in Europe 2002'*, 'in Ireland all school students are in compulsory general education as no separate vocational stream exists'. While this is the case at lower secondary education, if the Youthreach programme is not included, (Youthreach provides integrated education, training and work experience for people aged 15 to 20 who have left school early without qualifications or vocational training). The system at upper secondary school level is more complex, although general education still predominates at this level. (See Theme 4. Section: 2) The main programme followed at upper secondary level is the Leaving Certificate programme which like the Junior Certificate at lower secondary level, is predominantly academic.

At upper secondary level there are two distinguishable categories:

- General education leading to the possibility of entry to tertiary education e.g. the traditional Leaving Certificate.
- Vocational education which provides qualifications for both the preparation for working life and for pursuing further studies e.g. the Leaving Certificate Applied Programme and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme.

Alternance Training - While the traditional type of alternance training combining a school-based environment and a real workplace (see CEDEFOP Glossary 2003), is not a feature of IVET at upper secondary level in Ireland, there are other forms of alternance type training in existence. (See Theme 4. Sections : 4/5). These programmes can be divided into the following three broad categories.

- Vocational education programmes and courses in non-tertiary colleges and centres of further education, e.g. Post Leaving Certificate courses under the responsibility of the Department of Education and Science (DES).
- Apprenticeship training provided by FÁS, the Training and Employment Authority in co-operation with the Department of Education and Science and Traineeships (See Theme 4. Sections: 3/4)).
- Other initial entry-level VET for various industry sectors provided by publicly-funded agencies such as Fáilte Ireland for new entrants into the tourism industry.
- Foundation and progression programmes, for those who have left school early without any formal qualifications. These are run both in the education and training systems.

Apprenticeship - The Irish Training and Employment Authority, FAS, defines the term “apprenticeship” on its’ official website as follows:

‘Apprenticeship is the recognised means by which people are trained to become craftspeople in Ireland. The main craft trades (see [listing](#) on FAS website), have been designated by FÁS and come within the scope of the Statutory Apprenticeship system, which is organised in Ireland by FÁS in co-operation with the Department of Education and Science, employers and unions. Apprenticeship is a demand-driven, (alternating on and off-the-job), workplace and classroom,

educational and training programme for employed people, aimed at developing the skills of the apprentice to meet the needs of industry and the labour market. The [Curriculum](#) for each apprenticeship programme is based on uniform, pre-specified standards which are agreed and determined by industry. Apprentices are paid an agreed [Industrial Apprentice Wage Rate](#) by the employer. During off-the-job training, all apprentices are paid an [Apprentice Allowance](#) by FÁS. The apprenticeship cycle is deemed to be complete when an apprentice has completed all of the alternating on-the-job and off-the-job phases of their apprenticeship, within the minimum time frame from the date of registration, as well as achieving the qualifying standard throughout their apprenticeship. Successful completion of the apprenticeship is a compulsory requirement in order to be awarded the FETAC Advanced Certificate’.

Source: <http://www.fas.ie/en/Training/Apprenticeships/default.htm>

In Ireland apprenticeship is governed by the Rules of Apprenticeship and covers 26 designated occupations, all of which come within the scope of a standards-based statutory system set out in the Labour Services Act 1987 and Industrial Training Act 1967. The apprentice is contractually linked to the employer. Apprentices are assessed on a structured ongoing basis throughout their apprenticeship. FAS, has statutory authority for the administration and management of the apprenticeship programme⁸. (For further information see Theme 4. Section: 4.4).

Curriculum - While there is no national definition for the term “curriculum”, the curriculum for Ireland’s primary and post-primary schools is determined by the Minister for Education and Science who is advised by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, (NCCA), a statutory body set up under the Education Act (1998). The NCCA also has responsibility, to review the curriculum, or any part of the curriculum, for schools and the syllabuses taught. The NCCA website www.ncca.ie states that the curriculum sets out not only what is to be taught, but how, and how learning in the particular subject area is to be assessed.

The following is a general definition of the context in which the term could normally be referred to in Ireland. A Curriculum is an arrangement of materials for instruction, planned for a specific group of students/trainees extending over a considerable period of time. It covers the ‘what’ and the ‘how’, and thus subsumes a syllabus. It refers to the totality of content to be taught and aims to be realised within the training or educational system. Curriculum guidelines tend to lay out a programme’s philosophy, and specify the purposes and course content. The curriculum is expected to identify the implementation constraints and articulate detailed objectives along with assessment and evaluation criteria. It also include materials to support the teacher/trainer in meeting the needs of the learners. The FAS curriculum for instance for apprenticeships is standards-based, focusing on learning outcomes and structured on a modular format. The term curriculum can also cover materials composed of ‘generic’ common modules. The common components of a curriculum include:

- aims and learning objectives.
- rationale of the course and description of target student/trainee.
- detailed description of subject-matter and instructional plans.
- training programme and timetable.
- lists of materials and plan for assessment and evaluation.
- specific sequencing in a program of study along with specification of the teaching process and resources used.

Qualification - ‘The Irish National Framework of Qualifications is required in law to be based on learning outcomes. Section 7 of the Qualifications Act requires the Qualifications Authority ‘to establish and maintain a framework . . . for the development, recognition and award of *qualifications* in the State based on standards of knowledge, skill or competence’. Under section 8, the Authority is required to ‘establish policies and criteria on which the framework of qualifications shall be based’. In its *Policies and Criteria for the Establishment of the National*

⁸ Apprenticeship Information. FAS, The Training and Employment Authority Ireland, 2008.

Framework of Qualifications (2003), 22 the Qualifications Authority determined that award standards are the expected outcomes of learning, inclusive of all education and training. They concern the knowledge, skill and competence that are expected from the learner who is to receive an award. They concern both general standards (for a level in the Framework or an award-type) and the specific standards for named awards in particular subjects or fields of learning'. Source: European Qualifications Framework - Referencing of the Irish Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). National Report. June 2009.

In the Act setting up the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland, the term “qualification” is not defined and accordingly the term appears to be interpreted as equivalent to “award” i.e. an award means that which is conferred, granted or given by an awarding body and which records that a learner has acquired a standard of knowledge, skill or competence.

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

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

THEME 2: POLICY DEVELOPMENT - OBJECTIVES, FRAMEWORKS, MECHANISMS, PRIORITIES

2.1 OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES OF THE NATIONAL POLICY DEVELOPMENT AREAS OF VET

Vocational education and training (VET) in Ireland is seen both in policy and structural terms, as one of the main pillars for the building and maintaining of a skilled workforce. The government's main human resource priorities in recent years, have been to-

- maintain a focus on education and training, and in particular lifelong learning;
- target those with low educational and vocational qualifications and skills;
- ensure the development of a highly skilled workforce.

2.1.1 NATIONAL LIFELONG STRATEGY

Ireland's VET policies in recent years have restated the Government's commitment to Lifelong Learning and focused on enhancing access to training, the development of new skills, the acquisition of recognised qualifications and progression to higher level qualifications. Eurostat data for 2007, as illustrated by Table 14 above, shows that 7.6% of all persons in Ireland aged 25-64 participated in lifelong learning in comparison to 9.7% in the EU-27 countries. A vital element of LLL in Ireland is the adult education sector which caters for adult and mature learners. This sector has taken on a significant role in the current economic downturn, as many people lose jobs and look for an opportunity to acquire new skills and qualifications to get themselves back into the workforce. Recent information on the trends and needs in this sector released by Aontas, the National Adult Learning Organisation, show that 76% of people in contact with Aontas had not taken part in any form of education for over ten years, while 48% had been out of education for more than twenty years⁹.

A significant development in progressing the Lifelong Learning agenda in Ireland was the establishment of 'The Taskforce on Lifelong Learning' in 2002. This gave official sanction to the funding of community education. The introduction of the Part-time Options Strand under the auspices of the 'Back to Education Initiative' (BTEI) in 2002 provided further opportunities for second chance education. Other developments included the establishment of the 'Adult Guidance Initiative' to facilitate information and career guidance for adult learners, and the commencement of the National Adult Literacy Programme, to address the low literacy level of some of the Irish adult population, identified in OECD International Adult Literacy Survey¹⁰.

The National Social Partnership Agreement 'Towards 2016', the 'National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016' and the 'Programme for Government 2007', have all re-emphasised the government's commitment to lifelong learning, and focused on enhancing access to training to develop new skills, the acquisition of recognised qualifications and progression to higher levels of qualifications. In 2008 the government appointed a Minister of State for Lifelong Learning with responsibility for improving access to learning, as well as overseeing and ensuring a co-ordinated approach to lifelong learning.

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

⁹ Aontas Press release 28th July 2009

¹⁰ OECD Literacy Skills for the knowledge Society, International Adult Literacy Survey, Paris 1997.

providing pathways to facilitate transfer between the different levels of the education and training system.

Under the current Social Partnership Agreement-‘Towards 2016’, a “lifecycle approach” to employment and training is set out, with the supports available to the individual at each stage of their “life cycle”. This includes transitions between non-employment, employment and within employment, with training and up-skilling acting as the catalyst for such transitions. Ireland’s proposed Lifelong Learning Strategy will cover all phases of education and training, from primary and post-primary education, initial vocational education and training which also includes youth provision, to further and continuing VET and higher education. The Governments’ key priorities for the implementation of a framework for Lifelong Learning were set out in the ‘National Skills Strategy’ (NSS) published in 2007. These include:

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

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

Increase the up-skilling of 500,000 people in employment, as over 70% or 1.43 million of the current workforce will still be in employment in 2020.

Ensure that the output from the education system reaches its potential, through improving participation rates in upper secondary level to 90% and ensuring the progression rate to third level increases to 70%.

2.1.2 POLICY DEVELOPMENT IN THE MAIN VET POLICY AREAS

The *roles and responsibilities* for the Irish education system, including for vocational education, are separate from the vocational training system, which is the responsibility of the labour market authorities. There are three levels of administrative responsibility in the publicly funded VET sector and some organizations’ may operate at more than one of these levels. These levels are:

- Government departments (ministries), which set policy and overall direction, including providing the public funding for VET.
- Intermediate organizations who may be involved in implementing government policy, channelling funds or acting as a provider of VET programme, for example the 33 Vocational Education Committees located in the 27 counties and in urban areas.
- VET provider bodies such as FÁS, the National Training and Employment Authority.

The administration and implementation of government policy for IVET, falls mainly within the remit of the Departments of Education and Science (DES) and of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE), with the former being the most significant player in the area of IVET.

A major factor influencing VET policy in Ireland during the last decade has been the significant financial support provided by the *European Social Fund (ESF)*. This Fund has played an important policy-influencing role, emphasizing the need for consistency with European VET and social policy, in particular the European Employment Guidelines. These policies are reflected in the Government’s National Development Plan (NDP) for 2007-2013, where medium-term policy is set out, together with the complementary Human Capital Investment Operational Programme (HCI OP) 2007-2013. The latter sets out a range of programmes and services agreed with the EU Commission, and these are co-funded by the European Social Fund. The structure of the HCI OP is designed to address the Lisbon Agenda and the Operational Programme is the key delivery

mechanism for employment, education and vocational training strategies. The OP has two priority objectives:

- Upskilling the workforce; and
- Increased participation in the labour force.

Under the *National Development Plan for 2007-2013*, there are five strategic investment priorities.

- Economic Infrastructure
- Enterprise, Science and Innovation
- Human Capital
- Social Infrastructure
- Social Inclusion.

Some EUR 25.8 billion will be invested in *Human Capital* which is broken down into three programmes.

- Training and Skills Development.
- Schools Modernisation & Development.
- Higher Education.

Within the *labour market* context, government policy on vocational training is set out in the annual National Reform Programme-NRP, formerly the Employment Action Plan. (As part of the Lisbon Strategy each Member State must prepare an annual NRP outlining their priorities for action to enhance job growth over a three year period). Under this Programme, Irish labour market policy during 2005-08 focused on:

- Sustaining a high level of employment and low unemployment;
- Ensuring an adequate supply of labour to meet the needs of the economy;
- Maintaining a strong focus on education and training including lifelong learning, to ensure the development of a highly skilled, adaptable workforce.

In contrast to previous years, the 2008 National Reform Programme (NRP) was prepared during a period of significant economic uncertainty, with a deteriorating economic outlook, both internationally and domestically. While people's skills and capabilities remain a countries' core economic asset, and even during a slow-down there is always a demand for recruits in occupations employing large numbers of people where labour turnover is an on-going feature, there has and will continue to be a decline in demand for persons with no or poor qualifications. To address these issues significant VET policies were introduced in recent years, in particular the establishment of a National Framework of Qualifications in to improve access, transfer and progression within the VET system, and the 2007 National Skills Strategy referred to above.

While *National Skills Strategy* predicted that in the future many jobs will require third-level qualifications, it still expects that half of the Irish workforce in 2020 will have below third-level qualifications. It therefore recommended the need for encouraging higher rates of school completion, and increased access to alternative educational provision for young people who may find mainstream secondary level school is not suitable for them. The 2007 'Programme for Government' gave considerable attention to 'curricular change to meet skill needs and ensure a broader range of educational opportunities', in particular the introduction of new curricula in subjects such as engineering, economics and technology in secondary level schools, with a greater focus placed on maths and science education at all levels, supported by increased investment in teacher training, in order to increase and improve outputs and throughput to higher education levels.

Changing economic circumstances, which are creating demand for new and higher skills, will also pose challenges and opportunities for the third level sector, in particular, universities and Institutes of Technology will have to deliver more flexible, labour market orientated qualifications. In 2008 the Government set up a Steering Group to look at a *new National Strategy for Higher Education*. This Group will examine of the roles and relationships of

institutions in the higher education system, so that it can deliver the levels of efficiency, performance, innovation and growth that will optimize Ireland's economic recovery and social development in future years.

Ireland does not have an integrated and comprehensive structure for *providing career guidance* and advice. In 2004 a National Guidance Forum was established, in response to an OECD review of career guidance policies in Ireland. The Forum's report and recommendations entitled 'Guidance for Life: An Integrated Framework for Lifelong Learning in Ireland' published in 2007, has provided an opportunity to plan the provision of a guidance service that would underpin national priorities in lifelong learning. In 2008 the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), developed a draft curriculum framework for guidance in post-primary education¹¹, which offers an outline of a range of learning experiences for students in the areas of Personal Guidance, Educational Guidance and Career Development. The framework reflects the importance of a balanced approach to guidance provision, both in terms of the coverage of a broad range of topics and skills, and in terms of school student access to guidance across all the years of post-primary education. The Adult Education Guidance Initiative (AEGI) Service established in 2000 is available in 38 guidance projects countrywide.

With regard to *teacher and trainer training*, traditionally the roles and responsibilities for the education system, including vocational education, have been separate from the vocational training system in Ireland, which is the responsibility of the labour market authorities. Therefore, while teachers are regulated by the Department of Education and Science (DES), there is no similar state organisation regulating vocational trainers. The Teaching Council Act, 2001, led to the establishment of a Teaching Council in 2006, which seeks to promote and develop teaching as a profession at primary and post-primary levels, and to ensure that priorities are set for the professional training of an adequate number of teachers in the various subjects.

In contrast, there is no legal description of the role of a vocational trainer, nor is there any requirement for them to have any educational qualifications or pedagogical skills. Trainers are involved in the skills training and development of trainees of all ages outside of the formal education system. This training is generally provided either by private companies or within semi-state organisations such as FÁS, the Training and Employment Authority.

Over a number of years, *new informal learning routes*, offer a variety of learning opportunities for adults. Until recently however, mobility within the Irish education system has been vertical and only in limited circumstances was informal and non-formal learning accepted for entry to higher education. In recent years, policies regarding non-formal and informal learning, organised on a sub-tertiary basis, and with particular reference to community-based education and workplace learning, have been given formalised accreditation, and these will allow for greater access, transfer and progression in learning. The introduction of the National Framework of Qualifications, (see Diagram in Theme 2. Section: 2.2), will also allow progression routes to be developed from the informal education sector into the formal education system. Awards will become more flexible to fit with the non-linear way in which adults progress through education and will be more relevant to workplace and community-based learners.

2.1.3 CURRENT DEBATES

Despite the current economic downturn, enhancing access to education and training, the development of new skills, the acquisition of recognised qualifications and progression to higher education continue to be the key issues driving the lifelong learning agenda in Ireland. However, this can only be successful if it is fully-inclusive, participative, accommodating of diversity and focused on equality of outcomes for all. During the last decade, Ireland experienced a steady inflow of non-Irish workers to meet the demands of an expanding labour market. If these migrants are to achieve the desired levels of integration they will have to be afforded the same

¹¹ Curriculum Framework for Guidance (Post Primary) Report on Consultation with Schools, NCCA, 2008

access to education, employment and enterprise as Irish citizens. A recent report on 'Migrants and Higher Education' produced by the Cork Institute of Technology¹², identified barriers faced by migrants in Ireland when attempting to access third level education. It found that the main barriers to educational advancement for this group were the lack of:

- information provision,
- English language skills,
- Recognition of qualifications and prior learning (RPL),
- Fees and financial considerations.

The report recommended that information on educational programmes should be more easily available, as well as information on entitlements, fees and access for learners. Standardized entry level guidelines for competence in English should be set out for all third level colleges and there should be clear and accessible policies on Recognition of Prior Learning across the third level sector, as well as clear equivalences for international awards mapped to National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) standards. While the Irish National Qualifications Authority 'Qualifications Recognition Ireland Service' does not have a direct recognition function, it can facilitate access to education and training and the labour market generally as each foreign qualification is compared to an Irish qualification placed on the NFQ. At vocational training level FAS the national Training and Employment Authority, has introduced intercultural training for its' staff to help them work more effectively in an intercultural environment. The Migrant report found that education, training and up-skilling was essential to combating racism and for developing a more inclusive, integrated and intercultural society in Ireland. To address this general challenge the Government appointed its' first Minister for Integration in 2007.

Experience in Ireland is that increasingly unemployed persons are suffering from multiple disadvantages. A lack of qualifications and skills are some of these disadvantages and VET has an important role in addressing the 'social-inclusion' needs of disadvantaged groups in society. Consequently, there is an increased need to address these needs in a 'holistic manner', with the provision of VET linked to other actions, (e.g. in relation to health, housing or child-related issues).

An important development, reflected in VET provision is the increased demand for individualised, customer-centred, provision. The public is no longer satisfied with the 'one size fits all' provision. The future challenge for VET providers is how to deliver such individualised provision at acceptable cost. The modularisation of curricula, e-learning and greater emphasis on self-learning can all help to increase the flexibility of VET provision. The growing interest in online and blended learning, as illustrated by the increasing use of learning resources such as FAS eCollege, is indicative of this trend.

Apprenticeship is a common, and favoured, form of delivery of VET for young persons in Ireland and many other countries. However, the apprenticeship model is dependent on ensuring a balance of costs and benefits to all parties involved - in particular employers and young apprentices. Experience in Ireland has shown that it is difficult to maintain such a balance as economic conditions change. Where apprenticeship is found in large companies, the desire to 'slim-down' employment in such companies to a 'core' group of employees, may result in a reduced willingness to invest in apprenticeship training. Another aspect of apprenticeship, which may become of greater importance in Ireland as employment in the construction industry contracts sharply, is the issue of mobility within the EU and the recognition of periods spent in apprenticeship in different countries.

In view of the current economic downturn and in particular the need for retrenchment in the area of public expenditure, levels of VET expenditure will become a matter of more urgent debate in the future between the Government and employers. While Ireland's three-year

¹² Migrants and Higher Education, edited by Dr Margaret Linehan and Eileen Hogan, Cork Institute of Technology, 2008.

National Partnership Agreements involving the Government and the Social Partners, have all included policies in relation to education and training. In recent years there has been some divergence of opinion between the Government, the Social Partners and outside commentators, regarding the extent to which employers and individuals should pay for training that benefits them, and the amount of financial support that individuals should receive while in training. While there has been widespread support for the principle that vocational training should be provided by the State, at no cost, to young people and unemployed people, whether participants should also receive some form of income payment while undergoing vocational training, and the extent of such a payment, have been an issue about which differing views have been expressed.

The National Skills Strategy at looked at existing provision of training and the benefits of investment in training for individuals, employers and the nation as a whole and concluded that of the 1.4 million workforce still at work in 2020, half a million need to be up-skilled by at least one level on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). It stated that *“As a general principle, individuals who do not currently hold a qualification equivalent to NFQ Level 4 or 5 (Leaving Certificate equivalent), should be assisted to achieve such an award, through either full or part-time study, without incurring tuition costs and with a level of subsistence, provided by the State, for full-time study where appropriate.”* However, for higher-level courses (levels 6) the report envisages a shared funding between individuals, employers and the State. To achieve these aims high levels of expenditure will be required in the future.

2.2 THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN THE FIELD OF EUROPEAN TOOLS

In 2001 the Government set up the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI). The NQAI covers all awards in the State from initial schooling to further education and training including higher doctorate level and promotes access, transfer and progression within the education and training system for all learners including those who have special needs. It also promotes the maintenance of the standards of awards in the further and higher education and training sectors, and liaises with bodies outside the State for the mutual recognition of awards.

The NQAI has policies and procedures under four themes, through which it meets its objectives. These are:

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

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

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

The Councils must also inform themselves of the education, training, skills and qualifications requirements of industry, including agriculture and the professions, the level of knowledge, skill

and competence to be acquired by learners, and promote practices in education and training which meet those requirements. They also have a quality assurance role and can provide for the progression and transfer of trainees to further third level Institutes and Universities. Since 2007 FETAC has implemented a new 'Common Awards System' for the development of future awards and all former systems for developing awards have now ceased operation. The aim of this new award system is to ensure awards are relevant to both employers and learners needs and coherent with the National Framework of Qualifications.

Following the setting up of the Awards Councils a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) was established in 2003 by the NQAI. The latter has an over arching role in regard to the development and implementation of a national framework of qualifications based on standards of knowledge, skill or competence to be acquired by learners. The Framework covers all awards in the State from initial schooling to higher doctorate level, and provides a system for co-ordinating and comparing awards, thereby facilitating progression and mobility for learners irrespective of the entry point or the education or training path followed. It focuses primarily on learner needs and promotes the setting of standards for awards. Under this Framework strategy, all IVET and CVET programmes must have provision for access and transfer. A diagram of the National Framework of Qualification can be viewed by clicking on the following link which shows the various awards and levels within the National Framework of Qualifications. The existing and former awards placed on the Framework are also listed in the outer segments of the fan structure, as well as the various bodies making awards in the Framework, such as FETAC and HETAC. <http://www.nfq.ie/nfq/en/images/LegacyFan.JPG>

FÁS, the National Training and Employment Authority, the Department of Education and Science (DES) and all providers, must ensure their courses qualify for appropriate awards within the new Framework, which has set criteria for the level and award type available for all programmes that are submitted for its recognition. Within the Framework there are 10 levels of awards from Foundation (Level 1) to Doctoral Level (Level 10). The awards Council FETAC, is responsible for accrediting all vocational training courses and further education programmes leading to certification from levels 1-6. The awards at levels 1-6 are available at both IVET and CVET levels (depending on the status of the trainee). The awards council HETAC is responsible for more academic type courses from levels 6-10, which are provided by the Institutes of Technology and other institutions of higher education (e.g. private colleges or business schools). Many of the qualifications available in the further education and training sectors are modularised to allow students and trainees to accumulate credit units towards full and higher qualifications.

The National Qualifications Authority (NQAI) has also established a 'Qualifications Recognition Ireland Service' which facilitates international comparisons between awards, and Ireland has already co-operated in recent years with other EU countries on the development of qualification recognition agreements. In 2006, the NQAI published policies and criteria on the inclusion in, or alignment with the National Qualifications Framework (NFQ), of the awards (or the learning outcomes associated with them), of certain international and professional awarding bodies. In June 2009, Ireland completed the process of referencing the NQF to the European Qualifications Framework¹³ (EQF). As illustrated in Table 15 below, the EQF comprises eight qualification levels, described through learning outcomes (knowledge, skill and competence), the National Qualifications Framework has ten award levels.

¹³ European Qualifications Framework Information Bulletin 2 2009.

TABLE 15: NFQ AND EQF LEVELS	
NFQ (IRELAND) LEVELS	EQF LEVELS
1 & 2	1
3	2
4	3
5	4
6	5
7 & 8	6
9	7
10	8

The NQF and the qualifications within it, are based on the principle of learning outcomes, and are linked to credit systems and arrangements for the Recognition of Prior Learning. These national policies on alignment and the alignment of the NFQ to the EQF are crucial to and will greatly facilitate the recognition of foreign qualifications between Ireland and other countries. The National Qualifications Authority of Ireland is the National Co-ordination Point for the EQF and as such is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the EQF in Ireland. The second stage of EQF implementation, introducing a reference to the EQF in all new Certificate and Diploma supplements, should be completed by 2012.

In November 2006, Ireland became the first European country to verify the compatibility of its National Framework of Qualifications with the Bologna Framework, i.e. a Framework for Qualifications for the European Higher Education Area. In 2004 the National Qualifications Authority (NQAI) published the ‘Principles and Operational Guidelines for the implementation of a national approach to credit in Irish Higher education and Training’. These Guidelines provide a framework for learners to accumulate credits towards awards, including for prior and experiential learning. This builds on and is compatible with the developments under the Bologna process and in particular the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), a key component for the development of the European Higher Education Area. Introduced originally to support international student mobility and international curriculum development, in so far as it aims to facilitate a flexible system that will allow a transfer between further education and training and higher education, the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), is becoming a generalised and common basis for credit systems in higher education in many European countries including Ireland.

Ireland is also participating in and actively contributing to the debate concerning the development of a European credit system for vocational education and training (ECVET), an EU initiative to improve the transparency of vocational qualifications within and between Member States. The proposed approach to ECVET has many parallels with the Irish approach to qualifications frameworks, credits and VET in general. The National Qualifications Authority of Ireland and its partners FETAC and HETAC are currently working towards a national approach to credit that will facilitate a seamless transfer between further education and training and higher education and training, and this is similar to the approach proposed for the ECVET system.

The EU-wide Europass programme, which facilitates and promotes geographic mobility, was officially launched in Ireland in 2005, and National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) is the National Europass Centre. [Europass](#) and the services of [Qualifications Recognition-Ireland](#), both facilitate learner mobility into and from Ireland. For more information see: http://www.qualificationsrecognition.ie?recognition/prof_rec/index.html

The Qualifications Recognition Service also facilitates access to the [NRP \(National Reference Point-Network of Centres\)](#), which promote the recognition of international qualifications throughout Europe and other countries and acts as an International Qualifications Database which contains information on foreign qualifications and education and training systems. While working within the overall context of national awarding bodies' policies and the Qualifications Recognition service, the higher and university level sectors have developed independent recognition and evaluation processes for the admission of international students into their institutions.

2.3 POSSIBLE PROJECTIONS OF THE FINANCIAL CRISIS ON VET POLICIES

2.3.1 THE FORESEEN CONSEQUENCES OF THE CRISIS ON VET

2008 saw the rate of economic and employment growth in Ireland significantly moderate. Employment fell by 4.1% in the fourth quarter of 2008 compared to 2007 and unemployment rose by 70%. In the construction sector alone, it is estimated that approximately 20,000 jobs were lost. The number of people entering apprenticeship in 2008 was 3,765, 44% less than the number (6,763) registered in 2007. This reduced level of registrations arose mainly in the construction-related apprenticeship trades and reflected the general reduction of activity in the construction sector. Also during 2008 there was a significant increase in the level of redundant apprentices notified to FÁS, the national Training and Employment Authority, which increased to 3,108, mainly in the construction sector.

Although unemployment is now more common among persons with poor and medium-levels of qualifications, a proportion of persons with third-level qualifications are also experiencing unemployment. This has particularly been the case in respect of professionals associated with the construction industry (architects and solicitors for example), and recently, the Law Society of Ireland advertised for a Careers Development Adviser to help solicitors that have become unemployed, primarily due to the property downturn.

In nearly all job areas in the short-term, there will be an over-supply of potential recruits so that not all persons will be able to find a job in their chosen occupation. This lack of jobs has led to an increased demand for VET generally, and in particular many of those persons who are unemployed may consider starting their own businesses, and 'Start your own Business' training may be a very relevant option for many redundant workers who have gained experience working in 'down-sized' areas including construction professionals, managers and crafts persons. Even before the economic downturn, Ireland ranked fourth across OECD countries and second in Europe for the number of early stage entrepreneurs, with 8.2% of adults engaged in entrepreneurial activity in 2007.

While many of the state agency FÁS' normal training and employment advisory services are suitable for these clients, there is a need for special up-skilling training courses in new areas and areas of skills shortages such as training for the emerging environmental technology sectors. In this context FÁS will engage with other organisations who will be responding to the increased levels of unemployment. In the Mid-West region for example, State agencies and third level educators¹⁴ have agreed a co-ordinated approach to tackle unemployment and have set up a web portal www.tusnua.ie, "begin anew" to provide employment advice, new enterprise support, retraining and further education information, for the growing number of people out of work and to guide people through the range of agencies involved in providing employment, enterprise and VET services in the region.

¹⁴ FAS, City and County Enterprise Boards and Limerick University and Institute of Technology.

At higher education level, a reduction of €15.5 million combined with earlier budgetary adjustments has meant that the Higher Education Authority (HEA) budget has been reduced to €1.319 billion in 2009. The colleges will now have to operate within tighter budgets and effect economies. These reductions however, should be seen in the context of recent overall increases in investment in higher education that has risen by more than 33pc since 2004. In 2009 to meet the needs of the growing numbers of unemployed school leavers, the HEA announced the allocation of 1,500 part-time undergraduate places for these people in third level colleges to pursue third level certificate or degree programmes, and a further 1,000 part-time postgraduate places for unemployed adults.

2.3.2 THE MEASURES ALREADY TAKEN OR ENVISAGED TO BE TAKEN AS RESPONSES TO THE CRISIS

Recently FÁS has reviewed how its training course mix should be altered to respond to the growth in unemployment and the changing profile of unemployed clients, and a range of customised and flexible supports were provided in 2008 to facilitate re-entry for those recently unemployed, into the workforce. The Technical Employment Support Grant (TESG) scheme provides a range of speedy and flexible supports to clients who were experiencing difficulties in entering and re-entering the workforce. It facilitates access to a small grant for unemployed persons who would benefit from a short term training course or financial assistance in job searching. Redundant workers were also supported by FAS, through early intervention by FÁS, resulting in tailored interventions at individual or enterprise level, with a view to obtaining alternative suitable employment. Another example of a new approach to the changing client profile is a pilot training scheme for workers on short time working. This provides 2-days a week training and income support to workers in companies that have placed staff on a 3-day week, to up-skill employees for a period of 52 weeks.

FAS will increase Start-your-own-Business training to assist redundant, experienced, workers. The FAS 'Business Appraisal' training programme aims to help entrepreneurs to evaluate their business prospects while developing the necessary range of skills and knowledge. The Government is to re-focus resources the Enterprise Strand of the 'Back to Work Allowance', which supports people into self employment, this will be replaced by two new Back to Work Enterprise Allowance schemes. As part of its new training strategy to respond to the economic crisis, FAS intends to expand the range of options available to jobseekers to up-skill in order to gain accreditation for re-entry into the labour market. It will double the number of openings on its training courses to about 79,000, by running a range of new short courses (6,000 places). Job Clubs are also being re-focussed to help the 'job-ready' find work, and training courses will incorporate a greater focus on job-seeking.

In order to increase the levels of flexible training options to address the continued rapid rise in unemployment, two further initiatives were developed by FÁS in 2008 to commence in 2009. They include:

- The opening-up, and expansion, of FAS evening courses to provide a range of free new short training courses for 24,000 unemployed people and
- The provision of a range of free on-line blended (internet with tutor support) courses for 25,000 unemployed people.

The social partners also remain actively engaged in tackling the VET requirements of those vulnerable to unemployment in the current downturn. In 2008, the employer-led Training Networks Programme, Skillnets Ltd. increased the provision of training for the low skilled and those in vulnerable employment and the Irish Government continues to use a number of financial supports and other mechanisms to encourage employers to invest in training. (See Chapter 9.2.2).

A key challenge in 2008, focused on the need to develop employment and training opportunities for those who have been, or will be, made redundant in the construction industry. Measures developed during the year included the creation of training programmes in the developing environmental and energy technology areas. FÁS, has also worked with large employers to seek additional opportunities for redundant apprentice. Ireland's electricity utility, the ESB, recruited up to 500 redundant electrical apprentice electricians who were unable to complete their craft qualification because of the economic downturn. It is estimated that 800 electrical apprentices have lost their jobs while in training and as a result they were unable to complete the on-the-job training aspect of their apprenticeship, necessary to achieve national craft accreditation. The introduction of the Recognition of Prior Learning and Exceptions Process for the apprenticeship trades by FÁS will enable those who are currently unemployed or find work later in the various sectors, have their competency validated and 296 applications were processed during 2008.

In 2008 FÁS amended the Apprenticeship Rules to permit redundant apprentices to progress immediately to the next off-the-job phase of their apprenticeship training without having to do the on-the-job phase. The FÁS "Employer Based Redundant Apprentice Rotation Scheme" also assists employers to provide on-the-job training for an redundant apprentice while their own apprentice is attending off-the-job training in FÁS or the Institutes of Technology. The scheme, which will operate for a year, aims to provide up to 500 redundant apprentices with on-the-job training on a rotation basis. An 11 week certified training programme for up to 700 redundant apprentices per year, has also been set up to facilitate redundant apprentices to progress to higher education training programmes and a register of redundant apprentices has been established by FÁS and the Institutes of Technology in order to identify these people at risk at the earliest possible point in time.

In the area of vocational education, the Government has recognised that 'second chance' and further education has a major role to play in tackling current unemployment problems, in particular in supporting individuals achieve their full potential and assist them find work in an increasingly technology-driven economy. To achieve this in 2009, the Minister for Lifelong Learning announced the allocation of an extra 1,500 Post Leaving Certificate places in the Vocational Education sector. These courses which, although principally directed at school leavers, also are an important re-entry route to learning for adults.

THEME 3: LEGISLATIVE AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK - PROVISION OF LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

3.1 LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR IVET

It should be noted that a considerable amount of the legislation regulating VET in Ireland, as opposed to that concerned with primary and secondary education, applies to both IVET and CVET.

The Legislative framework of Irish VET system is principally set out under specific Acts of the Irish Parliament, but it is also implemented through the enactment of Statutory Instruments. (The latter are orders, regulations or bye-laws made by a designated Government Minister in the exercise of a power conferred by a statute or Act of the Parliament i.e. the power to make subordinate legislation). There is no legal definition of IVET in Ireland and an important feature of the Irish VET system in general, is that there is not a sharp distinction between initial and continuing vocational education and training for jobseekers and new entrants into the workforce, whether they are young or older people and a considerable amount of legislation contains provisions which apply at both these levels of VET for example the Labour Services Act 1987.

While there is no IVET element in lower school-based secondary education in Ireland, the most important legislation at upper secondary education level within the initial vocational education system is the Vocational Education Act, 1930 and respective amendments, which led to the establishment of thirty-three regionally-based Vocational Education Committees (VECs). The Vocational Education (Amendment) Act, 2001, broadened the representative element of VECs to include public representatives, parents, teachers, local businesses and a requirement for the VECs to adopt education plans.

The Education Act 1998 provides for the education of every person in the State, including persons with a disability or special educational needs. It requires schools to give school students access to guidance in their educational and career choices, and provides for continuing education opportunities for adults with low educational qualifications. The Education Welfare Act 2000 aims to reduce educational disadvantage by promoting regular school attendance and tackling early school leaving. Young people aged 16-17 years who have left school early, must now register with the National Educational Welfare Board. The Act also raised the school leaving age to 16 years. In 2001 the Teaching Council Act was introduced to promote teaching as a profession. At further tertiary education level, the Regional Technical Colleges Acts 1992-1999 and the Dublin Institute of Technology Act 1992 gave statutory recognition to the development and expanding role of Regional Technical Colleges and in 1998 all these colleges were re-designated as Institutes of Technology. In order to unify the publicly funded higher education sector, the Institutes of Technology Act, 2006 dealt with structural reform in third level education, the Institutes of Technology were brought within the remit of the Higher Education Authority, (set up under the Higher Education Authority Act, 1971), although their distinctive roles and functions will be maintained, in particular the applied and regional focus of the Institutes. At higher education level the primary piece of legislation dealing with Universities is the 1997 Universities Act.

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

training and employment programmes; the provision of an employment and recruitment service; an advisory service for industry; and support for community based employment. The vocational training and placement element of the former National Rehabilitation Board was devolved to FAS during 2000.

In the 1980's Fáilte Ireland, was set up with responsibility for training in the tourism and hospitality sectors, and ACOT for the development of agriculture and horticulture, some of whose functions were incorporated into TEAGASC under the Agricultural (Research, Advisory and Training) Act, in 1988. Other public bodies were established to advise on and/or implement training in the forestry, fisheries, marine and nursing sectors. Enterprise development bodies also have a role in VET - for example Enterprise Ireland set up in 1998. With regard to the funding of training for the employed, a major development was the introduction of the National Training Fund Act, 2000, which replaced a previous apprenticeship levy system.

In recent years the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999, established structures for a national framework of qualifications to co-ordinate awards and promote access, transfer and progression within the both the initial and continuing VET system. To implement this process the Act established the National Qualifications Authority (NQAI), together with the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) and the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC).

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

3.2 INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR IVET

The roles and responsibilities for the Irish education system, including for vocational education, are separate from the vocational training system, which is the responsibility of the labour market authorities. There are three levels of administrative responsibility in the publicly funded VET sector and some organizations' may operate at more than one of these levels. These are:

- Government departments (ministries), which set policy and overall direction, including providing the public funding for VET;
- intermediate organizations who may be involved in implementing government policy, channeling funds or acting as a provider of VET programme, for example the 33 Vocational Education Committees located in the 27 counties and in urban areas;
- VET provider bodies such as FÁS, the National Training and Employment Authority.

Although the European Social Fund (ESF) now contributes much less funding to IVET, it remains an important influence on government policy. During the period of the Employment and Human Resource Development Operational Programme (EHRD OP) 2000-06, the ESF co-funded activities for IVET for young unemployed people and early school leavers. Similar policies are reflected in the National Development Plan (NDP) and the complementary Human Capital Investment Operational Programme for 2007-2013.

The administration and implementation of government policy for IVET, falls mainly within the remit of the Departments of Education and Science (DES) and of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE), with the former being the most significant player in the area of IVET. The provision of compulsory secondary level education in schools is the responsibility of the DES, which is responsible for general education at all levels, including further and university education. The Department also administers all aspects of education policy including curricula,

syllabi and the national examinations, supervised by the State Examinations Commission, which is responsible for the setting and awarding of qualifications at secondary level.

In contrast to school-based education, IVET is delivered at a number of different levels; in secondary level schools, in vocational training including apprenticeship and in further and higher non-tertiary education. It is mainly funded by the State either directly or through intermediary bodies. A number of government departments have funding and administrative responsibilities for IVET in specific industry sectors, such as in the tourism agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors and for certain social groups. (See Chart 1 illustrating the education system in Ireland under section 4.1).

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

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

The National Qualifications Authority (NQAI) set up two awards Councils, the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) and, the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) in 2003, both of which provide accreditation and certification for all IVET courses in the State, other than awards made in respect of primary and secondary level schooling and third level university education. Responsibility for the implementation of initial vocational training programmes for young entrants into the workforce, unemployed persons and early school-leavers is devolved to State funded bodies which include:

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

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

While the majority of IVET provision is publicly funded, in recent years there have been a growing number of further, non-tertiary vocational education centres and colleges which are commercially based and privately run. These offer courses such as Post Leaving Certificate courses for young people who have left school without formal qualifications or who wish to add

to their school qualifications. They also provide initial vocational training for many of the professions such as the legal and accountancy professions.

3.3 LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK CVET

As noted above, a considerable amount of the legislation regulating VET in Ireland, as opposed to that concerned with primary and secondary education, applies to both IVET and CVET and this is detailed in Section 3.1 above. There is no statutory obligation on companies to provide CVET for their workforce and no specific sectoral agreements in respect of CVET within enterprises. Various sectoral committees, which include representatives of the social partners, promote and advise on initiatives to provide training for the different industrial and services sectors. In some cases companies will pool resources to identify and make provision for training needs. The industry-led initiative "Skillnets" encourages and fosters this kind of co-operation.

3.4 INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK CVET

Administrative responsibility for funding and policy for publicly provided CVET falls mainly within the remit of the following bodies:

- The Department of Education and Science (DES), responsible the provision of continuing vocational and second chance adult education;
- The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, (DETE), responsible for policies to upgrade the skills and competences of the employed and unemployed population.

Other government departments make provision for CVET in their own specific sectoral areas - for example for the tourism, craft, agriculture, fishery and forestry sectors and for some community-based adult education activities.

While central government is the main source of funding for publicly-provided CVET, this area is also supported through ESF co-financing, although to a much lesser extent than in IVET. Within the former EHRD OP 2000-06 there were several CVET measures supported by ESF co-funding. These included second-chance education, adult literacy, the development of the national qualifications framework and enterprise-based training. The Human Capital Investment Operational Programme (HCI OP) for 2007-2013, has two relevant co-funded priority objectives:

- upskilling the workforce and
- increasing the participation in the labour force.

The DES supervises and funds further vocational education colleges and adult education centres run by the thirty-three Vocational Education Committees. These have devolved responsibility for a range of continuing vocational educational programmes including:- literacy programmes, education provision for asylum seekers, prison education services, senior Traveller training and the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) for the long-term unemployed. The Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) and the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC), are responsible for the certification and accreditation of all CVET courses.

The State through aegis of the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment (DETE) plays a significant role in helping employers' train their employees, principally through the services of a range of publicly-funded state agencies, who offer financial and other incentives, such as training advice, to encourage companies to meet their employees' training needs. These agencies include FÁS which delivers continuous skills training directly and provides funds to other training providers and employers to undertake this training, and Enterprise Ireland which provides funding to support training within internationally traded companies. Other State bodies which deliver continuing vocational training at sectoral level include:

- Fáilte Ireland which provides ongoing training for the tourism and catering sectors.
- The Irish Fisheries Board (BIM), for the fishing, processing and aquaculture industries.
- Teagasc, which provides training for farmers and for the food processing industry.
- Coillte, the Irish Forestry Board, which trains forestry workers.
- Bord Altranais, responsible for implementing CVET for the nursing profession.
- The Crafts Council of Ireland which is the national design and development organization for the craft industry in Ireland.

Local and regional authorities play a less significant role in the provision of CVET. Locally-based Vocational Education Committees (VECs), identify and meet local needs for both initial and continuing vocational education and play a major role in providing second chance education through the provision of programmes such as Post Leaving Certificate courses, which although principally directed at school leavers, are also an important re-entry route to learning for adults. The Institutes of Technology (ITs) also have a role in supporting industry development and innovation at local level. Other state agencies which operate at this level include:

- Údarás Na Gaeltachta, a regional development agency which operates in Irish-speaking areas and aims to develop these areas through local enterprise and skills development.
- 35 County and City Enterprise Boards which provide training schemes mainly targeted at the development needs of micro-enterprises and their employees.
- County Development Boards, whose remit includes a consultative role in relation to CVET policies implemented within their areas, as do the country's four Territorial Employment Pacts.

The general role of the social partners in advising on VET policy is outlined in Chapter 3. 2. With regard to CVET the Social Partners have a consultative role in the allocation of funds for training schemes and programmes funded under the employer-levied National Training Fund. The Government-sponsored, Expert Group on Future Skill Needs, is the forum used to fulfill this consultation requirement. Other bodies such as the National Centre for Partnership and Performance (NCP) established in 2001, which includes representatives from the social partners, as well as independent experts from industry and the academic community, has a general role in fostering and improving performance and partnership in the workplace generally, including the support of training.

THEME 4: INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

4.1 BACKGROUND TO THE IVET SYSTEM AND DIAGRAM OF THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM.

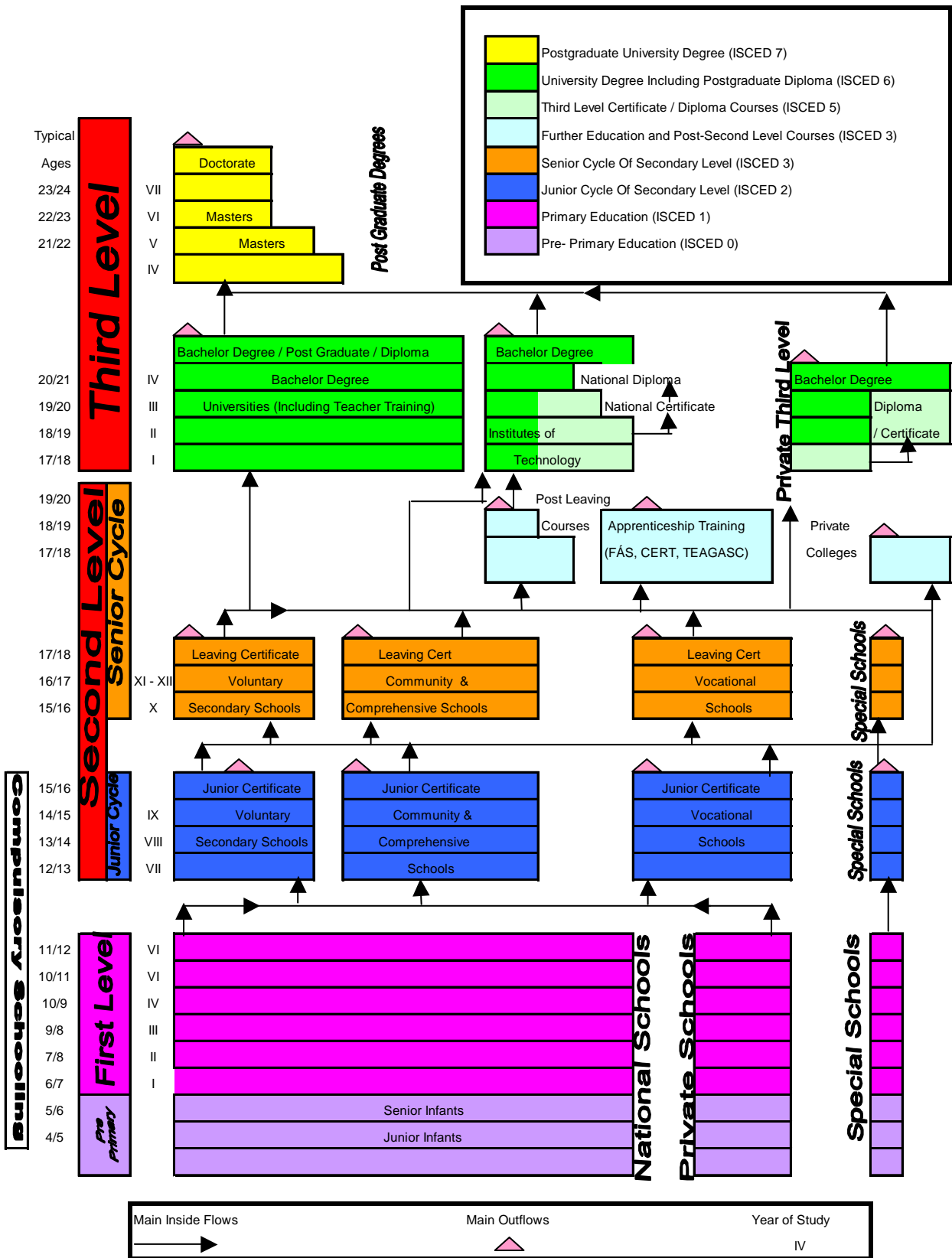
The Irish education system involves education from the ages of six to 16 inclusive. Primary education can be commenced from the age of 4.5 years and lasts for up to 8 years finishing at age 11-12. Secondary education lasts for 5-6 years with the three year Junior Cycle from 12 to 15 years (i.e. 3 years) and then a further 2-3 years for Senior Cycle education.

While there is no IVET element in formal lower school-based secondary education, in Ireland IVET is focused primarily on the education and training of young persons, aged 15-20, who have generally completed compulsory secondary level education and who have not yet significantly engaged with the labour market, excluding apprenticeship. Because the roles and responsibilities for vocational education are separate from the vocational training system, which falls under the responsibility of the labour market authorities, there is not one system of IVET for young people who have completed compulsory schooling, but rather IVET policies and programmes which are implemented through different government departments and intermediary organisations. These programmes can be divided into the following four broad categories.

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

An important feature of the Irish VET system in general, is that there is not a sharp distinction between initial and continuing vocational education and training for the unemployed. Rather, Government policy in general makes a distinction between programmes for young persons and school students, (mainly within the IVET system), programmes for the unemployed (whether young or older) and programmes for persons in employment. The majority of publicly-supported VET relates to IVET and training for unemployed people. The Chart below outlines the different levels and qualifications awarded within the formal and initial vocational education system in Ireland and corresponding ISCED levels.

Education System Of Ireland



4.2 IVET AT LOWER SECONDARY LEVEL

All education provided at this level is considered to be general in nature rather than focused on a particular vocational or skill need (i.e. this is not considered as vocational education).

Lower secondary level education (the Junior Cycle), consists of a three year programme, during which school students complete a broad, balanced curriculum. The Junior Certificate examination is taken at the end of the Junior Cycle, in seven to ten subjects including Irish, English, Mathematics, History and Geography. Schools at this level provide a variety of additional subjects such as modern languages, home economics, materials technology, e.g. woodwork etc.

4.3 IVET AT UPPER SECONDARY LEVEL

According to Eurostat's study 'Key Data on Education in Europe 2002', 'In Ireland all school students are in compulsory general education as no separate vocational stream exists'. While this is the case at lower secondary education, if the Youthreach programme¹⁵ is not included, the system at upper secondary level is more complex, although general education still predominates at this level. The main programme followed at upper secondary level is the Leaving Certificate programme which like the Junior Certificate at lower secondary level, is predominantly academic. In Ireland all education at this level is free.

At upper secondary level there are two distinguishable categories:

- General education leading to the possibility of entry to tertiary education.
- Vocational education which provides qualifications for both the preparation for working life and for pursuing further studies.

At the end of compulsory schooling at age 16, the majority of students proceed to upper secondary education (or the Senior Cycle). This consists of an (optional) Transition Year followed by one of three versions of the two-year Leaving Certificate Programme. In Ireland today 82% of persons complete upper secondary level education. The Transition Year programme which is offered following completion of the Junior Cycle emphasizes personal development and experiential learning opportunities. The Transition Year remains optional and some school students prefer to directly proceed to one of the Leaving Certificate Programmes. There are three options within the Leaving Certificate.

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

¹⁵ Youthreach provides integrated education, training and work experience for people aged 15 to 20 who have left school early without qualifications or vocational training.

aims to be equally relevant to those preparing for further education or seeking immediate employment.

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

According to the Department of Education and Science, the Leaving Certificate Applied Programme (LCAP) and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) are considered to have IVET elements, although the LCAP is more vocationally-oriented than the LCVP. However, significantly none of these programmes are classified as initial vocational training. As with the traditional Leaving Certificate both these Programmes are assessed by an examination set by the State Examination Board.

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

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

A survey undertaken by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) and published by the Higher Education Authority in 2007, found that the percentages of pupils studying these three options in 2003-04 were Leaving Certificate established (63%), Leaving Certificate Vocational (30%) and Leaving Certificate Applied (7%). The report also found that the percentage of those staying at school to take the different Leaving Certificate options has remained in the region of 80-82% during the last decade, despite the aim of government policy to gradually increase the percentage of young persons taking the Leaving Certificate to 90%. Data published by the

Department of Education and Science in March 2008 showed that the percentage of person having completed secondary level education in the years 2004/05 was 83.7%, of which 85.7% were female and 75.5% were male. In 2007 the total number of candidates taking the Leaving Certificate examination was 53,926 and in 2008 this figure was 55,589¹⁶ a 3% increase. This latter number is broken down between the three different programmes as follows:

- Established Leaving Certificate - 37,638
- Vocational Leaving Certificate - 14,505
- Applied Leaving Certificate - 3,445

In relation to those that drop-out of school, the government aims to address their needs through the promotion of strategies such as the 'School Completion Programme' and the Youthreach Programme. (For the latter see Chapter 4. 5).

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

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

The Educational Research Centre is another agency involved in curriculum research into issues, such as factors associated with early school leaving. A network of Education Centres, hosts the national 'Programmes of Curriculum Reform' and provides support services at local level, on a range of issues relating to teaching and learning. The 2007 'Programme for Government' gave considerable attention to 'curricular change to meet skill needs and ensure a broader range of educational opportunities'. Under proposals in this Programme, the government will introduce new curricula in subjects such as engineering, economics and technology in the secondary level school curricula, and there will be greater focus placed on maths and science education at all levels, supported by teacher training, in order to increase outputs and throughput to higher education levels.

The introduction of the National Qualifications Framework in 2003 covering all awards in the State from initial schooling to higher doctorate level, provides for a system to co-ordinate and compare awards thereby facilitating progression and mobility for learners irrespective of the entry point or the education or training path followed. Under the Framework strategy, all IVET and CVET programmes must have provision for access, transfer, and progression. All the above Leaving Certificate programmes lead to certification at levels 4 and 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications. (See also Table 23 listing all the main IVET accredited programmes in Ireland together with accrediting bodies). The following link shows the various awards and levels within the National Framework of Qualifications.

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

¹⁶ Department of Education and Science Statistics 2007-08

4.4 APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Apprenticeship is the recognised means by which individuals are trained to become craftspersons. The apprenticeship system is managed by FÁS, in co-operation with the Department of Education and Science (DES), the employers and the trade unions, under the aegis of the National Apprenticeship Advisory Committee. A recent outcome of this co-operation has facilitated FÁS in co-operation with the Institutes of Technology, to develop protocols for the recognition of Prior Learning for the apprenticeship process, thus allowing increased access to this programme. Funding for apprenticeship training is sourced from the employer-levied, National Training Fund (NTF), together with central government funds. The NTF funds most of the costs of apprenticeship training undertaken in FÁS, whereas the government funds most of the costs of the apprentices training undertaken in the education system, i.e. in the Institutes of Technology.

Apprentices receive alternating on and off-the-job training in 26 designated occupations including the construction, engineering, motor, furniture and printing trades, all of which come within the scope of a standards-based statutory system. Under the National Development Plan 2007-2013, it is intended to introduce apprenticeships in additional occupations. The apprenticeship system comprises seven phases over a period of four years and the curricula are based on pre-specified standards which are agreed with industry. All new apprentices are required to be registered with FÁS *eCollege* where they will have access to a range of online learning materials relevant to their course. Three of the apprentice phases are off-the-job, and are they delivered in FÁS Training Centres and Institutes of Technology over a total of forty weeks. The four on-the-job phases take place with the employer. On successful completion of this training, an apprentice receives an Advanced Certificate awarded by FETAC, the Further Education and Training Awards Council, at level 6 on the National Qualification Framework (NQF).

Apprentices are recruited and employed in their chosen occupation by companies approved by FAS, and receive wages when training on-the-job. This is based on a percentage of the full craft wage, while the funding of apprentices during off-the-job training phases is provided by the state and apprentices receive a trainee allowance (equivalent to their wage) from FAS during the off-the-job phase of their apprenticeship. Apprentices must be at least 16 years of age and the minimum entry requirement into an apprenticeship is successful completion of at least five subjects in the Junior Certificate or the completion of a pre-apprenticeship course, or be over 18 years of age and have three years work experience approved by FAS. However, the majority of apprentices have completed upper secondary level education. About 10-15% of all school leavers follow the apprenticeship route. A similar apprenticeship model is found in some other areas of initial vocational training, e.g. in the farming, tourism and hospitality sectors and Defence Forces. In addition, many professional bodies also operate apprenticeship-style schemes, involving full-time employment with day release or evening course provision, for example in accountancy and law.

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

apprenticeship trades by FÁS has enabled those who are currently working in the various sectors to have their competency levels validated and 296 applications for apprenticeship were processed during 2008.

Due to the growth in the economy from 1998-2006, there was a rapid expansion in total apprentice registrations from 16,125 in 1998 to 29,801 in 2006, with approximately 11,900 companies participating in the scheme. During these years the profile of apprenticeships was dominated by the construction and electrical trades, which accounted for over 80% of all apprenticeship starts in 2006. During 2007 and 2008 however, due to the downturn in the construction industry, apprentice numbers have declined significantly with 3,765¹⁷ new registrations in 2008, a 44% decrease in comparison to 6,763 in 2007 and 8,306 in 2006. In 2008 the total number of apprentices across all phases of training was 26,170¹⁸ a decrease from 28,500 in 2007. Also during 2008 there was a significant increase in the level of redundant apprentices notified to FÁS, which increased to 3,078¹⁹, mainly in the construction related trades. During 2008, FAS amended the apprenticeship scheme rules to permit redundant apprentices to progress to their next off-the-job phase in their apprenticeship without having to complete the next on-the-job stage. To further assist redundant apprentices to complete their off-the-job training and assessments with employers, a Redundant Apprentice Rotation Scheme was also introduced whereby employers are supported to provide on-the-job training for a redundant apprentice while their employed apprentice is attending an off-the-job training phase in FÁS or the Institutes of Technology.

TABLE 17: MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

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

4.5 OTHER YOUTH PROGRAMMES AND ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS

In recent years several strategies have been put in place to address the IVET needs of those who drop-out of school without any qualifications, as well as the other transition or progression issues associated with this group. A variety of measures and legislation have been introduced to tackle early school leaving, such as the 'Education Welfare Act 2000' and the 'Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004'. Both the 2007 National Skills Strategy and the National Anti-Poverty Strategy have a specific target to reduce the number of young people who leave school early so that the percentage of those who complete upper secondary level or

¹⁷ FAS Annual Report 2008

¹⁸ FAS Annual Report 2008.

¹⁹ FAS Annual Report 2008.

equivalent will eventually reach 90% from a baseline figure of 81.6 % in 1999. Table 11 in Section 1.4 indicates the reduction in the percentage of early school leavers from 2002-07.

A number of progression interventions are available to meet the needs of early school leavers to access higher skills training. These include foundation and bridging training programmes, mainly provided by FAS in co-operation with the Department of Education and Science, as well as advisory supports to assist progression and flexible part-time and work-based options. An example of this approach are the Youthreach and Young Traveller Programmes, which assists young people who have left school with no qualifications, benefit from further education and training.

The Youthreach programme, introduced in 1989, is a joint initiative between the Department of Education and FAS. It provides two years' full-time integrated education, training and work experience for young people between 15-20 years who have left school early without qualifications or vocational training, no course fees are charged and a training allowance is paid to participants. In 2007, in response to the 'Education For Persons with Special Educational Needs Act' 2004, the special educational needs initiative was introduced for those with educational disabilities as part of the Youthreach Programme. This programme is managed locally by Vocational Education Committees (VECS) and FÁS regional management, and consists of two distinct phases:

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

Certification is provided by FETAC at levels 1-2 on the National Framework of Qualifications and progression options to the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate Applied Programmes are available.

In 2006 a comprehensive five-year Strategy for Traveller²⁰ education was developed with the assistance of the Educational Disadvantage Committee and the Advisory Committee on Traveller Education. One of the issues it addresses relates to how existing educational supports for Traveller children might best be integrated into mainstream IVET provision. The training programmes being developed under this strategy are aimed at both young and adult Travellers who have left school early. The programmes place emphasis on the core skills of literacy and numeracy. Further Education Awards Council (FETAC) provides the Certification FOR courses provided in Traveller Training Centres and this ensures a range of progression opportunities for participants. Travellers training workshops are run by the Department of Education and Science with instruction provided by the Vocational Education Committees. The Youthreach and Young Traveller Programmes are defined as IVET programmes at lower secondary level, and are designed as part of an integrated strategy to ensure that young people who have left school with no or few qualifications, have a second chance to gain access to, and benefit from education that allows them find employment, or to progress to further education and training. Another progression option developed by FÁS is 'Linked Work Experience', an employer-supported training and work experience initiative intended for trainees who have completed the Foundation phase of Youthreach, or who do not require foundation training and can benefit from structured on-the-job training.

At the end of 2007-08, there were 3,133 young persons²¹ attending Youthreach programmes in vocational education centres and 1,089²² attending Traveller training centres, while 1,790 early school leavers completed FÁS programmes delivered mainly in 41 Community Training Centres, as well as those completing other initial training courses. A recent survey of outcomes from the

²⁰ The Travelling Community in Ireland is a nomadic ethnic minority. There are estimated to be in excess of 25 000 Travellers in the Republic of Ireland.

²¹ Department of Education and Science Statistics 2007-08

²² This figure includes both young and older Travellers

Youthreach (VEC) centres found that 71% had obtained employment or had progressed to further education or training. The comparable percentage for Travellers training centres was 42%, and for Community Training Centres participants it was 46%. The FÁS Foundation Training Programmes include courses for people who have left school early and/or mature people who have been out of work for a considerable period of time. The courses can be flexible in delivery and concentrate on basic personal skills development, career direction and skill sampling, with a view to progression to Specific Skills Training programmes or entry to the labour market. Table 18 below sets out the main types of VET programmes at lower secondary level.

TABLE 18: MAIN TYPES OF OTHER VET PROGRAMMES AT LOWER SECONDARY LEVEL						
TYPE OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME	MAIN ECONOMIC SECTORS	CORRESPONDING ISCED LEVEL/ ORIENTATION	BALANCE BETWEEN GENERAL AND VOCATIONAL SUBJECTS	BALANCE BETWEEN SCHOOL-BASED AND WORK-BASED TRAINING	AVERAGE DURATION OF STUDIES	TRANSFER TO OTHER PATHWAYS
YOUTHREACH	All sectors	Level 2 orientation to Level 3B	25% / 75%	90% training based 10% work-based	2 years	Further non-tertiary vocational education and training up to FETAC level 5 on the NFQ
YOUNG TRAVELLER PROGRAMME	All sectors	Level 1/2 orientation to Level 3B	15% / 85%	100% training based	1-2 years	Further non-tertiary vocational education and training

The School Completion Initiative combining the Early School Leaver and the School Retention Initiatives, are a number of other measures established to enhance support for the continued participation of young people in school. Another IVET intervention which targets young people is the Local Training Initiative (LTI) programme which aims to provide community-based training and work experience opportunities. The main target group is people aged between 16 and 25 years who are unable to access other FÁS interventions for social, personal or geographical reasons. Training leads to awards at levels 1-2 on the National Framework of Qualifications. A total of 2,665 participants completed training on LTIs during 2008.

Table 19 below, sets out the broad range of supports for early school leavers.

TABLE 19 : RANGE OF VET SUPPORTS FOR EARLY SCHOOL LEAVERS (ELS)

INITIATIVE	TARGET GROUP	DELIVERY MECHANISM
GATEWAY - provides part-time training including appraisal of career potential leading to return to school, training or a job.	15-18 year ESLs who cannot attend full-time Community Training Centre (CTC) Foundation Programmes.	Delivered in Community Training Centres or community-based facilities.
CUSTOMISED TRAINING - Provides a fund, which may be used to enable ESLs access training directly linked to their career plan and not otherwise available through state agencies.	ESLs in progression within YOUTHREACH or who have attained Foundation level certification and who have identified a career path.	Available in Community Training Centres, (CTCs) FÁS/Dept of Justice Workshops and YOUTHREACH Centres.
BRIDGING TRAINING - specially designed programmes or modules including pre-apprenticeship, available from FÁS for ESLs who have completed Foundation level certification but who require special additional qualifications to gain entry to a mainstream programme.	ESLs in Progression within YOUTHREACH or who have attained Foundation level and who have identified a career path.	Available in CTCs and FÁS Training Centres.
ADVOCACY - a tailor-made approach to career path planning for ESLs who are experiencing difficulties in progression within YOUTHREACH, and for those who have attained Foundation level certification and have identified a career path.	YOUTHREACH participants who are in or about to enter progression and who are experiencing difficulties.	Available to all in the four strands of the YOUTHREACH programme in CTCs, YOUTHREACH Centres or FÁS/Dept of Justice workshops.
LINKED WORK EXPERIENCE - provides YOUTHREACH participants with the opportunity to develop specific abilities through sustained, structured on-the-job training.	Trainees who have completed the Foundation phase or who do not require foundation training.	Available through CTCs or directly through YOUTHREACH Centres or through external trainers.
COUNSELLING, GUIDANCE, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORTS - a service to YOUTHREACH participants who require specialist support in dealing with personal issues.	Trainees who are referred by CTC staff and who are in need of specialist support.	Delivered locally and involves the VEC making a budget available to find a suitable provider.
MENTORING - provides YOUTHREACH participants with services to (a) help the young person identify the best way forward, (b) negotiate on behalf of the young person with training or education providers (c) support and track the young person's progress.	ESLs that experience difficulties in deciding the way forward or are assessing options.	All YOUTHREACH strands can choose this or another (e.g. Advocacy) support for their group.

Source: Cedefop Theme 4: Initial Vocational Education and Training in Ireland, K. Mc Ginn, FÁS, 2005

4.6 VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING AT POST SECONDARY (NON-TERTIARY) LEVEL

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

PLC courses are provided in some 225 secondary level schools and further education centres and colleges and 92% of provision is within the Vocational Education Committee (VEC) sector. Some 40.8% of all participants are over 21 years, and accordingly the courses are an important re-entry route to learning for adults, as well as catering for some 18% of all school leavers each year. While the courses offer an alternative to programmes available in higher education, certain PLCs are accepted as bridges into university education through e.g. the Higher Education Links scheme. They can also provide an alternative route to third level education in the Institutes of Technology for those who have completed the Leaving Certificate Applied Programme. (See Section: 4.3). In 2007-08 there were approximately 30,000²³ persons enrolled on full-time PLC courses. The programme is the largest non-tertiary, post secondary-level, initial vocational education programme in Ireland.

The majority of publicly-supported initial vocational training in Ireland is for new entrants into the labour market. One of the main publicly-funded providers of post-secondary vocational training is FÁS the Training and Employment Authority. While many of FÁS courses cater for young persons receiving initial vocational training, these courses are also open to all age groups, for example both Specific Skills training courses (SST) and Traineeships and are designed to enable participants to directly enter the labour market. Traineeships involve employers, union representatives and FÁS working together to devise occupational-specific training programmes for jobseekers. The training content and occupational standards are based on consultation with employers and lead to certification by FETAC at levels 3-5 on the NQF. Traineeships combine structured on-the-job training with formal off-the-job tuition in a FÁS Training Centre. In host companies trainees are assigned a mentor or skills coach who supervises workplace training. Traineeships vary in duration from six to twenty-four months, depending on the scope of the curriculum, the skill requirement of the occupation and the entry level of the trainees. Example of these programmes include, retail and legal secretary traineeships. In 2008 2,228²⁴ persons completed traineeship, an increase from 1,995²⁵ in 2007.

SST courses concentrate on high-level technical skills and soft skills (e.g. communications, team-working, career planning). The duration of these full-time courses varies, but usually they last for four to six months. In 2008 5,701²⁶ persons completed SST courses, while another 6,051²⁷ completed bridging/foundation-type courses. The Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) award a 'Specific Skills Certificate' at levels 4/5 for SST participants and the 'National Skills Certificate' for Traineeships. These are placed at levels 4, 5 and 6 (depending on

²³ Department of Education and Science Statistics 2007-08

²⁴ FAS Annual Report 2008

²⁵ FAS Annual Report 2008

²⁶ FAS Annual Report 2008

²⁷ FAS Annual Report 2008.

the course followed), on the National Framework of Qualifications. They do not lead to direct entry into third-level education.

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

- *Fáilte Ireland*, the National Tourism Development Authority, provides full-time day and block release courses, for trainees, in the hotel, catering and tourism industry. These courses are mainly for young entrants pursuing careers in tourism and related hospitality occupations. The trainees are generally aged from 17 to 24 years, and the courses range from one to four years, depending on whether they are full-time, block or day-release courses. Formal instruction is mainly delivered in Institutes of Technology and it is complemented by periods of industry work experience. Recently five different short skills development courses have also been provided in areas such as culinary, restaurant and bar skills. These are run mainly in the four Failte Ireland training centre. A total of 6,145 received skills-based training and or participated, in full-time Advanced/Higher Certificate programmes in nine Institutes of Technology nationwide²⁸. The latter courses were accredited by both FETAC and the Higher Education and Training Authority-HETAC at levels 6-8 on the NFQ.
- *Teagasc*, the Agriculture and Food Development Authority, provides training for young people wishing to pursue a career in agriculture, horticulture and equine studies. Many of the courses extend over two years and include course work at college and work experience. A FETAC Certificate is awarded to successful students completing the first year. Student completing the optional year two are awarded a FETAC Advanced Certificate at level 6 on the NFQ and participants have the option to transfer to higher third level courses. In 2007 the agency delivered eleven full time programmes in eight higher education colleges (in combination with the Institutes of Technology), and these were accredited by HETAC. In 2007 there was an increase in enrolments in agricultural colleges, a reversal of recent trends with a total of 636²⁹ participating in this higher level training in 2007. Further education courses in a number of specializations were also delivered in a number of local further education centres with a total of 531 enrolled on these courses. The total overall number of trainees participating in all Teagasc programmes was 3,384 in 2007.
- *Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM)*, the Irish Fisheries Board, offers initial vocational training courses in sea and fish farming. Attendance at BIM training centres for 2006 amounted to 1 635[5]. There are currently in excess of one hundred individual BIM training modules or courses available for the seafood industry at both initial and continuing training level. Modular FETAC Certificates are awarded in Commercial Fishing, Aquaculture and Seafood Processing and Certificates of Competency for deck and engineer officers, are awarded by the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources. Mobile coastal training units play a significant role in the delivery of BIM training.
- *Údarás Na Gaeltachta*, a regionally-based economic development agency, which operates in Irish-speaking (Gaeltacht) areas, provides education and training which are core elements of the agency's development strategy for the Gaeltacht areas. Collaborative initiatives have commenced with a number of third-level institutions, with an emphasis on third-level education through Irish. At initial VET level there are four main priorities aimed at raising skill levels and improving educational achievements at individual or community level. These are: management development; apprentice development; third level education through Irish, and a secondary level school programmes. Excluding secondary level students, nearly 3,000 persons completed these training and education programmes in 2006.

²⁸ Fáilte Ireland Annual Report 2008

²⁹ TEAGASC Annual Report 2007

- *Crafts Council of Ireland*, provides training courses for those wishing to take up employment in this industry. In 2009 a Council report “Creative Pathways”³⁰ reviewed craft education at secondary, third and further levels and looked at the range of training available. It found that there were over 120 PLC courses that include an element of craft mainly certified by FETAC at NFQ levels 3-6 and covering areas such as textiles, glass craft, ceramics, metal and woodwork. There were also a number of third level institutions providing craft related courses at NFQ levels 6-8.

Other forms of initial vocational training includes, training for new entrants into the civil service and public service such as the defence and police forces, and for the professions such as accountancy and law. Table 20 sets out the main types of non-tertiary VET.

TABLE 20: MAIN TYPES OF NON-TERTIARY INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

TYPE OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME	MAIN ECONOMIC SECTORS	CORRESPONDING ISCED LEVEL/ ORIENTATION	BALANCE BETWEEN GENERAL AND VOCATIONAL SUBJECTS	BALANCE BETWEEN SCHOOL-BASED AND WORK-BASED TRAINING	AVERAGE DURATION OF STUDIES	TRANSFER TO OTHER PATHWAYS
POST LEAVING CERTIFICATE PROGRAMME	All sectors	ISCED 4A/B Orientated to level 5A/B	65% vocational subjects and 35% general subjects.	90% school-based 10% work-based.	1-3 years	Further vocational education at Tertiary and at higher university level.
TRAINEESHIPS	Occupation specific e.g. retail, legal	ISCED 4B orientated to level 5B	100% vocational subjects.	50% work-based and 50% formal training	6 months-1 year	Further training at non-tertiary level.
SPECIFIC SKILLS TRAINING (SST)	All sectors	ISCED 4B orientate to level 5B	100% vocational subjects.	100% formal training	4-6 months	Further training at non-tertiary level.
BRIDGING FOUNDATION-TYPE COURSES	All sectors	ISCED 2 Orientated to level 3B	100% vocational and vocationally oriented general subjects.	100% formal training	4-6 months	Specific skills training.
IVET AT SECTORAL LEVEL	Hotel/Catering/ Tourism, Agriculture, horticulture, Forestry, Fishing and Marine	ISCED 4B orientated to level 5A/B	Very variable depending upon programme and institution concerned.	Varies according to sectoral needs. Some programmes contain a large amount of work-based training.	1-4 years	Further vocational education and training at tertiary and at higher university level.
IVET FOR THE PROFESSIONS AND FOR THE PUBLIC SERVICES	Law and accountancy Police and Defence forces	ISCED 4B/5A orientated to level 6	100% vocational subjects.	50% work-based training And 50% school-based training	2 -4 years	Further tertiary and higher education.

³⁰ Creative Pathways – A Review of Craft Education and Training in Ireland. 2009

The following table sets out the levels for the main IVET programmes available in Ireland and the providers of these programmes.

TABLE 21: IVET PROGRAMMES AND NON-TERTIARY COURSES FOR SCHOOL LEAVERS AND NEW ENTRANTS INTO THE WORKFORCE		
IVET LEVELS	EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMMES	EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROVIDERS
INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN THE SCHOOL-BASED SYSTEM		
Upper & post-secondary school level	Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme. Leaving Certificate Applied Programme. Post-Leaving Certificate courses. (*)	Secondary Schools, Community/ Comprehensive Schools, Vocational Schools, Community Colleges, (VECs). Further Education Centres (VECs).
POST-SECONDARY SCHOOL IVET		
Apprenticeships. Other alternance type training such as FÁS Traineeships	26 craft apprenticeship courses. Certified occupational training e.g. for retail assistants.	Off-the-job training in FÁS and Institutes of Technology. On-the-job training by employers, FÁS and on-the-job training by employers.
Foundation and progression training for early school leavers	Youthreach and young traveller training.	VEC Youthreach centres, Community Training Centres and other FÁS training provision, Traveller Training Centres
INDUSTRY SECTOR ALTERNANCE TYPE IVET (**)		
Initial vocational training for new entrants	Courses for the tourism, catering and hospitality sectors.	Fáilte Ireland, Institutes of Technology, in-house hotel training provision
Initial vocational training for new entrants	Courses in agriculture, horticulture and equine studies.	Institutes of Technology, agricultural and horticultural colleges, Teagasc training centres
Initial vocational training for new entrants	Courses in sea fishing and fish farming	Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM) centres
OTHER POST SECONDARY NON-TERTIARY IVET		
Initial vocational training for new entrants into the professions and public service.	Courses mainly following an alternance type approach, similarly for certain public services training e.g. for the police and defence forces etc.	Specialist training centres e.g. the Institute of Public Administration; in-house Departmental training units; Institutes of Technology and Colleges of Further Education (VECs); Colleges for law and accountancy etc.

(*)PLC courses are also available to adults.

(**)IVET courses are also available for new entrants into the forestry sector.

4.7 VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING AT TERTIARY (HIGHER EDUCATION) LEVEL

The third-level education sector is principally funded by the state, mainly via the Higher Education Authority (HEA), which has overall statutory authority for advising on, planning and developing higher education and research. This sector comprises the Universities (7), the technology sector (Institutes of Technology) and the Colleges of Education.

The Institutes of Technology, (ITs) are the main third-level educational institutions providing courses aimed at the IVET sector. There are fourteen ITs run by independent boards of management with a large element of funding and direction from the Department of Education and Science. ITs play a significant role in providing the off-the-job educational elements for those participating in the statutory apprenticeship schemes, (see Theme 4 Section: 4), and provide initial vocational courses for young entrants into the tourism, agriculture, horticulture and forestry sectors. Other significant providers of initial vocational education at third level are the five Primary Teacher Training Colleges and the two Home Economics and a Physical Education Colleges in the University of Limerick. Teachers of art and of music are trained in the National College of Art & Design (NCAD) and the Royal Irish Academy respectively. Teachers of Religion are trained in the Mater Dei Institute of Education in Dublin. In addition, there are a number of independent private colleges offering third level qualifications. The Open University (Ireland), and the National Distance (learning) Education Centre (OSCAL), based in Dublin City University, both have a network of study centres throughout the country.

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

The awarding Councils FETAC and HETAC, which are responsible for the certification of all education and training in the State, other than awards made in respect of primary and secondary-level education, the Dublin Institute of Technology and the Universities, also have a quality assurance role and providers wishing to register with FETAC and HETAC for the first time must first agree their quality assurance procedures with the Councils before offering awards. Many of the qualifications available in the further education sector are modularised to allow students and trainees to accumulate credit units towards full qualifications. In the higher education sector, the Institutes of Technology have established processes and systems in place for reviewing their courses. This involves researching the needs before commencing new programmes of study. The Centre for Teaching and Learning in University College Dublin (UCD), has a website to support academic staff develop and improve their skills and knowledge in areas such as curriculum design and student assessment.

There has been a significant expansion of higher education over the past two decades in terms of participation and investment, approximately 31% of those aged 25-64 had a third level qualification in 2007³¹, an increase of 6% on 2005. The numbers of students in full-time third-level education, from 2007-08 were 141,640. The vast majority of third-level students attend institutions funded by the state and tuition is free. There were 8,002 students in non-aided colleges (i.e. fee paying colleges, dependent on private funds only). According to the 2007 OECD 'Education at a Glance', Report (Tables C. 2.1/3.), 15% of the relevant cohort in Ireland entered Tertiary Type B (Certificate/ Diploma/Degree) education, and 44% entered Tertiary Type A (A Primary Degree/Masters) in 2005. This can be compared with the OECD average rates of 16% and 53% respectively for a similar cohort.

³¹ Eurstat; EU Labour Force Survey; 27/05/08

While there has been a lack of sharp distinction between initial and continuing VET in Ireland, in contrast, there has been a clear separation between the higher education (university) and the VET sector, with few progression routes facilitating transfer between these areas. In recent years there have been several initiatives to increase progression from the VET sector into higher education, in particular the introduction of Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses, which increasingly link into third-level programmes. Several higher education institutions, including universities, have a range of schemes to facilitate direct progression from PLC courses to degree level courses. For example FETAC Level 5 PLC courses in community and health services subjects have progression links to nursing degree courses in universities and Institutes of Technology. The Institutes of Technology (ITs) now reserve a number of places for those with Further Education and Training Awards, under the Higher Education Links Scheme. In 2008, 7,244³² FETAC applicants applied through the Central Applications Office for a variety of third level courses an increase of 20% on 2007.

Changing demographic and economic circumstances are creating a demand for new skills and this poses challenges and opportunities for the third level sector. In particular universities and Institutes of Technology will have to deliver more flexible, i.e. part-time and labour market orientated course and qualifications. A major emphasis was placed in the National Development Plan (NDP) for 2000-06 on broadening access to further and third level education for life long learners and mature students, particularly for those from disadvantaged backgrounds, and significant investment continues to be allocated to this area. In 2003 a National Office for Equity of Access to Third Level Education was established to progress the third-level access agenda. Enhancing access to education and training, the development of new skills, the acquisition of recognised qualifications and progression to higher education, are the key issues driving the lifelong learning agenda in Ireland. Lifelong learning can only be successful if it is fully inclusive, participative, accommodating of diversity and focused on equality of outcomes for all. Table 22 below shows the number of full-time students in publicly funded third level education during 2007-08. The total figure 141,640 is an increase of 2.3% on the 2006-07 student number of 138,362.

TABLE 22: NUMBER OF FULL-TIME STUDENTS IN INSTITUTIONS AIDED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE IN 2007-08	
LEVEL	NOS. OF STUDENTS
UNIVERSITIES AND OTHER HEA COLLEGES (EXCLUDING ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS OF IRELAND)	78,577
INSTITUTES OF TECHNOLOGY/TECHNOLOGICAL COLLEGES	51,572
TEACHER TRAINING COLLEGES	6,761
OTHER AIDED (INCLUDING BY OTHER DEPARTMENTS)	4,730
TOTAL THIRD LEVEL	141,640

Source: Education Statistics, Annual Report 2007-08 Department of Education and Science.

Table 23 below lists the main programmes and non-tertiary courses available at the different levels of IVET in Ireland and the various funding Government Departments.

³² FETAC Annual Report 2008

TABLE 23: THE MAIN IVET ACCREDITED PROGRAMMES IN IRELAND

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE	
PROGRAMME AND QUALIFICATION	COURSE DESCRIPTION/PROVIDER
Leaving Certificate Applied Programme (LCA). <i>Certifying body</i> - State Examinations Commission (School awards). Levels 4 or 5 on the NFQ.	2 year programme to meet the needs of students who choose not to opt for established Leaving Certificate programme. Objective is to prepare students for working life through emphasis on vocational and technical subjects. Providers- secondary /community/comprehensive/Vocational Education Committee (VEC) schools.
Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP). <i>Certifying body</i> - State Examinations Commission. Levels 4 or 5 on the NFQ.	2 year programme with teaching of vocational/technical/business disciplines. Includes 3 Link Modules on enterprise education, preparation for work and work experience.
Post-Leaving Certificate Courses (PLC) <i>Certifying body</i> - Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETEC). Levels 5 or 6 on the NFQ.	Courses of 1 to 3 years, for persons who have completed secondary education and who wish to enhance their post-school qualifications.
Middle Level Technician/ Higher Technical Business Skills. <i>Certifying body</i> - Higher Education and Training Authority (HETAC). Level 6 on the NFQ.	2 year course to National Certificate Level. 3 year course to National Diploma Level or 1 year with a National Certificate.
JOINTLY FUNDED BY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION & SCIENCE AND ENTERPRISE & EMPLOYMENT	
Youthreach and Young Traveller training Programmes. <i>Certifying bodies</i> - FETAC/State Examinations Commission. Levels 1-2 on the NFQ	Aimed at disadvantaged early school leavers without qualifications. Aim re-integration into mainstream activities. 2 year courses which can be extended to facilitate access to the Leaving Certificate or equivalent qualification.
Post-graduate Conversion Courses. <i>Certifying bodies</i> - HETAC/Universities. Levels 8-9 on the NFQ	1 year in 'skills shortage' disciplines.
DEPARTMENT OF ENTERPRISE TRADE AND EMPLOYMENT	
Apprenticeship training leading to an Advanced Certificate. <i>Certifying body</i> - FETAC at level 6 on the NFQ. Traineeships leading to Certification by FETAC at level 5.	Alternating on and off-the-job training over four years in 26 designated occupations, all of which come within the scope of a standards-based statutory apprenticeship system. Traineeships combine structured on-the-job workplace training with formal off-the-job tuition in a FÁS Training Centre.
FUNDED BY OTHER RELEVANT GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS	
Certificate and Advanced Diploma courses for craft and management trainees in the hotel, catering and tourism industry. <i>Certifying bodies</i> - FETAC/ HETAC at levels 5-8 on the NFQ.	Full-time day and block release courses for craft trainees in the hotel, catering and tourism industry. Courses range from one to four years. They are funded by the Department of Arts, Sports & Tourism.
Certificate/Diploma course in farming and farm apprenticeships. <i>Certifying bodies</i> - FETAC/ HETAC at levels 5-6 on the NFQ.	Training for young people in agriculture and horticulture. Courses extend over two years and can lead to A third level qualifications. Courses funded by the Department of Agriculture & Food.
Certificates in Commercial Fishing and in Aquaculture and other Marine related courses. <i>Certifying body</i> - FETAC	Training Courses at both initial and continuing levels in sea and fish farming. Courses funded by the Department of Communications, Marine & Natural Resources.

Source: Cedefop's Detailed Thematic Analysis series: Initial Vocational Education and Training in Ireland, K. Mc Ginn, FAS, Ireland, 2005.

THEME 5: CONTINUING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR ADULTS

5.1 FORMAL CONTINUING EDUCATION AND TRAINING

In Ireland there is no legislative distinction between formal, non-formal and informal continuing education and training. The definitions adopted by the European Commission regarding these different types of learning, were set out in the 2007 CEDEFOP report on the validation of formal and informal learning³³ (European Commission, 2001, p. 32-33), and in general this report follows these definitions which are as follows:

- Formal learning is typically provided by education or training institutions, structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support) and leading to certification.
- Formal learning is intentional from the learner's perspective;
- Non-formal learning is not provided by an education or training institution and typically it does not lead to certification. However, it is structured, in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support. Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view;
- Informal learning results from daily life activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time and/or learning support).
- Typically, it does not lead to certification. Informal learning may be intentional but in most cases, it is non-intentional (or incidental/random).

The distinction between formal, informal and non-formal CVET in Ireland, while it generally falls within the definitions outlined by the Commission, is not perceived as having any less educationally progressive outcomes, rather it is seen as offering two different approaches, i.e. a more structured as against a more flexible approach to the same learning and training goals. This is best illustrated by the different second chance learning approaches and options offered under the Back to Education Initiative.

The Irish Department of Education and Science (DES) defines further education and training (FET) as 'embracing education and training which occurs after secondary level schooling but which is not part of the third level system'[1], while it is defined by the Government sponsored Expert Group on Future Skills Needs as 'education which is post-compulsory and of a vocational nature'. It is evident from these definitions that CVET in Ireland is easier to define by indicating the traditional categories of education and training which it excludes, rather than those categories which it includes.

Continuing vocational education and training (CVET) is a rapidly growing part of the Irish VET system. Increased investment has expanded the number of places in further education courses in the past five years by 5 000 to a current level of 49,000 in 2007. CVET caters for a diverse range of learners and fields of learning and takes place in a range of locations, including Institutes of further education, training centres, community-based learning centres and in the workplace. In Ireland there is not a sharp distinction between what comprises further or continuing vocational education and training (CVET), as opposed to initial vocational education and training.

³³ Recognition and Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning for VET Teachers and Trainer in the EU Member States. CEDEFOP. Panorama Series 147 Luxembourg. 2007.

Government policy in general makes distinctions between:

- programmes for young persons and students (mainly within the IVET system);
- programmes for the unemployed (whether young or older); and
- programmes for persons in employment.

The features of the CVET sector generally which distinguish it from the higher, mainly university, education sector include the following.

- Courses are provided by a variety of institutions, these include: further education centres and colleges under the remit of Vocational Education Committees (VECs); state agencies such as FÁS, the national Training and Employment Authority, institutes of further education and training, such as the Irish Management Institute and the Institute of Public Administration; CVET courses provided by professional bodies for their members; private training companies and networks which provide fee-based training for companies and in-company training for employees within both enterprises and the public sector.
- The courses typically have a vocational focus and reflect national, regional or sectoral economic needs. They also aim to develop personal skills and, in general, are open to all learners.
- The cohort undertaking any one course does not fit a prescribed profile i.e. in terms of age, existing qualifications etc.

There are currently approximately 1,300 further education and training centres registered with the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC), these include:

- Adult Education and Community Training Centres.
- Adult Literacy Centres.
- Centres for Learners with Special Needs.
- Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) Centres and Further Education Colleges (VECs).
- FAS and other state training centres.

5.1.1 GENERAL BACKGROUND (ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE AND FINANCING)

The roles and responsibilities for the Irish education system, including for vocational education, are separate from the vocational training system, which is the responsibility of the labour market authorities. There are three levels of administrative responsibility in the publicly funded VET sector and some organizations' may operate at more than one of these levels. These are:

- Government departments (ministries), which set policy and overall direction, including providing the public funding for VET.
- Intermediate organizations who may be involved in implementing government policy, channelling funds or acting as a provider of VET programme, for example the 33 Vocational Education Committees located in the 27 counties and in urban areas.
- VET provider bodies such as FÁS, the National Training and Employment Authority.

The administration and implementation of government policy for CVET, falls mainly within the remit of the Departments' of Education and Science (DES) and of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE), with the latter being the most prominent player in the area of CVET.

The Department of Education and Science funds and provides for the following programmes which could be classified as formal continuing vocational education.

- Post-Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses.
- Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) for the unemployed.
- Senior Traveller training centre programmes for adult Travellers who have left school early.
- The Back-to-Education Initiative - Part-time and Community Strands.

Further (non-tertiary) vocational education programmes are generally provided locally by the Vocational Education Committees (VECs) and by secondary-level schools and the courses offered are mainly certified by the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC). Tertiary

(higher) education programmes, mainly provided by the Institutes of Technology at levels 6 and 7 on the National Qualifications Framework, are certified by the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC). In comparison to continuing education, formal continuing vocational training is generally skills and sectorally based. It is publicly funded and provided under the auspices of Government Departments, such as the Departments of Enterprise, Trade and Employment; Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and Arts, Sport and Tourism. The programmes themselves are provided by a range of training agencies, such as FÁS, the Training and Employment Authority, Fáilte Ireland, the Tourism Development Authority, and Teagasc, the Agriculture and Food Development Authority. As in the case of further vocational education, national certification for continuing vocational training is provided by FETAC, (Certification for CVT training ranges across the full spectrum of NFQ levels in Ireland, and hence ISCED levels 3 to 5.)

5.1.2 MAJOR CHARACTERISTICS OF FORMAL CVET

In Ireland formal CVET takes several forms. These include:

- Ongoing publicly funded occupational and general skills training provided by public training and educational institutions;
- Re-entry by adults into further non-tertiary or higher non-university level continuing education;
- Self-funded night-classes and general part-time provision;
- Education and training for unemployed and redundant persons.

This formal CVET can be categorized as follows:

- **Second chance vocational education** which caters for learners at all levels from pre-foundation to higher, non-tertiary level and is generally open to all. This provision is not confined to CVET and mainly addresses the educational deficits of those people who have not completed upper second-level education. Examples include the Post Leaving Certificate programme (PLCs) and the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) for the unemployed.

The PLC programme was originally introduced to provide appropriate vocational training for young people to bridge the gap between school and work. Although principally directed at school leavers, it also is an important re-entry route to learning for adults, with 18% of all participants in 2004-05 over 25 years of age, (in 2008, 795 Leaving Certificate candidates funded under the VOTOS and the Back to Education Initiative (BTEI), were re-entrants to education). The PLC programme integrates training for vocational skills in particular disciplines with the development of general skills necessary in all jobs. It also includes work experience to give relevance to the skills learnt. Courses are of one or two years' duration, they can be taken on a full or part-time basis and focus on ICT, language learning and technical training. The courses are locally-based and mainly facilitated by the Vocational Education Committees (VECs). The majority of PLC courses are offered at further non-tertiary level, (ISCED level 3/4) and lead to certification by the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC), at levels 3, 4 and 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), (see Table 25 below), although in certain situations they can facilitate progression to further education at tertiary (non-university) level 7 on the NFQ, leading to certification by the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC). For example the Post-Leaving Certificate courses in health care can facilitate progression to a degree in nursing.

- **Publicly funded continuing occupational and skills training** is available for industry in general and it is provided mainly by publicly funded state agencies. The following are the main providers of this type of training.

- *FÁS*, which provides training for adults who wish to enter or re-enter the workforce or to generally update their skills within it. Courses range from full-time specific skills training, part-time evening class provision, to the e-learning opportunities provided by *FÁS eCollege*.
- *The Crafts Council of Ireland (CCI)* which is responsible for the development of the Irish craft industry and provides continuing training courses for those employed in the industry.
- *Údarás Na Gaeltachta*, a regionally-based development agency, facilitates training for companies and employees within the Irish speaking Gaeltacht areas.
- *Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM)*, the Irish Sea Fisheries Board, provides continuing training for those employed in the fishing, fish processing and aquaculture industries. Mobile Coastal Training Units target the needs of remote rural and island fishing communities.
- *Coillte, the Irish Forestry Board*, provides ongoing training for all forestry workers in its own training centres. The industry formed a company, Forestry Training & Education Ireland to identify the training needs of the sector.
- *Teagasc, the Agriculture and Food Development Authority*, operates a range of continuous training courses for farmers through its network of 80 local training centres and for employees in the food processing industry through its two National Food Research Centres. In 2007 11,738³⁴ adult farmers completed short training courses and 75 (mainly management) training courses, were delivered to 1,209 from over 100 companies in the food industry.
- *Fáilte Ireland, the National Tourism Development Authority*, provides continuous training for owners, managers and employees in the tourism and hospitality sectors. Courses are delivered through full-time off-the-job certified training, short training interventions and distance and e-learning. The Authority has set up a Tourism Learning Networks Programme involving 560 owner/managers to bring learning closer to the industry operators. In total in 12,645 people were trained on all Fáilte Ireland skills, college and industry-based programmes³⁵ in 2008.
- *Bord Altranias*, the regulatory body for the Irish nursing profession, is responsible for supervising CVET for this sector.
- *County and City Enterprise Boards*, (35 CEBs) fund training programmes and schemes which are mainly targeted at the development needs of micro-enterprises and their employees.

Government departments provide in-service continuing training directly for their own employees e.g. for civil servants, public service employees and teachers, police and defence forces etc. The awards systems, levels and certification processes for the above CVET programmes are detailed below.

- ***Conversion courses for those without previous background of VET.*** Due to the advent of the economic recession, recent graduates are finding that their 'normal' employment opportunities are considerably limited. A recent measure introduced to tackle this problem is the Graduate Skills Conversion Programme (GSCP), a joint initiative with the Department of Education and Science and the Higher Education Authority, in response to the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) skills needs, identified by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs. The aim of the programme is to provide graduates with the opportunity to acquire qualifications for employment in the ICT area.

- ***Distance Learning and e-learning.*** In recent years there has been increased financial investment by both the commercial and public sectors, in alternative modes of learning such as open, distance and e-learning and there are now a number of public and private providers of this type of e-learning in Ireland. The Open University (Ireland), and the National Distance Education Centre (OSCAIL), based in Dublin City University, both have a network of study centres

³⁴ Teagasc Annual Report 2007

³⁵ Fáilte Ireland Annual Report 2008.

throughout the country. FÁS, the Training and Employment Authority, has established *FÁS eCollege* to provide online courses for adults who wish to avail of a more flexible online learner-centred approach. These e-learning courses are available to both employed persons who pay a course fee and to unemployed persons for whom online training is free. The courses can be pursued at the initiative of the individual, and are also increasingly popular among companies. Course registrations have grown from approximately from 2,750 during 2007-08 to 3,800 for the corresponding period for 2008-09. The majority of the courses on offer from *FÁS eCollege* are modularized in the areas of word processing, IT, web design and multimedia, and participants are awarded industry recognized certification such as ECDL and Microsoft certification. Recently *FÁS eCollege* has moved towards offering a blended e-learning approach, targeting unemployed participants, in which online learning is combined with tutor support and some in-centre training support. Both Fáilte Ireland, the National Tourism Development Authority and Teagasc, [the Agriculture and Food Development Authority](#), have also established e-learning programmes with 500 adults completing programmes in Teagasc in 2007.

- ***Part-time evening courses.*** FÁS runs a range of fee-paying evening courses in its training centres, mainly aimed at employed workers and the general public who wish to update their skills. If the trainee is unemployed or is from a recognised disadvantaged group no fee is charged. In many cases the employer sponsors the training or pays or reimburses the cost of these courses. The majority of these courses lead to qualifications awarded by FETAC. In 2008 due to the economic downturn, FAS increased the number of evening courses places for the unemployed (6,000), and during the year approximately 8,000³⁶ people attended these courses. Part-time adult course provision is also offered by universities and the Institutes of Technology (ITs), however these courses tend to be at Degree, Diploma or Certificate level.

- ***CVT provided by non-commercial and private training providers.*** In addition to the publicly-provided CVET, a growing number of commercial further education and training providers offer courses to the general public and individual learners can avail of these fee paying courses in for instance, language and IT skills, provided by commercial colleges and institutes. This category of CVT provider includes organisations such as the Irish Management Institute (IMI), which trains and develops managers. The Institute of Public Administration (IPA), which is the national centre for training in public administration for employees working in the public sector. There are also an increasing number of private training companies that provide training on a commercial basis for enterprises, many of these are members of the Irish Institute of Training and Development.

- ***Government measures to foster access to CVET.*** In recent years the Irish government has introduced a number of publicly funded financial measures to encourage adults to participate in CVET, targeting in particular, those with low skills and educational qualifications. In 2002 the 'Back to Education Initiative' (BTEI) was introduced to promote part-time learning and community-based education. The Initiative was designed to complement existing full-time, further and adult education programmes and to build the capacity of this sector to meet the changing needs of individuals and communities. While participation in full-time further (e.g. PLC courses), and higher university education, does not require the payment of tuition fees, until recently this was not the case for part-time participants, however since 2007, funding eligibility criteria under the Back to Education Initiative was amended to allow free tuition to any adult with less than upper secondary level education. In making this change, the key priority was to remove barriers to access by adults who do not have the Leaving Certificate or its equivalent, and so increase participation by this group in further education without them incurring tuition costs. In particular, this change in eligibility criteria extends access to free tuition to women in the home and men in low paid employment. Another measure introduced, increased public funding for childcare costs, which was recognised as a potential barrier to participation in CVET by women. Tax relief of up to EUR 5,000 per annum (2006-07) is also available for persons attending recognized third level courses and limited tax relief (up to EUR

³⁶ FAS Annual Report 2008.

1,270), is available for the fees paid for attendance at approved CVET courses aimed at improving ICT and foreign language skills.

The Government also uses a number of financial and other incentive mechanisms to support and encourage employers to invest in training to improve the skills of their staff. The level of this support depends on a number of factors including region, type and size of company, sectoral grouping or type of employee (e.g. low skill operatives in declining industries), and the stage of company development. In particular subsidies are provided by State-funded agencies to reduce the costs of training for SME companies. The agencies that support and advise companies who wish to undertake further training for their employees include FÁS, Enterprise Ireland, IDA-Ireland and the thirty-five County and City Enterprise Boards, the latter develop local indigenous enterprise in the micro-business sector at city and county levels and provide training to start up businesses. Sector-specific support and assistance is provided by Fáilte Ireland for the tourism and hospitality industry, Teagasc for the agricultural and food sector and the Crafts Council of Ireland.

A significant promoter of training within SMEs is the State supported and employer-led Skillnets, which receives most of its funding from the National Training Fund. The Skillnets Programme supports workplace training and provides financial support of up to 75% for enterprise-led training networks, with the possibility of higher support levels for certified training and training for the lower skilled. In 2008 the agency launched its Training Networks Programme (TNP), with the setting up of 123 networks which included 22,724³⁷ companies. This Network has also facilitated many networks to achieve certification of their courses by FETAC and HETAC. Skillnets has also encouraged networks to use innovative approaches to training accreditation such as recognition of prior learning and has set up a task group to develop expertise in this area.

- **Measures to promote investment in CVET by individuals.** There is no legislative entitlement to paid CVET leave in Ireland and in general no public funds are distributed directly to the population for adult learning or CVET, which usually is paid for directly by the individuals themselves. Recently however, in response to recommendations made in the 2007 National Skills Strategy, there have been new approaches by FAS to pilot funding mechanisms such as Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs) and paid learning leave, to encourage individual investment in education and training and to promote participation in continuing lifelong learning.

- **Main characteristics of curriculum in formal CVET.** In the area of CVET, course curriculum is generally modular in design and credit-based with a variety of assessment methods. The course content is flexible in terms of delivery, and generally focused on learner needs and designed to advance progression to further and higher levels of qualifications. This is particularly the situation in the design of curriculum for the Post Leaving Certificate Programme. FÁS, in its' role as the national training authority, develops curricula for all its courses, including for apprenticeship training. It is also responsible for the quality assurance and conformance of its training materials with the requirements of the National Framework of Qualifications. At local level FÁS training programmes are based on course demand, expected recruitment from new or expanding companies, the success of existing courses in terms of job placement and the views of various local organisations'.

In the higher education non-university sector, the Institutes of Technology have established processes and systems in place for reviewing their course curriculum, which involves researching the needs before commencing new programmes of study. The Centre for Teaching and Learning in University College Dublin (UCD), has a website to support academic staff develop and improve their skills and knowledge in areas such as curriculum design and student assessment.

- **Awards systems and National Qualification levels for formal CVET.** Until 2003, the most common award system in further and continuing vocational education and training was that developed by the National Council for Vocational Awards (NCVA), the National Council for

³⁷ Skillnets Annual Report 2008

Educational Awards and training agencies such as FÁS, Fáilte Ireland and Teagasc, had developed their own separate systems for the recognition of learning taking place under their responsibility. The Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) and the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC), have now assumed these awarding functions, bringing together all certification for these CVET areas under their own responsibility.

In January 2008, FETAC announced the commencement of its 'Common Awards System' for the development of future awards. This will be accessible to all education and training providers operating in the further education and training sector in Ireland. The new Common Awards System incorporates a credit, accumulation and transfer system for further education and training. It will provide coherent, flexible and unitised awards at levels 1-6 on the National Framework of Qualifications. Major awards are the principle class of awards that FETAC makes and these will be divisible into minor awards. Minor awards can be accumulated over time towards one or more named major awards. All minor awards identify the appropriate standards of knowledge, skills and competence required to achieve these awards and standards will be expressed as learning outcomes.

The new award system will ensure awards are relevant to both employers and learners needs, coherent with the National Framework of Qualifications, responsive to demand and nationally available to registered providers. FETAC currently has over 2,000 named awards within its existing Directory of Awards. By 2010 all existing awards will be converted, harmonised and reviewed according to the Common Awards System. FETAC awards are made across all fields of education categorised by ISCED. (For further information regarding the latter see Section 10.3).

In 2003 a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) was established covering all awards in the State. The Framework focuses primarily on learner needs and progression levels and promotes the setting of standards for awards. Under the Framework strategy, all IVET and CVET programmes must have provision for access, transfer and mobility. FÁS, the Department of Education and Science (DES) and other providers must all ensure that their courses qualify for appropriate awards within the new Framework, which has set criteria for the level and award type available for all programmes that are submitted for its recognition. Within the Framework there are 10 levels of awards from Foundation (Level 1) to Doctoral Level (Level 10). (See related [diagram](#), further explained under Chapter 2.2). FETAC is responsible for the certification for all vocational training courses and further education leading to certification from level 1 up to level 6 (Advanced Certificate). The awards at Levels 1-6 are available for both CVET and IVET (depending on the status of the trainee), (see Table 24 below). HETAC is responsible for accrediting awards for tertiary level academic type courses from levels 6-10, which are provided by the Institutes of Technology and other institutions of higher education (i.e. private colleges and business schools such as the Irish Management Institute), but not for university degree courses.

- Progression within the CVET system into third level higher and university education

Many of the qualifications available in the further education sector are modularised to allow students and trainees to accumulate units towards full qualifications. Several higher education institutions, including universities, have a range of schemes to facilitate direct progression from PLC courses to degree level courses, For example FETAC Level 5 PLC courses in community and health services subjects have progression links to nursing degree courses in universities and Institutes of Technology. The Institutes of Technology (ITs) now reserve a number of places for those with Further Education and Training Awards, under the Higher Education Links Scheme. In 2008, 7,244³⁸ FETAC applicants applied through the Central Applications Office for a variety of third level courses. This number represents an increase of on the number of applicants in 2007 (6,999).

³⁸ FETAC Annual Report 2008 - Highlights

Table 24 below shows the 10 levels on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) at which the two Awarding Councils provide awards.

TABLE 24 : FETAC AND HETAC AWARDS	
LEVEL ON NFQ*	AWARDING BODIES AND STANDARD OF AWARDS
ONE	<i>FETAC - Foundation Certificate; Introductory Vocational Skills Certificate; National Craft Certificate; National Foundation Certificate; National Skills Certificate; National Vocational Certificate.</i>
TWO	<i>FETAC - National Vocational Certificate.</i>
THREE	<i>FETAC - National Vocational Certificate; Specific Skills Certificate. Examination Commission- Junior Certificate at secondary level.</i>
FOUR	<i>FETAC - Certificate; Examination Commission-Leaving Certificate at secondary level.</i>
FIVE	<i>FETAC - Certificate; Examination Commission-Leaving Certificate at secondary level.</i>
SIX	<i>FETAC - Advanced Certificate; HETAC & Dublin Institute of Technology - Higher Certificate.</i>
SEVEN	<i>HETAC & Dublin Institute of Technology & Universities - Ordinary Bachelor Degree.</i>
EIGHT	<i>HETAC & Dublin Institute of Technology & Universities - Higher Diploma; Honours Bachelor Degree.</i>
NINE	<i>HETAC & Dublin Institute of Technology & Universities - Masters Degree; Post - Graduate Diploma.</i>
TEN	<i>HETAC & Dublin Institute of Technology & Universities - Doctoral Degree</i>

*See Link to Diagram of National Framework of Qualifications at Theme 2. Section 2.2.

-Quality assurance measures in CVET. A key objective of the National Qualifications Framework is to promote and maintain standards. The Awards Councils FETAC and HETAC have a quality assurance role and providers wishing to register with FETAC and HETAC for the first time must first agree their quality assurance procedures with the Councils before offering awards. Over 737 providers of further education and training, including FAS, and incorporating 1,300 separate centres, have agreed their quality assurance systems with FETAC and can offer courses leading to FETAC awards at Levels 1 to 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications. In 2008 FETAC was established as the national reference point for quality in VET in Ireland. With regard to emerging developments in relation to a European Qualifications Framework (EQF), Ireland has been well placed to meet the requirements of the EQF in terms of quality assurance principles and approaches, and the capacity to match the levels in the Irish framework against the 8 levels proposed for the EQF. In June 2009 the country completed the process of referencing the NQF to the EQF³⁹. (See Table 15: Theme 2. Section.2.). As already noted above FETAC common award standards will be expressed as learning outcomes.

³⁹ European Qualifications Framework Information Bulletin 2 2009.

	ISCED 0-2				ISCED 3				ISCED 5-6			
	POPULATION	EMPLOYED	UNEMPLOYED	INACTIVE*	POPULATION	EMPLOYED	UNEMPLOYED	INACTIVE*	POPULATION	EMPLOYED	UNEMPLOYED	INACTIVE*
EU 25	1,4	1,3	2	1,6	5,2	3,8	7	10,3	8,5	7,3	15,1	14,3
IE	1.6	1.4		1.8	5.2	3.8		9.1	10.9	7		22.5

**The economically inactive population comprises all persons who were neither 'employed' nor 'unemployed'. This population is split into four groups-(1) Attendant at educational institutions. (2) Retired. (3) Engaged in family duties. (4) Other economically inactive.*

Source: Eurostat. Last update 9th November 2005.

Table 25 above indicates that in general Ireland approximates to the average EU percentage for those participating in formal education by education attainment and employment status based on ISED levels, except for the economically inactive at ISCED levels 5-6, where there is a much higher percentage of those engaged in formal education than the rest of the EU 25 countries. There are also a comparatively high percentage of Irish employed people engaged in formal CVET at ISCED levels 5-6. (Eurostat appears to have no figures available for the participation in the formal education (and training) system of the unemployed. It should be noted that Theme 5. Section: 3. has substantial information on the numbers of unemployed attending formal publicly funded education and training programmes in Ireland at CVET level).

5.2. NON-FORMAL/ INFORMAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

5.2.1 GENERAL BACKGROUND (ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE AND FINANCING)

Over the past number of years, new informal learning routes have offered a variety of learning opportunities for adults. Until recently mobility within the Irish education system has been vertical and only in limited circumstances was informal and non-formal learning accepted for entry to further and higher education. In recent years, policies regarding this type learning, organised on a sub-tertiary basis and with particular reference to community-based education and workplace learning, have been given formalised accreditation, and this will allow for greater access, transfer and progression in learning. The introduction of the National Framework of Qualifications in 2003, (see Diagram: Theme 2. Section: 2.2), where qualifications within the Framework are linked to credit systems, will also facilitate progression routes to be developed from work-based learning and the community education sector, into the formal education system. Awards will therefore become more flexible to fit with the non-linear way in which adults progress through education and training and these will be more relevant to work and community-based learners.

In 2005 the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) issued 'Principles and Guidelines on the Recognition of Prior Learning in Ireland in Further and Higher Education'. These established policies to ensure that non-formal learning is recognised and accredited, and addressed issues of quality and assessment for this form of learning. Assessment is the core activity in validating non-formal and informal learning. Under these guidelines providers of further and higher education and vocational training that lead to awards, must follow a set of procedures which include the following statements concerning informal learning:

- A statement of arrangements to assess a learner's eligibility to enter a specific programme and further selection arrangements.
- A statement of arrangements for recognition of prior learning for entry into their programmes.
- Possibilities for transfer and/or progression associated with the programme, including any relevant specific progression linkages.
- Details of learning support available for specific learners, such as for learners with disabilities.

These guidelines aim to encourage the development and expansion of processes for the recognition of prior learning (RPL) so that providers and awarding bodies may communicate their commitment to and bring coherence and consistency to RPL.

All awards issued since 2005 come under the aegis of the two new awarding councils and are now included in the National Qualifications Framework. The remit of The Further Education and Training Awards Council, (FETAC), includes the validation of prior and experiential learning and work-based learning, and community and private sector education also come under its aegis. In order to facilitate the recognition of prior learning, the awards council may also make awards to persons who apply for such and who, in the opinion of the Council, have achieved the relevant standard. It is thus possible for a learner to achieve an award without having participated in a specific formalised programme of learning. A policy on the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) was published in 2005 by FETAC, which provides for the formal recognition of informal and non formal learning wherever acquired. In 2008 an infrastructure to approve providers to formally recognize RPL was set up by FETAC and nine providers have been approved to offer awards through RPL in areas such as retail and supervisory management. The remit of HETAC-the Higher Education and Training Awards Council also includes the validation and assessment of education and training programmes. The Awards Councils have specific policies to encourage providers to exempt learners from programme requirements, to assist learners obtain credits towards an award or to qualify for a full award within the Irish framework of qualifications.

5.2.2 MAJOR CHARACTERISTICS OF NON-FORMAL CVET

The 2007 CEDEFOP Report on ‘The Recognition and Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning for VET Teachers and Trainer in EU Member States⁴⁰’ noted that “non formal learning is that learning which can be shown to be equivalent to either or both of:

- knowledge, skills, and competences acquired through formal means of study and training;
- knowledge, skills, and competences required for the performance of a particular job role and responsibilities”.

In Ireland these definitions of non/informal CVET mainly cover:

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

Traditionally in Ireland, formal qualifications have had a high status and for the most part are a pre-requisite for access to higher education. Mobility within the education system has been vertical and only in limited and occasional circumstances was informal and non-formal learning accepted for entry to higher education (largely in respect of mature students). Access to IVET and further education is less restrictive. Young people with no school leaving qualifications can

⁴⁰ Recognition and Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning for VET Teachers and Trainer in the EU Member States. CEDEFOP. Panorama Series 147 Luxembourg. 2007.

avail of basic training provided by the VECs, FÁS and the various sectoral training agencies. For the most part however, these qualifications do not entitle them to progress to higher education although greater access routes have been developed in recent years. Qualifications have also tended to be used as a screening device at entry-level for graduate recruitment into employment. However the Irish labour market also allows for flexible progression and surveys demonstrate that employers place a high value on the experience and knowledge that potential employees have as well as on their formal qualifications. The publication of the 'White Paper on Adult Education- Learning for Life' in 2000, marked the adoption of lifelong learning as an important principle of educational policy and the official recognition by the State that its educational commitment extends to include not only those people in school and university, but also that part of the population which has left the initial education system.

- **Government funded employer and employee CVT schemes.** Government policy has long been that CVET for persons at work is primarily the responsibility of employers, who are the main source of funds for training for the employed, through their direct funding of in-company training and their financial contributions to the National Training Fund (NTF). While in the past government sponsored CVET schemes were largely aimed at the unemployed, work-based learning initiatives are now seen as critical to maintaining the employability and job-security of many of the workforce. It is recognised that educational disadvantage among adults is no longer concentrated among the unemployed, but exists also among workers in low-paid, low-skilled employment. According to the National Economic and Social Forum - NESF ⁴¹, "Ireland has a high proportion of low-skilled workers compared to other best performing countries and our level of lifelong learning remains low". Approximately 39% of all working age persons have less than upper secondary level qualifications. The Enterprise Strategy Group in their 2004 report 'Ahead of the Curve' ⁴², identified the need to increase skills training for low-skilled and unskilled employees, and support for lifelong learning has been prioritized in the National Development Plan for 2007-2013. As a result there has been a significant increase in State funding for schemes to encourage in-company training and training for people in employment.

New strategies to meet the skill needs of the workforce were published in the 2007 National Skills Strategy which concluded that there was a need to up-skill 500,000 employed people to the next level within the National Framework of Qualifications. It also called for adult literacy programmes to deliver basic skills training to employees in low skilled and paid employment. The government now plays a significant role in helping and encouraging employers' to meet their responsibilities to train their employees, principally through the services of publicly-funded State agencies. The following are the range of financial and other incentives, such as training advice, offered by these agencies to encourage companies to meet their employees' training needs.

(a) FÁS, through its Services to Business advisers, assists companies meet their training needs by co-operating with industry representatives in the identification of sectoral training needs, and in the development of suitable training programmes, supported by financial incentives. The programmes and incentives that FÁS makes available to employers in order to promote enterprise-based training include the following.

- *The One Step Up Initiative* launched in 2005, includes up to 100% training support for low skilled and vulnerable workers. All FÁS programmes and initiatives for training for the employed are now aligned to this Initiative, to encourage employee training and increase employee's competency levels within the National Framework of Qualifications, as well as promoting an ethos of lifelong learning in the workplace. The initiative facilitates this by providing easy access to a range of learning options such as tutor-led training and e-learning.

⁴¹ National Economic and Social Forum, Report No. 33, 'Creating a More Inclusive Labour Market' January 2006.

⁴² Ahead of the Curve, Report by the Enterprise Strategy Group, Ireland. 2004.

- *The Competency Development Programme (CDP)* encourages the training of employed people by subsidising the cost of approved training programmes covering a wide range of competencies including management, IT, retail, contract cleaning and caring. The Programme aims to Training programmes, based on local and national needs, are agreed after consultation between FÁS and the relevant industry organizations and these are open to all companies in the private sector. In 2008 a total of 32 000 persons⁴³ received training interventions under this programme which aims to provide the participants with portable, accredited and transferable skills.

- *The Strategic Alliance Programme* is a new approach to enterprise-based training, whereby FÁS contracts with national organisations such as Chambers of Commerce, employer and trade unions organisations, to deliver suitable training courses in both larger companies and SMEs for low skilled workers, in partnership with industry representatives, such as the Irish Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (ISME), the Chambers of Commerce and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. An example of this approach includes FÁS contracting with the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) and organisations such as the National Learning Network, to assist trade unions establish learning advocates, for the support and provision of training for people in employment.

- *The Specific Sectoral Skills Training Programme*, whereby after FÁS has consulted with Advisory Committees, representing sectoral groups such as the Engineering, Construction and Film/TV sectors it develops and co-funds programmes for specific sectors such as management training for owner-managers in the services sector and the Construction Skills Certification Scheme, designed to raise standards of safety among construction industry employers. FÁS also provides a range of environmental and health and safety courses for industry employees in response to EU and national legislation.

- *The FÁS Excellence through People Programme (ETP)*, is Ireland's national standard for human resource development to improve a company's operational performance through staff training. It is a voluntary initiative to encourage companies to identify and plan their staff training activities.

(b) A number of other state agencies provide financial incentives and advice to support and promote enterprise-based training in specific industry sectors. These include:

- *Fáilte Ireland*, which operates a training subsidy scheme known as RETAIN to train employees in the tourism and hospitality sectors.
- *Enterprise Ireland*, which advises and provides grants towards management development and training within indigenous companies involved in the manufacturing and internationally-traded services.

- **Accreditation of non-formal and informal learning.** Recognition of prior learning (RPL) processes is more common in IVET and further education. However, over the past number of years, more practices and actions regarding non-formal and informal learning have been introduced at all levels of education and training, leading to greater access, transfer and progression in learning. In 2006 the employer-led Skillnets agency, (See Theme 5 Section: 1.2.) set up a collaborative RPL forum which includes the National Qualification Authority, FETAC and two higher education Institutes and several of its' member networks, to support and develop RPL in the workplace. Skillnets continues to encourage its' enterprise networks to use this approach to accrediting learning in the workplace and has set up an internal taskforce to develop expertise in the area. FÁS, in co-operation of the Institutes of Technology, has developed protocols and procedures for the recognition of Prior Learning for the apprenticeship process, thus facilitating increased access to apprenticeship. Other FÁS initiatives to accredit prior learning have taken place in the retail, construction and childcare sectors including the co-funding of the 'Lionra -Accreditation of Prior Learning' (APL) project, 2006-07, which sought to accredit prior learning in Information Technology (IT):

⁴³ FAS Annual Report 2008.

TITLE OF PROJECT: VALIDATION OF NON-FORMAL LEARNING - LIONRA PILOT STUDY

The Lónra, higher education network for the Border, Midland and Western (BMW) region of Ireland, was established in 2001. In 2006 the network members set up a pilot project on the validation of non-formal learning. The aim of the project was to provide a collaborative response to the education and development challenges facing the Border Midland and Western (BMW) Region.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES: This Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) project received funding from FÁS under the auspices of the FAS, Strategic Alliances Programme. Its' objective was the development and application of a standard model to accredit prior learning in Information Technology (IT) for companies operating in the BMW region, in order to meet the need for up-skilling in IT skills among the workforce of the region, particularly in small and medium enterprises (SMEs). where many employees had acquired some knowledge and skills relating to IT, which were often uncertified. The members of the Lónra learning network comprised five Institutes of Technology, Galway university, St Angela's College, Sligo and the Border Midland and Western Regional Assembly.

LEVEL OF OPERATION: All of the participating Institutes of Technology offered Higher Certificate Courses in Office Information Systems or equivalent. They agreed to develop a common APL methodology for awarding exemptions to some IT modules on such courses. Staff members who are IT subject matter experts trained in APL portfolio assessment in each participating college and a common methodology for APL in relation to IT subjects was developed and agreed. By May 2007, 237 employed people had received training in APL awareness. A minor award in mentoring was also developed and delivered to 20 mentors in 2007. The project ran from March 2006 to July 2007.

CONCLUSIONS: The project indicated the need for a national strategy on APL. It illustrated the role of APL in recognising the knowledge, skills and competences individuals have acquired in informal settings such as the workplace. The project findings also indicated that: (a) attention was needed to be given to developing an understanding of the language of certification, e.g., award, learning outcomes and assessment; (b) more time was needed to develop a portfolio of evidence related to an award and to resources and support for applicants throughout the APL process. For APL providers, there is a need for more funding and training, more flexible provision and adaptation of IT systems to manage APL. For National Awards Councils, the project indicated a need for more awards in different fields of learning and at different levels, the need for minor, supplemental and special purpose awards, and clear procedures for applicants. At national level, the project suggested that funding of APL is a significant issue to be addressed.

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

Various sectoral committees, which include representatives of the social partners, promote and advise on initiatives to provide training for the different industrial and service sectors. In some cases companies will pool resources to identify and make provision for training needs. The industry-led initiative "Skillnets" encourages and fosters this kind of co-operation. Recently, increased interest has being shown by employers in e-learning as an approach to learning on-the job.

Surveys of Irish companies have found that enterprise-based training mainly takes place in larger and multinational companies rather than in SMEs, where the majority of low skilled workers are

located. The EU-wide CVTS3 survey⁴⁴ found that 69% of companies employing 10 or more persons, had carried out some training in 2005, and companies spent, on average 2.5% of labour costs on training - this is the highest percentage in the EU. The survey found that training was most prevalent in the manufacturing and financial sectors, whereas construction companies, hotel and restaurants were less likely to train their employees. Results from the Quarterly National Household Survey⁴⁵ 2007 found that of the 1.9 million employed persons in 2007, 153,000 (9%) of adults aged 24-64, received some form of education and training during the four weeks of the survey, an increase of 26,000 from 127,000 in 2005. However studies have also indicated that in-company training also remains skewed towards certain types of employees based on age, gender, sector and educational attainment, as well as according to the size and type of the company that employs them.

- **Part-time learning options and adult education.** An important strand of 'informal' continuing education, are part-time adult education courses that take place in vocational, community and comprehensive schools. The principle routes for learning under this category of continuing education, are the Part-time Options Strand of the Back-to-Education Initiative (BTEI). This initiative was a central element in the lifelong learning strategy outlined in the 2000 White Paper on Adult Education as it aims to build on existing further education programmes and to facilitate a significant expansion of flexible, part-time options within these programmes. In particular it makes provision for those who find full-time programmes inaccessible and are least likely to take part in courses in formal education settings. It is specifically designed to increase the participation of young people and adults with less than upper secondary-level education. The BTEI Part-time courses are generally open to all and free for the unemployed and in 2008 over 27,000 people participated in part-time learning under this initiative. The Initiative promotes formal recognition of learners achievements through the National Framework of Qualifications and facilitates transfer and progression in learning.

There are also a substantial range of part-time and evening adult courses on offer throughout the country, targeting adults mainly interested in non-job-related courses and relating primarily to hobby, leisure and remedial learning. While courses are generally self-funded, which means that adults pay fees to attend, (there is a fee reduction for some categories), many are funded under the Community Strand of the BTEI. While participants may receive some form of certification for these courses, they will not as a rule, follow a formal course of study. These courses have proved extremely popular and have consistently attracted large numbers of participants over the years. There is no comprehensive national database of statistics for participation in this sector, although AONTAS-The National Association of Adult Education, collects some relevant statistics on an ongoing basis.

- **Community-based CVET.** Increasingly community and voluntary groups, who operate mainly in disadvantaged areas, are seen as important providers of CVET for unemployed adults. Community education is an innovative and empowering approach to education which is gaining recognition as a strategy that has considerable potential for addressing the systematic causes of poverty and educational disadvantage. Community education strategies have proven very effective in reaching out to non-traditional learners and are purposely designed to build and maintain resources within communities. This type of CVET mainly targets unemployed adults and others vulnerable to exclusion in the labour market. A team of thirty-seven Community Education Facilitators have been recruited to support this non-formal adult education sector, and to build links between community groups and the Vocational Education Committees (VECs) who co-ordinate the courses, which are generally free and open to all. Many community-based CVET learning activities are now publicly-funded under the Community Strand of the BTEI, (in 2002 the government increased funding to this sector through the introduction of a Community Strand under the BTEI, ensuring that a proportion i.e. 10% of all funding for this initiative should be given to education activities organised by local community groups).. In

⁴⁴ Continuing Vocational Training Survey, 2005, Central Statistics Office, Ireland. 2007

⁴⁵ Participation of the Employed in Education and Training 2007, Quarterly National Household Survey 2007.

2008, 2,225 (8%)⁴⁶ of the total number of participants in the BTEI were accommodated under the Community Strand, with 47 community groups funded under the Initiative. An Pobal (formerly Area Management Ltd), a state agency responsible for measures to combat social inclusion at local level, also allocates funds to around seventy-six community organisations including Local Area Partnerships, which implement locally-identified CVET projects.

- **Adult literacy/numeracy programmes.** The Vocational Education Committee's adult literacy service runs basic literacy and numeracy courses which are free to all participants. (For further information on the national Adult Literacy Strategy see Section 5.3).

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

	ISCED 0_2				ISCED 3_4				ISCED 5_6			
	POPULATION	EMPLOYED	UNEMPLOYED	INACTIVE*	POPULATION	EMPLOYED	UNEMPLOYED	INACTIVE*	POPULATION	EMPLOYED	UNEMPLOYED	INACTIVE*
EU 25	6,5	9	7,6	2,8	16,4	18,9	14,8	6,7	30,9	33,7	22,7	13
IE	6,8	9		3,6	14	15,5		9	24,4	26,1		13

*The economically inactive population comprises all persons who were neither 'employed' nor 'unemployed'. This population is split into four groups-(1) Attendant at educational institutions. (2) Retired. (3) Engaged in family duties. (4) Other economically inactive.

Source: Eurostat. Last update 9th November 2005.

Table 26 above would appear to indicate that participation in non-formal/informal learning in Ireland is higher among those who are employed and already have higher educational attainment, although it would appear that for this group, participation in non-formal learning is slightly below average in comparison to the rest of the EU 25 countries. (As indicated in Table 26 above, no figures appear to be made available by Eurostat for participation in non-formal learning in Ireland for all the categories of the unemployed). It should be noted that these figures relate to 2005.

⁴⁶ HCI-OP 2007-13 ESF Monitoring Committee Report for 2008.

5.3 MEASURES TO HELP JOB-SEEKERS AND PEOPLE VULNERABLE TO EXCLUSION FROM THE LABOUR MARKET

There are a range of education and training programmes available for unemployed people and those vulnerable to exclusion in the labour market, to help them re-enter or upgrade their skills within the labour market. Government priorities for publicly-funded training programmes for the unemployed and socially-excluded are set out in the annual Reform Programme, formerly the National Employment Action Plan (NEAP), and these were developed within the framework of the European Employment Guidelines. In 2005 the Educational Disadvantage Committee (EDC), issued a report entitled, 'Moving beyond Educational Disadvantage', which looked at disadvantage on a lifelong curve and made specific recommendations in relation to adult education and community-based education. The National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016, 'Building an Inclusive Society', also set out a wide-ranging and comprehensive programme of action to address poverty and social exclusion which included access to education and training. Both the education and training systems run bridging courses to facilitate progression onto mainline education and training programmes, for the long-term adult unemployed or those who have become marginalised due to disabilities or other social problems. The Department of Education and Science (DES) is responsible for a number of programmes to assist people with low or no qualifications progress to further or second chance educational opportunities. These include the following programmes.

(A) THE 'BACK TO EDUCATION INITIATIVE' (BTEI) - PART-TIME OPTIONS.

Introduced in 2002, this initiative has resulted in a major expansion of second-chance for young disadvantaged people and adults with low education qualifications, as it provides flexible learning opportunities to gain qualifications and specific skills that enable progression to further education and training. A high priority of the BTEI is to target individuals and groups that experience particular and acute barriers to participation in the labour market and there is considerable emphasis on engaging with "hard-to-reach" groups—those who are more difficult to engage in the formal learning process. Another important function of the BTEI is also to ensure that learning progression opportunities are available to students progressing from the Adult Literacy Service. The BTEI The Guidelines for the BTEI

Part-time Options strand, advocate strategies to promote: innovation; learner centeredness; equality; accessibility; inclusiveness and the recognition and accommodation of diversity, as well as quality assurance, local consultation and an area based approach to learning.

When the BTEI- Part-time options was initiated, there was also a clear intention to target the skill needs of those in employment, particularly those with low education qualifications. However, until recently financial eligibility criteria acted as a disincentive to this group, as those in employment, even the low skilled, and some categories of the unwaged (e.g. women in the home), were required to pay fees for part-time courses. Recently as a result of proposals in the 2007 'Programme for Government', eligibility criteria were amended to allow free tuition to any adult with less than upper secondary level education. This change encompassed those who were previously eligible (people with a social welfare) and extended eligibility for free tuition to unwaged people and those in employment. In total there were 27,104⁴⁷ participants on courses under the BTEI (Part-time) in 2008, this reflects an increase of 1,244 on the position in 2007 (25,860 participants).

(B) THE VOCATIONAL TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES SCHEME (VTOS).

This is another "second chance" education programme that provides courses for unemployed people. VTOS facilitates full-time, work-related second-chance VET for adults aged 21 or more, who have been receiving specific social welfare payments for at least six months. Lone parents and persons with disabilities who satisfy these criteria are also eligible. The courses are education-led and vocationally-oriented, they are free of charge, and can last up to two

⁴⁷ HCI OP 2007-13 ESF Monitoring Committee Report for 2008.

years. This scheme has proved successful in opening up learning and progression opportunities for people who have been marginalised by unemployment. VTOS trainees can pursue subjects in the Junior or Leaving Certificate programmes, or other modules certified by the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) at Foundation Levels 1, 2 and 3 on the National Qualifications Framework.

During the year 2007-08, over 5,403 participants⁴⁸ enrolled in VTOS courses, in over 100 locations throughout the country and 70% of those who completed courses in 2007 went on to employment or returned to further education and training⁴⁹. To overcome some of the remaining cost barriers that act as a disincentive for those in full or part-time employment who wish to access courses to gain further qualifications, the Department of Education and Science in 2006 provided funding of €5.7 million to the Vocational Education Committees (VECs)⁵⁰ to assist with the childcare expenses of participants in the VTOS, Youthreach and the Senior Traveller training programmes. The aim is to attract people, whose attendance is currently prevented by childcare responsibilities, to enrol on these programmes.

(C) THE EDUCATIONAL EQUALITY INITIATIVE (EEI).

This Initiative supports education for very disadvantaged men and women, such as those in treatment for substance dependence and other groups experiencing learning difficulties. The Initiative supported 27 projects from 2000-06 and a range of innovative approaches have been piloted to attract the most disadvantaged adults through outreach activities and neighbourhood worker schemes.

(D) THE SENIOR TRAVELLER TRAINING PROGRAMME.

This provides Travellers⁵¹ with the skills to make a successful transition to work and to participate fully in their communities. The programme is aimed at both young and adult Travellers who have left school early and places emphasis on the core skills of literacy and numeracy in order to respond to the needs of this group. Certification by FETAC, of courses provided in Traveller Training Centres ensures a range of progression opportunities for participants. In 2007-08, 1,089 adult travellers participated on these courses.

The main facilitators of all the above courses are the thirty three Vocational Education Committees (VECs), who also have responsibility for a range of other continuing vocational educational programmes aimed at the disadvantaged including

- Literacy/numeracy programmes.
- Education provision for asylum seekers and refugees.
- Prisoner education programmes.

(E) THIRD LEVEL ACCESS PROGRAMME.

While most entrants to third-level, higher education are school leavers, government policy is to encourage greater participation by mature and second-chance learners. In particular priority has been given to increasing participation from persons from traditionally under-represented groups such as students from disadvantaged backgrounds and Travellers. To achieve this special arrangements have been put in place in various universities, including access officers, alternative entrance qualification requirements and special foundation or preparatory courses. A number of other initiatives have been established, including the special links with secondary-level schools. Students with disabilities are supported with technical education aids and other supports. In 2008 the National Access Office published the "National Plan for Equity of Access to

⁴⁸ Department of Education and Science Website 2009.

⁴⁹ Department of Education and Science Press Release on VOTOS 20th Anniversary Conference, 6/03/09.

⁵⁰ Annual Report, Department of Education and Science, 2006

⁵¹ The Travelling Community in Ireland is a nomadic ethnic minority. There are estimated to be in excess of 25 000 Travellers in Ireland.

Higher Education 2008-13” which evaluated progress to date and set up systems for the collection of access data on the social, cultural and ethnic backgrounds of new entrants to higher education.

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE) is responsible for developing continuing vocational training (CVT) policies for the unemployed. These policies are implemented and delivered through several public providers. The largest of these is FÁS, the National Training and Employment Authority, which provides a range of CVT courses through its network of Training Centres and contracted training providers, for unemployed people, seeking to enter or re-enter the labour market. These courses cover a range of technical and practical and skills. FÁS also provides a range of services in co-operation with community groups, which focus on the integration and re-integration into the labour market of long-term unemployed and other marginalised people.

(F) FAS COURSE FOR THE UNEMPLOYED.

In 2008, approximately 20,500 unemployed persons⁵² and jobseekers⁵³ completed training courses in FÁS and the following is an outline of the range of training programmes which cover a wide variety of skill levels and areas. FAS programmes include ‘Foundation Training for Jobseekers’ which comprises:

- Alternance (Return to Work) training;
- Local Training Initiative;
- Linked Work Experience;
- Skills Bridging/Foundation Programme.

These courses are open to all age groups and concentrate on basic skills development. They are seen as bridging courses with a view to progression to specific skills training. FÁS Community Training Centres⁵⁴ also offer the opportunity for trainees to improve their basic skills. In 2008 an estimated 6,051⁵⁵ completed FÁS Bridging/Foundation training courses. Skills Training is designed to meet the skill needs of unemployed jobseekers both young and older and includes the following courses:

- Specific Skills training comprise employment-led courses that lead to qualifications which offer learners both generic and advanced skills. In 2008 5 701 completed this type of training.
- Traineeships run in co-operation with employers, concentrates on occupational skill development, targeting new labour market entrants and unemployed persons. In 2008 2, 228 persons completed this programme. (See Theme 4. Section 4.6).
- Technical Employment Assistance Grant Schemes provide more flexible and immediate training options for unemployed jobseekers. Where the training required is not immediately available in FÁS, a training fund is available to purchase the required training.

An integrated support service is provided by FAS for people being made redundant because of company restructuring or closures. This involves skills analysis, training and retraining courses and job placement. The agency also provides specific training for older, longer term unemployed adults, and for those who for various reasons, such as family responsibilities or disabilities, have been excluded from the workforce. These programmes include:

- The Community Employment Programme (CE), which targets long-term unemployed and the socially excluded persons. It offers part-time employment of one year’s duration,

⁵² FAS Training and Employment Annual Report, 2008

⁵³ As FÁS provides both initial and continuing training, depending on the age and status of the trainee, it is not possible to disaggregate trainees into those who have worked prior to entry onto a course. In this context it is assumed that those aged over 25 who have worked are consequently receiving continuing vocational training.

⁵⁴ There is some crossover in the type and age of participants attending Community Training Centre courses and Youthreach Programmes, although the latter is designed for early school leavers.

⁵⁵ FAS Annual Report 2008.

provided by a range of voluntary and community organisations, and includes core skills training. Literacy programmes can also be accessed by FÁS CE participants. By the end of 2008 there were 22,896⁵⁶ participants on this programme.

- Expanding the Workforce (ETW) is a FÁS initiative aimed at persons outside the workforce. It is a tailored and flexible response to the training needs of lone parents and women returnees seeking a gateway into the labour market and assists them to progress to higher level positions once they are in employment.
- Employment and training advice and information is also provided by FAS to migrant jobseekers living in Ireland, through its Employment Services offices.

While FÁS mainstream training and employment programmes are open to people with disabilities, it also subcontracts the delivery of some programmes for persons with disabilities who require a greater level of support than may be available in their mainstream programmes. These programmes are delivered by specialist training providers who can award similar FETAC certification to that available in mainstream FÁS training programmes. FAS, administers several grant schemes designed to assist those with a disability to access employment. These include the Disability Awareness and Training Support Grant Schemes, aimed at increasing support for the employment of persons with a disability and the Adaptation of Training Equipment and the Employee Retention Grant Scheme, designed to help employees who acquire a disability, to continue at work.

(G) OTHER PUBLICLY FUNDED AGENCIES WHICH FACILITATE OR PROVIDE VOCATIONAL TRAINING FOR THOSE EXCLUDED OR MARGINALISED FROM THE LABOUR MARKET.

- An Pobal, (formerly Area Management Ltd), is responsible for measures to combat social inclusion at local level and allocates funds to around seventy-six community organisations including Local Area Partnerships, which implement locally identified training projects.
- The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform in conjunction with FÁS, provides training workshops for people with low educational attainment who have been in prison, to help them re-entry the labour market and improve their literacy and numeracy skills.
- The Department of Social and Family Affairs operates a Community Development Programme which includes training for urban and rural disadvantaged communities throughout the country.
- The County Development Boards, whose remit includes a consultative role regarding CVET policies implemented within their areas, together with the four Territorial Employment Pacts in Dublin, Westmeath, Limerick and the North East, facilitate schemes for lone parents to access employment and training at local level. The Pacts also run courses for marginalised and socially excluded persons.

Training for unemployed jobseekers seeking employment in specific industry sectors, such as in agriculture, fisheries and the tourism and hospitality sector, is provided by a range of other publicly-funded agencies. (See Theme 5. Section: 1.2 for a list of these agencies).

(H) ADULT LITERACY PROGRAMMES.

One of the priority policies for the government is the provision of a national adult literacy strategy and the governments' National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS), has identified education and training as central to addressing poverty, and targeted investment and support for individuals and groups with inadequate literacy and numeracy skills. This strategy is being implemented through the 'National Adult Literacy Scheme' managed by FÁS and the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA). The scheme provides free tuition to those who wish to access literacy programmes. In addition to reading and writing, adult literacy provision now extends to basic education such as numeracy, social and personal development, learning to learn and IT

⁵⁶ FAS Annual Report 2008.

skills. Programmes are available nationwide and mainly delivered through the Vocational Education Committees (VECs) adult literacy service. The number of learners amounted to 49,000 participants in 2008⁵⁷ an increase of approximately 5,000 from the previous year. Accreditation at FETAC Levels 1 & 2, of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), became available for adult literacy learners in 2007⁵⁸.

In 2007, 2,054 employed persons participated in 251 courses related to communications, literacy and numeracy, funded through the Workplace Basic Education Fund (WBEF). FÁS in association NALA and the Vocational Education Committees (VECs) operate this scheme, which is designed to deliver basic skills training in the workplace at FETAC Level 3, to employees in low skilled and low paid employment. Since its inception 3,370 people have registered for participation in the programmes operated under the fund. Recently an Essential Skills for Work Certificate Programme was introduced by FÁS in co-operation with the trade unions, to improve the literacy and numeracy skills of vulnerable employees in low-skilled occupations. The Programme, which is 100% grant-aided, is also funded under the Workplace Basic Education Fund.

(I) REHABILITATIVE VOCATIONAL TRAINING.

The Disability Act, 2005, together with government plans to further mainstream employment and training for people with disabilities by FÁS, form key elements of a new National Disability Strategy which sets out to address the barriers to employment experienced by those with physical and mental disabilities. The National Training and Development Institute (NTDI), which is Ireland's largest non-Government disability training organisation, caters for over 4 500 trainees each year. The main certifying body for these courses is FETAC.

(J) ELEARNING INITIATIVES.

FÁS eCollege and the Library Council of Ireland commenced a pilot programme in 2008 on 'Lifelong Learning in the Community'. The programme theme is social inclusion, targeting RAPID areas of high disadvantage, and specifically unemployed, low-skilled and low-paid, clients. Individuals taking part in the pilot can access learning in their local library with the support of an IT facilitator provided by FÁS. FAS eCollege has also developing blended elearning courses for the unemployed, who can participate in this type of part-time training, combined with online learning, without any loss of social welfare entitlements.

(K) CVET AT THE INITIATIVE OF THE SOCIAL PARTNERS.

Adult learning opportunities for the unemployed are provided by the trade unions. There is currently a network of thirty seven Centres for the Unemployed, established by the Irish Congress of Trades Unions (ICTU), which offer learning opportunities for unemployed people. Recently under the Strategic Alliances programme FÁS contracting with the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) and organisations such as the National Learning Network, to assist trade unions establish learning advocates, for the support and provision of training for low skilled people in employment.

⁵⁷ HCI-OP 2007-13 ESF Monitoring Committee Report for 2008.

⁵⁸ Human Capital Investment Operational Programme, Annual Monitoring Report 2007,

THEME 6: TRAINING VET TEACHERS AND TRAINERS

6.1 TYPES OF TEACHERS AND TRAINER OCCUPATIONS IN VET

6.1.1 TEACHING AND TRAINING OCCUPATIONS IN VET

Traditionally the roles and responsibilities for the education system, including vocational education, have been separate from the vocational training system in Ireland which is the responsibility of the labour market authorities. Therefore, while teachers are regulated by the Department of Education and Science (DES), there is no similar state organisation regulating vocational trainers. Table 29 below sets out the different categories of teachers and trainers in Ireland and the areas in which they work.

TABLE 27 : CATEGORIES OF TEACHERS AND TRAINERS IN THE SECONDARY LEVEL EDUCATION SYSTEM AND AT IVET AND CVET LEVELS	
OCCUPATIONAL TYPE	TYPE OF LOCATION
Teachers in the secondary level school education system*	Secondary schools; Community schools or colleges Vocational schools; Comprehensive schools.
IVET teachers	Non-tertiary Education Centres, Colleges of Further Education.
CVET teacher	VTOS (Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme for unemployed persons), which is delivered in vocational education schools and centres. Also adult education courses in Colleges or Institutes of Further Education.
CVET lecturer	Institutes of Technology; universities; privately run professional colleges and other private institutions.
CVET trainer or instructor**	FÁS and other state training agencies in specific industry sectors e.g. for the tourism and agricultural sectors.
CVET private trainer or training consultant	In-Company training centres in all types of enterprises and private training companies.

*The types of secondary level schools differ on the basis of administration and sources of funding, but the same curriculum applies to all these schools. Community schools and colleges operate the same curricula but differ only in that the schools are operated by local committees and the colleges are operated by the city and county VEC's.

**The terms trainer and instructor are used interchangeably. Trainers are generally persons providing training on an independent basis or within private companies, while persons providing training within state organisations such as FÁS are usually referred to as instructors.

6.1.2 RESPONSIBLE BODIES

The Teaching Council Act, 2001, led to the establishment of a Teaching Council in 2006. The Council seeks to promote and develop teaching as a profession at primary and post-primary

levels, and to ensure that priorities are set for the professional training of an adequate number of teachers in the various subjects. Its functions are as follows:

- To promote teaching as a profession.
- To promote the continuing professional development of teachers.
- To provide for the establishment of standards, policies and procedures for the education and training of teachers.
- To provide for the registration and regulation of teachers and to enhance professional standards and competences.

The Council also provides a forum for presenting the views of the profession on all aspects of teaching as a career, from initial recruitment to in-career professional development.

In general, the main types of training required by teachers and trainers are pedagogical and professional. However, the extent and level of this education and training depends on whether the person is a teacher or a trainer. However those trainers who wish deliver training on FÁS funded courses must now be registered on the FÁS Register of Trainers. . The minimum educational qualification to register as approved trainer is a Certificate in Training and Development awarded by a recognised awarding body. The Irish Institute of Training and Development (IITD) is a professional body which develops and monitors standards in training and development in Ireland.

6.1.3 RECENT REFORM TO VET TEACHER/TRAINER TRAINING

Outside the establishment of the Teaching Council referred to above there have been no recent major reforms in VET teacher/trainer provision. However, in response to the Report of the Expert Group for Future Skill Needs on future requirements for high level ICT skills, it is proposed to enhance the professional (mathematical) qualifications of primary and secondary level teachers through the introduction of a Professional Masters Degree course.

6.2 TYPES OF TEACHERS AND TRAINERS IN IVET

6.2.1 TYPES OF TEACHERS, TRAINERS AND TRAINING FACILITATORS IN IVET

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

In contrast, there is no legal description of the role of a vocational trainer, nor is there any requirement for them to have any educational qualifications or pedagogical skills. Trainers are involved in the skills training and development of trainees of all ages outside of the formal education system. This training is provided at both initial and continuing vocational training levels. Training is generally provided either by private companies or within semi-state organisations such as FÁS, the Training and Employment Authority. As there are no authenticated figures available, it is difficult to establish exact numbers of this latter group of trainers. However those trainers who wish deliver training on FÁS funded courses must now be registered on the FÁS Register of Trainers. Table 29 above lists the types of teachers operating in the formal secondary level education system and trainers at IVET and CVET levels.

6.2.2 PRE-SERVICE AND IN-SERVICE TRAINING OF IVET TEACHERS AND TRAINERS

Primary school teachers are trained in Colleges of Education and this training consists of a four-year degree course. Secondary level teachers pursue a degree course (or equivalent), at a university or at a relevant third level institution in the subjects that they intend to teach. This must be followed by a one year course, which includes supervised practical classroom work, which leads to a Postgraduate Diploma in Education. This is directed towards teaching school students at 12 to 18 years of age. Teachers in secondary schools are required to be registered with the Registration Council for Secondary Teachers, a statutory body under the Intermediate Education (Ireland) Act 1914. The Council prescribes the conditions for teaching in voluntary secondary schools in Ireland. Teachers in Vocational Schools must have properly authenticated skills qualifications, together with a Diploma or Degree in the in their teaching subject.

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

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

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

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

The Centre for Teaching and Learning in University College Dublin (UCD), has a website to support their academic staff develop and improve their skills and knowledge in the areas of teaching, curriculum design and student assessment. The website also acts as a research centre for study and support for third level teachers and lecturers generally.

With regard to trainers in the area of IVT, as already noted, there is no requirement for them to have any educational qualifications or pedagogical skills to establish themselves as trainers. Trainers in state-funded institutions and in industry and commerce, are usually experienced in their trade or commercial sector, but may not necessarily have any formal qualifications or pedagogical skills.

Training instructors working in the state agency FÁS at both IVET and CVET levels are required to have:

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

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

For those employed by public agencies to work as trainers, instructors or training advisors some further general professional competences are also taken into account, namely:

- technical competence (the skills and knowledge which are relevant and up to date in relation to the subject being taught),
- pedagogical competence, (the skills and knowledge in the principles of instructing and training, which are relevant and up to date),
- social skills and competence, (the ability to effectively manages personal inter-relationships within the group represented by the course participants).

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

Recently FÁS decided that it would be beneficial for its own trainers and instructors to have access to formal qualifications in training and development whether they were providing either initial or continuing vocational training. A series of programmes from Foundation, Certificate to Degree and Master level, were set up in co-operation with Maynooth and Galway Universities and accredited by the National University of Ireland (NUI). These programmes were initially designed for FÁS instructors, but are now available to those practicing or planning a career as trainers in vocational colleges as well as the commercial, voluntary and community sectors. Programme delivery combines open learning and self-instructional modules, along with attendance at workshops and practical assignments. The Department of Education and Science provides funding for this type of training for trainers. Entry criteria or minimum qualifications for trainers involved in the training for persons with disabilities are determined by the individual employing organisation. FÁS working with Maynooth University has developed a Diploma in Social Inclusion which addresses the wider issues of social inclusion, including those groups listed in the Equal Status Act.

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

6.3 TYPES OF TEACHERS AND TRAINERS IN CVET

6.3.1 TYPES OF TEACHERS, TRAINERS AND TRAINING FACILITATORS IN CVET

This type of vocational training is generally provided either by private companies or by training instructors within semi-state organisations such as FÁS, the Training and Employment Authority. (For descriptions of the latter category see Section 6.2.1) Trainers may also operate as independent practitioners, or private training consultants, who offer training to companies. As there are no authenticated figures available, it is difficult to establish exact numbers of this latter group of trainers. However those trainers who wish deliver training on FÁS funded courses

must now be registered on the FÁS Register of Trainers. Table 30 above lists the types of teachers operating in the formal secondary level education system and trainers at IVET and CVET levels.

The staffing of the adult and community-based education sector reflects its complexity, and increasing number of people are now working in roles that could roughly be classified under the following three categories:

- Those Working Directly with Learners

These include volunteers in the literacy and community education sectors i.e. teachers who work with the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS); the Back to Education Initiative (BTEI); Post-Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses; the Youthreach service; adult education teachers and tutors who work with community education groups, as well as guidance personnel.

- Organisers and Co-ordinators of Services

Staff whose role is to organise and co-ordinate the development of programmes and those involved in their delivery. These include:- Community Education Facilitators (CEFs); Adult Literacy Organisers Guidance Coordinators; BTEI Coordinators; community group leaders, as well as a range of personnel within the higher education system such as Access Officers and Mature Student Officers.

- Management Personnel

Personnel, whose role is to develop the strategic thinking and planning for CVET services such as, Adult Education Officers; Education Officers and Chief Executive Officers within the VEC system; managers and management committees of community groups, as well as directors of adult and community education services.

6.3.2 PRE-SERVICE AND IN-SERVICE TRAINING OF CVET TEACHER AND TRAINERS

The In-Career Development Unit of the Department of Education and Science funds and develops a national programme of in-service training and continuing professional development (CDP), for teachers, tutors and school managers at all levels in the education system. These programmes are provided in Teacher Training Colleges, Universities and by other state agencies and include support for teachers in schools in the context of changes in curricula and school programmes at first and secondary levels. A Leadership Development Programme has been developed for principals and deputy principals at primary and post-primary levels.

The National Centre for Technology in Education (NCTE) provides a range of ICT professional development courses and support groups for teachers, and in 2007 it produced an online course on the Internet as a teaching and learning resource for teachers who wish to learn how to integrate the Internet into their teaching. There are also programmes for teachers in specific areas of learning support and special needs, for example the Substance Misuse Prevention Programme. Integrate Ireland Language Training Ltd. provides training for teachers in primary and post-primary schools responsible for the English language development of non-English speaking school students.

A nationwide network of Education Centres, are key partners in the provision of teacher CDP. Under the remit of the DES, the centres host the national Programmes of Curriculum Reform and offer support services on a range of issues relating to teaching and learning, in particular the identified needs of teachers and schools in their various catchment areas. Teachers participating in CVET programmes in non tertiary Centres and Colleges of Further and Continuing Education managed by the Vocational Education Committees (VECs), must have properly authenticated skills qualifications together with a Diploma or Degree in the theoretical dimension of their subject.

Support services for CVET teachers across the adult vocational education sector are varied in their quality. Within the Vocational Education Committee (VEC) service, adult education staff have developed their own support services, with different categories of staff requiring different types of professional development depending on their roles, skills, and qualifications. The DES has funded Certificate and Diploma programmes, on an in-service basis, for staff involved with the Youthreach, Senior Traveller Training and Adult Literacy programmes. The National Adult Literacy Agency provides training for literacy personnel within the VEC service.

Training for community education staff is provided through a variety of sources. Maynooth University, offers students a Higher Diploma and MA Degree in Adult and Community Education. The National Collective of Community-based women's networks, also provides support for community learning strategies and the Community Education Facilitators' Training Support Programme, is delivered by AONTAS-The National Association of Adult Education.

While there is no formal training path for those wishing to work as trainers in private industry, many companies provide training for employees who show an aptitude for the role of company trainer. In the majority of larger companies there are training managers who are responsible for organising in-company training. Many of these may have some formal trainer qualification which they may have obtained on a part-time basis. (See Section: 6.2.2. above for the minimum trainer qualification required to become an approved trainer on the register of public organisations such as FÁS and Enterprise Ireland and for details on training for FAS instructors).

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

THEME 7: MATCHING VET PROVISION WITH LABOUR MARKET NEEDS

7.1 SYSTEMS AND MECHANISMS FOR THE ANTICIPATION OF SKILL NEEDS

Irish VET organisations use a mixture of formal consultation, informal feedback and research, to identify skill needs and there are several key players involved in this process. The Expert Group on Future Skill Needs (EGFSN) provides a national research and co-ordination mechanism that includes representatives of the social partners, government departments, industrial development organisations and education and training bodies. Its objectives include:-

- identifying the skills needs of different sectors and advise on the actions to address them;
- considering strategic issues in developing partnerships between business and the CVET sectors to meet skill needs at national and local levels;
- advising on how to improve the career awareness of job seekers to areas where the demand for skills exist, of the qualifications required, and of how they can be obtained.

FÁS, the Training and Employment Authority, has a Board and advisory committees representing a number of sectors, to inform it of sectoral training needs. It also has a Planning and Research Department, which undertakes studies of employment trends and skills needs in order to inform VET provision. The FÁS Skills and Labour Market Research Unit, regularly produces studies on different occupations and provides a research facility for the EGFSN. A series of Manpower Forecasting Studies carried out by the Economic Social Research Institute (ESRI) in co-operation with FÁS, also forecasts the occupational and employment trends in about 40 different occupational groups for 5-10 year periods. In 2007 FÁS together with the EGFSN commenced the publication of a National Skills Bulletin. The objective of the Bulletin is to outline key labour market statistics in order to assist policy formulation in the areas of employment, education and training, and immigration. FAS also produce a Quarterly Labour Market Commentary and an annual Labour Market Review⁵⁹ which provide details on skills and occupational trends in Ireland.

The setting up of the National Training Fund (NFT) in 2000, gave the social partners and in particular employers, a policy and consultation forum regarding the allocation of funding for skills training for the employed. Employers have representatives on the Board of FAS and are represented on the EGFSN to assist in the identification of specific skill and qualification needs, they also have representatives on the Awards Councils of FETAC and HETAC.

As a significant stakeholder in the provision of VET, FÁS consults with Advisory Committees, representing sectoral groups such as the Engineering, Construction and Film/TV sectors and carries out regular reviews of national skills and training needs (see below). As a result of this consultation process, the FAS has developed and co-funds programmes for specific sectors such as management training for owner-managers in the services sector and the Construction Skills Certification Scheme, designed to raise standards of safety among construction industry employers.

In recent years there have been several important research and policy reports and reviews issued by the Government and its agencies. These have included assessments of the skills and competence needs of employees in specific sectors of the labour market, for example in the healthcare sector. In many instances these reports have led to the introduction of new national programmes and strategies for VET provision to meet these needs, for example the research undertaken by the EGFSN has underpinned the development of a National Skills Strategy (NSS) on the future skills needs in Ireland up to 2020. Other important policy reviews covering VET and or the labour market have included the following reports.

⁵⁹ Irish Labour Market Review 2008.FAS 2005-08

- Learning for Life: A White Paper on Adult Education, 2000.
- Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning, 2002.
- Ahead of the Curve - Ireland's Place in the Global Economy, 2004.
- Progressing the Action Plan: Funding to achieve Equity of Access to Higher Education, 2005.
- A Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation, 2006.
- Tomorrow's Skills - Towards a National Skills Strategy, 2007.
- Guidance For Life: an Integrated Framework for Lifelong Learning in Ireland, 2007.
- The National Development Plan 2007-2013.
- The National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016.
- Lisbon Agenda-Integrated Guidelines for Growth and Jobs, the implementation of the National Reform Programme in Ireland 2008.

Most recently the government in 2008 published a policy strategy on 'Building Ireland's Smart Economy - A Framework for Sustainable Economic Renewal'. The Expert Group on Future Skill Needs has also in recent years undertaken research and published reports on a range of occupational areas including ICT, engineering, the digital media, financial services, construction, Healthcare and also reports which Monitor Ireland skill supplies as well as trends in education and training outputs, and on the labour market generally at both national and regional levels⁶⁰.

7.2 PRACTICES TO MATCH VET PROVISION WITH SKILL NEEDS

Recent measures that have facilitated significant developments in meeting the skills needs of the labour market and progressing VET generally, include the introduction of the National Framework of Qualifications in 2003 which has facilitated progression routes within the formal and informal VET system. The establishment of a National Guidance Forum in 2004 ensures that the delivery of guidance by labour market and education providers is co-ordinated and delivered effectively.

The expansion of the '*Back to Education Initiative*' in 2002 provides flexible part-time learning options and the provision of funding for community education, thereby increasing access to further education for those with low qualifications. The 2007 '*Programme for Government*' which in response to identified⁶¹ low literacy levels among some of the Irish adult population, proposed not only to continue to expand adult literacy training, but also to provide funding for English language training for other groups such as migrants. Finally, there are a broad range of Government-funded VET programmes, mainly provided by FÁS, which are available for unemployed people and those vulnerable to exclusion in the workforce; for example people with disabilities, to help them enter, re-enter or upgrade their skills within the labour market. The needs of the latter group were highlighted under the Government National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016.

Published in 2008, the report '*Tomorrow's Skills -Towards a National Skills Strategy*', sets out the potential skills needs of the economy over the next decade, the likely supply and demand for skilled labour and the key policy issues required to address these skills needs, as well as the existing provision of training and the benefits of investment in training for individuals, employers and the nation as a whole. It details specific targets to achieve a significantly improved educational and skills profile for the Irish labour force with the objective of:

- Upskilling an additional 500,000 people by at least one level on the National Framework of Qualifications by 2020.

⁶⁰ See 'National Skills Bulletin, 2009'.- Publications of the Expert Group on Future Skill Needs. Skills and Labour Market Research Unit, FAS

⁶¹ -Literacy Skills for the Knowledge Society. An OECD International Adult Literacy Survey, 1997

- Increasing participation rates in upper secondary level to 90% and progression rates to third level to 70%.
- Addressing the skills needs of the immigrant population and those re-entering employment.

While the Skills Strategy had a key focus on targeting the lower skilled, it also examined the existing supply of labour in Ireland in terms of quantity and quality (as per educational levels). It identified information and communications technology (ICT), pharmaceuticals, biotechnology as well as high value engineering as areas within the Irish economy which had potential for future growth.

The Government's priority in future will be on implementing the recommendations contained within the NSS, including identifying the precise mechanisms that will be used to implement these recommendations. The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs will report annually on progress in relation to these recommendations and the National Framework of Qualifications will provide the framework to benchmark the implementation of the Strategy. Already in response to these recommendations, FÁS has developed two initiatives, one in respect of 'Paid Learning Leave' which provides assistance to employers towards the wage cost of releasing low-skilled employees to attend training programmes. The other, 'Individual Learning Options', provides individual support to meet identified training needs of low-skilled employees.

With regard to curriculum development, the 2007 'Programme for Government' gave considerable attention to 'curricular change to meet skill needs and ensure a broader range of educational opportunities'. Under proposals in this Programme, the government is introducing new curricula in subjects such as engineering, economics and technology in the secondary level school curricula, and there will be greater focus placed on maths and science education at all levels, supported by teacher training, in order to increase and improve throughput to higher education.

At upper secondary level, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), which was established to advise on 'matters relating to curriculum reform', and whose membership represents teachers, parents, business and trade unions and other educational interests including the State Examination Commission, has recently been engaged in the review and revision of the Leaving Certificate examination subjects to ensure:

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

Senior cycle secondary education itself is currently being reviewed in Ireland and care has been taken to align proposed developments at this level with developments in the field of qualifications in Ireland and Europe, in keeping with the guiding principle of lifelong learning. (*Proposals for the Future Development of Senior Cycle Education in Ireland*, April 2005. See www.ncca.ie Review of Senior Cycle Education).

In order to improve teacher training in the education system and to meet future requirements for high level ICT skills, it is proposed to enhance the professional (mathematical) qualifications of primary and secondary level teachers through the introduction of a Professional Masters Degree course. The 2006, Government Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation, also included a range of measures to further strengthen science teaching and learning.

In the area of CVET, courses are generally modular in design and credit-based with a variety of assessment methods. They are also flexible in terms of course delivery and are generally focused on learner needs. FÁS, in its' role as the national training authority, develops curricula for all its courses, including for apprenticeship training. It is also responsible for the quality assurance and conformance of its training materials within the requirements of the National Framework of

Qualifications. The curriculum of FÁS apprenticeships is standards-based, focusing on learning outcomes and structured on a modular format. The off-the-job modules are assessed by coursework and written exams and the on-the-job modules are assessed by competence-based testing. Competences are defined as the application of skills, knowledge and attitude in order to perform tasks or combinations of tasks to industrial and commercial standards. Apprenticeship curricula, is reviewed regularly by subject expert committees, representing the social partners and education and training organisations, under the direction of the National Apprenticeship Advisory Committee.

FÁS has recently revised its curricula for all the apprenticeship trades and it is developing five additional apprenticeships and new 'Generic Common Modules', for example basic IT awareness. Generally FÁS training programmes are based on course demand, expected recruitment from new or expanding companies, the success of existing courses in terms of job placement and the views of various local organisations'. FÁS has recently introduced a number of new programmes to respond to new skill needs identified in the labour market. These include Bio-Pharmaceutical training programmes, Sustainable Energy System Installation programmes and new Financial Services programmes.

FETAC is responsible for quality assurance and setting standards for vocational education and training programmes in further education (as with HETAC, in the context of the NFQ). All assessment within the FETAC system is now criterion referenced. Each assessment technique has assessment criteria which details the range of marks to be awarded for specific standards of knowledge, skill and competence demonstrated by candidates. The assessment techniques test a range of learning outcomes. To enable all learners to demonstrate that they have reached the required standard, candidate evidence may be submitted in written, oral, visual, multimedia or other format as appropriate to the learning outcomes.

Until recently one of the gaps in the provision of education and training in Ireland was the absence of a unified framework for the validation and certification of qualifications. The establishment of the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) in 2001 was designed to fill this gap. NQAI covers all awards in the State from initial schooling to further education and training including higher doctorate level, and has an over arching role in regard to the development and implementation of a National Framework of Qualifications. For the future the NQAI plans to set up subject experts to identify new qualification areas and their relevant knowledge and skill levels. Regarding qualification design, both the awarding Council FETAC and HETAC must inform themselves of the education, training, skills and qualifications requirements of industry, including agriculture and the professions, the level of knowledge, skill and competence to be acquired by learners, and promote practices in education and training which meet those requirements.

THEME 8: GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING FOR LEARNING, CAREER AND EMPLOYMENT

8.1 STRATEGY AND PROVISION

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

In 2004 a National Guidance Forum was jointly established by the DES and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE), in response to an OECD review of career guidance policies in Ireland in 2002. The Forum brought together key stakeholders from across the education and labour market spectrum, and for the first time an agreed cohesive strategy for a national lifelong guidance service was developed. The Forum's report and recommendations entitled 'Guidance for Life: An Integrated Framework for Lifelong Learning in Ireland' published in 2007, has provided an opportunity for the DES and DETE to plan the provision of a guidance service that would underpin national priorities in lifelong learning. The Forum's report noted:

- the role of guidance practitioners in the dissemination of quality educational and careers information; and
- provided a national lifelong guidance framework which outlines the knowledge, skills and competencies that guidance aims to develop among individuals, covering the life stages from early childhood to adulthood, and
- recognised that guidance should be needs-based rather than age-based.

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

- *Guidance services at secondary level*

The Education Act (1998) required schools to ensure that school students have access to guidance to assist them in their educational and career choices. Under the Guidance Enhancement Initiative, 2001, each school was granted an additional teaching resource to assist it with its guidance provision and later schools received additional staffing for guidance purposes in response to proposals to establish links with the local and business community, promote the uptake of science, and focus on the disadvantaged. In recent years priority has been given to additional elements of guidance in the curriculum e.g. 'substance abuse' programmes and 'stay safe' programmes. In some schools, support teachers are available to support the needs of children with social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties. Guidance at primary, and at secondary and third level is available free of charge as is guidance in the adult education sector. However, there are also a small number of private providers where fees are charged - usually on

an individual basis for professional advice, guidance and counselling in relation to career options.

- Guidance at post secondary level

At post secondary school level, guidance and counselling provision is provided mainly within further education colleges and centres operated locally by Vocational Educational Committees (VEC) and in community education settings. All universities and most Institutes of Technology (ITs) have careers and counselling services available to students. The Youth Information Centres, managed by a variety of youth organisations, also offer information to young people on a wide number of issues, including employment matters, local community services and education and training opportunities.

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

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

In the labour market context, FÁS, the Training and Employment Authority, is responsible for the provision of guidance, advice and information in respect of employment and career choices. In recent years both the National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCCGE) and FÁS have been active in guidance developments at European level and are members of the Euroguidance Network of national resource centres throughout Europe, funded under the European Commission's Lifelong Learning Programme.

The State agency Enterprise Ireland has a voluntary mentoring and guidance service to provide advice for the growth and development of entrepreneurs (the Mentor network), and the City and County Enterprise Boards provide similar mentoring and support programmes at local level for those seeking to set up small businesses. In the community sector, guidance and counselling services are mainly provided by Area-based Partnerships and the Territorial Employment Pacts, which work with local employment services education and other voluntary agencies to provide guidance and counselling services to individuals in local communities with social problems. Table 28 below, sets out the main support and co-ordination agencies for the provision of guidance and counselling services in Ireland and their target client groups.

8.2 TARGET GROUPS AND MODES OF DELIVERY

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

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

In the educational area, guidance services are based in post-primary schools, higher and further education institutions and through second chance education programmes such as Youthreach. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) published in January 2007, a draft curriculum framework for guidance in post-primary education, for the areas of Personal Guidance, Educational Guidance and Career Development. The framework reflects the importance of a balanced approach to guidance provision, both in terms of the coverage of a broad range of topics and skills, and in terms of student access to guidance across all the years of post-primary education.

Within the Youthreach programme for early school-leavers, there are measures for guidance, counselling and psychological services. An Advocacy Service managed by FÁS, provides a tailor-made approach to career planning in order to meet the specific guidance, training and work experience needs of disadvantaged early school leavers as they move from Youthreach centres to mainstream training, education or employment. There are currently 27 advocates in the country, providing career guidance and other related supports to over 1 600 early school leavers. The advocates provide services to trainees in Youthreach centres, Community Training Centres, FÁS and Department of Justice Workshops and Senior Traveller Training Centres. (See Table 3, Section: 0405).

In the adult education sector a range of services are available to assist people make choices about their careers and lives generally. The National Centre for Guidance in Education provides a support service for adult guidance projects, run mostly under the auspices of the Vocational Education Committees (VECs). The Adult Educational Guidance Initiative (AEGI) set up in 2000 to pilot guidance information and counselling services for adult learners, currently serves 36 areas throughout the country. The main target groups are adult literacy students, community education and 'Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme' (VTOS) participants, (see Section: 1004), and other learners participating in adult education. Since the programme began, over 30,000 individuals have accessed AEGI services, including significant numbers of adults from outside the designated target groups, for example some people with learning difficulties, physical and mental disabilities, unemployed people and foreign nationals.

Career guidance and counselling is provided by FÁS for its clients as part of its overall national employment and training service, in over 134 locations countrywide, with an additional 25 services operating in disadvantaged areas. This service is provided by Employment Services Officers, and includes:

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

A Local Employment Service (LES) affiliated to FÁS, also provides vocational guidance and counselling through the services of trained mediators, for individuals most distanced from the labour market. Through this process individual needs are identified and an action plan developed which may involve placement in employment or referral to vocational training programmes. Recent initiatives undertaken by FÁS to support and develop their guidance systems include:

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

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

Guidance services in Ireland are available within both the education and labour market sectors, and are located within educational institutions and in the FÁS Employment Services offices. In

the educational area, guidance services are based in post-primary schools, higher and further education institutions and through second chance education programmes such as the Youthreach programme. The following Table sets out the supports available.

TABLE 28: SUPPORT AND CO-ORDINATION AGENCIES FOR THE PROVISION OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING SERVICES		
PROGRAMME TYPE	CONTENT AND FOCUS OF PROVISION	TARGET CLIENT GROUPS
NATIONAL CENTRE FOR GUIDANCE IN EDUCATION (NCGE)	Supports and develops guidance practice in all areas of education; informs DES policy.	Provides support to the DES and to guidance practitioners in education.
EUROGUIDANCE CENTRES	Provides information on educational opportunities within the EU. Promotes European mobility.	Supports the guidance community, in cooperation with a network of 65 centres in 31 countries.
INSTITUTE OF GUIDANCE COUNSELLORS (IGC)	Liaison and advocacy role with government departments, trade unions and education and training institutions. Continuing professional development for guidance professionals.	Professional body representing 1200 practitioners in secondary level schools, third-level colleges, consultancy practice and other settings.
NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICE (NEPS)	Agency of DES. Provides psychological services to pupils in primary and post-primary schools	Services are not yet available in all schools and priority is for pupils with learning disabilities.
ASSOCIATION OF GRADUATE CAREERS SERVICES IN IRELAND (AGCSI)	Develops the career services for students and graduates, provides resource/ and information materials and the website Gradireland.	Members are guidance professionals in publicly funded third-level institutions.
INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY CAREERS ADVISERS' NETWORK (ITCAN)	Supports the operation of career advisory services and provides a forum for sharing best practice.	Members are career advisers in 14 Institutes of Technology.
ASSOCIATION FOR HIGHER EDUCATION ACCESS AND DISABILITY (AHEAD)	Advocates improvement in access and participation of students with disabilities in higher education; research and informs national policy on the education and employment of graduates with disabilities.	Advises Higher Education Authority, education institutions and others in education sector.
IRISH ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE COUNSELLORS	Representative body for counselling services in third level education.	Counsellors work with individuals or groups to provide support in personal and academic issues.
ADULT EDUCATIONAL GUIDANCE ASSOCIATION	Identifies guidance staff training and development needs in association with the NCGE.	Represents staff participating in the Adult Educational Guidance Initiative pilot projects.

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

8.3 GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING PERSONNEL

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

Career guidance and counselling is part of the work of a FÁS employment officer. While currently no specific formal guidance qualifications are required, prior relevant experience is taken into account and matched against the required competences. Recently recruited FÁS employment officers are required to undertake a one-year, part-time open-learning Certificate Programme in Adult Guidance and Counselling in the National University of Ireland, Maynooth, with an option of applying to progress to diploma level. FÁS has also made provision to train relevant staff in guidance and counselling skills to enable them to provide guidance services to persons with disabilities, while staff involved in the Youthreach programme are trained in non-formal guidance skills.

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

Organisations that represent guidance practitioners, (See Table 30), also play a vital role in professional development. The Institute of Guidance Counsellors is the professional body representing over 900 practitioners in secondary-level schools and in other settings. The Institute has a liaison and advocacy role on behalf of its members, with government departments and management and trade unions within the education, employment and training areas. It promotes standards for entry into the profession, best practice for guidance and counselling, and supports the professional development of its members through in-career training. The National Committee for Guidance in Education provides a support service for adult guidance personnel.

THEME 9: FINANCING - INVESTMENT IN HUMAN RESOURCES

The majority of funding for vocational education and training (VET) in Ireland for individuals not in employment is provided by the State. This applies for both young persons before they enter employment, and unemployed adults. Under the National Development Plan (NDP) for 2007-2013, which provides the framework for the allocation of public funding for VET in Ireland, there are five strategic investment priorities, which include Human Capital. Some EUR 25.8 billion will be invested in the following three programmes under the complementary Human Capital Investment Operational Programme (HCI OP) 2007-2013.

- Training and Skills Development (EUR 7.7 billion).
- Schools Modernisation & Development (EUR 5.1 billion).
- Higher Education (EUR 13 billion).

The Training and Skills Development Programme of the NDP has been allocated EUR 7.7 billion funded as follows:

- Exchequer (EUR 4.8 billion);
- National Training Fund (EUR 2.8 billion) and State bodies (EUR 100 million).

This Operational Programme focuses on the following areas.

- Upskilling the Workforce - EUR 2.8 billion will be invested in training for people in employment. This will help to up-skill those affected or likely to be affected by industrial re-structuring, improve and enlarge the apprenticeship system and provide progression opportunities for school leavers.
- Activation and Participation of Groups outside the Workforce - EUR 4.9 billion will be provided for measures to provide targeted training and services to groups outside the workforce such as the long term unemployed. It will also promote opportunities for a wide range of socially excluded groups, i.e. people with disabilities, lone parents, Travellers, ex-offenders, and encourage the increased participation of women, older workers, part-time workers and migrants in the workforce.

A major factor influencing VET funding policy in Ireland has been the significant financial support provided by the European Social Fund (ESF), which has enabled the government to spend at higher levels than they otherwise could have done. The Employment and Human Resources Development Operational Programme, (EHRD OP), was Ireland's largest European Social Fund (ESF) supported programme in the 2000-06 round of Structural Funds, with EUR 892 million in ESF aid allocated to this Programme. In 2007 approximately EUR 713 million⁶² in ESF was received in Ireland. In the future however, EU funding for VET in Ireland is likely to remain important but at a lower level.

The National Strategic Reference Framework for Ireland has set out the objectives agreed between Ireland and the European Commission for the period 2007-13. In respect of the ESF, the priority identified for investment under this Framework, is that of up-skilling the workforce and increasing the participation of groups outside the workforce as reflected in the NDP above. The allocation of the ESF within this period is 61% of funding for the Border Midland and Western (BMW) region and 39% for the South and Eastern region.

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

⁶² Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment Annual Report 2007.

9.1 FUNDING FOR IVET

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

- Funding of IVET in secondary level, institutions

The Department of Education and Science (DES) is responsible for the funding of publicly provided school education at secondary-level. Funds are allocated on a formula, based on a standard pupil-teacher ratio. There is also a per-pupil non-pay grant. Responsibility for the provision of funding of vocational schools, community colleges and further education centres is devolved from the Department of Education and Science, (DES), to thirty-three city and county based Vocational Education Committees, (VECs), (see Theme 3 Section: 3.2). The funding for programmes such as Youthreach, to address the needs of early-school leavers, is distributed jointly by the DES and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE). In 2007 the Budget for Youthreach was increased by EUR 8 million in order to provide for 400 additional places on the Programme, bringing the total number of Youthreach participants to over 3 600. Total expenditure for Youthreach in 2008 amounted to EUR 65.3 million.

With regard to funding mechanisms and links to quality assurance, the Department of Education and Science carries out Value for Money Surveys on several of the programmes that it funds and a 'value for money' review of the Youthreach and Senior Traveller Programmes was undertaken by the Department and published in 2008.

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

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

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

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

Apprentices are employees of companies under an apprenticeship contract. During the phases of on-the-job training, employers contribute to their support through the payment of an agreed '[industrial apprentice wage rate](#)', which is a percentage of the full (adult) craft worker wage which may vary depending on the occupation and employer. Generally, rates are based on the year and increase during the apprenticeship. During off-the-job training, all apprentices are paid an [allowance](#) by FÁS and, where appropriate, a contribution towards travel or accommodation costs. During the periods of off-the-job training and education, the state, through FÁS, pays an allowance to the apprentices, equivalent to their wages. There are also grants to encourage employers to recruit and register Female Apprentices. While FÁS resources for apprenticeship training were increased by EUR 15 million in 2007, bringing the total allocation for apprenticeship training to EUR 129 million. In 2008, due to the impact of the economic recession on the construction industry, funding for the apprenticeship programme was reduced to EUR 126.8 million⁶³. The training costs for trainees attending Traineeships programmes, designed to enable the unemployed access the labour market, are paid by the State. In 2008 expenditure by FÁS on this programme amounted to EUR 29.2 million⁶⁴. The trainees also receive training allowances paid by FÁS.

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

- Funding of IVET in third level and higher education Institutions

The third level and higher education sector is principally funded by the State. The Higher Education Authority, which operates under the remit of the DES, is the main funding body for universities and for the designated higher education institutions, such as the 14 Institutes of Technology and teacher training colleges. Since 1995 no fees have been charged for undergraduate education in publicly funded third-level institutions and a system of means-tested grants towards the cost of living for students is in existence. The total expenditure on Higher Education in 2007 was EUR 2.5 billion. However due to tighter economic resources, a reduction of EUR 15.5 million combined with earlier budgetary adjustments meant that the Higher Education Authority's budget was reduced to EUR 1.319 billion in a supplementary Budget in 2009. These reductions however, should be seen in the context of recent overall increases in investment in higher education that has risen by more than 33% since 2004.

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

- Funding for IVET in specific industry and services sectors

Central government provide funds for IVET for new entrants into specific industry sectors, through its funding of several public bodies such as Fáilte Ireland, which provides IVET for the tourism industry and Teagasc, the Agriculture and Food Development Authority, which provides IVET for the agriculture and horticulture industries. In most cases funding by these agencies includes financial support for students through the payment of tuition and capitation fees but not student grants⁶⁵. The Institutes of Technology (ITs), who jointly provide initial vocational education courses for the tourism and agricultural sectors, receive their funding from the Higher

⁶³ FAS Annual Report 2008

⁶⁴ FAS annual Report 2008

⁶⁵ Failte Ireland 'picktourism..ie' website 2009

Education Authority via the DES, together with contributions from Fáilte Ireland and Teagasc. Two other state supported agencies, Bord Iascaigh Mhara (the Irish Sea Fisheries Board) and Coillte (the Irish Forestry Board), fund training for new entrants into the fishing and aquaculture sectors and the forestry industry respectively.

9.2 FUNDING FOR CVET AND ADULT LEARNING

9.2.1 FUNDING FOR PUBLICLY PROVIDED CVET

The state plays a smaller role in the funding of CVET for the employed and for adult learners, in comparison to its funding for the training of the unemployed and for young people. While central government is the principal source of funding for all publicly provided CVET, it is also supported through ESF co-financing.

The Department of Education and Science, (DES) provides funding for continuing vocational education in further (VEC) education colleges and adult education centres. Funding for continuing vocational training is distributed by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, (DETE), to state agencies such as FÁS and other government departments fund ongoing continuing training for specific industrial sectors such as tourism. Between 1997 and 2008 it is estimated that expenditure in the area of further education has increased by over 400% to EUR 414 million, enabling over 170,000 learners⁶⁶ to access further education learning opportunities in 2008.

No public funds are distributed directly to the population for CVET, and there is no system of paid education and training leave. In general CVET for adults is paid for directly by the individuals themselves, and while participation in full-time further and higher education does not require the payment of tuition fees, adults attending part-time or evening courses normally pay the full cost.

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

(A) SECOND CHANCE AND COMMUNITY-BASED EDUCATION AND TRAINING.

This is now more accessible since funding was provided in 2002, for part-time learning under 'Back to Education Initiative' (BTEI), together with the introduction of the Community Strand of the BTEI. Regarding the latter Strand, a proportion (10%), of all BTEI funding must be given to community-based education activities. In 2007 the eligibility criteria for courses funded under the BTEI were amended to allow free tuition to any adult with less than upper secondary level education. (See Theme 9 Section: 3 below). The funding allocation for BTEI in 2008 was EUR 18,750,000 million. With regard to funding mechanisms such as the BTEI and links to quality assurance, a document resulting from meetings with BTEI (Part-time) providers, was issued by the Department of Education and Science in 2006. While identifying some challenges and system constraints, the document emphasised the positive achievements of the BTEI (Part-time), in particular the flexibility of the funding mechanism which has led to a significant expansion in the range of learning options available to adults.

⁶⁶ Statement in the Seanad by the Minister for Lifelong Learning on Education and Training responses to the Economic Downturn. 5th November 2009.

Courses funded under the Vocational Training Opportunities (VTOS) scheme, a “second chance” education and training programme for unemployed people, are provided free of charge. VTOS participants, who receive unemployment assistance or benefit, get a training allowance. Lone-parents or those eligible for disability payment, also receive a payment. There is a meal and travel allowance for those who reside at a distance from the VTOS centre, and books and materials are free of charge, childcare support may also be available. A bonus payment of EUR 31.80 is payable for those in receipt of certain eligible social welfare payments for at least one year when they join VTOS. In 2008 total expenditure on this programme was EUR 71.2 million. VTOS is funded by the Department of Education and Science.

(B) LITERACY TRAINING PROGRAMMES.

The government provides funding for literacy training courses which are provided free of charge to participants. In 2007, approximately EUR 30 million was spent on Adult Literacy Activities (up EUR 7 million on 2006), with 3,000 additional places being made available.

(C) GOVERNMENT FUNDED EMPLOYER AND EMPLOYEE CVT SCHEMES.

The Government uses a number of financial and other incentive mechanisms to support and encourage employers to invest in training to improve the skills of their staff. The level of this support depends on a number of factors including region, type and size of company, sectoral grouping or type of employee (e.g. low skill operatives in declining industries), and the stage of company development. Under the 2007 ‘Programme for Government’ EUR 2.8 billion was provided for up-skilling the workforce to improve training for people in employment and help up-skill those affected by industrial restructuring.. In particular subsidies are provided by state-funded agencies to reduce the costs of training for SME companies. The agencies that support and advise companies to undertake further training for their employees include FÁS, Enterprise Ireland, IDA-Ireland and the thirty-five County and City Enterprise Boards whose role is to develop local indigenous enterprise in the micro-business sector at city and county levels, and who provide training to start up businesses, as well as training in management, e-commerce and IT skills. Sectoral specific support assistance is provided by Fáilte Ireland for ongoing training in the tourism and hospitality industry, by Teagasc for training in the agricultural and food sector and by the Crafts Council of Ireland for this sector. During 2008, FÁS continued its support for training people in employment with total direct costs of EUR 36.7 million in 2008 compared to EUR 48.7 million in 2007 and EUR 37.4 million in 2006⁶⁷. Approximately 32,000⁶⁸ people receiving training in 2008. Expenditure on training for people in employment was EUR 54.1 million in 2007. However due to the economic down turn this expenditure was reduced to EUR 41.9 million in 2008.

There are a number of state financial mechanisms to encourage investment in training by enterprises. The main schemes are as follows.

(i) The FÁS ‘One Step Up’ Initiative aims to encourage employee training in order to increase competency levels by subsidizing employee training through three primary funding mechanisms:

- The Competency Development Programme (CDP) encourages the training of employed people by providing a training subsidy from 50% up to 100%, to companies to reduce the costs of training for employers in a range of skills and competences including management, IT, retail, contract cleaning and caring.
- Under the FAS administered Strategic Alliances programme, whereby FAS contracts with national organizations to deliver suites of suitable training courses at a cost of EUR 5.6 million⁶⁹ in 2008.

⁶⁷ FAS Annual Report 2008

⁶⁸ FAS Annual Report 2008

⁶⁹ FAS Services to Business figures for 2008

- The Workplace Basic Education Fund which targets employees with the low skills levels (including early school leavers), and particularly those with difficulties with literacy and numeracy. Expenditure from the fund was EUR 1.1 million⁷⁰ in 2008 for the training of approximately 925 employees.⁷¹

(ii) Enterprise Ireland, funds schemes to support in-company management training and advisory services for approved firms within the manufacturing and internationally-traded services sectors. According to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment Government Estimates for 2008, the agency was allocated EUR 3 million from the National Training Fund for these activities. In total in 2008 this agency spent EUR 12,193 million⁷² on management development and training.

(iii) The Industrial Development Authority (IDA), responsible for securing new industries from overseas in the manufacturing and internationally-traded services sector, was allocated EUR 2.5 million from the National Training Fund for training and development activities in 2008⁷³.

(iv) Údarás Na Gaeltachta, a regional development agency which operates in Irish-speaking areas, spent EUR 5.84 million on training in 2006.

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

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

- Fáilte Ireland, spent EUR 15.103⁷⁴ million in 2008 in comparison to EUR 17.493⁷⁵ million in 2007 on training for people seeking employment or employed in the tourism and hospitality sectors. The agency also receives a small contribution from the tourism industry and charges fees for employees' attendance on courses.
- Teagasc, the Agriculture and Food Development Authority, spent approximately EUR 25 million⁷⁶ in total on education and training in 2007. The agency charges a fixed fee to run ongoing courses for farmers. It also provides training courses at cost, for persons working in the food processing industry.
- Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM), the Sea Fisheries Board, provides training for those employed in the fishing, fish processing and aquaculture industries. In 2006 it spent EUR 0.96 million on ongoing training activities.
- Coillte, the Irish Forestry Board, provides training for forestry workers. In 2006 it spent EUR 0.8 million on ongoing training for its workforce.
- Crafts Council of Ireland offers financial and other incentives such as training advice and courses for the craft industry. These courses are free and a training allowance is paid to participants. The Council receives its funding from the Enterprise Ireland agency. In 2008 expenditure by the Council on education and training amounted to EUR 343,578⁷⁷.

Funding for CVET for public servants, teachers, the police and defence forces etc., is sourced from the 'normal' budget of the relevant government department. The state also allocates some

⁷⁰ FAS Annual Report 2008

⁷¹ FAS Annual Report 2008.

⁷² Enterprise Ireland Annual Report 2008.

⁷³ Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment 2008 Government Estimates of Income and Expenditure of the National Training Fund..

⁷⁴ 2007 Failte Ireland Annual Report

⁷⁵ 2008 Failte Ireland Annual Report

⁷⁶ Teagasc Annual Report 2007

⁷⁷ Craft Council of Ireland Annual Report 2008

funding to a number of non-commercial training providers such as the Irish Management Institute (IMI) and the Institute of Public Administration (IPA), for the training of employees in the public sector. These Institutes are also funded through their membership subscriptions, as well as by course fees paid by companies and the individual learners.

9.2.2 FUNDING FOR CVET IN ENTERPRISES

Government policy views the training of persons at work as primarily the responsibility of employers, who are the main source of funds for training for the employed, through their funding of in-company training or indirectly through their contributions to the National Training Fund (NTF). The NTF was established in 2000 and it is resourced by a levy on employers of 0.7% of earnings of employees. It applies to the main kinds of employment and covers approximately 75% of all insurable employees. The monies collected can be used to fund training schemes and programmes for the employed, (including apprenticeship training), and for those seeking employment. The Social Partners have a role to play in the allocation of the NTF they are consulted by the government in relation to the allocation of NTF funds for training programmes. The Government-sponsored, the Expert Group on Future Skill Needs, is the forum used to fulfill this requirement. Table 29 below, sets out the NTF funding utilized by State and other bodies, on training for the employed from 2005-08.

STATE AGENCIES	2005	2006	2007**	2008**
FÁS	11 713	12 573	15 159	13 000
IDA-IRELAND	0 900	1 269	1 100	2 500
ENTERPRISE IRELAND	2 500	3 550	3 160	3 000
SHANNON DEVELOPMENT LTD	0	161	0	255
SKILLNETS LTD	7 500	8 500	13 500	26 472
INSTITUTE OF ENGINEERS	300	300	405	450
OTHER IN-COMPANY TRAINING	3 408	23 854	26 660	2 100
TOTAL	25122	49746	59 579	47 777

Source: Government Estimates 2008. ** Expenditure for 2007 and 2008 is estimated.

The extent of employer direct investment in in-company training is difficult to ascertain given the lack of comprehensive information on in-company training expenditure. While no definitive statistics exist, figures on training expenditure from different sources, indicate that employee training is growing.

A report by the Economic and Social Research Institute found that spending by the state on training for the employed amounted to about EUR 49 million in 2003⁷⁸ in comparison to an estimated EUR 1 billion spent by companies and commercial trainers. The latter amount includes the employer contributions to the National Training Fund (NTF). In 2005 total expenditure by companies was estimated at EUR 1.5 billion though only EUR 420 million of this cost was on the direct costs of training courses.⁷⁹ Employers also participate in the industry-led 'Skillnets' Training Networks Programme (TNP), which has been allocated EUR 55 million from the NTF for 2005-10, to support enterprise-based training networks. In 2008 expenditure on this programme

⁷⁸ Data Analysis of In-Employment, Education and Training in Ireland, Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, Forfás, 2005

⁷⁹ Company Training in Ireland 2005, R. Fox FAS 2005.

amounted to EUR 36.5 million⁸⁰, (EUR 25 million invested by Skillnets and EUR 11.5 million by member companies), in comparison to EUR 14 million in 2006. The ACCEL scheme which is aimed at groups of companies and also operated by Skillnets had a budget of EUR 16 million for 2006-08.

Table 30 below sets out a comparison between the EU 27 and 25 countries and Ireland, for the total cost of CVT courses as a percentage of total labour cost for all enterprises for 1999 versus 2005. The EU-wide CVTS3 survey⁸¹ [2] found that 69% of companies, employing ten or more persons had carried out some training in 2005 and companies spent, on average, 2.5% of labour costs on training. This was the highest rate among EU countries.

TABLE 30: TOTAL COST OF CVT COURSES AS % OF TOTAL LABOUR COST (ALL ENTERPRISES) (2005 VS. 1999)								
	SIZE CLASS (NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES)							
	TOTAL (%)		10 TO 49 (%)		50 TO 249 (%)		250 OR MORE (%)	
	CVTS3	CVTS2	CVTS3	CVTS2	CVTS3	CVTS2	CVTS3	CVTS2
EU 27	1,6	:	1,1	:	1,4	:	1,9	:
EU 25	1,6	2,3	1,1	1,5	1,4	2,4	1,9	2,5
IRELAND	:	2,4	:	2,1	:	2,1	:	2,9

Source: Eurstat 2nd and 3rd CVTS in enterprises (CVTS2 and CVTS3).

9.3 FUNDING FOR TRAINING FOR UNEMPLOYED AND OTHER GROUPS EXCLUDED FROM THE LABOUR MARKET

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

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

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

⁸⁰ Skillnets Annual Report 2008

⁸¹ Continuing Vocational Training Survey (CVT3) 2005, Central Statistics Office, Ireland. 2007

(a) *The formal vocational education sector*

In 2002 increased funding was made available for an expansion of the 'Back to Education Initiative' (BTEI), to introduce a Part-Time Options Strand to facilitate further education opportunities for young people and adults with low qualifications. In 2007 the BTEI funding eligibility criteria were amended to allow free tuition to any adult with less than upper secondary level education. This change encompassed those who were previously eligible (people with a social welfare entitlement or medical card), and extended eligibility for free tuition to unwaged people and those in employment with low education levels. In making this change, the key priority was to remove barriers to access by adults who do not have the Leaving Certificate or its equivalent, and so increase participation by this group in further education without incurring tuition costs. In particular this change in eligibility criteria extended access to free tuition to women in the home. In 2007, BTEI participants were also included for the first time in the childcare scheme operated for further education students. These childcare grants were made available on the same terms as for participants in full time programmes such as VTOS, Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training Centres, but at a pro-rata rate based on the number of hours attended, to reflect the part-time nature of the BTEI initiative. The payment of childcare supports to some women has been crucial in facilitating their participation in further education. The funding allocation for BTEI in 2008 was EUR 18,750,000 million.

School leavers and adults attending full-time Post-Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses of at least one year's duration, in publicly-funded colleges do not pay fees. An education allowance is available for persons following full-time third-level or PLC courses, who receive unemployment benefit, lone parent's allowance or disability benefit, (the latter group can also obtain special financial support). There are also other supplementary means-tested maintenance grants, known as 'Top-Up Grants', for school leavers from low-income families attending PLC courses. These grants are funded from the Student Assistance and Third-Level Access Funds, administered by the local authorities.

Other financial assistance includes the 'Back to Education Allowance' (BTEA), which is available for adults aged 21 and over, who wish to upgrade their general level of education. Expenditure under this programme came to EUR 70,840 million in 2008. The 'Education Equality Initiative' was allocated EUR 4 million in 2006, to meet the needs of specific marginalized groups e.g. those in treatment for substance dependence and Travellers.

A major educational measure aimed at those with low educational levels, is the 'Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme' (VTOS), whereby unemployed trainees receive a training allowance linked to unemployment payment rates. No course fees are payable and books and materials are provided free. Funding is also available for childcare to encourage parents to participate in VTOS. In 2008 total expenditure on this programme was EUR 71,200 compared with EUR 68.3 million in 2007 and EUR 62 million in 2006.

The State provides financial support to encourage participation by mature learners in third level higher education, in particular for students from disadvantaged backgrounds such as Travellers, or those with disabilities. Financial assistance for this category of person is distributed from the Third Level Access fund. In 2008 a new National Access Plan for 2008-13 was published by the National Access Office and the Higher Education Authority (HEA). A Student Assistance Fund is also available to students experiencing financial hardship while studying and a total of EUR 6.038 million was allocated in 2006-07 to these students. A fund of EUR 20 million⁸² was allocated in 2008 for students with disabilities.

⁸² The Report of the Higher Education Authority for 2007-08

(b) The formal vocational training sector

FÁS, the national Training and Employment Authority, offers a range of CVT programmes for young and older people seeking to enter or re-enter the labour market after an absence due to unemployment, disability or other reasons. Training allowances equivalent to unemployment payments, are provided to unemployed persons attending full-time FÁS courses. Training courses are free and a 'training bonus' is paid to long-term unemployed persons. A contribution is also available for approved childcare costs and trainees can receive travel and accommodation support. Expenditure on FÁS training and integration programmes for the unemployed and disadvantaged amounted to €235 million for training approximately 20,500 jobseekers for employment in 2008⁸³.

FAS, also administers a Technical Employment Support Grants Scheme which provides flexible training options for unemployed jobseekers, where the type of training required was not immediately available in a training centre. A training fund of EUR 1.270 and in exceptional circumstances EUR 2.500 per person, is available to purchase this training. Funding is available for a 12 month period. FÁS in suitable situations also subcontracts some training for the unemployed to approved private training providers following a tendering process.

FAS administers several grant schemes to assist those with a disability to access employment. The expenditure on FÁS programmes and schemes for people with disabilities in 2008 amounted to EUR 64 million. The 2008 FAS expenditure for specialist training providers who provide training for people with disabilities who require more intensive support, amounted to EUR 55.1 million in 2008 in comparison to EUR 52 million in 2007, while EUR 8.5 million was expended on Supported Employment Services in 2008. The Wage Subsidy Scheme, introduced in 2005, continues to be promoted by FÁS to encourage employers and potential employees to avail of the incentives under the schemes and to maximise take-up. The total expenditure on this programme for 2008 was EUR 9.4 million in comparison to EUR 7.6 million in 2007.

(c) Informal education and training sector

The community and voluntary sectors are important providers of VET, including adult literacy programmes for unemployed adults. Generally these programmes are provided free of charge and are funded by public authorities such as the Vocational Education Committees. In 2002 the Government increased funding to this sector through the introduction of the Community Strand under the 'Back to Education Initiative' (BTEI). Financing for CVET at community level, is mainly distributed by the government agency Pobal, (formerly Area Development Management Ltd.), which funds Local Area Partnership Companies and the four Irish Territorial Employment Pacts, both of whom facilitate CVET for marginalised groups. Some community groups and partnership companies give small allowances to learners whose parents are on social welfare, other groups provide services such as transport, childcare facilities and learning materials.

The National Adult Literacy Scheme provides free tuition to those who wish to access literacy programmes. The Department of Education and Science funds the cost of running the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA), which co-ordinates these programmes. In 2007 44,000 participants availed of adult literacy tuition at a cost of EUR 30 million.

Adult learning opportunities for the unemployed are also provided by many trade unions in their networks of adult education centres. These centres are funded from union members' subscriptions and some receive a grant from FÁS.

Table 31 below, shows expenditure for the main IVET and CVET programmes and activities provided by FÁS, Skillnets, the Departments of Education and Science* and Social and Family Affairs, for the employed and those seeking employment from 2005-08.

⁸³ FAS Annual Report 2008.

TABLE 31 : EXPENDITURE ON VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING SUPPORTS IN EUR 000'S FOR 2005-08				
	€000's	€000's	€000's	€000's
FÁS				
Training	2005	2006	2007	2008
Apprenticeship	101,800	113,034	129,030	126 842
Traineeship	20,633	22,699	25,191	29 221
Training & Sectoral Initiatives and Sponsored Training	19,359	38,777	49,813	37 531
Evening Courses / FÁS eCollege	2,689	2,013	1,836	1 820
Specific Skills Training	37,985	37,586	37,364	41 367
Local Training Initiatives	26,103	26,326	30,736	32 676
Workplace Basic Education Scheme	1,070	1,163	3,732	1 069
Bridging Foundation	21,863	20,561	21,226	23 635
Foundation/Progression in CTCs	38,904	42,435	46,793	49 756
Return to Work	2,684	2,753	2,833	3 004
Specialist Training Providers	44,889	49,371	52,009	55 191
TOTAL	317,979	356,718	400,563	402,112
Skillnets	7,500	14,000	24,500	26 734
Department of Social and Family Affairs				
Back to Education Allowance	46,695	52,070	64,140	87,870
Department of Education and Science				
Youthreach	45,334	51,679	59,343	65,306
VTOS	56,981	61,942	68,300	71,200
Senior Traveller Training Centres*	000	24,219	26,314	26,290
Back To Education Initiative*	000	15,049	17,510	18,537
TOTAL	102 315	152 889	171 467	181,333
OVERALL TOTAL	474489	577 724	660 670	698,049

* Expenditure on the Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) and senior Traveller Centres is not included for 2005.

Source: Lisbon Agenda-Integrated Guidelines for Growth and Jobs, Implementation of the National Reform Programme. Annual Progress Report, Department of the Taoiseach, Ireland. 2009.

9.4 GENERAL FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS AND MECHANISMS

- Sectoral funding

Various sectoral bodies, such as for example the Construction Industry Confederation and others which include representatives of the social partners, advise on and often provide funding for training initiatives for their different industrial and services sectors. (See also description of the National Training Fund, Theme 9. Section: 2.2 and the role of employers in advising on the use of these monies). In some cases companies will pool resources to identify and make provision for training needs. The industry-led initiative "Skillnets" encourages and fosters this kind of co-operation. (See Theme 5 Section:.1.2)

Sectoral specific support and funding assistance for both IVET and CVET is also provided by publicly funded agencies such as Fáilte Ireland for the tourism and hospitality industry, Teagasc for the agricultural and food sector, Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM), the Irish Sea Fisheries Board for the fishing industry and the Crafts Council of Ireland. Through its Specific Sectoral Skills Training Programme, FÁS consults with Advisory Committees, representing sectoral groups such as the Engineering, Construction and Film/TV sectors, and carries out regular reviews of national skills and training needs. It has developed and co-funded programmes for specific sectors such as management training for owner-managers in the services sector and the Construction Skills Certification Scheme which is designed to raise standards of safety among construction industry employers.

- Tax incentives

The use of ‘tax incentives’⁸⁴ is generally perceived in Ireland, in the context of the State as a source of various financial grants and incentives made available to employers and industrial sectors, to encourage and support companies to invest in training for their employees. These incentives are mainly targeted at those employees with low qualifications in vulnerable employment or in SMEs. (See Theme 5 Section: 1.2). Also much of further education and training provision is provided by the State free of charge and trainee allowances for VET are made available to the unemployed attending for example, FAS full time training courses, or to those in disadvantaged groups, as in the case of the ‘Back to Education Allowance’. For adults attending part-time courses in third-level colleges, some financial assistance is provided through tax relief for the fees paid for attendance at approved ICT and foreign language courses. With regard to tax relief for VET courses provided by commercial providers or for in-company training, while these courses are exempted from VAT they are not specially treated in terms of corporation taxes, companies however can claim the cost of training their employees as a deductible expense in a similar way to other eligible expenses. In the 2008 budget submission to the Government, IBEC the Irish Business and Employers Confederation, advocated extending to employers existing tax credits, which would include fees paid for any training course that leads to a National Framework of Qualification level within appropriate time limits.

- Learning Accounts and vouchers

There is no legislative entitlement to paid CVET leave in Ireland and in general no public funds are distributed directly to the population for adult learning or CVET, which is usually paid for directly by the individuals themselves. The 2007 National Skills Strategy report looked at funding mechanisms to encourage investment in education and training. It stated that “*As a general principle, individuals who do not currently hold a qualification equivalent to the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) Level 4 or 5 (Leaving Certificate equivalent), should be assisted to achieve such an award, through either full-or part-time study, without incurring tuition costs and with a level of subsistence, provided by the State, for full-time study where appropriate.*” In response to this recommendation, the Back To Education Initiative funding eligibility criteria were amended in 2008 to allow free tuition to any adult with less than upper secondary level education. (See Theme 9 Section: 3). For higher-level courses (NFQ levels 6-10), the report envisaged a shared funding between individuals, employers and the State. In response to other proposed funding recommendations made in the National Skills Strategy, there have been new approaches by FAS to pilot funding mechanisms such as Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs) and paid learning leave, to encourage individual investment in education and training and to promote participation in continual learning. Several pilot projects have been initiated to assess the success and attractiveness of these approaches to funding training. The Government through the research work of Expert Group on Future Skill Needs is also examining the potential of several innovative measures to stimulate both employees and employers to engage more fully in education and training.

⁸⁴ Using Tax Incentives to Promote Education and Training. CEDEFOP Panorama Series 2009

- *Saving Schemes and Loans*

These types of funding arrangements do not exist in Ireland at present as part of the public funding system for VET. However funding arrangements and financial schemes, supported by private companies to assist individual employees to access training and education, have existed for some time particularly among multinational enterprises. In such cases the employer usually sponsors the training or pays or reimburses the cost of the course.

THEME 10: NATIONAL VET STATISTICS - ALLOCATION OF PROGRAMMES

10.1 CLASSIFICATION OF NATIONAL VET PROGRAMMES

10.1.1 MAIN CRITERIA USED TO ALLOCATE VET PROGRAMMES

FETAC awards are made across all fields of education, categorised by ISCED and related to the National Framework of Qualifications (NQF). The NQF is learning-outcomes based. Each of its ten levels is defined by a level indicator - a series of statements defining the knowledge, skills and competences to be acquired by the learner for an award at that level. Higher education providers when submitting programmes to HETAC for validation must set out the learning outcomes associated with those programmes. These set out the knowledge, skill and competences, i.e. what a learner who has successfully completed the programme understands, knows and can do.

10.1.2 VET LEVELS IN THE NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

LEVEL	EQUIVALENT IN ISCED	MINIMUM DURATION	MAXIMUM DURATION	AVERAGE DURATION	TYPICAL STARTING AGE
LOWER SECONDARY	2	1 year	3 years	3 years	12
UPPER SECONDARY	3	1.5 years	3 years	2 years	16
POST SECONDARY/ FURTHER CVET	4	3 months	2 years	10 months	16-17
THIRD LEVEL NON UNIVERSITY LEVEL	5b	3 years	4 years	3.5 years	17-18
UNIVERSITY GRADUATE LEVEL	5a	4 years	4 years	4 years	17-18
POSTGRADUATE	6	2 years	4 years	3 years	21-24

10.2 FIELDS OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

FETAC and HETAC awards are made across all fields of education and training and these awards are in turn categorised according to the award Levels, set out in the 10-level structure of the National Qualifications Framework. All FAS programmes for example, are categorised according to FETAC's classification system. FETAC awards are also made across all fields of education, categorised by ISCED and the chart below illustrates the FETAC awards according to their respective International Standard Classifications in Education (ISCED), UNESCO fields of education and training.

CHART OF FETAC FIELDS OF LEARNING AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO ISCED FIELDS.

FIELD	SUB-FIELD		DOMAIN	ISCED FIELD CODE		
1 Agriculture, Science + Computing ISCED 4 + 6	1. Agriculture	1.1.1	Agriculture (livestock, farm animals, crops, farming, land)	6		
		1.1.2	Horticulture (fruit, vegetables, plants, gardens, landscape)			
		1.1.3	Floristry (flower arranging, display)			
		1.1.4	Veterinary/Pets/non-Farm Animals			
		1.1.5	Poultry (Geese, Ducks, Hens, Eggs)			
		1.1.6	Aquaculture			
		1.1.7	Equitation (horses, stables, equine)			
		1.1.8	Fisheries (commercial fishing, nets, fishing equipment)			
		1.1.9	Forestry (trees, timber)			
	2. Science	1.2.1	Natural Sciences/Food Science/Environmental Science, Environment, Conservation, Botany, Biology	4		
		1.2.2	Applied Science - Chemistry/Physics/Materials			
		1.2.3	Laboratory Skills			
		1.2.4	Statistics/Mathematics/Research			
		3. Computing	1.3.1		HardWare	4
			1.3.2		Systems + Networks	
			(not Applications)		1.3.3	
		1.3.4			Software Engineering/Design/Software Development	
	1.3.5	Programming				
	2	1. Arts		2.1.1	Music (theory and performance)	
2.1.2				Drama (the play and the players)		
2.1.3			Theatre (lighting, production tasks, scene-painting)			
2.1.4			Dance			

ISCED 2	2. Visual Arts, Craft. Design	2.2.1	Craft/Design (furniture, stained glass, jewellery, ceramics/upholstery/restoration/wood-turning/pottery)	2
		2.2.2	Textiles - woven/constructed, print, fashion design/tailoring (not manufacture)	
		2.2.3	Interior/Décor Design (feng shui, decorative painting techniques)	2
		2.2.4	Fine Art - sculpture, painting/drawing, print (etching/screen-printing/litho)	
	3. Media	2.3.1	Photography	2
		2.3.2	Television/video/Film (incl Production)	
		2.3.3	Radio/Broadcasting/Sound	
		2.3.4	Multi-Media/animation (other than web see 1.3.3.)	
		2.3.5	Printing + Publishing/DTP	
		2.3.6	Graphic Design	
3	1. Business	3.1.1	Legal	3
Business and Administration ISCED 3		3.1.2	Retail/Wholesale/Trade/Sales/Estate Agency/Purchasing/applied Economics	
		3.1.3	Finance/Banking/Insurance/Taxation/Accounting	
		3.1.4	Enterprise/Business Development/Entrepreneur/SYOB/Gen Business/rural business	
		3.1.5	Marketing/PR	
		3.1.6	Human Resource/Customers/Organisational Dev. + Skills/Personnel	
		3.1.7	Advertising/Display/Merchandising	
		3.1.8	Management Skills/Principles/Project Mgmt (motivation/delegation)	
		3.1.9	Journalism	
		3.1.10	Social and Behavioural Science	
		3.1.11	Library	
	2. Administration	3.2.1	Secretarial/Admin Skills/TeleServices/Payroll	

		3.2.2	Office Work/filing/Telephone	
		3.2.3	Admin-related ICT Applications/data entry	3
4				
Construction and Built Environment	1. Planning and Design	4.1.1	Architectural Assistant Skills	5
		4.1.2	Draughting/CAD	
		4.1.3	Planning Services, surveying	
	2. Housing/Building Construction	4.2.1	Construction Trades	5
		4.2.2	Technical Operatives/Scaffolding/	
	3. Civil Engineering	4.2.3	Construction Site Activities/Building Work/General Maintenance	5
		4.3.1	Civil Works, eg Roads	
		4.3.2	Plant Operators	
	4. Restoration/ Traditional/ Heritage	4.3.3	Engineering Technicians	5
		4.4.1	Heritage Craft Skills (stone wall building)	5
	4.4.2	Restoration Skills		
5				
Core Skills Language and General studies	1. Core Skills	5.1.1	Communication (writing, speaking, listening except literacy see 5.1.2.)	0
		5.1.2	Numeracy + Literacy + Visual Literacy	
		5.1.3	ICT Introduction (basic keyboard Sk, computer literacy)	
		5.1.4	Preparation for Work (CV, Interview Techniques)	
		5.1.5	Lifeskills (culture/day-to-day living/the world around us)	
		5.1.6	Personal Development (learning to learn, study skills)	
	2. Language (Excl Culture)	5.2.1	European Language	2
		5.2.2	English (incl ESOL)	
		5.2.3	Irish	
		5.2.4	International Language (other than European)	
	3. General Studies	5.3.1	Irish Tradition + Culture	2
		5.3.2	EU Studies + Culture	

		5.3.3	History/Geography/Archeology	
		5.3.4	Civics/Politics/Liberal Arts/Classics	2
		5.3.5	Philosophy	
6	1. Education Training	6.1.1	Trainer/Train the Trainer/Mentor	1
Education, Health and Welfare		6.1.2	Assessor/Evaluator	1
		6.1.3	Prof. Development Studies	1
		6.1.4	Supervisory Studies	1
		6.1.5	Education Studies/Montessori	1
ISCED 1 and 7 and 8		6.1.6	Classroom Assistant	1
		6.1.7	YouthWork	7
		6.1.8	ChildCare	7
		6.1.9	Community Care/Social Work	7
	2. Health/Welfare	6.2.5	Complementary Therapies	
		6.2.6	Nursing - Allied Skills	7
		6.2.7	Health Care Support	7
		6.2.8	Dental Studies	7
				7
		6.2.9	Disability Studies	7
7	1. Engineering	7.1.1	Electrical/Electronics/Electromechanical	
Engineering/Manufacturing		7.1.2	Mechanics/Mechanical/Tools	5
		7.1.3	Refrigeration	
		7.1.4	AirCRAFT/Naval/Boats/Navigation	
		7.1.5	Engineering Processes/Fitting/Turning/Metals/tool-making	
		7.1.7	TeleComms/Audio/TV Servicing	
		7.1.8	Environmental (Energy, Waste) Processes	
		7.1.9	Chemicals + Processing/Pharmaceuticals	
ISCED 5		7.1.10	Building Security - Alarm Installation	
	2. Manufacturing	7.2.1	Manufacturing Ops/Production Line/Factory	

	Processing	7.2.2	Food + Dairy Processing	
		7.2.3	Textiles + Footwear Manufacture	5
		7.2.4	Materials (plastic, glass, paper, wood) Manufacture	
		7.2.5	Medical Devices/Instrumentation	
8	1. Personal	8.1.1	Beauty	8
Services		8.1.2	Hairdressing	
		8.1.3	Domestic Services (commercial cleaning)/DIY	
		8.1.4	Occupational Health and Safety	
		8.1.5	Funeral/Other Services	
ISCED 8	2. Logistics	8.2.1	Warehouse/ForkLift/Storage	8
		8.2.2	Transport/Logistics	
		8.2.3	Driving (HGV eg)	
		8.2.4	Freight/Forwarding	
	3. Security	8.3.1	Door Security (Bouncer)	8
	8.3.2	Commercial Security		
	8.3.3	Military		
	8.3.4	Prison/Prisoner Security (Dept. Justice)		
	8.3.5	Emergency Service Personnel		
	4. Environmental protection	8.4.1	Wastewater treatment/Water protection	8
9	1. Tourism	9.1.1	Travel	8
Tourism, Hospitality		9.1.2	Tourism (non Hospitality)/rural tourism/sports tourism	
		9.1.3	Tour Guiding	
and Sport		9.1.4	Visitor/Heritage Centre Operations/Skills	

ISCED 8	2. Hospitality	9.2.1	Hotels + Guest House (Accomm, Front Office, B+B e.g.)	8
		9.2.2	Catering/kitchen	
		9.2.3	Restaurant + Bar	
		9.2.4	Food Safety/Hygiene (HACCP)	
		9.2.5	Customer Care Hospitality	
	3. Sport	9.3.1	Leisure Centre Activities/Leisure/Recreation/Sports Safety/Lifeguard	8
		9.3.2	All Sports (football/soccer/volleyball/surfing.....)	
		9.3.3	Health + Fitness/health-related fitness/exercise	
		9.3.4	Coaching + Training/Sports Instructor	
10	Unclassified			9

The Chart above, while it indicates the FETAC fields of learning according and their relationship to ISCED coded levels, does not directly reference the FETAC fields of education and training to the award levels of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), the chart is nevertheless indicative of equivalent ISCED/NQF levels, as all FETAC awards are referenced directly to specific levels on the NQF. (See Table 24. Theme 5.)

10.3 LINKS BETWEEN NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS OR CLASSIFICATIONS

In recent years, as a result of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999, structures were established to put in place a national framework of qualifications based on standards of knowledge, skill or competence to be acquired by learners. (See Theme 2 Section: 2.2). To implement this process the Act established the National Qualifications Authority (NQAI), together with the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) and the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC). In 2003 a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) was established covering all awards in the State. The Framework focuses primarily on learner needs and progression levels and promotes the setting of standards for awards. Under the Framework strategy, all IVET and CVET programmes must have provision for access, transfer and mobility. FÁS, the Department of Education and Science (DES) and other providers must all ensure that their courses qualify for appropriate awards within the new Framework, which has set criteria for the level and award type available for all programmes that are submitted for its recognition. Within the Framework there are 10 levels of awards from Foundation (Level 1) to Doctoral Level (Level 10). Qualifications within the Framework are linked to credit systems, will also facilitate progression routes to be developed from work-based learning and the community education sector, into the formal education system.

The role of the NQAI includes co-ordinating and comparing education and training awards, promoting access, transfer and progression for all learners, establishing and developing standards of knowledge, skill or competence within the both the initial and continuing VET system, and promoting recognition outside the State of awards made by bodies in the State and recognition in the State of awards made by bodies outside the State. In order to implement the latter process, the NQAI established a ‘Qualifications Recognition Ireland Service’ which facilitates international comparisons between awards made outside the country and those made in Ireland.

In 2006 the NQAI published policies and criteria on the inclusion in, or alignment with the NQF, of the awards (or the learning outcomes associated with them), of certain international and professional awarding bodies and in June 2009 Ireland completed the process of referencing the NQF to the European Qualifications Framework⁸⁵ (EQF). These policies on alignment and the alignment of the NFQ to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) are crucial to and will greatly facilitate the recognition of qualifications between Ireland and other EU member states, as well as with other foreign qualifications. As illustrated in Table 32 below, the EQF comprises eight qualification levels, described through learning outcomes (knowledge, skill and competence), the NQF has ten award levels and the qualifications within it, are based on the principle and objective of learning outcomes, and are also linked to credit systems and arrangements for the recognition of Prior Learning.

NFQ (IRELAND) LEVELS	EQF LEVELS
1 & 2	1
3	2
4	3
5	4
6	5
7 & 8	6
9	7
10	8

⁸⁵ European Qualifications Framework Information Bulletin 2 2009.

TABLE 33 : EQF AND NFQ DEFINITIONS OF LEARNING OUTCOMES	
EQF	NFQ (IRELAND)
Knowledge	Knowledge: breadth Knowledge : kind
Skills	Know-how and skill: range Know-how and skill: selectivity
Personal and professional competence: (i) Autonomy & responsibility	Competence: context Competence: role
Personal and professional competence: (ii) Learning competence	Competence: learning to learn
Personal and professional competence (iii) Communication and social competence	Competence: insight
Personal and Professional competence: (iv) Professional & vocational competence	Know-how and skill: selectivity

The NQAI is the National Co-ordination Point for the EQF and as such is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the EQF in Ireland. The second stage of EQF implementation, introducing a reference to the EQF in all new Certificate and Diploma supplements, should be completed by 2012.

In November 2006, Ireland became the first European country to verify the compatibility of its National Framework of Qualifications with the Bologna Framework, i.e. a Framework for Qualifications for the European Higher Education Area. In 2004 the National Qualifications Authority (NQAI) published the 'Principles and Operational Guidelines for the implementation of a national approach to credit in Irish Higher education and Training'. These Guidelines provide a framework for learners to accumulate credits towards awards, including for prior and experiential learning. This builds on and is compatible with the developments under the Bologna process and in particular the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), a key component for the development of the European Higher Education Area. Introduced originally to support international student mobility and international curriculum development, in so far as it aims to facilitate a flexible system that will allow a transfer between further education and training and higher education, the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), is becoming a generalised and common basis for credit systems in higher education in many European countries including Ireland.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AEGI	ADULT EDUCATION GUIDANCE INITIATIVE
APL	ACCREDITATION OF PRIOR LEARNING
EAP	EMPLOYMENT ACTION PLAN
BTEI	BACK TO EDUCATION INITIATIVE
CDP	COMPETENCY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME
CIF	CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY FEDERATION
CPD	CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
CSO	CENTRAL STATISTICS OFFICE
CTF	CUSTOMISED TRAINING FUND
CVET	CONTINUING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING
DES	DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE
DETE	DEPARTMENT OF ENTERPRISE, TRADE AND EMPLOYMENT
ECVET	EUROPEAN CREDIT SYSTEM FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING
EDC	EDUCATIONAL DISADVANTAGE COMMITTEE
EEI	EDUCATIONAL EQUALITY INITIATIVE
EGFSN	EXPERT GROUP ON FUTURE SKILLS NEEDS
EHRD OP	EMPLOYMENT AND HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME
ETP	EXCELLENCE THROUGH PEOPLE
ETW	EXPANDING THE WORKFORCE
FÁS	TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT AUTHORITY
FETAC	FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING AWARDS COUNCIL
HETAC	HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING AWARDS COUNCIL
HCI OP	HUMAN CAPITAL INVESTMENT OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME
HSP	HIGH SUPPORT PROCESS
IBEC	IRISH BUSINESS AND EMPLOYERS CONFEDERATION
ICTU	IRISH CONGRESS OF TRADE UNIONS
IDA	INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
IILT	INTEGRATE IRELAND LANGUAGE TRAINING
IITD	IRISH INSTITUTE OF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

ISCED	INTERNATIONAL STANDARD CLASSIFICATION OF EDUCATION
ISME	IRISH SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES ASSOCIATION
ITS	INSTITUTES OF TECHNOLOGY
IVET	INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING
NAAC	NATIONAL APPRENTICESHIP ADVISORY COMMITTEE
NALA	NATIONAL ADULT LITERACY AGENCY
NAPS	NATIONAL ANTI POVERTY STRATEGY
NCCA	NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT
NCGE	NATIONAL CENTRE FOR GUIDANCE IN EDUCATION
NCPP	NATIONAL CENTRE FOR PARTNERSHIP AND PERFORMANCE
NCTE	NATIONAL CENTRE FOR TECHNOLOGY IN EDUCATION
NDP	NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN
NESF	NATIONAL ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL FORUM
NFQ	NATIONAL FRAMEWORK OF QUALIFICATIONS
NQAI	NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS ASSOCIATION OF IRELAND
NTF	NATIONAL TRAINING FUND
NUI	NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF IRELAND
OSCAIL	NATIONAL DISTANCE EDUCATION CENTRE
PLC	POST LEAVING CERTIFICATE
QNHS	QUARTERLY NATIONAL HOUSEHOLD SURVEY
RPL	RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING
SFA	SMALL FIRMS ASSOCIATION
SIF	STRATEGIC INNOVATION FUND
SILC	SURVEY ON INCOME AND LIVING CONDITIONS
SIPTU	SERVICES INDUSTRIAL PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL UNION
SMES	SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES
SSRR	SENIOR SELECT RETAIN AND RETRAIN
TESG	TECHNICAL EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT GRANT
VECS	VOCATIONAL EDUCATION COMMITTEES
VTOS	VOCATIONAL TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES SCHEME