

Numbers at School and College to Grow Significantly in the Coming Years

Expert Group Publishes Monitoring Ireland's Skills Supply

(Tuesday, 20 July 2010) The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs today published its annual report on the supply of skills to the Irish labour market. The report, “Monitoring Ireland's Skills Supply: Trends in Education and Training Outputs”, highlights the increasing numbers of students entering and leaving the education and training system in Ireland. The report examines:

- The demographic profile of the school age population
- Junior and Leaving Cert trends
- Further education and training awards
- Higher education trends
- Where graduates go

Commenting on the report, Una Halligan, Chairperson of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs said “For the first time in the Monitoring Ireland’s Skills Supply series, we have taken a closer look at where graduates go from higher education. The key finding for third level graduates aged between 25 and 34 is that even in the current economic climate, 85% of them with an honours bachelor degree and above are at work. The overwhelming message here is that further education creates opportunities”.

The main findings are:

- There were almost 200,000 awards made in the academic year 2008/2009 across all levels on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)- a 2% rise on the preceding year.
- 84,000 people received awards in further education and training (major awards) and higher education.
- 31% of those were at NFQ level 8 (honours bachelor degree) which is almost the same as the previous year.
- 18% were postgraduate awards - a 4% increase on the previous year.
- The largest increase was for the number of FETAC (major) awards, which increased by almost 20%.
- Students are more likely than ever before to sit the Junior and Leaving Certificate examinations with retention rates of 94.6% and 81.3% respectively (based on the latest data from the Department of Education and Science).

- The numbers of older learners participating in further education and training or higher education has increased and this is set to continue.
- The share of FETAC award holders in the older age cohorts (aged 30 and over) made up 54% of the total in 2009, compared to 48% in 2007.
- The number of CAO acceptors aged 23 and over is also increasing.
- Part-time awards in higher education accounted for more than a fifth of the total in 2008; the share of part-time awards increased at all levels except level 8 which remained unchanged.
- There are promising signs for technology subjects at higher education, excluding construction
- CAO acceptances increased for computing, science and engineering which will impact positively on graduate output in the medium term.
- 1,100 PhD awards were made in 2008 - almost a 50% increase since 2004; almost 50% were in technology-related subjects.

Where do Graduates Go?

This report examined, for the first time, the economic status of young (aged 25-34) third level graduates (NFQ 8 and above) in Ireland.

Other findings include:

- Those with education qualifications of NFQ level 8 and above were most likely to be in employment - 92% were at work.
- 80% of engineering graduates were at work, compared to 90% in quarter 1 2008.
- Those with qualifications in engineering or construction were less likely than 1 year previously to work in this field; an increased share were working in science-related occupations, mainly as software engineers, in 2009.
- While 54% of science graduates work in the science sector, a further 10% work in education, almost exclusively as third level lecturers.

Numbers at school and college to grow significantly in the coming years

- There were over 65,000 junior infants in 2008 - this figure could rise by more than 10,000 by 2013 based on an increase in the number of births (13,600 more births in 2008 than 2003).
- Second level enrolments are expected to increase by 22,300, or 7%, by 2018, based on Department of Education and Science projections.
- Rising participation rates in higher education combined with increasing numbers of Leaving Certificate sittings should ensure further growth in CAO acceptances numbers, and subsequently graduate output, in the coming years.

In monitoring the skills supply that emerges from the education and training system in Ireland on an annual basis, the report serves as a valuable tool for the EGFSN's role in advising Government on the current and future skills needs of the economy and on other

labour market issues that impact on Ireland's enterprise and employment growth. This is of particular importance as, in the coming years, the education and training system in Ireland is expected to experience considerable growth as a result of recent increases in the number of school-going age children and greater participation by older learners, particularly in further and higher education and training.

"Monitoring Ireland's Skills Supply: Trends in Education and Training Outputs" is available to download at the EGFSN's website: www.skillsireland.ie .

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