

## Expert Group Provides a View of Ireland's Skills Supply and Demand

### Job opportunities highlighted for those with languages, ICT and sales skills

The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs today (Wednesday 25 July) has published two reports which together provide a view of both the supply and demand of skills in Ireland. *Monitoring Ireland's Skills Supply: Trends in Education and Training Outputs* is the Expert Group's annual report on the supply of skills to the Irish labour market and the *National Skills Bulletin*, provides a review of employment trends, job opportunities and demand for skills.

Speaking on the launch of the reports Ciarán Cannon, Minister for Training and Skills commented, "The two reports published today by the Expert Group provide us with a view of both sides of the Irish skills story. Ireland's workforce is one of our most significant competitive advantages and it is critically important that we continue to ensure our workforce is well aligned with the skills that employers need now and into the future. The Government has brought education and training to the heart of its Action Plan for Jobs and initiatives such as Springboard and the ICT Conversion Programme are targeted at delivering the skills needed by enterprise. Graduates from these programmes are available to industry and increasing numbers will qualify over the next 18 months."

Una Halligan, Chairperson, Expert Group on Future Skills Needs commented, "These two studies show some encouraging trends. There are more people than ever before engaging in education and training across almost all levels and an increasing number of people in the workforce continuing to add to their portfolio of skills throughout their working lives. There are job opportunities in certain sectors and for specific skills such as information and communications technologies, high-tech manufacturing particularly biopharma, the financial services sector, the health sector and for those with languages and sales skills. The EGFSN has specifically highlighted the need for the development of further high-level ICT skills and there are promising signs with higher level computing programmes seeing a 27% increase in the number of graduates at level 8 and a 37% increase at level 9 since 2009," said Halligan

"I would very much encourage those making career choices to focus on the areas of greatest job opportunities and to focus their education and training on specific skills needs in those areas," said Halligan.

The Expert Group, in its recent report on the skills for enterprises to trade internationally, highlighted the critical need to boost our performance in languages and international sales skills with a potential 2,200 jobs coming on stream in exporting companies over the coming years. "Foreign language capability and cultural awareness are essential. An improved supply of foreign languages capability, including German, French, Spanish and Italian as

well as Mandarin Chinese and Japanese, would be a major boost to enterprises in achieving their export potential. The statistics published today show that there are more students participating in ERASMUS courses overseas, which is to be welcomed, but we need to ensure that more continue to do so and especially that they study through foreign languages" said Halligan.

### Demand - Key Findings

- Over the period 2010 to 2011, the labour force and number of persons in employment contracted, although at a slower rate than a year ago, unemployment increased, and long term unemployment persisted at an elevated level.
- Being male, non-Irish national, younger than 25, holding lower secondary and below as the highest level of education attained and having worked in construction (in elementary or skilled trade occupations) continued to be characteristics associated with a relatively higher risk of unemployment.
- Job vacancies were most frequent for sales and related occupations, including marketing (especially digital marketing) and customer services roles. Vacancies also arose for IT professionals, science and engineering professionals, business professionals, administrative occupations, IT associate professionals, and personal care occupations.
- Demand for specialised skills sets was identified, although well below the levels recorded at the peak of economic activity in 2007. The level of excess demand is unlikely to be greater than several hundred (in terms of headcount) for the overall economy except for IT skills where the demand is greater especially for experienced personnel who are in demand and short supply globally.
- While employers continued to source skills from outside the EEA in 2011, the trend is towards a reduction in the overall number in relation to the previous year. ICT skills continued to account for the largest share of skills sourced abroad.

### Supply - Key Findings

- An increasing number of people are gaining awards across almost all levels of the National Framework of Qualifications, in 2011 there were in excess of 210,000 awards made, a 5% increase on the previous year.
- Almost 38,000 people received a major award in further education and training.
- There were more than 58,000 awards made in the higher education and training sector; they included:
  - More than 13,000 higher certificates/ordinary degrees (NFQ 6/7)
  - Almost 27,000 honours bachelor degrees (NFQ 8)
  - Almost 17,000 postgraduate certificates/diplomas and master degrees (NFQ 9)
  - More than 1,200 PhDs (NFQ 10)
- The field of social science, business and law had the largest number of awards with almost 25,000, spanning all levels of the NFQ
- Promising signs for computing at higher level with a 27% increase in the number of graduates at level 8 and a 37% increase at level 9 since 2009

- Although the overall number of young adults (aged 25-34) in the country declined between quarter 4 2009 and quarter 4 2011, the number of young third level graduates (NFQ 8 and above) in Ireland actually increased.
- While young level 8-10 graduates were most likely to be employed in professional occupations (46% of all third level graduates in the 25-34 age group), an increasing number are taking up lower skilled positions in the retail sector and to a lesser extent the health sector.
- In 2009/10, the number of outgoing ERASMUS students from Ireland reached their highest number to date: 2,128 students went abroad to study or work as part of their studies, mostly to France and Spain.
- Approximately 107,000 persons aged 25+ participated in lifelong learning (LLL) in quarter 4 2011, representing 4.4% of the adult population.
- Over the period quarter 4 2006 to quarter 4 2011, the number of LLL participants increased by 35% (or almost 28,000 learners)

ENDS

### About the EGFSN

The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) advises the Irish Government on current and future skills needs of the economy and on other labour market issues that impact on Ireland's enterprise and employment growth. It has a central role in ensuring that labour market needs for skilled workers are anticipated and met and provides guidance to Springboard, market activation calls in areas of future skills needs and conversion programmes.

The work of the EGFSN is managed by Forfás. The research and analysis conducted for the EGFSN is undertaken by the Skills and Labour Market Research Unit of FÁS and Forfás.

### Notes to Editors

*The National Skills Bulletin 2012* is the eighth annual report on skills and occupational trends in Ireland. The Bulletin draws on data on employment, vacancies, job announcements and immigration and other qualitative information held in the National Skills Database to identify imbalances in the Irish labour market at occupational level. The report is produced by the Skills and Labour Market Research Unit in FÁS on behalf of the EGFSN.

*Monitoring Ireland's Skills Supply: Trends in Education and Training Outputs 2012* examines the outputs from the Irish education and training system. This report provides data from a variety of sources on education and training outputs in all sectors of the formal education system in Ireland (primary, post-primary, further education and training, and higher education) across the ten levels of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

Together, the two publications provide an annual snapshot of the supply and demand for skills in the Irish labour market.

Copies of the National Skills Bulletin 2012 and Monitoring Ireland's Skills Supply: Trends in Education and Training Outputs 2012 can be downloaded from the EGFSN website [www.skillsireland.ie](http://www.skillsireland.ie)