

IRELAND

Summary

**Country Report on the Vocational Education and
Training system, REFERNET Cedefop**

and

**Summary report on Vocational Education and
Training (VET) for learners with Special
Educational Needs (SEN)**



CONTENTS

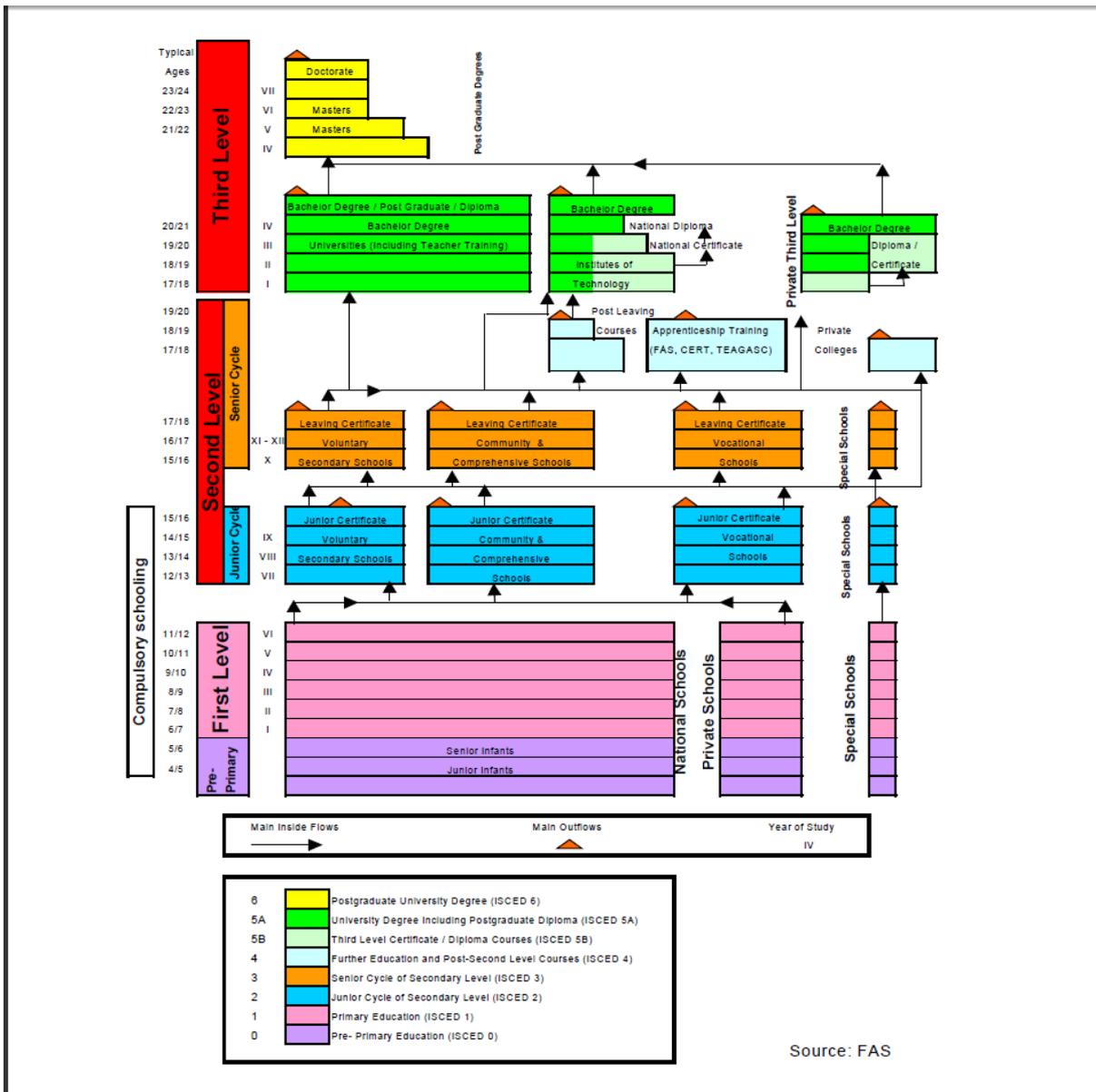
1 VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM	4
1.1 Diagram of the education and training system.....	4
1.2 Definitions.....	4
1.3 Objectives and priorities of the national policy development areas of VET.....	6
1.4 Institutional and legislative framework for IVET	6
1.5 Types of teacher and trainer occupations in VET	7
1.6 Systems and mechanisms for the anticipation of skill needs	7
1.7 Practices to match VET provision with skill needs	7
1.8 Guidance and counselling for learning, career and employment in IVET.....	8
1.9 Funding for initial vocational education and training	8
1.10 References	8
2 VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (VET) FOR LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS.....	9
2.1 Population	9
2.2 Organisation and Provision of VET programmes.....	9
2.2.1 <i>IVET system options for SEN learners: lower and upper secondary levels, apprenticeship training and other youth programmes.</i>	9
2.2.2 <i>Different types of educational/VET settings</i>	10
2.2.3 <i>The curricula of VET programmes, the assessment procedures, types of qualifications and assessment criteria (e.g. flexibility on curricula composition and individual adaptations, diplomas etc.)</i>	11
2.3 VET programmes and employment.....	11
2.3.1 <i>Strategies and practices used to match the local labour market needs with the skills acquired by learners in the course of the VET programmes</i>	11
2.4 Data (relating to learners with SEN aged between 14 and 25 years old and enrolled in VET programmes in the academic year 2010/2011 and relating to their transition to employment) 12	
2.4.1 <i>Data on the number of learners with SEN aged between 14 and 25 years old who are enrolled in VET programmes, at national and/or local level.</i>	12
2.4.2 <i>Data on how many of these learners are enrolled in mainstream VET programmes, how many are enrolled in special units within mainstream VET settings and how many are enrolled in special VET programmes.</i>	12
2.4.3 <i>Data on the number and percentage of learners with SEN aged between 14 and 25 who are enrolled in VET programmes, in comparison with the number and percentage of the general youth population of the same age enrolled in VET programmes, at national and/or local level.....</i>	12
2.4.4 <i>Brief definition and explanation of “drop out”. Data concerning the drop out rate of learners with SEN aged between 14 and 25 who are enrolled in VET programmes, in</i>	



<i>comparison with the drop out rate of the general youth population, at national and/or local level.</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>2.4.5 Data on the transition rate of learners with SEN from VET to employment in comparison with the transition rate of the general youth population from VET to employment at national and/or local level</i>	<i>13</i>
2.5 Legislation and policy	13
<i>2.5.1 Brief description of existing legislation</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>2.5.2 Main objectives and priorities of the national/regional policy relating to VET for learners with SEN and the transition from VET to employment</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>2.5.3 Roles and responsibilities within the institutional framework.....</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>2.5.4 The actors involved in improving standards and evaluating the VET programmes on offer for learners with SEN, relating to the job market.....</i>	<i>14</i>
2.6. VET teachers, trainers and other professionals	15
<i>2.6.1 Information on the VET staff (teachers, trainers, career counsellors, transition officers etc.)</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>2.6.2 Information on the careers/employment guidance and counselling services offered to learners with SEN who are enrolled in VET programmes</i>	<i>15</i>
2.7 Funding	16

1 VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM

1.1 Diagram of the education and training system



1.2 Definitions

Vocational education and training during compulsory education



Lower secondary education (the junior cycle) consists of a three-year programme from 12 to 15/16 years. It is provided in (voluntary) secondary, vocational, community and comprehensive schools. Vocational schools are administered by vocational education committees while community and comprehensive schools are managed by boards of management composed of relevant community interests. Schools provide a variety of additional subjects such as modern languages, art, music, home economics, materials technology (wood), woodwork, metalwork and technical graphics. All junior cycle students follow a social, personal and health education programme. Guidance and counselling is provided as well as physical education.

Vocational education and training after compulsory education. At the end of compulsory schooling, the majority of students proceed to upper secondary education (the senior cycle). This consists of an (optional) transition year followed by one of three versions of the two-year Leaving certificate programme. The transition year focuses on active learning, which emphasises personal and interpersonal development and experiential learning opportunities. Students are encouraged to explore their own particular academic, leisure, career and vocational interests as well as developing greater personal, social and cultural awareness of school, community and wider issues. Among the three options, there is the traditional Leaving certificate programme and the Leaving certificate vocational programme (LCVP), both accepted basis for entry into third level education institutions. The LCVP is more vocationally oriented and it required to follow two activity-driven (link) modules – Enterprise education and Preparation for the world of work. These are designed to develop communication skills, research and report writing and team working. The use of active teaching and learning methodologies is encouraged across the LCVP curriculum. The Leaving certificate applied (LCA) programme is a separate, distinct and innovative programme designed for those who do not wish to take the direct route to third level education. Key principles underlying the programme are activity-based learning and teaching and maximising the student's involvement with the local community.

-Youthreach: Youthreach is a joint initiative between the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. It provides two years integrated education, training and work experience for young people aged 15 to 20 years, who have left school early without qualifications or vocational training. These comprise about 7 % of the age group. (a) a foundation phase to help overcome learning difficulties, develop self-confidence and a range of competences essential for further learning; (b) a progression phase which provides more specific development through a range of education, training and work experience options. Courses are full-time, of 35 hours duration per week and available on a year-round basis. A training allowance is paid to participants and training focuses on personal development with a strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy, work experience and vocational skills (e.g. hairdressing, catering, woodwork and metalwork) and new technology skills.

Alternating training

- **Apprenticeship** is the recognised means by which people are trained to become craft persons. An apprenticeship normally lasts four years. On successful completion of training an apprentice receives the National craft certificate awarded by FETAC (Further Education and

Training Awards Council). The curricula for apprenticeships are based on uniform pre-specified standards which are agreed with industry. They are written by experts nominated by employers, trade unions, the Department of Education and Science and FÁS.



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

1.3 Objectives and priorities of the national policy development areas of VET

Some of the areas where there have been debates are:

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

Trends:

- Skills anticipation mechanisms: Increasingly, the requirements of the national system of certification are demanding that training/education organisations align their courses in a systematic manner to identified needs. The Expert Group on Future Skill Needs was established in 1998 by the Government in the context of increasing concerns about labour and skill shortages in Ireland. The Expert Group provides a research and coordination mechanism at national level and reports jointly to the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and the Minister for Education and Science. It contains representatives of the social partners, government departments, industrial development organisations and education/training bodies.

1.4 Institutional and legislative framework for IVET

Government:

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

-The Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment has responsibility for policies to upgrade

the skills and competencies of the adult population within a framework of lifelong learning. Policy implementation issues are addressed by government ministries, known as departments, in consultation with the social partners. National forums to facilitate these processes have supported enhanced collaboration between education, training, industry and community interests, and local structures (e.g. county/

National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI). The main focus of this body is the establishment of a national framework of qualifications for non-university education awards at further and higher level, taking account of education, training, social partner, voluntary organisation and learner interests. Two award councils have been set up under the provisions of the Act; FETAC, the Further Education and Training Awards Council, and HETAC, the Higher Education and Training Awards Council.



Vocational education committees (VECs) are statutory committees of county councils and other local authorities. There is a VEC for each county and county borough in Ireland - 33 in total.

CERT (since 2003 Fáilte Ireland) is responsible for training and recruitment in the tourism industry. It provides either directly, or in cooperation with institutes of technology, initial vocational training, training for unemployed people and support for continuing training in the tourism sector. **Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM)** provides training for the fishing industry. **Teagasc** is the state agency responsible for training in the agricultural sector.

Policies:

- The Equality Act 1998 extended equality legislation and an Equality Authority was established to address issues in this area resulting in additional emphasis on equality issues in the education and training arena.
- The Education Act 1998 makes provision for the education of every person in the State, including any person with a disability or who has other special educational needs and generally for primary, post-primary, adult and continuing education and vocational, education and training.
- National Training Fund Act (2000) funding apprenticeship
- The Education Welfare Act, 2000 provides a framework for promoting regular school attendance and tackling problems of absenteeism and early school leaving.
- The Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999, set up structures for a national framework of qualifications and came into full force in June 2001

1.5 Types of teacher and trainer occupations in VET

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

1.6 Systems and mechanisms for the anticipation of skill needs

The Expert Group provides a research and coordination mechanism at national level and reports jointly to the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and the Minister for Education and Science. It contains representatives of the social partners, government departments, industrial development organisations and education/training bodies. It has undertaken research on a wide range of skill areas including ICT, engineering, biotechnology, construction, pharmaceuticals, e-business, research and the labour market as a whole. Its recommendations have been influential in increasing public investment in ICT and other scientific fields. **Education and training organisations** use a mixture of formal consultation, informal feedback and research to identify future skill needs. **FÁS** has a long established planning and research department. It has carried out a series of studies on employment trends and skills developments

1.7 Practices to match VET provision with skill needs

Community employment for the long-term unemployed and other socially-disadvantaged groups (e.g. persons with disabilities and lone parents). Part-time



employment for one year is provided through a wide range of voluntary and community (non-profit) organisations. Community employment has been successful in providing work and training to many persons and a significant minority of them have gained 'normal' employment or proceeded to further education or training.

The Vocational training opportunities scheme (VTOS) provides second chance education and training for adults aged 21 or more, who have been receiving an unemployment payment for at least six months.

1.8 Guidance and counselling for learning, career and employment in IVET

Guidance services in Ireland are both education and labour market based, located within educational institutions and in employment services offices. Guidance forms part of the curriculum in senior cycle through the Transition year programme (TYP), Leaving certificate applied (LCA) and Leaving certificate vocational programme (LCVP)

The National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE), an agency of the Department of Education and Science, supports and develops guidance practice in all areas of education and contributes to policy formation in the field of guidance.

1.9 Funding for initial vocational education and training

- The State is the dominant funder of all **initial vocational training (IVT)** carried out within the education system. The European social fund provides a significant level of support, while a small amount is raised from individuals and business sources. In the case of vocational schools the funds go to the VECs which distribute them to the vocational schools under their responsibility. There is an annual application process in which schools and VECs apply to the Department of Education and Science and are issued with an approval to provide a certain number of places. Funding is allocated using a formula based on a standard pupil-teacher ratio.
- Funding for **apprenticeship** comes from the government, employers and, indirectly, apprentices themselves.

1.10 References

Cedefop The vocational education and training system in Ireland . Short description (2004): Panorama Series 83. Luxembourg: Office for official publications of the European communities.



2 VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (VET) FOR LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

2.1 Population

A child should be afforded support based on their health or educational needs as outlined by the Disability Act, 2005, Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act, 2004, or Equality Acts (2000 – 2004). Transition issues for people with disabilities should not be affected by the differing definitions in the legislation outlined above. For example, a child with a severe disability will most likely come into contact with the health service prior to entering the education system. This child's needs should be addressed, in the context of provisions and rights afforded under the Disability Act, by the Department of Health and Children or the HSE. When that child enters the school system, supports are then co-ordinated (in respect of the EPSEN Act) between the original service provider and the education system, via the Department of Education and Skills or the National Council for Educational Needs (NCSE) up to the age of 18 years. This is to ensure that the child can participate in the education system according to their specific needs and ability. Having completed post-primary education any student transitioning to Vocational Education and Training should receive supports from the course provider. Funding structures and sources for additional supports for students on post-secondary VET programmes are more diverse.

2.2 Organisation and Provision of VET programmes

2.2.1 IVET system options for SEN learners: lower and upper secondary levels, apprenticeship training and other youth programmes.

The post-primary sector consists of secondary, vocational, community and comprehensive schools. Secondary schools are privately owned and managed. The trustees of the majority of these schools are religious communities or Boards of Governors. Vocational schools are administered by Vocational Education Committees (VECs) while community and comprehensive schools are managed by Boards of Management of differing compositions.. Second-level education is based on two cycles, the junior cycle and senior cycle. The senior cycle can be completed over two or three years, depending on participation in Transition Year, culminating in the Leaving Certificate examination. Students can choose from three different Leaving Certificate Programmes:

- **The Established Leaving Certificate** is a two-year programme that aims to provide learners with a broad, balanced education while also offering some specialisation towards a particular career option.
- **The Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP)** can be described as a Leaving Certificate with a strong vocational dimension. It provides students with the opportunity to realise their potential for self-directed learning, for innovation and for enterprise.
- **The Leaving Certificate Applied** is a distinct, self-contained, 2-year Leaving Certificate programme aimed at preparing students for adult and working life. The programme puts an emphasis on forms of achievement and excellence which the established Leaving Certificate had not recognised in the past. The framework of the Leaving Certificate Applied consists of a number of modules grouped under three general headings:
 - General Education
 - Vocational Education



- Vocational Preparation

Further education colleges are post-primary schools that specialise in post-secondary vocational education and training. The vast majority of these colleges are in the VEC sector. They offer a range of full-time and part-time VET programmes to people who may not have completed secondary education and/or who want to advance their skills or opportunities for employment or higher education. The main type of programme in this area is the Post-Leaving Certificate (PLC) course. It is aimed at students who have completed post-primary education and wish to obtain the knowledge, skills and competence necessary to gain employment. Another type of full-time programme is the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) for adults who are over 21 years and are unemployed.

All programmes are required to be accessible to people with disabilities and SEN. In general, there are no post-secondary programmes within the education sector specifically targeted at people with disabilities/SEN. Some specialist provision occurs within the Disability Sector which is in receipt of state funding.

YOUTHREACH is an integral part of the national programme of second-chance education and training in Ireland and is a central part of the Government's contribution to the achievement of a lifelong learning society. The programme is directed at unemployed young early school leavers aged 15-20. It offers participants the opportunity to identify and pursue viable options within adult life, and provides them with opportunities to acquire certification. It operates on a full-time, year-round basis. Some funding is provided for an SEN Initiative within this programme.

2.2.2 Different types of educational/VET settings

All of the programmes identified in the answer to Q2 above are mainstream VET programmes required to facilitate the inclusion learners with SEN.

Outside of the education system VET provision would include:

Vocational Training

Funded by FÁS, this training aims to equip students with skills for the workforce such as computer skills, business and administration, catering. Training is provided in a variety of innovative ways: centre-based learning where students attend a training centre on a daily basis; employer-based training where students learn employable skills while based with a local company; and distance learning where students pursue their studies from their own home with regular support from instructors.

Rehabilitative Training

This HSE-funded training aims to develop foundation skills to equip people to progress to further education or employment. Often students engaged in Rehabilitative Training will have experienced mental health difficulty or acquired a disability or will be early school-leavers and will require additional supports to enable them to progress towards employment or further training and education.

Specialist Training Providers

FÁS contracts with 20 Specialist Training Providers (STPs), such as the National Learning Network, in 55 centres to deliver vocational training to disabled people who require more intensive support than would be available in the general options. This training is provided exclusively to people with disabilities within a segregated setting. It is envisaged that the Specialist Training Providers will deliver on more than half of the target laid out by the



Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment's (DETE's) strategy to employ more than 7,000 people with disabilities by 2010.

- National Learning Network,⁷³ the training and employment division of Rehab Group, is Ireland's leading non-government provider of inclusive training, education and employment access services, offering innovative training options in over 50 locations around the country. Every year, the organisation provides vocational and rehabilitative training to more than 5,000 people with disabilities, people with mental health difficulties and others who are distant from the labour market.

Certificate in Contemporary Living (Trinity College Dublin in collaboration with University College Cork). The National Institute for Intellectual Disability (NIID) in Trinity College has pioneered the Certificate in Contemporary Living course for students with intellectual disabilities. It comprises ten modules that cover the areas of liberal arts, expressive arts, career development and vocational skills.

2.2.3 The curricula of VET programmes, the assessment procedures, types of qualifications and assessment criteria (e.g. flexibility on curricula composition and individual adaptations, diplomas etc.)

The vast majority of state funded VET programmes in Ireland are certified by a statutory agency, the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) (www.fetac.ie), from levels 1 to 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications (www.nfq.ie). It is a requirement of both FETAC and the Department of Education and Skills that all VET programmes are subject to on-going review and evaluation to ensure that the content of the programmes remains relevant to the skills needs of the economy and is in keeping with the National Skills Strategy.

The Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) can be described as a Leaving Certificate with a strong vocational dimension. It provides students with the opportunity to realise their potential for self-directed learning, for innovation and for enterprise. For more information see <http://lcvp.slss.ie/>

The Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) is a distinct, self-contained, 2-year Leaving Certificate programme aimed at preparing students for adult and working life. The programme puts an emphasis on forms of achievement and excellence which the established Leaving Certificate had not recognised in the past. The framework of the Leaving Certificate Applied consists of a number of modules grouped under three general headings:

- General Education
- Vocational Education
- Vocational Preparation

For more information see <http://lca.slss.ie/>

2.3 VET programmes and employment

2.3.1 Strategies and practices used to match the local labour market needs with the skills acquired by learners in the course of the VET programmes

The vast majority of state funded VET programmes in Ireland are certified by a statutory agency, the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) (www.fetac.ie), from levels 1 to 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications (www.nfq.ie). It is a requirement of both FETAC and the Department of Education and Skills that all VET programmes are subject to on-going review and evaluation to ensure that the content of the programmes



remains relevant to the skills needs of the economy and is in keeping with the National Skills Strategy.

See: Guidelines for Alignment of Further Education Programmes with Skills Needs of Enterprise, Forfás, 2012 – this report was commissioned by the Further Education Section of the Department of Education and Skills.

2.4 Data (relating to learners with SEN aged between 14 and 25 years old and enrolled in VET programmes in the academic year 2010/2011 and relating to their transition to employment)

2.4.1 Data on the number of learners with SEN aged between 14 and 25 years old who are enrolled in VET programmes, at national and/or local level.

The Annual Youthreach Survey is based on returns from VECs. There is a disability indicator which is based on the opinion of the co-ordinator which may or may not be based on a formal diagnosis or report. The 2011 survey indicates that almost 8% of Youthreach participants had a disability.

	Male	Female	Total
Youthreach Learners with a disability	169	86	255

In 2010/2011, just over 2% of Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) participants received assistance from the Fund for Students with Disabilities.

	Male	Female	Total
PLC learners availing of the FSD	334	401	735

2.4.2 Data on how many of these learners are enrolled in mainstream VET programmes, how many are enrolled in special units within mainstream VET settings and how many are enrolled in special VET programmes.

These learners are enrolled in mainstream programmes.

2.4.3 Data on the number and percentage of learners with SEN aged between 14 and 25 who are enrolled in VET programmes, in comparison with the number and percentage of the general youth population of the same age enrolled in VET programmes, at national and/or local level

Youthreach learners are between 15-20 years of age. PLC learners must be at least over 16 years of age. The figures given at question 4 above are in comparison with total participation of 3,692 in Youthreach, and 36,538 in PLC.

2.4.4 Brief definition and explanation of “drop out”. Data concerning the drop out rate of learners with SEN aged between 14 and 25 who are enrolled in VET programmes, in comparison with the drop out rate of the general youth population, at national and/or local level.

Not available



2.4.5 Data on the transition rate of learners with SEN from VET to employment in comparison with the transition rate of the general youth population from VET to employment at national and/or local level

Not available

2.5 Legislation and policy

2.5.1 Brief description of existing legislation

- **The Employment Equality Act 1998** was the first Irish legislation to prohibit discrimination in employment or vocational training on any of nine grounds, including disability.
- **The Education Act 1998** deals with education generally, but also emphasises the rights of children with disabilities and special educational needs. The Education (Welfare) Act (2000) focuses on ensuring that children receive a certain minimum education as required by the Irish Constitution.
- **The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act (2004)** aims to ensure that a person with special educational needs can be educated where possible in an inclusive environment.
- **The Equal Status Act (2000-2004)** relates mainly to the provision of services including education. The Act also prohibits discrimination on nine grounds including disability and requires the provision of reasonable accommodation to persons with a disability.
- Section 4.1.5 the DETE, under the provisions of the **Disability Act (2005)**: The key focus of the plan is 'to facilitate and improve access to vocational training, employment programmes and open labour market employment opportunities for people with disabilities'
- **Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999**

2.5.2 Main objectives and priorities of the national/regional policy relating to VET for learners with SEN and the transition from VET to employment

The **Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (DJEI)** has responsibility for developing quality employment and national competitiveness in Ireland. A unit of the DJEI, the Employment Services Policy Unit, oversees, through strategic measures, the re-integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market. This includes promoting the social and economic inclusion of people currently excluded from the labour market.

The National Action Plan for Social Inclusion, published in 2007, set a high level goal to promote 'equal opportunities for people with disabilities in the open labour market supported by enhanced vocational training, employment programmes and further development of supports'. The plan set a target in which the overall participation rate in education, training and employment will be increased to 50% by 2016.

The Irish Government launched a **National Disability Strategy in 2004**. This brings together the various strands of strategic policy outlined in this Section. Work on the National Disability Strategy is being co-ordinated by the National Disability Authority (NDA). The NDA is an independent statutory agency established under the aegis of the Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform by the National Disability Authority Act (1999). Towards 2016 – Ten-year Framework on Social Partnership.

One of the key social policy documents for Ireland is **Towards 2016 – Ten-year Framework Social Partnership Agreement 2006-2015**. The framework outlines a vision of Ireland for the future, namely a 'dynamic, internationalised, and participatory society and economy, with a strong commitment to social justice, where economic development is environmentally sustainable and internationally competitive'.



2.5.3 Roles and responsibilities within the institutional framework

The National Disability Strategy builds on existing policy and legislation, including the policy of mainstreaming public services for people with disabilities. It has been endorsed in the social partnership agreement Towards 2016.

The key elements of the strategy are:

- Implementation of the Disability Act (2005);
- The Citizens Information Act (2007) which equips the Citizens Information Board (formerly Comhairle) to provide a personal advocacy service for people with disabilities;
- Implementation of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004);
- Implementation of sectoral plans prepared by six government departments;
- A multi-annual investment programme worth €900m targeted at high-priority disability support services to run until 2009.

Part 3 of the Disability Act 2005 requires six government departments to prepare plans (known as sectoral plans) that set out how they will deliver specific services for people with disabilities. Those departments are:

- Health and Children
- Social and Family Affairs
- Transport
- Communications, Marine and Natural Resources
- Environment, Heritage and Local Government
- Enterprise, Trade and Employment.

People with disabilities, their families, carers, advocates and service providers were consulted on the plans before they were finalised for submission to the Oireachtas (Parliament). Each plan includes arrangements for complaints, monitoring and review procedures. The Oireachtas approved the six sectoral plans in October 2006, and the plans were published in December 2006. The sectoral plans are due to be reviewed by the end of 2009.

A Centre for Excellence in Universal Design was established as part of the implementation of the Disability Act (2005). Its role is to promote a more inclusive environment that can be readily used, accessed and understood, without the need for further adaptation, by people of any age, size, ability or disability. The centre promotes Universal Design through the development of new standards, collaboration with educational establishments on including it in the curricula and working with key stakeholders on the benefits of a universal design approach.

2.5.4 The actors involved in improving standards and evaluating the VET programmes on offer for learners with SEN, relating to the job market

www.workway.ie

This is a joint initiative between the Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC) and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU). The initiative has been developed to promote the employment of people with disabilities in the private sector. Detailed



information guidelines are provided to employees and employers in relation to a range of issues related to disability and the workplace.

2.6. VET teachers, trainers and other professionals

2.6.1 Information on the VET staff (teachers, trainers, career counsellors, transition officers etc.)

The Department of Education and Science has developed a **Special Education Support Service (SESS) for teachers**. This service provides training to school staff in respect of providing expert support, professional development and training opportunities in special education.

The visiting teachers provide advice and assistance in relation to the education of children with a visual or hearing impairment at the pre-school, primary and post-primary school levels. Support is provided to the children themselves, their parents, and the schools. Assistance is made available also in the context of the transition of a child from primary to post-primary school. The visiting teachers provide advice to schools on the inclusion of these children in learning programmes and in other school activities. Specific advice can be provided in relation to increasing the child's access to education through the use of assistive technology. Visiting teachers can also assist with the making of applications to the Department of Education and Science for grants for assistive technology.

2.6.2 Information on the careers/employment guidance and counselling services offered to learners with SEN who are enrolled in VET programmes

- **Disability support service** The Disability Support Service (DSS) is a partnership between the National Learning Network and the City of Dublin Vocational Educational Committee (VEC) which offers a wide range of supports to students with disabilities in eight colleges of further education in Dublin. The emphasis of all National Learning Network training courses and supports is on progression and it has been highly successful in supporting individuals with disabilities to progress to employment and further education. It does this by building very strong links with local employers and by supporting students to engage in work experience which often leads to long-term employment.
- **Supported Employment Programme.** This is an open labour market initiative providing people with disabilities, who are 'job-ready', with supports to help them access the open labour market. It is implemented by sponsor organisations on behalf of FÁS who employ Job Coaches to provide a range of supports tailored to the individual needs of a jobseeker. Individuals who participate on this programme must achieve a minimum 8 hours work per week, by 6 months into the Programme. Supports are provided for a maximum of 18 months.
- **Transitions** from education to employment require a number of workplace-based supports for people with disabilities. The DJEI oversees the re-integration of those excluded from the labour market. The DETE (as part of the Disability Act) is currently implementing a Sectoral Plan, the key focus being 'to facilitate and improve access to vocational training, employment programmes and open labour market employment opportunities for people with disabilities'.⁴ This task is complemented by FÁS (the training and employment authority in Ireland). FÁS operates training and employment programmes, provides a recruitment service to jobseekers and employers, an advisory service for industry, and supports community-based enterprises with mainstreamed services for disabled people.
- **Specialist Training Providers** deliver vocational training to people with disabilities who require intensive support. The Supported Employment Programme is an open labour market initiative providing people with disabilities, who are 'job-ready', with



supports to help them access the open labour market. **The Disability Awareness Training Support Scheme** assists the integration of disabled people into the workplace and is available to all companies in the private sector who are interested in employing, retaining or relating to people with disabilities.

- **National learning network**

As we have seen in the previous Chapter of this report, the National Learning Network works to assist people with disabilities in relation to the labour market and employment. This is provided through specific training courses and information provided on accessing the labour market for those who are disadvantaged and require further training and advice.

There are also **non-governmental/non-profit organisations** which provide education and employment services for people with disabilities. The National Learning Network provides education and employment services around the country. Each year, the organisation provides vocational and rehabilitative training to more than 5,000 people with disabilities, people with mental health difficulties and others who are distant from the labour market. Willing Able Mentoring is an initiative of the Association of Higher Education Access and Disability and is funded through the EU Equal initiative. This project, which aims to accelerate the transition of graduates with disabilities into the labour market, arranges work placements in a number of companies and organisations in the public and private sectors

2.7 Funding

Table 6.7 Expenditure on Disability-related FÁS Programmes

Programme	2008 €m	2007 €m	2006 €m	2005 €m	2004 €m	2003 €m	2002 €m	2001 €m	2000 €m
Specialist Training Providers	55.19	52	49.37	44.88	42.4	39.79	39.21	28.91	14.57
Employment Support Schemes	-	-	-	Incorporated in - WSS	3.13	2.9	2.64	2.44	1.37
Pilot Employment Programme	-	-	-	Incorporated in - WSS	1.93	1.95	1.95	2.08	0.96
Wage Subsidy Scheme (WSS)	9.42	7.61	6.69	4.88	0	0	0	0	0
Supported Employment Programme	8.57	8.25	7.68	6.57	6.47	6.12	5.85	3.95	0
Disability Support Awareness	0.83	0.48	1.07	0.49	1.23	0.95	0.41	0.22	0.09
Total	74.03	68.32	64.81	54.82	55.16	51.71	50.06	37.6	16.99

- **Expenditure on Disability Employment Supports.** A total of €74m was allocated by FÁS for employment-based supports for people with disabilities in 2008.72 Table 6.7 outlines the expenditure, over a period of eight years, on FÁS programmes for people with disabilities. The expenditure has increased significantly in the intervening period, from €17m in 2000 to €74m in 2008 reflecting the level of support being provided to people with disabilities who are seeking to access the labour market.
- The Disability Awareness Training Support Scheme: The increase in funding this programme from €14m in 2000 to €74m in 2008 reflects the level of support and commitment to people with disabilities who are seeking to access the labour market.
- Government financial support schemes are also available to people with disabilities looking to re-enter the workforce. Eligible people can apply for the Back to Work Allowance (BTWA) or the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance (BTWEA), the latter



being for the self-employed. These schemes are administered by the Department of Social and Family Affairs and allow people to enter the workforce while retaining a percentage of their original welfare payment (e.g. disability allowance) which is not subject to taxation or social insurance. Employees would also be allowed to retain their 'secondary benefits' (e.g. fuel allowance, medical card) for a specified amount of time.

- **Disability Awareness Training Support Scheme:** supports available which is not part of Reasonable Accommodation Fund, which assists the integration of disabled people into the workplace and helps to eliminate mistaken perceptions about them. It is available to all companies in the private sector who are interested in employing, retaining or relating to people with disabilities. Funding of up to 90% of training costs is available in the first year and up to 80% of costs in subsequent years with an annual limit of €20,000 payable to an organisation. To avail of this funding, however, training must be carried out by a FÁS approved training organisation.
- **The Personal Reader Grant** is available to blind or visually-impaired persons who are in employment and who need a Personal Reader to assist them with job-related reading. Such reading is part of the employee's duties but due to the nature of their visual impairment they cannot perform reading duties themselves. The grant to be paid will be based on a fee per hour, in line with minimum wage. Where there is a requirement for technically-qualified readers, the fee to be paid will be looked at on an individual basis and may be higher.
- **The Job Interview/Induction Interpreter Grant** is available to cover the costs of an interpreter up to a maximum of €106.68 for a 3-hour period for interview and induction purposes where an interviewee or new staff member is deaf, hard of hearing or has a speech impediment.
- **Workplace Equipment Adaptation Grant**

This is available to employers in the private sector who need to adapt equipment or the workplace to accommodate a disabled employee. The maximum grant provided is €6,350 and covers minor building modifications such as ramps or accessible toilets; assistive Employee Retention Grant Scheme

This is available to private sector employers when an employee develops a disability whether occupational or not. It provides funding to identify accommodation or training to enable the employee to remain in their current position or to re-train to take up another position within the organisation. There are two stages to the Scheme;

- Assessment, 90% of the costs of developing a retention strategy can be funded to a maximum of €2,500. technology; amplifiers for telephones, etc.

- Implementation, 90% of eligible programme costs can be funded to a maximum of €12,500.

Wage Subsidy Scheme: this scheme provides financial incentives to employers, outside the public sector, to employ people with disabilities who work more than 20 hours per week. The Scheme is structured in three strands. The employer can benefit from one or all, simultaneously.

Department of Education and Science provides a **school transport service** through Bus Éireann for students with special educational needs in both primary and post-primary schools. Applications for special transport are made through the Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO) who has been allocated



responsibility for the school. If a special transport system is not available, a grant may be applied to help with the cost of private transport. Approximately €50m was spent on school transport for students with special educational needs in 2007.

PLC

Approximately €166m is spent annually in delivering the Post Leaving Certificate programme. This funding is inclusive of tuition, capitation, assessment and student support costs. It also includes supports provided to PLC participants from the Fund for Students with Disabilities.

Youthreach

The Youthreach programme provides two years integrated education, training and work experience for unemployed early school leavers without any qualifications or vocational training who are between 15 and 20 years of age.

There are almost 6,000 places available nationwide under the Youthreach umbrella. The programme is funded by the Department of Education and Skills. Almost 3,700 of these places are provided by VECs in Youthreach centres. The majority of the remainder of places are provided by FÁS in Community Training Centres.

Youthreach Guidance, Counselling and Psychological (GCP) Services

The GCP service is used in Youthreach to prioritise from a spectrum of needs ranging from initial orientation and guidance and vocational information to psychological services.

Special Educational Needs Initiative (SENI) in Youthreach

Under the SENI, 20 VEC Youthreach centres receive an additional allocation of hours to enable them to deal with the special educational needs of learners as well as provide staff training, case supervision and professional support for staff.

The 2011 spend on the Youthreach programme and support measures was:

Youthreach €71.4m

Youthreach GCP €1.0m and

Youthreach SEN €1.6m

Others:

BANK OF RESOURCES

Regional Assessment and Resource Centre (Athlone Institute of Technology and partner institutions).