

Annual Implementation Report 2018

Implementation of Ireland's Operational Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020



Citizens' Summary



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

INTRODUCTION

Background

Ireland's Operational Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL) was launched in April 2015 (approved by the European Commission in February 2015). The Programme sets out a framework for the allocation of a total of €1.157 billion over the period 2014-2020, comprising €544.5 million from the European Social Fund (ESF), an equal amount from the Exchequer and just over €68 million from the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI).

Building on the positive contribution made by the earlier Human Capital Investment Operational Programme (HCIOP) 2007-2013, the PEIL focuses investment in a number of key areas. These areas revolve around activation of the unemployed, improving social and labour market inclusion, enhancing education attainment, and tackling youth employment. It is expected that the allocated funding will help to provide our labour force, and in particular the unemployed, with the skills, experience and qualifications necessary to avail of job opportunities as we emerge from the financial crisis.

This Citizens' Summary accompanies the PEIL Annual Implementation Report (AIR) for 2018 which was submitted to the European Commission in accordance with the relevant Regulations on 28th June 2019. It is the third Citizens' Summary produced under PEIL and summarise the activities under the PEIL during 2018.

Structure of the Operational Programme

The PEIL OP is comprised of the following thematic objectives from the ESF Regulation No. 1304/2013, (Article 3):

- **Priority 1:** Promoting the attainment of sustainable and quality employment through relevant upskilling measures and supporting labour mobility (*Article 3.1(a)*).
- **Priority 2:** Promoting Social Inclusion and combating discrimination in the labour market (*Article 3.1(b)*).
- **Priority 3:** Investing in Education, Training and Life Long Learning with a view to upskilling and re-skilling the labour force (*Article 3.1(c)*).
- **Priority 4:** Youth Employment Initiative (*Article 3.1 (a) (ii)*).
- **Priority 5:** Technical Assistance

There are 20+ specific activities within the first four priority investments, while the Technical Assistance priority deals with the operation and administration of the overall programme. The Priority Axes are as follows –

[Priority 1: Promoting the attainment of sustainable and quality employment through relevant upskilling measures and supporting labour mobility](#)

€419.728 million or 36% of the total funding allocated to the Programme, is assigned to Priority 1, which is intended to tackle unemployment and enhance labour mobility. Activities within this Priority Axis include –

- ***ETB Training for the Unemployed:*** Provides a range of vocational training courses to meet the needs of unemployed persons or other job-seekers.
- ***Springboard:*** Provides part-time flexible higher education opportunities to reskill or upskill unemployed or previously self-employed people in areas where there are identified skills shortages and where sustainable employment opportunities may arise as the economy recovers.
- ***ICT Skills Conversion Course:*** Provides graduates from other skills areas with the opportunity to upskill or reskill through 1 year full- time Conversion Programmes in core computing/programming skills.
- ***Intra-EU Mobility:*** This activity supports EURES Ireland, which promotes labour mobility across the EU.

[Priority 2: Promoting social inclusion and combating discrimination in the labour market](#)

€297.616 million, or 26% of the total funding allocated to the Programme, is assigned

to Priority 2 to support active inclusion measures, to promote equal opportunities and to combat discrimination. Activities within this Priority Axis include –

- ***Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP)***: Tackles poverty and social exclusion in local communities.
- ***Youthreach***: Provides education, training and work experience for early school leavers.
- ***Garda Youth Diversion Projects***: Supports young people at risk of/or involved in criminal and/or anti-social behaviour.
- ***Young Persons Probation Projects***: Engages with young offenders in local communities.
- ***Disability Project (Ability Programme)***: a pre-activation programme for young people with disabilities.
- ***Integration and Employment of Migrants***: Promotes active inclusion and enhanced employment possibilities for vulnerable legally resident migrants.
- ***Tus Nua Project***: Promotes independent living and positive reintegration into the community for women leaving prison and women offenders referred from the community.
- ***Gender Equality***: Supports women wanting to return to the labour market and women entrepreneurs.

Priority 3: Investing in Education, Training and Life Long Learning with a view to upskilling and re-skilling the labour force

€215.4 million, or 19% of the total funding allocated to the Programme, is assigned to this Priority Axis to promote lifelong learning through the following activities –

- ***Third-Level Access***: Enhances 3rd level attainment by disadvantaged students and students with disabilities.
- ***Back to Education Initiative (BTEI)***: Provides part-time learning opportunities for those with less than second level education.
- ***Adult Literacy***: Provides increased access to literacy, numeracy and language tuition for adults.

Priority 4: Youth Employment Initiative

€204.4 million, or 18% of the total funding allocated to the Programme, is assigned to this Priority Axis. The purpose of the YEI is to tackle youth unemployment and implement the Youth Guarantee by providing job, education and training opportunities to young people aged 15-24 who are not in employment, education or training (NEET). YEI funding is reserved for use in those regions, including Ireland, where youth unemployment levels exceeded 25% during the reference year of 2012.

The specific YEI funding allocation for Ireland of €68 million is matched by equal amounts from our European Social Fund (ESF) allocation and from the Exchequer, giving an overall allocation of €204 million.

A new activity, entitled the Youth Employment Support Scheme (YESS), commenced in mid-2018. This replaced JobBridge, which ceased in 2016.

The following activities are now funded under Priority Axis 4 for NEET , (it should be noted that some activities not all of these activities are aimed exclusively at under-25s):

- ***Back to Work Enterprise Allowance Scheme (BTWEA)***: Promotes the self-employment prospects of long-term social welfare recipients.
- ***JobsPlus Incentive Scheme***: Incentivises employers to offer employment opportunities to the long term unemployed.
- ***Youthreach***: Provides education, training and work experience for early school leavers.
- ***Community Training Centres (CTCs)***: Provides early school leavers with the knowledge, skills and confidence to participate in society and progress to further education, training and employment.
- ***Defence Forces Employment Support Scheme***: Exerts a positive influence on participants with the specific aim of equipping them with life skills and other marketable and certifiable skills
- ***Youth Employment Support Scheme (YESS)***: To raise the skills and education levels of people eligible for support under YEI, by providing education, training, work experience and/or work opportunities, including support for self-employment.

Priority 5: Technical Assistance

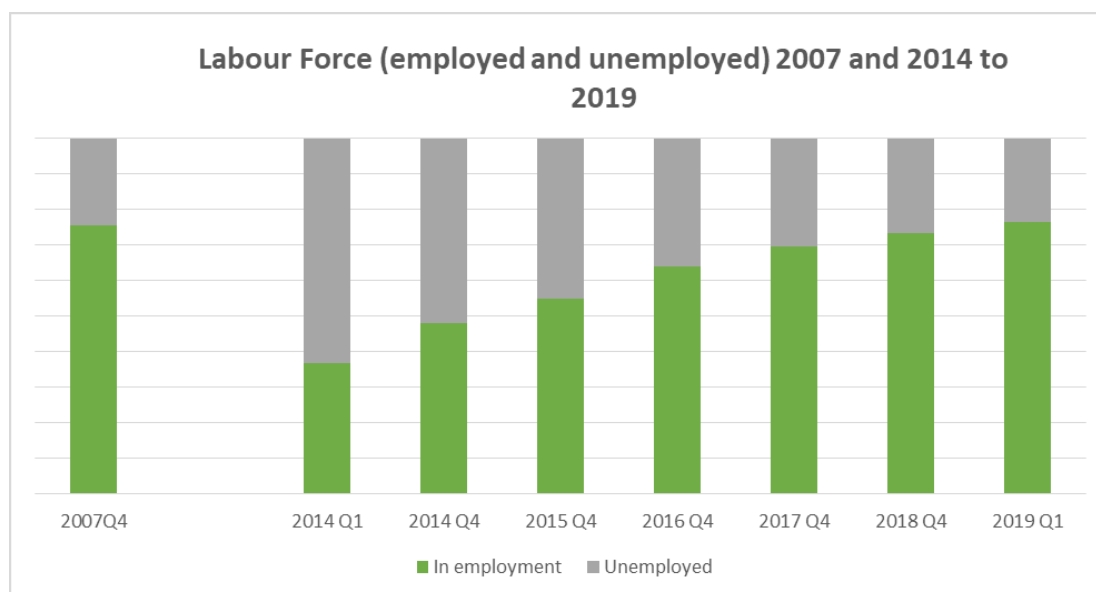
€20 million, or less than 2% of the overall funding allocated within the Programme, has been assigned to Technical Assistance to support the various preparatory, management and control, evaluation, information and communication, and audit activities undertaken in to implement the programme. Training and guidance for Intermediate Bodies and beneficiaries are also eligible for assistance as well as the costs associated with the new IT system required for data exchange under the 2014-2020 round.

National Context – Key Recent Developments

The economy continued to expand during 2018, as shown on Chart No.1 below, and there were continuing positive improvements for a number of labour market indicators. Employment continued to grow with an increase of 2.3% (50,500) in 2018, slightly down

on the 2017 level of 3.1% (or 67,300).

Chart No. 1 Labour force - employed and unemployed between 2014 and 2019



The number of persons employed by the end of 2018 reached 2.281m. See Table No. 1 below. By the end of Q1 2019, the number employed had reached 2.302m, which is 3% higher than in Q4 2007, prior to the recession period. The number of persons in full time employment increased from 1,486,800 at the start of 2014 to 1,828,900 at the start of 2019, an increase of 342,100 (or 23%) while the part time employment increased by 9,100 (or 2%).

Table No. 1 Labour force (employed and unemployed) Q1 2014 to Q1 2019

	2007Q4	2014Q1	2014Q4	2015Q4	2016Q4	2017Q4	2018Q4	2019Q1
In employment	2232.9	1950.7	2025.2	2085.4	2163.5	2230.8	2281.3	2301.9
In employment full-time	1817.6	1486.8	1557.7	1612.5	1694.7	1770.6	1818.8	1828.9
In employment part-time	415.3	463.9	467.5	472.9	468.9	460.2	462.5	473
Unemployed	114.7	282.2	235.3	206.8	167.6	144	128.8	114.4
Unemployed %	4.9%	12.6%	10.4%	9.0%	7.2%	6.1%	5.3%	4.7%
In labour force	2347.6	2232.9	2260.5	2292.2	2331.1	2374.8	2410.1	2416.3

Source: CSO

Employment

The numbers in employment have grown steadily from the start of 2014 to the first quarter of 2019 for almost all the age categories. See Table No. 2 below. The number of those employed in the age category 20 to 24 increased by 38,500 over the period, having had declined by over 148,000 during the recession. The number of 35 to 44 year olds

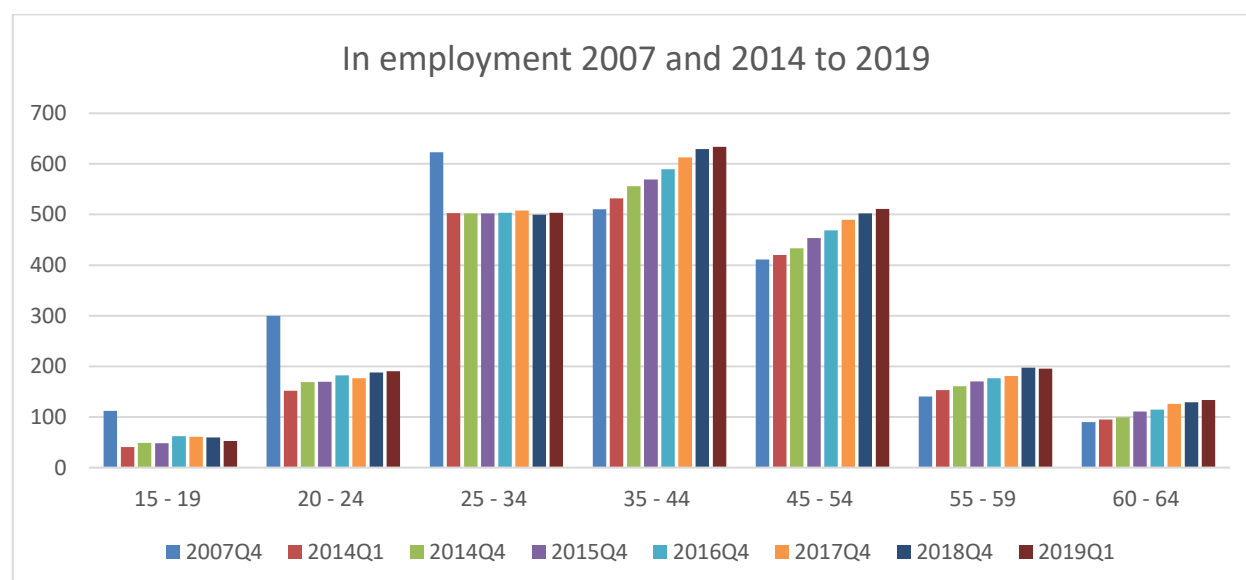
employed increased by just over 100,000 since 2014 while the 45 to 54 age group grew by almost 91,000. The number of those employed in the 25 to 34 age group have remained relatively static since 2014, having decreased by almost 120,000 during the recession. The percentage changes for the Q1 2014 to Q1 2019 period can be seen in the last column of Table No. 2 which also shows the decrease in employment during the period recession 2007 to 2013.

Table No. 2 Employment 2007 and 2013 to 2019

Age Group	2007Q4	2014Q1	2014Q4	2015Q4	2016Q4	2017Q4	2018Q4	2019Q1	% Change
15 - 19	111.7	40.6	48.9	48.1	62.2	60.8	59.5	52.4	29%
20 - 24	299.9	151.8	168.6	169.3	182.4	176.7	188	190.3	25%
25 - 34	622.8	502.9	502	502	503.2	508.1	499.9	503.7	0%
35 - 44	510.4	531.7	555.9	569.4	589.4	612.6	629.4	633.8	19%
45 - 54	410.8	420.2	433.2	453.7	468.4	489.4	501.9	511	22%
55 - 59	140.5	153.4	160.4	169.9	176.7	180.8	197.2	195.6	28%
60 - 64	90	95.2	99.4	110.9	114.3	125.7	128.8	133.4	40%

Source: CSO

Chart No. 2 Employment (2007) and 2013 to 2019



Unemployment

The numbers unemployed decreased by 15,300 over the year to the end of Q4 2018 to 128,800, a decrease of 11%. The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate had decreased to 5.7% by the end of the year (6.4% at Q4, 2017), below the EU average of 6.6%.

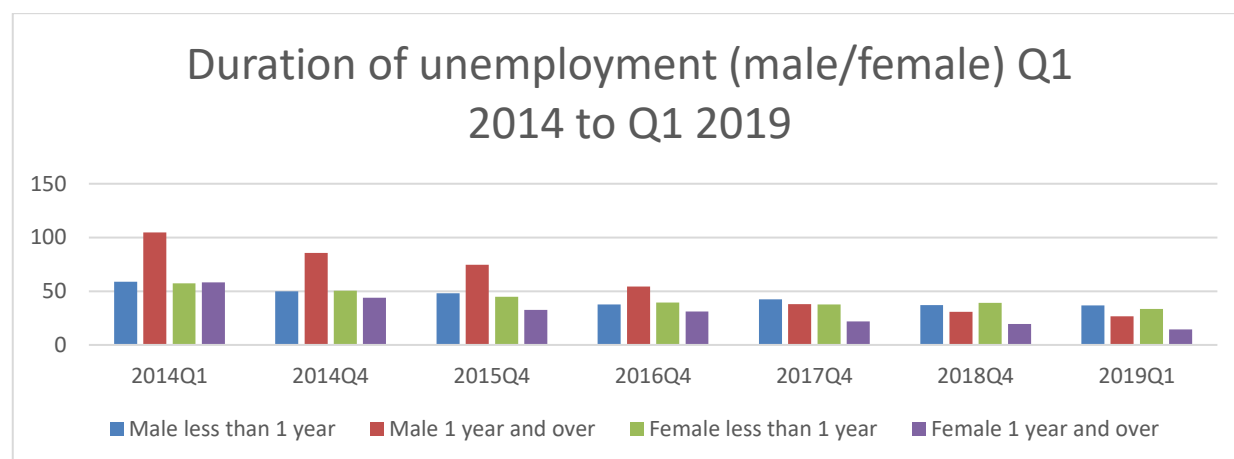
The long-term unemployment rate decreased from 2.5% to 2.1% at the end of Q4 2018, representing approximately 39% of total unemployment, compared to 46% a year earlier.

From the commencement of the PEIL OP in 2014, the number of males who were unemployed for over a year (long-term) has fallen from 104,700 in Q1 2014 to 26,600 in Q1, 2019, a 74.6% reduction, while the number of females has fallen from 58,100 in Q1 2014 to 14,300 in Q1, 2019, a 75.4% reduction. The number of males on short term unemployment has fallen from 58,800 in Q1 2014 to 36,700 in Q1 2019, a 37.6% reduction. The corresponding number for females on short term unemployment has also fallen from 57,200 in Q1 2014 to 33,600 in Q1, 2019, a 41.3% reduction. (Chart No. 3).

Table No. 3 Unemployment (short and long term) 2014 to 2019

	2014Q1	2014Q4	2015Q4	2016Q4	2017Q4	2018Q4	2019Q1
Male less than 1 year	58.8	50	48.2	37.7	42.3	37.2	36.7
Male 1 year and over	104.7	85.7	74.6	54.3	38	30.7	26.6
Female less than 1 year	57.2	50.4	44.8	39.5	37.8	39	33.6
Female 1 year and over	58.1	43.9	32.5	31.2	22	19.5	14.3

Chart No. 3 Duration of unemployment (male/female) Q1, 2014 to Q1, 2019



Youth unemployment

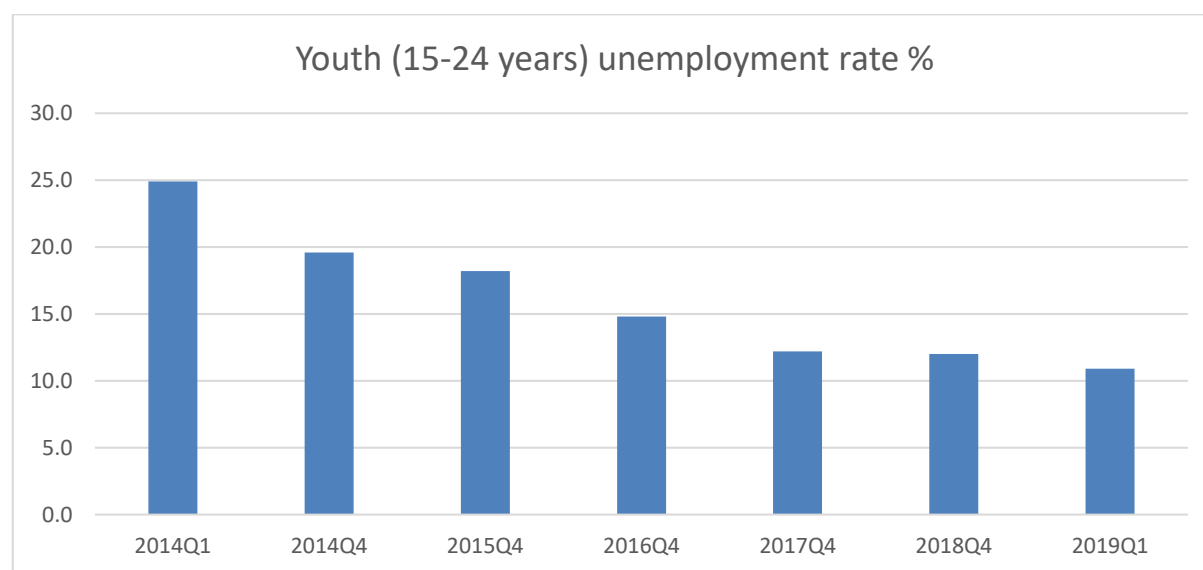
The downward trend for unemployment in respect of 15-24 year olds continued with the youth unemployment rate decreasing from 12.2% in Q4 2017 to 12.0% at the end of 2018. The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in Q1 2019 was 10.9%.

Table No. 4 and Chart No. 4 show the decline in the unemployment rate for the 15 to 24 years category between the years 2014 and 2019.

Table No. 4 15 to 24 years unemployment rate (seasonally adjusted) 2014 to 2019

	2014Q1	2014Q4	2015Q4	2016Q4	2017Q4	2018Q4	2019Q1
Unemployment rate %	24.9	19.6	18.2	14.8	12.2	12.0	10.9

Chart No. 4 15-24 years (seasonally adjusted) unemployment rate 2014 to 2019



Employment increased in most of the economic sectors over the year 2018. The largest rates of increase were in the Administrative and support service activities (+12.6% or 11,900) and the Construction (+7.9% or +10,600) sectors. The largest rate of decrease was recorded in the Agriculture, forestry and fishing (-6.4% or 7,100) sector. (Source CSO LMS Q4 2017).

While the economic recovery that has taken place since 2012 has outpaced projected growth, a number of challenges remain for the future, most notably the outcome of the current Brexit negotiations.

The 2016 Census (<http://www.cso.ie/en/census/>) found that there was a strong relationship between unemployment and the levels of education attained. More recently, the CSO's *Educational Attainment Thematic Report (Dec 2018)* reported that as at Q2 of 2018 for the age category 25 to 64 with just primary education or below, the unemployment rate was 14%; for those with lower secondary, higher secondary and post leaving certificate, the rates were 7%, 5% and 6% respectively and for those with third level education the unemployment rate was 4%.

The report further stated that in the last ten years, there has been an increase in the proportion of those aged 25 to 64 years old with a third level education, from 37% in Q2 2009 to 47% in Q2 2018. There has also been a steady decrease in the proportion with primary education/no formal education from 13% in Q2 2009 to 5% in Q2 2018.

In relation to early school leavers (aged between 18 and 24), the unemployment rate was higher than the rate for others in the same age category. In Q2 2018 the unemployment rate for early school leavers was 18% compared to 9% for others in the same age category. See Table No 5 below.

Table No. 5 Early school leavers (18 -24) labour market status (2010 to 2018)

		Early school leavers 18-24 between Q2 2010 - Q2 2018 (by percentage)								
		2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Early school leaver	Employed	41	31	30	35	31	29	43	34	28
	Unemployed	37	42	43	39	33	40	23	24	18
	Inactive	22	27	26	26	36	31	34	43	54
Other persons aged 18-24	Employed	52	50	48	50	49	52	57	56	56
	Unemployed	18	17	20	18	15	12	12	9	9
	Inactive	30	32	32	32	36	36	31	35	35

Source: CSO Educational Attainment Thematic Report (Dec 2018)

A number of relevant Government policies, and recent actions, are set out below.

An innovative new initiative, the **EXPLORE Programme**, was launched in June 2018. The initiative is aimed at increasing participation rates in Lifelong Learning, (targeted at persons over 35 in manufacturing employment) and offering an opportunity to upskill for those already in employment. It seeks to address the lack of digital skills in this cohort; to provide a new approach to overcome barriers to participation in lifelong learning; to address the key issue of skills obsolescence which is a significant concern for employers; and to showcase the benefits of collaboration between local Education & Training providers and industry. The ETBs are working with employers and the network of Regional Skills Forum Managers to deliver the programme, by focussing on non-formal learning.

A comprehensive independent **review of the National Training Fund (NTF)** was published in August 2018. The review was commissioned as part of a package of reforms announced to accompany the decision in Budget 2018 to raise the NTF levy. This followed a consultation process with key stakeholders, during which issues were raised regarding the transparency of the use of the Fund, the alignment of expenditure

for employer needs and the role of employers in informing expenditure priorities. The independent review examined the existing operation of the NTF and provided recommendations to inform its future direction. There are 14 specific recommendations across four key areas including reform of the future direction of the NTF, utilising the NTF to support investment in Higher Education, enhancing enterprise engagement and input to NTF priorities and improvements in the monitoring and evaluation of the NTF.

The **National Skills Bulletin 2018** (launched in January 2019) was produced by SOLAS on behalf of the National Skills Council. It set out the key findings for 2017 including 61,900 additional people entered employment, employment growth was particularly strong in construction, accommodation and food and the education sector, and almost 400,000 people commenced in a new role.

A **report on adult participation in lifelong learning** was published in July 2018 based on lifelong learning in Ireland for quarter 4, 2017. The main findings of the report were that 5% (131,400) of the 25 to 64 year olds participated in learning activities and 10% (248,500) took part in non-formal learning. The EU's target is 15% for adult participation in learning activities by 2020. The National Skills Strategy target is 10% by 2020 and 15% by 2025. The lifelong learning rate for Q4 2017 is 14%.

A report on **Digital Transformation: Assessing the Impact of Digitalisation on Ireland's Workforce** was published in December 2018. Another report on **Forecasting the Future Demand for High-Level ICT Skills in Ireland, 2017- 2022** addressing Future Demand for High-Level ICT Skills by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs was published in March 2019. Both reports were produced by SOLAS on behalf of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs.

The Government launched an **'Action Plan for Education 2019: Cumasú – Empowering through Learning'** programme in March 2019. The Action Plan sets out more than 280 deliverable actions for this year with the ambition to continuously improve our education system. The Action Plan for Education 2019 builds on progress to date. It represents a bridge between continuity and change.

The Government launched a report entitled **Future Jobs Ireland – Preparing Now for Tomorrow's Economy** in February 2019. The report focusses on on five pillars namely Embracing Innovation and Technological Change, Improving SME Productivity, Enhancing Skills and Developing and Attracting Talent, Increasing Participation in the Labour Force and Transitioning to a Low Carbon Economy. The report is the first in a series of annual reports, establishing 26 ambitions under these pillars that will enhance the resilience of our economy and ensure we are well placed to exploit future economic opportunities.

The policy framework **Supporting Working Lives and Enterprise Growth in Ireland: 2018-2021 further education and training policy framework for skills development of people in employment** was launched in 2018. The policy framework is being promoted as the **Skills to Advance** initiative. The initiative will enable targeted support for vulnerable groups in the Irish workforce, particularly those who have lower skill levels and who need more opportunities to advance in their working lives. The policy also supports small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) who need assistance to invest in and develop their workforce.

Progress towards our EU 2020 Targets

Europe 2020 is the EU's ten-year growth and jobs strategy, launched in 2010. Five headline targets have been set for the EU to achieve by the end of 2020; three are relevant to this Programme – employment, education, and social inclusion and poverty reduction. Positive progress has been made towards the achievement of Ireland's targets, and data relating to the targets on employment and education are set out below in Table No. 6

Table No. 6 Employment and education indicators

Indicator	Position in 2010	2016	2017	2018	Target 2020
Employment					
% 20-64 year olds in employment	64.7%	71.2%*	72.9%*	73.7%*	69-71%
Education					
Early school leavers	11.4%	6.9%	6.1%	5%**	8%
Tertiary attainment of 30-34-year-olds	50.1%	52.3%	53.3%	56.3%*	60%

* Eurostat ** CSO

The employment target of 69-71% for 2020 has already been exceeded by Ireland; the employment rate for 2018 was 73.7%.

The target for early school leavers (i.e. 18-24 year olds with at most lower secondary education and not in further education and training) in 2018 of 5% is below the 2020 target of 8%.

The target for third level education attainment reached 56.3% in 2018, which exceeds the EU average of 40.7% in 2018.

Ireland's contribution to the Europe 2020 poverty target is to reduce by a minimum of 200,000 the population in 'combined poverty' (ie. at-risk-of-poverty/basic deprivation).

There has been a decrease in basic deprivation or ‘combined poverty’ with the rate falling from 29% in 2016 to 27.8% in 2017 (1.332m people). The 2017 figure represents a decrease of 80,000 people on the 2010 baseline figure. Another 120,000 people will need to be lifted out of combined poverty to meet the Europe 2020 target. It should be noted that this rate increased to 1.74 million people from 2010 to 2013 and therefore the current rate represents a decrease of approximately 400,000 people on the 2013 rate. See Table No. 6 below.

Table No. 6 Combined poverty rates

	2010 (baseline)	2013	2014	2015	2016	2107	2020 Target
Combined poverty ('000)	1,412	1,732	1,719	1,539	1,381	1,332	1,212
Combined poverty (%)	31.0%	37.7%	37.3%	33.2%	29.0%	27.8%	

Source: Social Inclusion Monitor 2017

Progress to Date

The Table here below shows the progress made in terms of expenditure at both Priority Level and by individual Activity within each Priority. The total expenditure reported for the OP at the end of 2018 (capped by allocation) reached €980.3m. The total gross expenditure submitted to the Commission in 2018 was €220.6m and a total of €116 million was received back from the Commission in 2018.

PEIL 2014-2020	IB	AIP No.	Total Allocations 2014-2020	Expenditure 2014-2018 (capped at allocation)	Gross payment applications to Commission in 2018
PRIORITY 1					
ETB Training - Unemployed	SOLAS	ESF 1.1	€335,702,368	€335,702,368	€0
Springboard	HEA	ESF 1.2	€54,752,372	€54,752,372	€0
ICT Skills Conversion Course	HEA	ESF 1.3	€12,373,358	€12,373,358	€0
Momentum	SOLAS	ESF 1.4	€13,700,000	€13,700,000	€0
Intra EU mobility	DEASP	ESF 1.5	€2,700,000	€1,522,651	€0
Transnational	DES	ESF 1.6	€500,000	€0	€0
Priority 1 Total			€419,728,098	€418,050,749	€0
PRIORITY 2					
SICAP	DRCD	ESF 2.1	€60,000,000	€36,818,549	€0
Youthreach	SOLAS	ESF 2.2	€117,624,578	€65,647,218	€0
Garda Youth Diversion Projects (GYDPs)	DJE	ESF 2.3	€75,125,160	€49,646,053	€10,443,995
Young Persons Probation (YPP)	DJE	ESF 2.4	€11,648,000	€7,250,216	€3,364,165
Disability Project	DEASP	ESF 2.6	€16,000,000	€1,022,361	€0
Transnational	DES	ESF 2.11	€500,000	€0	€0
Sub Priority total:			€280,897,738	€160,384,397	€13,808,160
Integration / employ Migrants	DJE	ESF 2.7	€3,325,000	€1,343,725	€0
Tus Nua project	DJE	ESF 2.8	€2,392,830	€1,886,319	€696,929
Gender Equality	DJE	ESF 2.9	€11,000,000	€2,897,246	€0
Sub Priority total:			€16,717,830	€6,127,290	€696,929
Priority Totals			€297,615,568	€166,511,687	€14,505,089
PRIORITY 3					
Third Level Access	HEA	ESF 3.1	€22,400,000	€22,400,000	€0
Sub Priority total:			€22,400,000	€22,400,000	€0
BTEI	SOLAS	ESF 3.2	€100,940,000	€100,940,000	€43,186,642
Adult Literacy	SOLAS	ESF 3.3	€91,557,150	€91,557,150	€50,684,912
Transnational	DES	ESF 3.4	€499,998	€0	€0
Sub Priority total:			€192,997,148	€192,497,150	€93,871,554
Priority Totals			€215,397,148	€214,897,150	€93,871,554
Priority 4					
(BTWEA) Scheme	DEASP	ESF 4.1	€4,647,870	€1,652,000	€0
JobsPlus Incentive Scheme	DEASP	ESF 4.2	€7,992,000	€7,992,000	€0
Youthreach	SOLAS	ESF 4.5	€101,156,387	€101,156,387	€111,943,907
Momentum	SOLAS	ESF 4.6	€13,800,000	€8,370,918	€0
CTCs	SOLAS	ESF 4.8	€60,000,000	€60,000,000	€0
DFESS	Defence	ESF 4.9	€840,000	€590,948	€310,948
YESS	DEASP	ESF 4.10	€16,000,000	€34,038	€0
Priority Totals			€204,436,257	€179,796,291	€112,254,855
Priority 5					
Technical assistance for OP	DES	ESF 5.1	€20,000,000	€1,057,423	€0
Total OP:			€1,157,177,071	€980,313,300	€220,631,498

ESF Participants 2014 to 2018			
PEIL 2014-2020	AIP No.	New Participants 2018	All participants 2014-2018
Priority 1: Promoting the attainment of sustainable and quality employment through relevant upskilling measures and supporting labour mobility.			
ETB Training for the Unemployed	ESF 1.1	9,013	47,150
Springboard	ESF 1.2	0	0
ICT Skills Conversion Course	ESF 1.3	1,454	5808
Momentum	ESF 1.4	0	0
Intra EU mobility	ESF 1.5	4	25
Priority 1 Total		10,471	52,983
Priority 2: Promoting Social Inclusion and combating discrimination in the labour market			
Social Inclusion and Activation Programme (SICAP)	ESF 2.1	30,887	30,887
Youthreach	ESF 2.2	4,503	4,503
Garda Youth Diversion Projects (GYDPs)	ESF 2.3	1,160	8,365
Young Persons Probation (YPP) projects	ESF 2.4	115	649
Disability Project	ESF 2.6	297	297
Sub Priority Total		36,962	44,701
Integration and employment of Migrants	ESF 2.7	678	1,139
Tus Nua project	ESF 2.8	32	115
Gender Equality	ESF 2.9	1,014	2,002
Sub Priority Total		1,724	3,256
Priority 2 Total		38,686	47,957
Priority 3: Investing in Education, Training and Life Long Learning with a view to upskilling and re-skilling the labour force			
Third Level Access	ESF 3.1	9,535	49,182
Sub Priority Total		9,535	49,182
BTEI	ESF 3.2	11,964	66,264
Adult Literacy	ESF 3.3	20,145	99,486
Sub Priority Total		32,109	165,750
Priority 3 Total		41,644	214,932
Priority 4: Youth Employment Initiative			
Back to Work Enterprise Allowance (BTWEA) Scheme	ESF 4.1	45	340
JobsPlus Incentive Scheme	ESF 4.2	152	1,310
Youthreach	ESF 4.5	0	8,086
Momentum	ESF 4.6	0	0
Community Training Centres (CTCs)	ESF 4.8	1,212	4,095
Defence Forces Employment Support Scheme	ESF 4.9	49	82
Youth Employment Support Scheme (YESS)	ESF 4.10	75	75
Priority 4 Total		1,533	13,988
Overall Total		92,334	329,860

INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITY UPDATES

PRIORITY 1

ETB Training for the Unemployed

This activity includes the following programme groups:

- **Specific Skills Training** - mainline courses which are employment-led and lead to qualifications that offer learners both generic skills and skills specific to particular jobs or occupations. Both short courses and longer 6+ month courses are included.
- **Bridging-courses** for people who have left school early, or for other reasons need broader-based, generic skills training.
- **Traineeships** - occupational-specific training courses, typically of 9 months duration that use a combination of off-the-job and structured on-the-job workplace training.



SOLAS has commissioned an evaluation for **Specific Skills Training** programme (and Vocational Training and Opportunities Scheme). The evaluation commenced in March 2018 with the aim of generating policy-relevant knowledge concerning the appropriateness, conduct and impacts of VTOS and Specific Skills Training provision; to learn about the appropriateness of current policy on VTOS and Specific Skills Training provision and the effectiveness of both. This evaluation is due for publication in the latter part of 2019. There were 9,013 new participants on Skills Training activities in 2018.

The Education and Training Boards across Ireland substantially increased their commitment to traineeship provision, with over 50 traineeships available across Ireland by the end of 2018. In 2018, traineeship grants as reported by the Education & Training boards amounted to €31.531m which was an increase of 40% on the 2017 figure of €22.468m.

3,068 trainees enrolled on **traineeship programmes** in 2018. A range of new traineeships were developed in 2018 in areas such as hospitality, engineering and animal care. These new programmes will complement the existing programmes on offer. The programmes have been designed by ETBs working in collaboration with employers to meet identified skill needs. It is intended that by 2020, there will be 5,000 annual enrolments on traineeship programmes and 54 programmes available across a range of industry areas. These awards are equivalent to Levels 4-6 on the National

Framework of Qualifications. In the period 2016-2020 it is intended that a total of 19,000 trainees will have enrolled. The Action Plan includes targets for enrolments and new programmes for each year leading up to 2020.

Springboard



Springboard commenced as an initiative to help unemployed and previously self-employed people remain as close as possible to the labour market by accessing free part-time flexible higher education and training opportunities to upskill or reskill in areas where there are skills shortages and where sustainable employment opportunities may arise as the economy recovers. This is actioned through the funding of places on courses that are at levels 6 to 9 on

the National Framework of Qualifications and are provided by public and private higher education providers across the country. Providers and courses are selected for funding through an annual competitive calls process. Since 2015, Springboard courses and ICT conversion courses have been run as a joint initiative under the banner brand Springboard+. Courses may lead to full awards but there may also be minor awards or special purposes awards. All courses provide job-readiness training and most offer the opportunity for work placement, project-based learning or industry site visits where appropriate.

Given the success of the expansion of the eligibility criteria under Springboard+ 2017 to those in employment wishing to upskill or reskill in the areas of ICT, Biopharma & Medtech, the eligibility for Springboard+ 2018 was further extended to include all people irrespective of their employment status. Returners and those in receipt of certain allowances, including Jobseekers Benefit, continued to be able to access courses free of charge. Level 6 courses remained free to all participants and for employed participants on courses NFQ level 7 – 9, 90% of the course fee was funded by the Government, with participants required to contribute just 10% of the fee.

The 2018 Call for Proposals replaced the 2017 Call for Proposals term 'Homemakers' (referring to persons not in receipt of a payment from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection that have been out of the work environment for a number of years due to childcare or other caring obligations and have a previous history of employment but may require upskilling or reskilling to transition back to the workforce), with the term 'Returners'.



Springboard+ 2018 launch took place on 30th May 2018, with the new courses being unveiled by Ministers Bruton and Halligan. The change in eligibility criteria saw a shift in the cohort of individuals applying for courses. Approximately 70% of applicants are now in employment. This reflects the fact that Ireland is approaching full employment. It also contributes to the national target of increasing

the number of citizens engaged in Lifelong Learning.

The Springboard+ Helpline operated again in 2018 for a period of five months. Approximately 2,500 calls were received during this period from people interested in applying for a Springboard+ course. Most callers sought general career-guidance but an analysis of call records indicates that other issues raised included eligibility, employability, additional issues specific to Returners, and additional issues specific to individuals in employment. One issue raised by many callers was progression, whereby participants had to be moving to a higher NFQ level in pursuing a new Springboard+ course. This issue was considered by the Executive, and in consultation with the Department of Education and Skills, this restriction was removed for the 2019 Call.

A Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection scan of the Live Register in July 2018 reported that 80% of Springboard participants (2011-2016) were no longer on the Live Register.

Springboard+ courses are delivered over the academic year. Springboard+ 2018/19 provided for over 8,000 places on 245 courses in 40 public and private educational institutions throughout Ireland. Courses were in the following skills areas: ICT, Engineering, Manufacturing, Construction, Hospitality, Business, Administration and Law. Limited courses will also be available in Entrepreneurship, Animation, Medical Devices Decontamination and certain other manufacturing related services courses.

6,045 places were on Springboard+ part-time courses, 749 places were on full-time ICT skills conversion courses and 1,294 were on part-time ICT skills conversion courses.

ICT Skills Conversion Courses

The ICT skills conversion programme was introduced as a means to address concerns by industry and the enterprise development agencies about continuing difficulties in sourcing ICT graduates with the requisite skills in Ireland, not only to fill existing vacancies, but also to support expansion of their activities and potential employment

opportunities. Therefore the activity aims to increase the number of high level ICT skills graduates by providing places on specialised graduate conversion programmes aimed at non-ICT graduates. Programmes are selected for funding on the basis of an annual competitive calls process.

In total 1,454 people registered on ICT skills conversion programmes funded under Springboard+ 2018. The majority of these courses began in autumn 2018 with a small number commencing in early 2019.

Intra-EU Mobility



This activity promotes the use of EURES, the European Job Mobility Portal and the range of services provided by EURES Ireland as part of the network designed to facilitate the free movement of workers within the EU. EURES advisers that are in daily contact with jobseekers and employers across Europe.

During 2018, EURES Ireland assisted employers in recruiting for specialised or hard-to-fill vacancies offering unique opportunities to participate in sector specific Online recruitment events. Two Online European Recruitment Events in 2018 focussing on both the Irish Hospitality and Tourism sector and the Business/Customer Support sector proved to be very successful. Both events were organised with the direct support of the European Commission and were targeting jobseekers with very specific skills.

In October 2018, a EURES National and European (onsite and online) Jobs Fair 2018 was held in Blanchardstown, Dublin 15. More than 700 jobseekers attended the event and 423 jobseekers registered for the online event. Evaluations from jobseekers showed a very high level of satisfaction, with no negative evaluations. Employers gave the event a 99% satisfaction rating.

EURES Ireland held '**Arrive and Revive – Ireland**' European Online Job Day organised in March 2018 was aimed at attracting Irish and European jobseekers with the hospitality skills and experience to join the booming Hospitality, Tourism and Culinary Arts sector in Ireland. 56 Irish based companies and over 530 jobseekers with hospitality skills participated in the event. There were 166 jobs and in total 477 positions available for this event with over 1,300 applications received.

'**Your Language – Our Business**' - European Online Job Day organised in May, was attended by 19 Irish based companies and attracted over 1,100 bilingual jobseekers from

Europe. This event was targeting Irish and European jobseekers with language skills to work in the business/ customer support sector in Ireland. There were 120 jobs advertised and in total 339 positions available for this event with over 870 applications received.

A Cross Border Job Fairs were held in Dundalk, Cavan and Newry

A **DIALOG** Polish Open Day took place in Dublin in November 2018 for Polish people living in Ireland who were considering returning to Poland or looking at progressing their career in Ireland. A representative of the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy of Poland attended the event. 27 people attended and 18 engaged in “one to one” consultations. Participants gave the event a 100% satisfaction rating.

A number of EURES Advisers attended targeted Recruitment Fairs in other Member States (i.e. Madrid, Milan, Turin, Varna) to assist employers from Ireland in recruiting for hard to fill vacancies, particularly in the Meat, Health and IT sectors.

PRIORITY 2

Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP)



The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) 2018 – 2022 which is the successor to the 2015 – 2017 programme was launched on 20th April 2018. SICAP aims to tackle poverty and social exclusion at a local level and is managed locally by 33 Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) with support from Local Authorities.

Programme Actions are delivered by Programme Implementers (PIs) across 51 Lots. PIs work with Local Community Groups to create more sustainable communities and with disadvantaged individuals providing help through lifelong learning supports, employment supports and personal development supports.

The programme structure is influenced by a number of factors including national government policy and priorities, Ireland’s changing social and economic landscape, particularly reduced unemployment levels and a general economic recovery, learning from SICAP 2015 – 2017 and findings from the 2017 national consultation process, and, findings from a series of evaluations by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) on particular SICAP components.

SICAP has three horizontal themes that cut across all areas of SICAP work and one of the themes is *“Promoting an equality framework with a particular focus on gender equality and anti-discrimination practices”*. A breakdown of SICAP participants in 2018 by gender and disadvantage outlined below demonstrates how the programme has assisted various target groups:

Indicator	2018
No of participants below 25	4,853 (16%)
No of female participants	14,884 (48%)
No of participants from migrant/ ethnic minority/ foreign background	7,302 (24%)
No of participants with disability	2,452 (8%)
No of participants experiencing disadvantage (including substance abuser, homeless or affected by homelessness, living in jobless household, living in poverty or material deprivation, ex-offender, participant with no basic education, participant from a single adult household with dependant)	20,525 (66%)

Over 30,000 participants were engaged in SICAP during 2018 which exceeded the target of 25,000 participants.



Youthreach is the national response to the needs of unqualified early school leavers in Ireland. The programme is designed to offer two years integrated education, training and work experience

for young people who have left school early without qualifications or incomplete qualifications or vocational training. The programme aims to provide participants with the knowledge, skills and confidence required to participate fully in society and progress to further education, training and employment.

Youthreach was programmed under Priority 4 (the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI)) of the PEIL OP from 2014 to 2017, and re-allocated under Priority 2 with effect from 1st January 2018.

While this has no impact on delivery of services on the ground, ESF rules governing participant data require that different reports for Youthreach are submitted for 2017 and 2018 to reflect this change. Youthreach participants who remain enrolled on 31/12/17 are considered to have completed their Priority 4 activity on that day, and to have commenced Priority 2 activity on 1/1/18. While such double-counting of participants is not normally allowed, Priority 2 and Priority 4 activities are considered to be separate ESF operations, and thus this is in accordance with ESF rules.

The number of participants reported for this activity for 2018 was 4,503.

SOLAS commissioned research on Youthreach / Community Training Centres. The purpose of the evaluation was to generate policy-relevant knowledge concerning the outputs and outcomes of the Youthreach programme (i.e. Youthreach centres and CTCs) and the effectiveness of this provision. The evaluation which was published in June 2019 found:

- there has been an overall decline in demand for Youthreach from 2015 to 2017, as the economy has continued to improve and the long-term trend of decline in early school-leaving has continued.
- At the same time there has been an increase in the number of severely marginalised young people requiring support from Youthreach, including Irish Travellers and young people from migrant backgrounds.
- There has also been an increase in the number of young people with mental health issues participating in Youthreach programmes.
- Amongst the general population of early school-leavers, only 10 per cent entered education or training courses between 2010 and 2017. Of those who participated in Youthreach, however, 45 per cent went on to further education and training courses.
- Approximately 69 per cent of Youthreach learners complete the programme. Of

those who complete the programme, approximately 60 per cent receive certification.

In response to the ESRI report, SOLAS has developed a number of recommendations to improve Youthreach and respond to the ongoing need for support for young people at risk of exclusion from education and training. It's recommendations for the future of Youthreach include:

- Greater promotion of Youthreach, particularly amongst communities traditionally excluded from further education and training opportunities, such as Travellers and young people from migrant backgrounds.
- Enhanced collaboration with the Education and Training Boards and Community Training Centres responsible for delivering Youthreach to review the sustainability of providing Youthreach in the longer term.
- Strengthening pathways for Youthreach participants to progress on to further education and training programmes such as PLC courses, apprenticeships and traineeships.

Garda Youth Diversion Projects (GYDP)



The primary objective of the Garda Youth Diversion Projects (GYDPs) is to engage with young people at risk of/or involved in criminal and/or anti-social behaviour and provide them with targeted supports designed to enable these young people to stop their offending and become positive contributors to society.

Young people are mainly referred to projects through the local Gardaí (Police). Projects mainly work with young people aged 12 to 17, but also seek to reduce the future incidence of criminal and anti-social behaviour by providing family support services, undertaking preventative work with younger children at risk and continuing to work with young people who 'age-out' on attaining 18 years, as required and on a case-by-case basis.

- A Young People's Advisory Group of six participants in GYDPs was established to help advise the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) on the consultation methodologies and process.
- Seven consultations were held in Dublin in July and August 2018. In total 41 young people attended the consultations, including current and past participants. Young People shared their views on what does and does not work well in projects and what helped young people avoid being in trouble. A report outlining the findings is available on IYJS' [website](#).
- The pilot *Work To Learn* programme was expanded to 16 GYDPs in 2018. The programme exposes participants to the world of work and the skills required to operate effectively in it, through a structured and supported process involving preparation, placement, reflection and challenges the young person involved to undertake a paid part-time job with all the responsibilities that that entails.
- The programme supports employers to become actively involved in the young person's learning, development and progression through the placement itself and by way a series of structured assessments of the participating young person's skills. The Work To Learn programme will be evaluated in 2019.
- In 2018 a GYDP Action Research Project, working with 15 selected (of 105) local projects over a two-year period to identify and disseminate best practice in working with young people at risk. Phase 1 of the Reform and Development Programme consists of a two-year Action Research Project in a partnership between the Irish Youth Justice Service, a research team from the School of Law in the University of Limerick and 15 GYDPs, which have volunteered to engage in an Operation Transformation-type programme of change.
- IYJS also introduced a pilot of the online Youth Level of Service / Case Management Inventory (YLS/CMI) assessment tool. The YLS/CMI is used to inform decisions about suitability for admission to GYDP and identified the risks and needs of young people as well as facilitating the preparation of a case management plan. The online system will allow for greater evidence collection as assessments are currently undertake on paper.
- In late 2018, IYJS completed a tender to work with the University of Ulster to introduce a **Restorative Practice** ethos in GYDPs. Training of trainers started in early 2019 and training of Youth Justice Workers will be introduced in early 2020.
- In November 2018, the Department of Justice and Equality reinstated the

Annual Garda Youth Diversion Projects National Conference, which was held in Co. Meath. The event brought together speakers from a variety of disciplines to discuss current issues. The conference was designed contribute to policy and future development of the GYDP service.

- Also in 2018, IYJS sought additional funding to pilot early interventions at 8-11 year olds and family support. Additional funding of €500,000 was secured in 2018, and these initiatives will be piloted in 2019.

Throughout 2018 the Garda Youth Diversion Projects (GYDPs) continued to deliver assistance and support to young people at risk of/or involved in criminal and/or anti-social behaviour, with approximately 3,575 young people benefiting from the service. Of these, 1,160 young people joined a GYDP during 2018. The dedicated staff working in the projects in communities across the country are engaged with their young people with the aim of changing their attitudes towards offending behaviour and enable them to a more positive contribution to society.

Participant numbers are generally in line with expected figures, and are approx. 5% less than the 2018 milestone. The slight decline in participant numbers on projects may be attributed to a decrease in youth crime detection and in recent years the impact the projects are having on young people's behaviour. In 2017 and 2018 participant numbers on projects are expected to remain at similar levels to 2015 and 2016.

Young Persons' Probation (YPP) Projects



There are 18 Young Person Probation (YPP) Community Based Organisation (CBOs) funded by the Probation Service in order to develop and deliver services to young

offenders in their communities. The management and monitoring of the YPP projects is undertaken directly by the Probation Service. The YPP projects provide a range of services to young offenders in local communities, including training & education, and offender management programmes.

Four of the YPP projects are included in the European Social Fund programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning. These are:

- Le Chéile which is a nationwide mentoring service;
- Céim ar Chéim and Southill projects based in Limerick City; and
- Dóchas don Óige project based in Galway.

Participants in the four YPP projects come from marginalised backgrounds and socio

economic deprived areas, and require the highest levels of support and interventions. It is considered that the clients are presenting with increasing complex issues, including mental health issues. The YPP projects address a number of challenges in their work with juveniles (most of whom would have low levels of educational achievements) by focussing on the needs of those furthest from the labour market and with the highest poverty risk. There were 115 new young people participating in these projects during 2018.

In June 2018, **Céim ar Chéim** opened its new refurbished premises in the new integrated Moyross Youth Academy. The state of the art premises will assist in the delivery of programmes, but also offers new opportunities for innovation and future progression opportunities for the young people and adults.

- 3 Victory Scholars from America participated in the Sports Changes Life Programme which began in September 2018 in partnership with Limerick Institute of Technology & the Sports Changes Life Programme working on personal development programmes and sport through basketball for the next year.
- Participants have continued to progress. One student has now progressed to LIT studying social care, while 3 others are attending PLC courses in Limerick College of Further Education. Three have now graduated from UCC studying Youth & Community Work with one more student commencing.
- Céim ar Chéim together with Limerick Printmakers pioneered a printing project for participants which went on exhibition in Moyross Youth Academy and the Belltable Arts Centre in Limerick and subsequently onto Chicago.
- **Le Chéile's Mentoring & Youth Justice Support Services** hosted its second ever National Volunteer Conference in September, which was built around the central theme of 'Building Resilience, Being Mindful of Trauma'. The keynote address was given by Dr. Tony Bates, founder of Ireland's National Centre for Youth Mental Health, Jigsaw. A series of workshops took place that focused on developing skills in different areas relevant to mentors' work. The conference focused on increased mentor awareness of young people's mental health, substance abuse and the impact of childhood adversity.
- At the end of 2018 there were 217 volunteers registered with Le Chéile Mentoring. Over 53% of the volunteers have volunteered with the project for over 2 years which is a very positive volunteer retention rate. At the end of 2018, 70% of young people were either actively taking part in mentoring or had successfully completed mentoring. This compares well with 2017.

- During 2018 the Y-JARC initiative was commenced by the Probation Service; Le Chéile Mentoring has received a number of youth referrals in Cork and Dublin. The young people have been selected because of their prolific offending, so it is to be expected that they may be harder to engage in mentoring
- Le Chéile revised its Child Protection Policy, completed a risk assessment and devised a Child Safeguarding Statement in order to be compliant with legal and policy changes which came into effect in 2018. New training modules for volunteers were devised and training is being rolled out in 2019.
- Le Chéile have indicated that the profile of the young people referred for mentoring in 2018 continues to include disadvantage, poor education record, mental health, substance use, negative peers, lack of positive male role model, strained family relations, lack of daily structure, early offending/ anti-social behaviour, social isolation, poor communication skills, low self-confidence, previous experience of detention. Many of the young people had family members in prison; several had additional charges from before mentoring; some from care backgrounds; some have been homeless for periods. The young people have been involved in a range of offences. There is some evidence that more serious offences emerging, the age range is increasing and the risk profile is increasing. Many of the young people are very difficult to engage.
- The project has noted an increased number of young people who are homeless and who are living in very unsatisfactory conditions, in hostels, in ad hoc unsuitable arrangements. These are already very vulnerable young people and homelessness intensifies the challenges in their lives.

Dochás Don Óige have been very instrumental in the development of a new pilot service (Turas) in Galway for 12-16 year old young people. The GRETb have committed to the pilot for 3 years, and the project has allowed the use of its premises for the delivery of the Turas (alternative education program).

Southill Outreach have rolled out their Car Crime Programme DRIVE programme, a programme that engages targeted young people with a history of motor related offences. The project uses a restorative approach to challenge their attitudes towards their offending behaviour, the impact on their victims, their community and themselves. The programme consists of ten sessions of one and a half hours duration. Together with the RSA, the project produced a DVD as a tool to raise awareness and understanding in the target group. One of the issues facing the project is the increased incidence of polydrug use, and its effect on the mental health of participants.

Disability Project - Ability Programme



The Ability Programme is a pre-activation programme for young people with disabilities (YPWD). It aims to bring those young people, aged 15-29, who are not work-ready closer to the labour market using a range of person-centred supports.

It will

Organisation	County
Ak Inspired Ability Company.	Kerry
Blossom Ireland Community Inclusion.	Dublin
Central Remedial Clinic.	Dublin
Cill Dara Ar Aghaidh Cuideachta Faoi Theorainn Rathaiochta	Kildare
Co Wexford Community Workshop (New Ross)	Wexford
Cope Foundation.	Cork
Down Syndrome Ireland.	Dublin
Dublin City University.	Dublin
Dublin South City Partnership.	Dublin
Fingal Leader Partnership.	Dublin
Forum Connemara.	Galway
I.W.A.	Dublin
Ird Duhallow.	Cork
Knockanrawley Resource Centre.	Tipperary
Limerick Youth Service.	Limerick
Northside Partnership Company. (to commence Jan. 2019)	Dublin
Offaly Integrated Local Development Company.	Offaly
Peter Bradley Foundation.	Dublin
Roscommon Integrated Development Company.	Roscommon
Specialisterne Ireland.	Dublin
St. Cronans Association Company.	Tipperary
The Blanchardstown Area Partnership Company.	Dublin
Tipperary Regional Youth Service.	Tipperary
Walkinstown Association for People with an Intellectual Disability.	Dublin
Walkinstown Green Social Enterprises.	Dublin
West Cork Development Partnership Company.	Cork
Wexford Local Development Company.	Wexford

The programme addresses the diversity existing within the target group of YPWD by providing supports to organisations working with participants across the disability

spectrum. Some organisations specifically cater to physical or intellectual disabilities, others are dedicated to working with young people with mental health issues, and other organisations work with all of the above.

Over the course of the Programme, it is expected that some 2,600 YPWD will be assisted. 297 participants were assisted during 2018, which is below the target set. This is as a consequence of projects taking longer to get established and up and running with some staff recruitment issues being encountered. A particular challenge identified is the lack of transport options for YPWD, particularly in rural areas.

A programme evaluation, addressing the extent to which the programme has met its stated policy objectives, is being undertaken. An external evaluator has been appointed by Pobal to undertake this work between 2018 and 2020 with an interim review being provided.

Integration and Employment of Migrants



The objectives of the Migrants Activity are to promote active inclusion, equal opportunities, active participation and to improve employability through social inclusion employability programmes and the socio-economic integration of marginalised communities who are experiencing barriers to participation and employment. The categories of persons in the target group are

EEA Nationals who are resident in Ireland and Third Country Nationals with permission to enter employment in Ireland.

In March 2018, the EU Funds Unit held a Networking and Training event for ESF Funded Projects – both GE and IEM. The event provided an opportunity for projects to network, to ask questions and to hear presentations from the ESF management cascade. In June, they held a working day with ESF Funded projects, including representatives from the currently funded Gender Equality projects. The day was focused on issues being raised directly by projects in relation to their participant tracking and reporting duties. In November they held a ‘world café’ style consultation with ESF stakeholders, including representatives from the currently funded Gender Equality projects. The purpose of this event was to provide an opportunity for interested parties to share their views on where the priorities for the next round ESF PEIL funding should be focused and how the fund can be best used to deliver results on the ground.

The participants on EPIC’s Employment Programmes attended the Intreo Careers Fair in March 2018. On the final day of the Migrant Women’s Entrepreneurship training

programme at the City West Campus, the participating women made their pitch finale to a panel of industry experts. This was followed by the presentation of Certificates in May 2018.

There were 678 participants in 2018. Although slightly behind the 2018 milestone, it is expected the current pace will continue and the 2023 target value will be met by 2020. A second open call for projects will see new operations commencing in 2019 and help to increase the number of participants towards the final target.

Tus Nua Project



Tus Nua provides a support service for women leaving prison and women referred from the community (with a history of offending), and in particular with safe supported housing and a positive

environment as part of a 6 month supported residential programme. The project supports participants in their transition and reintegration into the wider community. The participants in the project would have complex support needs.

The programmes provided by Tus Nua includes key-working sessions; Life Skills programmes; Health & Wellbeing and Personal Development and planning programmes; Addiction Support, including Harm Reduction, Prevention & Relapse Strategies and on site counselling; Community Integration - helping participants to reintegrate and make a contribution to their Community.

Over 17.5% of all new referrals to the Probation Service are for women offenders, and in 2017 almost 1,500 new female offenders were referred to the Probation Service. The figure for 2018 is expected to be broadly similar. Women in the criminal justice system face unique issues in relation to addressing and reducing their risk of offending. The rehabilitation and reintegration of women offenders requires a different and holistic approach, which is best delivered through coordinated multi-agency working both in custody and in the community.

In 2018, Tus Nua endeavoured to increase its focus on working with their partners with a view to further supporting clients regarding education, addiction issues and employment. In this regard, they have sought to enhance relationship with other

agencies such as CDETB, Addiction and treatment services, Drug task force, and Gardaí.

There were 32 new participants under the Activity in 2018. The activity is on target to reach the target for milestone for 2018. One of the major challenges for Tus Nua is improving or increasing the completion rates for participants. The low completion rates are triggered by the complex needs of clients, and the need for the project to adopt a low threshold in terms of participants' use of drugs or engaging in anti-social behaviour.

The project has highlighted that a major challenge in 2018 has been dealing with active addiction issues for their clients. Addiction issues on number of occasions, has impacted the ability of participants to progress in education or employment.

Gender Equality



The objective of the Gender Equality Activity is to support a cohort of those women who are currently detached from the labour market, in order to assist their return to the labour market. This will be done by offering them a locally delivered development course which will comprise a series of training opportunities focusing self-development and work related skills. The categories of persons in the target group are (1) Strand A – Women Returning to the Workforce (WRW) i.e. women who are

detached from the labour market and the objectives are to develop and deliver one or more training models to offer self-developmental training in employment related skills on a part time basis to women who currently detached from the labour market. (2) Strand B – Women's Entrepreneurship (WE) i.e. women who can be supported to increase the rate of women's entrepreneurship, the objectives are to develop and deliver interventions aimed at addressing the gender gap in entrepreneurial activity through targeted supports for women's entrepreneurship. In 2016, 18 projects were selected to deliver initiatives, 14 under Strand A and 4 under Strand B.

In March 2018, the EU Funds Unit held a Networking and Training event for ESF Funded Projects – both GE and IEM. The event provided an opportunity for projects to network, to ask questions and to hear presentations from the ESF management cascade. In June, a working day was held with ESF Funded projects, including

representatives from the currently funded Gender Equality projects. The day was focused on issues being raised directly by projects in relation to their participant tracking and reporting duties. In November a 'world café' style consultation with ESF stakeholders was held. The purpose of this event was to provide an opportunity for interested parties to share their views on where the priorities for the next round ESF PEIL funding should be focused and how the fund can be best used to deliver results on the ground.

The Wise Project which is based Donegal, held a conference in 2018 entitled 'A Fresh Start for Women'. Four keynote speakers from the business, education and voluntary sectors spoke about their work and how they achieved their goals and dreams through employment and education. There were a number of information stands where attendees could learn about local businesses and how to access avenues of employment and personal development.

The Ballyhoura WREN showcase took place in Croom Community Enterprise Centre in June 2018, to mark the end of the official programme for the 2017/2018 participants, who had the opportunity to showcase their business idea and pitch their idea to the audience. A panel of Business Experts marked their display and pitch. This contributes towards the accredited programme. The event was an opportunity for those interested in WREN for 2018/2019 to get information on the programme.

The EMPOWER Explore event, 24 September 2018, GMIT. This event took place in order for the GMIT Innovation Hub to launch the second cycle of "EMPOWER" – AN ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAMME FOR WOMEN. The theme of the evening was "Discovering your True Passion and Purpose". Successful entrepreneurs took to the stage to talk about their own experiences and how they built their businesses.

The total number of participants in the projects for 2018 was 1,014. Progress for the activity projects is on track. A second open call for projects will see new operations commencing in 2019 which will overlap with existing operations. It is expected the current pace will continue and the 2023 target value will be exceeded.

PRIORITY 3

Third Level Access



There are two broad objectives under this measure: The Student Assistance Fund (SAF) which aims to support students facing ongoing or temporary financial hardship which would

otherwise negatively impact on their chances of retention or completion of their higher education course. The Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD) supports students in overcoming barriers to participation in higher education due to disability. Support under both these objectives are offered to eligible students on full-time higher education courses. For practical purposes, the two objectives are administered separately as sub-programmes.

Student Assistance Fund (SAF):

A review of the SAF was published in 2016 and a HEA-chaired implementation group was established to progress the recommendations. Continued progress was made in 2018 on the implementation of the review's recommendations. Work on implementing the remaining recommendations is ongoing. Updated 2018/19 guidelines for higher education institutions and students were developed with changes relating to data protection, data collection and financial reporting. Feedback in relation to these guidelines was generally positive. In addition, a student information leaflet was included with fresher handbooks.

In 2018 the SAF continued to include a ring-fenced allocation of €1m for the support of part-time students who are lone parents or members of the other target groups identified in the National Access Plan. Prior to that the SAF supported full-time students only. In December 2018, a further €1m was added to the SAF for students attending Professional Masters of Education courses who are experiencing financial difficulty. It is anticipated this funding will have a positive impact on the number of students remaining on courses that culminate in a teaching qualification, thereby positively impacting teacher supply and helping to address current teacher supply shortages at primary and post primary level.

Students on Springboard courses or who are on blended/distance learning courses are eligible for support through the part-time element of SAF, subject to meeting the eligibility criteria.

Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD):

A review of the FSD was published in October 2017 and a HEA-chaired implementation group was established to progress the recommendations of this review. The group met twice in 2018 and it is expected that this group will continue to meet twice yearly to progress the implementation of the review's 14 recommendations. The FSD review recommended that the fund cover students on part-time courses. Arising from this recommendation, from 2018 higher education institutions were permitted to include costs for institutional supports provided for learners on part-time courses on a pilot basis.

Arising from the FSD review, a new model for allocation of the fund has been developed. The allocation for any coming year will be based on a single detailed return of the individualised needs of FSD students, made to the HEA by each institution towards the end of the preceding academic year. FSD student numbers and data returned will be analysed and converted into weighted student numbers. The weightings will be determined by relative costs of different categories of need.

The number of new participants supported by the two funds during 2018 was 9,535.

Back to Education Initiative (BTEI)



The overall aim of the Back to Education Part-Time Programme (BTEI) is to increase the participation of young people and adults with less than second level education in a range of part-time accredited learning opportunities leading to awards on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) to facilitate their access, transfer and progression to other education or employment pathways.

The BTEI offers part-time provision of up to 400 hours per year, leading to certification at Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) levels 1-6. The BTEI's primary target groups are those that experience strong barriers to participation and are more difficult to engage in the formal learning process. The initiative is designed to complement other Further Education provision funded by SOLAS such as Adult Literacy, Youthreach, VTOS and Post Leaving Certificate Courses.

11,964 participants entered the BTEI in 2018.



SOLAS requested the ETBs who are providing BTEI training to consider how the needs of identified priority cohorts, such as the long term unemployed, young people, apprentices, people with disabilities, members of the Traveller and Roma communities etc. and the target participation rates across FET provision, agreed with DES and DEASP, were being

addressed. In the context of the National Skills Strategy 2025 and the Strategic Performance Agreements, SOLAS and the ETBs must give consideration to the development of appropriate solutions tailored to the needs of older workers in order to support them in staying attached to the workforce.

A key new development in 2018 was the launch of **Strategic Performance Agreements**¹ developed as part of a strategic dialogue process between SOLAS and the ETBs. A review of the 16 individually agreed Strategic Performance Agreements makes it clear that the prioritisation of support for all learners is an important aspect of ETB plans. Following on from the SOLAS 2017 publication *Barriers to Further Education and Training with Particular Reference to Long Term Unemployed Persons and Other Vulnerable Individuals*, barriers to participation are recognised and there are many innovative ETB approaches to address them, from female engagement in apprenticeships, to outreach work with traveller groups and family literacy programmes. The community education model has been very successful in facilitating inclusion and development, often by working in partnership with local organisations.

Unemployment Blackspots

While national unemployment levels are falling, many ETBs face particular challenges around 'unemployment blackspots' (79 Electoral Divisions around the State, identified by the CSO in 2016, where the unemployment rate is over 27% and where the labour force is greater than 200). As part of the Funding Parameters and Requirements in 2018, providers must consider how to support individuals from these areas of concentrated spatial disadvantage.

¹ All 16 Strategic Performance Agreements can be downloaded [at this link](http://www.solas.ie/Pages/Strategic-Performance-Agreements.aspx). Also available at this URL: <http://www.solas.ie/Pages/Strategic-Performance-Agreements.aspx>

Integrating Literacy and Numeracy

Consistent and integrated learner support and guidance was a core theme within the strategic performance agreements, and this will be critical to facilitate course completion and progression across all levels of FET. Importantly, inclusive access to wider education supports and the labour market for participants on this measure are supported through the integration of literacy and other additional learning supports into BTEI programmes. This encourages progression to employment or continued education through a series of interventions that enhance skills development at a pace suitable to the learner's circumstances and ensure that when they do gain employment it is sustainable. In 2018 SOLAS produced the Report "Integrating literacy and numeracy" which outlined good practices for implementation within ETBs to ensure that opportunities for literacy supports were not confined to standalone settings, but interwoven with other training programmes, including the suite of training programmes delivered under this measure. ETBs are requested in their funding parameters and requirements to ensure that recommendations from this report are considered across all programme design and delivery.

Adult Literacy



The objectives of the activity are to increase access to literacy, numeracy and language tuition for adults whose skills are inadequate for participation in modern society and the social and economic life of their communities. The aim is also to increase the quality and capacity of the adult literacy service. The priority target cohort for adult literacy programmes are those adults with primary education or less and whose literacy and numeracy skills do not match Level 3 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

Key target groups in this area of investment include the unemployed, particularly the long-term unemployed, disadvantaged groups, those under-35's and those formerly employed in declining sectors such as the construction sector, as well as employed adults in need of improved basic literacy, language and numeracy skills.

Literacy and numeracy

Addressing the low levels of literacy among the adult population in Ireland in general (16-65 years of age) remains a key SOLAS priority. How literacy skills are distributed across a population is closely correlated to how economic and social outcomes are distributed within society. The importance of literacy, numeracy and ICT skills for

every citizen is evidently growing, yet half of the adult population (56 percent) in Ireland have no ICT skills or can only fulfil the simplest set of tasks in a technology-rich environment.

Low levels of literacy and numeracy also exist within the workforce, which can impede the introduction and dissemination of new productivity improving technologies, digitalisation and work-organisation practices. This can put the on-going viability of the business at risk, hence the focus that SOLAS places in progressing the Department of Education and Skills (DES) recommendations on improving adult literacy and numeracy in the FET sector for those seeking to enter employment and those already working.

FET provision for literacy and numeracy

The Further Education and Training Strategy continues to focus all FET providers on increasing levels of literacy and numeracy for learners. Literacy and numeracy are important skills in supporting participation in society and gaining and sustaining employment. The Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, contained within the Further Education and Training Strategy, aims to achieve the best possible outcomes for learners with literacy and numeracy needs.

The strategy includes the following elements:

- Advertising and promotion of literacy and numeracy
 - Fit-for-purpose screening and assessment systems
 - Increased participation, completion and attainment at NFQ levels 1-3 for learners
 - Broader access and range of provision
 - Literacy and numeracy for personal, family, social and community contexts
 - Provision of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and initial competency assessment for low qualified and unemployed migrants
 - Improved data collection and analysis via PLSS
 - Staff support through Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and review existing CPD structures
 - Research into the practice and impact of integrating literacy and numeracy into all FET programmes
 - Increased numeracy offered as integrated and standalone options
- SOLAS, in partnership with providers and other agencies, will support the realisation of these outcomes throughout 2018.

In 2018 SOLAS demonstrated its commitment to the goal of active inclusion by expanding substantially and further establishing a designated Active Inclusion Unit within SOLAS, with specific responsibility for delivering on the Active Inclusion goals in current and future SOLAS Corporate Plans and national FET Strategies. Output from this unit in 2018 have included:

- English Language Provision and Language Assessment for Low-Skilled and Unemployed Migrants: Recommendations for Good Practice at NFQ Levels 1-3 in ETBs.^[1]
- Initial and Ongoing Assessment of Adult Literacy and Numeracy at NFQ Levels 1-3; Guidelines, Toolkit and Research Report.^[2]
- 2018 National Adult Literacy and Numeracy Awareness Campaign.^[4]
- Evaluation of 2017 (Phase 2) National Adult Literacy and Numeracy Awareness Campaign.^[5]
- Guidelines on the Inclusion of People with Intellectual disabilities in Adult Literacy Services.^[6]
- Active Inclusion in FET: Strategies Reference Document.^[7]
- 2018 Adult Learner Forum project, including 9 regional reports and 1 annual report.^[8]

The number of new participants under Adult Literacy in 2018 was 20,145.

PRIORITY 4

Back to Work Enterprise Allowance Scheme (BTWEA)



**An Roinn Gnóthaí Fostaíochta
agus Coimirce Sóisialaí**
Department of Employment Affairs
and Social Protection

The Back to Work Enterprise Allowance (BTWEA) supports participants to engage in self-employment by allowing them to retain a reducing proportion of their

qualifying social welfare payment over two years (equivalent to 100% in year 1 and 75% in year 2). The YEI is supporting participants who are NEETs (Not in Employment Education and Training) as defined by the nationally agreed definition and under 25 at the point of commencement on the BTWEA scheme.

The scheme guidelines were updated in April 2018 to extend the scope of the entry criteria to reach a larger cohort. Now, in addition to taking applicants that have been in receipt of Jobseekers Allowance (JA) or Jobseekers Benefit (JB) for 9 months continuously, applicants in receipt of JA or JB immediately prior to their BTWEA

^[1] To access English Language Provision and Language Assessment for Low-Skilled and Unemployed Migrants: Recommendations for Good Practice at NFQ Levels 1-3 in ETBs [please click on this link](http://www.solas.ie/Pages/SOLAS-Research.aspx). Also available by visiting URL <http://www.solas.ie/Pages/SOLAS-Research.aspx>

^[2] To access Initial and Ongoing Assessment of Adult Literacy and Numeracy at NFQ Levels 1-3; Guidelines, Toolkit and Research Report [Please click on this link](http://www.solas.ie/Pages/SOLAS-Research.aspx). Also available by visiting URL <http://www.solas.ie/Pages/SOLAS-Research.aspx>

^[4] Conducted in 2018, report forthcoming.

^[5] To access Evaluation of 2017 (Phase 2) National Adult Literacy and Numeracy Awareness Campaign please [click on this link](http://www.solas.ie/Pages/SOLAS-Research.aspx). Also available by visiting URL <http://www.solas.ie/Pages/SOLAS-Research.aspx>

^[6] To access Guidelines on the inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities in adult literacy services [please click on this link](https://www.nala.ie/resources). Also available at URL <https://www.nala.ie/resources>

^[7] This is an internal working document that was developed to assist ETBs.

^[8] Regional reports are not disseminated publicly, annual report forthcoming.

application for 12 months with a maximum of 30 days break in the Live Register are eligible. The eligibility for other eligible payments is now 9 months. Where there is a break in an eligibility payment due to Maternity or Paternity Benefit the Client can be deemed eligible, once this Benefit was preceded and has been followed by a primary eligible payment and meets the required accumulated days.

The numbers assisted under the scheme are declining with 45 NEETS being assisted in 2018. The reduction in the Live Register and improved economic growth has impacted the take-up on the scheme.

JobsPlus Incentive Scheme



**An Roinn Gnóthaí Fostaíochta
agus Coimirce Sóisialaí**
Department of Employment Affairs
and Social Protection

JobsPlus Youth is an employer incentive which encourages and employers to offer employment opportunities to the long term unemployed. The incentive is

open to all eligible employers in the private, community, not for profit and voluntary sectors, including those who are self-employed who are filling new positions or vacancies arising from natural turnover. The employer must offer full-time work of at least 30 hours per week over at least 4 days. The grant is payable at €7,500 or €10,000, depending on how long the new employee was unemployed. The grant is paid in monthly instalments for a maximum of 24 months. Employers can now recruit persons under the age of 25 who had been unemployed for 4 months in the previous 6 months. Employers are paid the JobsPlus grant at the lower €7,500 rate in respect of these employees.

For YEI support, all participants must come within the NEET (Not in Employment Education and Training) definition and be under 25 years of age when entering the scheme.

For 2018, the qualifying criteria for the higher rate of JobsPlus grant were changed for those under the age of 50. To avail of the higher rate, the jobseeker must be unemployed and have been on the live register for 936 days in the previous 48 months. This was introduced to offset the change in the qualifying criteria for those over the age of 50, following the identification of their under-representation in the JobsPlus scheme in a focused policy assessment carried out in August 2017.

The numbers supported under the scheme is declining reflecting the continued improvement in the labour market. 152 NEETs started under the scheme during 2018.

Youthreach



Youthreach was programmed under Priority 4 (the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI)) of the PEIL OP from 2014 to 2017, and switched to Priority 2 with effect from the 1st January 2018.

While this has no impact on delivery of services on the ground, ESF rules governing participant data require that different reports for Youthreach are submitted for 2017 and 2018 to reflect this change. Youthreach participants who remain enrolled on 31/12/17 are considered to have completed their Priority 4 activity on that day, and to have commenced Priority 2 activity on 1/1/18. While such double-counting of participants is not normally allowed, Priority 2 and Priority 4 activities are considered to be separate ESF operations, and thus this is in accordance with ESF rules.

Community Training Centres (CTCs) –Part of the Youthreach Initiative



There are 35 CTCs around the country offering programmes to young people generally between 16 and 21 years of age, who have left school without completing formal examinations or who have incomplete qualifications; who are experiencing difficulties finding a job; and who are keen to gain a qualification. Programmes include basic skills training and work experience and have a strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy training. CTC courses are full-time and

participants can avail of training opportunities within a CTC for a period up to two years.

CTCs, which are owned and managed by local community groups, are funded and supported by SOLAS / ETBs. 1,211 participants commenced CTC Programmes during 2018.

SOLAS commissioned the Economic and Social Research Institute to undertake an evaluation of Youthreach to generate policy-relevant knowledge concerning its outputs and outcomes and its effectiveness. The evaluation was completed and SOLAS prepared a Response Report to the findings – which was reported in the Youthreach Section earlier.

Defence Forces Employment Support Scheme



Two programmes were held in 2018, one in in Collins Barracks, Cork with 29 participants (June - August) and one in the Curragh with 20 participants (October-December). Both programmes ran for 10 weeks, consisting of 5 weeks of military orientated training interspersed with 5 weeks of educational orientated training.

There were a total of 49 participants under the two programmes in 2018, as follows:

DFESS Location	Participants - Male	Participants - Female	Participants - TOTAL	Completers	Male	Female
Cork	21	8	29	24	17	7
Curragh	11	9	20	20	11	9
Total	32	17	49	44	28	16
	65%	35%		90%	87%	94%

The Defence Forces YouTube channel posted a video of the scheme in 2018 entitled "Helping you to reach your Potential". This video shows all participants, male and female, undertaking the variety of activities undertaken and has been posted on the ESF website. www.esf.ie.

What do we fund?

Defence Forces Employment Support Scheme

The Employment Support Scheme

The Defence Forces
"Helping You To Reach Your Potential"

The Defence Forces Employment Support Scheme is targeted at unemployed 18-24 year olds who face significant barriers to gaining employment. The Scheme seeks to provide these participants with new skills, competencies and self-development that will enhance their capacity to pursue employment, work experience or further educational opportunities.

The Scheme encompasses a training programme of 10 weeks duration, consisting of 5 weeks of military orientated training interspersed with 5 weeks of educational orientated training. Participants are exposed to an environment which encourages personal development, achievement and hard work and, on successful completion of the programme, should be able to:

1. Display social and team skills.

An internal review of the scheme was undertaken in 2018 which recommended that one iteration of the Scheme should be run in 2019. It concluded that the scheme had been very successful in terms of the personal development of the individuals participating and had also been a very positive project for all involved.

Youth Employment Support Scheme



This new work experience programme provides participants with the opportunity to learn basic work and social skills in a supportive environment while on a work placement.

Supported by the Youth Employment Initiative, it is available to jobseekers and other eligible cohorts who are:

- aged between 18 and 24; and
- have been out of work and in receipt of a qualifying payment for at least 12 months: or
- if unemployed for less than 12 months, are considered by a case officer to face a significant barrier to work.

Participants work 24 hours per week for the 3 months of their placement, which can be extended to 6 months. A designated case officer liaises with the jobseeker and host organisation throughout the period of the placement, to monitor how well it is progressing for both parties and to provide appropriate advice/support.

A Learning and Development Plan is agreed between all parties at the outset of the placement. The case officer monitors progress and the host organisation completes an assessment for the participant at the end of the placement. Participants receive a weekly YESS payment of at least €229.20, which comprises the weekly personal rate of payment plus a top-up allowance as a contribution towards potential travel and other work placement-related expenses. At the end of the placement, host organisations are encouraged to hire satisfactory participants and can qualify for a subsidy under the JobsPlus scheme.

The YESS commenced on Monday 1st October 2018, and all placements are advertised on www.jobsireland.ie. By the end of 2018, a total of 75 jobseekers had commenced a YESS placement. The number of possible placements is greater than the number seeking placements and the INTREO case officers are encouraging jobseeker participation.

PRIORITY 5

Technical Assistance

Technical Assistance (TA) activities include the preparatory, management and control, monitoring and evaluation, information and communication, and audit activities necessary for the effective implementation of the Operational Programme. The TA budget for the period 2014-2020 amounts to €20m.

In March 2018, the new eCohesion IT system went live. Through the TA priority, the MA has supported the roll out of eCohesion through extensive testing, training, and also the development of guidance documents for Beneficiaries. Training was provided to 174 people from our IBs and Beneficiaries through 14 training sessions. These sessions also included training on compiling financial claims and reporting participant data, as well as communication requirements. This work has been critical to the progress of the OP and the drawdown of the ESF allocation from the European Commission.

Throughout 2018 the MA undertook a number of communications activities including the purchase of 48 ESF pop up banners for use by our IBs and Beneficiaries and produced its annual newsletter and calendar. To mark 30 years of Youthreach and ESF co-funding, the MA provided funding to the NAYC for 110 Anniversary Banners, one for each of the Youthreach centres. The MA also purchased ESF branded merchandise which was used to promote the OP at numerous events throughout the year, including the National Ploughing Championships.

The MA hosted a training session on promoting best practice with regard to anti-fraud measures, targeted at Intermediate Bodies and Beneficiaries in September 2018. There were some 70 attendees. Topics included were “Combating fraud in EU Funded Projects”, “Audit Strategy for Fraud Detection” and the “MA’s Anti-fraud Measures”. The MA conducted a further six ESF training sessions/briefings with relevant bodies and also hosted an Erasmus+ Discovery Day for ESF co-funded

projects.

Following an examination undertaken by the ESF AA, the ESF Managing and Certifying Authorities were officially designated on 13th November 2018.

The MA continued to monitor the progress of the OP in 2018 by holding two Programme Monitoring Committee meetings.

The MA successfully applied to the European Commission for Standard Scale Unit Costs (SSUCs) under article 14.1 of the ESF Regulation and Delegated Regulation (EU) 2018/1127 provides for SSUCs for the ETB Training for the Unemployed and CTC activities. This will facilitate simpler certification of the expenditure on these activities and reduce the associated administrative burden.

EVALUATION ACTIVITY

The Evaluation Plan for PEIL was prepared by the Managing Authority in 2015 and provides an overall framework for the evaluation of PEIL 2014-2020. The European Commission provided its observations on Ireland’s ESF Evaluation Plan in May 2016 and, as a result, the plan was revised and updated.

The Mid-Term Evaluation of PEIL and the Final YEI Impact Evaluation were completed by the end of 2018. The Mid-Term Evaluation had been originally timetabled for 2017. However, to ensure that the evaluation could yield useful information and recommendations, it was deferred until 2018 and incorporated the second YEI evaluation, which was due to be completed by end of 2018.

Overall, the evaluation notes that the PEIL at its mid-term stage is progressing well and contributing significantly to a range of important education, labour market, and social inclusion policy goals and objectives. The evaluation also notes that this progress has been made in the face of a number of implementation challenges: a changing socio-economic context; extensive institutional reorganisation in the FET sector; operationalising the necessary accountability and reporting systems; integrating ESF and YEI involvement and requirements into a wide range of pre-existing and ongoing schemes and interventions; and specifying its role, planned contribution and appropriate monitoring framework within each strand of activity it supports.



In relation to the YEI element of the Programme, the report finds that YEI support channelled through the Programme has been effectively deployed through targeted schemes activating young people in long-term unemployment, addressing early school leaving, and addressing their personal and employment skills shortages into positive and sustained labour market transitions. While not the only programmes that have sought to, the Programme and the YEI have made central contributions to effecting the positive trends that have occurred in youth employment, unemployment and labour market inactivity since the financial and economic crisis.

The Evaluation Plan for PEIL also notes that other relevant evaluations, outside the scope of the evaluation plan itself, are planned and will take place over the course of the programming period. These evaluations are noted within the Plan itself, together with any relevant recommendations/findings. This is to ensure that all relevant stakeholders

are made aware of relevant evaluation work, in the interest of transparency and emergent learning. Other relevant evaluations which were ongoing or planned in 2018 include –

- SOLAS commissioned the ESRI in 2017 to undertake an evaluation of Youthreach provision, with a core task of generating policy-relevant knowledge concerning the outputs and outcomes of Youthreach and the effectiveness of this provision. The study involves a mix a desk research, a national survey of Youthreach managers, analysis of existing data on school leavers, case studies and consultative workshops. The evaluation was ongoing during 2018 and the report was published in June 2019.
- SOLAS appointed Indecon International Economic Consultants in 2018 to undertake an evaluation of Specific Skills Training (part of ETB Training for the Unemployed). The evaluation is ongoing and the final report is due to be published in 2019.
- Pobal appointed Quality Matters in 2018 to undertake an external evaluation of the Ability Programme. The evaluation is assessing the achievement of the programme’s original aims and key objectives. The evaluation is also exploring the effectiveness of different approaches and measures applied in bringing young people with disabilities who are not work-ready, closer to the labour market in addition to examining the range of impacts on the participants of the programme. The evaluation is a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods, which is supported by an analysis of quantitative data collected by Pobal. The evaluation is being conducted over the duration of the programme and it will conclude in June 2020.
- The Department of Justice and Equality decided to commission an external evaluation of the Garda Youth Diversion Projects in 2019.

The Evaluation Plan also provides that the ESF Managing, through its Technical Assistance budget, will seek to support the evaluation activities of relevant bodies where those activities are, in the view of the Managing Authority, particularly relevant to the efficient and effective implementation of the PEIL.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION ACTIVITY



In September 2018, the ESF and ERDF MAs, in conjunction with the Member State (DPER), managed a stand in the European Commission Representation in Ireland's marquee at the National Ploughing Championships. The biggest outdoor event in Europe, the National Ploughing Championships attracts some 80,000 visitors on each of its three exhibition days. This event provided a significant opportunity to publicise the PEIL Operational Programme to the general public, with visitors of all ages and backgrounds as well as considerable media coverage. A number of the ESF co-funded programmes were also promoted separately during the three days, including EURES, SICAP, Adult Literacy, Traineeships and the Back to Education Initiative.





Project Launches

ABILITY

The Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection, Regina Doherty, T.D., together with the Minister of State with special responsibility for Disabilities, Finian McGrath, T.D., announced funding of €16 million to deliver a new pre-activation Programme for young people with disabilities, called “Ability”. The Ability Programme will provide supports to over 2,600 young people with disabilities aged between 15 to 29 years old.

SPRINGBOARD+

Putting an emphasis on importance of lifelong learning and upskilling, the then Minister for Education and Skills Richard Bruton, T.D. and the Minister of State for Training, Skills and Innovation John Halligan T.D., launched a new suite of courses under the ESF co-funded Springboard+ 2018.

SICAP

The Minister for Rural and Community Development, Mr. Michael Ring TD, formally launched the ESF co-funded Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme in April 2018. SICAP supports unemployed people, people living in deprived areas, people with disabilities, single parent families, people on low income, members of the Traveller and Roma community and other disadvantaged groups.

YESS

The Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection, Regina Doherty T.D., announced the launch of the ESF co-funded Youth Employment Support Scheme (YESS) on 24 September. YESS is a new work experience scheme targeted exclusively at young jobseekers who are either long-term unemployed or face significant barriers to employment.

30 Years of Youthreach

To mark 30 years of Youthreach and ESF co-funding, the National Association of Youthreach Coordinators (NAYC) hosted “YRFest” in the National Sports Campus in Blanchardstown on 24th October. YRFest was attended by Youthreach learners and staff from all over the country. The



event included Sports activities, learner relevant presentations, interactive and stage entertainment, workshops and zoned exhibitions areas. The Minister for Education and Skills Joe McHugh T.D. spoke to young learners at the event. The ESF MA provided funding to the NAYC for 110 30th Anniversary Banners, one for each of the Youthreach centres.



45 years of EU Membership

To celebrate Ireland's 45 years of EU Membership, the European Commission Representation in Ireland published a collection of 45 stories that illustrate ways Ireland has benefited from membership. The case study of an ESF co-funded EMPOWER Programme participant was chosen. The story also featured in a special Irish Examiner supplement, 'Celebrating Ireland's 45 Years of EU Membership'. The stories were transformed into an exhibition which travelled Ireland in 2018 and has continued into 2019.



30 Years of Cohesion Policy



To celebrate the 30th anniversary of EU cohesion policy, the European Commission organised a number of events and exhibitions around 30 years of cohesion policy. ESF MAs were asked for nominations of highly emblematic and symbolic projects financed by cohesion policy (ERDF-CF-ESF), with one project being chosen per Member State.

'EPIC' (Employment for People from Immigrant Communities) was chosen to be Ireland's cohesion project for the campaign. As part of the campaign, EPIC featured in a special Panorama magazine issue and in an exhibition at an Open Day on 5th May 2018 in the Berlaymont building. EPIC celebrated its own 10 year anniversary in December 2018. The EPIC Programme has supported 3,235 people from 105 countries over the past 10 years.

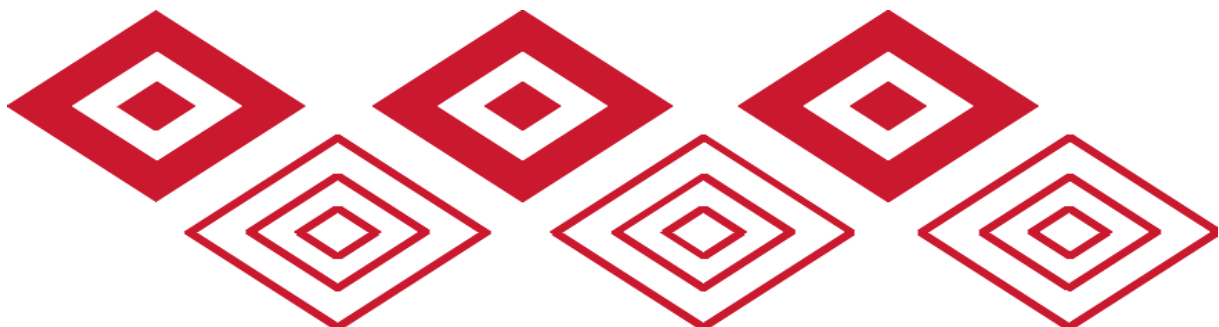


EU IN MY REGION



The European Commission's #EUinmyregion campaign aims to highlight the work that projects across Europe are doing with the help of EU funding.

Over 50 of Ireland's ESF projects took part in the campaign by holding events during 2018. These events included Further Education and Training Fairs, conferences, graduation and awards ceremonies, launches and open days.



Communication Activities in Numbers

- The ESF MA has supported over **50** Activity specific events
- Provided **21** training sessions/briefings
- Hosted **1** Erasmus+ Discovery Day
- **48** ESF Popup banners provided to Beneficiaries
- **10,000** ESF leaflets distributed
- Circulated over **5,000** ESF Newsletters
- **785** Twitter Followers # **2,585** Profile Views
- **232** Tweets # **200** Retweets # **159.5k** Impressions
- **13k** ESF website hits with **3.4k** new users



HORIZONTAL PRINCIPLES



The Horizontal Principles of Gender Equality and the Promotion of Equal Opportunities and Non-Discrimination are relevant to the PEIL.

Intermediate Bodies and Beneficiaries report on both HPs on an annual basis. These reports are reviewed by experts from the Gender Equality (GE) Division in the Department of Justice and Equality and from the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) for each HP respectively.

In their presentations to the Programme Monitoring Committee in May 2018:

- GE Division noted the detailed reports and steps already taken while recognising the importance of using disaggregated data to identify trends to ensure an equality of opportunity truly exists.
- IHREC noted that activities were strong on the HP and that efforts had been made to accommodate a diversity of needs, especially within project implementation. Improved data collection allows for reporting addressing intersectionality (how participants may be affected by more than one equality ground) and IHREC are glad that activities are working towards the Public Sector Duty.



The HP Working Group set up in 2017 to consider how to improve reporting on the principles in respect of ESF Activities for PMC meetings continued its work. The MA hosted a focused guidance seminar in May 2018 for IBs and Beneficiaries. The seminar was very well attended, with representation from all IBs. Issues address were:

- Why there is a need to report on HPs; the policy/regulation rationale, what information is captured and the benefits, opportunities and challenges involved.

- Applying HP's to project implementation, how to bring an equality lens to implementation plans, how to inform the implementation, reviewing project progress, outcomes and impact.
- Facilitated small group discussion and feedback on strengthening IB reports on HPs.

The PEIL Mid-term Evaluation Report (December 2018) noted that the OP had embraced the two key HPs quite commendably and noted that no specific commitments were set for Sustainable Development in the OP. It noted that:

- formal consideration of the HPs was integrated into intervention design and planning,
- there were regular reporting processes across the OP
- information and expertise was available to advise and support delivery agents in meeting their obligations and consequently
- understanding of the HPs has been enhanced, and performance is moving beyond minimally compliant levels to more thorough consideration, examination and reporting on accomplishments and further challenges.

The HP Working Group met in December 2018 to consider some of the issues that were raised at the seminar, the mid-term evaluation and how best to progress with the guidance work.

Further information regarding the Operational Programme can be found on the Irish ESF website: <http://www.esf.ie/en/Programmes/ESF-Programme-for-Employability-Inclusion-and-Learning-PEIL-2014-2020/>



The Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) is supported under PEIL 2014-2020