

Annual Implementation Report 2019

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



Citizens' Summary



INTRODUCTION

Background

Ireland's Operational Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL) involves investment 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). The Programme focuses on activation of the unemployed, improving social and labour market inclusion, enhancing education attainment, and tackling youth employment.

This Citizens' Summary accompanies the PEIL Annual Implementation Report (AIR) for 2019 which was submitted to the European Commission in accordance with the relevant Regulations on the 30th September 2020.

It is the fifth Citizens' Summary produced under PEIL and summarise the activities under the PEIL during 2019.

Structure of the Operational Programme

The PEIL OP has 4 Priorities, each addressing one of the thematic objectives set out in Article 3 the ESF Regulation No. 1304/2013, as well as a Technical Assistance priority, as follows:

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

There are 20+ specific activities within these four priorities, while the Technical Assistance priority deals with the operation and administration of the overall programme and has an allocation of €20 million, or less than 2% of the overall funding.

Priority 1: Promoting the attainment of sustainable and quality employment through relevant upskilling measures and supporting labour mobility

€394 million, or 34% of the total investment under the Programme, is assigned to Priority 1, which tackles unemployment and enhance labour mobility, via the following activities –

- ***ETB Training for the Unemployed:*** provides a range of vocational training courses to meet the needs of unemployed people and job-seekers.
- ***Springboard:*** provides part-time higher education opportunities in areas where there are identified skills shortages and where sustainable employment opportunities may arise as the economy recovers.
- ***ICT Skills Conversion Courses:*** provide 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:*** supports EURES Ireland, which promotes labour mobility across the EU.

Priority 2: Promoting social inclusion and combating discrimination in the labour market

€298 million, or 26% of the total investment under the Programme, is assigned to Priority 2 to activities to support active inclusion measures, to promote equal opportunities and to combat discrimination, via -

- ***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:*** engage 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 other female offenders.
- ***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

€241 million, or 21% of the total investment under the Programme, is assigned to Priority 3 to promote lifelong learning through the following activities –

- **Third-Level Access:** supports disadvantaged students and students with disabilities pursue third level education.
- **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 million, or 18% of the total investment under the Programme, is assigned to the YEI 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 was provided 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.

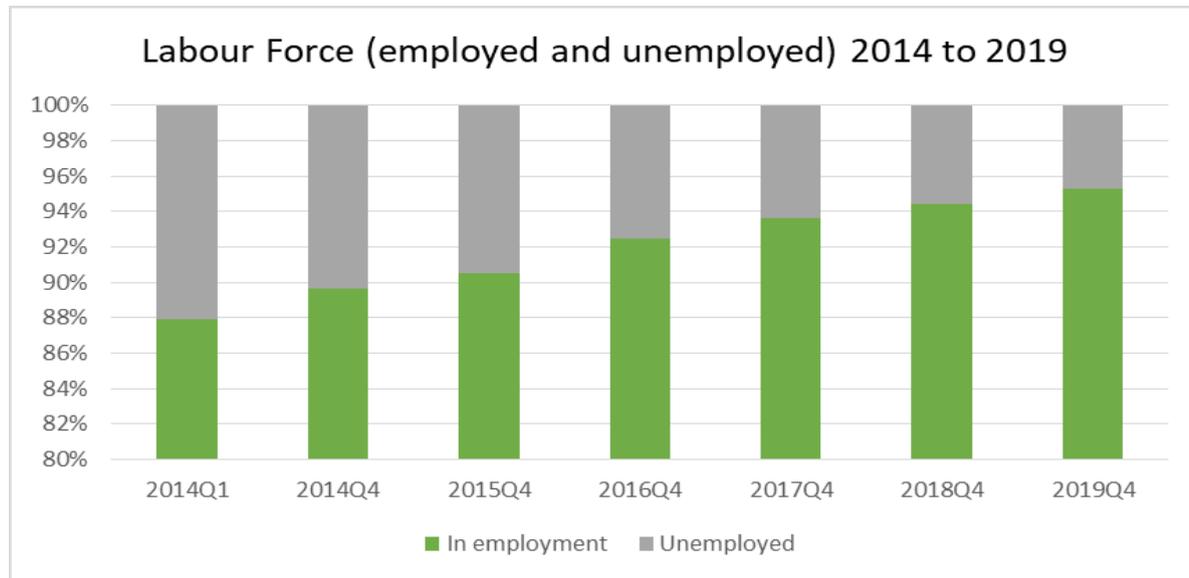
The following activities are funded under the YEI (it should be noted that in relation to some of these schemes, not all of their activities are aimed exclusively at under-25s):

- **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. [completed in 2017]
- **Community Training Centres (CTCs):** provides early school leavers further education and training opportunities.
- **Defence Forces Employment Support Scheme:** a 10 week training programme of military and educational orientated training.
- **Youth Employment Support Scheme (YESS):** work experience programme with integrated learning and development plan.

National Context – Key Recent Developments

The economy continued to expand during 2019, as shown on Chart No.1. Employment continued to grow with an increase of 3.5% (79,900) in 2019, up on the 2018 increase of 2.3% (50,500).

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



The number of persons employed by the end of 2019 reached 2.35m, seasonally adjusted, see Table No. 1 below. The number of persons in full time employment increased from 1,449,400 at the start of 2014 to 1,864,900 at the end of 2019, an increase of 415,500 (or 28.7%) while the part time employment increased by 38,800 (or 8.6%).

Table No. 1 Labour force over 15 (employed and unemployed) Q1 2014 to Q4 2019 [Seasonally adjusted]

	2014Q1	2014Q4	2015Q4	2016Q4	2017Q4	2018Q4	2019Q4
In employment	1,902.7	1,933.3	2,079.2	2,155.8	2,220.0	2,271.7	2,350.6
Full-time employment	1,449.4	1,485.7	1,591.3	1,688.8	1,765.7	1,815.0	1,864.9
Part-time employment	451.3	445.7	486	467.8	458.6	460.3	490.1
Unemployed	260.8	223.3	217.2	176.3	150.3	134.9	115.9
Unemployed %	12.1%	10.4%	9.5%	7.6%	6.4%	5.7%	4.7%
Participation rate %	60.2%	59.9%	61.9%	62.0%	62.2%	62.2%	62.6%
In labour force	2,162.2	2,157.3	2,296.6	2,333.2	2,374.8	2,412.0	2,471.7

Source: CSO website

Employment

The numbers in employment have grown steadily for almost all the age categories. See Table No. 2 below. The number of those employed in the age category 15-19 grew by 22,100 while those in the 20- 24 increased by 34,600 over the period. However, those

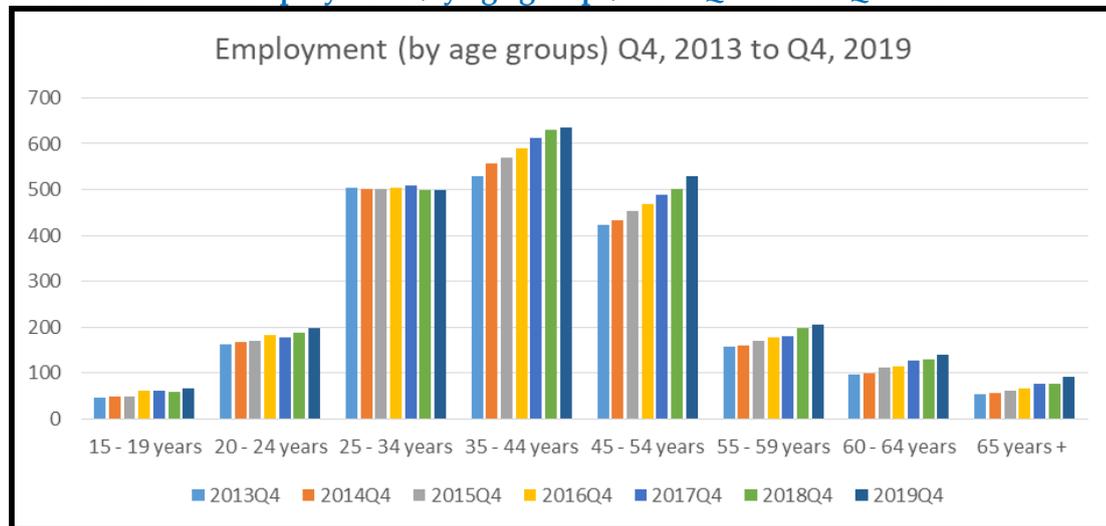
employed in the 25 to 34 year olds category decreased by 5,400 since Q4, 2013, the only age group to do so; this has been attributed to a combination of net outward migration and falling birth rates. [The number now employed in this category in Q4, 2019 is equivalent to the same age group back in 2002.] The number of those employed in the 35 to 44 age group grew by 103,900, the 45-54 years increased by 105,100 and the 55-59 years by 48,200. The numbers employed in the over 60 categories increased by 81,800. The percentage changes for the Q4 2013 to Q4 2019 period can be seen in the last column of Table No. 2.

Table No. 2 Employment (by age groups) between Q4, 2013 and Q4, 2019

Age Group	2013Q4	2014Q4	2015Q4	2016Q4	2017Q4	2018Q4	2019Q4	% change Q4 2013 to Q4 2019
15 - 19	44.7	48.9	48.1	62.2	60.8	59.5	66.8	49.4%
20 - 24	162.7	168.6	169.3	182.4	176.7	188	197.3	21.3%
25 - 34	503.6	502	502	503.2	508.1	499.9	498.2	-1.1%
35 - 44	530.3	555.9	569.4	589.4	612.6	629.4	634.2	19.6%
45 - 54	423.0	433.2	453.7	468.4	489.4	501.9	528.1	24.8%
55 - 59	156.7	160.4	169.9	176.7	180.8	197.2	204.9	30.8%
60 - 64	95.5	99.4	110.9	114.3	125.7	128.8	139.5	46.1%
65+	54.4	56.8	62.2	66.9	76.6	76.6	92.2	69.5%
Total	1,971.0	2025.2	2085	2163.5	2230.7	2281.3	2361.2	19.8%

Source: CSO website

Chart No. 2 In employment (by age groups) from Q4 2013 to Q4 2019



Unemployment

The numbers unemployed decreased by 18,300 over the year to the end of Q4 2019 to 110,600, a decrease of 14.2%. The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate had decreased to 4.7% by Q4 2019, down from 5.7% in Q4, 2018, below the EU average of 6.2%. In the year to Q4 2019, the number of persons classified as long-term

unemployed decreased by 11,500 (-22.8%), bringing total long-term unemployment to 38,700. This represents approximately 35% of total unemployment, compared to 39% a year earlier.

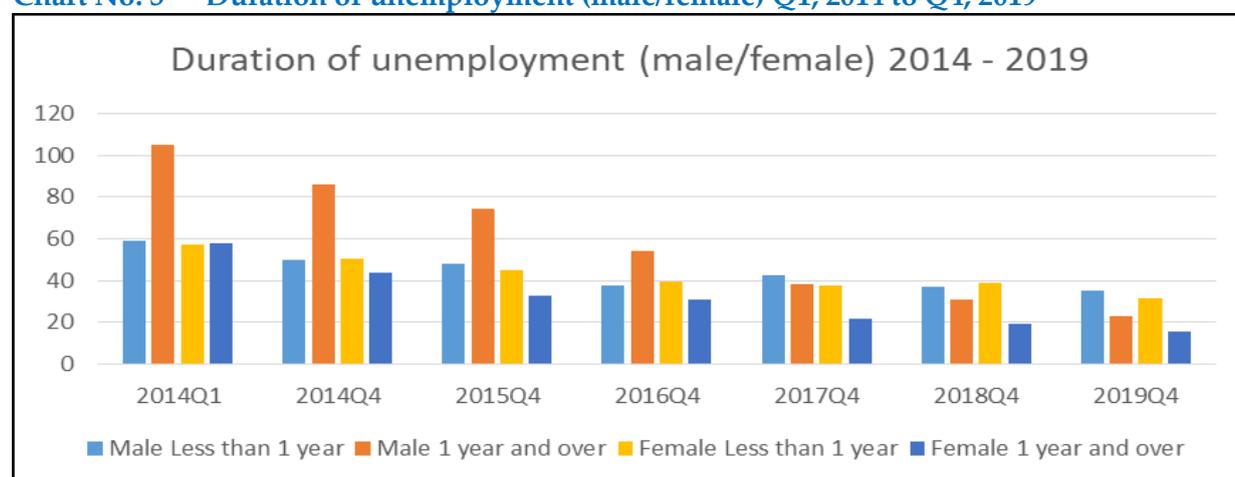
From the commencement of the PEIL OP in 2014, the number of males who were unemployed for over a year (long-term) has fallen from 104,700 in Q1 2014 to 22,900 in Q4, 2019, a 78% reduction, while the number of females has fallen from 58,100 in Q1 2014 to 15,800 in Q4, 2019, a 72.8% reduction. The number of males on short term unemployment has fallen from 58,800 in Q1 2014 to 35,400 in Q4 2019, a 40% reduction. The corresponding number for females on short term unemployment has fallen from 57,200 in Q1 2014 to 31,400 in Q4, 2019, a 45% reduction. (Chart No. 3).

Table No. 3 Numbers Unemployed (000s) 2014 to 2019

	2014Q1	2014Q4	2015Q4	2016Q4	2017Q4	2018Q4	2019Q4
Male less than 1 year	58.8	50	48.2	37.7	42.3	37.2	35.4
Male 1 year and over	104.7	85.7	74.6	54.3	38	30.7	22.9
Female less than 1 year	57.2	50.4	44.8	39.5	37.8	39	31.4
Female 1 year and over	58.1	43.9	32.5	31.2	22	19.5	15.8

Source: CSO

Chart No. 3 Duration of unemployment (male/female) Q1, 2014 to Q4, 2019



Youth unemployment

The downward trend for unemployment in respect of 15-24 year olds continued with the youth unemployment rate decreasing from 12% in Q4 2018 to 9.6% at the end of 2019. The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in Q4 2019 was 11%.

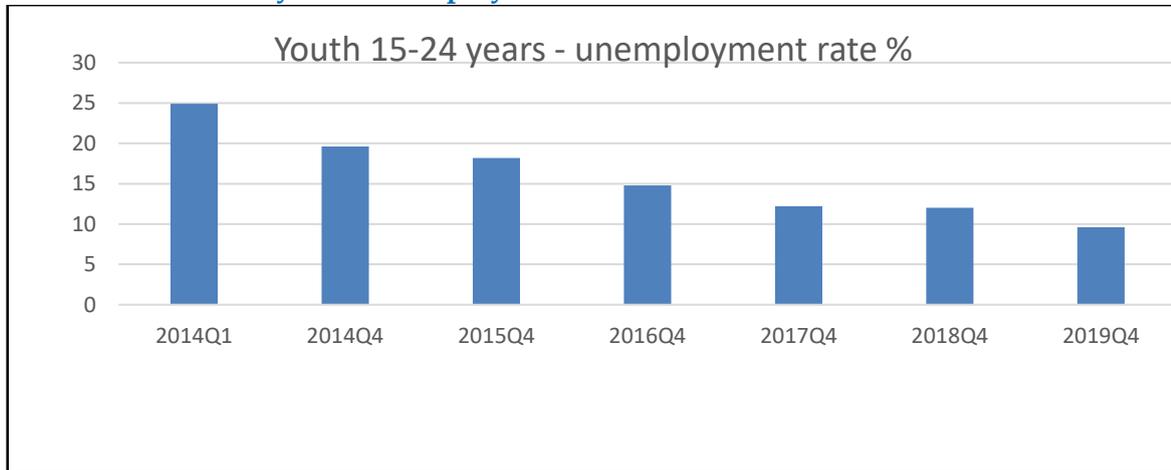
Table No. 4 and Chart No. 4 show the decline in the unemployment rate for the 15 to 24 years category between the years 2014 and 2019.

Table No. 4 15 to 24 years unemployment rate 2014 to 2019

	2014Q1	2014Q4	2015Q4	2016Q4	2017Q4	2018Q4	2019Q4
Unemployment rate %	24.9	19.6	18.2	14.8	12.2	12.0	9.6%

Source: CSO

Chart No. 4 15-24 years - unemployment rate 2014 to 2019



Employment increased in most of the economic sectors over the year 2019. The largest rates of increase were in

- Education (12,800),
- Information and Communication (12,300),
- Public administration and Defence (8,700),
- Financial, insurance and real estate activities (8,500),
- Transportation and storage (6,600)
- Human health and social work activities (5,800) and
- Industry (5,600).

The only area showing a decrease in employment was in the Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles (-1,700). (Source CSO LMS Q4 2019).

While the economic recovery that had taken place since 2012 outpaced projected growth up to the end of February 2020, an unprecedented challenge now faces the economy with the arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic. While the standard measure of Monthly Unemployment was 5.2% in August 2020, the CSO’s COVID-19 Adjusted Measure of Unemployment indicates a rate as high as 15.4% if all claimants of the Pandemic Unemployment Payment (PUP) were classified as unemployed. This COVID-19 Adjusted Measure of Unemployment was 28.2% at the end of April 2020. A number of other challenges remain for the future, most notably the outcome of the current Brexit negotiations in 2020.

The CSO’s *Educational Attainment Thematic Report 2019* reported that employment rates increased with education levels. See Table no. 5. The data shows that the level of

employment increases with the educational attainment level held. In relation to the unemployment rate, the opposite is generally the case.

Table No. 5. Educational attainment and labour market position Q2, 2016 & Q2, 2019

Educational Attainment Q2 2019					
Highest level of education attained	NFQ	Employment rate		Unemployment rate	
		Q2,2016	Q2, 2019	Q2, 2016	Q2, 2019
Primary or below	None/1/2	36	40	19	6
Lower Secondary	3	57	58	13	7
Higher Secondary	4/5	68	73	9	5
Post Leaving Certificate	4/5/6	73	77	9	5
Third Level, of which:	6/7/8/9/10	82	86	5	3
Higher Certificate or equivalent	6	74	75	11	5
Ordinary Degree or equivalent	7	79	82	6	4
Honours bachelor degree or equivalent	8	83	86	5	3
Postgraduate qualification	9/10	86	89	5	2
Total persons		72	76	8	4

Source: CSO's Educational Attainment Thematic Report 2019

In Q2, 2019 the employment rate for females with third level qualifications (82%) was more than three times those with only primary or below (26%). See Table No. 6. The rates for males with third level qualifications was 91% compared to 51% for males with a primary or below. 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 2019 and a steady decrease in the numbers with primary/no formal education from 13% in Q2 2009 to 5% in Q2 2019.

Table No. 6 – Employment rates (M/F) by educational attainment 2016 and 2019

Employment rates (M and F) by educational attainment 2016 and 2019					
Highest level of education attained	NFQ	2016		2019	
		M	F	M	F
Primary or below	None/1/2	45	25	51	26
Lower Secondary	3	70	39	71	41
Higher Secondary	4/5	77	59	82	63
Post Leaving Certificate	4/5/6	81	64	87	67
Third Level, of which:	6/7/8/9/10	87	79	91	82
Higher Certificate or equivalent	6	84	66	83	71
Ordinary Degree or equivalent	7	84	74	87	78
equivalent	8	87	80	91	82
Postgraduate qualification	9/10	90	83	94	85
Total employment rates		78	65	83	69

Source: CSO

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 2019 the unemployment rate for early school leavers was 25% compared to 8% for others in the same age category. See Table No. 7.

Table No. 7 Early school leavers (18 -24) labour market status (2014 to 2019) %

	2010	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Early school leaver							
Employed	41	31	29	43	34	28	27
Unemployed	37	33	40	23	24	18	25
In labour force	78	64	69	66	57	46	53
Inactive	22	36	31	34	43	54	47
Other persons aged 18-24							
Employed	52	49	52	57	56	56	56
Unemployed	18	15	12	12	9	9	8
In labour force	70	64	64	69	65	65	64
Inactive	30	36	36	31	35	35	36
All persons aged 18-24							
Employed	51	48	51	57	55	55	54
Unemployed	20	16	13	12	10	9	9
In labour force	71	64	64	69	65	64	64
Inactive	29	36	36	31	35	36	36

Source: CSO Educational Attainment Thematic Report (Dec 2019)

Government Policies/Initiatives during 2019

Following the launch of the **Future Jobs Ireland – Preparing Now for Tomorrow’s Economy**, a major stakeholders’ summit was held in November 2019 to discuss progress and to plan the goals for 2020 by focussing on three themes: transitioning, clustering and new modes of working.

Investment of €300m in higher education under the **Human Capital Initiative** was announced, targeted at meeting the future skills needs of the economy.



The special fund totals €300m over five years – €60m a year from 2020 to 2024. The finance is being provided from the surplus in the National Training Fund (NTF) in line with recommendations contained in the independent review of the NTF and the development of labour market skills. The HCI consists of three main pillars which will form the basis of three competitive calls addressing:

1. Graduate conversion and specialisation courses
2. Additional places on undergraduate provision
3. An innovation and agility fund

The **National Skills Bulletin 2019** (published in December 2019) was produced by SOLAS on behalf of the National Skills Council. It looks at 95 occupational groups and a range of labour market indicators. It noted that employment increased by 63,000 during 2018 while the unemployment level decreased by 20,400, the number on part-time/under employment fell by 7,000 and long-term unemployment rate fell to 2.1%. An indication of the skills shortages was the number of new employment permits issued in 2018 (11,300), which was a 20% increase on 2017. The health (30%) and the ICT sectors (36%) accounted for most of the permits.

An Implementation Plan to deliver the recommendations in the independent **review of the National Training Fund (NTF)** was published as part of Budget 2019 along with details of a new advisory group to the National Skills Council in order to optimise enterprise engagement on NTF priorities.

In October 2019, €27m from the NTF was committed to an increase in workplace and employer-led training through apprenticeship and the Skillnet Ireland programme. The **ETB Skills to Advance** programme will receive an additional €6 million to allow for the upskilling of an additional 3,000 people in the workforce. An additional €8 million will support 7,000 additional participants on Skillnet Ireland programmes including a new digital skills initiative and an SME upskilling scheme.

An **Action Plan for increasing Traveller participation in Higher Education 2019-2021**, an initiative under the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2021 (NAP), was launched on the 26th November, 2019. The NAP identified Irish Travellers as one of the target groups that were under-represented in higher education. The review also highlighted the difficulty in measuring the number of Traveller students in the higher education system, as self-identification is the only mechanism by which this information is captured. The purpose of the Action Plan is to set out the various actions for the Department will deliver or co-ordinate delivery to achieve the NAP targets.

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 and the positive progress made in relation to Ireland's targets is set out in Table No. 8.

Table No. 8 Employment and education indicators

Indicator	Position in 2010	2016	2017	2018	2019	Target 2020
Employment						
% 20-64 year olds in employment	64.7%	71.2%	72.9%	73.7%	75.1%	69-71%
Education						
Early school leavers	11.4%	6.9%	6.1%	5.0%	5.1%	8%
Tertiary attainment of 30-34-year-olds	50.1%	52.3%	53.3%	56.3%	55.4%	60%

Source: Eurostat

Both the employment early school leavers targets have been exceeded. Third level education attainment of 30-34 year olds reached 55.4% in 2019, which while exceeding the EU-27 average of 40.3%, falls short of the 60% target.

Ireland's contribution to the Europe 2020 poverty target is to reduce by a minimum of 200,000 the population in 'combined poverty' (i.e. at-risk-of-poverty/basic deprivation). Ireland's contribution is based on reducing the population in 'combined poverty' based on three indicators – consistent poverty or at-risk-of-poverty or basic deprivation. It is similar to the EU composite measure, 'at risk of poverty or exclusion'. There has been a decrease in basic deprivation or 'combined poverty' with the rate falling from 27.8% in 2017 to 23.5% in 2018 (1.14m people). The 2018 figure represents a decrease of 270,000 people on the 2010 baseline figure. It should be noted that this rate increased to 1.74 million people from 2010 to 2013, which means the current rate represents a decrease of some 600,000 people from 2013. While the 2018 data achieves the 2020 Target, the Covid19 pandemic will have a negative effect on this position.

Table No. 9 Combined poverty rates

	2010 (baseline)	2013	2014	2015	2016	2107	2018	2020 Target
Combined poverty ('000)	1,412	1,732	1,719	1,539	1,381	1,332	1,140	1,212
Combined poverty (%)	31.0%	37.7%	37.3%	33.2%	29.0%	27.8%	23.5%	

Source: DEASP/Social Inclusion Division data in relation to 2018; the Social Inclusion Monitor for 2018 due for publication in 2020).

Financial Progress to Date

The financial progress made in terms of payment applications made to the Commission at Priority Level is shown in table 10. These payment applications account for €293m, or 47.8%, of the total EU contribution and have resulted in receipts from the Commission of €267m to date.

Table No. 10 Interim Payment Applications

Priority	Allocation	EU Contribution	PAs made to Date Gross ^	PAs made to Date Net
1	€394,040,738	€197,020,369	€138,505,934	€69,252,967
2	€297,615,568	€148,807,784	€86,803,150	€43,401,575
3	€241,084,508	€120,542,254	€171,249,938	€85,624,969
4	€204,436,257	€136,290,838	€142,270,006	€94,846,671
5	€20,000,000	€10,000,000	€0	€0
Total	€1,157,177,071	€612,661,245	€538,829,027	€293,126,181

^ €541,266,900 less the corrections of €2,437,873 made in the 2018/19 accounts

The progress in terms of participants on ESF activities is shown in Table 11.

Table No. 11 Participants on PEIL Activities

PEIL 2014-2020	AIP No.	New Participants 2019*	All participants 2014-2019*
ETB Training for the Unemployed	ESF 1.1	8,749	55,517
ICT Skills Conversion Course	ESF 1.3	1,279	7,144
Intra EU mobility	ESF 1.5	9	34
Priority 1 Total		10,037	62,695
Social Inclusion and Activation Programme (SICAP)	ESF 2.1	21,533	54,014
Youthreach	ESF 2.2	1,829	6,291
Garda Youth Diversion Projects (GYDPs)	ESF 2.3	1,415	9,824
Young Persons Probation (YPP) projects	ESF 2.4	98	733
Disability Project	ESF 2.6	994	1,291
Integration and employment of Migrants	ESF 2.7	597	1,760
Tus Nua project	ESF 2.8	18	114
Gender Equality	ESF 2.9	692	2,591
Priority 2 Total		27,176	76,618
Third Level Access	ESF 3.1	0	52,245
BTEI	ESF 3.2	10,180	76,059
Adult Literacy	ESF 3.3	21,161	120,031
Priority 3 Total		31,341	248,335
Back to Work Enterprise Allowance (BTWEA) Scheme	ESF 4.1	46	386
JobsPlus Incentive Scheme	ESF 4.2	80	1,390
Youthreach	ESF 4.5	0	7,996
Community Training Centres (CTCs)	ESF 4.8	1,092	5,187
Defence Forces Employment Support Scheme	ESF 4.9	26	108
Youth Employment Support Scheme (YESS)	ESF 4.10	555	630
Priority 4 Total		1,799	15,697
Overall Total		70,353	403,345

INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITY UPDATES

ETB Training for the Unemployed

The courses provided under this activity include:

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

Grants of €68.7m were disbursed to the ETBs in 2019 for these activities. 1,218 Training courses were reported in 2019, providing training for 14,769 beneficiaries. In this instance, a beneficiary is a learner receiving individual training intervention. A learner can be counted as a beneficiary several times in a year, however for purposes of ESF performance indicators reporting, they will only be counted once. There were 8,749 new participants in 2019.

The 2019 FET Services Plan developed by SOLAS sets out how the State's investment in FET will be deployed across ETBs, support agencies and bodies, and the outputs and outcomes that this investment is expected to deliver. It was guided by the FET strategic priorities set as well a number of key national policies and Government sectoral strategies, focusing on areas such as rural and regional development, climate change, job creation, active inclusion and workforce development. As unemployment fell and the labour supply tightened, labour shortages became more acute in certain sectors. The 2019 FET Services Plan details how SOLAS will pursue the dual objectives of improving the skills of those seeking to enter the labour market and the provision of upskilling opportunities for workers with low skills levels in order to adapt to the changing world of work. Potential changes in international taxation, escalating trade tensions between the US and China, and uncertainty surrounding Brexit were identified as the main external challenges that may negatively impact Ireland's future growth and skills requirements.

In 2019, SOLAS placed an increased emphasis on lifelong learning, which will form an essential part of every person's working life to enable them to keep up to date with the rapid pace of change in job tasks and skills as a result of technological changes.

Traineeships

The Action Plan to Expand Apprenticeship and Traineeship in Ireland 2016–2020 seeks to address current and emerging skill shortages. ETBs, in partnership with employers

and employer representative bodies, have developed traineeships in areas such as engineering, ICT, hospitality, construction, retail, business, logistics, sports and leisure, fashion and finance. Such collaboration enhances the performance of programmes and ensures the skill needs of industry are being met, as well as maintaining Ireland's competitiveness, underpinned by a highly skilled workforce.

A review of traineeship, (2018), identified priority areas of work that will support continued expansion and improvement of traineeship in Ireland, including:

- A further review of traineeships in the context of the key features identified in the Guide to Traineeship in Ireland,
- recording and communicating examples of good practice,
- ongoing research on traineeship at local, regional and national levels,
- a promotional campaign to increase awareness of traineeships in the FET sector.

'This is FET'

In October 2019 SOLAS, in collaboration with ETBs, launched a new *'This is FET'* campaign showcasing further education and training. The campaign, which coincided with European Skills Week, is centred around a new website, www.thisisfet.ie, which tells the stories of learners, graduates and employers about the positive impact FET has had on their careers and businesses. Information about the diverse range of FET courses can also be found on the website. The campaign aims to be an information hub as well as showcasing the achievements and success of FET learners, encouraging participation in a wide variety of life-long education options, including Traineeships.

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 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 and the ESF, with participants required to contribute just 10% of the fee.

Springboard+ 2019 was launched in May 2019 and some 80% of applicants are now in employment, reflecting the fact that Ireland was approaching full employment. The Springboard+ Helpline operated again in 2019 for a period of nearly five months. About 2,500 calls were received, most callers sought general career- guidance; other issues raised included eligibility, employability, additional issues specific to Returners, and additional issues specific to individuals in employment.

The rule that Participants had to be moving to a higher NFQ level in pursuing a new Springboard+ course was removed for the 2019 Call. This enabled previous participants to undertake courses in other skills areas.

Springboard courses are delivered over two academic years 2018/2019 and 2019/2020. Courses were offered in both public and private institutions 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.

In total 9,163 people registered on courses funded under Springboard in 2019. The majority of these courses began in autumn 2019 while a number were offered under the previous Call in spring 2019.

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, to fill existing vacancies and 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, ICT, Biopharma & Medtech, aimed at non-ICT graduates. Programmes are selected for funding on the basis of an annual competitive calls process.

The launch of the current courses took place in May 2019 and some 80% of applicants are in employment, reflecting the fact that Ireland was approaching full employment.

During 2019 courses were delivered over the 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 academic years. Courses are offered in both public and private educational institutions throughout Ireland and are offered on a one-year full-time or two-year part-time basis, with online, face to face, and distance learning options.

In total **1,279** people registered on ICT skills conversion programmes funded by this activity in 2019. The majority of these courses began in autumn 2019 with a smaller number commencing earlier in the spring of 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.

EURES assists employers in recruiting for specialised or hard-to-fill vacancies by offering them a unique opportunity to participate in sector specific recruitment events.

In May 2019, an Irish Recruitment Day (onsite and online) was held in Madrid, Spain, organised by EURES Ireland in collaboration with EURES Spain. More than 500 jobseekers attending the onsite event. Evaluations from jobseekers showed a high level of satisfaction with the event, 83% and employers gave a 92% satisfaction rating. The event had 41 Irish based employers participating and 1,600 jobseekers registered. There were 183 jobs/ 762 positions available, with 1,645 applications received.

EURES Ireland held an Online European Recruitment Event in March 2019 titled 'Careers in Ireland'. The event was attended by 47 companies and 1,655 jobseekers. There were 144 jobs/ 1,172 positions available, with over 1,278 applications received. The event was organised as part of Jobs Week 2019 in conjunction with the Dublin Castle Careers Fair held. The presentations were broadcast live on the European Job Days platform. A EURES Adviser/moderator was able to put questions from jobseekers throughout Europe to the presenters in Dublin Castle.

EURES held an onsite jobs fair 'Careers in Ireland' in London in September 2019. A

total of 27 Irish based employers attended the event and the feedback was positive.

A DIALOG Polish Open Day took place in Dublin in December 2019, for Polish people living in Ireland who were considering returning to Poland, held in co-operation with EURES Poland via video conference. Eight people registered for the event; 15 attended on the day. EURES Poland expressed an interest in running similar events in 2020, and hosting more events in other parts of Ireland.

A number of EURES Advisers attended targeted Recruitment Fairs in Finland, France, Italy and Sweden to assist employers from Ireland in recruiting for hard to fill vacancies, i.e. the Meat, Health and IT sectors. Presentations on living and working conditions in Ireland were also given. The EURESIreland.ie website provides information to people interested in working abroad in nineteen languages.

Irish EURES Advisors participated at Recruitment Fairs in other Member States and EURES Advisors from other Member States participated in the Jobsfairs, giving presentations and information on labour market conditions in their respective countries.

During 2019 placements for nine jobseekers, seven in The Leuven Institute in Belgium in the hospitality area, and two in the Europa Park in Germany, were facilitated. Participant numbers increased due to extra promotion for specific vacancies. Participant numbers overall were down on original expectations for the scheme due to the decline in the Live Register. The Co-Sponsored Placement Programme will end in mid-2020.

Ongoing promotion of EURES services in line with EURES Regulation requirements including:

- continue mainstreaming the service with PES services nationwide and
- to external stakeholders through Employer Relations Team.
- Supporting/facilitating the implementation of EURES ICT and Interoperability with EURES Europa portal
- Implementing Communication plan, developing and expanding use of social media including EURES Ireland Facebook pages, Twitter and now Linked In
- Promotion and management of EURESIreland.ie
- In addition as Co-Applicants under YFEJ, set up and implement intra-EU mobility programmes for young people.

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. It 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.

SICAP has seen a number of key achievements for 2019, as summarised below:

The **“My Journey: Distance Travelled” Tool** was developed and validated in 2019 following an 18 month development process. Full project information is available on the project page [here](#). SICAP is now unique in the Irish context in having a tailor made tool to measure individuals soft skills and to assess change over time in five components, which have been found to impact on progress into education and training.

Also significant in 2019 was continued work to strengthen the case studies for SICAP to share programme stories and improve learning. Local Development Companies submitted case studies focusing on particular aspects of programme delivery and impact, and a bursary was made available to fund video case studies. A number of LDCs have now recorded short videos telling their SICAP story and these have been extremely useful in providing context to SICAP and have been used at the regional support sessions.

A series of SICAP regional support events were held in early and late 2019 and were an invaluable opportunity to bring together frontline and management staff from LDCs and from LCDCs in order to share their SICAP experiences and engage in peer-to-peer learning on targeting techniques and effective engagement techniques for the hardest to reach. External agencies were also invited to speak at the sessions in late 2019 in order to improve linkages across local support services.

Finally, significant work took place in 2019 in terms of reviewing programme data capture and reporting. It was agreed that a shorter and more targeted SICAP annual report would be developed by Pobal in order to make the key programme achievements available in a more accessible format. This new condensed structure is being applied to the 2019 report and will be published in 2020. In addition, there were

meetings between the Pobal Monitoring Team and service providers on potential improvements to the online monitoring system (IRIS), potential efficiencies, and simplification to the Individual Consent Forms and Registration Forms. The impact will be partly visible in 2020 but a number of the more substantial alterations may be introduced for the SICAP successor programme.

A breakdown of SICAP participants in 2019 by gender and disadvantage outlined below demonstrates how the programme has assisted various target groups:

Indicator	2019
No of participants below 25	4,009 (19%)
No of female participants	10,662 (50%)
No of participants from migrant/ ethnic minority/ foreign background	5,468(25%)
No of participants with disability	1,803 (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)	14,175 (66%)

There were 21,533 new participants engaged in SICAP during 2019. The cumulative caseload to end of 2019 was 55,517 which already exceeds the target of 50,000 set at the start of the programme for 2023.

Youthreach



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, as Priority 2 and Priority 4 activities are considered to be separate ESF operations this is in accordance with ESF rules.

The number of participants reported for this activity for 2019 was **1,829**.

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.

The number of participants in 2019 was **1,415**.

During 2019 the Department of Justice and Equality underwent a transformation programme process to reorganise the Department into a functional model. As part of this programme, the Youth Crime Policy and Programmes Division (YCPPD), of which Irish Youth Justice Service (IYJS) was part) was integrated into the new Criminal Justice function. Funds Administration Unit was set up in the Civil Justice, Operations and Service Delivery function. Oversight of the GYDPs is now shared between the Community Safety Applied Policy Unit of Criminal Justice Policy (for policy matters) and the Funds Administration Unit (for administration of funding). It is expected that GYDPs will benefit from more dedicated support and oversight with the expertise of both Units.

8-11 Year Olds and Family Support

Additional funding allowed 8 GYDPs to pilot early interventions for 8-11 year olds and family supports . The projects were afforded a broad remit in developing their own individual programmes. Evaluation of the programmes are due to commence in 2021 with the aim of expanding the most successful interventions to the network of GYDPs as part of the GYDP Change Programme.

YLS Online Pilot

The Department introduced a pilot of the online Youth Level of Service / Case

Management Inventory (YLS/CMI) assessment tool (2018), which is used to inform decisions about young people regarding their suitability for admission to GYDPs. It identifies the risks and needs of the young person and facilitates the preparation of individual case management plans. The online system will allow for greater and more accurate data collection, and will replace current paper-based assessments. The Department concluded this pilot in 2019 and it is expected to roll out the YLS/CMI online tool to all GYDPs in 2020.

Young Persons' Probation (YPP) Projects



An tSeirbhís Phroibhálach
The Probation Service

There are 18 Young Person Probation (YPP) Community Based Organisation 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 increasingly 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 98 new young people participating in these projects during 2019.

Participants in **Céim ar Chéim** have continued to progress. One student has now progressed to Limerick Institute of Technology (LIT) studying social care, while three 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.

In 2019, the number of referrals to **Le Chéile** increased. Le Chéile operates a Validation Tool to measure young people's progress before and after participation in mentoring. There were significant improvements in young people's outcomes across a range of measures:

- 56% improvement in young people's choices and behaviour
- 54% improvement in hopes and dreams
- 50% improvement in communications skills
- 48% improvement in well-being

In 2019, the project reviewed its youth participation policy and adapted a revised policy, which provides an impetus to prioritise this part of their work. A Youth Consultation process of young people who have used Le Chéile services, to find out their experience of the Justice system and of Le Chéile Mentoring, was held at the end of 2019. The youth feedback will inform the organisation's submission to the review of the Youth Justice Strategy and Le Cheile's own strategic planning. There were 230 volunteers with Le Chéile in 2019, and 54% of volunteers have volunteered for at least 2 years.

In October 2019, Le Chéile held a public seminar titled Supporting Families to improve youth justice outcomes, which was attended by many statutory agencies and NGOs.

Dochas Don Óige continued to meet the targets set in the Probation Service funding agreement. All clients received component awards, and are working towards their level 3 and 4 awards in (due for 2020). Dochas has continued with the 3-year pilot service (Turas) in Galway for 12-16 year old young people. The project continued its links and inter-agency work with other youth projects in the area. It also developed links with the Meas GYDP project to facilitate the work of a Senior Occupational Therapist, in order to gain a better understanding of the issue of ADHD and how it impacts on young participants.

Southill Outreach continued to deliver 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 project reported that their interventions has resulted in reduced recidivism among participants, a factor that would not be obvious from the ESF data. In addition to the their Core Programmes, the project facilitated a number of young men to access addiction counselling and residential treatment, leading to secondary treatment for two young men.

The project has implemented a Horticulture Programme Working with the older participants, who in turn mentor some of the on younger participants. It is hoped that

the Horticulture programme will hopefully lead to community enterprise in 2020. Some of the highlights from 2019 in respect of Ceim ar Cheim include:-

- 32 young people participated in Leaving Certificate and QQI Accredited Education Programmes. Two students completed the Leaving Certificate Exams in June.
- Participants also obtained a total of 6 fully completed major awards in General Learning Level 2. 13 other participants completed a total of 44 component awards.
- A further three participants completed 8 component awards at Level 3 Employability Skills and 1 young person completing Level 3 in Digital Media.
- Six students completed the bronze GAISCE awards.
- Participants in the project ran a CONNECT Summer Camp for children in direct provision.

Staff and participants of Céim ar Chéim took part in a story exchange with children and staff of Corpus Christi Primary School and Narrative. This project took place with a view to engaging young people with positive male role models and giving young participants the opportunity to learn from different perspectives of young people and older positive role models.

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.

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, which was launched in 2018, it is expected that some 2,600 YPWD will be assisted.

There were **994** participants assisted during 2019.

A programme evaluation, to determine the extent to which the Activity has met its stated policy objectives, is being undertaken (collection of data between 2018 and

2020). A baseline study was conducted in 2019 and the baseline report was finalised in May 2020.

At the end of 2019, the halfway point of programme delivery, the target number of participants has reached 42%

- Four grantees exceeded their target number of participants to be supported.
- 13 grantees reached or exceeded 50% of their overall programme target
- Three grantees reached between 40 and 50% of their overall programme target (referred to challenges, but gave no details), expect to make good progress for the remainder of the programme.
- Four grantees engaged between 30% and 40% of their target for participants and
- Three grantees have recruited less than 30% of their target number.

Of the seven grantees who have recruited less than 40% of their overall target, they provided details of more significant challenges facing their programmes:

- Delayed commencement of the Ability Programme - impact on staff recruitment resulted in delayed project team formation, establishment of programmes and participant recruitment (some organisations have made progress on their targeted number of participants, but others still struggle to do so).
- Human Resources - a buoyant economy and labour market created more competition for charity and voluntary sector organisations to attract and retain staff with the requisite skills, which has meant a high turnover and difficulties in recruiting staff in some organisations. Consequently, the level of work undertaken and the number of participants supported had to be reduced.
- Referral pathways: a) labour intensive preparation of programme to suit people with mental health conditions; b) lack of available services, especially in rural areas, reduces the eligible referral pathways into the programme; c) ensure that young people are in a suitably stable situation to avail of Ability support and to signpost to other services in the interim when this is not the case; d) in cases of acquired injuries, restrictive referral criteria, particularly the ineligibility of GP referrals, represents a significant barrier to entry for prospective participants to one project.
- High targets set by a small number of organisations were particularly ambitious and significantly higher than the average; but the targets proved to be less achievable than was originally anticipated.

Successful partnerships

Ability-funded organisations reported on various initiatives and partnerships which

have positively impacted participants and project. Some examples include the following:

- Local solutions: adapting the Green Certificate

Agriculture is a key economic driver in the area served by Forum Connemara. Many Ability participants are engaged and interested in working on their family farm. However Forum has found that participants with learning/intellectual disabilities are unable to access mainstream education in these subject areas. In response, Forum has forged a partnership with the Galway Roscommon Education and Training Board Adult Literacy Service to develop a foundation (QQI Level 2-3) farming programme based upon the Green Certificate (QQI Level 6). This partnership also involves Forum's European Innovation Partnership personnel (who support local environmental and farming enterprises) and the Rural Recreation Officer for county Galway. The group is in the process of distilling relevant material and experiential methodologies that can be delivered to individuals with learning/intellectual disabilities that have an interest in the area of agricultural practices. Once the programme is developed it will be run as a pilot.

- High-profile partnerships

The Trigon Hotel Group invited the COPE Foundation's Ability@Work programme to participate in their chef cooking showcasing event. Two participants from the programme helped the chefs on the night. This high-profile event was attended by hotel industry professionals who were impressed by the young people's work on the night. This exposure resulted in the participants securing offers for part-time, paid work in two Cork city hotels.

- Nationwide partnerships

Down Syndrome Ireland run their Ability-funded programme through branches nationwide. Similarly, employment opportunities are being sought, and successfully secured, with national and international businesses who can offer placements throughout the country. Partnerships with Applegreen, iNua, Nolaclan, Mondalez Ireland and Unilever are among those reported so far by the organisation. A good example of this in action is through collaboration with a national salon supplies company. The company provides training to salon staff throughout its national network and has strong links with salons all over Ireland. Six Ability participants studying to be Hairdressing Assistants graduated at the National Hairdressing Awards in November 2019, with three progressing into paid salon employment and two onto voluntary positions.

- Focus on sustainability

St. Cronan's Association actively endeavours to source work placements to which participants could ultimately travel independently from home or their day service. The programme supports young people with disabilities to gain valuable work placement experience with an employer that best suits their wishes and abilities. This tends to involve some level of one-to-one support regarding logistics and mentoring and gradually withdrawing support as the participants gain confidence. The Ability team work to find natural supports within the host employers to source ongoing supports that will meet the participants' needs going forward.

- Wrap-around supports

Many grantees either directly employ or contract occupational therapists as part of their Ability-funded teams. They specifically highlight the effectiveness of support through guidance officers/mentors/engagement workers when provided in tandem with occupational therapy within the same programme. Similarly, the provision of counselling or other additional wrap-around supports is reported to complement the direct work of Ability-funded staff and maximise positive outcomes for participants.

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

Following the first open call for proposals in 2016, €3.3 million of funding was made available under the Activity for a second open call for projects to commence in 2019. Five projects were successful in receiving grant awards. They are as follows:

- Business in the Community
- New Communities Partnership
- County Kilkenny Partnership
- Cultúr Celebrating Diversity
- Seetec

These five projects are ongoing at present. They have a maximum duration of four years and are due to end no later than 30th June 2021.

There were 597 participants in 2019.

Tus Nua Project



**An tSeirbhís Phróibhálach
The Probation Service**

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.

Female offenders are identified as a key target group in the Irish Prison Service and Probation Service Strategic Plan 2018-2020. One of the Strategic Actions of this Plan is designed to develop a range of responses for female offenders to afford them more opportunity and help realise their potential. Tus Nua plays a central role in the Joint Probation Service-Irish Prison Service Strategy 2014-2016 “An Effective Response to Women Who Offend”, which was designed to provide a more tailored women centric intervention, to reduce offending among this group, improve opportunities for reintegration as well as positive outcomes more generally.

In 2019, 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.

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 highlighted that a major challenge in 2018 was 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.

18 participants were active in the project in 2019.

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. Strand A – Women Returning to the Workforce (WRW) targets 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. Strand B – Women’s Entrepreneurship (WE) targets 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 April 2019, a further Call for Proposals was launched under the Gender Equality stream. In October 2019, 12 organisations were approved funding totalling €4.29m under Strand A and a further 5 organisations approved funding totalling €1.49m under Strand B. The successful organisations and their project names are as follows:

Strand A

(Lead) Applicant Name	Project Name
South East Community Training & Education Centre	Wexford Women Working
Network Personnel	“Power” project
Business in the Community Ireland	women@work
NCCWN	Steps to Employment for Women
New Communities Partnership	Migrant Women’s Opportunities For Work
Irish Refugee Council	Employer Access: Women in Asylum
Northside partnership	Careers in Mind
Cherish/One Family	New Horizons for Lone Parents
Ballyhoura Development Association	Healthcare Opportunities for Women
Cork City Partnership	Growing Your Potential
North East, West Kerry Developments	Moving on Kerry
People First	Women’s Integration: Skills and Employment

Strand B

(Lead) Applicant Name	Project Name
Migrant Rights Centre Ireland	Women’s Entrepreneurs Carer Training
Partas	Tallaght Working
Galway Mayo Institute of Technology	Empower; Promoting Women’s Entrepreneurship
SECAD	WREN Project
South East Community Training and Education Centre	Enterprise and Start Up for Wexford Women

Progress for the Gender Equality projects is on track. A second open call for projects was launched in 2019, and in October 2019 17 projects were approved funding totalling €5.78. These have now commenced operations, with some overlap with existing projects. The 2023 target value of 2749 participants looks likely to be exceeded (2410 persons have participated on an ESF GE project by the end of 2019).

The total number of participants in the projects for 2019 was **692**.

Third Level Access



This activity supports the Student Assistance Fund (SAF) and the Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD). The SAF aims to support students facing ongoing or temporary financial

hardship which would otherwise negatively impact their completion of their higher education course. The SAF can be claimed for expenses such as books, rent, food, medical costs, class materials, light and heat bills, essential travel and childcare.

The FSD supports students with disabilities 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. Funding can be used to provide supports and accommodations for assistive technology, equipment and software, non-medical helpers, academic or learning support, deaf supports and transport..

On the basis of estimates of expenditure provided by the HEA, the Programme allocation for Third Level Access will be exceeded by expenditure to end 2018 and therefore there will be no payment applications for expenditure after 2018. Accordingly, no participants are reported for 2019.

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.

During 2019 SOLAS continued the significant progress in the development of the FET sector in line with the Further Education and Training Strategy 2014-2019¹. A new FET Strategy for period 2020-2024 was published in July 2020 and sets out a vision for FET's development over the next 5 years, based around three pillars of skills, pathways and inclusion, with associated strategic priorities.

SOLAS continued its annual planning process with the programme providers (ETBs) and updated the Funding Allocation Requests and Reporting (FARR) Parameters and Requirements for 2019. Some of the measures included in this document relating to the BTEI Activity are listed below:

- The FET literacy and numeracy strategy must be delivered, including objectives related to improved screening and assessment systems, ESOL policy, and awareness. Any specific targets which emerge to meet government policy objectives must also be embedded within FET service plans to adopt these targets.
- ETBs are responsible for ensuring that all programme specific guidelines are considered e.g. BTEI, CTC, LTI, STPs, Youthreach, VTOS, DES, Adult Literacy Programme guidelines.
- ETBs are required to implement the recommendations and guidelines arising out of 'Initial and Ongoing Assessment of Adult Literacy and Numeracy at NFQ Level 1-3: Guidelines, Toolkit and Research Report' (SOLAS/ETBI 2018)². The utilisation of these guidelines is to be considered in relation to other programmes, such as BTEI and VTOS, as appropriate.
- ETBs are to ensure that the actions related to Literacy and Numeracy and ESOL development identified in The Migrant Integration Strategy 2017-2020 and the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017 – 2021 are considered and progressed in 2019-2020 planning.
- ETBs must consider the needs of a diverse range of learners by broadening inclusive practices in FET programmes.

2019 FET Services Plan

In its 2019 FET Services Plan, SOLAS set out how State investment in FET will be deployed to programme providers and the outputs and outcomes that this investment

¹ <https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/920e2fa0b6/fetstrategy2014-2019.pdf>

² <https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/5451e6dd60/initial-and-ongoing-assessment-of-adult.pdf>

is expected to deliver. SOLAS annual service planning is guided by the strategic priorities set out in the Further Education and Training Strategy 2014–2019 as well a number of key national policies and Government sectoral strategies, focusing on areas such as rural and regional development, climate change, job creation, active inclusion and workforce development. The FET Services Plan provides comprehensive analysis for estimated retention, completion and accreditation rates by programme for the ETBs and other providers for 2019. Analysis is also provided on planned participation rates for the priority groups of the long-term unemployed, refugees, disabled learners and learners in need of literacy and numeracy skills.

It also details various supports provided for learners engaging in BTEI programmes. The following examples are not definitive:

- The Adult Education Guidance and Information Service (AEGIS), which provides nationwide guidance for learners before, during and after their participation in BTEI, Adult Literacy, Community Education or VTOS programmes. This service also supports the provision of quality AEGS guidance and information services to people aged 16 and over.
- Participants in Youthreach, VTOS, or BTEI are eligible for low-cost childcare under the Childcare in Education and Training Scheme (CETS), operated by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA).
- The HEA Fund for Students with Disabilities can provide support for students with a disability. This fund allocates funding to further and higher education colleges for services and supports to full-time students with disabilities. The fund aims to ensure that students can participate fully in their academic programmes and are not disadvantaged by reason of a disability.
- The Intreo service, administered by the Department of Social Protection, provides a single point of contact for all employment and income supports. It also offers employment services and supports for both jobseekers and employers.

The overall grant disbursed to the ETBs in 2019 towards BTEI training was €26.1m. A total of 3,305 BTEI courses were reported in 2019 by the ETBs, providing training for 36,163 Beneficiaries. In this instance, a Beneficiary is a learner receiving individual training intervention. One learner can be counted as a Beneficiary several times in a year, however for purposes of performance indicators reporting, they will only be counted once. **10,180** participants entered the BTEI in 2019.

Adult Literacy

The objectives of this 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. It targets 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.

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.

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 aims to achieve the best possible outcomes for learners with literacy and numeracy needs.

During 2019 SOLAS funded NALA (National Adult Literacy Agency) to undertake background research and develop, in conjunction with the Further Education and Training sector, good practice guidelines for family literacy in ETBs. A short document 'Family Literacy in ETBs - guidelines at a glance'³ was disseminated to ETBs and family literacy practitioners to coincide with the NALA family learning conference held on 28 November 2019. The full guidelines document⁴ was published in 2020 along with case studies, recommendations and a larger background research report on enabling intergenerational learning. This initiative is part of a wider strategic approach by SOLAS and its partners across FET to supporting good practice in active inclusion, with other guidelines developed or in development around areas like initial assessment of literacy and numeracy, universal design for learning, approaches to ESOL and numeracy provision.

SOLAS has overseen the development of case studies on the use of '*Guidelines for the Inclusion of Adults with Intellectual Disabilities in Adult Literacy Services*'. These case studies will be published in 2020 along with a substantial background report, which provides recommendations for the sector on inclusive practices, particularly for learners with intellectual disabilities.

SOLAS continues to support progress in English language provision, including the

³ Family Literacy in ETBs – Guidelines at a glance: <https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/c377532524/family-literacy-in-etbs-guidelines.pdf>

⁴ Family Literacy Practices in ETBs: Guidelines, case studies and recommendations https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/f5b5061825/solas_fet_familyliteracyguidelines_april-2020_web.pdf

development of Good Practice Guidelines for Initial Assessment of English Language Competency for Migrant Learners. This report will be published in 2020. Programme developers are working to develop fit for purpose programmes for ESOL learners. The first programme to be developed and piloted will be an ESOL family learning programme with plans under way for the development of further programmes including work-based ESOL.

As per the strategic performance agreements between SOLAS and the ETBs, the ETBs are encouraged to assess all literacy and numeracy learners before commencing on programmes and direct them to most appropriate courses to address individual needs. The ETBs will also implement the best practice toolkit and guidelines in the recently published *Initial and Ongoing Assessment of Adult Literacy and Numeracy* at NFQ Levels 1-3 to assist in this regard. The implementation support was provided via workshops and briefings conducted by ETBI throughout 2018 and 2019.

Similar assessment has been commissioned by SOLAS Active Inclusion unit during 2019 and will focus on Adult Literacy and Numeracy at NFQ Levels 4-6. It is anticipated that this work will be launched and available across Education and Training Boards (ETBs) in 2020.

The overall grant disbursed in 2019 was €27.4m. A total of 5,443 Adult Literacy courses were reported in 2019 by the ETBs, providing training for 38,194 Beneficiaries. In this instance, a Beneficiary is a learner receiving individual training intervention. One learner can be counted as a Beneficiary several times in a year, however for purposes of performance indicators reporting, they will only be counted once.

The number of new participants under Adult Literacy in 2018/19 was **21,161**.

Back to Work Enterprise Allowance Scheme



**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 reduction in the Live Register and improved economic growth impacted the take-up on the scheme in 2019.

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 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 number of young people aged under 25 years assisted under the scheme in 2019 was **46**.

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 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. Grants are 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.

The numbers supported under the scheme is declining reflecting the continued improvement in the labour market. **80** NEETs started under the scheme during 2019.

The number of unique under 25-year-old JobsPlus starters represents a 45.6% decrease and the number of overall JobsPlus applications decreased by 36% from 2018 to 2019.

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.

The overall grant disbursed to the ETBs in 2019 towards Community Training Centre training was €33.7m which provided training for 2,950 Beneficiaries. In this instance, a Beneficiary is a learner receiving individual training intervention. One learner can be counted as a Beneficiary several times in a year, however for purposes of performance indicators reporting, they will only be counted once.

1,092 participants commenced CTC Programmes during 2019.

Defence Forces Employment Support Scheme



The Defence Forces Employment Support Scheme targets unemployed 18-24 year olds who face significant barriers to gaining employment and seeks to provide 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. The scheme is one of the actions in *Pathways to Work 2016-2020*.

The Employment Support Scheme programme for 2019 was held in Gormanston Camp with 26 participants (June – August). There were a total of 26 participants on the course in 2019.

Completion Rates:

Year:	Location:	Participant numbers	Completion Rate %
2017	Limerick	17	88
2017	Gormanston	16	100
2018	Cork	49	83
2018	Curragh ('DFTC')	82	100
2019	Gormanston	26	92

The Defence Forces YouTube channel posted a video of the ESS. This video shows all participants, male and female, undertaking daily tasks and training. Leaflets were created for each iteration showing both male and female participants.

Youth Employment Support Scheme

The Youth Employment Support Scheme targets jobseekers, aged between 18 and 24, who have been out of work and in receipt of a qualifying payment for at least 12 months or who if unemployed for less than 12 months, are considered by a case officer to face a significant barrier to work. During 2019, a total of 555 jobseekers commenced a YESS placement. The take-up on the scheme was lower than anticipated and a series of YESS events and employer roadshows were held in Q3, 2019 to promote the scheme further, and there was a noticeable increase in participant numbers in the last three months of 2019 following this engagement process.

Technical Assistance

Through the TA priority, the MA continued to support the maintenance and ongoing development of the eCohesion IT system for reporting, monitoring, auditing and accounting for expenditure under the ESF. In 2019, there were 375 ESF users of the system.

34 training sessions were provided for our stakeholders on various topics including anti-fraud, communication requirements, the eCohesion IT system, compiling financial claims and reporting participant data.

Throughout 2019 the ESF MA supported over 100 Activity specific events, distributed over 20,000 ESF leaflets and circulated over 11,000 ESF newsletters. Due to the significant increase in the number of projects liaising with the ESF MA in relation to events and merchandise, the ESF MA conducted a large procurement exercise for the supply of branded promotional merchandise in March 2019.

In 2019, the ESF MA sponsored a Special Recognition Award for ESF co-funded projects as part of the AONTAS STAR Awards (Showcasing Teamwork, Awarding Recognition). The Awards were a unique opportunity for ESF to gain nationwide visibility and presence with a wide ranging audience of learners, communities, organisations and the media.

The ESF MA continued its work on updating and developing the ESF website, www.esf.ie. The website's content management system was upgraded within 2019 and a cookie management plan was adopted in line with the GDPR. Website content continued to be translated to Irish and a number of videos were added to the site in 2019 including videos promoting Adult Literacy and Third Level Access.

EVALUATION ACTIVITY

The Evaluation Plan for PEIL provides 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.

The evaluation of Youthreach provision undertaken by the ESRI on behalf of SOLAS was published in 2019. The study involved a mix of desk research, a national survey of Youthreach managers, analysis of existing data on school leavers, case studies and consultative workshops.

Overall the evaluation found that there remains a strong rationale for interventions like Youthreach as a mechanism to address social exclusion and that the programme is closely aligned with, and similar to, other international approaches. The extensive qualitative and quantitative research demonstrated the benefits of the Youthreach programme, but also raised some issues around demand, geographic distribution and governance.



SOLAS has developed a series of recommendations in response to the evaluation, together with an indicative timeline for delivery.

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 2019 include –

- 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 2020.
- SOLAS has appointed Indecon International Economic Consultants to undertake an evaluation of further education and training provision at Levels 3 and 4 of the National Framework of Qualifications, incorporating the Back to Education Initiative (BTEI). The purpose of the evaluation in the first instance is to generate policy-relevant knowledge on the delivery of Level 3 and 4 and BTEI FET provision, including the overall quality and the impact for participants. The evaluation is ongoing and the final report is due in 2020.
- 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. As part of the evaluation a baseline report was produced in April 2020, which provides a profile of the service users enrolled in the Ability programme, a summary of the types of services being provided by services funded under the programme, and the baseline scores on a soft outcome tool for a sample of service users. It also includes a thematic analysis of the challenges that providers and their clients have been experiencing as well as what they have found to be good practice during the first year of the programme. The evaluation is being conducted over the duration of the programme and it will conclude in June 2021.
- The SICAP programme has recently developed a tailored distance travelled tool (My Journey) to measure soft skills relevant to employment, education and personal development for service beneficiaries. It aims to support service users and staff to work together to identify personal goals for the client and show progress over time. In 2019, the tool was piloted in 15 LDCs. It was formally launched in January 2020.

- An evaluation of SICAP pre-employment supports commenced in January 2019. The evaluation's key objectives are to examine the role played by SICAP in assisting those who are further away from the labour market; provide a detailed profile of individuals participating in pre-employment programmes/initiatives; provide a counterfactual assessment of the impact of the pre-employment programmes/initiatives in assisting individuals who are further from the labour market to progress into employment or study/training; analyse the routes through which individuals access the pre-employment programmes/initiatives; and assess the learning experiences of programme participants. The report of the evaluation was published in September 2020.
- **Youth Justice Research Projects:** Findings from two studies commissioned by the Department of Justice and Equality and undertaken by the University of Limerick were used to kick-start the research programme and inform the development of a wider Youth Justice Strategy.

The first research project was an international review of evidence of the types of relationships that are most effective in bringing about positive change with young people. The findings are being used as the basis for researchers and youth professionals to design new, more effective ways of working.

The two-year Action Research Project which commenced in 2018 is ongoing, and is due to conclude in Q4 2020. It is a partnership project with the Department of Justice and Equality, a research team from the University of Limerick's School of Law and a select group of 16 GYDPs, who volunteered to engage in a programme of change. The objectives of the Action Research Project are to identify and disseminate best practice in working with young people at risk. By building purposeful relationships with young people, specialist Youth Justice Workers in GYDPs aim to reduce the likelihood of offending and encourage young people to take up pro-social opportunities and transform their prospects for the better. The Project will feed into the GYDP Change Programme in 2020/2021, which aims to ensure that the service is more widely available to a greater cohort of all young people who could benefit from participating.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

Major event

In September 2019, the ESF, EMFF and ERDF MA's were part of the European Commission's marquee at the National Ploughing Championships in Co. Carlow. Attendance at the National Ploughing Championships was 297,000 visitors over the three days. The event provided an excellent opportunity to publicise the ESIF and the ESF PEIL Operational Programme to the general public. A number of ESF co-funded programmes were also promoted separately during the three days, including EURES, SICAP, Adult Literacy, Traineeships and the Back to Education Initiative.



The ESF, ERDF and the EMFF were on hand to provide information and answer questions on what the EU is doing in the regions. The Funds work together to invest in education, research, transition to low carbon economy, urban regeneration and job creation, seafood sector and coastal community development, contributing to a sustainable and healthy economy across the whole of the country.

Aontas Star Awards

The STAR Awards (Showcasing Teamwork, Awarding Recognition) celebrates the positive contribution that adult learning initiatives make to adult learners, local communities and wider society. In 2019, the ESF sponsored a Special Recognition Award for ESF co-funded projects. The Awards were a unique opportunity for ESF to gain nationwide visibility and presence with a wide ranging audience of learners, communities, organisations and the media.

Six ESF co-funded projects were shortlisted with two co-funded projects receiving awards at the final ceremony. The WISE Project won the STAR Award for Sustainable Employment and the New Futures Project was awarded the Special Recognition Award for an ESF co-funded project.



European Awards

REGIOSTARS

The REGIOSTARS are Europe's awards for the most innovative, regional projects. The ESF MA endorsed four projects for submission under Category 3 - Combatting inequalities and poverty. The ESF Gender Equality project, WISE, was one of five projects shortlisted for the prestigious award.



VET Excellence Awards

In March 2019, the Commission launched a call for ESF projects for the 'European funding for excellence in Vocational Education and Training (VET) Award'. The theme was 'VET and digitalisation and technological change'. The ESF MA nominated GetReSkilled, a Springboard+ course. GetReSkilled was announced as the runner up of the ESF Award at the awards ceremony in Helsinki on 17th October.

In addition, DDLETB's Builder's Merchants Sales Traineeship programme was announced as the runner up for the Training at Work award.

EU Road Trip

Panos, Olga, Wijnand and Selina kicked off their EU Road Trip in Ireland on 29 August 2019. As part of their trip they got to visit Listoke Distillery & Gin School and meet Bronagh Conlon, founder and MD. They had the chance to take a tour of the distillery where they learned not only about making gin but that the EU supports local SMEs.



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/reviews to the Programme Monitoring Committee in June 2019:



- **The Civil Justice and Equality Policy-Inclusion, Equality and Gender Equality Unit's** review of the Gender Equality Horizontal Principle reports for 2019. The report noted that the new EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, adopted by the European Commission in March 2020 takes a dual approach of gender mainstreaming combined with targeted actions, while intersectionality is a horizontal principle for its implementation.

The review stressed the importance of using a `gender lens` to check for, identify and address gender sensitive needs and to monitor participation by gender, and other personal characteristics to identify possible barriers to entry. The Unit shared a link to a toolkit developed by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) to help those working with EU Funds better fit their programmes to the gender equality goals of the EU and its Member States⁵. The review also provided an individual commentary on the IB's reports.

- **IHREC's** Review of the Horizontal Principle reports on Equal Opportunities and Non-discrimination submitted by the Intermediate Bodies in relation to the PEIL Activities noted that there was evidence of good practice in a number of the reports and some were much improved since the last reports. The report also stated that there were still challenges to securing a systematic approach to implementing the horizontal principle across all initiatives and it made a number of suggestions for improving reporting particularly in relation to



⁵ Gender Budgeting: Step-by-step toolkit - Guidance for mainstreaming gender into the EU Funds, (2019), EIGE, <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/toolkits/gender-budgeting>

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.

It was further highlighted that GDPR was again cited as a barrier to data collection by a number of Activities. IHREC referred to the Commission's Guidelines on the Improving of the Collection and use of Equality Data⁶, which provided guidance on the collection of equality data.

The IHREC report also offered suggested learning for implementing the horizontal principle over the next programming period.

The HP Working Group held one meeting in May 2019 to follow up on the issues discussed at the previous meeting (December 2018). The new members were welcomed and apprised with the work of the group to date. Among the items raised were a proposed review of the two HP templates and the introduction of a checklist and guidance document for the IBs and Beneficiaries; the creation of a page on the www.esf.ie website for HP matters including the Public Service Duty reminder for the IBs; hold a seminar for the IBs to update them on the changes/obligations; and consideration of funding for an independent review of the HPs under PEIL. However, due to further staff changes and pressure of other work, the October meeting wasn't held and the matters referred to above, were not progressed.

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

⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/final_guidelines_4-10-18_without_date_july.pdf