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Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

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Agenda Item 11. Evaluation Update

Youthreach and Community Training Centres

The evaluation of Youthreach provision undertaken by the ESRI on behalf of SOLAS was published on 17 June, following the last PEIL PMC meeting on the same date. 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. At the July PMC meeting, SOLAS Strategy & Evaluation Unit gave a presentation on the evaluation.

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, which are set out in its [response document](#). The response document contains 17 recommendations under six themes: programme remit and setting; programme management and planning; programme practice; staffing and support; learner pathways and outcomes; and implementation.

SOLAS will produce quarterly monitoring reports for submission to the Further Education and Training Unit of the Department of Education and Skills tracking progress on implementation of these recommendations.

Specific Skills Training (part of ETB Training for the Unemployed)

SOLAS appointed Indecon International Economic Consultants to undertake an evaluation of Specific Skills Training (part of ETB Training for the Unemployed). The evaluation is ongoing and the final report is expected to be published in Q1 2020.

Disability Project (Ability Programme)

An external evaluation of the Ability Programme is being undertaken by Quality Matters on behalf of Pobal and the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection. The evaluation is assessing the achievement of the programme's original aims and key objectives. The evaluation is also exploring the effectiveness of different approaches and measures applied in bringing young people with

disabilities who are not work-ready, closer to the labour market in addition to examining the range of impacts on the participants of the programme.

The evaluation will be a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods, which will be supported by an analysis of quantitative data collected by Pobal. It is expected that the evaluation will be conducted over the duration of the programme and it will conclude in June 2020.

The ESF Managing Authority is represented on the Steering Group for the evaluation.

Back to Education Initiative

SOLAS has appointed Indecon to undertake an evaluation of further education and training provision at Levels 3 and 4 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. Level 3 and 4 provision plays a key role in allowing people access to courses that facilitates their (re)entry into education and training and enhances their options for progression into more education and training and/or employment. On this basis a key focus of the evaluation overall is how learners accessed their course, the quality of that learning experience, including support levels, and the impact it has had; whether that be a new qualification, a stepping stone to additional learning or helping them to transition back into the labour market.

The ESF Managing Authority is represented on the Oversight Group for the evaluation.

Garda Youth Diversion Projects

The Department of Justice and Equality plans to commission an external evaluation of the Garda Youth Diversion Projects in 2019.

The ESF Managing Authority is represented on the Steering Group for the evaluation and is inputting through the group on the terms of reference.