

# Joint Report on the implementation of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET2020)

Final Version – 1st July, 2011

CONTRIBUTION TO NATIONAL REFORM PROGRAMMES (approx. 2 PAGES)

## QUESTION 1

Please provide a summary of the main education and training elements in your National Reform Programme (NRP):

### National Targets

The Europe 2020 national targets that Ireland has adopted in relation to early school leaving and tertiary attainment are based on the following related pre-existing 2020 targets in our National Skills Strategy (NSS), which was launched in 2007:

- the proportion of 20-24 year olds with at least upper secondary education (Levels 4/5 in our National Framework Qualification (NFQ) to increase from 86% in 2005 to 94% by 2020;
- the progression rate to tertiary education (Levels 6-10 in our NFQ) to increase from approximately 55% in 2005 to 72% by 2020.
- 48% of the labour force (i.e. those in the population in the age range 25-64 inclusive) to have tertiary attainment (i.e. qualifications at NFQ Levels 6-10) by 2020.

Lead responsibility for the national targets rests with the Department of Education and Skills.

### Early School Leaving

Ireland's current share of early school leavers (i.e. 18-24 year olds with at most lower secondary education and not in further education and training) is 11.3% (based on Eurostat data for 2009, the latest available).

**Using the related NSS target as a basis, Ireland's proposed 2020 target for 18-24 year olds with at most lower secondary education and not in further education and training, is 8%.**

### **Key Measures to reach national target**

DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) is a national action plan for educational inclusion. Focusing on the needs of 3 to 18 year olds from disadvantaged communities, DEIS adopts an integrated approach with **early intervention** as a core principle.

Among the key issues and needs addressed by DEIS are:

- improved identification of disadvantage enabling resources to be targeted more effectively
- targeted reductions in pupil teacher ratios and additional non-pay allocations for schools based on level of disadvantage
- access to additional literacy/numeracy supports and programmes
- access to Home/School/Community Liaison and School Completion Programme (SCP) services

- enhancing research and evaluation of outcomes.

The SCP directly targets those in danger of dropping out of the education system through an integrated cross-community approach based on the development of local strategies. Strategies may encompass actions for the whole-school/school cluster, for individual students and those who are already outside of the formal system. Provision includes in-school, after-school, out-of-school and holiday time supports. A School Business Partnership programme works with the schools in the SCP to bring together education and business expertise in tackling early school leaving.

The SCP and a number of other educational welfare related programmes have recently been brought together under a common management team under the remit of a statutory agency, the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB). The NEWB are to bring forward recommendations for a single strategic approach to delivery of the relevant services with a view to further improving local and national responses to tackling poor attendance and early school leaving.

The Educational Research Centre (ERC) has been commissioned to conduct an independent evaluation of DEIS, to assess its impact and to inform the direction of future policy. A report is expected to be finalised shortly.

In a separate development, the rollout, from later this year of a new plan to improve literacy and numeracy teaching and learning in Ireland's schools, will also contribute to achievement of the national early school leaving target. This plan responds to areas of weakness identified in recent national studies and sets ambitious targets covering early childhood, primary and secondary education.

In addition, the introduction in Ireland in 2010 of the free pre-school year is a major development in the area of early childhood care and education. This is a change of direction from that of targeted pre-school provision to one of universal provision. 63,000 children, or 95% of the eligible child cohort, are now taking part in the universal pre-school scheme. International experience points to the importance of providing high-quality early childhood education services, and these are particularly important for children from low-income homes.

### **Tertiary Education**

Ireland has already achieved a high tertiary attainment rate for 30-34 year olds (49% based on Eurostat data for 2009, the latest available) due to the high participation rates for school leavers that have been growing steadily over the last decade.

**Using the related NSS targets as a basis, Ireland's proposed 2020 target figure for tertiary attainment by 30-34 year olds is 60%.**

The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 was published in early January 2011 and provides a framework for the development of the higher education sector for the next twenty years. The recommendations of the Strategy aim to increase the quality and flexibility of the system to ensure that it is responsive to the needs of an increasingly diverse cohort of students. Implementation of the Strategy will allow the following key measures to be delivered.

### **Key Measures to reach national target**

The most important measures to ensure that the national target for tertiary attainment will be met are:

1. To continue to meet the high demand from school leavers for higher education through the provision of a sustainable funding base;
2. To widen access for students facing social and economic barriers and students with disabilities to higher education through the provision of appropriate supports and access measures;
3. To put in place policy measures to maximise progression through and completion of higher education degrees;
4. To ensure accessibility to higher education of adults, particularly those in the workforce, by increasing flexible provision, particularly part time provision, and through developing other entry routes into higher education, including Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).

Internal monitoring mechanisms will continue to include the following performance indicators:

1. Participation rates in higher education
2. Access and participation rates by under-represented and disadvantaged groups
3. Progression and completion rates in the higher education sector
4. Numbers of adults participating in higher education
5. Numbers of students in part time education
6. Number of courses available through flexible provision
7. Higher education attainment rates in the population by age group.

Ireland's National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2008-2013 establishes a number of benchmarks and actions to increase access by under-represented groups, particularly disadvantaged students, mature students and students with disabilities. The plan also recognises the importance of further education in providing the relevant skills to enable learners to access higher education. A mid-term review of the Plan is currently being finalised.

In addition, the student grant schemes administrative function for tertiary education is currently undergoing a radical restructuring, enabled by the Student Support Act, which was signed into law in February 2011. The key provisions of the Act are:

- The transfer of responsibility for student grants from 66 grant awarding authorities to a single grant awarding authority.
- The creation of a single unified grants scheme by way of regulation to replace the existing four student grant schemes.
- The establishment of an Appeals Board.

It is envisaged that this reform will deliver a significant service enhancement benefit to student grant applicants. Within the student grant schemes, special rates of maintenance grants are provided for eligible disadvantaged students who receive almost twice the level of an ordinary grant payment.

Ireland's proposed national targets for early school leaving and tertiary attainment as stated above are linked with the related NSS targets. Consequently, any revisions made to NSS targets between now and 2020 may necessitate revision of the related EU 2020 targets.

## EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING (approx. 3 PAGES)

### QUESTION 2

**What measures has your country taken to reduce early school leaving?**

**2.1 Measures to analyse current situation and monitor developments in early school leaving (e.g. data collection, surveys and research):**

Enhancing attendance, progression, retention and attainment are central elements of DEIS (see reply to Q1 above). The DEIS plan targets those schools serving the most disadvantaged communities in the country. It has 875 participating schools, some 22% of all schools in Ireland.

Early school leaving continues to be a major concern but the number of students staying in school to complete their second level education is now at its highest rate ever. The latest national Retention Report (May 2011), published by the Department's Statistics Section, shows yearly improvements in retention rates - rising from an estimated 81% to 88% for entrants to second level in 1996 and 2004 respectively. The average Leaving Certificate retention rate in DEIS schools increased by 5 percentage points from 68.2% to 73.2% for entrants to second-level between 2001 to 2004 while the retention rate in non-DEIS schools increased from 85.0% to 87.4% over the same period.

The latest available data <sup>1</sup> on Early School Leavers, defined as persons aged 18 to 24 years whose highest level of education or training is the Junior Certificate or equivalent, shows a decrease in the proportion of early school leavers from 13% in 2004 to 10% in 2010.

As stated in the reply to Q1 above, an evaluation of DEIS by the independent Educational Research Centre is underway and an initial report focusing on rural disadvantage was issued in March 2009. A second report is expected shortly - advance information on its findings indicates a welcome overall improvement in average reading and mathematics achievement between 2007 and 2010. The aim of the evaluation process is to monitor the implementation of the programme and assess its impact on students, families, schools, and communities at primary and secondary levels. The outcomes of the evaluation will inform any future changes to the current programme.

**2.2 Please indicate the priority areas your country is focusing on (e.g. target groups, educational sectors):**

The Department supports a continuum of interventions to address disadvantage and tackle early school leaving, including:

- the DEIS action plan;
- second-chance education and training;

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<sup>1</sup> Sourced from the CSO's Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS)

- access measures for adults to support increased participation by under-represented groups in further and higher education.

Other measures also have an impact on addressing these issues, including the provision of language support for EAL (English as an additional language) students and additional supports provided for learners with special educational needs, including through the work of the National Council for Special Education established in 2005.

### **DEIS:**

With regard to the DEIS flagship programme in particular, the process of identifying primary and second-level schools for participation in the programme was managed externally by the Educational Research Centre (ERC) on behalf of the Department.

In the primary school sector, the ERC identified the socio-economic variables that collectively best predict achievement, and these variables were then used to target schools for participation in the School Support Programme. The variables involved were:

- % unemployment
- % local authority accommodation
- % lone parenthood
- % Travellers
- % large families (5 or more children)
- % pupils eligible for free books

In the case of second-level schools, the Department supplied the ERC with centrally-held data from the Post-Primary Pupils and State Examinations Commission databases. Based on an analysis of these data, with particular reference to medical card holding, retention rates and external exam performance, schools were targeted for inclusion in the programme.

### **Migrant education:**

In September 2010, the Department published its Intercultural Education Strategy. The Strategy covers all sectors of education from pre-school through to further and higher education. The key theme permeating the Strategy is the development of an inclusive, integrated and intercultural learning environment. Such an environment would enable new immigrant students along with their native peers to feel welcome. It is about respect for difference and a concerted and evolving change of attitude. With such a learning environment students should have high expectations and aspirations and be enabled to remain in education rather than feeling isolated and perhaps leaving early.

Some 12% of primary students and 9% of secondary students in Irish schools are from countries other than Ireland. At both primary and secondary levels, additional language support is provided for students who do not speak English as their first language. EAL resources are designed to allow individual

students to participate in mainstream education on a par with their peers. The unique position of students in examination years and at senior cycle in post-primary school is recognised by the additional weighting afforded to them when applying for ongoing EAL support from the DES. This is due to the additional requirements for proficiency in academic, as well as more basic or conversational, English, which is necessary at that stage in education. The provision of EAL supports serves as a targeted response to potential early school leaving amongst migrant students and some 1,400 whole-time equivalent teachers are involved in the provision of this service in the current school year.

### **Traveller Education:**

A key development in terms of advancing education for the Traveller Community<sup>2</sup> has been the Report and Recommendations for a Traveller Education Strategy which was launched in November 2006. The Report covers all aspects of Traveller Education from pre-school right through to further and higher education within a lifelong learning context. The primary objective of the Strategy is to ensure a quality, integrated education for Travellers underpinned by the principles of inclusion and mainstreaming with an emphasis on equality and diversity and the adoption of an intercultural approach.

A decision was taken as part of the last Budget to withdraw specific Resource Teacher for Travellers (RTT) posts, effective from September 2011. Traveller pupils who are eligible for learning support teaching will, in future, receive this tuition through the existing learning support provision in schools. All schools are advised to select students for learning support on the basis of priority of need.

In respect of the DEIS programme, Traveller enrolments have been included in the valid enrolment for the purpose of allocating additional staffing under the programme for the 2011/12 school year. Also, alleviation measures are being provided to assist schools with high concentrations of Traveller pupils who were previously supported by RTT posts.

The decision which has been taken reflects the recommendations in the Traveller Education Strategy Report that an integrated, collaborative and in-class learning support system should be adopted for all children, including Travellers, who have identified educational needs.

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<sup>2</sup> Irish Travellers are an indigenous minority who, according to historical evidence, have been part of Irish society for centuries. They have a long shared history, value system, language, customs and traditions that make them a group recognised by themselves and others as distinct. This distinctive lifestyle and culture, based on a nomadic tradition, sets them apart from the settled population. The history of the Traveller community includes a struggle to uphold their distinct cultural identity and to maintain a nomadic way of life. Travellers have shared a nomadic tradition and a means of communication, beliefs, values and practices distinct from the majority culture.

**2.3 Measures to prevent early school leaving. Please mention the most effective measures taken at system level, at school level and in support of individual pupils/learners:**

**A. DEIS**

Enhancing attendance, progression, retention and attainment are central elements of DEIS (see reply to Q1 above), which provides various supports for participating primary and second-level schools. These include:

- reduced pupil teacher ratio in primary schools in urban areas with most disadvantage.
- additional non-pay funding and school books funding based on level of disadvantage.
- access to a School Meals Programme
- access to literacy/numeracy supports and measures at primary level.
- access to Home/School/Community Liaison services (see below).
- access to School Completion Programme.
- enhanced guidance counselling provision at second-level
- access to school planning supports.
- provision for school library and librarian support in post primary schools with most disadvantage
- access to the Junior Certificate School Programme and the Leaving Certificate Applied Programme (see below)
- access to a range of professional development supports.

The key School Completion Programme (SCP) and Home/School/Community Liaison (HSCL) elements of DEIS are discussed further below:

**SCP:** The SCP component of DEIS (see NRP material in response to Q1 above) currently targets approximately 36,000 young people between the ages of 4 and 18 years and supports 470 primary and 220 secondary schools in 124 SCP projects.

The main aims of the SCP are:

- to retain young people in the formal education system, or equivalent, to successful completion of the Senior Cycle;
- to improve the quality of participation and educational attainment of targeted children and young people in the educational process;
- to bring together all local stakeholders (home, school, youth & community/statutory and voluntary) to tackle early school leaving;
- to offer positive supports in primary and post-primary schools towards the alleviation of educational disadvantage;
- to influence in a positive way policies relating to the alleviation of early school leaving in the school system.

Each local project is required to engage in a consultative and planning process with school staff, parents and local representatives of statutory, voluntary and

community agencies in the development of annual retention plans. Plans must provide for a collaborative programme of in-school and out-of-school actions that will prevent early school leaving and support young people with characteristics and behaviour that are indicative of real risk.

**HSCL:** The role of parents and guardians in the education of their children cannot be underestimated. To support this role the HSCL has been extended to all DEIS schools. The HSCL scheme is a key intervention designed to improve the educational outcomes of children from disadvantaged areas by promoting active cooperation between their parents and teachers and encouraging community involvement. HSCL officers (who are teachers drawn from within the staff of the school) seek to raise parents' awareness of the need to encourage their children in learning and to help parents to improve their own capacities to enhance their children's educational progress and to assist them in developing relevant skills.

Some 400 HSCL officers are providing services under the scheme in the current year.

In 2011, all 880 schools in the DEIS programme will benefit from access to HSCL as well as in-school programmes to address literacy and numeracy.

## **B. Early childhood education**

The value of early childhood education in the prevention of school failure is acknowledged widely in both national and international literature. In Ireland, since the 1990s there has been significant investment in the provision of ECCE services for children including:

- the delivery of a universal free preschool year (from January 2010);
- the creation of new ECCE facilities
- development of National Practice Frameworks (Síolta, the national Quality Framework and Aistear, the Early Childhood Curricular Framework) to underpin and promote quality provision;
- development and delivery of a range of targeted interventions for children with additional needs e.g. Early Start (tackling disadvantage), Autism preschool services.

**Universal Free Preschool Year in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme:** This initiative offers one year free preschool to all children in the year prior to enrolment in primary school. It consists of a maximum of 3 hours per day, 5 days per week, 38 weeks per year. Participation is voluntary. Since its establishment in January 2010, there has been a very positive response to this offer and data collected in September 2010 reports 63,000 (94%) of eligible children have enrolled in ECCE services. A wide variety of ECCE settings are contracted by the state to provide the free preschool year on condition that they fulfil a number of criteria including compliance with the principles of Síolta and staff qualification requirements.

**Early Start:** The Early Start programme is a pre-school programme for 3 and 4 year olds in disadvantaged areas which offers one year of pre-school

(meeting the ISCED Level 0 classification) to children in designated areas of disadvantage. It can cater for 1,650 children. The programme aims to provide children who are most at risk of educational disadvantage with an educational programme that will enhance their development and prevent failure at school. Parents' involvement is one of the core elements of the programme. The HSCL coordinator works with the Early Start staff to develop a structured plan to support parents, ranging from initial contact with families to the enrolment of new pupils at open days.

## **B. Leaving Certificate Applied Programme**

The Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) Programme has been developed by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment it is a distinct, self-contained two-year Leaving Certificate programme. It is designed for those students who do not wish to proceed directly to third level education or for those whose needs, aspirations, and aptitudes are not adequately catered for by the other two more academic Leaving Certificate programmes. Some 7% of Leaving Certificate students take the LCA option.

## **C. Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme**

The Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) has been in existence since 1994 and its introduction was designed to enhance the vocational dimension of the Leaving Certificate. The two year programme combines the traditional academic strengths of the Leaving Certificate with a focus on self-directed learning, enterprise, work and the community which are included in the Link Modules. Some 20% of Leaving Certificate students take the LCVP option.

**2.4 Measures to compensate early school leaving. Please mention the most effective measures taken:**

**A. Youthreach**

Youthreach is an integrated programme of education, training and work experience for young people aged between 15 and 20 who have left school early without any qualifications or vocational training. There are almost 6,000 places available nationwide under the Youthreach umbrella.

The programme usually provides two years integrated education, training and work experience. Basic skills training, practical work training and general education are features of the programme, and the application of new technology is integrated into all aspects of programme content. There is a strong emphasis on personal development, on the core skills of literacy/numeracy, communications and IT, along with a choice of vocational options and a work experience programme.

In 2010, 2,385 Youthreach learners achieved certification and of those completing, 15% progressed to employment and 52% progressed to further education and training.

**B. Back to Education Initiative (BTEI)**

The BTEI programme is a part time initiative for learners who wish to pursue part time or modular programmes. Under the BTEI a programme may be offered for as little as 1 hour per week or as much as 17 hours per week, depending on the needs and demands of the prospective learners. BTEI allows free tuition to anyone over 16 years of age with less than upper second level education and it aims to give adults an opportunity to combine their return to learning with family, work and other responsibilities.

The BTEI had 28,000 participants in 2010.

**TERTIARY EDUCATION ATTAINMENT (approx. 3 PAGES)**

**QUESTION 3**

**What measures has your country taken to increase tertiary (or equivalent) education attainment?**

**3.1 Measures to increase entry rates to higher education, including widening access to under-represented groups**

**3.2 Measures to improve completion rates of students in higher education**

The National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2008-2013, referenced in our reply to Q1 above, includes the following key policy objectives:

- the priority accorded to promoting equality in higher education will be reflected in the strategic planning and development of the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and of higher-education institutions;
- the lifelong learning agenda will be progressed through the development of a broader range of entry routes, a significant expansion of part-time/flexible courses and measures to address the student support implications of lifelong learning;
- the priority accorded to promoting equality in higher education will be reflected in the allocation of public funds to higher-education institutions;
- students will be assisted to access supports and those supports will better address the financial barriers to access and successful participation in higher education;
- the higher-education participation rates of people with disabilities will be increased through greater opportunities and supports.

Notwithstanding the economic challenges that have arisen since the plan's publication, a number of actions are supporting the realisation of these objectives including:

- The core funding of higher education institutions in Ireland is being developed to incentivise lifelong learning policy and practice. Since 2006, funding for access and some elements of lifelong learning programmes (i.e. actions targeting mature student access) have been integrated into the core budget of the seven universities in Ireland. In light of new data gathered in 2007 and 2008 this model of funding is being further developed so that, from 2010, the annual budget of all publicly-funded institutions will include a 'core access grant' calculated on the basis of a weighting of 33% linked to the number of 'access students' enrolled in each institution, including numbers of mature/lifelong learners.
- From 2006, new institutional projects to increase levels of access and lifelong learning were also supported through a Strategic Innovation Fund. A number of projects have increased part-time and flexible learning opportunities for adults and have supported the development of broader routes of entry to higher education.
- The proportion of full time entrants who engaged in lifelong learning as mature students in Ireland has increased from 9% in 2004 to 14% in the 2009/10 academic year.
- The student grants schemes, as a primary access measure, support disadvantaged students, including mature students engaged in lifelong learning, to access higher education. This support also includes the provision

of a special rate of maintenance grant for those in receipt of a long term welfare payment whose income is particularly low. Some 72,000 students were supported under the student grant schemes in the 2010/11 academic year.

- A Student Assistance Fund tackles disadvantage by providing financial support to disadvantaged students who require additional financial support to enable them to fully benefit from their third-level studies.
- A Fund for Students with Disabilities provides students with disabilities with supports and services to enable them to access, to participate and to complete their course of study.
- The development of alternative routes of access is crucial element to increasing levels of access and lifelong learning in Ireland. A number of actions under the National Access Plan are advancing this objective including:
  - work between the higher and further education sectors to develop routes of progression (the proportion of HE entrants with FE awards increased from 3% to 10% between 2005 and 2008 in Ireland);
  - the development of a national policy for the provision of higher education access/foundation courses (currently 39 courses are delivered by 18 HE institutions to approximately 700, mainly mature, students, each year);
  - the development of new strategies for the recognition of prior learning (RPL), in particular with the support of Strategic Innovation Funding.

The following challenging targets are set in the 2008-2013 plan:

- A national participation rate of 72 per cent of the relevant age cohort will be achieved by 2020 (55 per cent in 2004).
- All socio-economic groups will have entry rates of at least 54 per cent by 2020 ('Non-manual' group at 27 per cent and 'Semi-skilled and unskilled manual' group at 33 per cent in 2004).
- Mature students will comprise at least 20 per cent of total full-time entrants by 2013 (9% per cent in 2004).
- Mature students will comprise 27 per cent of all (full-time and part-time) entrants by 2013 (18 per cent in 2006).
- Flexible/part-time provision will increase to 17 per cent by 2013 (7 per cent in 2006).
- Non-standard entry routes to higher education will be developed so that they account for 30 per cent of all entrants by 2013 (estimated at 24 per cent in 2006).
- Ireland will reach EU average levels for participation in lifelong learning by 2010 and will move towards the top quartile of EU countries by 2013

- The number of students with sensory, physical and multiple disabilities in higher education will be doubled by 2013.

A mid-term review of the plan has been recently conducted and will be published later in 2011. In the case of participation in lifelong learning, it will show that the level for Ireland decreased to 6.3% in 2009 from 7.4% in 2005, while the EU 27 average also decreased to 9.2% from 9.8% over the same period.

## **MOBILITY (approx. 2.5 PAGES)**

### **QUESTION 4**

**What measures has your country taken to promote learning mobility?**

**4.1 Measures to promote outgoing/incoming learning mobility of students in different education sectors (schools, VET, higher education, adults):**

### **Higher Education**

The measures which have been taken include:

**Annual Erasmus Lecture:** The annual Erasmus Lecture was inaugurated by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) in 2008 in an effort to raise awareness of the benefits of spending time studying or working in Europe as part of one's higher education. A prominent individual from world of business, politics, arts etc is invited to deliver a special address to senior representatives from the education sector and the world of business, arts and politics;

- **Erasmus “Buddies”:** In partnership with the Department, the Association of Teachers’ Education Centres in Ireland (ATECI) and the National Academy for Integration of Research, Teaching and Learning (NAIRTL), the HEA launched (in October 2010) a pilot project whereby Erasmus Graduates visited second-levels schools for the purposes of promoting the benefits of mobility.
- **Poster Campaign:** A poster campaign promoting Erasmus and addressed at second level schools
- **Media Course:** A course on media relations for International Officers in HEIs.
- **Information Seminars:** Focus events for International Officers of higher education institutions aimed at promoting the benefits of mobility for students and staff.
- **Erasmus Student Ambassadors:** Nominations have been sent to the Commission for consideration as Erasmus 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary (2012) ambassadors

- **EuroLink:** Periodic newsletter of the European Programmes section of the HEA.

### **Schools, VET and Adult Education**

- Extensive promotion and constant updating of the Léargas website at [www.leargas.ie](http://www.leargas.ie)
- Several national and regional information meetings are held each year to promote the Lifelong Learning Programme in general and specific sub-programmes (Comenius for Schools, LdV for VET and Grundtvig for Adults). Topics covered include the opportunities for students, trainees, apprentices, adults and workers to benefit from learning mobility actions.
- Several learning mobility projects involving students, trainees, etc. were featured at the National Valorisation Conference held on 13 October 2010 on the European Year theme of ‘Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion’ and highlighted in the accompanying booklet circulated at the event and via our website.
- Periodic sub-programme newsletters and flyers, circulated in hard copy and via the Léargas website, promote opportunities for learning mobility to organisations providing education and training to students, trainees etc.
- Nomination of a selection of prominent young Irish sportspersons, actors and journalists to the EC for consideration as ‘Youth Mobility Ambassadors’.
- Information and promotion actions taken in relation to teachers, see below, would include where appropriate input on learning opportunities for school pupils and students.

<p><b>4.2 Measures to promote outgoing/incoming learning mobility of teachers and other education professionals in different education sectors (schools, VET, higher education, adults)?</b></p>
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### **Higher Education**

The measures which have been taken include the following (in addition to the Annual Erasmus Lecture, Information Seminars and EuroLink measures in 4.1 above, which apply equally to students and education professionals):

- **Erasmus Staff Ambassadors:** Nominations have been sent to the Commission for consideration as Erasmus 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary (2012) ambassadors

- **Networking:** Meetings have been held with a range of bodies to explore areas of common interest – the Arts Council; European Parliament Office Dublin; Association for Higher Education Access and Disability (AHEAD)
- **Valorisation Events:** promoting good practice in staff/teaching mobility; placements and Intensive Programmes.

Extensive promotion and constant updating of the Léargas website at [www.leargas.ie](http://www.leargas.ie)

Several national and regional information meetings are held each year to promote the Lifelong Learning Programme in general and specific sub-programmes (Comenius for Schools, LdV for VET and Grundtvig for Adults). Topics covered include the opportunities for teachers, school principals, trainers, training centre managers, guidance counsellors, human resource specialists and other VET professionals to benefit from learning mobility actions.

Several learning mobility projects involving education and VET professionals were featured at the National Valorisation Conference held on 13 October 2010 on the European Year theme of ‘Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion’ and highlighted in the accompanying booklet circulated at the event and via our website.

Promotion of opportunities for Education and VET professionals to participate in thematic Study Visits (46 Irish participants) and organisation/hosting of six inward Study Visits involving 80 professionals.

Periodic sub-programme newsletters and flyers, circulated in hard copy and via the Léargas website, promote opportunities for learning mobility to Education and VET professionals.

Support for the ‘Academia Project’, co-ordinated by the NGCE, aimed at Irish Guidance Counsellors.

## **Schools**

- Presentation to ‘European Awareness’ In-Service Training Course in EC House, Dublin.
- Eleven Contact Seminars promoted via Léargas website and circulation of two flyers to schools.
- E-Twinning on-line newsletters issued, promotional poster developed/circulated and information workshops at regional teachers’ centres.
- Promotion of e-Twinning Professional Development Workshops (8 teachers to 3 countries).
- Presentation at Worldwide Teacher Forum in Croke Park in January 2010.
- Advertisements of learning mobility opportunities published in the educational press.

## **VET**

- Promotion of Commission’s new partner finding database via Léargas website, at all promotional meetings & project workshops and an extensive email-shot.

- Promotion of five contact seminars (11 Irish participants) and support for 9 persons to hold preparatory meetings with potential future partners in learning mobility projects.
- Continued promotion of the 'Europass Portfolio' to validate learning mobility.

### Adults

- Three Contact Seminars promoted via Léargas website and mailshot to contacts list.
- Léargas hosted a Contact Seminar attended by 57 participants from 12 countries.
- Promotional DVD to celebrate 10 years of the Grundtvig programme produced/circulated.

### 4.3 Steps to identify and reduce the obstacles to learning mobility?

- *Investing in Global Relationships: Ireland's international education strategy 2010-2015* (published in September 2010) places a significant emphasis on learning mobility, particularly within staff and student cohorts in the higher education system. Among other things, this strategy gives consideration to the barriers to enhanced mobility, and makes recommendations to education institutions to overcome these barriers.
- The strategy recommends the introduction of international strategies for higher education institutions which will set out the internationalisation vision and targets for each institution. This will include mobility of learners and staff (e.g. through building mobility windows into academic programmes).
- The strategy recommended reform of an (modestly funded) existing scholarship programme to promote inward and outward mobility and active consideration is being given to this recommendation.
- The High Level Group on International Education, which draws together representatives from Government Departments, State agencies and the education sector and reports to the Minister for Education and Skills, meets on a quarterly basis. It is charged with implementing the international education strategy and promoting internationalisation generally. The next annual work programme will be developed in Q3 of 2011.
- Action-specific application workshops were held to assist applicant organisations to understand the process involved and to utilise recently issued eForms where applicable.
- Within each sub-programme of LLP, action-specific workshops are held throughout a funded project's lifecycle to assist participating organisations with project/contract management, interim and final reports.

- Continued promotion and implementation of the European Language Label to recognise best practice in LLP projects – 11 projects awarded the Label and 4 Language Ambassadors appointed.

## **NEW SKILLS AND JOBS (approx. 2.5 PAGES)**

### **QUESTION 5**

**What measures has your country taken to improve the assessment of future skills requirements matching since 2009?**

**5.1 Recent measure to improve skills forecasting (in addition to information provided through Eurydice in June 2010)**

**5.2 Recent measures to take the results on board in education and training planning processes, information and guidance**

#### ***Identifying Future Skill Needs in Ireland and measures to take results on board***

The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) advises the Irish Government on current and future skills needs of the economy and on other labour market issues that impact on Ireland's enterprise and employment growth. It has a central role in ensuring that labour market needs for skilled workers are anticipated and met. The work of the EGFSN has allowed Ireland to identify future skills shortages in advance and enabled remedial action to take place in some cases. In addition the EGFSN also drafted Ireland's National Skills Strategy, which was launched in 2007 and forecasts Ireland's skills requirements up to the year 2020.

The EGFSN produces sectoral reports with the objective of quantifying skills and labour requirements in sectors in the medium term as well as making recommendations to Government and education and training providers as to how skills needs can be met. For providers this can entail, for example:

- developing new modules that build on existing qualifications of graduates;
- introducing work placement programmes to enhance graduate employability;
- conversion courses or new programmes to upskill existing employees where new technologies, higher productivity requirements, new work practices or regulations are impacting significantly on skills and qualifications requirements.

Since 2009 the Expert Group has completed analysis of future skills requirements in some key exporting sectors of the economy – the BioPharmaChemical sector, Enterprises in 6 sub-sectors of the Green Economy (Nov 2010), ICT skills updates to meet recent developments (May 2011), the Food & Beverages sector (Nov 2009) and the key locally traded sector Wholesale & Retail.

Each year the EGFSN produces a National Skills Bulletin outlining demand for each occupation. The next report will be issued in July 2011. A Monitoring Skills Supply report is also produced annually giving details of the annual output from the education system.

The EGFSN works directly in consultation with enterprises to identify specific current and future skills needs. Higher education institutions are represented on the EGFSN and as a standard practice, engage with employers in the review and development of higher education programmes. This analytical approach enables education and training providers (including higher education providers and FAS, the National Training and Employment Authority) to adapt their provision to address skills needs. It is also used to underpin labour market activation programmes such as:

- (a) the Higher Education Authority's recent "Springboard" initiative which is a competitive call for proposals for the provision of part-time higher education places for unemployed persons. On the basis of recommendations from an independent expert selection panel, the Government decided as part of its recent Jobs Initiative to increase the number of part time higher education places to be funded under Springboard to 5,900 in 2011. Programmes will be available at all higher education levels from certificate to masters degree level (levels 6-9 on NQF) enabling unemployed people with differing levels of qualifications, including Leaving Certificate, PLC or degree level qualifications to participate
- (b) the Labour Market Activation Fund, which was introduced in 2010 and aims to stimulate innovation in the provision of training and activation measures for jobseekers seeking to up-skill and get back into work. The Fund is supporting 55 projects and providing approximately 10,500 places.

The EGFSN provided a guidance paper regarding future skills needs to accompany the LM Activation Fund calls in 2010 & 2011 to ensure that programme provision by the education & training bodies was aligned to future skills needs.

In the case of FAS, in addition to taking account of the work of the EGFSN at national level, decisions on training course mix to be provided in centres at local level will be based on a variety of local data including expected recruitment demand from new or expanding companies and/or employers making direct contact seeking training programmes to supply them with entry-level skilled workers.

**Taking results on board in the case of school curricula and in respect of guidance:** The Department and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) engage on an ongoing basis with the EGFSN and other industry and social partner interests on curriculum reform. A major reform is under way under the Project Maths initiative in second level schools designed to promote better understanding of mathematics, and an increase in the proportion taking the subject at Leaving Certificate higher level. A review of lower second level education is also underway and, as mentioned in our reply to Q1, a national strategy on literacy and numeracy is currently being finalised. Key objectives are to promote improved attainment,

enhance creativity and innovation, and address concerns about curriculum overload and rote learning.

Through the work of the National Centre for Guidance in Education, and the professional development services for teachers, the Department continues to support best practice in guidance in schools and adult education centres. This is supported by a comprehensive course database at [www.qualifax.ie](http://www.qualifax.ie), and by up to date information on the labour market through [www.careersportal.ie](http://www.careersportal.ie). The latter is an initiative developed by the private sector which is widely used as a guidance resource in schools and other settings.

### ***Background on National Skills Strategy***

As stated above, the Strategy was prepared by the EGFSN. It identifies Ireland's current skills profile, provides a strategic vision and specific objectives for Ireland's future skills requirements, and sets out a road map for how the vision and objectives can be achieved. The Strategy sets out clear long-term objectives for the education and training requirements needed to develop Ireland as a knowledge-based, innovation-driven, participative and inclusive economy with a highly skilled workforce by 2020.

#### *Key Proposals for 2020:*

- 48 percent of the labour force should have qualifications at NFQ Levels 6 to 10 – from National Certificate to PhD level;
- 45 percent should have qualifications at NFQ levels 4 and 5 – Awards equivalent to Leaving Certificate Examination;
- The remaining seven percent are likely to have qualifications at NFQ levels 1 to 3 (i.e. below Junior Certificate) while aiming to transition to higher levels.

#### *Skills Road Map to 2020 – Achieving the Vision*

- An additional 500,000 individuals within the workforce will need to be upskilled and to progress by at least one NFQ level over and above their current level of education and training;
- The Leaving Certificate retention rate for young people should rise to 90 percent;
- By 2020, the proportion of the population aged 20-24 with NFQ level 4 or 5 qualification (Leaving Certificate or equivalent), should be increased to 94 percent;
- The progression from second- to third-level education should increase from 55 percent to 72 percent; and
- The strategy also highlights the need for:

- Integration of immigrants into the education and training system, at all levels;
- Career guidance and mentoring for those at work;
- Assistance for individuals and companies in identifying their skills needs;
- More awareness programmes that highlight the benefits of education and training; and,
- Education and training provision needs to be flexible and responsive to the needs of employers and employees

### ***Update on the National Skills Strategy***

A report update of March 2010 concluded that significant progress had been made towards meeting the objectives set out in the National Skills Strategy:

- the percentage of those in the labour force with higher education qualifications (NFQ Levels 6-10) has increased from 33% in 2005 to 39% in 2009, compared with the target of 48% by 2020;
- the percentage of the labour force with NFQ educational Levels 4 & 5 (Upper Secondary including Leaving Certificate), between 2005 and 2009 remained at 40%, compared to a target by 2020 of 45%;
- The percentage of the labour force at NFQ Levels 1-3 (Junior Certificate and below) fell from 27% to 21%, compared to a target by 2020 of 7%.

The most significant challenge for the period to 2020 is upskilling those at Levels 1-3 to Levels 4 & 5.

### ***National Skills Database (NSD)***

A National Skills Database (NSD) was developed in 2003 by the Skills and Labour Market Research Unit (SLMRU) in FÁS on behalf of the EGFSN. It has been designed to collate all available information about the supply and demand of skills in Ireland. As such, it provides a platform for the timely analysis and forecasting of the labour market at occupational level.

## EDUCATION BUDGETS (approx. 2 PAGES)

### QUESTION 6

**How has the economic and financial crisis affected education and training budgets in your country (please refer to developments in particular education sectors, if appropriate)?**

The challenging economic situation of recent years has required the Irish Government to implement a wide range of savings measures across all Government Departments, both on the current and the capital side. In relation to current expenditure, while the Government has sought to protect education expenditure, especially expenditure on front-line services, from these measures, it was still necessary to implement significant savings measures across the education sector, in the 2009, 2010 and 2011 Budgets.

Under the terms of the EU/IMF Programme of Support and as set out in the National Recovery Plan 2011-2014, the Government is committed to reducing overall current expenditure by €7 billion by 2014, bringing spending back to 2007 levels. While the National Recovery Plan fully recognises the need to protect core areas of economic investment such as education and supports for enterprise and innovation, meeting the overall €7bn target will require the implementation of additional savings measures in the education sector over the next three years.

A particular challenge in this regard is the need, in establishing the budgetary allocation for education, to take account of ongoing upward expenditure pressures even in a non policy change scenario (see below).

The budgets of 2009 and 2010 identified savings of €150m (€256m or about 3% of current expenditure in a full year) and €96m (€163m or about 2% of current expenditure in a full year) respectively. A number of measures introduced in 2009 were subsequently moderated or reversed as a result of commitments made in the October 2009 Renewed Programme for Government.

The budget of 2011 provides for further current expenditure savings of some €175m (€320 million annually or some 3.5% of current expenditure by 2014) to be secured across the education sector. This €175m is broken down as €74m in pay and €101m in non-pay savings (€81m pay and €39m non-pay annually by 2014). Notwithstanding these savings, the current allocation for 2011 is actually higher than the outturn for 2010. This is due to the fact that the 2011 allocation also takes account of upward expenditure pressures, mainly in relation to increases in pensions expenditure and the impact of significantly increasing demographics (with enrolment over the next four years projected to increase by 6%, 5% and 18% in primary, secondary and tertiary education respectively) on teacher numbers and on student support payments.

The savings being implemented are spread across the education and skills sector and include the school transport scheme, reductions in staff numbers, student supports and training allowances.

In relation to higher education specifically, a new student contribution charge of €2,000 will replace the existing Student Services Charge of €1,500 with effect from the 2011/2012 academic year. Also, the Minister for Education and Skills has asked the Higher Education Authority to undertake further work on the sustainability of the existing funding framework over the course of this year. This work will inform consideration by Government of policy options in relation to future funding of the sector.

The allocation for capital expenditure has also been reduced by some 40% since 2008, although falling land values and tender prices have significantly moderated the impact of these reductions on the educational building programme.

## **Upcoming Developments**

**Comprehensive Review of Expenditure:** As part of the budgetary correction process over the coming years, the Government is transforming the approach to budgets and providing services and has embarked on a detailed Comprehensive Review of Expenditure (CRE). This approach involves seeking to reform how services are delivered, making major efficiency gains while protecting essential services as far as possible. Each Department is currently preparing a Comprehensive Expenditure Report in respect of the Department and its associated agencies, to identify expenditure programme savings, scope for savings arising from efficiency and other reforms, proposals for reducing and/or merging of agencies and associated reductions in staff numbers.

The objectives of the expenditure review process are to provide the Government with a comprehensive set of decision options:-

- to meet the overall fiscal consolidation objectives, both as regards spending and numbers reduction targets
- to re-align spending with the Programme for Government priorities
- in this context, to consider new ways of achieving Government objectives in the context of public sector reform.

Under the CRE, Ministers and Departments have the responsibility to evaluate every budgetary programme for which they are responsible, within both Departments and Agencies. The Review has been initiated and will be completed by end-September. The results of this process will then be brought before Government for consideration and decision in the annual budgetary process.

**Capital Expenditure Review:** Alongside the Comprehensive Review of Expenditure, the Government is undertaking a specific comprehensive review of its capital investment programme. The aim of the review is to assess:-

- priorities for capital investment to meet critical economic and/ social infrastructure deficits within our tightened budgetary circumstances
- what proposed infrastructural investment is vital and what is desirable but not vital?
- how, can capital programmes best support sustainable employment?

The Capital Expenditure Review will follow the same broad timeframe as the Comprehensive Review of Expenditure and will help the Government plan how to best target capital investment over the next few years.

## LIFELONG LEARNING STRATEGIES (approx. 2 PAGES)

### QUESTION 7

**What progress has your country made in the development and implementation of a coherent and comprehensive lifelong learning strategy?**

**7.1 Does your country have such a strategy (please indicate where it is laid down)**

**7.2 Please briefly refer to the main measures addressing the principles of shared responsibility, effective financial mechanisms, flexible pathways and quality initial and targeted continuing training**

The **Government White Paper on adult education, *Learning for Life***, published in 2000, reflected on the role of adult education in society and also set out principles, policies and strategies for the development of a lifelong learning approach to provision. The publication of the White Paper marked the adoption of lifelong learning as a governing principle of education and training policy in Ireland.

### **General Approach and Policy**

Education and training policy approaches from the LLL strategy perspective include:

- Providing a firm foundation of high quality relevant initial education (encompassing early childhood, primary and secondary education), developing key competences, broadening curricular choice in second level schools, providing a range of options to meet different abilities, interest and needs, and strengthening the language, technical and vocational dimensions of curricula;
- Prioritising State investment towards those most at risk and tackling disadvantage in terms of special attention to literacy and numeracy, preventing and addressing early school leaving, tackling unemployment, and providing second chance education and training for those with low skills;
- Ensuring a supply of high quality manpower to address skills needs, including through the promotion and resourcing of training at all levels for those seeking employment and for those in employment and generally widening access to lifelong learning in the context of an integrated approach to education and training;
- Addressing access barriers through a strengthening of financial supports, guidance, counselling, childcare services and increased flexibility of provision;
- Enhancing the quality of provision through investing in the initial and continuous professional development of teachers and trainers;
- Embedding education and training provision within a national framework of qualifications, providing for quality standards, streamlined progression pathways, mechanisms for credit accumulation and accreditation of prior and work based

learning, and including learning in formal, non formal, community and workplace environments.

The **White Paper on Adult Education** laid out a policy framework for the development and delivery of adult, further and community education. Its definition of adult education as “systematic learning undertaken by adults who return to learning having concluded initial education and training” is a broad one which allows for the inclusion of a wide and varied cohort of adult learners.

The White Paper set out targets for the development of adult literacy provision, as well as new part time programmes to address the needs of those with low initial levels of formal education. It prioritised the development of community education and a National Adult Literacy Programme, in recognition of the crucial role that this sector had played in reaching large numbers of participants in disadvantaged settings, as well as pioneering new approaches to teaching and learning in non-hierarchical community based settings. Some ten years on from the publication of the White Paper, many key developments have taken place including the establishment of the National Adult Literacy Programme, the Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) and the Adult Education Guidance Initiative (AEGI). These programmes have succeeded in increasing significantly the numbers of adults participating in education and training. The Department is taking this opportunity to examine how the programmes can be delivered more effectively, thus making it easier for adult learners to progress through the system.

The introduction of the **National Framework of Qualifications** has made it easier for learners to understand how the education system works and how one award can lead on to another. It helps the learner map out the route that their education will take and clarifies for prospective employers that the NFQ is a system of 10 levels ranging from basic education at level 1, to doctorate level at level 10.

The publication of a **National Skills Strategy in 2007** (see our response to Q5) identified new targets and proposed a vision of Ireland in 2020 in which a well-educated and highly skilled population would contribute to a competitive, innovation driven, knowledge based participative and inclusive society. The Strategy also recommends that literacy and generic basic skills should be integrated into all public funded education and training programmes as far as possible. International evidence highlights the efficacy of an integrated or embedded literacy strategy, as it removes unnecessary literacy barriers to access, persistence (completion rates), and achievement, enables greater numbers of adults to raise their literacy levels, and achieve targets and raises capacity of providers to deal with literacy issues across all programmes and levels, delivering programmes more inclusively and effectively. As stated on our response to Q5, the most recent update on the Strategy highlights the significant progress in meeting the targets set for adults with higher education qualifications but emphasises the significant challenge that remains to be faced in upskilling those at Levels 1-3 to levels 4 and 5 by 2020.

Because of the present economic situation, a major priority of the new Government is in relation to investment in learning opportunities for those who have found themselves unemployed or underemployed. The recent Jobs Initiative will deliver almost 16,000 education and training places in a range of part-time and full-time further education and training and higher education programmes at all levels of the NFQ.

## OTHER SIGNIFICANT REFORMS IN THE PRIORITY AREAS (approx. 2 PAGES)

### QUESTION 8

**What progress has your country made in making reforms in the priority areas not directly addressed in questions 2 – 7? (Please indicate relevant priority area and give a short description)**

**Basic skills in reading, mathematics and science (also Professional development of teachers and trainers):**

- **National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People in Schools, 2011 - 2010**

The Department's Draft Plan (Strategy) to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes in schools was referenced in our response to both Q1 and Q5 above. The Strategy arises in the context of both recent OECD/PISA results and Inspectorate reports which indicated that standards in these areas were under threat. The Strategy has implications for teacher training in the broadest sense, for curriculum reform more generally, and for the use of assessment in schools and more generally within the educational system (see below).

It is envisaged that implementation of the Strategy will be overseen by a National Implementation Group which will include national and international experts on literacy, numeracy and assessment in public education systems, the heads of key organisations such as the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) and the Teaching Council and senior officials from the Department.

The Draft Strategy has been sent to the education partners and the responses are currently being collated. It proposes very significant improvements to teacher education. It envisages that initial teacher education courses for primary teachers move to a four year degree, with substantial school based time and an increase in literacy and numeracy modules (and other pedagogical courses) at the expense of Humanities subjects which the bulk of student teachers take to degree level. Teacher Education courses for the majority of secondary teachers will move from one to two year post-degree courses with a greater proportion of teachers studying concurrent degree programmes (i.e. programmes in which students undertake academic subjects and pedagogical studies). It also envisages a regime of CPD for teachers which will focus on embedding literacy and numeracy teaching skills within the profession.

The finalised plan will be launched in early July 2011.

- **Project Maths**

As mentioned in our response to Q8, a major programme of reform in mathematics, Project Maths, began in all second level schools at both junior and senior cycle in September last, building on the experience of 24 schools which began the programme in 2008. Project Maths is designed to encourage better understanding of mathematics, to reinforce its practical relevance to everyday life and to ensure better curriculum

continuity across the system. It is supported by a comprehensive investment in professional development for teachers which will continue to at least 2013.

Mathematics has the highest participation of any subject in the Leaving Certificate, but only some 16% sit higher level mathematics. A key aim of Project Maths is to encourage more students to take the subject at higher level. A further incentive will apply from 2012, under which 25 additional Central Application Office (CAO) points will apply to all students scoring at least grade D3 in higher level Mathematics.

Project Maths is supported by online materials and resources and by an industry-education partnership designed to add value through co-operation across higher education, second level and industry. The work of the Discover Science and Engineering programme, which has extended its remit to Mathematics, is also important in this respect. In addition, career awareness information on opportunities in the science technology, engineering and mathematics sectors is featured on [www.careersportal.ie](http://www.careersportal.ie), a guidance tool which is now widely used in schools.

### **Innovation-friendly institutions**

- **ICT Schools Programme**

The integration of ICT into teaching and learning is a key aspiration for most western economies and requires that a continuous policy focus is maintained in addressing the areas which can allow integration to happen. Consequently, the ICT in Schools Programme addresses these four broad areas:

1. The provision of essential ICT infrastructure and networking within schools.
2. The provision of access to broadband connectivity to schools.
3. Up-skilling teachers' ICT skills. (CPD)
4. Integrating ICT within the curriculum and providing curriculum relevant digital content and software. (Digital Content)

Since October of 2009 some €2m has issued to schools targeted at providing a base of ICT equipment.

**QUESTION 9**

**Under the 4 broad strategic objectives, described below, the Council also defined mid-term priority areas for the period 2009-11. Which mid-term priority areas would your country wish to co-operate on during the next cycle (please indicate order of priority – high, medium, low)?**

**9.1 Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality:**

- Expanding learning mobility – medium
- Reference tools – medium
- Guidance – medium

**9.2 Improving quality and efficiency of education and training:**

- Basic skills in reading, mathematics and science - high
- New skills and jobs – high
- Initial recruitment and education continuum for teachers and trainers - high
- Governance and funding – higher education – medium
- VET quality – medium

**9.3 Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship:**

- Early leavers from education and training - high
- Learners with special needs - medium

**9.4 Enhancing innovation and creativity, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training:**

- Transversal key competences - medium
- Partnership – medium

**9.5 Other comments:**

All of the areas identified in 9.1-9.4 above, and in particular those listed as constituting a high priority for co-operation for Ireland in the next cycle, constitute a number of core priority areas for Ireland in the field of education and training (for example, in the case of new skills and jobs, re-skilling and upskilling those who are unemployed in a context in which unemployment has risen from less than 5% to nearly 15% in four years) and are also areas in which we consider the scope for added value from enhanced European co-operation is high.

Ireland would support an approach, in the context of significantly reduced administrative staff resources arising from the economic crisis, in which the breadth of the overall co-operation agenda in education and training was made narrower for the next cycle of co-operation. We consider that more added value can be gained by somewhat narrowing the agenda of issues to be processed by national representatives, to concentrate most resources/effort on those which have been identified as key priority areas by the largest number of Member States.