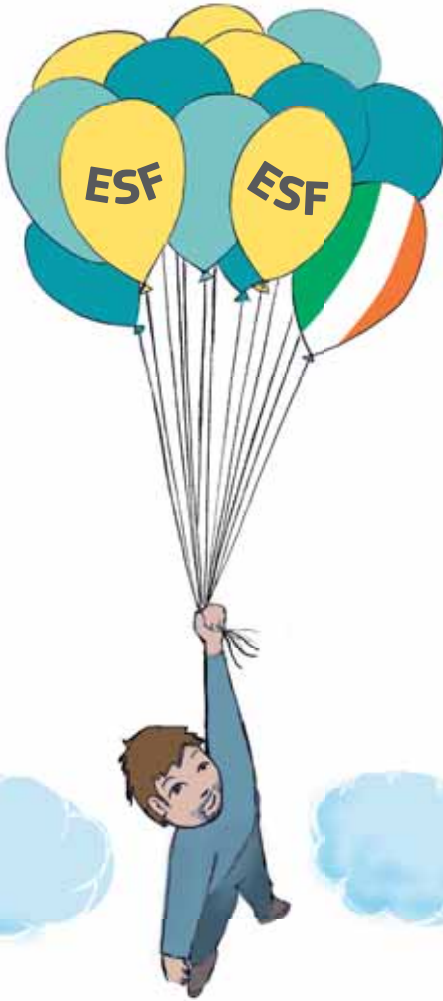




European
Commission



IRELAND

AND THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND

The economic crisis has left Ireland facing some major challenges. Over EUR 750 million of ESF funding is being channelled into reversing the rapid rise in unemployment seen in recent years. Retraining the workforce with new skills for new industrial sectors, and giving citizens from disadvantaged groups the skills to improve their job prospects, are the two main priorities.

*Social
Europe*

IRELAND

INVESTING IN PEOPLE AND JOBS: THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR IRELAND

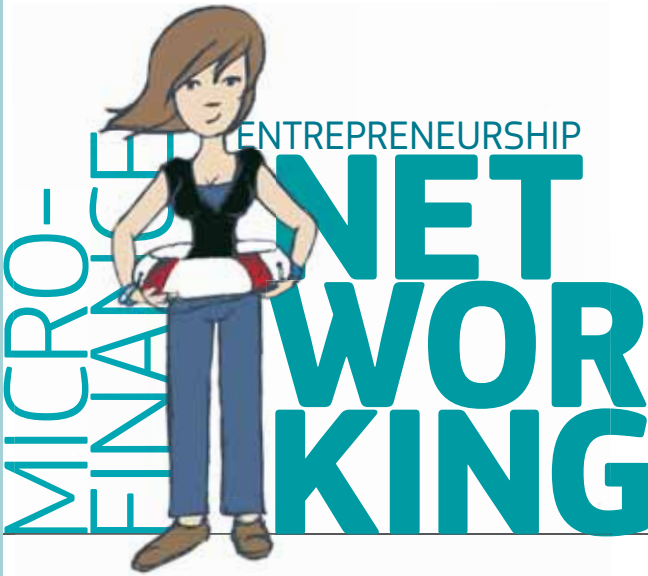
Ireland is facing a challenging time both economically and socially as a result of the crisis: many jobs have been lost and long-term unemployment has become a pressing problem. The country is receiving EU and euro-area financial support as part of a programme to strengthen its banking sector, support public finances, and restore growth and employment. Ireland needs to boost job creation and upgrade the skills of its workers such that they can benefit from returning growth. The construction and manufacturing sectors were the hardest hit by the recession and men have suffered more than women, as regards losing jobs and remaining unemployed in greater numbers. And significantly, many of the jobs lost in these sectors are unlikely to return. So Ireland needs to reduce unemployment, and in particular it must combat rising long-term unemployment among groups of people with low-skills – or the wrong skills – to benefit from future growth. This means that retraining for new skills in new sectors is an important factor in facilitating the return to work for many groups. Furthermore, if Ireland is to meet its target of 70% of the workforce in employment by 2020, then opportunities for acquiring new skills

*“In 2011 alone,
155 000 people received
ESF support, over half
of whom were women”*

and better job prospects must be inclusive and available to as many people as possible, including social groups facing particular obstacles to work.

ESF spending in Ireland

The ESF is providing financial support of over EUR 375 million for the period 2007-2013. National co-funding brings the total amount being invested in jobs to over EUR 750 million. This is being spent on improving skill levels by increasing training opportunities, and reducing inequalities by providing specific support to those who are disadvantaged or excluded from working life in some way. By the end of 2011, more than 645 000 Irish residents had taken part in these activities.



IRELAND'S ESF PRIORITIES

Improving skills

The ESF in Ireland has introduced a wide range of training and education measures to help workers improve their skills and the unemployed to get back to work. The 'Labour Market Activation Fund 2010' has played a key role in rolling out these measures. For example, in 2011 the Fund provided 12 000 training places for the unemployed through 55 education and training initiatives throughout the country.

Critically, such activities take a 'progression pathway' approach which goes beyond acquiring new skills and addresses the wider needs of unemployed people, such as help with job search and career rebuilding.

“Creating fairer access to jobs and training”

An example is the 'Begin Again' project that exceeded its targets and delivered training and over 700 work placements to unemployed professionals, of whom 69% went on to full-time employment. ESF projects are addressing diverse needs: for example, developing individuals core skills as a springboard for further training or employment; providing formal education opportunities for those with no higher education qualifications; taking an industry-focused approach to reskilling and up-skilling in employment sectors where there is a clear demand; and engaging with employers to design effective training responses to skill gaps and to give people the chance to fill these.

Inclusive employment

Ireland is also using ESF funding to support marginalised groups and people facing particular obstacles to getting a job. Examples include projects to ensure that the poorly qualified, such as early school leavers, get a second chance to acquire basic skills. The Workplace Youth Intervention initiative, run by a number of community training centres, is one such project: it provides development and training opportunities to young people with minimal vocational or academic qualifications.

“More chances for more people”

Other projects are helping people with disabilities: for instance, the 'Third Level Access' priority funds projects for assistive technologies for disabled students, among other activities. Immigrants are another target group – they are being helped through the EPIC programme which identifies training and work-placement opportunities as part of ensuring their integration into Irish society and working life.

Entrepreneurship is also encouraged as a means of bringing people into the workforce. One example is a project in Galway to build skills for self-employment among women in itinerant traveller communities; another is the award-winning 'Going for Growth' project to help female entrepreneurs to grow their companies.

THE ESF IN IRELAND: SOME EXAMPLES

TBSP: The Business Strategy Programmes

Career development with a certificate in logistics was on offer to participants in 'The Business Strategy Programmes (TBSP)' initiative supported by the 2010 Labour Market Activation Fund. Over 47% of graduates went on to find employment within two months of successfully completing the programme. Training was held in Limerick, Cork, Tallaght, Swords and Dundalk for a total of 101 job-seekers, 92 of whom were awarded The Chartered Institute of Logistics & Transport Certificate in Logistics. Field trips and networking with industry formed a major part of the training programme, giving the participants opportunities to see logistics systems in action in various industries in their home areas. Training also included comprehensive sessions on entrepreneurship, resulting in five individuals setting up their own businesses. Participating trainees praised the project for giving them the confidence and skills to contribute to business success, while a certificate external evaluator found that the TBSP team had delivered some of the best performing students to date.

<http://www.tbsplogistics.com/programme/index.asp>

Supporting literacy

In the 'Basic Education Solutions' project, the Limerick City Adult Education Service is providing a range of learning opportunities for adults who lack reading and writing skills and thus have difficulties in getting work. With small class sizes and a curriculum that can be tailored to individual learning needs – including one-on-one teaching where needed – the project had enrolled over 1 000 learners by the end of 2009. Today, courses on offer include basic literacy and personal skills, numeracy and computer skills, and English and maths to junior certificate level. Thematic-course approaches to literacy, for example on health issues, childcare and cookery, are also available to better engage with learners. As well as attracting participants from the general population, they are drawn from a variety of groups, including traveller communities, migrant workers and ex-offenders, all of whom are approached with specific initiatives to encourage involvement.

<http://www.limerickcityaes.ie>

Do you want to...?

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- ...understand better how the ESF works?
- ...see video clips on projects from across the EU?

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