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Education & Training
Boards Ireland
*Boird Oideachais &
Oiliúna Éireann*

Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI)

Submission to the Joint Committee on Education and Social Protection

on the

FET Strategy 2014-2019

Wednesday 12th November 2014

Executive Summary

ETBs and ETBI

The establishment of the Education and Training Boards and SOLAS in 2013 was intended to provide for the better co-ordination and delivery of education and training, leading to the development of a world-class integrated system of Further Education and Training in Ireland.

The role of the ETB is: *“to plan, provide, co-ordinate and review the provision of education and training, including the provision of education and training for the purpose of employment, and services ancillary thereto in its functional area”*, while the role of SOLAS, the Further Education and Training Authority, under the aegis of the Department of Education and Skills, is to have responsibility for the strategic co-ordination and funding of the Further Education and Training sector, including ETBs.

The ***Further Education and Training Strategy 2014–2019*** published in May 2014 provides the roadmap for this process. ETBs, and ETBI, their representative body, both have a significant role to play in the realisation of the strategy as the main statutory authorities delivering Further Education and Training. Key to successful implementation of the strategy is the capacity and resources to efficiently

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manage the delivery of training and education. If the strategy is to fulfil its mission, ETBs need appropriate structures and supports and adequate resourcing.

How the ETBs will assist in the fulfilment of the goals identified in the FET Strategy has been set out in the ***Detailed Implementation Plan for the FET Strategy***. A summary of the 13 of the 53 actions in the Plan identified for ETBI and ETBs are:

- Modify FET provision in accordance with the Skills Needs of industry
- Reflect direct employer involvement in designing local courses
- Provide education and training in entrepreneurship
- Develop appropriate FET interventions and supports for active inclusion
- Ensure an effective education and training needs identification, matching and support service is available for all learners who need it
- Develop a co-ordinated programme of continuous professional development in literacy and numeracy learning
- Develop a FET *Customer Service Charter*
- Ensure effective CPD to support responsive and industry led programme development
- Develop FET Strategic Partnerships e.g. DCU, FESS to support innovation in FET
- Devise and implement an integrated FET Guidance Strategy
- Provide career management skills to FET learners
- Ensure staff skills are regularly updated
- Internationalise FET to facilitate mobility across Europe and globally

ETBI has identified a number of concerns regarding impediments to achieving these actions.

Priority issues that need to be addressed include:

- A strategy addressing salary scales and career structure development for those delivering FET needs to be put in place urgently, as well as clear job specifications and conditions of service for tutors which reflect the need for flexible delivery modes.
- In order to deliver appropriate and responsive FET, capital funding must be made available for providing and improving facilities and equipment to match those in modern workplaces.
- Alleviation of the current moratorium on recruitment is needed to allow ETBs to recruit staff to implement actions in the Strategy that are not specifically teaching or tutoring. Critical in this context would be guidance and support staff.
- In order to develop and implement an integrated FET Guidance Strategy, more resourcing is needed for the provision of information and guidance in FET, which should be seen as a front-line service, and not subject to the moratorium.
- Similarly, adequate resourcing needs to be provided for the development and planning required to ensure innovation, quality and responsiveness of FET to industry.

SOLAS and ETBs

One of the means by which SOLAS supports the delivery of integrated Further Education and Training by the ETBs is by allocating funding to the ETBs. This funding includes the costs of running the former FÁS Training Centres plus grant aid to ETBs for a range of further education and training programmes (PLC, VTOS, BTEI, Adult Literacy, Community Education, etc.), for which the ETBs will have in place Service Level Agreements with SOLAS.

SOLAS and the ETBs hold high level meetings as part of the collaborative process that is required and necessary to ensure implementation of the agreed strategies and the ***Implementation Plan for the FET Strategy***. This collaborative approach to planning FET provision reflects the complementary roles of SOLAS and the ETBs. The putting in place of funding agreements ensures that ETBs retain ownership

over their own local planning within national guidelines, while ensuring consistency in approach and quality across the regions. SOLAS, through a flexible approach, also ensures that ETBs have sufficient freedom to meet local needs but still within a clearly defined national framework.

Underpinning the **FET Strategy** is a commitment by ETBs and SOLAS to establish an appropriate advisory infrastructure so that provision is informed directly by employers and responds to emerging needs at both national and local level, as well as the a commitment to develop and provide new courses and programmes that are quality assured and adhere to the relevant Awarding Body quality system. There is also a commitment to advance the recommendations of the DES **Apprenticeship Review** to establish new models of work-based learning.

ETBI and ETBs will continue to collaborate with SOLAS to achieve the aims of the **FET Strategy** and advance the actions listed in the **Implementation Plan**. But it is imperative that adequate resourcing and funding are put in place to allow ETBs to fulfil both those commitments and their mandate as set out in the **Further Education and Training Boards Act 2013**.

In conclusion, I wish to thank the members of the Committee for your invitation to discuss the provisions contained in the **FET Strategy**, in of which ETBI and our member ETBs are centrally involved. I am happy to respond to any questions you may have.