

Human Capital Investment Operational Programme (2007- 2013)

Progress Report Template

*Each **Intermediate Body (IB)** in the HCI OP is required to submit a progress report at Activity Implementation Plan level to the Managing Authority twice a year as follows:*

Spring: relating to the entire preceding calendar year

Autumn: relating to the period January-June of the current year.

This template sets out the reporting requirements for each Monitoring Committee meeting. The Progress Reports to be completed by each IB should be brief and relate only to activity within the reporting period itself. An entry must be made under each heading, even if only to formally record no change.

FOR THE REPORTING PERIOD: January to December 2013

PRIORITY: No. 1 - INCREASING ACTIVATION OF THE LABOUR FORCE

ACTIVITY NAME: Skills Training for the Unemployed ESF 1.1

1. Activity description

The activity in 2013 provided a range of vocational training courses to meet the needs of unemployed persons or other job seekers (including those who are socially disadvantaged). Training courses were provided at different levels and in a wide range of subjects. Some courses concentrated on generic, foundation skills whilst others provide skills specific to a particular occupation or set of tasks, as well as addressing new skills for new types of jobs including the 'greening' of operative and skilled workers, ICT, logistics, business and administration etc.

Within the overall suite of training programmes for unemployed/job-seekers, this activity focused on particular types of programmes and client groups, to respond to particular needs within budget allocations. In 2013, the activity included the following FÁS programme groups: Specific Skills Training¹, Traineeships², Return to Work³, Bridging/Foundation⁴, Community Training Centres⁵ and Local Training Initiatives⁶. Specific skills training programmes are the main category of training within this activity.

¹ Mainline courses which are employment-led and lead to qualifications that offer learners both generic and skills specific to particular jobs or occupations.

² Occupational-specific training courses that use a combination of off-the-job and structured on-the-job workplace training.

³ Courses for mature people who have been out of work for a considerable period of time.

⁴ Courses for people who have left school early or for other reasons need broader-based, generic skills training

⁵ Initial vocational skills training which is offered as an alternative to second level education with a view to re-engaging early school leavers in training and/or education.

⁶ The LTI programme is designed to provide opportunities for marginalised clients who are unable to access other FÁS training interventions for personal, social or geographical reasons.

2. Significant Changes in the Operating Environment

The most recent data suggests that the Irish economy has begun to recover somewhat. Real GDP forecasts for 2014 range from 1.8 – 2.6%. The ESRI forecast around 60,000 new jobs will be created in 2014 with unemployment set to fall to around 10% in 2016. The Government is optimistic that all of the jobs lost in recession can be replaced by 2020.

The labour market also continues to recover slowly. There has been a slight increase in the numbers of those in employment in the period 2011 – 2013. Between Q2 2012 and Q2 2013, unemployment fell back from 15.0% to 13.9% and subsequently to 12% in January 2014. Approximately 61,000 more individuals were at work in 2013 bringing total employment to 1,909,800. Unemployment declined by almost 42,000, bringing the number of unemployed down to 283,000. While the number of long-term unemployed decreased by 14.5% or 28,000, the total long-term unemployed figure remains high at around 165,000.

In response to the challenging economic and labour market background, the Government, through FÁS and other organisations, continued to improve its provision of training and related opportunities. Almost 75,000 learners benefitted from FÁS training provision during 2013.

The recent economic downturn presented a particular challenge for both Vocational Education Committees (VECs) and FÁS in a context of on-going diminishing resources, to respond effectively, with programmes and services to meet the needs of an increasing number of individuals who had lost their jobs. The response of Government was to streamline the former 33 existing VECs into 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and to transfer the training function of FÁS into the ETBs with the aim of bringing local and regional coherence to Further Education and Training. The Government also decided to create a new authority, SOLAS, The Further Education and Training Authority, to replace FÁS under the aegis of the Department of Education and Skills, with responsibility for the strategic co-ordination and funding of the further education and training sector.

The VECs and FÁS were statutory bodies. Substantive legislative change was required to meet the reform aims outlined above. Consequently, two pieces of legislation were enacted in 2013 to provide the statutory basis for the dissolution of the VECs, the dissolution of FÁS, the establishment of SOLAS and the establishment of 16 ETBs. With regard to the ETBs, the Education and Training Boards Act was signed into law in May 2013, replacing nine existing Vocational Training Acts with one piece of legislation. The new Act provided for the dissolution of the VECs and through a process involving a merger of some of the existing 33 VECs, for the establishment of 16 ETBs. Seven FÁS Training Centres transferred to ETBs in

December 2013 with the remainder due to transfer in June 2014. The key aim of this legislation is to modernise governance provisions and to more accurately reflect the current mission of ETBs. The functions of the Education and Training Boards were published in the Education and Training Board Act 2013 and can be downloaded at <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/2013/en/act/pub/0011/>

The Further Education and Training Act 2013 was signed into law in July 2013. It provided for the dissolution of FÁS and the establishment of SOLAS and the phased transfer of the existing FÁS training centre network and associated staff and training provision to the relevant ETBs. The legislation also strengthens consultation between SOLAS, DSP, DJEI and employers to improve FET provision for the activation of unemployed persons on the Live Register and for employers. The Further Education and Training Act 2013 details the mandate of SOLAS. Section 7 (1) of the Act specifies the requirement of SOLAS to *'prepare and submit to the Minister a strategy in respect of the provision of further education and training in accordance with section 9'*. The functions of SOLAS, including funding, were published in the Further Education and Training Act and can be downloaded at <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/2013/en/act/pub/0025/>

To give effect to the legislative process relating to the transfer of former FÁS Training Centres and training provision to ETBs, significant preparatory work was undertaken in 2013 to support the transfers. The preparatory work relating to each phase of the transfer process includes; adaption and reconfiguration of the systems aligning to sixteen ETB regions to facilitate the management and governance of transferred functions; ensuring the continuity of business during the transition period; arrangements for transfer of records relating to HR, payroll, financial, training, contracts, assets, etc.

SOLAS will continue to provide supports during the transition period to ETBs in regard to the transferred training centres. The supports provided will in the main relate to systems including ICT support, financial and other business systems, programme delivery systems and processes.

To ensure business continuity, extensive work as part of the preparation process was undertaken during 2013. The preparatory work focused on the: systems, processes and operations, along with other supports required to facilitate a seamless continuity of business. Each Training Centre/Region along with central Policy Units identified a range of actions required to enable the transfer process.

Most regions identified a common set of projects/actions that relate to specific aspects of the transfer process. Some of these projects related to work required in order to transfer utility accounts, service contracts and training contracts, including cut off procedures for payments, invoicing arrangements pre and post transfer etc. Other work included relevant communications with staff and the various stakeholders, the completion of assets stocktake, up-dating of the assets register, transfer of assets and lease arrangements, ensuring all HR records were up-dated relating to leave etc., at the time of transfer. Significant engagement with stakeholders took place to ensure a smooth transfer of projects under the following headings:

- ICT
- Finance/Funding
- Contracted Training Systems
- Quality Assurance
- External Authentication
- Results Capture and Certification Request System
- Curriculum and Assessment Development and Systems
- Interim National Course Database
- Central Assessment Management System
- Blended Learning Supports
- Other Programme Supports

A number of other reforms impacting on Further Education and Training to date include:

- Launch of 'Intreo', (2012)
- Planned launch of 'Jobpath', (2014)
- The establishment of Quality and Qualifications Ireland, (2012)
- The Government's 'Pathways to Work' Initiative, (2012), (2013)
- The Government's 'Action Plan for Jobs', (2012), (2013), (2014)
- The Government's Action Plan for SOLAS, (2012)
- Introduction of the Government's 'Youth Guarantee', (2014)
- Publication of a five year Strategy for the FET sector, (2014 - 2019)
- Publication of a three year Corporate Plan for SOLAS (2014 – 2016)

There are many other reforms on-going in education including the early education/framework for early learning, the national literacy and numeracy strategy, junior cycle reform as well as higher education reform.

One of the first major tasks undertaken by SOLAS was the development of the five-year Strategy for Further Education and Training.

SOLAS, in developing the FET Strategy and the associated implementation plan, adopted a consultative and evidence-based approach which, in 2013, included: a desk-based review of Irish FET; a number of commissioned international reviews from FET experts in the UK, Germany, the Netherlands and Australia; forty-six semi-structured key FET informant interviews; and the planning of nine SOLAS-led consultation workshops involving a broad range of FET groups, consideration of, inter alia, recently published research relating to FET, including the NESC strategic review of FET provision and the unemployed and the DES commissioned review of apprenticeship. The workshops and the drafting of the Strategy were scheduled to take place from January – March 2014.

In parallel, the development of a Corporate Plan for SOLAS was initiated in 2013 for submission to the Minister in April 2014. The bulk of the development work was carried out from September to December 2013. ICF GHK Consultants assisted SOLAS with the development of the Corporate Plan. The Plan sets out a number of high level goals and measurement criteria to achieve the SOLAS mission over a three year period. These goals will be based around a set of defining principles for SOLAS. The Plan is informed by the SOLAS Action Plan and the feedback received from the DES-led consultation process on the establishment of SOLAS. A thematic analysis of the responses to this consultation was carried out and followed up by interviews with the Chief Executive Officers of each ETB. A comparative analysis of international organisations having broadly similar roles to SOLAS was also carried out.

3. Commentary on Activity-related progress

In 2013, prior to the transfer of any of the FÁS Training Centres to ETBs, approximately 21,704 persons completed training under this activity at a cost of €173.7 million (excluding central costs, canteen costs, Justice Workshops and Sponsored Training).

Training Activity in 2013

While actively planning for the future and undergoing the first of a series of major structural changes, FÁS successfully maintained business continuity during 2013. FÁS delivered on the key targets for the year as determined by the government and addressed the needs of priority cohorts including persons who are long-term unemployed, those who are disadvantaged or have low standards of education or qualification and also those who have suffered job losses in

sectors most impacted by the economic downturn. In 2013, FÁS provided a range of training opportunities within this activity for:

- 12,746 people who completed Specific Skills Training Programmes
- 2,621 individuals who completed Traineeships
- 2,053 participants who completed Bridging-Foundation Programmes
- 2,685 individuals who completed Local Training Initiatives
- 1,484 early school leavers who completed Foundation progression in Community Training Centres
- 115 people who completed Return to Work courses.

Developments in Specific Skills Training and Traineeships

In 2013 FÁS launched a range of new and updated courses across various industry sectors of which 35 new courses were developed to meet the FETAC Common Award requirements with the remainder leading to industry recognised certification and upgrades to existing courses.

The courses introduced during the year include:

- Logistics and Distribution
- Contact Centre Operations
- Supply Chain Logistics
- MySQL Associate
- Hairdressing
- Business Management
- Aircraft Maintenance - Basic Training
- Interior Design
- Warehousing Operations
- Industrial Automation
- Legal Studies
- Signwriting
- CAD – 3D Parametric Modelling
- Healthcare Support
- Financial Services Administration.

Specific Skills Training (Long) courses take 6 months or more to complete and are designed to meet the needs of industry across a range of sectors and are fully certified leading to either a FETAC award (now QQI) on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) or are certified by a recognised accreditation body. Examples of courses now include:

- Industrial Automation

- Healthcare Support
- Legal Studies
- Interior Design.

Specific Skills Training (Short) courses were introduced to allow individuals to quickly upgrade their skills. The majority of the programmes on offer are FETAC (QQI) or externally certified. Examples of courses now include:

- Cleanroom and Packaging Operations
- Pneumatic Fluid Power Systems
- Electric and Electronic Control Systems
- Programmable Automation.

Traineeship courses typically take up to 9 months to complete. They provide occupation specific training and integrate formal training from FÁS and workplace coaching with a host employer. All programmes are certified. Examples include:

- Software Developer- Traineeship
- IT Support Specialist – Traineeship.

Developments in Community Based Training

Community Based Training is designed for unemployed early school leavers; people with disabilities; and unemployed people who are unable to access FÁS mainstream training. Community Based Training is accessed through FÁS funded Community Training Centres (CTCs) and Local Training Initiatives (LTIs). Learners are given the opportunity to take part in education and training ranging from FETAC Level 3 to Level 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). All training programmes delivered through these interventions address both the generic and vocational skills requirements of participating learners.

In 2011, all existing FETAC Interim Standards Level 3 awards were deactivated and in December 2012 all existing Interim Standards FETAC Level 4 awards and the first tranche of Level 5 awards were deactivated. In 2013, the development of training programmes for learners in community training continued with particular emphasis on extending the range of modules available at FETAC Levels 3, 4 and 5. A wider range of vocational modules were developed to match the individual aptitude, interest and employment aspirations identified in Individual Learning Plans (ILPs). This approach provides increased progression pathways for learners on Community Training programmes by providing more opportunities for learners to achieve a major award. The range of provision developed will also assist in achieving increased level of retention on these programmes and ensure the maximum utilisation of

resources within Community Training.

The programmes developed are listed as follows:

FETAC Level 4 Major Awards:

- Science Skills
- Sport and Recreation

FETAC Level 5 Major Awards:

- Early Childcare Care and Education
- General Studies
- Community Development
- Community Health Services
- Furniture Design and Making
- Hospitality Operations
- Horticulture
- Retail Practice
- Sports Recreation and Exercise
- Cultural and Heritage Studies
- Music
- Intellectual Disability Practice

In addition to this, 13 modules at Level 3, 20 modules at Level 4 and 48 modules at Level 5 leading to component awards were developed in 2013 to supplement and broaden the choices available to learners for programmes that were developed during 2011 and 2012 leading to Major Common awards.

Community Training Centres (CTCs) are the vocational arm of the national Youthreach programme for early school leavers. They are independent, community-based organisations catering for the training and employment needs of early school leavers, primarily aged between 16 –21. The training is certified leading to recognised awards on the NFQ.

An Innovation Strategy initiated with CTCs at both national and local level continued in 2013 with a strategic focus on:

- o Value for money
- o Board Governance
- o Training relevant to both the labour market and further educational training

opportunities for early school leavers.

- o Retention management/Improved progression outcomes.

The development of the capacity of CTC boards with regard to excellence in CTC corporate governance was implemented through IACTO in 2013 to ensure CTCs meet additional company, contractual, training standards and child protection requirements in a cost effective manner.

FÁS as part of its on-going strategy to develop a whole centre approach to the integration of literacy and numeracy development identified a need for a training course for CTC managers. The training, which was designed in partnership with NUI Maynooth and NALA, commenced in 2013 with a total of 31 participants taking part and will continue in 2014.

With regard to value for money, the Business Planning and Budget Bidding model for CTCs continued to be implemented by SOLAS in 2013. Budgets applied to CTCs are based on :

- o Staff costs (in line with staffing per Productivity Agreement)
- o A maximum operational cost per day was applied to calculating running costs (exclusive of rent costs) based on in-centre activity
- o Training allowances

This process has resulted in a significant reduction in CTC training costs.

The Local Training Initiative programme is designed to provide opportunities for marginalised clients who are unable to access other FÁS training interventions for personal, social or geographical reasons. Some projects are targeted at specific groups experiencing disadvantage such as homeless people, recovering addicts, prisoners and travellers. Target clients are primarily people under 35 years of age, with no formal qualifications or incomplete secondary level qualifications. The LTI supports many organisations engaged in a wide variety of activities including genealogy, environment, heritage, tourism, theatre, and sports and coaching.

In 2013, circa 150 LTIs provided vocational training opportunities through project-based learning to assist participants achieve awards on the NFQ and to develop the capacity to progress to further training, education and work. The on-going relevance and effectiveness of LTIs was further supported in 2013 by the development of a project review process.

In order to facilitate a smooth transition of responsibility from FÁS to ETBs for the approval, and monitoring of LTIs, revised Operating Guidelines for LTIs were

developed and published on a web based portal. All associated documents and forms were reviewed with a view to improving efficiencies in the operation, administration and management of these projects.

4. Progress in relation to physical performance indicators and targets

A total of 21,704 people were trained under this activity in 2013. The numbers trained comprised 14,638 persons (67%) in the S&E region and 7,066 (33%) in the BMW region. Of the 24,129 new entrants in 2013 - a total of 14,705 (61%) were male and 9,424 (39%) were female.

Summary of Certification Data 2013

The primary source of award data is supplied via the SOLAS Results Capture Certification Request System (RCCRS) augmented by apprenticeship and construction skills data. Analysis of interim certification and award statistics for 2013 shows that in excess of 52,000 certificates were awarded for all programmes (including non ESF co-financed programmes). Of these certificates, 34,000+ were issued by FETAC which listed approximately 63,000 minor awards on the certificates and included approximately 6,900 Major awards. City and Guilds issued approximately 2,500 full award certificates; however there was a further 6,500+ Units of Credit issued⁷. There were 7,200+ certificates⁸ awarded by Irish Computer Society (ICS) mainly in the area of ECDL. The remaining 7,600+ certificates relate to a range of awards made by other industrial and professional certifying bodies.

⁷ For this report Units of Credit are not deemed to be certification and therefore not counted in the overall certificate attainment of 52,000.

⁸ A significant amount of ICS certification is issued directly to training providers/contractors working on behalf of SOLAS but recorded on the RCCRS.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS:							
Annual and Cumulative Indicators							
A. OUTPUT							
	Region	Current period/Year: (e.g.) Jan. – Dec. 13 as applicable			Cumulative totals 2007-2013		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1. Number of Persons Trained	BMW	4,655	2,411	7,066	24,998	17,718	42,716
	SAE	8,844	5,794	14,638	65,033	53,992	119,025
	NAT	13,498	8,206	21,704	90,031	71,710	161,741
B. RESULT							
	Region	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1. Number of Persons gaining Certification	BMW						
	SAE						
	NAT						
C. IMPACT							
	Region	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1. % of Persons Trained in Employment or Further Education at time of follow-up Survey.	BMW						
	SAE						
	NAT						

NUTS III Activity Indicator Report for reporting period (Jan – Dec. 2013)

<i>Activity: Number of persons trained</i>			
<i>Indicator Used: Throughput</i>			
Region	Total	Gender break-down	
		Male	Female
<i>Border Region</i>	3,757	2,361	1,415
<i>Midland Region</i>	2,183	1,576	585
<i>West Region</i>	1,126	717	412
<i>BMW Total</i>	7,066	4,655	2,411
<i>South East Region</i>	2,352	1,268	1,091
<i>Mid East Region</i>	270	134	135
<i>Dublin Region</i>	6,585	4,079	2,503
<i>South West Region</i>	3,316	2,032	1,280
<i>Mid West Region</i>	2,115	1,331	786
<i>SAE Total</i>	14,638	8,844	5,794
National (BMW + SAE)	21,704	13,498	8,206

5. Progress with regard to expenditure

A total of €173.8 million was spent on this activity in 2013 (Does not include central costs, canteen costs, Justice Workshops and Sponsored Training). This comprised €119 million in the S&E region and €55 million in the BMW region. EU funding support for this expenditure is provisionally stated at €11.5m all for the BMW region. The full amount of ESF relating to the S&E was drawn down prior to 2013.

For the OP period as a whole, expenditure is €1,163 million with an EU support of €114 million. Total programme forecast is €346 million and cumulative expenditure is 336% of forecast.

Table 1 – Expenditure for the Reporting Period Jan. to December 2013 (€m)

HCI OP €m	<i>Total Programme Forecast*</i>	<i>Total Programme Spend</i>	<i>Expenditure as % of forecast</i>	<i>Total co- financed spend</i>	<i>EU Structural Funds</i>	<i>National Public Co- financed</i>	<i>Private Co- financed</i>
<i>Source of information within financial tables</i>		<i>Column</i>		<i>Column</i>	<i>Column</i>	<i>Column</i>	<i>Column</i>
Region							
<i>Dublin</i>	58.402	46.336	79%	46.336	0.000	46.336	0
<i>South East</i>	25.024	25.895	103%	25.895	0.000	25.895	0
<i>Mid East</i>	5.675	4.000	70%	4.000	0.000	4.000	0
<i>Mid West</i>	22.540	17.500	78%	17.500	0.000	17.500	0
<i>South West</i>	20.629	24.916	121%	24.916	0.000	24.916	0
SAE Total	132.270	118.647	90%	118.647	0.000	118.647	0
<i>Border</i>	109.601	29.342	27%	29.342	5.904	23.438	0
<i>Midland</i>	58.264	14.508	25%	14.508	3.168	11.340	0
<i>West</i>	46.243	11.254	24%	11.254	2.428	8.826	0
BMW Total	214.108	55.104	26%	55.104	11.500	43.604	0
National (BMW + SAE)	346.378	173.751	50%	173.751	11.500	162.251	0

Table 2 – Cumulative Expenditure since January 2007 (€m)

HCI OP €m	<i>Total Programme Forecast*</i>	<i>Total Program me Spend</i>	<i>Expenditur e as % of forecast</i>	<i>Total co- financed spend</i>	<i>EU Structur al Funds</i>	<i>National Public Co- financed</i>	<i>Privat e Co- financ ed</i>
<i>Source of information within financial tables</i>	<i>Column</i>	<i>Column</i>	<i>Column</i>	<i>Column</i>	<i>Column</i>	<i>Column</i>	<i>Column</i>
Region							
<i>Dublin</i>	58.402	353.386	605%	353.386	33.678	319.708	0
<i>South East</i>	25.024	171.504	685%	171.504	10.362	161.142	0
<i>Mid East</i>	5.675	33.778	595%	33.778	4.435	29.343	0
<i>Mid West</i>	22.540	135.356	601%	135.356	12.918	122.438	0
<i>South West</i>	20.629	145.957	708%	145.957	9.110	136.847	0
SAE Total	132.270	839.981	635%	839.981	70.503	769.478	0
<i>Border</i>	109.601	165.835	151%	165.835	19.440	146.395	0
<i>Midland</i>	58.264	88.990	153%	88.990	13.895	75.094	0
<i>West</i>	46.243	68.189	147%	68.189	9.945	58.244	0
BMW Total	214.108	323.014	151%	323.014	43.280	279.734	0
National (BMW + SAE)	346.378	1162.995	336%	1162.995	113.783	1049.212	0.000

* See Financial Tables.

6. Data on Participants in Programme Activity Implementation Plan
(Commission Implementing Regulation 1828/2006 - Annex XXIII)

6.1 NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS PER YEAR

(People entering, those leaving, and carry-over from one year to the next)

	Male:	Female:	Total:
Entrants: (a)	14,705	9,424	24,129
Leaving: (b) (<i>Throughput</i>)	13,497	8,207	21,704
Carry-over to next year (<i>In training Dec '13</i>)	5,783	5,437	11,220
Total:			

6.2 BREAKDOWN OF PARTICIPANTS BY GENDER

	Male:	Female:	Total:
Participants: Throughput	13,497	8,207	21,704

6.3 BREAKDOWN OF PARTICIPANTS ACCORDING TO STATUS IN THE LABOUR MARKET

	Male:	Female:	Total:
Employed (Total number of employed, including self-employed)			
Self-employed			
Unemployed (Total number of unemployed including long-term unemployed)	11,389	5,457	16,846
Long-term unemployed			
Inactive persons (Total number of inactive persons, including those in education, training or retirement, those having given up business, the permanently disabled, those fulfilling domestic tasks or other)	2,109	2,749	4,858
Inactive persons in education or training			
Note: Employed + Unemployed + Inactive = Total number of Participants (by Gender)	13,498	8,206	21,704

6.4 BREAKDOWN OF PARTICIPANTS BY AGE

	Male:	Female:	Total:
Young people (15-24)	5,295	3,444	8,739
Older workers (55-64)	776	464	1,240

6.5 BREAKDOWN OF PARTICIPANTS BY VULNERABLE GROUPS, IN ACCORDANCE WITH NATIONAL RULES

	Male:	Female:	Total:
Minorities:			
Migrants:			
Disabled:			
Other disadvantaged people:			

6.6 BREAKDOWN OF PARTICIPANTS BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

	Male:	Female:	Total:
Primary or lower secondary education (ISCED 1 and 2)	4,882	2,139	7,021
Upper secondary education (ISCED 3)	7,330	5,053	12,383
Post-secondary non-tertiary education (ISCED 4)			
Tertiary education (ISCED 5 AND 6)			

Note: Educational attainment is not available for the full population

7. Horizontal issues

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8. Compliance with EU and National policy

This activity was processed within the framework of guidelines and procedures consistent with EU and national policy in areas such as procurement, competition and state aids and is monitored to ensure compliance.

Where SOLAS becomes aware of a breach of such regulations remedial action is taken immediately to rectify the situation. A formal action plan was implemented in 2013.

9. Added Value of ESF Interventions

Building on extensive upgrading of processes that commenced in 2011/2012 FÁS introduced further improvements during 2013 across its main training support systems. Examples are listed below.

Programme Curriculum and Assessment

Programme Curriculum - The schedule of curriculum and assessment developments planned for 2013 was implemented and completed. The centrally devised curricula are available for training centres use and can be accessed via the National Course Database. In addition a range of specific learning resources is available to Community Training providers. The learning resources were designed to assist training delivery and include training notes and exercises relating to 86 modules. The management of the resource material along with the access to it will be supported for the duration of the transition period.

Central Assessment Management System (CAMS) - The Central Assessment Management System (CAMS) is a repository, currently based in SOLAS, for all assessments leading to QQI-FETAC awards. It was designed to ensure the security and integrity of the assessment distribution within FÁS. The CAMS was up-dated and all legacy award assessments were removed. Training Centres will continue to have access to CAMS during the transition period. SOLAS will also review the assessments held on CAMS twice annually, and remove assessments that have become invalid because of changes in programme standards and/or the programme is no longer valid (all QQI-FETAC programmes are only valid for five years from the date of validation).

Contracted Training

The Contracted Training System is a Procurement System for the outsourcing and management of external Training provision. The system consists of; a (CTTL) Contracted Trainer Tender list, which is the pre-qualification list for the procurement framework (panel) agreement, a (SRM) Supplier Relationship Module linked to SAP, to manage contracts and payments to the

contractors and extending the use of (TACS) Trainee and Apprentice Clocking System and (TAPS) Trainee Apprentice Payment System to pay learners. The preparatory work included the alignment of the CTTL to each ETB boundary, up-dating the CTTL, operational procedures and supporting documentation to take account of the transitional period. Contracted Training function is supported by a web based portal that includes all policies procedures, forms and supporting documentation.

Momentum

The Momentum programme was also administered during 2013; this involved the contracting of over 80 projects to facilitate training and work placements for a planned capacity of 6,500 long-term unemployed participants in identified growing sectors e.g. Sales & Marketing, Transport and Logistics, Digital Media, ICT, Healthcare, Social Services, Food Processing and Manufacturing. An independent evaluation of the programme is currently underway.

Training Standards System (TSS)

In 2013, the SOLAS TSS Unit continued to support and maintain the TSS system and associated portals. In support of training centres moving to their recipient Education and Training Boards (ETBs) a Transition Quality Assurance System (TQAS) and portal was developed by the unit. TQAS is a mirror of the TSS system with the facility for the Education and Training Boards to insert their own governance detail in all QA documentation e.g. QA manual, process maps, forms, documents, etc. for agreement with QQI post training centre transfer. The SOLAS TSS Unit provided briefings on TQAS to the QQI and to those training centres transferring to ETBs in December 2013. TSS continued to conduct certification audits throughout 2013 and by November 2013 all training centres had participated in the certification audit process.

In preparation for the Training Centre transfer to ETBs, the TSS Unit provided briefings and training for staff dealing with the devolvement of a number of quality assurance tasks some of which were previously managed by the central unit. These tasks included for example, co-ordination of External Authentication (EA) and conduct of certification audits related to second providers. Local internal monitoring continued to be conducted at training centre level during 2013. The TSS Unit will continue to support the training centres during the transfer process in the context of TQAS. Post training centre transfer the individual ETBs will be responsible for agreement of quality assurance policy and procedure with QQI in relation to transferred training centres.

The TSS system has been updated to reflect SOLAS governance e.g. for Apprenticeship and to ensure QA arrangements for national programmes under SOLAS governance are available via the dedicated SOLAS TSS portal.

External Authentication

In 2013, the SOLAS TSS Unit briefed and trained staff dealing with the devolvment of a number of quality assurance tasks including the co-ordination of external authentication. This previously centrally managed function was devolved to the training centres mid-2013 in preparation of transfer to the ETBs. The SOLAS TSS Unit continues to support the training centres pre and post transfer through the maintenance of a pool of suitably qualified authenticators.

Results Systems

Throughout 2013 the SOLAS TSS Unit maintained and developed the Results Capture and Certificate Request System (RCCRS). The enhancement project dealing with the test event notification and results capture system (TENRCS) continued in 2013 with the aim of augmenting the overall results systems and will be scheduled for rollout in 2014.

eCollege

eCollege continued to deliver cost effective online learning courses to unemployed clients seeking a flexible delivery service. Approximately 12,000 clients availed of this service in 2013. The range of courses was increased in line with the focus on employability skills development targeted at the labour market at that time. Research has shown that, on completion of their course, 45% of eCollege Online Learners were in employment. Although not appropriate for every learner or every course, the eCollege service is a valuable component of FET provision.

The eCollege Unit monitors on-line course activity and contracts the e-Tutor service supporting all clients utilising eCollege courses. In 2013, as part of a continuous improvement process, the unit introduced new learning technologies including virtual classroom, SMS texting service and virtual laboratories. This unit also continued to support the training centre network by providing the online learning platform and resources that facilitated the delivery of blended learning courses.

Information Technology (IT)

In 2013, the SOLAS IT department continued to support, develop and implement agreed IT systems for both FÁS/SOLAS and for the Department of Social Protection ensuring

compliance with the Department of Finance pre-requisites, restrictions, guidelines and advice notes etc. as published. To facilitate and support the transfer in 2013 of seven training centres in the 1st phase of the transfer process, the preparatory work included:

- The re-configuration of network services so that both the former FÁS training network and each ETB network can operate in parallel providing access to the various systems required to support operations.
- All of the operational codes relating to training (courses and community providers) required re-coding. The purpose for the recoding was to enable alignment with each of the sixteen ETB regions thereby facilitating autonomous management of and reporting on, operations within each ETB region. This work involved the development of revised codes and the testing of them across a number of support systems and sub-systems prior to implementation.
- The partitioning of systems into sixteen partitions (four in the 1st phase) configured to each of the ETB geographic boundaries. The purpose of the systems partitioning was to support the management of and governance by each ETB of the transferred training provision within their remit. Among the systems partitioned were: the National Course Database, the Contracted Training Tender List, the Results Capture and Certification Request System, e-college and SAP.

In 2013, SOLAS commenced initial scoping and development of a national FET programme database system, a national FET programme calendar scheduling system and a national FET learner database referred to as the Programme and Learner Support System (PLSS), one of the priorities outlined in the Further Education and Training Strategy.

Finance

The Finance Unit in 2013 continued to provide a financial accounting, management accounting and EU financing service. It also managed the European Globalisation Fund, undertook procurement of goods and services and capital items at best price and safeguarded existing assets. The Finance Unit completed the roll-out of the contracted training payments to all of FÁS regions and systems were also transferred to DSP during 2013.

The SAP system including SRM (Supplier Relationship Module) continued to be used by over 300 users spread across SOLAS and the network of former FÁS Training Centres. The SAP system is integrated with a number of other systems used e.g. payroll, procurement, contracted training, TAPS. The SAP company structure has been re-configured to facilitate separate ETB legal entities and at the same time maintain the system integration functionality to accommodate the management and reporting requirements relating to Training Centre

operations for each of the sixteen Education Training Boards. This work was completed in 2013 for the seven training centres that transferred in the 1st phase to four ETBs. Supports that continue to be provided for transferred training centres include the maintenance of master data, processing functions supports and general supports.

Feedback from FÁS Participants

Feedback and labour market outcomes of past participants of programmes can provide a good indication of the level of added-value of such interventions. In the past FÁS commissioned independent placement and monitoring surveys 'Follow-Up Survey of FÁS Participants' on a regular basis to establish outcomes relating to learners participating on FÁS courses. The most recent survey was conducted in May /June 2013 among trainees who had exited these programmes 12 months previously. Of this cohort 40% of trainees obtained employment at some point during the 12 months since exiting the programme. The vast majority of these jobs were obtained within 6 months of the exit date from the programme. The employment figures varied considerably between programmes designed to equip trainees with skills required in the marketplace and those programmes targeted at more disadvantaged groups where progression to further education and training is considered to be of equal importance. Thus 60% of those attending traineeships found employment while 42% of those attending Specific Skills Training also found employment – rising to 44% for the longer duration courses. This compares to a placement figure of 27% for those attending courses for disadvantaged groups. With the exception of Traineeship participants, progression rates to further and higher education of 25% were similar between Specific Skills programmes and courses targeted at the disadvantaged.

The On-Line (eCollege) and Evening courses performed relatively well in terms of achieving employment rates of 45% and 44% respectively.

While it may have been expected that the On-Line (eCollege) courses, in view of their focus of ICT skills, might encourage participants to seek a formal third-level qualification in this area, the fact that one in four of those attending evening courses subsequently pursued further education suggests that for some participants at least, these courses are part of a wider education and training career path.

The extent to which these results would have occurred in the absence of the training programme will always be the subject of debate. However, the fact that almost all of the trainees were unemployed and receiving welfare payments prior to attending their courses, together with the high proportion who stated that they were long-term unemployed, suggests

that the so-called 'deadweight' effect was modest.

SOLAS has reviewed both the timing of the survey and the size of the sample with a view to conducting the survey on an annual basis and increasing the sample to provide statistically reliable results in respect of the type of employment obtained by former learners of education and training programmes. Consequently a survey will be undertaken in 2014 which will include, for the first time, some further education programmes.

10. Publicity

All former FÁS training centres and former FÁS-funded community projects exhibit signage that acknowledges NDP and/or NDP/ESF funding as appropriate. Promotional material for services under this activity acknowledges funding sources.

11. Proposals for re-profiling of expenditure (where applicable)

Any proposal to reprofile expenditure should be contained in this section of the report and should include the rationale for doing so. Reprofiling of expenditure can only be carried out with the approval of the Monitoring Committee (and the European Commission depending on the nature of the reprofiling proposed).

N/A

12. Proposals to amend Programme Activity Implementation Plans (where applicable)

Amendments to Activity Implementation Plans require the approval of the Monitoring Committee. Any proposal to amend an existing Activity Implementation Plan should indicate the precise change sought and the rationale for doing so. A copy of the proposed new Activity Implementation Plan should also be provided.

N/A