European Social Fund Newsletter 2016

Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020

Ireland’s European Structural and Investment Funds Programmes 2014-2020
Co-funded by the Irish Government and the European Union

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Investing in your future
European Social Fund
Foreword

Welcome to the 8th issue of the ESF Newsletter, the first to relate to the Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL) 2014-2020. The PEIL was launched in April 2015 and is comprised of a total allocation of €1.153bn, which will be allocated to some 20 activities.

This Newsletter highlights some of the achievements of the European Social Fund (ESF) in Ireland during 2014 and 2015. The articles reflect the range of activities that have benefited from ESF co-funding over this period and how those activities make a difference in the lives of their participants.

We are grateful to all of the contributors for their input.

The ESF Managing Authority
The Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020

ESF objectives are implemented in Ireland through the Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL) Operational Programme 2014-2020. The PEIL 2014-2020 is the successor to the Human Capital Investment Operational Programme (HCIOP) 2007-2013 and is the Operational Programme (OP) through which the ESF will be applied in Ireland during the 2014-2020 programming period. The PEIL involves a total investment of €1.153 billion - €542m each from the ESF and the Irish Government and a further €68m from the EU's YEI budget.

This OP takes into consideration and complements actions in the human capital area, to be taken at EU and National level, aimed at making Europe a more attractive place to invest and work, enhancing knowledge and innovation for growth and creating more and better jobs. The new ESF OP underpins the Government's strategies to get people back to work and to build a strong and inclusive society based on more and better jobs. The activities included in the OP form part of the key strategies of the Action Plan for Jobs¹ and Pathways to Work² that are delivering on the central targets of Ireland’s National Reform Programme³ (NRP).

The EU Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) is also being delivered through the ESF OP. Ireland has received a specific allocation of €68 million for the YEI, which aims to tackle youth unemployment and implement the Youth Guarantee by providing jobs, education and training opportunities for individuals under 25 who are not in Employment, Education or Training. Nearly 14,000 individuals under 25 have taken part in YEI-supported activities since its introduction under the PEIL.

The key areas chosen for the ESF in Ireland, in line with the investment priorities set out in the ESF Regulation are:

• promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility,
• tackling youth employment,
• promoting social inclusion and combating poverty and discrimination,
• investing in education, training and life-long learning.

The PEIL 2014-2020 contains four Priority Axes (five including technical assistance which funds the operational administration and publicity of the programme) comprising some 20+ specific activities.

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³ http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/eng/Work_Of_The_Department/Economic_and_International/Economic/NRP/
Priority 1: Promoting the attainment of sustainable and quality employment through relevant upskilling measures and supporting labour mobility

- ETB Training for the Unemployed
- Springboard
- ICT Skills Conversion Course
- Momentum
- Intra - EU Mobility

Priority 2: Promoting Social Inclusion and combating discrimination in the labour market

- Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP)
- Youthreach
- Garda Youth Diversion Projects (GYDPs)
- Young Persons Probation (YPP) Projects
- Disability Project (not yet commenced)
- Integration and Employment of Migrants (call for Proposals issued)
- Tus Nua
- Gender Equality (call for Proposals issued)
- Equality Mainstreaming (not yet commenced)

Priority 3: Investing in Education, Training and Lifelong Learning with a view to upskilling and reskilling the labour force

- Third Level Access
- Back to Education Initiative
- Adult Literacy

Priority 4: Youth Employment Initiative

- Back to Work Enterprise Allowance (BTWEA) Scheme
- JobsPlus Incentive Scheme
- Tús
- JobBridge, the National Internship Scheme
- Youthreach
- Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP)
- Momentum
Launch of the Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning Operational Programme 2014-2020

At the launch of the ESF Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020 on 23 April 2015, the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Skills, Mr. Seán Ó Foghlú welcomed the Deputy Director General of DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Mr. Zoltan Kazatsay and his colleagues from the European Commission, the Departments and Agencies involved in delivering the ESF supports for the next seven years and the partners from the broader public service, civil society and the non-Governmental organisations who were key players in the drafting of the ESF Operational Programme.

In his remarks, Mr Ó Foghlú noted that the ESF has contributed to Ireland’s progress since joining the EEC in the 1970s. During the 1970s and the 1980s, the ESF helped to establish and grow social and economic investment via public sector social and employment programmes as well as being a key funding mechanism for labour market programmes. The ESF has provided support to enable many thousands of Irish people, especially young people, to exploit training and education opportunities relevant to the workforce during the economic recession of the 1980s. As the country recovered and started to grow during the 1990s, the ESF continued to support education and training while also providing significant funding for sectoral investment programmes across the economy that were designed to underpin emerging and growing business areas. This also saw the first significant support from the ESF for entrepreneurship initiatives. In the 2000s, the focus of ESF investment in Ireland switched to underpinning a strong economy and while the constant theme of education and training supports continued to feature, support was also provided for self-employment and for upskilling those already at work in keeping with the National Skills Strategy objectives.
The Secretary General observed that during the period 2007-2013, the HCIOP demonstrated how the ESF can be flexible in responding to Ireland’s economic market and societal needs. When the economic crisis hit fully in 2009, the ESF, with partnership from the Managing Authority and the European Commission, proved equal to the challenges presented. The focus of the Programme was adjusted away from investing in those at work to investing in the unemployed and lower skilled young people facing barriers to inclusion in the labour market. This approach provided opportunities for young people and those seeking work to upskill or re-skill. The measures from the OP were clearly a factor in the recovering unemployment rate and the uptake of jobs evident in our recovery.

Attending the launch, Ian Hynes (Momentum); Emma McNeely (GYDP); Niamh O’ Donoghue (Youthreach) and Lauren Richie (JobBridge) shared positive experiences of ESF supported activities.

Mr Ó Foghlú acknowledged that the occasion of the formal launch of the new ESF OP for Ireland afforded the opportunity to hear how it would meet the challenges faced in Ireland. He looked forward to the PEIL 2014-2020 and the ESF delivering as part of a continued recovery for the country in the years ahead.

The Secretary General also extended his thanks to Mr Kazatsay and his colleagues in the European Commission, in particular those working on the Irish Desk in DG Employment, as well as his own colleagues in the ESF Unit in delivering this OP and in framing the current ESF Regulation during the Irish Presidency of the EU in 2013.
ETB Training for the Unemployed (ESF 1.1)

ETB Training for the Unemployed provides a range of training courses to meet the needs of unemployed persons or other job seekers, including those who are long term unemployed, unemployed youth and those who are socially disadvantaged or low skilled.

Training courses are provided at different levels across a wide range of subjects. Some courses concentrate on generic, foundation skills while others provide skills specific to a particular occupation or set of tasks, enabling individuals to progress to higher level skills training. Within the range of specific skills courses are provided in computer applications and software development, financial services, caring, driving, machine operation, electronics and retail.

This Activity supports the following SOLAS programme groups:

- **Specific Skills Training** - mainline courses which are employment-led leading to qualifications that offer learners both generic skills and skills specific to particular jobs or occupations.

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

- **Traineeships** - occupational-specific training courses that use a combination of off-the-job and structured on-the-job workplace training.

During 2014 and 2015 SOLAS and the Education and Training Boards have provided training to over 22,500 ESF participants nationally. Over 10,000 of these were long-term unemployed and 7,000 participants were under 25 years of age.
Springboard and the ICT Skills Conversion Courses commenced under the PEIL in 2014. They are now incorporated under Springboard+ and offer a range of free higher education courses. All courses selected for funding under Springboard+ are in areas of identified enterprise skills needs based on research by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs.

Springboard aims to keep unemployed, or previously self-employed, people close to the labour market by addressing their educational and training requirements through the provision of part-time flexible higher education opportunities to reskill or upskill in areas where there are identified skills shortages and where sustainable employment opportunities may arise as the economy recovers. It seeks to enhance collaboration and engagement between the enterprise sector and higher education providers in the design and delivery of relevant and responsive higher education programmes to support job creation and expansion in line with the objectives of the Government’s Action Plan for Jobs.

The ICT Skills Conversion Courses activity aims to address ICT skills gaps through the successful conversion of talented graduates from non-computing/IT disciplines to meet identified ICT skills needs through clearly stated collaboration and engagement between the enterprise sector and higher education providers in the design and delivery of higher education programmes, thereby meeting the on-going and future demand for qualified employees.

BEN WALSH – Certificate in 3D for games

25 year old Ben Walsh from Malahide in Dublin had always been fascinated and impressed by the level of artistic skill displayed by the great Hollywood animation studios in movies like Toy Story, An American Tail and the Lego Movie. He had been drawing since he was a child and while Ben loved to use pencil and watercolour, animation always interested him.

‘When I left school, I studied Computer Science at DIT but I soon realised that it wasn’t for me and that my heart lay in a more artistic direction,’ said Ben. ‘So I applied for one of the animation courses at Ballyfermot and was delighted to be accepted.’

He graduated from the Ballyfermot College of Further Education with a Higher National Diploma in Illustration in 2012.

Unfortunately, it was the height of the recession with limited opportunities and Ben embarked on a three month internship at the National Museum of Archaeology, drawing ancient artefacts by hand.
His lack of 3-D animation skills was still standing in the way of meaningful work experience in his preferred career until he successfully applied for the Certificate in 3D for Games course at the Dundalk Institute of Technology (DKIT) which had just become available under Springboard+.

The course, which began at DKIT in 2014, equips participants with skills in 3D modelling, animation, game concept development, project generation and management along with key game theory principles. The students gain vital software skills in programs such as 3D Studio Max and Unreal Engine 4.

‘I attended college two days a week and in between, there were plenty of projects to be completed,’ said Ben. ‘There were only 13 of us in the class and it was great to be once again learning alongside like-minded people. We also received a lot of one-to-one support and mentoring from our three lecturers which was excellent for building confidence. One of my favourite parts of the course was creating three animated pieces of work in the 3D Studio Max program.’

Ben also benefited from four weeks work experience with Glue Visual Effects in East Wall, Dublin, which handles visual effects for both film and advertising production companies.

‘I worked on animation for an exciting project and I loved every minute of it. I am now feeling pretty good about getting full-time work in this industry and I would definitely recommend it to anyone who wants to make a career in this area.’
Momentum is targeted to benefit the long-term unemployed and those under 25 years of age. It is focused on funding upskilling and re-skilling programmes delivering qualifications up to Level 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), or equivalent.

Momentum provides education and training opportunities for the long-term unemployed and those under 25 years of age to gain the skills needed to access work in sectors of the economy where there are job opportunities. The programme includes on-the-job training in the form of work experience modules.

Since its inclusion under the PEIL in 2014, nearly 6,500 unemployed people have enrolled on Momentum courses.

Momentum reached the RegioStars Finals in 2015

Ken Seery from SOLAS receiving a certificate acknowledging the Momentum programme reaching the Regiostars finals from Corina Cretu, European Commissioner for Regional Policy and Lambert Van Nistelrooij, President of the Regiostars 2015 Jury.

Momentum is the first Irish training programme to be nominated as a finalist for the RegioStars Awards which celebrate good practices in regional development and highlight original and innovative projects which could be attractive and inspiring to other regions.
Participants James Smith and Patrick Melia share their stories

James Smith, participated in a Transport and Logistics Course in Galway:
‘I knew that I needed to get some new training and skills so I decided to take the Distribution & Logistics course. The course seemed long but when I think about the certs that I got especially in Fork Lift, Manual Handling, Safe Pass and the like, I was delighted that I took the course. The course was great as it helped me get back into a daily routine and really helped build my self-confidence. I also got a lot out of the CV preparation. I was delighted when I got my work placement and it went very well. Unfortunately they did not have enough work to give me a job in the end. It was not until I stuck with Cpl and the Jobs Club programme that I was able to get the job that I am currently working in full-time at Divilly’s meats in Oranmore. I feel that I was lucky to be able to take the course and am thankful that the Department of Social Protection encouraged me to take it’.

Patrick Melia, participated in the Hospitality and Tourism and the Transport and Logistics courses in Galway:
‘To be honest I was not sure if I should take the course. I was strongly encouraged by the Department of Social Protection to do so as I was unemployed for almost 5 years. I really learned a lot on the course and it was great that I got the training in Safe Pass, Manual Handling and Fork Lift. It also helped bring my self-confidence back because it was so hard to get a job being unemployed for so long especially after working for 12 years for the same company.
I know now that I really needed those certs to get a job in the industry and the fact that I had them also helped in Cpl being able to get the work placement for me. I had a great work placement at Divilly’s Ltd. and it was even better that I got offered a job with them. I was not sure about taking the job as I thought that I would lose some of my family benefits but once I understood the family benefit programme it made me change my mind. Not to mention it is important to me that my children see me back at work and it is good for me. I will say that I am thankful to everyone that helped me on the Momentum programme’.
**Intra EU Mobility** aims to improve the employment prospects of young people and assist job seekers and job changers, including the unemployed, graduates and migrants to find employment in the wider European Labour Market. It also assists employers to source suitable candidates. It promotes EURES as the recruitment organisation of ‘choice’ for both jobseekers and employers by mainstreaming EURES in the employer and jobseeker actions of the Department of Social Protection. Unemployed people are offered support in taking up employment, work experience and training in other EU countries by securing work placement/training opportunities in other countries and by preparing participants to relocate (e.g. language training).

**Job Fairs**

During 2015, EURES Ireland was very active in the development of EURES Services to jobseekers and employers. A number of initiatives took place to tackle the shortages and surpluses here in Ireland and indeed throughout other Member States.

EURES Ireland held a very successful Jobs Fair in Athlone in November which attracted up to 3,000 visitors, twenty five local employers along with a range of training and community agencies.

Colleagues from eight Member States; Belgium, Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Latvia, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden also attended the event. They were available to provide information on job opportunities and on living and working conditions in their respective countries.

Outcomes from the event included 75 positions in both employment and training being secured. Feedback from both exhibitors and visitors at the Athlone Jobs Fair was positive with 92% of exhibitors and 83% of visitors reporting their satisfaction.
Experience Your Europe (EYE) Programme

Under the EURES Ireland EYE Co-sponsored Placement Programme five young jobseekers were successfully placed in the Illuminata IT Company in the Netherlands. This proved to be an extremely successful project for EURES resulting in all five participants being employed with the Irish branch of Illuminata on completion of their placements.

In addition a project was established under the EYE Programme within the animation industry. Currently there are placements in Poland, Denmark and Germany. The duration of the placements was initially for six months, but in two cases these placements have been extended to twelve months as the companies were so impressed with the calibre of the participants. The following feedback was received from a participant in the programme, based in Berlin –

“I am benefiting from the scheme greatly. My technical skills have probably doubled since the time I have started my work placement so I would be very hire able I believe. I have had great fun in work, and I work with an extremely talented and nice group of people. It has been one of the best experiences I have had living here”.

DIALOG Programme - supporting EU/EEA workers living in Ireland

The DIALOG Programme continued to assist unemployed workers from Europe with DIALOG Workshops being held in the following locations throughout 2015:

- Navan, Co. Meath for Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish and Greek nationals,
- Carlow for Latvian nationals,
- Longford for all nationalities,
- Athlone also for all nationalities.
The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme aims to support registered unemployed young people improve their work readiness and access to employment by providing a series of locally delivered activities. With a particular focus on those from disadvantaged communities, it provides a range of defined activities including training, job preparing/job search, work placements and mentoring.

Connect Mental Health

Ciaran McLoone is from Ballyshannon in South Donegal. In 2015 he contacted Donegal Local Development Company Ltd (DLDC), the Local Development Company that provides supports for groups under the SICAP programme within the area. Ciaran had an idea to set-up a new community initiative in Donegal to highlight and promote a positive message about mental health awareness and services that can be accessed within the local community and most importantly to promote a positive message that mental health issues and concerns affect everyone throughout their lives, that there are organisations out there to help and not to be afraid to seek help and support if its needed. DLDC worked with Ciaran to support his vision of realising a local community conference and a series of events.
Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (ESF - 2.1 & 4.6)

A full programme of events and activities was organised leading into “World Mental Health Day” on the 10th October, 2015 including:

- Workshops in local secondary schools – four schools in the Ballyshannon/Bundoran area.
- Film Screenings in local cinemas – with an awareness raising message.
- Employers' workshops provided by “See Change.”
- A Health & Wellbeing morning in conjunction with Donegal Family Resource Centre.
- A “Connect Mental Health” Community Conference in the Abbey Arts Centre Theatre in Ballyshannon on World Mental Health Day.

Over 300 adults and children from the local area attended the Connect Mental Health Conference which was jointly organised by Ciaran, the HSE, local schools and Donegal Local Development Company Ltd. Transition year students who had taken part in school workshops, helped in organising and staging the event.

A number of workshops ran simultaneously on the day in the Abbey Theatre including talks from Cindy O’Connor from Pieta House, Bill Vaughan from Mental Health Ireland and Maria Whelan from GROW.
A number of speakers also gave very personal accounts of how they had overcome their own personal health challenges in life including Oisin McConville, former Armagh Gaelic footballer who spoke about gambling addictions, Niall Breslin (Bressie) who spoke about overcoming depression, and Easky Britton, Irish Champion Surfer from Rossnowlagh, who spoke about the positive impact which surfing has on mental health. The group were supported in the development of this initiative by DLDC staff working across Goals 1, 2 and 3 of the SICAP programme.

Further information is available at: www.connectmentalhealth.ie or www.dldc.org
Youthreach aims to address the personal and social development needs of unemployed young school leavers aged between 15 and 20. The need to improve self-esteem, promote independence and personal autonomy are common among programme entrants. The programme seeks to instil a pattern of lifelong learning and integrate participants into further education and training opportunities and the labour market. Certification is available relative to the ability and career options of the individual participant.

A new centre and a busy year for CMETB - Castleblaney Youthreach

2015 was a very busy year for Cavan Monaghan ETB’s Castleblaney Youthreach Centre. This new Youthreach Centre which was officially by Heather Humphreys T.D., Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. The new purpose built centre can accommodate 25 Youthreach trainees.

Creativity shone during the year with Leva Stasule, a Youthreach student, receiving the TP McKenna Drama Scholarship to attend StageWise Performing Arts Camp for one week. Youthreach students were also involved in designing Muppets for the Muckno Mania festival.

At a European level five students got involved in the Future Generation/Intercomm Programme. This included a range of community projects which focused on establishing cross border and cross community healthy relationships.

Pictured welcoming Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Heather Humphreys T.D. to the new Castleblaney Youthreach Centre are CMETB Chief Executive Martin O’Brien and Centre Co-ordinator Sinead McKenna.
**Garda Youth Diversion Projects (GYDPs) (ESF 2.3)**

**Garda Youth Diversion Projects** engage with young people (aged 12-17) at risk of/or involved in anti-social and/or criminal behaviour and provide them with targeted supports designed to enable these young people to stop their offending and become positive contributors to society. The purpose of youth crime intervention work is to engage young people in a process of learning and development that enables them to make positive lifestyle choices. Projects are specifically located in areas of social disadvantage and marginalisation, where there are high volumes of youth crime and where there is a history of early school leaving and generational unemployment.

**Togher Tidy Towns**

The TACT Garda Youth Diversion Project (Cork) provides on-site activities such as an environmental & horticulture programme, bicycle restoration and building programme. The programmes run on the premises of TACT involve the help and cooperation of numerous people and require young people to become involved in all aspects of planning, execution and evaluation. Youth workers, City Council workers, Community wardens, Gardaí, members of the public and people representing other community interests are involved. These interventions continue to be successful with project participants and were particularly effective in 2015 with TACT winning the Regional and National SuperValu Tidy Towns Youth Award. The media attention and local recognition that participants received, served to strengthen their attachment to the local community and promote their civic responsibility beyond the confines of the project.

Dean O Riordan (far left) and Adam O’Flynn (beside Mayor) from the TACT Project receiving a cheque from the Cork County Mayor on behalf of TACT & Togher Tidy Towns following our Regional and National success at the SuperValu Tidy Towns Award.
Back to the Ploughing

The Ploughing Championship ‘Time Travel’ Garden display was a joint initiative between the Foróige TACT Project and the Foróige ETB SPY Togher Youth Development Project. Staff and young people from both projects were involved in the construction of the garden.

Finbarr Kelleher and Liam Scannell are members of Togher Youth Development Project who collaborated with Foróige on this venture on ‘Back to the Ploughing’ Time Travel Garden display.

At this event four gardens designed and built by Foróige young people from Cork, Galway, Clare and Laois were also on display at the National Ploughing Championships. The young people worked with Diarmuid Gavin to develop their ideas and the four ‘time travel’ themed gardens were truly spectacular. They went on to be featured on TV3 and in other media outlets. Thousands of attendees stopped by to see the gardens and many took the time to talk to the young people involved. President Michael D. Higgins visited the gardens, in addition to the then Tánaiste and Labour Leader Joan Burton, T.D. and the former Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Simon Coveney, T.D.

Each and every young person, volunteer and staff member involved deserves a huge round of applause for all of their hard work and dedication in the lead up to and at the Championships themselves. The young people deserve special recognition as they not only worked so hard to create the gardens, they also acted as fantastic ambassadors for the organisation.

The Foróige Time Travel Gardens featured in the Sunday Mirror and Sunday World.
Young Person Probation (YPP) Projects (ESF 2.4)

Young Persons Probation Projects aim to add value to the work of the Probation Service by supporting and motivating young persons address the cause of their offending behaviour and make positive changes in their lives so as to avoid further offending. The YPP projects work with young people to address identified needs and support their personal development. Young people require a broad range of support and assistance in the community if they are to make better choices and progress to making a contribution to their families and communities. Community Based Organisations play an important role in working with offenders, supporting their rehabilitation, re-integration and engagement in a positive lifestyle. Some of the areas of work include: educational needs; self-care living skills; drug and alcohol misuse, and emotional and mental health.

Four YPP projects were supported under PEIL in 2015. These are:

**Le Chéile**

Le Chéile is a volunteer nationwide mentoring and family support service, which works with young people involved in or at risk of offending. The project affects positive change in the lives of young people and their families, by providing Mentoring, Youth Justice and Family Support Services.

**Céim ar Chéim**

The Céim ar Chéim Education and Training Day Centre is situated in Moyross on the north side of Limerick City. This project caters for young persons placed on probation, young offenders (attached to the Garda Juvenile Liaison Programmes) and other young people considered to be at risk.

**Southill**

The Southill Outreach project engages with and supports young offenders, both in the community and in detention schools and centres, and other young people at risk of offending and/or re-offending. They assist the young people develop positive pro-social life styles. The project works with young people aged between 12 and 25 from Limerick City/County, Co. Clare and North Tipperary.

**Dóchas don Óige**

Dóchas don Óige deals with young people mainly from the Galway City/County area and environs who are offenders on probation or other persons considered to be at risk. The project provides FETAC accredited education and training courses to the young adults/children.
Young Person Probation (YPP) Projects (ESF 2.4)

What Dóchas don Óige Participants Say:

- **Dochas has given me something to do all day and I see how important learning is. I want bigger and better things.**
- **You are not judged on where you have been only where you are going.**
- **No one else believed in me.**
- **In the first year I liked school and I tried. But then they put us, Travellers, into one class. After that I had no interest. There was a lot of messing and I got in trouble. Then I got expelled.”**
- **No one would take me. It was the last chance. They didn’t judge my past.**
- **They gave me my 2nd chance.**
- **I want to get my Fetac level 4 and hopefully move on. Dochas will help me achieve my goals.**
- **Dochas treats you fairly. Also points you in right direction. I think Dochas is very welcoming place with hope and chances.**
- **Things are different at Dochas I feel more capable now; all staff are a big help. So now I feel better about my education.**
**Tus Nua Project (ESF 2.8)**

**Tus Nua** is a specialised service supporting women who are homeless upon their release from prison or women with an offending background who are homeless in the community. The main aim of the service is to prevent re-offending and facilitate resettlement and reintegration in the community. The service is managed by Depaul, an organisation set up to support people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Tus Nua works in close partnership with the Dóchas (Women’s) prison and the Probation Service.

Tus Nua was opened in 2003, the first service of its kind in Ireland supporting women leaving prison. In December 2014 Tus Nua increased its capacity from 6 to 15 accommodation places when it relocated in North Dublin.

Tus Nua is a low threshold harm reduction service which accommodates up to 15 women in single rooms for 6 to 9 months. The service aims to prevent the risk of re-offending by supporting the women to recognise their short-term and long-term needs.

Each woman is appointed a keyworker. Together they identify a support plan for their stay which covers life skills, budgeting, alcohol harm reduction, detox access and physical and mental health support. The professionally trained staff members also assist the residents to access more suitable long-term accommodation. Tus Nua aims to provide time and space during which women can address the problems which led to their housing crisis and prison sentence. In January 2016, the project was delighted when one resident of Tus Nua successfully move into a two bedroom house.
One Resident’s Story (Mary⁴):

‘I came to Tus Nua in late 2015 and I enjoy very much my time here. Before I lived in emergency accommodation, but I couldn’t stay long. Sharing the room with difficult people made me behave different, at times be angry, always be on my guard. At Tus Nua I have my own room with a proper bed and wardrobe; I have my own TV and fridge. On some mornings I cook brunch with volunteers, and when my turn comes, I prepare communal meals for everyone in the house. Some days when I don’t go to my training in city centre, I keep busy here; I go to workshops where I meet ladies from Novas and the trainer that is very kind to us.

Thanks to the support of the team in Tus Nua I am now going to CBT classes and psychology (Fetac Level 5).

To me Tus Nua has given me a safe space, my own room and somewhere that I can call my home. I can lock my own room when I am out and I know that everything will be safe. I never have known a place like this that will support me through difficulties and help me to embrace my life’.

⁴ Not the person’s real name
Third Level Access contributes to enhancing attainment of tertiary education qualifications by disadvantaged and disabled students, thereby supporting access to sustainable employment as skilled members of the workforce. Supports include financial assistance to those facing economic barriers to participation and the provision of tailored accommodation and services. The Third Level Access activity supports the Student Assistance Fund and the Fund for Students with Disabilities.

The **Student Assistance Fund** provides financial assistance for full-time higher education students who are experiencing financial difficulties whilst attending college. Students can apply for Student Assistance to help them with either temporary or ongoing financial difficulties.

The **Fund for Students with Disabilities** provides services and supports to full-time students with disabilities. The Fund aims to ensure that students can participate fully in their academic programmes and are not disadvantaged by reason of a disability.

Some 25,000 students were assisted from the PEIL support of these Funds during 2014/15.

A review of the Student Assistance Fund was published in September 2016 which found that the largest proportion of funding has been allocated to assist students with the costs of rent: at 46% on average of total annual SAF funds, followed by:

- Heating / lighting / food: 23%
- Transport: 15%
- Childcare costs: 8%
- Books / materials: 4%
- Other living expenses: 2%
- Medical / dental expenses: 1%

The SAF is highly valued and heavily relied upon by students, particularly by those students who are most in need. The SAF review is one of the first actions to be delivered under the new National Access Plan and, crucially, is key to achieving other objectives in the Plan, particularly national targets to increase access to higher education.
The BTEI aims to increase the number of adults with upper second level education and/or qualifications at FETAC Levels 3, 4, 5, and 6 and relevant or updated skills to meet the needs of the economy. This is achieved through the provision of a range of part-time learning opportunities that enable learners to reconcile participation in education with family and/or employment responsibilities.

**KWETB – Introduction to Construction Course**

Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board (KWETB) have successfully piloted a new BTEI funded course called “Introduction to Construction” in Athy Town. The course started on the 13th January 2015 in the Further Education and Training Centre, Athy with eighteen participants enrolled on the course.

The course focused on equipping the learner with the knowledge, skills, competence and expertise to develop a range of construction skills under supervision. The course focused on the practical and theoretical aspects of construction with literacy, computers and guidance support underpinning the various modules on the course.

The Course finished on the 16th July 2015 and was an overwhelming success. Eleven participants successfully completed the course and will submit portfolios towards achieving the Employability Skills in Construction level 3 (Major) awards. Three participants partially completed the course successfully gaining full-time or part-time employment in the locality.
Adult Literacy (ESF 3.3)

Adult Literacy aims to enhance equal access to lifelong learning for all age groups in formal, non-formal and informal settings, while promoting flexible learning pathways including through career guidance and validation of acquired competences. Investment is primarily aimed at the unemployed, particularly the long-term unemployed, disadvantaged groups, those under-35’s and those formerly employed in declining sectors such as the construction sector, as well as adults in need of improved basic literacy, language and numeracy skills. Over 100,000 participants attended Adult Literacy courses during 2014 and 2015.

WWETB learners attending classes in Adult Literacy Services

Adult learners attending classes in Adult Literacy Services in Waterford Wexford Education and Training Board (WWETB) tell the human story of returning to education at a celebratory event in the city library attended by the Deputy Mayor, John O Leary, management, staff and students of both the ETB and library service. These are life stories of hope, telling the people of Waterford that it is never too late to learn and that learning brings with it many benefits. These stories were published in booklet form and the stories were exhibited in the city library.

All over Waterford, many people are returning to education and improving their reading, writing, and maths skills. They are people who want to catch up on what they missed at school, parents who want to help children with their homework and those who would simply like to write a letter home. Whatever the reason for going back to learning, the benefits are always the same. Not only do people improve their old skills, but they also gain the confidence to learn new ones.
Back to Work Enterprise Allowance – (ESF – 4.1)

The Back to Work Enterprise Allowance Scheme aims to improve the self-employment prospects of young people aged under 25 who have been on a social welfare payment. It is designed to provide assistance for people who are long-term dependent on social welfare payments who wish to engage in self-employment by allowing them to retain a reducing proportion of their qualifying social welfare payment over two years.

A new Back to Work Scheme called the Short-Term Enterprise Allowance started in May 2009. There is no qualifying period for the Short-Term Enterprise Allowance. You can get immediate access to the allowance if you meet the qualifying conditions.

Over 100 YEI eligible participants on this scheme were supported under the PEIL 2015.

JobsPlus Incentive Scheme – (ESF – 4.2)

JobsPlus is an employer incentive which encourages and rewards employers who employ jobseekers from the Live Register. The aim of this activity is to improve the employment prospects of young people under 25 who are on the Live Register. Regular cash payments are made to qualifying employers to offset wage costs when they engage jobseekers from the Live Register. Eligible employees must be under 25, have been in receipt of a Jobseeker’s payment or signing for Jobseekers credits for at least 4 months. Time spent on certain activation programmes may count towards this time. Entry to the scheme was also extended to include former recipients of the one-parent family scheme who transferred to the Jobseekers Transition payment. Almost 500 YEI eligible participants were assisted under the scheme in 2015.
Tús – (ESF – 4.3)

Tús aims to improve the employment prospects of people aged under 25 who have been on the Live Register through a community work placement initiative providing quality work to break the cycle of unemployment. It targets people who are out of work and on job-seekers’ payments for a year or more to improve their employability and work readiness by providing them with the opportunities to put work skills into practice and learn new ones enabling progression to work, further education or skill development opportunities. In addition, participation on Tús aims to boost the participant’s motivation and confidence, while simultaneously providing prospective employers with evidence that a participant has the necessary skills and abilities to do the job.

Almost 1,000 YEI eligible participants were assisted during 2015.

Tús Co. Westmeath Placements reach 140

The Tús scheme has now surpassed 140 places in Co. Westmeath. Initially the Tús scheme was allocated 100 places but this allocation has since been increased to 140 places to meet the demands of local community groups expressing interest for Tús participants. The Tús scheme provides short term working opportunities for unemployed people and all the work carried out by the participants on the scheme benefits the local community.

As well as benefitting the participants, the Tús scheme benefits community groups in Westmeath. The types of projects eligible for this scheme include energy conservation work in homes and community buildings, social care of all age groups and people with disabilities, facilities management of community buildings and spaces, renovation of community and sporting facilities and sporting spaces, work in support of cultural and heritage activities, community administration and community event management, coaching for sporting activities or repair of equipment for the Developing World – for example, farm tools, bicycles, computers, sewing machines, health equipment.
JobBridge, the National Internship Scheme, was introduced in July 2011 as an extraordinary and temporary response to the unprecedented collapse in the economy – particularly the sharp increase in unemployment, a high level of involuntary emigration and negative growth.

The aim of the scheme is to provide unemployed people with the opportunity to secure work experience and to prove their competence to prospective employers, thereby breaking the vicious cycle of “no work, no experience; no experience, no work”. It caters both for new entrants to the labour market following education or training, and unemployed workers whose existing skills are not appropriate for the types of jobs that are emerging in post-recession Ireland.

First Steps is a variant of JobBridge targeted specifically at 18-24 year olds from backgrounds which make it difficult to gain employment. It was launched at the start of February 2015 by then Tánaiste Joan Burton T.D. The aim of First Steps is to bring disadvantaged young people closer to the labour market by providing them with a work placement experience, where they gain the opportunity to learn and develop basic work and social skills in organisations in the private, public, voluntary and community sectors. First Steps participants are being supported by a dedicated INTREO case officer and by a mentor who is assigned by the host organisation.

In October 2016, the Minister for Social Protection, Leo Varadkar TD, announced the closure of JobBridge to new applications, following an in-depth review of the programme. While the review found that JobBridge had been very successful in helping unemployed people, and was viewed positively by most of those taking part, it also recommended that, given the turnaround in the economy since its introduction, it should be replaced with a new programme with a stronger focus on skills, paying at least the minimum wage and focusing on those unemployed for at least 6 months. It is intended that the JobBridge Scheme will be replaced with a new Work Experience Programme which will be launched in Q2 2017.

JobBridge was included in the PEIL for 2015 with a total of 1,898 individuals under 25 years of age participating in the scheme.
JobBridge– (ESF – 4.4)

JobBridge and First Steps for under 25s

Case Studies: Participants share their stories

Christopher
‘First Step Internships are a very good idea. It’s important for people on both sides, the intern and the employer to obey the rules about the hours that need to be done. I don’t mind doing more than twenty four hours as I get good experience. I think it’s a great way for young people to get the feel of what horticulture is all about. I would highly recommend it for people to do and not only young people but older people too. It’s great for people who don’t have a JC because it gives them a chance to learn. I want to get a job working with plants. I’ve learnt loads and every day is different. The boss is going as my referee and I am applying for jobs in garden centres now.’

Anthony
‘I’d recommend First Step Internships. You get to learn more things and have more choices when it comes to doing things. I like – I even love it up there. They want me to work there but there are no jobs there at the moment. I will do another three months. I learnt a lot especially about all the different machines that I didn’t even know about. I’m in every day. I love it up there. They said that I can use them as a referee’.