
Once again, we have - after some cajoling - received a healthy response to our request for information about the various activities and projects undertaken with the assistance of the ESF. This Newsletter is an important means of communicating all that is good about the ESF in Ireland. We live in difficult times so the priorities and focus of the ESF HCI OP 2007-2013 are ever more relevant.

In this issue of the Newsletter we have sought to present the information in a more user-friendly and accessible format and we hope that our efforts have been worthwhile.

Finally, as always, we welcome at any time details of events, publications, conferences, success stories, newspaper articles, photos, press releases etc., which highlight the ongoing contribution of the ESF in Ireland.

Willie McIntosh
Head of ESF Managing Authority
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THANKS TO ESF...

David Loughnane
2006 – 2011
English & History

I was born with Cerebral Palsy. I could walk up to age of sixteen and then got very ill in Cork hospital. I think that this made me stronger and made me want to use my head more and so I became determined to make something of myself. Now I want to be teacher in English and History. With the support I have received in Mary I via the ESF aided Fund for Students with Disabilities, I know this can happen if I work.

When you’re disabled it can be hard to open any door. Education opens up so many doors in life, but you must want it and be prepared to work hard and take the punches as you get them. Third level can be so much fun. You get to meet new people who in time become one of the lads.

I don’t let anything get in my way of life. Why should I? I am in a wheelchair but my brain is working over time. Through the assistance of the ESF aided Fund for Students with Disabilities, I get all the supports that I need from the access office here in Mary I. I have someone who types up notes in every lecture. Someone helps me when I am studying in the library. I am actively involved in Wired F. M and have being elected to student council as Equality and Welfare Officer. Life is good here!

This is to thank you for the money that I receive from the ESF aided Student Assistance Fund each semester. The majority of my money is spent on travel as I’m from the Aran Islands and I travel home every weekend. In a return journey home on one weekend I have to use a plane/boat, two buses and a taxi. The average cost of travelling home one weekend can cost €80. Táim fíor bhuíoch as an airgead. (I’m really grateful for the money).

3rd Yr B.Ed
2007 – 2011
Shane O’Halloran
2005 – 2009
Geography and Media & Communication Studies

I first heard of the Access programme in Mary Immaculate College from my Guidance Counsellor in secondary school who encouraged me to apply for it. I am glad I did as it offered me the financial security necessary throughout my four years in college. There are many different levels of support available and the Access Officers in the College were always extremely helpful and accommodating.

Without their support and the financial support of the ESF aided Student Assistance Fund, I can honestly say that I would not have enjoyed and participated fully in college life over the last few years and I would like to take the opportunity to thank them for their help and support.

As a former student of Mary I, I would also like to say that these were probably the best years of my life! I came to Mary I from a lonely place in Cork and came out with friends for life and experiences which I will never forget.

I am extremely grateful for the financial assistance I receive from the Access office in Mary Immaculate College via the Student Assistance Fund.

I am extremely grateful for the financial assistance I receive from the Access office in Mary Immaculate College via the Student Assistance Fund. I am aware this funding comes from the European Social fund. The staff of the Access unit in Mary Immaculate College is very helpful and very approachable if an Access student has a problem. They offer great support and are always willing to help the students. This funding helps me with the expenses in college such as books, rent, travel, and food costs. This funding is very beneficial to students whose household income is not very high. It has assisted me greatly with college and living expenses and has made my college life much easier. Financial worries have been decreased greatly by this fund.

4th Yr B.A. Student
2006-2011
The Irish Youth Justice Service, an executive office of the Department of Justice and Law Reform, funds 100 Garda Youth Diversion Projects nationwide. The projects are community-based multi-agency crime prevention initiatives that seek to divert at-risk young people from criminal and anti-social behaviour.

In April 2010, the Treo Nua Project, a Garda Youth Diversion Project based in Tuam County Galway, was visited by the then ESF Programme Manager for Ireland, Ms. Manila Pisaniello, a senior European Commission official. (See also photo on the cover page.)

The Treo Nua project delivered a personal development course with part funding from the European Social Fund 2007 – 2013. The visit provided Ms. Pisaniello with the opportunity to see first-hand the work undertaken by Garda Youth Diversion Projects. The objective of the course was to improve the employability prospects of participants.

The personal development course delivered a variety of topics, including a Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) and Crime Awareness. The BTEI course enabled the young people to re-enter mainstream education or training.

Another key element of the course was to source work experience in the local area. In the long term this will improve their chances of entering the workforce.

A group of nine young people took part in and successfully completed a ‘Build A Bike’ Course. The course ran over three months with the young people meeting on a weekly basis on Friday evenings. The programme was designed to encourage an interest in cycling as a sport and covered many of the skills needed to find employment in the cycle industry.

The course was a success with many of the young people developing an interest in pursuing a career in bike building, maintenance, servicing and mechanics. The young people demonstrated enhanced knowledge of the rules of the road and bike safety.
YOUTHREACH GALWAY (ESF 2.5)

Youthreach Galway City provides an educational & training programme for early school leavers aged 16-20 years with a strong emphasis on personal and social development, literacy & numeracy support, mentoring, personal counseling & vocational guidance. Youthreach is funded through the ESF, under the Department of Education & Skills and governed locally by City of Galway VEC.

DISABILITY ACTIVATION PROJECT (ESF 2.2)

Business Training Programmes:

The Disability Activation Project, co-funded by the European Social Fund and Department of Social Protection, is an interagency project whose objective is to develop and test a comprehensive employment strategy based on individual case management of people on illness/disability welfare payments that will have the capacity to increase their rate of employment. The project brings together the key organisations, including the Department of Social Protection, FÁS, the Health Service Executive(HSE), the VEC and the Community/Voluntary sector, involved in supporting people with disabilities to access employment, training and education opportunities.
In order to encourage entrepreneurship and in recognition of the potential for business opportunities among Illness/Disability payment recipients, the Disability Activation Project in conjunction with Westmeath Community Development Ltd. initiated, developed and in November 2009, commenced a pilot Business Training programme for 13 participants, in Mullingar. Self-employment can offer people with disability a unique employment opportunity in terms of flexibility of hours and time-management around health, the possibility to work from home and the identification and development of ‘niche’ areas. The participants, who were in receipt of Department of Social Protection illness/disability payments, developed business skills through a series of 20 modules covering areas including Market Research, Financial Planning and Control, Computerised Accounts and Legal Matters, and one-to-one mentoring.

This innovative programme combined the flexibility required for people with disability with the innovation and motivation necessary to bring a business project from the idea stage through to the commencement of trading. 10 trainees successfully completed the programme on 4 May 2010. Participants were granted a further 24 week extension to their respective permissions to work in recognition of the particular difficulties people with disability face in starting their own businesses.

Following the success of the Mullingar project, the Disability Activation Project supported a second pilot Business Training Programme, in Kilbeggan, Co. Offaly. The pilot, designed to test the same methodology and modules in a rural location, commenced in May with 13 participants. On completion of the programme, and assuming eligibility, the candidates can progress onto the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance - offering an additional support and increasing the possibility of continuance with their business initiatives.

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The participants are encouraged to join the Enterprising Westmeath Network (E.W.N.) which is an established organisation which was set up to act as a support to small businesses. As members of the E.W.N. they are privy to affordable training and also to exhibit at the annual Enterprising Westmeath Network Exhibition which attracts in the region of eight thousand visitors annually.

Participants can also join the website www.themidlandmall.com, initiated and funded by the ESF funded Disability Activation Project, and developed specifically to advertise the business enterprises resultant from both pilot business training programmes. The website provides a platform for the participants to publicise their activities and allows for future participants to be accommodated into the website if they so wish. A formal launch of the website took place at Belvedere House, Mullingar on 21st October 2010. Presentation of the Business Programme Certificates took place on the same occasion.

‘Self-employment can offer people with disability a unique employment opportunity’
The new ‘entrepreneurs’ and their fledgling businesses, which include areas as diverse as poultry production, a driving school, garden equipment repair and service, greeting-card design and production, cot quilt sets, and money awareness, continue to avail of mentoring and support from the various agencies, including the Disability Activation Project, Westmeath Community Development Ltd, South Westmeath Employment, Education & Training Services Ltd and FAS, involved in the development and delivery of both successful programmes.

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SOCIAL FARMING PROGRAMME

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In early 2010 the Disability Activation Project initiated and developed a Social Farming Programme in conjunction with Roscommon Integrated Development Company and the HSE. The main aim of the programme was to give participants a chance to explore various aspects of social farming, identify their preferred area of interest and support them in moving forward to gain further skills.

The key objective of this project was to give participants an opportunity to explore the potential of meaningful work in their own communities.

The modules of the programme cover organic horticulture and gardening, small animal husbandry, bee keeping, poultry production, health and nutrition, cooking, baking and preserving and personal development.

Social farming provides a real opportunity for people with mental health difficulties to gain meaningful work by offering their skills, gained through training, to farming and the wider community. This programme is part of a progression; participants having identified their area of interest are receiving ongoing support and training to gain a level of skill to necessary to exploit the opportunities presented in social farming.

A number of participants have already progressed to further training or education options. Presentation of the programme certificates took place on 3rd August 2010.

Participants themselves catered the event, thus showcasing some of the skills acquired throughout the programme. An additional programme is planned for the near future.

This initiative was county wide in terms of both participants and activities.

Course participants and facilitators are pictured on the occasion of the presentation of programme certificates on 3rd August 2010.

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Pictured below are representatives from the Letterkenny Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) group presenting a cheque for €620 to Donegal Women’s Domestic Violence Service (DWDVS). The money was raised from the Christmas Craft Fair as part of the LCA Enterprise Task for Vocational Preparation.

From left-right are: Priya Mendes-McMenamin (Letterkenny Youthreach Resource Staff), Mary McKenna (DWDVS), Kirsty Laird (Letterkenny Youthreach Learner), Trevor Bates (Letterkenny Youthreach Learner), Aislin McEntee (Letterkenny Youthreach Learner), Fiona Doherty (DWDVS) and Breda Rodden (Letterkenny Youthreach Co-ordinator).

Lifford Youthreach

Lifford Youthreach learner, Eoghan Lynch, is celebrating after being crowned “the most skilled driver in the region” at a recent road safety event. Learners from Buncrana, Ballyshannon and Lifford Youthreach took part in a cross border driving skills and road safety event in Bready, Co. Derry this month.

The competition element of the day saw 50 drivers compete in a driving theory quiz and a series of driving skills manoeuvres which were designed to raise awareness of good driving practice and road safety matters. This was the third year that such an event was organised, although it was the first time that Youthreach was invited to take part. It was also the third time that someone from Donegal was judged winner.

The hat-trick was this year delivered by Eoghan Lynch from Lifford Youthreach, who was awarded the overall competition winner and first in the Donegal driver’s category.

Shane Woulfe from Ballyshannon Youthreach came 2nd and Sabrina McMonagle from Lifford Youthreach came third.

The event, which was attended by more than 200 people from Counties Donegal, Derry and Tyrone...
Investing in Your Future

Pole Position for Eoghan Lynch

Left to Right: Eamonn Brown (Donegal Road Safety Officer), Paula Donaghy (Lifford Resource Tutor), Sabrina McMonigle (3rd place, Donegal drivers), Eoghan Lynch (1st place Donegal drivers and overall winner), Harry Rutherford (Limavady Road Safety Committee), Aidan Callaghan (Lifford Resource)

Cootehill Youthreach Envirnoment Project

Learners from Cootehill Youthreach Centre approached St. Michael’s National School to inquire if they would allow the learners to make pieces in Woodcraft and Art Class that could be used in the school playground. The pieces were made from re-cycled wood and the project was used by St. Michael’s School to achieve their Green Flag!
Ballyshannon Youthreach recently organised a very successful Health Promotion Week, which involved various activities to raise awareness of positive health. Not just general health, but mental, physical and emotional health too.

The aim of the week was to encourage learners to become more aware of their lifestyles and provide a realisation of what needs to be done to maintain a healthy lifestyle. One of the activities involved learners making smoothies (with a difference)!

The blender used to make the smoothies was powered by a bicycle, so they had to pedal their way to refreshment!
Learners Shane Woulfe and Justine Duffy (above) pedalling for their smoothies!

Castleblayney Youthreach Environment Project

Castleblayney Youthreach took part in a ‘Growing in Peace Project’ which involved many learners designing a community garden on the grounds of St Mary’s Nursing Home, Castleblayney. The garden is a focal point for people to build positive relationships and develop skills in growing fruit and vegetables. It is an opportunity for young people to learn from older members in the community and vice versa.

THIRD LEVEL ACCESS (ESF 2.4)

Limerick Institute of Technology 3rd Year E-Office Administration student Shane Ryan, with Visual Impairment, competed in the LTA Visual impaired category in the World Indoor Rowing Championships in Boston, United States in February 2010. Shane won gold in a time of 3.08.1, a personal best for Shane knocking 0.7 seconds of his previous personal best. While studying in LIT, Shane’s special educational needs are funded through the European Social Fund Initiative, Fund for Students with Disabilities.
SKILLS TRAINING (ESF 1.1)

Workplace Youth intervention within the local, inner-city Community

On the 30th June 2010, six trainees from North Inner City Dublin were presented with certificates in a ceremony in the Capita/Eircom building on Marlborough Street, Dublin marking their achievements and successes in completing the a joint training / work placement programme set up to give young people from the area the opportunity and experience of working within a large corporate environment with a view to aiding their progression to future full time employment.

Born from the relationship between the Staff of Capita/Eircom and from the (LYCS) Lourdes Community Training Centre (FÁS Funded) this is a unique initiative that has now grown to include a number of the City Centre Community Training Centres. The programme, fully backed and funded by FÁS, aims to provide development, training and future career direction to trainees who lack minimum vocational or academic qualifications that would traditionally have been a prerequisite to obtaining employment or progression within this type of environment.
The young people attending are statistically part of the 18% of youth in Ireland who have left second level education before reaching the Leaving Certificate. This lack of education and training coupled with the economic climate of recent years, makes it hard for them to progress into employment. Thus this initiative offers them the opportunity to access training, work experience and education within a real company setup not traditionally open to them.

It allows them to attain certification, and facilitates their progress into future employment. Some of the previous participants have successfully secured employment as a direct result of their experience on the course. The 3 month course combines a variety of externally recognised training delivered in both intensive classroom and ‘on the job’ training sessions.

The success and dedication of the graduates from this 3 month course which started in March 2010 - Donna Clarke, Emma Brennan, Kelly Byrne, Bernadette Byrne, Erica Dunne and Rachael Murray – has paved the way for this course to be continued and its intake extended. 10 new participants from various local City Centre Community Training Centres have just started the new course May 2010 with future courses planned.

In this era of NAMA, rising unemployment cuts in community project funding and growing uncertainty here’s hoping that other employers will follow this innovative lead and promote this type of practical initiative for social involvement at the local community level.
Experience of Third-Level Students with Disability Published in Report

More than three-quarters of college students with a disability or specific learning difficulty use technology to help them with their situation. The finding is contained in a report, Assessment & Support Services for Students with Specific Learning Difficulties, launched in the Ascent Regional Assessment & Resource Centre, Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT) in November 2010.

The students use a combination of specialised assistive technology (AT), as well as general purpose technology, such as Microsoft Word and Adobe. Two-thirds of students use the technology on a daily basis, with three-quarters using the assistive technology most frequently at home. Fifty-nine per cent of learners use the AT least frequently in class. Amongst the assistive technologies used at third level are voice recognition, speech-to-text, text-to-speech and mind mapping software. Specialised hardware used in the colleges includes dictaphones, reading pens and talking dictionaries.

The Ascent project aims to increase the participation and retention of students with specific learning difficulties at third level. This is achieved through the provision of assessment services and research to inform and support the use of interventions for students. The project partners are the five higher education institutions in the Border, Midland and West (BMW) region: AIT, GMIT, IT Sligo, LIT and NUIG.

Ann Heelan, Executive Director of AHEAD (Association for Higher Education Access and Disability), said: “Students with disabilities across the country are doing as well as other students where they get the support. They are completing the courses at a greater rate; they’re getting as good if not better first and second class honours degrees. This is a really important message for employers who want the best employees. They want the best and students with disabilities can deliver the best. In fact, they often bring a broader way of thinking, more resilience and problem-solving because that has been their life and college experience.”
AIT President, Prof. Ciarán Ó Catháin, said that “Despite the country’s financial difficulties, we must hold true to the commitment to ensure the equal treatment of individuals during their time at college. Higher education is a transformative experience. It is appropriate too that we should constantly look to transform our own practices, so that those most in need of encouragement and support receive that assistance to help them fulfil their own potential.”

The recommendations contained in the report, he continued, “will in future inform screening and assessment practices and the provision of support services and assistive technology services to students.”

Patricia Kearney, Disability Liaison Officer at AIT, said that “The greater use of inclusive technologies within the teaching environment means that education is now much more accessible for all students. Facilities for students with disabilities and specific learning difficulties are integrated to a much greater extent within mainstream teaching, and this is a positive development.”

The Ascent Regional Assessment & Resource Centre was established in 2007 under the Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF). Since its opening, the partners have collaboratively developed and improved screening, assessment, learning support, examination accommodations, inclusive teaching and learning and assistive technology services for students.

Following the launch of the report, a student needs assessment and assistive technology training workshop was organised for further education and second level teachers working with pupils with disabilities and specific learning difficulties. This training is provided by the Regional Assistive Technology Connection to Higher Education (REACH) project.

The SIF 2-funded REACH project builds upon the earlier work by promoting the progression of students with disabilities and specific learning difficulties to higher education through the transfer of expertise and resources from third level to second level and further education colleges. The project provides teacher training in student needs assessment, and advice and support in the use of assistive technology by students in second level and further education.
In 2009 The Carers Association applied for funding under the Access to Employment Strand of the Equality for Women Measure (EWM). This positive action measure is co-funded by the European Structural Fund and the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs. Managed by the Gender Equality Division, its purpose is enhancing women’s skills and fostering their engagement in Irish society.

The Carers’ Initiative was designed to support women in achieving a sustainable career and employment in the healthcare sector by giving them confidence, FETAC accredited training, real life work experience placement which would put skills learned into practice, and to give the women the knowledge on where employment opportunities exist and how to access them. Five training initiatives were rolled out in different locations across the country and the women who participated in them achieved outcomes measurable by their excellent results in certification for their hard work.
The following is the story of one of these ladies, Nuala Keogh, who experienced a life changing transformation as part of her time on the Kilkenny course.

“In 2006, my mother in law died suddenly. She was the full time carer for my father in law, who had suffered a stroke many years previously. This meant my family had to move house, and that I would be taking over the role as carer of my father-in-law, Myles. We had to move from the comforts of a modern bungalow in close proximity to amenities and socialising to an old farmhouse in a rural area with all the environmental difficulties associated with such dwellings.

This took a heavy toll on me as time went on. I was physically exhausted and lacking energy. Psychologically I felt trapped, a loss of identity, loss of independence, lacking in confidence wondering all the time if I was doing the right thing, de-motivated and eventually very low self-esteem.

One day I got a call from The Carers Association informing me that they would be rolling out a training programme including FETAC accredited training in Care Skills and Patient Moving & Handling.

I was unsure about it, wondering if I had the ability to do this and whether I could get time out from caring duties to attend. I attended the information session held to brief potential participants and after much consideration decided to undertake the course. Little did I realise that this decision would shape my future and enable me to fulfil my dream.

The work started off fast and furious. One class that was invaluable was Moving and Handling, and it became apparent to me immediately that I was lifting incorrectly and was fortunate not to have injured my back.

I acquired a lot of valuable skills in a relatively short time. When I started my placement in Leighlinbridge Day Care Centre for the elderly, I felt competent in my role as a carer with all my new caring skills and efficiency in manual handling. While on placement I was very impressed by a number of things. For example, one of the day care ladies, Frances, was knitting baby cardigans and caps every week and sending them to hospitals for premature babies. I asked the ladies if they would be interested in doing a little project to focus on the work they were so graciously doing for others. I began by taking photographs of people’s hands working on their projects. The reason hands were used is that I would have had to get special permission to photograph people. Sometimes rules can work in your favour! We named the project “Hands”
During the next few weeks, we spent time on turning these photographs of their hands working on good deeds, into cards. The photograph that is on each card was decorated individually by the person whose hands are in the photograph.

At the end of my course I felt that I had achieved something special. I felt a huge sense of fulfilment and at the age of forty-nine, I learned where my vocation was. Although the caring role I have been undertaking happened by necessity rather than by choice, the course has reassured that I want to carry on caring and that I want to undertake further studies to enable me take up this role on a professional basis. The course has made me realise that I have skills and abilities that I did not recognise and it has brought out potential in me that has always been there but now needs to be nurtured. The learning has given me my confidence and sense of worth back and made me realise I can go forward positively. I have recently commenced a BA Degree in Applied Social Studies. The following quote I feel sums up my story:- “In the midst of winter, I finally learned there was in me an invincible summer”

This EWM training funded under the Human Capital Investment Operational Programme (HCIOP) changed Nuala’s life. As with all EWM projects, the lives of many women across the country have changed by improving their opportunities to accessing education, training and employment.

EQUALITY FOR WOMEN INITIATIVE (ESF 2.8)

‘Going for Growth’ - fostering female entrepreneurs

Going for Growth is an initiative under the Equality for Women Measure which is supported by European Social Fund, Department of Community, Equality and Gaelacht Affairs (Gender Equality Division) and Enterprise Ireland. Recruitment for the third phase of the Initiative will begin in late 2010. The initiative enables women entrepreneurs to benefit from peer support and the insights and experiences of successful entrepreneurs.

Going for Growth was designed, developed and is being co-ordinated by Paula Fitzsimons of Fitzsimons Consulting in response to a request for proposals on female entrepreneurship from NDP Gender Equality Unit, now subsumed into Gender Equality Division, Department of Community, Equality and Gaelacht Affairs.

Background

International research has shown that, in Ireland at least, not only do women start new enterprises at a much lower rate than men, but of those women who are starting new businesses, fewer have an aspiration to grow. Women also tend to be less confident in their ability to successfully start and manage a new business, less alert to entrepreneurial opportunities, less networked than men and with lower growth aspirations. The challenge is to address these perceived weaknesses in a manner that minimizes the negative economic impact on women and the opportunity loss to Ireland.
Creative Solution
The Going for Growth initiative is designed to offer a unique support to female entrepreneurs who were seriously committed to growing their businesses. Many women entrepreneurs feel isolated and find that it can be difficult to access information and advice on the challenges involved, particularly in growth.

The framework of the Going for Growth Initiative is to place selected applicants at one of eight ‘roundtables’, facilitated and led by an experienced female Lead Entrepreneur. These Leaders give about three hours of their time on a voluntary basis once a month to meet with up to eight women owner managers in order to support their development. Participants have the benefit of sharing experiences and learning from peers but, even more importantly, they also gain knowledge from a leading female entrepreneur who has successfully travelled the road to growth and has first hand experience of the journey.

Moreover, Lead Entrepreneurs act as role models to the participants and affirm the participants’ belief in their ability to achieve growth by demystifying the process. The intention is to create a very different experience from a traditional training programme, with the focus on organic and co-operative learning, and practical development. Where specific training needs are identified by or for the participants, these are addressed separately.

Results
Over 90% of participants to date have indicated that they felt nearer to achieving their growth goals as a result of their participation in Going for Growth. A great number of participants have provided testimonials and these may be viewed on the website www.goingforgrowth.com. Below is a sample of some of those testimonials:

“I want to thank you so much for allowing me to be part of this wonderful group. It has done so much for me and my business. Apart from giving me the time to think about my business it was helped me look at it in a much different light. Since joining the group and as a direct result of the group discussions we have implemented a board of directors, we have submitted an application for an Enterprise Grant, we have been selected for the Enterprise Ireland first flight scheme and now have a mentor. Initially we were only looking to the UK market but as a result of the group and particularly Elaine’s influence of thinking big and looking at market size we are now looking to bring our product the European market. Thank you for this super opportunity!” (CMcN)
“Participating with and being in the same environment as these successful and influential women were infectious. The drive, ambition & confidence spread like a virus and the adrenalin was high.” (RM)

“Since the end of the programme we’ve gone from having 1 employee besides ourselves to having 3. We’ve moved into new offices, we’ve got BES approval to raise finance and in September we started our development project for a new online version of SortMyBooks. This is just the start of our growth phase. It is onwards and upwards from here on! If you get a chance to go on this programme grab it!” (AH)

“My objective was to grow my business outside of the Cork area and we now serve all of Ireland and are well recognised in our industry as being the leading relocation company in Ireland. We won the SFA Outstanding Small Business Award in 2008 and were shortlisted again in 2009.” (CW)

The past participants have become active ambassadors for Going for Growth. All report that they would recommend participation to others and would like to stay in contact with the Going for Growth network. Going for Growth initiative was included by the European Commission in the 2009 selection of good practices in female entrepreneurship activities.

“My objective was to grow my business outside of the Cork area and we now serve all of Ireland...” (CW)

INTEGRATION OF MIGRANTS (ESF 2.8)

Business in the Community Ireland’s unique collaboration with the Office of the Minister for Integration, entitled ‘EPIC’ Employment for People from Immigrant Communities was recognized by Minister for Integration, Mary White TD for its successful contribution to social inclusion at a special graduation event held on November 17th 2010. The Minister acknowledged the success of EPIC at the most recent graduation ceremony from the Programme which saw 162 participants receive certificates of completion from the Minister. Since its inception in 2007, 1532 people from over 64 different countries, 14 EU and 50 Non-EU countries have been referred to EPIC. Of these, 939 people have been eligible to participate and nearly 700 of these have been successfully placed in either training or education (39%) or in employment (50%).

The number of immigrants engaging with EPIC has increased in 2010 with 426 referrals to date and with 423 in total in 2009. Placement trends for 2010 show that education and training placements are rising as employment becomes more difficult for all to gain. Employment placements are currently at 50% of all placements and considering current external factors this is a very strong rate of placement. There is currently 20 immigrants on the waiting list to engage with the Programme in 2011.
Speaking at the graduation ceremony Minister for Integration, Mary White TD said “EPIC is a unique Programme in that it seeks to assist immigrants through seeking employment. Employment is a vital part of creating a socially inclusive environment. Immigrants coming to Ireland or any country run the strong risk of becoming socially isolated without strong connections to the community.

Employment gives them a direct link to society, gives them the opportunity to meet and integrate with Irish workers and a means by which to develop a stable life here in Ireland. The work of EPIC is highly commendable and I congratulate them on their success to date particularly in an adverse economic environment.”
STTC DONEGAL (ESF 2.5)

St. Fiachra’s Training Centre (STTC) was established in 1983 as a joint venture between Co. Donegal VEC and FÁS. The then management committee secured a site and a loan to build a new education and training centre on the Kilmacrennan Road on the outskirts of Letterkenny town centre in the mid-1980s. A new purpose built centre was subsequently opened in 1992. Currently, the building is shared with Letterkenny Youthreach.

Today St Fiachra’s STTC is a 24 place Centre of Education for Travellers, which facilitates life-long learning and training through an intercultural approach. It offers a range of FETAC courses, such as Maths, English, Computers, Metalwork, and Woodcraft.

The certificates presented to the male learners in the photo were for completing the Safe Pass course.

STTC LIMERICK (ESF 2.5)

The Riverside Senior Traveller Training Centre, Rathkeale, Co. Limerick is a Travellers Training Centre funded by the DES and part funded by the ESF under the Senior Traveller Training Programme managed by Co Limerick VEC on behalf of the DES.
The Riverside STTC, Rathkeale presented Fetac Awards to learners on the STTC programme in April 2010 by Deputy John Creegan. The ceremony was attended by the local Public Representatives Mr Dan Neville T.D., CEO Co. Limerick VEC Mr Sean Burke, Mr Gerry Griffin National Co-ordinator of Senior Traveller Training Centres,DES, staff and most importantly, the Learners from the STTC in Rathkeale.

ADULT LITERACY (ESF 2.3)

Basic Education Solutions

Basic Education Solutions, previously the Adult Learner Support Service (ALSS), provides a range of learning opportunities for adults who experience literacy difficulties. Our mission, as part of Limerick City Adult Education Service, is to deliver a quality literacy service which responds to the many changing demands and the evolving needs and aspirations of learners in an environment of mutual respect and partnership. Basic Education Solutions delivers programmes for adults with literacy, numeracy and basic educational needs in order to improve skills, build confidence and so encourage fuller participation in society.

Overview:

As a Literacy Service, Basic Education Solutions provides basic education opportunities on a part-time basis for adults, over 16 and not in formal education, to return to education. Programmes delivered focus on the core skills of reading, writing, numeracy, IT and digital skills, and personal development. BES courses run mainly in community and workplace settings, along with classes in the Limerick City Adult Education Service on O’Connell Avenue (main centre). BES runs classes in over 32 locations.
ADULT LITERACY (ESF 2.3)

In general, learners experience a different learning environment to their experiences of the formal education system. Class sizes are small and the curriculum delivered is tailored to the individual learning needs of each group. Some learners, particularly those with the most significant literacy need, may benefit from 1-to-1 provision also for a period.

The Service comprises full time staff, including Literacy Organisers, Development Workers and tutoring staff. However we also have a significant, and growing, cohort of volunteer tutors. In 2009/10 the staff included 3 permanent Adult Literacy Organisers, 3 PRPT Full-Time Tutors, 7 annual contract including: 6 Resource Workers, 1 initial contact worker, 22 Part-Time Tutors operating out of over 30 community venues and 40 Volunteer Tutors.

In 2009 a breakdown of registered learners was as follows:

- 1028 Learners enrolled: 341 male 687 female
- 773 with very basic literacy skills
- 235 employed
- 160 migrant workers
- 49 FAS CE participants- 5 RTE programmes ran in year Jan-Dec
- 254 gained accreditation through BES directly with many more receiving
- accreditation through communities – 6 learners achieved a full award

The following are the core subject areas being offered:

- FETAC Level 1 and 2 – General Learning programmes encompassing reading, writing, IT and digital skills, communications and personal development
- Junior Cert English & Maths
- FETAC level 3 Communications, Computer literacy & Numeracy
- Basic Maths at FETAC level 2 and 3
- Themed literacy through Computing, Driver Theory, Childcare, Cookery, Health Literacy and Living in a Diverse Society
- Personal Development
- Family Learning
- English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Level 1, 2, 3

Further details on course and programmes on www.limerickcityaes.ie
All learners attending classes have the option to pursue accreditation through FETAC in the above subject areas at level 2 and level 3 primarily. Learners also have the opportunity to pursue English and Maths to Junior Certificate level.

Access to programmes

Basic Education Solutions operates a policy of continuous enrolment throughout the year. Programmes are open to all adult learners who experience literacy or numeracy difficulties regardless of age, gender, socio-economic background or previous education attainment. However, BES is very active in the key areas of disadvantage in Limerick City and key non-participative or under-represented groups (e.g. members of the traveller community, young adult males, ex-offenders etc.) are targeted through specific initiatives.

Generally, learners are referred to BES through a referral network although many learners self-refer also. This network includes community and NGO service providers, state agencies (including other government departments and the Gardaí) and other education providers. BES also promotes itself through local media, including local radio, and has recently undertaken a city-wide poster campaign. An example of one of the posters is shown below.

**Forms used to frighten me...**

**Not any more!**

*Take the first step... improve your reading and writing.*

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**Limerick City Adult Education Service**

*Learning for Life*

**Call 061 445 700**

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**Investing in your future**
Investing in Your Future

Programmes run by Basic Education Solutions

The general courses run by Basic Education Solutions in both our main centre and across the City, are part funded by the European Social Fund and range from individual stand-alone classes to programmes that achieve a full award under FETAC. The service also runs a number of distinct programmes two of which include:

- **Intensive Tuition for Adult Basic Education (ITABE):** A ring–fenced programme that delivers 14 week programmes to a maximum of 84 hours. ITABE programmes generally run twice a week for 6 hours per week. Learners on ITABE programmes generally benefit from a number of different subject area combinations that regularly include: Communications, IT and Computers, Numeracy and Personal Development.

- **Return to Education:** A programme run and supported by the Department Enterprise Trade and Employment through FAS for adults who are part of Community Enterprise Schemes. The programme provides 200 hours tuition for participants of CE Schemes in subject areas that include: Communications, IT and Computers, Numeracy and Personal Development.

BES also works closely with other VEC programmes, both full-time and part-time, to ensure that when learners present to other programmes with a literacy difficulty they can be referred to the service quickly. Also, our close links with other VEC programmes, particularly the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (a full-time programme for level 2-6) and the Back to Education Initiative (a part-time programme for levels 3-5), ensure we can make appropriate progression options available to learners when they have fully availed of our services and are ready to take the next step.

As part of the Limerick City Adult Education Service, learners also have access to the Adult Educational Guidance and Information Service to assist in their progression.

EQUALITY FOR WOMEN (ESF 2.8)

**E.L.L.E. (Education and Life-Long Learning for Employment for Women) Initiative**

The aim of the E.L.L.E. Initiative was “to work with target group women on the development of practical and achievable progression pathways to open labour market employment as compatible with their personal circumstances”. The ELLE project consortium comprised Bray Area Partnership, Wicklow Trade Union Centre, Co. Wicklow VEC Adult Guidance Service, Little Bray Family Resource Centre, St. Fergal’s Resource Centre, Bray Traveller’s Community Development Group and FAS.

The key features of the Initiative were Outreach, Needs identification and activation, Pre-development, Needs-led tailored interventions, and Referral. Up to 106 women participated in the courses, which included Basic Computers, Computers for Improvers, Budgeting and Nutrition, Personal Development, Developing Your Potential to Return to Work, Retail, Computers FETAC Level 3, Career Coaching, Study Skills, and Considering self-employment.
The WINGS (Women in New Guises Succeed) Initiative was a programme for unemployed women, particularly young mothers who left school with few or no qualification. It was run jointly run by the Bawnogue Women’s Development Group and the CPLN Partnership with funding from the Dept of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and the ESF. Three courses were run with 15 women on each course.

Recruitment was through the support of the local women’s group which had experience in running similar programmes.

The needs of each individual were assessed and of the group as a whole, as programme contained mandatory elements to prepare participants for employment. It also contained a series of optional courses depending on client group need. Provision was by qualified tutors of basic literacy, numeracy and communications supports as a base for the programme, including FETAC accredited modules in preparation for work, and a choice of FETAC modules depending on client need.

FETAC Levels 3 or 4 and include maths, career information, work orientation and communications.

The courses were delivered three days per week for four hours per day. The course lasted eight weeks and was delivered twice in each of two economically disadvantaged areas – South-West Clondalkin and Balgaddy. Childcare support was provided and paid for by CPLN. No EWWM money will be used for this purpose.
Investing in Your Future

EQUALITY MAINSTREAMING (ESF 2.9)

The Equality Mainstreaming Unit has been established with funding from the European Social Fund, through the Human Capital Investment Operational Programme 2007-2013 and from the Equality Authority. The main objective of the Unit is to contribute to addressing labour market gaps in Ireland for specific groups that are experiencing inequality across the nine grounds covered by the equality legislation.

These are gender, marital status, family status, religion, race, age, disability, sexual orientation, membership of the Traveller community. It seeks to achieve this by facilitating and supporting institutional change within providers of further education, training and labour market programmes and within small to medium enterprises by strengthening their capacity to combat discrimination, to promote equality and to accommodate diversity.

As part of its work, the Equality Mainstreaming Unit held its annual conference on Tuesday, November 9th in Dublin Castle. The conference was organised and supported by the Equality Mainstreaming Unit and the Department of Education and Skills.

This year’s conference focused on the theme of Planning for Equality and continued to explore the theme of equality mainstreaming in the design and delivery of vocational education, training and labour market programmes.

Graduation ceremony of the Bawnogue Women’s Development Group/CPLN Partnership EVM project in Clondalkin in December 2009
The conference was officially opened by Mr Sean Haughey, Minister for Lifelong Learning and School Transport. The morning session featured two key note speakers - Mary Tuppan-Wenno, Executive Director, ECHO Centre for Diversity Policy, The Netherlands and Dr John Kremer, Queen’s University, Belfast. Over 80 delegates from across the further education and training sector attended the conference and the feedback has been very positive.

This year’s conference also offered delegates the opportunity to attend practical interactive workshops facilitated by experienced trainers from across 4 of the equality grounds: race, gender, disability and sexual orientation. The workshops provided delegates with some practical skills on how to build equality considerations into planning and provision.

The conference demonstrated how equality mainstreaming strategies are an essential component of any good business planning process.

Equality mainstreaming is about placing equality at the heart of decision making. It is about considering the specific needs of groups experiencing inequality in the design and delivery of education and training programmes. Equality mainstreaming is an essential tool to promote equality and combat discrimination.
The FÁS Tolka Valley Community Training Centre is situated in Dublin Industrial Estate, Glasnevin, Dublin 11. The Centre caters for early school leavers aged between 16 and 21 with little or no formal education in the Finglas/Cabra area. In 2010 the Centre had a throughput of 85 trainees.

The courses on offer at the Centre include the following:

**Art & Design:** FETAC level 3 Major Award

**Beauty Therapy:**
- Beauty Specialist Diploma
- Swedish Massage Diploma
- Indian Head Massage Diploma
- FETAC level 3 – 5 Major Award

**Carpentry:**
- FETAC level 3 Major Award
- Junior Certificate

**Catering:**
- FETAC level 3 Major Award

**I.T:**
- FETAC level 3 Major Award
- ECDL
- Junior Certificate

The recent changes at policy and implementation level over the past year with regard to education and training was highlighted. Skills and training policy has been transferred to a new configured Department of Education and Skills. Senior Traveller Training Centres are being phased out with attempts to ensure the inclusion of Travellers in mainstream provision and there will be an amalgamation and reduction in the numbers of VECs.

The conference concluded that this change will bring with it many challenges for providers of further education and training and for groups from across the nine grounds covered by the equality legislation. In such a context, mainstreaming equality matters more than ever.

**SKILLS TRAINING (ESF 1.1) FÁS**

**FAS - Tolka Valley Training Centre**
“Breaking through my fears to a brighter future” FÁS course

The photo left was taken during a personal development class, where each young man wrote on one side of a piece of wood everything he hated about his life and on the other side he wrote what he wanted for his future. The boys smashed the wood breaking through to their dream of the future, a very successful exercise.

SKILLS TRAINING (ESF 1.1) FÁS
Lourdes Community Training Centre

Lourdes Youth & Community Services (LYCS) was established in 1984, as part of a broad based community development movement, which emerged in Dublin’s north inner city in the late 70’s and 80’s. This was an attempt to combat the relentless economic and social decline being experienced in inner city Dublin.

Unemployment levels were high and the misuse of drugs was widespread. LYCS was developed from three projects - Lourdes Craft Centre (a centre for older children and teenagers), Monto Skill Centre (a skills and job training centre from 1970’s) and the Community Services Project (set up to develop youth services in the parish and to train local youth leaders to work in their own community).

A crèche was then set up to provide much needed childcare for local people especially those who were training in LYCS. An Adult Education Programme was established at the same time providing a wide variety of services, primarily for women.

Over 100 women attended the centre each week. Each evening groups of women would meet to provide support for each other and to explore educational options.
From the mid 1990’s the organisation provided four separate types of services:

1. Adult education programmes,
2. Childcare,
3. Youth programmes and
4. Training for early school leavers. LYCS joined the Community Development Programme and employed a Director for the first time.

Over time, LYCS has adapted its services and the delivery of those services to meet the changing economic and social environment of the time.

Today these four programmes are:

**Crèche**
provides places for twenty-eight 1-5 year olds each day

**Youth Programme**
provides education and social programmes for approx ninety 12 – 21 yr olds per week

**Community Training Centre** – provides full time certified training for forty 16-21 yr olds each day

**Adult Education Programme** – provides training, educational and social programmes for over 100 men and women each week.

During the past 21 years, 175,000 people have come through the Centre; 3,500 individual people have participated in the programmes; 4,500 nationally recognised certificates have been awarded; 12 videos/books/quilts were made; 12 Annual Exhibitions held; there were 15 International Participants Visits from France to China; 150 people have worked in LYCS and four staff have worked in LYCS for 21 years.

Currently:
270 people participate in over 30 different programmes each week; 35 people work in LYCS today;

They network with over 150 other community/voluntary/statutory/private organisations
The youngest participant is one year old and the eldest is 80 years.

**Woodwork** — Learners aim to complete FETAC Level 3 Woodwork Modules as well as the mandatory modules in order to achieve a Major Award at level 3 (one to one literacy an numeracy is also a key element of this programme)
ECDL and Customer Service – Learners aim to achieve a the ECDL certificate as well as a FETAC Level 5 module in Customer Service

Childcare – Learners aim to complete FETAC Level 3 Childcare Modules as well as the mandatory modules in order to achieve a Major Award at level 3 (one to one literacy and numeracy is also a key element of this programme)

Note from ESF MA:
Details of the Information & Publicity Guidelines relating to the HCI OP 2007-2013 are available to download from our website www.esf.ie and should be consulted on a regular basis to ensure compliance.