European Social Fund

Newsletter 2012

The Graffiti Wall built by the Wheeler Dealers Project (GYD) of Tipperary
Welcome to the 4th issue of the ESF Newsletter for the Human Capital Investment Operational Programme (HCI-OP)2007-2013

The Newsletter highlights some of the achievements of the ESF in Ireland in 2011. The articles in this issue show the variety of projects that benefit from the ESF, from learning traditional skills such as boat building to new skills such as web design, to preparing for further training or education, or to achieving employment. The cover photo shows the “Graffiti Wall” built by the participants of the TAR Garda Youth Diversion Project in Tipperary. (See P21, P35 for more on the project).

Mid-Term Evaluation of the HCI OP

In 2011, the Mid Term Evaluation of the HCI OP 2007 -2013 (MTE) was carried out by Fitzpatricks and the Final Report was completed and presented to the Monitoring Committee in August 2011. The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the progress of the Operational Programme at the mid point of the programme in terms of the extent to which the OP objectives and Indicators were being met; any remedial action required where these were not being met; the levels of expenditure per Activity, Priority and Region relative to the Operational Programme objectives and the extent to which the Horizontal Principles were being addressed.

The Evaluators concluded that the OP remained relevant and appropriate as a programme providing targeted interventions aimed at upskilling people in the labour market and assisting access to it for groups outside it. They also made a number of recommendations in relation to reporting, targets and indicators, transnational support and the financial plan. As requested, the Evaluators made a number of suggestions in relation to lessons for post-2013.

Review of the HCI OP

Following on from the recommendations in the MTE, the Programme Monitoring Committee approved a proposal for submission to the Commission in relation to a review of the financial plan and the Indicators for the HCI OP. The Managing Authority submitted the proposal to the Commission in November 2011 and the Commission’s positive decision was received in March of this year.

Willie McIntosh
Head of ESF Managing Authority
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A replica Viking longboat being built by eighteen unemployed people on the Viking Longboat Project was one of the very popular attractions at the Waterford Tall Ships Festival, which was held on the 30th June - 3rd July 2011.

The Viking Longboat Project is a FÁS Community Local Training Initiative (LTI) in partnership with Waterford Museum of Treasures, Waterford City Council, Waterford Chamber of Commerce and the private sector.

The longboat attracted a vast amount of attention at the festival. Participants from the project were on site throughout the festival and this allowed the public to engage with the people who had built the ship and to ask questions. There was niche interest among people from the boatbuilding and sailing community who had come to see the Tall Ships, and also from a local Viking re-enactment group.

There was also strong interest from the general public who turned out in large numbers to see the longboat. There was great feedback from visitors – many of them had seen it featured on RTE’s ‘Nationwide’ 29th June broadcast, which had created extra interest amongst the festival goers.

The longboat was built using only traditional Viking tools such as side axes and adzes to sculpt out the crossbeams. A forge was constructed on site and trainees were trained in its use. This forge was used to manufacture the metal components of the ship, in particular the nails used to hold the ship together.

To learn more about the project, go to Facebook and search for “Viking Longboat Project Waterford”.

“The longboat was built using only traditional Viking tools such as side axes and adzes to sculpt out the crossbeams.”
BTEI – BACK TO EDUCATION INITIATIVE (PART-TIME) (ESF1.3)

- Provider: Co. Galway VEC
- Project: Traditional Currach Making Course on Inisbofin Island

The overall aim of the Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) is to increase the participation of young people and adults with less than upper second level education in a range of part-time accredited learning opportunities leading to awards at FETAC Levels 1 - 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) in order to facilitate their access, transfer and progression to other education or employment pathways.

The BTEI enables providers (VECs, Non-VEC Schools and Community Groups) to address the skills needs of unemployed people, in particular the priority groups identified in Government’s activation agenda, and to develop part-time education and training opportunities for low skilled people in employment to gain qualifications.

As part of the suite of BTEI programmes offered by Co. Galway VEC, a traditional currach making course aimed at engaging island men was organised on the offshore island of Inishbofin in collaboration with the Inishbofin Community Development Project.

The men in the group learned the skills of traditional boat building and together crafted a full carvel construction timber currach, a style traditional to the region. The initiative represented a revival in Inishbofin’s long tradition of boat making and it is hoped that it will bring a return of regattas to the island and support the economic activity of the island community.

This programme worked on a number of levels and succeeded in engaging a local community in further education, particularly men in a rural isolated area. The learners requested that the boat be made according to traditional Inishbofin lines using timber, not canvas.

The tutor selected for the course was a highly qualified boatwright with extensive experience in this local craft and the participants were invited to contribute on all aspects of the course and its delivery.
Following the course, a plan has been drawn up to set up a rowing club for the youth of the island and to construct a second boat to revive the island regatta as a way of encouraging tourism.

All learners acknowledged the positive contribution the course had made to their lives and the increased confidence they felt as a result of engaging in this project and expressed a desire to continue with further education.

The learners achieved a FETAC Level 3 certificate in Woodcraft. Learners are now equipped with the skill-set necessary to build a currach from start to finish and with this have increased their self-employment opportunities. Some of the learners also wish to construct model currachs as a local craft business directed towards the tourist market.

This course contributed to economic rural development and has fostered an entrepreneurial spirit among the participants and their community. The project has given the islanders the opportunity to regain the craft of traditional boatbuilding and with it an economic lifeline for the future.

This BTEI programme succeeded as a model for effective engagement of a rural community leading to both accredited training and economic revival and sustainability.
Labour Market Activation Fund – LMAF (ESF 1.6)

‘Innopharma Labs – Addressing transitions in a changing workforce’

The Pharmaceutical sector, despite the economic downturn, is still a growing industry in Ireland, with companies such as Allergan in Westport, announcing an investment of €350m to create 200 additional jobs and Genzyme investing €150m in expanding its facilities in Waterford. According to Matt Moran, Director of PharmaChem Ireland, “the Pharmaceutical and Biopharma industry is playing a vital role in this export-led growth recovery”.

Ireland is a country in transition, with a requirement to capture the skilled workforce from declining industries and successfully transition these professionals into opportunities within growing industries. This vital need for transition has been recognised by Innopharma Labs.

Innopharma Labs is a technology and training company that delivers training in the Pharmaceutical and Medical Device sector. The upskilling programme was developed in response to discussions with the Pharmaceutical sector as well as recent Pharmachem Ireland and Forfás reports that recognised a skills gap in these sectors. Recruitment from overseas is often the only option to fill these gaps.

One hundred unemployed participants took part in the Innopharma Labs LMAF upskilling programme funded by ESF in 2010-11. As well as completing a number of academic and business modules upskilling for the Pharmaceutical and Medical Device sectors during the five month programme, all participants completed an intensive CV and Interview module alongside one-on-one business coaching and mentoring.

To date over 75% of these participants are now employed as a result of their participation on the project and the expectation is that many of the remaining participants will also reach their employment goal.

Some of the success stories are listed below:

LIAM BURKE

Liam Burke, originally from Tipperary, is a Chemical Engineer in his mid thirties who returned to Ireland from the UK over a year ago. Having worked for large internationals including Aughinish Alumina and Worley Parsons, he had always been keen to work in one of Ireland’s major growth sectors, the Pharmaceutical sector. However, he knew there would be barriers to entry.

Liam comments, “By international standards, there is quite a conservative hiring culture in Ireland and not having a Pharmaceutical background was going to be an issue.

It’s great to finally see practical government programmes such as the Innopharma Labs programme which help tailor professionals towards particular industries … this is where the future employment training needs to be at.

Liam, who graduated from the Innopharma Labs programme in January 2011 is now working as a Project Engineer with GlaxoSmithKline.

 LIAM BURKE

“By international standards, there is quite a conservative hiring culture in Ireland and not having a Pharmaceutical background was going to be an issue.
Aisling Skelly, aged 24 is from Templeogue, Dublin. She had completed an Honours degree in Bioanalytical Science and was struggling to get the vital experience within the Pharmaceutical Sector. Having completed the Innopharma Programme she finally made the crucial step in January by securing a contract in Rottampharm, Dublin.

“The course did give me a better understanding of the overall industry and increased my knowledge about various aspects of the Pharma and Medical Device field…”

“Starting a 6 month placement in the micro lab at Rottampharm! I finally have my foot in the door! Thanks to all involved in the Innopharma Upskilling Programme for all their help with upskilling modules, CVs preparation and interview skills etc” reports Aisling.

Dermot Scollan from Mohill, Co. Leitrim, a qualified electrical engineer had worked as a construction manager for five years having returned to Ireland during the economic peak from working abroad in the same sector.

The downturn in the construction sector left Dermot with little option but to re-skill or to emigrate again. He commenced the Innopharma Labs programme in February 2011 and within one month of graduation he was offered a role in VistaMed in Carrick-on-Shannon

“The course did give me a better understanding of the overall industry and increased my knowledge about various aspects of the Pharma and Medical Device field which now makes me now feel I can expand my skills within the Pharma industry”.

Gerry O’Dowd is in his mid forties, lives in Dundalk where he has worked in various production and R&D for the food manufacturing giant – HJ Heinz - for close on 20 years. In October 2009 he was made redundant and has been proactively looking for a position since with little joy. Gerry was successful in securing a role as Team Leader Manager.

“The food industry is a very competitive industry and with little recruitment activity happening across the sector at the moment I’ve decided to look at jumping sectors.

The Innopharmalab programme has enhanced my skill base and primed me for the pharmaceutical business and actively seeking employment in Ireland.

While the programme is academic modules, it gives you a very strong understanding of the business allowing you to cross transfer your skills and tailor your experience.”

Eugene Brennan from Ballyfermot in Dublin, became unemployed in 2009. He embarked on the Innopharma Programme in 2010, through which he became acquainted with The Irish Medicine Board (IMB) who are responsible for the regulation of human and veterinary medical products. Eugene has secured a six month contract with the IMB, working on a Quality Defects & Recall programme.

Eugene reflects that “The course did give me a better understanding of the overall industry and increased my knowledge about various aspects of the Pharma and Medical Device field…”
Labour Market Activation Fund – LMAF (ESF 1.6)

TBSP – The Business Strategy Programmes – Career Development with Certificate in Logistics

Career Development with Certificate in Logistics was offered by TBSP: The Business Strategy Programmes through the Labour Market Activation Fund, 2010 with over 47% of graduates finding employment within two months after completing the programme.

Training was held in Limerick, Cork, Tallaght, Swords and Dundalk for a total of 101 jobseekers. The Chartered Institute of Logistics & Transport Certificate in Logistics was awarded to 92 participants who successfully completed the programme, gaining them exemption into year two of the CILT Diploma programme.

At the conclusion of the TBSP training programme, 10% of the graduates progressed to the CILT Diploma.

Field trips and networking with industry was a major part of the training programme, giving the participants opportunities to see Logistics Systems in action in various industries in their home areas.

Training also included comprehensive sessions on Entrepreneurship, resulting in 5 individuals setting up their own businesses.

Feedback from trainees reflected their confidence in having gained a high level of knowledge and competency in Logistics which they felt ready and able to apply in business.

This self assessment was validated in the results of their examinations and subsequent statement from the CILT external evaluator that “the TBSP team has delivered one of the most exceptionally high level of marks per student on any Certificate programme delivered to date”.

Kate Airlie, Programme Director of TBSP stated that it was one of the most satisfying programmes their team had ever worked on.

“The TBSP team has delivered one of the most exceptionally high level of marks per student on any Certificate programme delivered to date”.

“It was very gratifying to help the trainees realise their strengths and abilities in business, prepare them with superior c.v.’s and help them develop the confidence levels needed to ace an interview.

They were a great group - each and every one of them would make a valuable contribution as employees in any company.”

Swords group with guest speaker, Entrepreneur, Bill Cullen, Irish Host of The Apprentice.

Limerick Group visiting Iarnrod Eireann
Clare Family Learning Project started in 1994 within Clare VEC’s adult literacy service. Parents attending literacy classes wanted to help their children with homework and found they needed to refresh their skills as they had left school early.

The project began and over the intervening years has developed a number of resources to support parents to help their children learn, from preschool, primary and the move into second level. Some parents have returned and completed Junior and Leaving Certificate subjects or FETAC Level 3-5 programmes.

The project has trained facilitators in family learning nationally since 2000 reaching 526 tutors to date.

We have the only dedicated family learning website in Ireland www.clarefamilylearning.org.

The latest international resources and information is available on our quarterly e-newsletters which supports those involved in family learning work. Parents confidence in their ability to learn is boosted in a warm, relaxed friendly and stimulating learning environment.

We have a range of programmes to attract those least likely to engage in education, the booklet Family Learning in Action is available on the homepage of our website. Dads and Lads, Games, Gadgets and Machines, Fun Science Experiments are some of the parent and child programmes, while we also run parent only classes.

We work closely with DEIS schools and many community partners. This term they have short taster sessions on Family Olympics and Fantasy Football to engage parents/carers and children in fun literacy/numeracy activities, which they can continue at home.

As part of Family Learning in Clare Adult Basic Education Service, a group requested a visit to the Limerick College of Art and Design during open week.

Picture shows learners and staff viewing students work.

“Parents confidence in their ability to learn is boosted in a warm, relaxed friendly and stimulating learning environment.”
A Family Learning summer outing to Cragganowen, Co. Clare was included as part of the class.

The group and children are seen here with Clare Sheahan, Resource Tutor Clare Family Learning Project, CABES.

Lots of fun and a great group of learners and staff across all education strands turned up for the Family Learning Evening of Irish Culture and Music on 15th March 2011.

This was held in the Adult Education Centre, Ennis.

Parents of primary school children very engaged in Family Learning class at Ennis Educate Together National School, September 2011.

These parents really want to help their children do well in school.

Clare Family Learning Project is part of Clare Adult Basic Education Service and links to many local partners.
Third Level Access (ESF 2.4)

Student Assistance Fund

The Student Assistance Fund (SAF) provides financial assistance for full-time higher education students who are experiencing financial difficulties whilst attending college.

The SAF is funded by the Irish Government and part funded by the European Social Fund under the Human Capital Investment Operational Programme 2007 - 2013.

The Fund is managed by the National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education (a unit of the Higher Education Authority) on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills.

The fund fulfils an important role in ensuring that students with financial needs can receive support to ensure their participation and retention in higher education.

Support is provided under a range of headings contributing to the cost of rent, childcare, books, heating and food.

One of the recipient institutions of the SAF is Limerick Institute of Technology (LIT) which is committed to promoting equitable access participation in higher education for all members of society.

The aim of LIT’s Access Service is to support widening access for underrepresented students by delivering targeted strategies to promote and facilitate entry to and successful participation in higher education. These student groups include:

- Students who experience socio-economic disadvantage
- Students with Disability and/or Specific Learning Difficulty
- Mature Students
- Travellers and Ethnic Minorities

Students in LIT are informed of the SAF during their induction programme and in the LIT Student Handbook.

Throughout the academic year students are referred to the fund by peers and staff members across the Institute, LIT website, external agencies etc, www.studentfinance.

Posters advertising the fund are displayed on electronic screens throughout the campus.

The table below outlines the number of applicants and total spend from SAF 2004 - 2011.

As indicated in the table, a total of 192 students, 4.5% of the total registered full-time undergraduate students, received funding from the SAF during the academic year 2010 – 2011.
Student Assistance Fund in LIT 2004-2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Students Supported</th>
<th>Total Expenditure €</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004 - 2005</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>150,338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005 - 2006</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>157,884</td>
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<tr>
<td>2006 - 2007</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>161,095</td>
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<tr>
<td>2007 - 2008</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>168,640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008 - 2009</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>127,772</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009 - 2010</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>124,147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 - 2011</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>134,911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,199</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,024,787</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The comments below are an example of the feedback provided by students in LIT who were supported by the SAF in 2010-11

How beneficial was the Student Assistance Fund?

“Without the SAF I would be in greater debt than I am at present. I no longer have any savings; I’m not in receipt or eligible for any type of government assistance besides part maintenance grant, so I find it extremely hard to cope financially in college”. “I found the SAF was very beneficial as it really helped keep me on my feet. If I didn’t get the SAF I would have been under great pressure”.

“It was very beneficial as neither of my parents provide me with any financial assistance whatsoever. Without it, I would have had to drop out of college. It served a purpose and it came in handy, thank you for your care and support all through my years in college”.

“It really helped me to stay in college and complete my third year. I am so grateful for this fund. Thank you. The SAF provided me with the necessary funds to stay in collage. Without it, I would have had no option but to drop out. I am extremely grateful for all your help. The friendly nature of the girls always made me feel comfortable when asking for help and their level of professionalism was outstanding”.

“Very Beneficial. I wouldn’t have been able to carry on college without it”.

Are there any additional comments you would like to add?

“I found the SAF / Access staff extremely friendly and helpful. They put me at ease about the whole process. I’m glad there are people like them to talk to”.

“Staff providing this service went above and beyond with information and help relating to the fund. Thank you”.

“The Access Service was more than helpful and very friendly. If I had any problem with the form or questions they were more than willing to assist me”.

“The Access Service staff are so helpful and nice. They do way more than is expected of them”.

“Just to add how grateful I am for the fund and the help of those that run it”.

“Thank you again for allowing me to complete my course, as I couldn’t get a grant over family issues/arguments. Many thanks”.

“I would like to thank the SAF for this wonderful support given to me as a student, otherwise I don’t think I would have been able to cope financially”.

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Youthreach (ESF 2.5)

Buncrana Orienteering Project:
Pictured are learners (and their woodwork tutor) from Buncrana Youthreach who took part in an Orienteering project in conjunction with Buncrana Town Council and the Tidy Towns Committee which was spearheaded by Sean McGrory, Youth Development Officer, Inishowen Development Partnership (IDP).

The learners made the posts in the centre and helped the Council put them into the ground in Swans Park in Buncrana.

The orienteering course will be used by all primary and second-level schools in Inishowen. They were also involved in the map making process which involved undertaking two days of orienteering in Gartan and Roe Valley OECs.

The learners also showed the schools the route once it got up and running.

Ballyshannon Youthreach Cooking:
Pictured are Ballyshannon Youthreach learners Millie and Niamh at a cookery skills day in Donegal Manor where they also learned how to set a table and clean up after a meal.
Lifford Youthreach Achieve Gaisce Bronze Awards:

Gaisce – The President’s Award:

Gaisce - the President’s Award is Ireland’s very own National Challenge Award, the Country’s most prestigious and respected individual award programme.

What is it all about?
The President’s Award works on the basis of a personal challenge set by the individual. He/ she will set the challenge and agree it with a President’s Award leader.

How does it work and how to earn an award?
There are three different types of award that an individual can earn – bronze – silver and gold. There is a minimum age for each award.
Bronze – Minimum age of 15 years
Silver – Minimum age of 16 years
Gold – Minimum age of 17 years.

There are four different challenge areas and to earn an award the individual must participate in each of the four challenge areas. The areas are:
- Community Involvement
- Personal Skill
- Physical Recreation
- Adventure Journey

A Residential project is required for the Gold award.

Who can compete for the President’s Award?
The award is open to all young people between the ages of 15 and 25.

Ballyshannon Youthreach Cooking:
Pictured are learners Pól Mc Garrigle, Stiofan Hoynes, Andrew Walker and Debra Mc Ginley from Lifford Youthreach who achieved their Bronze Awards for Gaisce, The President’s Award.

The three boys were involved in the Lifford Tidy Towns Initiative while Debra participated in a Reading Buddy initiative based in Scoil Mhuire gan Smól, Lifford.

See left: Details regarding The President’s Award.
Hairdressing Demonstration with Donegal Hairdressing Academy

Throughout 2011 the NK10 project based in Listowel ran an Angling Education Programme covering all aspects of angling both freshwater and marine. The course was aimed at a target group of eight youths already engaging with our project.

The lads learnt a range of new skills including species identification, knot tying, bait harvesting, casting lessons, water safety awareness, rig making, fly tying, environmental awareness and fish conservation. The NK10 project was greatly assisted in delivery of this course by Inland Fisheries Ireland and the co-operation of the various local angling clubs who provided their fisheries and help without hesitation.

The course was also certified by Inland Fisheries Ireland and the youths that finished the course were awarded certs by the local fisheries officer.

Some of the youths have taken their angling to a much higher level and this is best exemplified by Gavin Stack who having already competed in a number of angling competitions finally got the reward for his hard work and dedication. The proud moment for Gavin came on January 8th when he won the junior section of the John Lacey Memorial Cup hosted by Tralee Bay Sea Angling Club.

This was fished on Fenit pier in testing conditions but using his skills and determination Gavin emerged in first place in the juvenile section owing to a fine overall catch of a conger, two rockling, a flounder and two dabs. All fish were returned alive. Considering the experienced competition he faced it was a fantastic achievement and he did not only himself but our project proud.
Last October we decided as a group to take part in a beauty programme with Beauty Therapist Celia Mullally. Over the 8 weeks we learned how to apply tan, gel nails, eyelash extension and carry out facials, pedicure, & eyebrow & eyelash tinting. The group as a whole found the experience very enjoyable and interesting.

One of the group members Nicola is very interested in studying and working in hair and beauty when she completes her leaving certificate this year. On finishing the programme we received certificates for participation in Beauty Therapy.

Following on from that programme the group also took part in a five weeks Beginners DJ Workshop with Mark Finn from the Young DJ Academy. The workshop consisted of learning how to set up the equipment, using equipment and different DJ techniques.

At the end of the programme we were also able to record an eight track mix from the music of our own choice.

Mark was so impressed with us that we travelled up to Dublin in May to visit a radio station and recorded a segment that will be broadcasted during the summer.

One of the members Issa said that “from doing the DJ’ing workshop I am considering going onto college to study music. I always had an interest in music; however I am now more focused on what I would like to do in the future”.

Nicole also said that she liked making her own individual CD and Tella said ‘I liked the DJ’ing workshop because I love music. She also liked doing the beauty programme because she is very interested in this line of work.

The group would like to thank staff and all the volunteer leaders for giving them the opportunity to participate and complete these programmes.
Curragh/Newbridge Garda Diversion Project

"Making Beautiful Music"

Pictured Above: Students receiving their certificates for participation in Beauty Therapist Awards

Pictured Below: Beginners DJ Workshop.
Investing in Your Future

SWAY Project – Waterford City

The SWAY Project is a Garda Youth Diversion Project based in Waterford City. The project’s catchment area includes the Sacred Heart and the Dunmore Road Neighbourhoods.

The project made an application to the IJJS for additional funding through ESF Sub Measure 1 (Personal Development) to deliver educational courses that were of interest and beneficial to the young people.

The aim of applying for this funding was to enhance the young people’s C.V., facilitate personal development, enable them to have the opportunity to engage in training courses that were of interest to them and identify possible future career paths.

Four young women aged between 17 and 18 years took part in an accredited Kayaking course and achieved certification in Kayaking Level 2 with Ardmore Adventure Centre Ltd.

This course proved to be both a mentally and physically challenging course for the young people and took a lot of determination from them to complete it.

Five young women also participated in a Make Up Artistry Course, run with local business Beauty Team in conjunction with Facemasters Make Up Academy which also included a photo shoot. The young women really enjoyed this course and gained new skills as a result of their participation.

As a result of ESF funding, the young people have built up core employment skills, knowledge and experience in the overall Hair and Beauty industry which has enhanced their C.V’s.

It has also given them the opportunity to experience achievement and encouragement to progress into different fields on completion of their Leaving Certificates.

Seven young women aged between 17-18 years completed a 6 week Introduction to Hairdressing course with Urban Hype Training Academy, which was run in a professional hairdressing environment.

This course was a huge success and there was great learning for the young people while also giving them a confidence boost as a result of working within a professional role and environment.

“...The aim of applying for this funding was to enhance the young people’s C.V., facilitate personal development, enable them to have the opportunity to engage in training courses…”
The Smart Project facilitated a 12 week course to build a remote control car on Tuesday evenings.

The purpose of the programme was to develop interpersonal skills i.e. how the young people relate to one another as well as to other people, helping them to improve their coping and problem solving skills.

While participating, the young people were able to practice their communication skills in a relaxed safe comfortable setting.

Two of the young males will use this programme towards their bronze president’s award skill. Overall the project was very successful among the young people.

Each participant completed their cars within the time frame. For the duration of the programme we had 100% attendance.

“The purpose of the programme was to develop interpersonal skills i.e. how the young people relate to one another as well as to other people, helping them to improve their coping and problem solving skills.”
TAR GYDP – Graffiti Project
See also Photo on cover of Newsletter and ESF in the Media News Article

Wheeler Dealer Project

Huge congratulations to the young men involved in the Wheeler Dealer Project. The programme is a subproject of Tipperary Regional Youth Service’s TAR youth Diversion Project. The young men under the guidance of Bernard O’Connor took on a project through welding, woodwork and steel fabrication.
Equality for Women – Gender Equality Division (ESF 2.8)

EWM Testimonials

The Equality for Women Measure (EWM) is a positive action programme led by the Department of Justice and Equality, which aims to foster gender equality in accordance with the National Women’s Strategy 2007-2016.

The EWM is funded by the Irish Government and the European Social Fund (ESF) and currently is operating 40 projects. Day to day management of the activity is undertaken by Pobal. Each year over 1,000 women benefit from training under this initiative.

The EWM aims to provide women (who are currently outside the labour market, and in areas of socio-economic disadvantage) with the social skills, education and training to enable them to enter or return to the labour market. There are also supports to develop female entrepreneurs. In doing so the EWM enables the economic empowerment of women. This accords with European Commission policy documents on gender equality, which identify the economic empowerment of women as essential for economic growth and social inclusion.

The following personal stories of two women participants on Equality for Women Activity sponsored project, describes how the project prepared and assisted them to build the skills and knowledge needed to successfully (re-)enter the labour market.

1. Mary Murphy and Teresa O’Brien provide below an account of their experiences participating on an EWM programme entitled ‘Stepping Stones’ with West Limerick Resources Ltd in 2011. This project aimed to provide access to the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) system to a cohort of unemployed rural women which will enhance their future employment opportunities.

In April 2009 I took voluntary redundancy and terminated my employment with Kostal Irl. in Abbeyfeale, Co. Limerick. After 22 years of working fulltime (shift and overtime) I found myself free of the pressures of a working mother, my second youngest third child was in Leaving Certificate and I only had two more Parent/Teacher meetings to attend….I was ‘at leisure’!!

I certainly did enjoy the first six months that I wasn’t working. The alarm clock was made redundant too!

I started to seek employment again in the autumn of 2009. I scanned the FAS website and sent my CV to potential employers by hand, email, and post. There wasn’t any work out there for me. I had one interview in 22 months! I felt that I was too old or my skills were outdated and I felt I was being left behind….I kept applying but the story was the same….most of my applications were not even acknowledged.

In January 2011 I took note of the advertisement in the local papers seeking applicants (female) for a Stepping Stones Programme (Equality for Women Activity) that would run for 6 months in the local community centre. I applied and was accepted to do the course.

The fact that this programme was run in our local community hall benefited the local shop where we bought the milk, etc. for our breaks. It ran for three days a week, keeping the community centre booked and busy.

There is a ‘domino’ effect that I certainly did enjoy the first six months that I wasn’t working. The alarm clock was made redundant too!"
The tips and ideas that other women had were very useful. We ran a series of workshops ourselves, on what we thought we were good at!

At the Induction morning, there were some familiar faces, friends and women I would yet get to know. Twenty of us started the course; we were of all ages, circumstances and situations.

We grew as a group, learning new skills every day. We learned a new craft, (knitting for me!) or perfected an existing one. I brushed up on my now rusty computer skills and enjoyed helping anyone that was new to computers.

We had workshops in ‘Start your own Business’ and ‘Women’s Rights’ but for me the best was ‘Interior Design’. The tips and ideas that other women had were very useful. We ran a series of workshops ourselves, on what we thought we were good at!

I was chosen to promote these workshops on local radio. The friendship, camaraderie, and sincerity of my colleagues meant that I grew as a person. I found my confidence return and my quest for employment didn’t seem as daunting as before.

I secured part-time employment in September 2011, as a school secretary, with the local primary school. The help I received from the course co-ordinator and West Limerick Resources was immeasurable, and without this help I would not have the confidence to apply for this position.

I keep in touch with the programme participants but more importantly with my course co-ordinator who is still there with help and advice when I need it.

The work that is done empowering women and encouraging us to reach our full potential is tremendous and is available for all women.
It was January, 2011, the weather was very bad and every time I turned on the radio or television it seemed to be all bad news and non stop talk about the recession. I was at the stage in my life where I had reared 5 children, found myself middle aged, the kids all gone, my confidence at a low and myself slipping into a rut where I could see no way forward, in this new world. I felt I was past my sell-by-date. An Equality for Women Measure (Stepping Stones Course) programme was advertised in Tournafulla in February 2011. I applied, was accepted and have not looked back since.

From the programme, I gained confidence, self worth; I mixed with people and listened to their ideas and opinions. I can truthfully say, I enjoyed every part of the course. I felt the years roll away as I got up each morning; washed, dressed, lunch packed and caught the bus to the programme. Everybody noticed the change in me and without I even applying for a job, I was offered two.

I choose a part-time job as a shop-assistant in a drapery shop, the work is not as physically demanding as what I have done in the past and I love meeting people.

I could not stress enough to people, young and old, “not to stay inside, but to apply for a course and keep your brain active”. When I look back at my time on the EVM programme, it is with great fondness and I am so thankful to everyone who made it possible for me to have had the chance to be part of the group.

Mary receiving her FETAC Level 3 certificate in General Learning from Danny O’Connell (Assistant Manager) West Limerick Resources Ltd.
Outlined below is a synopsis of the progression for one of the women that participated in year one of the Monaghan Employability Skills Programme which is managed by Monaghan Integrated Development and funded under the Equality for Women Activity 2010-2013, with funding from the European Social Fund (ESF) through the Human Capital Investment Operational Programme 2007-2013 and the Department of Justice and Equality.

Prior to engaging in the Employability Skills Programme, Mary had been out of the workforce for four years. Previously employed in the catering industry for a number of years, Mary found herself no longer able to work as she had to take on the role of full-time carer for a family member. When the time came for Mary to be in a position to return to the workforce, she had found this quite difficult as catering was no longer the area that Mary wanted to work in and she was unsure of the career direction that she should focus on.

When the Monaghan Employability Skills Programme was advertised in November 2010, Mary came along to the Information Morning to meet the Project Mentor, find out more about the course content and the supports available. Mary then completed the expression of interest form and was offered a place. Mary was determined to use this time to explore employment options and develop her skills and confidence to make the return to the workforce.

For Mary, the many benefits of the programme included the opportunity to work on a one-to-one basis with the Life Coach to set goals and develop her action plan. The group coaching sessions supported Mary in building her self-confidence and communication and interpersonal skills while the Employability Skills and Core Competencies workshops helped Mary in preparing for the transition from home to work, managing time more effectively and developing team work skills.

The FETAC accredited modules in Setting Learning Goals, Communications and Computers laid the foundation for a return to formal learning and since completion of the Employability Skills Programme in June 2011, Mary has been continuing with her education, on a part-time basis with County Monaghan VEC working towards achieving a full level 4 FETAC award and is undertaking modules in Mathematics, Local & Global Development Awareness, Personal Effectiveness, Organising Committees and Learning Advocacy.

Long-term, Mary would like to work in an advocacy / support role and is now linking in with the County Monaghan VEC AEGIS to explore further education courses in this area. Mary has also commenced part-time employment on a local community employment scheme. Mary agreed to join the steering committee of the Monaghan Employability Skills Programme and has been a great support to the committee in planning for the second phase of the project. In September 2011, Mary assisted the Project Mentor with the Information Morning for new project participants, where she was able to share her experiences of the programme with other women who were considering participating in the second phase.

Further information on the Monaghan Employability Skills Programme can be obtained by contacting Shauna Farrell, Project Mentor, Monaghan Integrated Development on 042 9749500 or email sfarrell@midl.ie.
The Equality Mainstreaming Unit held its annual conference on promoting equality and accommodating diversity in Vocational Education and Training (VET) on October 25th, 2011 in Dublin Castle.

The conference aim was to communicate the message that vocational education and training providers can have a highly positive impact on reducing inequality across the nine equality grounds if they integrate a focus on equality in the way they plan and deliver their services.

The conference was popular again this year with many delegates from VECs across the country in attendance.

This year the conference theme centred on the core challenge of maintaining a focus on equality mainstreaming strategies in a tightening economic environment. It highlighted the continued need for supports to build equality competency within education and training institutions to enable providers to design and deliver education and training programmes that can accommodate the needs of diverse learners while ensuring that their organisations are proactive and committed to promoting equality across the nine grounds covered by the equality legislation.

The conference was officially opened by Mr Ciaran Cannon TD, Minister for Training and Skills at the Department of Education and Skills. The conference also featured an international expert on equality and further education, Professor Sheila Riddell, Director of the Centre for Research in Education Inclusion and Diversity at the University of Edinburgh.

Sheila’s paper focused on how Vocational Education and Training can contribute to Equality and Social Inclusion at a time of economic crisis. She examined the current relationship of education to the equality agenda in Scotland and wider UK concluding that education has the potential to both sustain and challenge existing social inequalities.

However she warned that there is a danger that those at the educational and social margins will be the major victims of the current economic crisis.

This conference is supported by the Equality Mainstreaming Unit (EMU), which has been established with funding from the European Social Fund, through the Human Capital Investment Operational Programme 2007-2013, and from the Equality Authority.
Investing in Your Future

Mr. Padraig Kirk, CEO, Co Louth VEC, addressing the conference on the equality proofing project carried out by Co Louth VEC

Mr. Paul Smith Equality Officer, DCU, introducing participants to the on-line-equality training tool funded by the Equality Authority

Carole Sullivan (Head of the Equality Mainstreaming Unit) also addressed the conference. Her presentation detailed the work of the Unit and showcased a number of examples of equality mainstreaming tools developed by organisations funded by EMU. Dr Pádraig Kirk, Chief Executive Officer, Co. Louth VEC gave a very interesting and timely presentation on an equality mainstreaming project recently funded.

This project focused on Equality Proofing Adult and Further Education Provision to support the inclusion of Travellers in mainstream further education and training provision.

Each delegate received a USB key containing the relevant equality tools and materials. Finally, conference participants were given the opportunity to participate in an interactive session on 2 new e-learning tools to promote equality.

The Irish University Association Equality Network represented by Marie Connolly, Learning, Development & Equal Opportunities Manager, University of Limerick and Paul Smith, Equality Director, Dublin City University presented their E-learning tool on Employment Equality (funded by EMU) and the National Disability Authority represented by Shane Hogan, Senior Standards Officer, NDA on their recently developed E-learning tool on Disability Equality.
The Irish University Association’s Equality Network developed and tested an online equality and diversity training module on workplace equality for all staff within the university sector.

The online programme allows each participant the flexibility to complete the course at times and places that are most convenient to them.

The need for this type of flexibility was identified early in the project. The programme consists of 5 modules and participants can save their progress and return at any time.

**Module 1**
Understanding Diversity

**Module 2**
What’s it got to do with you?

**Module 3**
From Compliance to Commitment

**Module 4**
Recruitment & Selection

**Module 5**
Dignity & Respect

Six universities were actively involved in the implementation of this project. These were:

- Trinity College Dublin
- University of Limerick
- National University of Ireland Galway
- University of College Cork
- University College Dublin
- Dublin City University

The Gay and Lesbian Equality Network (GLEN) developed and piloted a high quality interactive online self-assessment tool on lesbian, gay and bisexual diversity, for employers in the financial services and in the information technology sector. Citigroup, Ernst and Young, Ulster Bank, Microsoft, Dell and IBM participated in the pilot phase.

The tool includes 15 downloadable resource guides. These guides include information on good practice from a range of organisations including An Garda Síochána, IBM, Microsoft, University College Cork, Irish National Teachers Organisation and the Public Service Executive Union. The online assessment tool is available here. www.diversychampions.ie

Full details of this project can be viewed on www.leadequalitynetwork.com
Migrant Integration (ESF 2.10)

EPIC – EMPLOYMENT FOR PEOPLE FROM IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES
EPIC - a successful model for helping immigrants find work in Ireland

The EPIC programme – Employment for People from Immigrant Communities – is funded by the Irish Government through the Department of Justice & Equality’s Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration and by the European Union under the Human Capital Investment Operational Programme 2007-2013. It is managed by Business in the Community Ireland.

EPIC has been in operation since 2007, supporting people from immigrant communities to become economically viable in Ireland, and therefore greatly increase their chances of integrating well into Irish society. Initially set up to work only with parents of Irish-born children, it was quickly expanded to cover all immigrants legally entitled to work in Ireland.

During the five years EPIC has been in place, we have developed and perfected a highly successful model for supporting people into employment and education.

Although EPIC only operates in the Dublin area, since 2007 over 1300 people from 91 countries have engaged with the programme.

Of these 1300 people, 69% have entered employment or further training/education. This is a real success story, and we are particularly proud of doing so well in 2011, a very difficult year for the Irish economy.

“69% have entered employment or further training/education. This is a real success story, and we are particularly proud of doing so well…”

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<th>Epic Results</th>
<th>2007</th>
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<tr>
<td>Number of people who engaged with EPIC</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>1315</td>
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<td>Number of people placed in employment</td>
<td>105</td>
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<td>104</td>
<td>129</td>
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<td>Number of people placed in Training/Education/Internships</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>363</td>
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<td>Total people placed per year</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>913</td>
<td>69%</td>
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**What is different about the EPIC programme?**

EPIC is a holistic model bringing together the skills and resources of business, NGOs, government agencies, the EU, and the commitment of the EPIC staff to support clients to successfully move away from unemployment and the social welfare trap.

The diagram (left) shows the many different elements that come together in the EPIC programme resulting in this highly effective model for supporting people into work & training.

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A great example of how businesses can share their skills to support the integration of immigrants is the Mock Interview process provided by CPL, a leading Irish recruitment agency.

As part of its corporate social responsibility strategy, CPL has partnered with EPIC since 2008 by providing Mock Interviews to our clients - 362 completed so far. The mock interviews concentrate on communication styles, body language, attitudes and the most effective answers to questions. Interviewees also get feedback regarding the layout of their CVs.

CPL recruiters focus their questions on the specific area where the candidate is looking for employment and also provide constructive feedback and recommendations on how to succeed in future interviews.

Finding work is a key factor in successful integration for immigrants.
Leonardo Chang attended a CPL mock Interview in February 2011. Originally from Sao Paulo, Brazil, he travelled to Ireland in 2007 to enrol in classes to improve his English language. “I was planning to stay for a short period of time but I fell in love with the country and decided to stay to pursue postgraduate studies and stay”.

Leonardo attended the EPIC Programme Pre-employment training and found the mock interview extremely helpful. “I didn’t know that I should be aware of my posture and body language. It is not just about having a good level of English. There are also cultural differences regarding the way you act and communicate in interviews here compared with Brazil”.

The mock interview strengthened his confidence and prepared him for the future. “The recruiter put me under pressure by asking challenging questions I was never asked before. I gained more experience and I am now prepared to give the right answers when I have my next interview”.

While attending the EPIC Programme service, Leonardo was applying for jobs and was shortlisted for interviews in a couple of companies.

Just a few days before completing the 6 weeks training Leonardo was selected and hired by an Insurance company for a full time position.

“The recruiter put me under pressure by asking challenging questions I was never asked before. I gained more experience and I am now prepared to give the right answers when I have my next interview”.

EPIC brings together many different elements to help immigrants find work or education in Ireland, a key factor in helping their integration. Take any one element away – training, individual support, government & EU support, business inputs, NGOs – and the programme would be significantly poorer.

Different clients will benefit most from different parts of our programme, but there is always something useful for each person. Treating people as individuals and tailoring the correct level of support to meet their needs is the key to our success.

For more information about EPIC, contact us at epic@bitc.ie or look at the Business in the Community website www.bitc.ie

Caitriona MacAonghusa, EPIC Co-ordinator
European Commissioner welcomes govt jobs initiative
Irish Examiner 1-06-2011

European Employment Commissioner Lázló Andor has said that the Government’s jobs initiative “includes many good ideas to get people into work” and should be built on further.

Speaking in Dublin today, Commissioner Andor also pointed out that Ireland is the second fastest spender of the European Social Fund and is on target to draw down €375m for measures supporting labour activation and getting people into the labour market.

Over the last two years, Ireland has submitted six applications for the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund for over €60m destined for training and job-search assistance for nearly 10 000 workers, he added.

“Ireland has influence because it engages”, he said. “That is how to get results in Europe. The effort that Ireland has put in over the years, with Europe’s help, on infrastructure, education and innovation will now pay off in getting through this very painful crisis.”

During his trip to Dublin the commissioner visited the city’s “Digital Skills Academy”, had talks with government ministers and spoke to the Institute of International and European Affairs on “Unemployment, Job Creation and the EU”.

“Ireland has influence because it engages”, he said. “That is how to get results in Europe.”
Empowering Traveller Women’s Entrepreneurs project - ETWE

Traveller women targeted as entrepreneurs
LORNA SIGGINS, Western Correspondent – The Irish Times Dec 6th, 2011.

A NEW project initiated yesterday by the Galway Traveller Movement will provide support services for women who may face obstacles when seeking to earn an income.

The project, endorsed in Ballybane by one of Ireland’s 10 EU ambassadors for female entrepreneurship, Liz Cassidy, is supported by the European Social Fund and the Department of Justice and Equality.

Traveller women were urged to overcome their fears and find their “inner entrepreneur”.

Bridget Kelly, from Athenry, Co Galway, told The Irish Times: “There is an entrepreneur in every woman, but you have to overcome the fear of losing social welfare and the fear of discrimination.”

“It was back in 2004, and my husband saw an empty shop unit in Loughrea and we came up with an idea for it,” she said.

“We sat down and did the homework and went for it . . . but I was afraid of losing the social welfare at the time, and was afraid of the stigma,” she said. Their business markets fireplaces and gates from their home in Athenry.

Ms Kelly, a member of the Travelling community, set up a fireplace business with her husband, who is from the settled community, seven years ago.

The project has identified opportunities in specialist flower bouquets; training services; event management; alterations, clothing design and dressmaking; and also a development of a social and cultural venue for Travellers. Many of these opportunities meet the demands within the Travelling community, for the reason that “Travellers know what Travellers want,” the association’s mentor Anne Costello said.

Ms Cassidy said that women entrepreneurs had to overcome “unique barriers such as lack of confidence and self-belief, fear of failure and juggling the demands of their business and personal lives”.

The Galway Traveller Movement has additionally established a Traveller Enterprise Development Unit. “Our vision is that by 2020, the Traveller economy in Galway city and county will be flourishing,” the movement’s co-ordinator Margaret O’Riada said.

“Travellers will be part of an ever-widening range of innovative community businesses and private enterprises,” she forecast.

Last week, President Michael D Higgins noted that Travellers have rights to their way of life, but the Travelling community’s “women and children have rights too”.

“It is a balance of rights, some of which must be resolved within the Traveller community,” he said.

“We should all of us, within the settled and the Traveller communities, have the intelligence and commitment to solve all these issues,” he said.
THE staff and trainees of the FAS Training Centre in Ballytivnan recently welcomed representatives from the European Commission and the Department of Education & Skills.

The occasion was used to showcase a number of local training success stories, which receive funding from the ESF (European Social Fund).

Ms Renate Schopf (Manager in the Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion Directorate General in the European Commission), along with representatives of the Department of Education and Skills’ ESF Managing Authority (Ireland) section, visited the FAS Centre to see first-hand a number of the ESF-funded labour market training initiatives currently offered to jobseekers in the locality and aimed at assisting them to enter the workforce.

Some of these training options currently available at the FAS Training Centre include bridging courses (e.g. computing skills) and Specific Skills Training courses, which include hairdressing, web design and roofing.

Specific Skills Training courses allow job seekers or job changers the opportunity to acquire specific job-related skills and formal vocational qualifications to facilitate re-entry to the workforce. FAS will seek to claim approximately €1.5m in ESF assistance each year for training carried out in Sligo under the 2007-2013 Operational Programme.

The visit to the FAS Training Centre was part of the delegates’ two-day visit to Sligo which also included a tour of a local Youthreach Centre and a briefing about its activities.
Huge congratulations to the young men involved in the Wheeler Dealer Project. The programme is a subproject of Tipperary Regional Youth Service’s TAR youth Diversion Project. The young men, under the guidance of Bernard O’Connor, took on a project through welding, woodwork and steel fabrication.

The young men worked throughout August and Saturdays during the school year to create the ‘graffiti wall’. The ‘Graffiti wall’ is a public and community art piece, which will be hung on the gable end of the TRYS building wall in early 2012.

One participant said that ‘The Graffiti Wall, it’s a creative idea, I am looking forward to seeing the piece hung somewhere in town, as we put huge work into the project.’

Since doing the project, two of the young men (Tony Buckley and lamie Buckley) have become more involved in Tipperary Regional Youth Service. Their attitudes have changed, and they have become more focused and determined.

They both felt the project gave them an insight into what careers they might choose in the future.

“It was a great experience, because you learnt how to weld, a new skill that I can take with me in the future and it also helped me in school and with my construction studies,” said Tony. “I really enjoyed the experience because when I went out there I learnt how to weld and I had the craic with the boys.”

I found myself going down the wrong road until the TAR Project accepted me onto the welding course which helped me get off the street and this skill will help me in the future.”

The piece is fantastic and probably the most ambitious project the TAR Project has ever taken on. It was the work of young people under the supervision of Bernard, who the lads referred to as “sound out a very good teacher”.

The work is very impressive considering the young people only started in August. The programme was funded by ESF (European Social Fund) to facilitate training and development to members of the Diversion Project.

So, as they say, watch this space (gable end of TRYS building, entrance to Blind Street) to see the good and ‘dasent’ work of the boys and their mentor Bernard.

“It was a great experience, because you learnt how to weld, a new skill that I can take with me in the future and it also helped me in school and with my construction studies...”