European Social Fund
Newsletter 2017

Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020
Foreword

Welcome to the 9th issue of the ESF Newsletter. It has been a very busy year for the ESF Managing Authority and our partners, participating in the Europe in My Region campaign for the first time and the launch of 24 new co-funded projects. The ESF MA also attended the Ploughing Championships in conjunction with the European Commission in Ireland.

2017 marks 60 years of the ESF in Europe. The ESF was set up in 1957 and over the years has evolved into the EU’s key instrument for investing in people. While helping people across the EU to find jobs for the first time, it also supports reskilling and upskilling. The ESF invests in projects that provide the most disadvantaged in society with opportunities to find or get back into work. The ESF also invests in better education opportunities and aims to reduce all types of discrimination.

This year’s newsletter highlights a variety of achievements of the ESF in Ireland during 2016 and 2017.

The ESF Managing Authority would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our partners for their continued support and commitment.

Pictured on the Front Page: Oxana Sereda, IT Skills Conversion Graduate and Killian Stokes, Springboard Graduate together with the Minister for Education and Skills, Richard Bruton T.D., Dr Vivienne Patterson, Head of Skills, Engagement and Statistics, HEA, the Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills, John Halligan T.D., and Dr. Graham Love, CEO, HEA launching Springboard+ 2017. Read Killian’s story on page 20.
EU in My Region 2017

Europe in My Region is an EU-wide campaign that aims to highlight the excellent work that projects across Europe are doing with the help of EU funding. As part of the campaign, the European Commission asks projects across Europe to open up their doors and hold events to mark the occasion. This year, for the first time, the ESF Managing Authority and Beneficiaries in Ireland got involved by holding various events across the country.

Limerick & Clare ETB

Limerick & Clare ETB kicked off the campaign on the 5th April with a Further Education and Training Opportunities Fair in Limerick. The Fair showcased the many FET opportunities for adult learners in Limerick, including both part-time and full-time courses, ranging from QQI Level 1 to Level 6.

Louth & Meath ETB

Louth & Meath ETB held three FET Information Fairs on Europe Day 9th May in Navan, Drogheda and Dundalk. Staff from LMETB were on hand to offer excellent advice and guidance to the public on all available FET options.
Dublin & Dun Laoghaire ETB

Fingal Adult Education Service and Youthreach Balbriggan jointly hosted an Open Day on 9th May. Members of the public were invited to meet tutors and discuss learning options.

The event celebrated 60 years of the ESF with a birthday cake and ESF decorated treats, baked by participants. The Open Day also featured a photo exhibition, displays of the centre’s work and a treasure hunt for visitors.

EURES Ireland

EURES Ireland held a Jobs Fair on Thursday 11th May to mark Europe Day and Europe in My Region. The event was aimed at jobseekers looking for work both locally and across Europe.

The Jobs Fair was attended by Irish employers and a number of locally based Employment, Training and Advice Agencies.

EURES Advisers from a number of other EU Member States were at the event to advise those interested in employment and career development options in those countries.

There were approximately 6,000 visitors to the Jobs Fair over the course of the day.
Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim ETB Youthreach

Youthreach Ballina celebrated its 25th Anniversary with a ‘Live Music’ Concert in Ballina Arts Centre on Tuesday 16th May.

Recognising the role that the ESF has played in helping fund this Programme, the Concert had a European Theme. Bunting and Flags were secured from the EU Commission and the Stage was suitably adorned for the Concert which was a great success.

Kerry ETB

On 29th May, Kerry ETB held the North Kerry FET Fair in Listowel. Aimed at jobseekers, second chance learners, guidance counsellors and parents, the Fair offered information on a wide range of courses as well as skills demonstrations and talks.

The fair also provided an opportunity to highlight the role of ESF and provide information on projects supported across Ireland with a particular emphasis on the key support for education and training in Ireland.

Kerry ETB has 20 FET centres spread across the County, offering hundreds of courses, both full and part time, as well as evening and online courses providing opportunities for people to build on their skills for work, life, family and community.
Young Person’s Probation - Southill Outreach

Southill Outreach, held a photographic exhibition from 15th June to 30th June showcasing their work with young people and their families as part of the Europe in My Region campaign.

The title of the exhibition was ‘Youth of Limerick, Citizens of Europe’ and was held in the Civic Offices in Limerick.

Southill Outreach operates a range of activities, incorporating preventative and supportive work for young people as well as providing a supportive service to their families.

Southill Outreach also provides an In-reach programme to young people detained in Oberstown or Trinity House.

Staff continue to engage with clients during their period of detention and are involved in devising pre-release programmes to enable the young people to re-integrate into their community on their release.
On 24th August, Dóchas don Óige held a *Europe in My Region* event to showcase the work that they do, as well as celebrate their 21st birthday. They also launched the first Dóchas don Óige Annual Report at the event.

Dóchas don Óige is a Young Person’s Probation Project, providing services for young people in the Galway City area. The primary concern of Dóchas don Óige is to provide young people with a second chance. This is a key concept and not only does the centre offer an alternative means of pursuing education for young people, it also guides and counsels young people and their families.

Dóchas don Óige is very lucky to have excellent highly experienced staff and tutors who are supported by wonderful volunteers who give so freely of their expertise and time.

Dóchas don Óige trainees, past and present, were awarded with their certificates at the event, giving everybody an opportunity to celebrate their achievements of the past academic year.

Trainees were joined by their family and friends, as well as the project’s tutors, Board of Management and representatives from their partner agencies including the ESF Managing Authority, the Probation Service and Galway and Roscommon ETB.

Dóchas don Óige have asked us to express their thanks to everyone who came along to support them and make the day a great success, with a special thanks going to Angela Coyne for donating her skills and expertise to producing their Annual Report.

For further information please visit: www.dochasdonoige.ie
SICAP Photo Competition

As part of the Europe in My Region campaign a national SICAP photo competition was held, with the theme being the work of SICAP projects that was supported by the ESF and the Youth Employment Initiative.

The winning entry was submitted by Kilkenny LEADER Partnership and features Rob Bresnan, who was supported to establish his own fitness business under SICAP.

Rob has a Degree in Strength & Conditioning from Limerick Institute of Technology but having worked part time in two gyms – one in Waterford City and the other in Clonmel in South Co. Tipperary, Rob was struggling to find sustainable employment. Following a period of unemployment from October 2016 – early spring 2017, it became increasingly clear to Rob that self-employment was his best option in terms of a sustainable living.

Working with Lisa and Conor from the Kilkenny LEADER Partnership SICAP team, Rob developed an offering that he believed would draw a client base in Waterford city. The core offering is based on semi personal training delivered to groups of five, spread across sixteen sessions over a one month period.

In a three month period, the business idea was packaged, tested across potential clients and priced. A good quality premises in Waterford City was secured. The necessary finance to support the establishment of the business was accessed through family loans. The Back to Work Enterprise Allowance was also secured and acts as a key contributor to the sustainability of the business in the medium term. Ultra-Performance (www.ultraperformance.ie) was opened in early April 2017. Rob already has seventy clients and room to grow this. He has taken on two trainees under the Linked Work Experience Programme. Both trainees will train in the sector and have the potential to become full time employees as the business grows.

Congratulations to Rob and we wish him the best of luck with Ultra-Performance. We would also like to take the opportunity to recognise the support offered to Rob by the staff in the Kilkenny LEADER Partnership, well done to all!
A Special Thank You

All of these events were included on the European Commission’s interactive map of events (http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/communication/inform-network/map/).

The ESF Managing Authority would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere thanks to all the staff and participants who made our first *Europe in My Region* so successful.

If you are interested in taking part in next year’s campaign please contact the ESF Managing Authority on (01) 8892003 or peil@education.gov.ie
Migrant Integration and Gender Equality Projects
Call for Proposals

On 25th January, Tánaiste and then Minister for Justice and Equality Frances Fitzgerald, T.D. and Minister of State with responsibility for Integration, Immigration and Equality Mr. David Stanton, T.D. announced funding of €8.5 million to promote gender equality and to help the integration of migrants.

Eighty applications were received and following the assessment process, 23 projects across the country were awarded grants. Five projects focusing on the Employment and Integration of Migrants will receive over €3.28 million in funding support over four years, while over €5.2 million over three years was awarded to 18 Gender Equality projects aimed at Women Returning to the Workforce and Women’s Entrepreneurship.

Both the Integration and Employment of Migrants and Gender Equality activities come under Priority 2 of the PEIL, which targets funding at promoting social inclusion, combating discrimination and promoting equal opportunities.

Integration and Employment of Migrants
Enyinna’s Story

The Employment for People from Immigrant Communities (EPIC) programme makes an impact on integration and social inclusion in Ireland. When Enyinna Ngwobia left Nigeria, he had completed graduate studies including Master’s Degrees in Political Science and Public Administration. “Coming from Africa, I knew I had to work hard to find a job and I was ready given the fact that things are done differently in the western world”. Despite having over 10 years professional experience with the last two particularly focused on project management and business, he still found it very difficult to get a job in Ireland. “My applications for employment were always rejected, even in cases I was sure I was qualified for, so consequently, I jumped to the easy conclusion that I was a victim of ‘racism’. I lost confidence and zeal, believing all was futile”.

Enyinna's Story
Joining the EPIC Programme, Enyinna was able to understand the differences between Nigeria and Ireland regarding the process of applying for jobs. “After attending the training I could hardly recognise my original CV. I was able to reshape it and learned more about how to prepare cover letters. I attended a mock interview in CPL and the recruiter prepared me on how to explain the responsibilities presented in my CV using key words. Additionally, the team building activities organised with classmates were very helpful to socialise and develop networks”.

Enyinna was assisted through one-to-one sessions with an expert Training and Employment Officer receiving guidance and supports on how to shape his career path in Ireland. “I was able to identify specific roles suitable for my background and knowledge. The coaching sessions allowed me to learn more about how to present my experience in my job applications and helped me to build my confidence”.

Business in the Community Ireland’s networks with companies were key to Enyinna’s progression into employment. “The learning sessions about CV preparation and interview skills provided by recruiters and staff members from blue chip businesses such as Accenture, Indeed and Enterprise Rent a Car were the best part of my experience. At the end, I was ready for those interviews and able to present myself in four sentences within thirty seconds. Such links with businesses helped me to find a job with a leading ICT company and now I know for sure that I will soon get into my dream career”.

Business in the Community Ireland (BITCI) specialises in providing advice and guidance to leading companies on corporate responsibility and sustainability and also works in education and employment. It runs programmes tackling issues on integration and social inclusion working with businesses, the government and the non-profit sector. The EPIC Programme, operated by BITCI, supports immigrants to become economically independent and more socially integrated in Ireland. Participants develop job seeking skills through pre-employment training, one-to-one support and work experience opportunities. Since its inception in 2008, over 2,600 people from 100 nationalities have engaged with the services. 67% of clients have secured employment or entered training or volunteering positions.

More information is available at: www.bitc.ie
Gender Equality

The Empower Programme

The Empower Programme is a new Female Entrepreneur Programme targeted at female entrepreneurs from Galway, Mayo and Roscommon.

The programme plans to address specific challenges facing females and will help to fast track female-led business development.

The EMPOWER programme will help identify market opportunities, build confidence and assess skills to implement ideas or scale businesses. Two different opportunities for female entrepreneurs are involved:

- **EMPOWER Start**, which is designed to test innovative ideas for market acceptance, is aimed at females with an early stage idea or in business for less than one year. A part-time programme, delivered over a 12 week period, it will allow participants balance any family commitments while planning and developing their new business.

- **EMPOWER Growth**, focuses on women who are already in business for over two years and who are looking to grow their business. It will offer support from peers and mentors with monthly engagement over 11 months.

EMPOWER will be delivered by the GMIT Innovation Hubs who have a successful track record in delivering entrepreneurship programmes across the region. Established in 2006, GMIT iHubs are two Innovation Hubs based on the GMIT Campuses of Galway and Mayo. The iHubs provide entrepreneurs with a supportive environment to progress business ideas from concept to commercial success.

For further details on EMPOWER please see www.empowerher.ie
Gender Equality

Women’s Rural Entrepreneurial Network

The Women’s Rural Entrepreneurial Network (WREN) project is aimed at female entrepreneurs living in Cork and Limerick. The project will help and support women who want to start, or have started their own business in the last two years.

The WREN project will provide the option of a part-time CIT accredited business course which is designed to suit existing work and family commitments. Training will include personal development and business skills, one to one and group mentoring, themed networking and experiential learning events, formation and facilitation of networking sessions and a business pitching event.

SECAD (South & East Cork Area Development) will lead the project, working in partnership with Ballyhoura Development in Limerick and Cork Institute of Technology’s Rubicon Centre and Hincks Centre for Entrepreneurship Excellence.

Minister of State for Justice David Stanton T.D., Suzanne Kearny, Assistant CEO SECAD, Dorothy O’Tuama, Lee Valley Taste Trails and Toni McCaul, SECAD, Programme Manager pictured at the launch of the WREN Programme
Success at Donegal ETB

Buncrana & Glengad Youthreach Win Innovation and Entrepreneurship Award

Youthreach learners from the Buncrana and Glengad Youthreach Centres won 3rd place in the Innovation and Entrepreneurship category of Donegal ETB’s Annual Awards on 28th April 2017.

Their winning entry used work they had created for their annual Craft Fair which had a Wild Atlantic Way theme. They reused and recycled drift wood and washed up materials from the shoreline of Lough Swilly on the Inishowen Peninsula and the Atlantic tides to produce high quality craft items to sell at their Fair in December 2016.

All funds raised at the Fair were donated to two local charities, the Donegal Hospice and St Vincent de Paul.

Pictured L-R are Youthreach learners Martina Doherty, Louise Doherty, Mandy Doherty and Nicole Jamison receiving the award on behalf of the Youthreach Centres from Donegal ETB Chief Executive Anne McHugh (centre)
ETB Training for the Unemployed

Former Donegal ETB Learner Receives Global Recognition

Former Donegal ETB learner Joanne McKenna from Glenfinn has received global recognition for her achievements in completing the Software Tester Application programme run by Donegal ETB’s Training Centre in Ballyraine, Letterkenny. Joanne was awarded a City and Guilds Medal for Excellence which recognises the achievements of learners, lecturers and trainers who have achieved great results by producing exceptional work, going above and beyond what is expected to achieve their results. It recognises not only excellent results but also those who show a true journey of progression throughout their qualification. It is a global programme that has now been running for over one hundred years. Joanne’s training was completed through ETB Training for the Unemployed funded under Priority 1 of the PEIL 2014-2020.

Joanne came to the course with no former knowledge of software programming or testing. Her lead tutor, Paul Heron, recognising her excellence in her approach to learning and the application of this learning in the testing environment, put her forward for the award. City and Guilds has some two million learners worldwide taking their programmes every year; out of these two million they award 87 medals each year and Joanne was only one of three people in Ireland to receive it for 2015-2016.

A special presentation was made to Joanne (pictured centre) at Donegal ETB’s Annual Awards on 28th April 2017 in recognition of her outstanding achievement in winning a Medal for Excellence.

Joanne is currently employed as a software tester and support with Firecloud 365 in the Co-Lab in Letterkenny Institute of Technology.

L-R are Michael Carr, Assistant Manager, Ballyraine Training Centre; Paul Heron, lead tutor, Software Tester Application programme; Joanne McKenna; Anne McHugh, Chief Executive, Donegal ETB and Guven Faraci, Contracted Training Officer
Back to Education Initiative

Tourism Opportunities on the Wild Atlantic Way

At a Donegal ETB planning meeting, where the Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) programme reviewed county wide provision, a need to update the training offered in line with employment opportunities was identified. The potential offered by the Wild Atlantic Way and a reportedly growing sector prompted Donegal ETB to identify a suitable award, that would be developed and offered to replace their traditional Office Skills.

The Hospitality and Tourism Operations (Hotel Front Office QQI Level 4) award was developed and introduced on a pilot basis. Commencing in September 2016, the programme was offered in three Donegal ETB FET centres at locations in Ballyshannon, Stranorlar and Milford. The programme is being delivered on a part-time over 2 years.

Following research into the sector, suitable modules were identified in order to give potential students the best advantage on entering the world of work whilst still satisfying the requirements of the award.

In an effort to improve the employability of their students, Donegal ETB liaised with Fáilte Ireland, the Irish Hotels Federation and various hospitality providers to identify the needs of Hoteliers and Tourism Providers. Additional training, site visits and guest speakers were added to the curriculum in response to these identified needs. The BTEI programme aims to raise students’ employability and equip them with skills that add value to the tourism sector.

Donegal ETB plans continued engagement with the hospitality and tourism industry as the programme enters its second year. Their aim is to get the students out of the classroom and to immerse them in the industry as much as possible.
Adult Literacy

A Busy Year for Kerry ETB’s Adult Learners

Family Learning – Dads & Lads Woodwork

Susanne McCarthy, tutor with the Caherciveen Adult Literacy and Basic Education Centre delivered the “Dads & Lads Woodwork Project” in the Woodwork Room in the O’ Connell Centre. The project aimed to have parents and their children working together in an enjoyable learning experience. It provided practical meaning to a number of mathematical concepts, symbols and the language of maths. It helped to encourage parents to develop an awareness of their children’s learning. The communication skills of both parents and children were enhanced through team work and discussion.

Food Choice & Health

John Casey, tutor with the Caherciveen Adult Literacy and Basic Education Centre delivered a Food Choice and Health course for adult learners.

The course was delivered in a practical way for everyday life while also assisting the learners to develop their literacy and numeracy skills.

The course facilitated learners to appreciate value for money when food shopping and to participate in the preparation of healthy meals, e.g. breakfast and lunch/dinner. They also learned common safe practices associated with food preparation and storage.
Adult Literacy

President Welcomes Kerry Learner

A woman who once thought she “was too old and just not able”, was a special guest of President Michael D Higgins at a reception in Áras an Uachtaráin for adult literacy learners and their tutors.

Margaret Scully from Killarney is an adult learner who has been taking classes in reading, writing, maths and technology with Kerry ETB over the last seven years. Like many people, her learning journey started when her young boys went to school and needed help with their homework. “I would make every excuse not to help them because I had nothing to draw from. I got six years of education. I started at 6 and finished at 12. Many young people left school early to go to work. While this is thankfully less frequent today, it was common in the past”.

Kerry ETB Learner Margaret Scully shaking hands with President Higgins at Áras an Uachtaráin. Also in the photo is Aoife McCormack, Kerry ETB County Adult Literacy Organiser (third from the right).
Since starting literacy and adult basic education classes with Kerry ETB, Margaret has done other things with her new found confidence and skills, including taking up community roles, such as being the South Kerry Coordinator for the Team Hope Project that organises shoe boxes as presents for disadvantaged children at Christmas time. Margaret has also trained as a NALA Literacy Ambassador, to go out and give talks to others about her experience. “This has opened up so many avenues for me and that is what I want for others. If I can do it anyone can. So take that first step and get your foot in the door. It is a free and confidential service”, says Margaret.

In welcoming the guests at Áras an Uachtaráin President Higgins said, “I think that experiencing literacy difficulties can create an atmosphere that is dark and lonely for so many people. I want to particularly welcome those who have taken on the challenge of addressing this and sharing their accounts with others. He went on to say that the importance and value of literacy cannot be underestimated, describing it as “a significant step forward towards the achievement of equality and social justice; towards a fair, ethical and equal society where there is no conversation we cannot have, no information we cannot access, no doors that remain closed to us. It is heartening to witness the progress that has been made during recent decades in Ireland in the development of adult literacy and in helping individuals improve their basic skills. There is still much work to be done, however.”

Kerry ETB has eight Adult Literacy & Basic Education Centres spread around the county. Phone (066) 7193900 or go to www.kerryetb.ie for further information.
Springboard+

Postgraduate Certificate in Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Enterprise

Following 13 years of working in the international aid sector, Killian Stokes returned to Ireland in 2014 seeking a career change. While between projects and trying to figure out his next steps, he received a letter in the post about Springboard+.

Killian applied and was accepted onto the Postgraduate Certificate in Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Enterprise at UCD’s Innovation Academy as part of the Springboard+ programme in 2015. The course ran two days a week, giving Killian time to explore ideas and work on other projects.

The course encouraged Killian to think about new ideas while also providing him with the opportunity to connect with other entrepreneurs through UCD’s graduate network. This is where Killian met his now business partner Shane.

Here is Killian’s Story:

I had been working in the international aid sector for several years but had started to become restless with the sector. As part of my work, I travel to quite a lot of countries in Africa, such as Ethiopia, and it was here where my thinking really began to change. During a visit to Ethiopia in 2013, I met a group of entrepreneurial women who had lifted their families out of poverty within 18 months. They had radically changed their lives through their own hard work and without dependency for aid or hand-outs. For me this was a light bulb moment. This was the start of my own journey away from charity and international aid and more towards trade, jobs, profits and shared value.
Around the same time as I was undertaking the Springboard+ course I connected with Proudly Made in Africa, a not-for-profit organisation that facilitates and promotes ethical trading of African goods. Through them I really started to learn about ‘Shared Value’ and the vast opportunities that exist for resource rich developing countries in Africa, such as Ethiopia, to harness the potential of their own resources and move beyond commodity trading.

Having previously travelled in coffee growing regions of Africa, I often had the opportunity to hike through beautiful mountains and forests and meet local coffee farmers, people who were producing some of the best beans but who were also some of the poorest people on the planet. These experiences, mixed with the insights and learnings I gained through Proudly Made in Africa and Springboard+, led me to set up a small tester project, BeanTribe, a subscription service to deliver African roasted coffees to Irish consumers and as part of this I went coffee hunting in Ethiopia.

There I met a Dutch company called Moyee Coffee that had a roastery set up. I met their coffee farmers, walked the land, saw where the coffee cherries were picked, and the beans washed, dried, delivered, roasted and bagged and I walked out with the finished product – coffee beans that grade in the top 15% in the world!

After this, and having connected with Shane, I used the entrepreneurial energy and skills I had learned through the Springboard+ course to bring Moyee Coffee (www.moyeecoffee.ie) to Ireland and the U.K. Now, 12 months on, we have Moyee Coffee in businesses and retail stores throughout Ireland. We supply Moyee Coffee to Groupon in Ireland, Poland and Germany, and we want to continue to take it worldwide.

The course itself was fantastic. It enables you to generate new ideas and gives a fresh approach to creative thinking. It showed me that anyone can be innovative and become an entrepreneur.

Things I learned on the course I still use in my everyday life. Like the power of post-it notes for brainstorming (one idea one post it!) and it taught me how to get curious - If the lid on your coffee cup keeps falling off and burning your hand – don’t get angry, instead get curious and then design a better lid!

I can’t recommend Springboard+ enough. It encourages further education, which is vital, and it has helped me to gain new energy and direction. If you’re unhappy in your career or are just looking for something new, I would definitely say to check it out.

You can find information on Springboard+ at www.springboardcourses.ie
Garda Youth Diversion Project (GYDP) - Kilrush

‘Heart to Art’

Heart to Art uses the creative process of making art to improve a young person’s physical, mental and emotional well-being. The creative process involved in expressing one’s self artistically helps the young people to resolve issues as well as develop and manage their behaviours and feelings, reduce stress and improve self-esteem and awareness. By providing access to an Art Project the young people have a positive alternative use for their free time. This reduces the potential for being drawn into negative behaviour and negative activities.

Prior to creating an art board, the young people are asked to think about what they want to paint and why. They are then required to research and create an inspiration board and to discuss what they want to achieve from the project. This opens up a dialogue and discussion with individuals and groups and focuses the young people on why and what they are creating. The boards that each individual eventually creates are born from their own ideas and sentiments which further solidify their attachment and pride in their finished art work.
Art is used as a way to engage with young people in a fun and rewarding way. The project allows young people to engage with a significant adult in a positive way. It provides a safe space in a friendly environment with the added benefit of being a structured weekly event, allowing for routine and reliability for those with chaotic or unstructured lives. It also teaches young people how to share space with others.

All those involved learn how to work to a deadline and realise the commitment needed to achieve their desired result. All involved quickly become aware that their art pieces would not magically finish themselves. They would only be completed because of their own effort and time dedicated to this project. These are strong life lessons that help develop resilience and serve the young people well beyond their involvement with the **Heart to Art** project or their GYDP.

Throughout the weeks of the programme, the young people are seen to help each other with no expectation of reward and push each other to succeed and finish their boards. At times several young people work together to complete a board if a peer is struggling with a task.

The completion of an art board is an achievement in itself and encourages feelings of self-worth and satisfaction at the accomplishment of a job well done. The Art Exhibition at the end of the project strengthens these feelings. It does this by allowing family, friends, teachers, funders and the general public the opportunity to see the results of their hard work and dedication and that the young people have created something of which they can be proud.

Heart to Art is a programme delivered by Clare Youth Services who manage Ennis GYDP and Kilrush GYDP and can be contacted at info@clareyouthservice.org.
Foróige’s Youth Entrepreneur of the Year 2017

In modern Ireland one of the key buzz words is enterprise. There is a great emphasis on people, especially young people becoming innovative and self-sustaining. The Irish Youth Justice Service now places great emphasis on increased employability prospects and self-sustainability, particularly under the ESF funding stream. In this regard the Acorn Project has two young people who excelled in 2016/17.

Claire Hutchinson (17) and Gabrielle Mooney (15) are shining examples of this in action. These girls undertook the Foróige Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE) programme culminating in great success in March 2017. Both girls came up with the concept of making individualised dog collars from shirt collars. They put a lot of research, imagination and hard toil into developing their idea. With their work ethic and the help of staff the product blossomed.

Claire and Gabrielle’s business idea was entered into Foróige’s 2017 Youth Entrepreneur of the Year awards. They were first very successful at County level before moving on to the Regional Finals. At the Regional Finals, in the Bridge House Tullamore, the girls were ecstatic when they once again were successful being awarded the top prize.

From here it was on to the Mansion House in Dublin for the National Finals. At this event they were highly commended and were interviewed by RTE News. The girls made the final seven out of 1,000 young entrepreneurs who set up start-up businesses as part of the Foróige NFTE programme this year.

Nifty Dog collars is one for the future. With the help of the Acorn Project the girls are now in discussion with Offaly Local Development Company, and the Local Enterprise Office to explore how to develop this concept into a fledgling business. The level of support they are receiving is heartening. The transformation that has occurred for these two young people is simply amazing. Whatever the ultimate outcome of this business idea is, there is no doubt that both of these young ladies now have a far greater appreciation of their talents which will hold them in good stead for the future.
Le Chéile is a mentoring programme aimed at reducing youth offending behaviour in the community. It is the first mentoring programme for young offenders in the country and today operates in Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Clare, South Tipperary, Midlands, Waterford and Meath.

The programme is a one-to-one relationship-based support service in which volunteers from local communities provide a positive role model for the young person by acting as an advisor and friendly support. Le Chéile also delivers parent mentoring, offering parents support and help in managing their child’s offending behaviour.

‘Reducing Youth Crime in Ireland’ is a detailed evaluation of the Le Chéile volunteer mentoring programme and its activities over the period 2013-2015. The evaluation report was launched on 30th March 2017 by the Probation Service. The report notes that for every euro spent on the programme, €4.35 is returned in social and economic benefits.

One of the key recommendations in the report was that, given the high social return from mentoring, Le Chéile should continue to be resourced and expanded to regions in Ireland where there is unmet or latent demand.
The report also found that the key benefits for mentees include:

- Reductions in offending behaviour (average 28%, with attribution of nearly half to mentoring);
- Reductions in alcohol (12%) and drug use (16%);
- Improved self-confidence (25%), hopefulness (25%), and happiness (23%);
- Greater involvement in activities outside the home (28%);
- Greater involvement or reengagement in education, work and training (25%);
- Improved communication skills (24%);
- Moving away from negative peers (9% improvement in relationship with peers), and
- Improved relationships with parents (11%), other family (8%), & persons in authority (23%).

Probation Service Director, Vivian Geiran, said, "Mentoring has always been a key part of probation work. The relationship between a trained and skilled mentor and a young person can play a crucial part in helping a young person on probation to turn their life around and stay out of the criminal justice system".

Third Level Access - Institute of Technology - Tralee

European Access Network Conference

Christina Boland and Katie Coffey are Third-Level Access Officers based at the Institute of Technology, Tralee. As members of the Traveller community, Christina and Katie’s presentation ‘Travellers on the Education Journey: Peer Access Support Project’ at the EAN Conference in Dublin in May 2016, shared a little of their own experiences in education before moving on to speak about the Junior Cycle, Senior Cycle and Mature Student initiatives that they co-ordinate at the Institute.

Through their work and their networks over the past five years, they have reached out to Traveller students in mainstream second-level schools through the Star Pupil programme to learn about the students’ experiences and their needs and to support them on their journey and help them to follow their dreams. Christina and Katie have linked with over 70 students from the Traveller community.

A series of partnerships with the adult community has seen 14 mature learners achieve single subject certification at the Institute, seven achieved a Minor Award at HETAC Level 6 and five entered employment. The success of the Traveller Access Programme has been attributed to Travellers seeing other Travellers working and studying at the Institute, the support of Champions and Role Models from both the Traveller and settled communities, partnership and honesty, the Travellers voices being heard, cultural awareness, home visits and providing education courses for Traveller parents.