European Social Fund

Newsletter 2018

Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020
Foreword

Welcome to the 10th issue of the European Social Fund’s Newsletter. It has been another very busy and successful year for ESF projects in Ireland. Our Newsletter highlights just some of the achievements of the ESF in Ireland, including the launch of the Ability Programme and Springboard+ 2018, participant stories and articles from a number of our projects and programmes.

This year marks a number of big milestones; EU cohesion policy and Youthreach celebrate their 30th anniversaries and it is the 45th anniversary of Ireland’s membership of the EU.

The ESF Managing Authority would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our partners for their continued support and commitment and to all of the projects who submitted articles for this year’s Newsletter. We congratulate and wish continued success to all those who have participated in ESF projects and contributed to the fantastic achievements of ESF in Ireland.

We are always happy to accept articles and material for our Newsletters. If you would like to submit to next year’s 2019 newsletter, please contact us at peil@education.gov.ie. You can also keep up to date with the ESF Managing Authority on Twitter @ESF_Ireland and on our website www.esf.ie

We hope you enjoy reading our Newsletter!

Cover Photo:

L to R: Maria Staunton (EMPOWER Programme Manager), Vicki O Toole (MD of JJ O Toole), Aine Mulloy (GirlCrew), Lorraine Corcoran (Cosmetic Creations), Donna Kennedy, Carol Coleman (MC and Journalist), Alison Cowzer (East Coast Bakehouse) and Norah Patten (Aeronautical Engineer)
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In 2018, Cohesion Policy celebrates its 30th anniversary. Over the last 30 years Cohesion Policy has become one of the most important policies of the European Union. It is the EU’s policy behind hundreds of thousands of projects all over Europe that receive funding from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Cohesion Fund (not applicable to Ireland). Cohesion Policy targets all regions and cities in the European Union; supporting employment, innovation, education, inclusion and the shift towards a low-carbon economy.

To celebrate this milestone, the European Commission organised a number of events and exhibitions. In addition, a number of emblematic projects from across the EU were selected to highlight how Member States have benefited from the funds.

We are very proud that one of the projects chosen was Business in the Community Ireland’s Employment of People from Immigrant Communities (EPIC) which is co-funded by the ESF in Ireland.

EPIC is the only project from across the EU that has been selected as an exemplar of the use of European Funding to assist migrants in finding employment and education. The EPIC programme helps disadvantaged and vulnerable migrants to raise their skills and to find employment and training opportunities, including work placement and mentoring.
Integration and Employment of Migrants

EPIC: Sara Sue’s Story

The Employment for People from Immigrant Communities (EPIC) Programme has been supporting migrants into employment and accessing education and training for 10 years, making a positive impact on diversity and social inclusion in Ireland.

Sara Sue left Peru for Ireland in 2012. She has a background in Business Management, Systems Engineering plus seven years of experience as an IT consultant. “With my experience I thought it was going to be easy to find a job, but I was wrong.”

She experienced a variety of challenges trying to adapt to life in Ireland such as her lack of networks. “Moving to Ireland was a very big change. At the beginning I didn’t have connections, friends or the opportunity to work and to be productive, so, I was totally dependent on my partner.” In the meantime, she kept busy and continued training to improve her skills. “I took some training online to keep upskilling accordingly with the current needs of the labour market.”

She had experience working in English for the North American market, and yet she struggled with Irish culture differences as she became aware that she needed to adapt to the new environment.

In 2013 she joined the EPIC Programme and learned about CV standards in Ireland.

“Before starting the programme, I was questioning myself professionally because all the job applications I sent were rejected and not getting into any interview stage. After the programme, I stopped questioning my capacity and experience as a professional and started to understand why my job applications did not get any answers.”

One of the most valuable teachings she learned through the EPIC Programme was the cultural differences existing between Peru and Ireland.
Business in the Community Ireland’s networks with companies was key for Sara Sue’s progression into employment

“The mock interview provided by CPL was definitely one of the most valuable experiences I went through with the programme. It allowed me to learn what recruiters expect from candidates and I kept using all those tips I have learned over the years.”

While she was attending the EPIC training, she applied for a job, got to the interview stage and at the end of the training she was hired by a leading ICT company in her area of expertise. Five years later she is working for another leading company in Ireland.

“What I appreciate the most from my current role, is the opportunity to work with people from different backgrounds and cultures.”

Sara Sue continues to collaborate with the EPIC Programme by delivering peer talks for different groups in training; sharing her experience and providing tips that could assist in job seeking.

“I believe that having the support of the EPIC Programme allowed me to get my first job in Ireland and it was a life changing experience.”

Business in the Community Ireland specialises in providing advice and guidance to leading companies on corporate responsibility and sustainability and also runs education and employment programmes. Their employment programmes work with businesses, the government and the non-profit sector to tackle integration and social inclusion issues.

The EPIC Programme supports migrants 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 3,200 people from 101 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/business-action-programmes/business-action-on-employment/are-you-a-jobseeker/
Welcome To Work: Belen’s Story

Originally from Spain, Belen decided to take a career break from her job in Elevator Emergency Response and move to Ireland to improve her English. She was working part-time in a supermarket and as a volunteer for Oxfam in Galway but was struggling to integrate within the community as she felt that her conversational English was poor. When she saw an online advertisement for the Welcome to Work programme, she didn’t hesitate to get in touch with Seetec.

Welcome to Work is delivered by Seetec in Galway, Castlebar and Monaghan. The 13-week course offers people who have moved to Ireland support with boosting their employment opportunities. Participants undertake training to improve their English language, learn how to use a computer, gain skills in searching and applying for jobs online, build a professional CV and gain interview skills.

Belen found the programme welcoming and comfortable. It helped with her confidence, she improved her English, received help with her interview skills and undertook mock interviews. She enjoyed meeting new people and integrating with the group.

Over the course of the programme a paid position came up with Oxfam as an Assistant Manager. Seetec’s advisers helped Belen with her interview skills, so she was as ready as she could be for the interview. Her hard work paid off and she is now working in paid employment full time in Oxfam as an Assistant Manager.

Overjoyed by her success, Belen said “I love my job and now I’m getting paid doing what I love. The programme helps people with their English, improve their CV and find a job - all the things that are required in Ireland. I would definitely recommend Welcome to Work to all my friends and family”.

L-R: Seetec Adviser Orna and Welcome to Work participant Belen Casero
Gender Equality

Bridge to Work Employment Programme

Ruhama is a Dublin based voluntary organisation, which works on a national level, with women affected by prostitution and other forms of commercial sexual exploitation. The Bridge to Work Programme was developed by Ruhama to assist the women that they work with to secure employment, and help them build lives free from exploitation for them and their children. Many women who have been exploited in prostitution and sex trafficking identified their lack of work experience in Ireland and low self-confidence as significant barriers to achieving their goal of accessing paid employment. Ruhama has developed this innovative programme to meet this need. They are developing positive partnerships with employers to facilitate paid work and voluntary placements, in integrated work settings for periods of 6 – 9 months. Following these initial placements, women will be assisted by the Bridge to Work project co-ordinator to source independent, paid employment.

Pathway to Employment – A Targeted Approach

Mary* is a service user with Ruhama. She connected with a dedicated caseworker and made a care plan tailored to her needs and goals. Having reached a point of stability in her life, Mary was in a position to consider employment and was referred into the Bridge to Work employment programme.

The Bridge to Work project co-ordinator worked directly with Mary via one-to-one sessions, providing mentoring guidance and support to help Mary prepare for the Irish workplace and focus on building a career.

The Bridge to Work project co-ordinator engaged with a coffee provider and was offered a free five hour Barista training session. Mary enrolled in the training and learned the skills and knowledge necessary to be a professional Barista.

After this training, a six week work placement was organised for Mary in a busy local café. Here Mary became used to the working day, interacting with customers and learned how a café operates.
The Bridge to Work project co-ordinator evaluated the placement with feedback from the Café Manager and Mary herself. Reflecting on the placement Mary said that “it gave me the courage to believe I could do this”. She enjoyed meeting new people and telling her friends and family about this opportunity.

Building on her increased self-confidence, Mary met with the Bridge to Work programme coordinator for one-to-one sessions to prepare for an interview at another coffee shop. Although Mary was very nervous about the interview, she was proud that she had come so far, and is hopeful that she will get good news.

*Person’s name has been changed to preserve confidentiality

Can you support Ruhama’s exciting new Work Placement Programme?

If you are, or if you know of, an employer that might be interested in hearing more about this innovative new programme, and being a part of truly changing women’s lives for the better, please contact the programme co-ordinator Elaine McGauran. All enquiries are treated in confidence and without obligation.

Phone: 086-0453683 Email: elaine@bridgetowork.ie
Wise Project

‘A Fresh Start for Women’ Conference is a WISE move

The ‘A Fresh Start for Women’ conference was held in the Clanree Hotel by the WISE project, which has dedicated employment advisors and offices in three locations across the county - Buncrana, Dungloe and Letterkenny.

WISE employment advisors Gemma Duffy (Buncrana), Helen Donoghue (Dungloe) and Grainne Boyle (Letterkenny) showed women how, with their support and guidance, they could explore and access the opportunities available in Donegal for employment, self-employment and education.

The WISE Project is a FREE programme open to women of all ages who have the potential, and the desire, to play a more active role in the labour force. It is for women who are neither employed nor unemployed - in that they are not in direct receipt of Jobseeker’s Benefit. Women who are claiming One-Parent Family Payment, Carer’s Allowance, Disability Allowance, Widow’s Pension or not claiming anything at all are eligible for the programme.

The WISE Project is co-ordinated and supported by People 1st, which is particularly proud to be awarded the Deloitte Best Managed Companies Platinum Award Winner 2018.

There were four keynote speakers from the business, education and voluntary sector, who spoke about their work and how they achieved their goals and dreams through employment and education.

One guest speaker, Jackie Ferry, told how, with the support of WISE, she was guided back to employment and is now a Key Youth Worker with Youthscape at the Donegal Youth Service. She spoke of how her employment advisor Helen worked closely alongside her to prepare her for interviews, identify her skills and build her confidence.
Rachel Wasson, Enterprise Officer at Donegal Local Development Company, also gave advice and a motivational talk to all those gathered. Mary Maguire MC on the day, from the Donegal Women’s Centre also gave an informative talk on the psychological, emotional, health, social and educational needs that are covered at the centre. Tara McGuire of the Donegal ETB spoke of the many courses they run in 14 Further Education Training Centres across Donegal.

Entertainment on the day was provided by Barbara Edwards of Rhythmic Noise. There were also a number of information stands where guests could learn about local businesses and how to access avenues of employment and personal development. The event ended with a raffle, where guests won top spot prizes from companies across Donegal.

If you would like to see what the WISE women can do for you, contact your nearest adviser at the numbers below.

Buncrana 086 145 2252
Dungloe 086 145 2249
Letterkenny 086 145 2250
EMPOWER: Mary’s Story

Mary Corrigan, founder of Noo Chocolates, has always been intrigued by food and its production. She never thought she’d start her own food company, as she wasn’t fond of business in school and didn’t think she’d have the time to fully commit to creating a successful venture. Then, in 2010, her 3 sisters bought her a voucher for a half day chocolate making workshop as a birthday gift. She and her husband attended, and learned the basics of chocolate making, how to temper chocolate, how to make simple truffles, and the best ways to pair flavours. After then, she continued practicing at home by making gifts for family and friends, gradually accumulating more and more chocolate making equipment. In 2017, Mary was offered redundancy by the company she was working for and took the opportunity to follow her dream and start Noo Chocolates in Ballina, Co. Mayo.

Noo Chocolates is an artisan chocolate company, which uses locally produced ingredients to create unique and exciting chocolates. The name comes from her family nickname, Noo, which is a term of endearment used for small children in South Africa, as her parents lived there for a few years before she was born.
Today, Noo Chocolates is based in a small production unit at the Quay in Ballina Co. Mayo. The chocolates are hand crafted and packaged there each day. Mary buys high quality couverture chocolate from Belgium, and hand tempers it. She carefully creates each filling herself, using as many locally sourced ingredients as she can. At the moment, Mary hand packs each chocolate herself. She is hoping to add to her team soon to help with the packaging and manufacturing of the chocolates. With this help, Mary will be able to focus on expanding her company as well as looking to access the corporate market.

Most of her customers include a local audience of mainly women, as well as a variety of tourists, offering them multiple tastes of Mayo in just one box.

When asked how the EMPOWER Start Programme helped Mary with the process of starting a company, she responded,

“The Empower Programme gave me the knowledge and skills to put in place a structure for my fledgling company. As I had no business knowledge previously, the fact that the programme covers all the aspects of setting up your own business meant that I was able to proceed with a level of confidence I wouldn’t have otherwise had. In addition, the networking and support from within the group has been huge. There is always someone on hand to offer a bit of advice or help or just some cheerleading, which is really important for anyone like me who mainly works alone.”
The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) is making a transformative contribution to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Ireland through the programme’s aim to reduce poverty and promote social inclusion and equality through local, regional and national engagement and collaboration. SICAP’s goals are strengthening local communities, promoting lifelong learning, and helping people become more job ready.

It is clear to see how projects in the SICAP programme contribute to sustainable economic development (SDG 8 - Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all) and to sustainable social development (SDG 4 - Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all).

What can be less obvious is the contribution SICAP projects are making to environmental sustainability as reflected in SDG 13 - Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts. A positive example of this is the SICAP project being undertaken by Mayo North East Partnership.
Apiary (Bee-Keeping)

As part of the SICAP programme Mayo North East Partnership is using apiary development (beekeeping) as both a process and a demonstration methodology to engage individuals and communities in environmental action. The bee-keeping programme is being utilised as a mechanism to involve individuals and communities experiencing such stresses as mental health, social isolation and ethnic marginalisation. At present such programmes are being run in Ballina, Knockmore, Erris and Westport. The programmes are proving to be very successful and the feedback from participants is entirely positive.

Aviary for Wild Species and Game

To engage with the small farmer sector, Mayo North East Partnership, through the SICAP programme, is creating an educational approach to landscape and ecology through the utilisation of an aviary. The function of this aviary is again to show the negative effects of bad farming practice on native fauna and game birds. By creating an awareness of the wildlife needs through this demonstration project Mayo North East Partnership is encouraging farmers to develop a green consciousness and an ecological centred focus on agriculture. Mayo North East Partnership is working in conjunction with Teagasc and local community groups to lend moral and practical support to this initiative.
Poly Tunnel

The Mayo North East SICAP programme also supports a horticultural initiative through the growing of organic vegetables in poly tunnels to supply a local social enterprise with fresh produce for its ‘meals on wheels’ programme. Many of the participants on this scheme suffer from social exclusion through health issues, loneliness and economic marginalisation. This programme provides not only environmental awareness but a health context to relieve these issues. It also is a consciousness raising process for the whole community. By supplying vegetables to the local ‘meals on wheels’ programme the participants are receiving positive affirmation from their local community and thus enhancing the probability and possibility of their full participation in community life. The project can also be seen as a tangible, environmental demonstration process to educate and to highlight ecological and climate change issues.
Springboard+ Launch


The new round of Springboard+ courses will provide over 8000 places, on 245 courses across Ireland. This is a 25% increase on 2017.

Springboard+ provides free higher education courses in areas of identified skills needs to unemployed people, those previously self-employed and those returning to work. NFQ Level 6 courses will now be free to employed participants. Participants on courses NFQ level 7 – 9 will be required to contribute just 10% of the fee.

An evaluation of Springboard+ showed that 80% of participants (2011-2015) are no longer on the live register.
Ability Programme

June 1st 2018 saw the launch of the Ability programme to promote employment prospects and meaningful social roles for young people with disabilities in Ireland, particularly for young people who are distant from the labour market.

The Ability Programme will provide supports to over 2,600 young people with disabilities aged between 15 to 29 years old, through funding provided to 27 projects nationwide.

Example projects funded under Ability:

The ROOTS (Reaching Out Open To Success) project is being delivered by St. Cronan’s Association in Laois, Offaly and North Tipperary. It will support 24 young people aged 20-29 years with mild-moderate intellectual disability and/or autism to progress to entering the workplace and/or to assume a meaningful and sustainable social role in their own community.

In Dublin, the REAL Project (Reaching Employment Ambitions in Life) is run by Walkinstown Green Social Enterprises Ltd. It will support young adults (18+) who have Intellectual Disabilities, Autism and Complex Needs to progress towards employment in the open labour market. Participants will develop their own vocational profile and personal progression plans before taking up a series of appropriate work experience placements of their choosing within Social Enterprises.
**Young Persons Probation**

**Le Chéile’s National Volunteer Conference 2018**

On Saturday 29th of September, Le Chéile Mentoring and Youth Justice Support Services hosted its second ever National Volunteer Conference.

Le Chéile works with vulnerable young people from across Ireland that have offended or are at risk of offending, as well as their parents, by matching them with a volunteer mentor. Often, these are young people that have led difficult or chaotic lives, therefore, the support of a mentor and the ethos of ‘One Good Adult’ can really make a difference in their lives. Parent mentoring works in a similar way by offering parents’ support to help them identify and develop their own parenting skills.

With this in mind, Le Chéile built the conference around the central theme of ‘Building Resilience, Being Mindful of Trauma’. The day focused on developing skills that volunteer mentors could use in their one to one mentoring sessions in order to help the young people or parents they work with become stronger and more resilient.

In the morning, Dr. Tony Bates gave the keynote address about the importance of positive mental health. As the founder of Ireland’s National Centre for Youth Mental Health, Jigsaw, Dr. Bates gave an informed and riveting talk about his work to date and the current state of mental health supports and provisions in Ireland.

Following Dr. Bates’ speech, there was a screening of the acclaimed documentary, Resilience – The Biology of Stress and the Science of Hope, which was shown in association with Irish Attachment in Action and the Irish Foster Care Association, with funding assistance provided by Tusla. The film, directed by James Redford, delves into the science of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and the birth of a new movement to treat and prevent toxic stress. The film was then followed by an engaging panel discussion chaired by Marie Dunne, from Irish Attachment in Action.
After lunch, there were a series of workshops that focused on developing skills in different areas relevant to mentors’ work. These included:

- Jane Mulcahy, PhD Candidate (UCC): Toxic stress, the brain, coping strategies and the power of relationships.


- Philip James, Clinical Nurse Specialist (HSE): Green and bluies - cannabis, tablets and young people.

The day then led to a particular highlight when a young person, who had previously had a mentor, gave a speech about the impact that Le Chéile has had on her life and how her mentors have helped her through some very difficult times. This was followed by a current mentor, who talked about his time volunteering with Le Chéile and what he has experienced and achieved by being a youth mentor.
Finally Vivian Geiran, Director of the Irish Probation Service, honoured the volunteers by opening the awards ceremony recognising those that have given two, five and ten years of dedicated voluntary service to the organisation.

Without these volunteers Le Chéile wouldn’t be able to do the work that they do, changing lives in communities across the country. In 2017 alone, volunteers gave over 3,000 hours to mentoring sessions, which is an achievement worth celebrating.

Overall, the conference was a great opportunity for all of the volunteers to join together in a day of celebration, networking and education that recognised their achievements, offered a chance to meet with other volunteers from different regions and gave them new skills that they can take back to mentoring sessions.
Garda Youth Diversion Projects

High Voltage GYDP

The participants of the High voltage GYDP, Cox’s Demesne, Dundalk completed a Dundalk F.C. supporters’ flag project in The House, Cox’s Demesne. The High Voltage GYDP is one of over a hundred Garda Youth Diversion Projects nationally which are co-funded by the Government of Ireland and the European Union under the European Social Fund 2014-2020.

A need to address issues was recognised as a result of increasing incidents occurring during football matches. The purpose of the project was to explore with targeted young people how they could be positive supporters of Dundalk F.C. The young people engaged in discussions with Dundalk F.C. in order to ensure that there would be no trouble at games. The players explained to the young supporters that the flares which were being lit by fans caused a disruption to their focus on the game.

As a result of the sharing of points of view between the fans, the players and Dundalk F.C. management committee, the young people suggested designing and creating their own supporters’ flags. The players and Dundalk F.C. management visited The House project in Cox’s Demesne, Dundalk to meet the young fans. The young people attended a meet and greet with Dundalk F.C. players. The young people love Dundalk F.C. and following their team.

There was an immense amount of learning involved in this project i.e. setting up a football forum, engaging in honest and positive communication and dialogue with the players, the club, the Gardai etc. The group worked with a graffiti artist in designing the flags. This project enabled the young people to express their support positively. As a result of making the flags, it is hoped that there will be no further negative behaviour at football matches. The flags will be displayed at home games in ‘The Shed’ at Oriel Park and taken to the away games by the young supporters.
SWAY GYDP Young Filmmakers Win National Award

Participants of the SWAY Garda Youth Diversion Project in Waterford participated in a film-making programme that would see them go on to achieve national recognition at the Fresh Film Festival in 2018.

The SWAY Film programme began in 2016 with four participants. To date, 3 films have been completed and a total of 11 young people have engaged. The main objectives of the programme are to:

- Engage young people’s creative and critical thinking skills
- Use creative processes to explore issues of concern for young people and the communities in which they live
- Enhance empathic skills through developing a fictional story and considering the emotional world of its characters
- Have fun and try new experiences

The programme is a collaboration between GYDP participants, Youth Justice workers and a local arts facilitator. Discussion always begins around issues of concern for young people in their community, before settling on a theme on which to develop a story further. In 2016, the young people chose to make a film exploring drug debts and intimidation and in 2017/2018, a group of boys looked at bullying and its impact on mental health, while the girls’ group chose teenage pregnancy as a starting point.

The facilitator then works with the group to devise and improvise a story based around this chosen theme. The process is fast and flexible, and each week the aim is to progress the story a little further and draw performances out of the young people. The Youth Justice workers and facilitator ask questions of the young people about their creative choices throughout, encouraging them to consider the story, their audience and the emotional state of the characters they are creating. This allows for open and frank discussion about sometimes highly charged and personal topics to happen in a safe, non-threatening way. The entire process takes between 6 and 10 weeks, from initial conversation to completed film.
In March 2018, in recognition of their films Useless and Duff, SWAY’s young filmmakers were awarded ‘Best Group’ at the Fresh Film Festival national final in Limerick. In presenting the awards, the judging panel commended the young people for “giving a dark subject a ray of light” and exploring “the travails of teen pregnancy with a lightness of touch that was refreshing”. The young people themselves were thrilled to be awarded the prize, which they received in front of an audience of over 400 of their peers. The winning films can be viewed at https://www.youtube.com/user/freshfilmfestival/playlists

SWAY Garda Youth Diversion Project is managed by Waterford and South Tipperary Community Youth Service.
ETB Training for the Unemployed

Specific Skills Training: Lewis Regan

Donegal ETB recently caught up with one of their former welding learners, Lewis Regan. Thanks to his training with Donegal ETB, former welding learner Lewis Regan has had the world at his feet in terms of work opportunities. Lewis completed his basic welding course under Donegal ETB welding instructor Cathal McGee, followed by an intermediate welding course.

He then worked with a top mechanical piping company for a year, on high-end jobs and came back to complete coded pipe welding with Donegal ETB, after which he also completed his Interprovincial Red Seal in welding which sets common standards to assess the skills of tradespeople across Canada. He spent another year working on pipe welding jobs across the pharmaceutical, petrochemical and food and dairy industries. Lewis then completed a Train the Trainer course (also with Donegal ETB) and now works as a contract welder and welding instructor. He has had numerous job offers from all over the world including America, Australia, Canada and Sweden. Lewis has said that, “every door that has opened for me has all stemmed from my training with Donegal ETB”.

You can find information on the various courses available in your local ETB at www.fetchcourses.ie.
Community Training Centres

Sligo CTC: Health Promotion and Promoting Positive Mental Health

Sligo CTC is located in the beautiful scenic area of Cleveragh in Sligo town. It offers courses in computers, catering, and hairdressing, exploring options and sports and recreation. These courses are supported with literacy/numeracy, maths, and communications, personal development, arts/crafts, work experience and link work. Sligo CTC were awarded ‘The Health Quality Mark Gold Standard’ from the National Youth Council of Ireland for 2017 – 2020. Health promotion is at the centre of everything Sligo CTC does.

There is a strong focus on promoting positive mental health with their young people. The centre held a very successful Mental Health Week in May 2018. As part of this week, trainees and staff got the opportunity to plant a sunflower seed to promote positive mental health. Other activities organised in the centre to encourage and promote positive mental health this year were healthy eating, girls and lads active sports activities, tai chi, hikes, gardening, mindfulness sessions, walking and nature photography.

To find out more about the centre and see the wide range of healthy initiatives and activities taking place visit sligoctcblog.blogspot.ie
Intra EU Mobility

EURES European Online Job Days

With the Irish economy growing at a robust pace and heading towards full employment, there are more and more skills shortages appearing in the Irish labour market which very often cannot be sourced locally. EURES has been assisting employers in recruiting for specialised or hard-to-fill vacancies by offering them a unique opportunity to participate in sector specific on-line recruitment events.

European Online Job Days are virtual events taking place on the dedicated web platform www.europeanjobdays.eu Thanks to online chat tools and livestreaming, employers and jobseekers based in remote locations in Ireland or Europe, can ‘attend’ a Job Day from the comfort of their own home or office and take part in online interviews. An online event also includes live presentations by employers and other exhibitors where jobseekers have an opportunity to ask questions through the public chat or talk to employers though the private chats.

EURES Ireland held two Online European Recruitment Events in 2018 which focused on both the Irish hospitality sector and business support sector and proved to be very successful. Both events were organised with the direct support of the European Commission and were targeting jobseekers with very specific skills. ‘Arrive and Revive – Ireland’ European Online Job Day organised in March 2018 was aimed at attracting Irish and European jobseekers with the hospitality skills and experience to join the booming Hospitality, Tourism and Culinary Arts sector in Ireland.

56 Irish based companies and over 530 jobseekers with hospitality skills participated in the event. In total, there were 477 positions available for this event with over 1,300 applications received. A programme of interesting presentations was broadcast live on the day including presentations by companies, the Irish Hotel Federation, the Irish Hospitality Institute, Dept. of Tourism and Hospitality in Cork Institute of Technology and EURES Ireland.

‘Your Language – Our Business’ – a European Online Job Day organised in May, was attended by 19 Irish based companies and attracted over 1,100 bilingual jobseekers from Europe. This event was targeting Irish and European jobseekers with language skills to work in the business/customer support sector in Ireland.
Youthreach

Ballymun Youthreach

Innovate Dublin approached Ballymun Youthreach with the opportunity of joining other local agencies, educative centres and schools embarking on a pilot Youth Academy programme. Innovate’s proposals for an interactive programme complemented Youthreach’s QQI level 5 Customer Service course. The pilot programme would help equip students for employment or self-employment opportunities in the future.
The pilot programme involved four Youthreach students spending one morning a week with Innovate Dublin over the course of 3 months. The four students that were chosen had mixed experiences of mainstream education and had poor levels of confidence and self-esteem as a result. Dealing with customers is a challenging environment and coupled with low levels of confidence the four students would have had much to gain from the expertise offered on the programme.

The programme focuses on developing transferable skills such as communication, project management and design thinking. While enjoying their time on the programme, the students also grew in confidence over the 3 months. As part of the programme the students were required to undertake a project aimed at developing business and entrepreneurial skills. Embracing the challenges the project posed, the students searched for solutions rather than giving up.

On completion of the project, the students presented a proposal to the Adult Education Officer in City of Dublin ETB and also hosted a coffee morning. Ballymun Youthreach were extremely proud of the innovative approach the students adopted and everyone at the centre was delighted with the results of the programme.

The course has now expanded to the full Customer Service group and this year culminated in producing a promotional video for our website, www.ballymunyr.ie, and an information sharing trip to the Prince’s Trust, Belfast to share ideas and experiences of both the programmes and our collective education centres. The students also showcased their finished projects in the conference room of the Ballymun Civic Offices in front of a large audience. Ballymun Youthreach look forward to continuing with Innovate Dublin this academic year and exploring more exciting projects.
Donegal Youthreach: Carmel’s Story

Carmel Doherty (25) from Desertegney, Buncrana left school at the age of 14. She went through a difficult time at a young age and was unsure what path to take next. “I wanted to go back to education, but you can’t just leave and go back to school. That’s when I found out about Youthreach.”

Youthreach is a free education, training and work experience programme for young people aged 16-20 years who have left school early. It provides people with the qualifications and life skills to progress to employment or other further education.

Work experience is an important part of the Youthreach programme. Carmel explored many aspects of the world of work through placements at Fort Dunree Military Museum, a local playschool, a national school, a hairdressers and a bookshop.

Carmel completed Youthreach at 17 years of age and moved on to college a year ahead of her peers in post-primary school. She is a talented artist, so she decided to pursue her passion by doing an Art Diploma in North West Regional College, Derry. She followed this up with a BTEC Higher National Diploma in Fashion & Textiles. After four years in Derry, Carmel decided to follow a different direction.

“I felt a need to do something more life-changing. I wanted to work in a career that would help people. I took a year out and was advised to do an Access course in Derry. That was when I got a taster of Psychology. I applied to Ulster University and got in last September.”

Carmel is now in her second year of Psychology and is looking forward to exploring the many career opportunities her degree will present when she finishes the course, perhaps even combining her skills in art and psychology.

Carmel recently went back to the Buncrana Youthreach Centre in Donegal to share her story. She told the current learners how Youthreach was a good platform to get into college.

“Everybody has different routes in life. If school doesn’t work out it’s not the end of the world. I loved my time at Youthreach. As long as you make use of all the opportunities that are there for you, I would say 100% do it.”
BTEI in Limerick and Clare ETB

This year, as part of a QQI Level 5 Computer Systems and Networks Award, BTEI Limerick City are running Operating Systems Level 5 for the first time. This class provides an opportunity for participants to embark on a really interesting career in IT support systems work, and it gives a great progression route for learners from other IT modules within BTEI.

Learners gain an understanding of the fundamentals on how to install, configure, secure and maintain a Computer Operating System and BTEI are delighted to see learners from Level 3 and Level 4 modules progress on to this challenging subject.
Donegal ETB FET Fair 2018

Donegal ETB’s annual Further Education and Training (FET) Fair took place on Wednesday 24 January in the Mount Errigal Hotel, Letterkenny. The Fair remains the County’s number one opportunity to discover learning, attracting over one thousand adults and young people each year.

January is traditionally the time to take stock of the year that has passed and plan for the year to come. For those who would like to take a different path in 2018, the Fair was the ideal opportunity to investigate what education opportunities are available locally and discover learning with Donegal ETB and other providers.

There are a wide range of options available; part-time and full-time learning, courses to help refresh the basics or develop knowledge in a range of areas of interest, including courses for recreation and courses to improve employment prospects.

Donegal ETB tutors and advisers were there on the day to talk through what Donegal ETB has to offer.

Information was available on Apprenticeships, new and exciting Traineeship courses and industry certified courses.

Attendees were able to try their hand at virtual reality welding and speak to current learners to find out first-hand what it’s like to undertake a course with Donegal ETB. The ETB’s strong links with universities, ITs and Colleges of Further Education mean progression opportunities for learners were represented too. Citizens Information, Department of Employment and Social Protection and SUSI Student Grants provided general information on the supports available for a return to learning.
In 2016, almost 12,000 learners completed courses in more than 120 venues across the county, making Donegal ETB the largest FET provider in the County, offering opportunities to retrain, upskill, get on the job work experience and progress onto higher education.

Many of Donegal ETB’s programmes are co-funded by the Government of Ireland and the European Social Fund as part of the Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL) 2014-2020. The ESF Managing Authority attended the fair to promote the role of the ESF and to communicate the opportunities available under the PEIL.
Adult Literacy

Take the First Step

The Take the First Step campaign is managed by the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) and SOLAS, with support from Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI). Take the First Step is Ireland’s campaign to support people who have difficulty with reading, writing, maths or technology to get the help they need. Literacy, numeracy and digital skills are key elements of the European Union’s lifelong learning policy. The ESF Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning provides over €90 million in funding for Adult Literacy courses from 2014-2020.

L-R: Sinead Moriarty, Author, Dr. Inez Bailey, CEO NALA and Charlie Bird, Journalist and Broadcaster launching the ‘Take the First Step’ campaign.
The campaign was launched on 7th September 2018 by journalist Charlie Bird and author Sinead Moriarty, ahead of a conference to mark International Literacy Day. NALA’s conference ‘Literacy Matters: challenges and solutions for communicating effectively with the public’ took place in the National College of Ireland, Dublin.

Speakers included the Attorney General, Seamus Wolfe; MB Donnelly, Data Protection Commission, Ireland; and Jennifer Hanrahan, Office of the Ombudsman. Eamon Delaney, Adult Literacy Student from Tipperary Education and Training Board (ETB) spoke of his experience returning to education, “To help my kids I had to help myself first.”

If you have difficulty with reading, writing, maths or technology please contact NALA on the Freephone support line 1800 20 20 65. Also further information can be found here: www.takethefirststep.ie
45 Years, 45 Stories

To celebrate Ireland’s 45 years of EU membership, the EU Commission Representation in Ireland has published 45 stories that highlight just some of the ways Ireland has benefited over the past four and a half decades.

45 stories has been adapted into a travelling exhibition, featuring pop-up displays of content from the publication. The Leas-Chathaoirleach Paul Coghlan, EU Affairs Minister Helen McEntee and Head of European Commission Representation in Ireland Gerry Kiely launched the 45 Stories exhibition in Leinster House on 26th September. A number of beneficiaries of the funding were also in attendance, including Michelle Malone who was a participant of the ESF co-funded EMPOWER programme.

Speaking at the launch, Senator Coghlan said “This exhibition and accompanying booklet contain rich personal stories of the real ways that European cooperation opens the door to economic opportunity and cultural enrichment, both for Irish people and for our fellow Europeans wishing to strengthen ties with Ireland.”
For the month of October, the exhibition was on public display in the European Commission office in Ireland. The exhibition will then travel to the Europe Direct Information Centres in Clones in November, Cork in December, Ballinasloe in January 2019, Blanchardstown in February, Sligo in March, Letterkenny in April, Nenagh in May and Waterford in June.

Read the EU 45 Stories: www.esf.ie/en/News-Events/Publications/
Celebrating 60 Years of the European Social Fund

Last year marked the 60th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Rome, which established the original European Economic Community and the European Social Fund (ESF). To celebrate, the ESF Managing Authority hosted a one day conference entitled ‘The European Social Fund: Celebrating 60 Years of Investing in People’, which was held in the Printworks in Dublin Castle, on 28th November, 2017.

The objectives of the conference were to highlight the role and support provided by the ESF in Ireland and to showcase the achievements accomplished by activities supported by the ESF in Ireland. There was a wide range of speakers on the day, including policy makers and practitioners, industry representatives, social partners and programme implementers. Of particular interest were the personal stories of past participants on ESF supported activities.

The conference focussed on the following 4 themes:

- Skills That Matter - Education and Training Meeting the Needs of the Labour Market
- Promoting and Enhancing Youth Employability
- Realising Equality of Opportunity in Higher Education
- Employment and Entrepreneurship for Women and Migrants

The ESF Managing Authority had the pleasure of welcoming delegates from many Government Departments, ESF partners and stakeholders and past and present participants to the Conference.

A video message from Ms Marianne Thyssen, European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility was delivered and Ms. Maria Iglesia, DG Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion addressed delegates on behalf of the European Commission.
A number of bodies, including the NAYC, the Defence Forces and Department of Justice and Equality hosted stands on the day to provide information on their activities to those attending the Conference. Southill Outreach, Limerick, showcased their photographic exhibition ‘Youth of Limerick, Citizens of Europe, a Photographic Journey’ which shows the work of the young participants and their families (photographed by Norma Manly).
With the support of the ESF, the NAYC produced an excellent video ‘Youthreach Ireland: The National Picture’ to mark the 60th Anniversary. The video was presented to the Conference by Louise Cole, Co-ordinator of Bray & North Wicklow Youthreach.

There was also an Art Competition for Youthreach participants, entitled ‘What Youthreach Means to Me’. Youthreach students from all over the country entered outstanding pieces of artwork. The ESF Managing Authority had an extremely difficult task of shortlisting these entries. Eventually three finalists were chosen; Ms. Erika Kelly from Laytown/Bettystown Youthreach, Ms. Dominik La Toch, Crumlin Youthreach and Ms. Sara Barnett, Macroom Youthreach. The Department of Education and Skills Post Primary Art Inspector Ms. Rebecca Galligan judged the final stage of the competition, selecting Ms. Erika Kelly as the overall winner.

Mr Seán Ó Foghlú, Secretary General, Department of Education and Skills closed the Conference by re-iterating the important role of the ESF in promoting employment and social inclusion, by investing in Europe’s people – employed, underemployed, unemployed, inactive, young and old – and their skills.