

## Expert Skills Group Publishes Update on Employment Trends and Demand for Skills

The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) today published the 2011 update of the *National Skills Bulletin*, its annual review of employment trends and demand for skills in Ireland.

This year's Bulletin shows that the rate of deterioration in the labour market during 2010 was slower than in 2009. Despite the decline in employment and diminished job opportunities in most segments of the Irish labour market, vacancies, and in several areas skill shortages, continue to exist.

Commenting on the report findings, Minister for Training and Skills, Ciarán Cannon said, "It has never been so critical to provide information on the employment trends and the areas of current and future skills demand. While it is hard to reconcile high unemployment with skills shortages it is critical that we maintain our focus on ensuring that our labour force is equipped with the skills for current and future jobs."

Una Halligan, Chairperson, EGFSN commented, "The Skills Bulletin highlights that vacancies are found in occupations associated with high replacement rates such as clerical, sales and service occupations and for skilled and experienced people in ICT, engineering, healthcare, finance and customer care (including technical support). It is crucial that education and training providers continuously ensure that their programmes are aligned with the future skills needs of enterprise. In this regard initiatives such as Springboard, which provides opportunities for people who are currently unemployed to gain skills in areas of current or future job opportunities, are very welcome. Enterprises are also playing a valuable role in providing work experience through the recently announced National Internship Scheme, JobBridge."

### Key Findings

- **Vacancies**

Despite the recession and at a significantly lower level than in 2007, vacancies continue to arise, with an increase in the level of vacancies in the first quarter of 2011 compared with 2010. Most vacancies are for clerical, sales and service occupations, which are associated with high replacement and turnover rates. Vacancies are also found in the areas of ICT, engineering, healthcare, finance and customer care (including technical support). Third level education, experience and languages are the most frequently mentioned requirements from prospective employers.

- **Skills Shortages**

Although in general, the supply of labour is greater than demand, in some areas shortages continue to exist. They are small in terms of the number of persons required, unlikely to be greater than several hundred, and confined to individuals with high level skills, experience and/or niche area expertise. Areas where shortages have been identified include ICT (e.g. senior software developers, network engineers, project managers), engineering (e.g. product development in pharmaceuticals), healthcare (e.g. doctors), sales (e.g. multilingual telesales),

transport (e.g. international supply chain managers), science (e.g. medical scientists) and finance (e.g. risk and regulatory experts).

- **Employment Permits**

Sourcing of highly skilled workers (primarily in ICT and healthcare) from abroad continued during 2010, although the number of new employment permits issued to non-EEA citizens was significantly lower than at the peak recorded in 2007.

- **Progress Towards the National Skills Strategy Targets**

During 2010, further progress toward the National Skills Strategy targets was made, with the share of third level graduates in the labour force increasing to 41% and the share of persons holding less than secondary qualifications decreasing to 19.5%.

- **Cohorts at Greatest Risk of Unemployment**

During 2010, males, under-25s, early school leavers, non-Irish nationals, residents of the South-East region and construction workers (craft persons and labourers) continued to be at a greater risk of unemployment than their counterparts.

ENDS

### **Notes to Editors**

The National Skills Bulletin 2011 is the seventh annual report by the EGFSN on skills and occupational trends in Ireland. The Bulletin draws on data on employment, vacancies, job announcements and immigration and other qualitative information held in the National Skills Database, to identify imbalances in the Irish labour market at occupational level. The report is produced by the Skills and Labour Market Research Unit in FÁS on behalf of the EGFSN.

Today's publication will be followed by the complementary report '*Monitoring Ireland's Skills Supply: Trends in Education and Training Outputs 2011*' which examines the outputs from the Irish education and training system. This report provides data from a variety of sources on education and training outputs in all sectors of the formal education system in Ireland (primary, post-primary, further education and training, and higher education) across the ten levels of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). Together, the two publications provide an annual snapshot of the supply and demand for skills in the Irish labour market.