

ESF Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning OP 2014-2020	
Priority axis:	Priority 1: Promoting the attainment of sustainable and quality employment through relevant upskilling measures and supporting labour mobility.
Thematic Objective:	Access to employment for job-seekers and inactive people, including the long-term unemployed and people far from the labour market, also through local employment initiatives and support for labour mobility;
Investment priority:	To increase the number of high level ICT skills graduates with a view to promoting sustainable and quality employment opportunities
Specific objective:	To raise the level and market-relevance of job seeker's skills, in particular, for LTU and young, through further/higher education and training opportunities, and by facilitating their labour mobility
Activity title:	ICT Skills Conversion Programme
Overall Objective:	Targeted reskilling and conversion programme to address skills needs and create opportunities for people seeking employment to reskill so as to return to work in a dynamic sectors of the Irish economy.
Certifying Authority:	ESF Certifying Authority
Managing Authority:	ESF Managing Authority
Intermediate Body:	Structural Fund Unit
Beneficiary Body:	Higher Education Authority

1. CONTEXT/ PROBLEM/ NEED BEING ADDRESSED:

The ICT skills conversion programme was introduced as a means to address concerns by industry and the enterprise development agencies about continuing difficulties in sourcing ICT graduates with the requisite skills in Ireland, not only to fill existing vacancies, but also to support expansion of their activities and potential employment opportunities.

The ICT skills conversion programme funding is disbursed on an annual basis following a competitive call for proposals. As the ICT skills gaps improve, it is anticipated that funding for the Programme will be wound down. Accordingly, it is proposed to seek ESF for ICT skills conversion programme from 2014–2016. Should the ICT skills programme continue after 2016 it is proposed to resubmit a new proposal for the remainder of the OP 2014 – 2020.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE ACTIVITY:

1. The primary objective of the ICT skills conversion programme is to address ICT skills gaps through the successful level 8 conversion of graduates (level 8 or equivalent) from non-ICT disciplines to meet identified ICT skills needs. Tuition fees are waived for all successful applicants regardless of employment status and regardless of whether or not s/he is in receipt of income support. The academic entry criteria for admission to courses funded through the initiative is determined by each participating higher education provider.
2. The programme also aims to identify and address skills gaps through clearly stated collaboration and engagement between the enterprise sector and higher education providers in the design and delivery of higher education programmes, thereby meeting the on-going and future demand for qualified employees.

3. ESF FUNDED ELEMENT OF ACTIVITY:

The Simplified Costs Option under Article 67(1)(b) of CPR 1303/2013 is to be applied to the operations of this activity.

The ESF claims will be made based on students that have that successfully completed their course of study. The main source of documentation to confirm the successful completion will be copies of the student's exam transcripts/records. The unit cost per student to be applied for the ESF claim is the same as the amounts used for HEA payments to service providers that were agreed as part of the application process and are linked to actual enrolment figures at the time of payment.

Any net revenue generated from the co-funded operations shall be deducted from its eligible expenditure in line with section 3.6 of the Department of Education and Skills Circular 1/2015, Eligibility Rules for 2014-2020 ESF and YEI.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES OF INTERMEDIATE BODY:

In line with Article 123(6) of CPR 1303/2013, an administrative agreement between the Managing Authority and Intermediate Body for this activity will formally record in writing the responsibilities and tasks to be carried out by the Intermediate body on behalf of the Managing Authority.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO HORIZONTAL THEMES	
A. Promotion of Equality between men and women	<p>The ICT skills conversion programme is open to male and female jobseekers and unemployed people who already hold a level 8 or equivalent qualification.</p> <p>Programmes are fully funded by the Department of Education and Skills and no fees are charged to participants.</p> <p>Entry to the programme is open to graduates of non-STEM disciplines, which have a higher participation rate among women. To date the ICT conversion programmes have seen a 25% female participation rate as compared to mainstream undergraduate ICT programmes which see a 15% female participation rate.</p>
B. Promotion of equal opportunities and non-discrimination	<p>Higher Education Institutions offering ICT skills conversion programmes are committed to equality which includes promoting equality and prohibiting discrimination in employment and in service delivery on nine grounds as defined in the Employment Equality Acts 1998-2011 and the Equal Status Acts 2000-2012. The nine grounds are gender (including gender identity), family status, civil status, sexual orientation, age, disability (including mental health), race (including skin colour, ethnicity and nationality), membership of the Traveller community, religion (including non-religious belief).</p> <p>Providers of the programme will provide reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities as in line with equality legislation. They will also allow for positive action to promote or ensure equality through preferential treatment or positive measures which promote equality of opportunity for people who may be disadvantaged because of their circumstances, or to cater for their special needs.</p>
C. Social Inclusion	<p>The ICT skills conversion programme strategically targets funding of free higher education programmes to enable unemployed people and jobseekers who already hold a level 8 or equivalent qualification to upskill or reskill in areas where employment opportunities exist. In doing so, the ICT skills conversion programme helps unemployed people re-enter the labour market and assists in the prevention of long term unemployment.</p> <p>Participants who are in receipt of a Department of Social Protection income support payment may be able to retain such payments subject to continuing to meet the eligibility conditions.</p> <p>The ICT skills conversion programme courses are delivered by public and private higher education providers across the country, providing all citizens with equal access to higher education opportunities.</p>
D. Sustainable Development	<p>As set out in the Partnership Agreement, the principle of sustainable development requires that the needs of the present be met without compromising the ability of future generations. This requires support for environmental protection requirements, resource efficiency, sustainable management of natural resources, risk prevention and management are addressed through both dedicated funding streams</p>

	<p>and through their horizontal integration across the Operational Programmes.</p> <p>The Government sustainable development framework document is intended to provide a platform for the integration of sustainable development principles into policies across all sectors. The framework broadly follows the thematic approach of the <i>EU Sustainable Development Strategy</i> and sets out a wide range of measures that seek to ensure an improvement in Ireland's quality of life into the future. Among the areas listed are sustainability of public finances and economic resilience, sustainable consumption and production, conservation and management of natural resources, climate change and clean energy, social inclusion, sustainable communities and spatial planning, education, communication and behaviour change, innovation, research and development, skills and training and global poverty and sustainable development.</p>
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6. INDICATORS and REPORTING

Reporting on the progress of each activity is required for the Annual and YEI Implementation Reports and the Programme Monitoring Committee. This reporting includes information on financial and non-financial indicators as outlined in the subsequent paragraphs.

High level Investment Priority and Priority Axis targets have been set as part of the output and results indicators and performance framework¹ tables included in the PEIL OP. The *ESF co-funded* and *ESF + YEI co-funded tables* below detail the activity level indicators that contribute to the higher level targets in the OP. In order to meet the reporting requirements the data in the table below must be captured and reported for this activity.

In addition to the capturing and reporting on the data for the high level targets included in the OP, data on common indicators is also required. These indicators are detailed in the attached Annex I² in line with the requirements of Article 5 of the ESF Regulation 1304/2013.

Priority 1 (ESF co-funded)				
Outputs and Results Indicator Targets ³	Measurement Unit	Target Value 2023	Performance Reserves Targets ⁴	
			Target Value 2018	Target Value 2023
OUTPUTS				
The number of participants on training and upskilling programmes for the unemployed or jobseekers -The	Number of participants ⁵	1,950	N/A	N/A

¹ Additional information on the application of the performance framework and reserve are set out under Articles 20 to 22 of the CPR 1303/2013

² The information on each participant are set out in data fields included in section (1) of Annex I. The European Commission issued an ESF guidance note on the *Monitoring and Evaluation of European Cohesion Policy* in September 2014 and Annex C of this document includes definitions for common ESF/YEI indicators. A further guidance note on the completeness of data is to be issued by the European Commission to further clarify the requirements in this area.

³ Additional to the indicator targets set out in section 6 above, data on common output and result indicators is required and is detailed in Annex I attached and as set out under Article 5 of the ESF Regulation 1304/2013.

⁴ Additional information on the application of the performance framework and reserve are set out under Articles 20 to 22 of the CPR 1303/2013.

⁵ The data fields required for each participant are detailed in section (1) of Annex I attached and as set out under Annex 1 of the ESF Regulation 1304/2013.

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number of students enrolled on ICT Skills Conversion Programmes				
The number of LTU participants on training and upskilling programmes for the unemployed or jobseekers - The number of LTU students enrolled on ICT Skills Conversion Programmes	Number of LTU participants	831	N/A	N/A
Certified Expenditure	€m	8.4	N/A	N/A
RESULTS				
Number of participants completing an education/training programme - The number of graduates from ICT Skills Conversion Programmes	Number of participants	1,305	N/A	N/A
Number of LTU participants completing an education/training programme - The number of LTU graduates from ICT Skills Conversion Programmes	Number of LTU participants	556	N/A	N/A

7. FINANCIAL INPUT	
Budget (€/m.) ESF + National Contribution	€8.407m
ESF Contribution €m	€4.203m
ESF Co-Financing %	50%
EU Intervention Field Code	102

8. CERTIFICATION ROLES		
Ex-Ante checks by:	Certified Claims Submitted by:	Submitted To:
	HEI	HEA
HEA	HEA	SFU Unit
SFU Unit	SFU Unit	Managing Authority DES
Managing Authority DES	Managing Authority DES	Certifying Authority DES
Certifying Authority DES	Certifying Authority DES	European Commission

9. PROJECT SELECTION	
Project Selection Process	Decisions on proposals for funding under the ICT skills conversion programme are made by an independent panel with industry and academic expertise convened by the Higher Education Authority. Proposed courses must focus on current and future skills needs of enterprise as advised by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs/Forfás.
Project Selection Criteria	<p>Course proposals are assessed in accordance with the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programmes must address a current or future ICT skills need • Level of collaboration with industry in design of course • Level of collaboration with industry in arranging work placements • Level of support for participants in returning to employment

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost and value for money
Composition of Project Selection Committee	An independent panel with industry and academic expertise convened by the Higher Education Authority.

10. PUBLICITY/INFORMATION PLANS

Publicity/ Information Plans for the Activity	<p>Website, brochures, reports and promotional materials will equally publicise the appropriate funding source in line with national requirements and those of Implementing Regulation (EC) No regarding information and publicity measures to be carried out by the Member States concerning assistance from the Structural Funds.</p> <p>The following Regulations apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulation No. 1303/2013 CPR (Articles 115-117) • Commission Implementing Regulation No. 821/2014 (Articles 3 and 4 and Annex II)
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11. IMPLEMENTATION CONTACT

Body: Higher Education Authority	Contact Name:	David Sheils
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*ANNEX I***Common output and result indicators for ESF investments**

(1) Common output indicators for participants

"Participants"⁶ refers to persons benefiting directly from an ESF intervention who can be identified and asked for their characteristics, and for whom specific expenditure is earmarked. Other persons shall not be classified as participants. All data shall be broken down by gender.

The common output indicators for participants are:

- unemployed, including long-term unemployed*,
- long-term unemployed*,
- inactive*,
- inactive, not in education or training*,
- employed, including self-employed*,
- below 25 years of age*,
- above 54 years of age*,
- above 54 years of age who are unemployed, including long-term unemployed, or inactive not in education or training*,
- with primary (ISCED 1) or lower secondary education (ISCED 2)*,
- with upper secondary (ISCED 3) or post-secondary education (ISCED 4)*,
- with tertiary education (ISCED 5 to 8)*,
- participants who live in jobless households*,
- participants who live in jobless households with dependent children*,
- participants who live in a single adult household with dependent children*,
- migrants, participants with a foreign background, minorities (including marginalised communities such as the Roma)**,
- participants with disabilities**,
- other disadvantaged**.

The total number of participants will be calculated automatically on the basis of the output indicators.

These data on participants entering an ESF supported operation shall be provided in the annual implementation reports as specified in Article 50(1) and (2) and Article 111(1) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013.

- homeless or affected by housing exclusion*,
- from rural areas*⁷

The data on participants under the two above indicators will be provided in the annual implementation reports as specified in Article 50(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013. The data shall be collected based on a representative sample of participants within each investment priority. Internal validity of the sample shall be ensured in such a way that the data can be generalised at the level of investment priority.

⁶ Managing authorities shall establish a system that records and stores individual participant data in computerised form as set out in Article 125 (2) (d) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013. The data processing arrangements put in place by the Member States shall be in line with the provisions of Directive 95/46/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 October 1995 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data (OJ L 281, 23.11.1995, p. 31), in particular Articles 7 and 8 thereof. Data reported under the indicators marked with * are personal data according to Article 7 of Directive 95/46/EC. Their processing is necessary for compliance with the legal obligation to which the controller is subject (Article 7(c) of Directive 95/46/EC). For the definition of controller, see Article 2 of Directive 95/46/EC. Data reported under the indicators marked with ** are a special category of data according to Article 8 of Directive 95/46/EC. Subject to the provision of suitable safeguards, Member States may, for reasons of substantial public interest, lay down exemptions in addition to those laid down in Article 8(2) of Directive 95/46/EC, either by national law or by decision of the supervisory authority (Article 8(4) of Directive 95/46/EC).

⁷ The data shall be collected at the level of smaller administrative units (local administrative units 2), in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 1059/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 May 2003 on the establishment of a common classification of territorial units for statistics (NUTS) (OJ L 154, 21.6.2003, p. 1).

(2) Common output indicators for entities are:

- number of projects fully or partially implemented by social partners or non-governmental organisations,
- number of projects dedicated at sustainable participation and progress of women in employment,
- number of projects targeting public administrations or public services at national, regional or local level,
- number of supported micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (including cooperative enterprises, enterprises of the social economy).

These data shall be provided in the annual implementation reports as specified in Article 50(1) and (2) and Article 111(1) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013.

(3) Common immediate result indicators for participants are:

- inactive participants engaged in job searching upon leaving*,
- participants in education/training upon leaving*,
- participants gaining a qualification upon leaving*,
- participants in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving*,
- disadvantaged participants engaged in job searching, education/ training, gaining a qualification, in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving**.

These data shall be provided in the annual implementation reports as specified in Article 50(1) and (2) and Article 111(1) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013. All data shall be broken down by gender.

(4) Common longer-term result indicators for participants are:

- participants in employment, including self-employment, six months after leaving*,
- participants with an improved labour market situation six months after leaving*,
- participants above 54 years of age in employment, including self-employment, six months after leaving*,
- disadvantaged participants in employment, including self-employment, six months after leaving**.

These data shall be provided in the annual implementation reports as specified in Article 50(5) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013. They shall be collected based on a representative sample of participants within each investment priority. Internal validity of the sample shall be ensured in such a way that the data can be generalised at the level of investment priority. All data shall be broken down by gender.

The data on participants under the two above indicators will be provided in the annual implementation reports as specified in Article 50(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013. The data shall be collected based on a representative sample of participants within each investment priority. Internal validity of the sample shall be ensured in such a way that the data can be generalised at the level of investment priority.

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- number of projects targeting public administrations or public services at national, regional or local level,
- number of supported micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (including cooperative enterprises, enterprises of the social economy).

These data shall be provided in the annual implementation reports as specified in Article 50(1) and (2) and Article 111(1) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013.

(3) Common immediate result indicators for participants are:

- inactive participants engaged in job searching upon leaving*,
- participants in education/training upon leaving*,

- participants gaining a qualification upon leaving*,
- participants in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving*,
- disadvantaged participants engaged in job searching, education/ training, gaining a qualification, in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving**.

These data shall be provided in the annual implementation reports as specified in Article 50(1) and (2) and Article 111(1) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013. All data shall be broken down by gender.

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