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# NATIONAL REPORT: IRELAND

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Deliverable: IO1 – A2



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## Introduction

The following research was conducted in the context of IO1: - Interdisciplinary apprenticeship for internationalization: Research Study and Analysis on apprenticeship schemes in Europe, specific needs of interdisciplinary apprenticeship in countries, and role of in-company tutor. The research tried to will look into the three main key words of 4EXPORT project: “Apprenticeship” “Internationalization” and “in-company trainers”. The sections analyzed, will assist on defining national strategies and good practices regarding interdisciplinary apprenticeship and internationalization activities. Also, will attempt to create a first description of skills, knowledge and competences that in-company trainers should have in order to efficiently carry out training activities related to internationalization actions of the company.

In the first chapter the apprenticeship strategies and policies will be presented. More specific, it will be analyzed the national apprenticeship system, the national policies for apprenticeship and apprenticeships promoting internationalization. The second part of the research will focus on internationalization of SMEs. In particular, national strategies supporting internationalization of SMEs, and good practices on SMEs internationalization will be presented. The last part will emphasize the in-company trainers’ topics, such as their skills and competences and learning opportunities and certification.

## 1. Apprenticeship Strategies and Policies

### 1.1 National Apprenticeship System

An apprenticeship is a work-based program, in which apprentices are trained in a craft trade or profession. Craft apprenticeships include carpentry, plumbing, motor mechanics and electrical apprenticeships. The main craft trades and professions have been designated by SOLAS and comply with the Statutory Apprenticeship system, which is organized by SOLAS in

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co-operation with the Department of Education and Skills, employers and unions, and Apprenticeship Council participates as well.

An apprenticeship provides on-the-job training with an employer. It usually combines off-the-job training in an education center and on-the-job training at your employer's workplace. A craft apprenticeship generally lasts for 4 years, during which time apprentices spend 3 different periods in off-the-job training.

Generally, the first off-the-job training phase will take place in an Education and Training Board (ETB) Training Centre while the subsequent off-the-job training phases will take place in an Institute of Technology. The skills to be developed are complying with level 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications, and an Advanced Certificate is given.

In 2016 new apprenticeships were introduced, which lead to an award between Levels 5-10 on the National Framework of Qualifications. Each apprenticeship program can be for a period between 2 and 4 years. New apprenticeships include the fields of ICT, finance and hospitality include software development, accounting technician and commis chef<sup>1</sup>.

## 1.2 National policies for apprenticeship

The legislation of 1967 Industrial Training Act control the apprenticeship system in Ireland. Since the 1970s it is estimated that over 105,000 apprentices have been trained in Ireland. In 2016 there were over 3,700 new registrations on the 27 craft-based apprenticeships. In the same year, there was a current population of 10,316 apprentices with 3,919 participating employers<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Citizens Information, "Apprenticeships", 2019, (retrieved from: [https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/vocational\\_education\\_and\\_training/apprenticeships.html](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/vocational_education_and_training/apprenticeships.html), 4/11/2019)

<sup>2</sup> Ireland Department of Education and Skills, *Action plan to expand Apprenticeship And traineeship in Ireland 2016-2020*, Dublin, Ireland Department of Education and Skills, 2016a (retrieved from:

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In 2014, the Minister for Education and Skills established the Apprenticeship Council. The establishment of the Council was a key action in the implementation of recommendations from a 2014 *Review of Apprenticeship Training in Ireland*. The Council is tasked with the expansion of apprenticeship into new sectors of the economy and identifying sectors where new apprenticeships can create new paths to both employers and employees<sup>3</sup>.

Ireland has planned some strategies for increasing apprenticeships schemes in companies. The Department of Education and Skills, its education agencies the HEA (Higher Education Authority), QQI (Quality and Qualifications Ireland) and SOLAS, representatives of Education and Training Boards and the Institutes of Technology have been working in partnership with the Apprenticeship Council to develop new structures including creation of new Legislative Orders in order to establish the apprenticeships as part of the national system<sup>4</sup>.

One result of these strategies is the new National Skills Strategy 2025. This strategy aims at boosting Ireland's economic growth over the coming years. The Strategy builds on the progress made since the last skills strategy, *Towards Tomorrow's Skills*, which was published in 2007 and sets new indicators of progress for the period to 2025. For achieving that, the Strategy will support development of a well-educated, well-skilled and adaptable labour force.

Ireland education and training systems regarding learning beyond school, comprises the further education and training (FET) and higher education (HE) sectors. Relating to New skills Strategy 2025, these two sectors work together and develop initiatives in order to promote education and training beyond the school system. One of these actions is about the

<https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/Action-Plan-Expand-Apprenticeship-Traineeship-in-Ireland-2016-2020.pdf>, 4/11/2019)

<sup>3</sup> Generation Apprenticeship, "About Apprenticeships, 2016, (retrieved from: <http://www.apprenticeship.ie/en/about/Pages/About.aspx?anchor=Council>, 4/11/2019)

<sup>4</sup> Ireland Department of Education and Skills, 2016a, *ibid*

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reforming of the apprenticeship system leading to expansion of industry and apprentice participation and new industry-led apprenticeships<sup>5</sup>.

Other actions focusing on apprenticeships in the context of new National Skills Strategy 2025 include expansion of the existing range of programs offered under the Apprenticeship system, will see new apprenticeships in the area of Information Technology, Manufacturing and Engineering<sup>6</sup>. According to the predictions of EGFSN (Expert Group on future skills needs), based on the ‘no policy change’ scenario, engineering and construction will be the fields with the most apprenticeship programs until 2020<sup>7</sup>.

Given the progress made in adapting the FET sector in recent years and the development of new Apprenticeships and Traineeships, now the State and employers should promote the essential skills attained from FET in the employment sector. Thus, the National Skills Strategy includes a target to support the delivery of 50,000 apprenticeship and traineeship places up to 2020. Regarding SMEs, the strategy focused on them at the first quarter of 2017, by creating a promotional campaign for adopting apprenticeship and traineeship systems. Progress will be reviewed in 2020 with a view to setting new ambitious targets for the period to 2025<sup>8</sup>.

Ireland has also launched the “Innovation 2020” Strategy which is connected to other national strategies (e.g. National Skills Strategy) in terms of innovation, and this strategy has adopted a coherent systems approach to support government’s vision of becoming a Global Innovation Leader. In the field of education for innovation, an action to be taken is to launch,

<sup>5</sup> Ireland Department of Education and Skills, *Ireland’s National Skills Strategy 2025*, Dublin, Ireland Department of Education and Skills, 2016b, (retrieved from: [https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/pub\\_national\\_skills\\_strategy\\_2025.pdf](https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/pub_national_skills_strategy_2025.pdf), 4/11/2019)

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN), *Tomorrow’s Skills Towards a National Skills Strategy*, Dublin, Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN), 2007, (retrieved from: [http://www.skillsireland.ie/media/egfsn070306b\\_national\\_skills\\_strategy.pdf](http://www.skillsireland.ie/media/egfsn070306b_national_skills_strategy.pdf), 4/11/2019)

<sup>8</sup> Ireland Department of Education and Skills, 2016a, *ibid*

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in partnership with industry, a range of new apprenticeships and traineeships to meet the needs of Ireland's most innovative sectors in SMEs, by 2020<sup>9</sup>.

Ireland has introduced several strategies concerning apprenticeships, as has set a target of creating a well-educated, well-skilled and adaptable labour force. Actions have also been taken in the field of SMEs, and these focus on encourage SMEs in developing new apprenticeship schemes.

### 1.3 Apprenticeships promoting internationalization

Currently, in Ireland apprenticeships are mainly organized in the following industry sectors:

- Auctioneering
- Biopharmachem
- Construction
- Electrical
- Engineering
- Finance
- Hospitality and Food
- ICT
- Motor
- Logistics
- Currently selected
- Sales
- Hair

<sup>9</sup> Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, Innovation 2020, Dublin, Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, 2019, (retrieved from: <https://dbei.gov.ie/en/Publications/Publication-files/Innovation-2020.pdf>, 4/11/2019)

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Regarding apprenticeships which promote cross-boarder activities, an example is The Logistics Associate Apprenticeship (LAA). This Consortium is a volunteer group, working collaboratively to address the skills shortage within these industries. With knowledge of the field, the needs of the industry and the skills needed for apprentices, the Consortium worked with TU Dublin to produce a 2-year program with workplace employment throughout. More specific, LAA organize apprenticeship for the Freight, Logistics, Shipping and Distribution industries, which offer a variety of roles across its many Employer types;

- Shipping companies can find Apprentices based in the Docklands working in offices alongside Vessels loading Containers
- Those employed in Freight Forwarding offices can get an insight into preparing and planning the geographical route and selection factors for cargo to take across international borders
- Distribution companies can see Apprentices operating within some of the Countries largest Warehouses, operating the latest technology to track, trace and store all types of cargo before preparing for final distribution<sup>10</sup>.

Another example of apprenticeship initiative is the IFS Apprenticeship (International Financial Services). The programs of IFS Apprenticeship were designed and developed by Industry for Industry in partnership with the lead provider, National College of Ireland and a Consortium consisting of senior HR contracts in the participating companies. In particular two apprenticeship programs have been developed:

- IFS Associate Apprenticeship – Higher Certificate in International Financial Services (Level 6)

<sup>10</sup> Logistics Associate Apprenticeship, “The Apprenticeship”, (retrieved from: <https://www.laa.ie/the-apprenticeship/>, 4/11/2019)

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- IFS Specialist Apprenticeship – Higher Diploma in Financial Services Analytics (Level 8)<sup>11</sup>

A range of companies collaborate with IFS Apprenticeship and some of them include Allianz, Bank of Ireland, Fidelity, AON, etc<sup>12</sup>.

As the above examples of apprenticeship can combine more than one field, can be considered interdisciplinary. Also, the existence of initiatives which promote apprenticeship shows that internationalization activities of a company can benefit by an apprentice.

## 2. Internationalization of SMEs

### 2.1 National Policies Supporting Internationalization of SMEs

Ireland's performance in internationalization is broadly in line with the EU average, and internationalization has recently become a priority area for the Irish government, as the United Kingdom is Ireland's largest single export market, especially for Irish-owned companies. For improving internationalization activities, is essential for Irish SMEs to be given the support they need to remain competitive, adaptable and expand both in existing and new markets.

In 2008, Ireland has introduced a wide range of measures to ensure that all internationalization recommendations are implemented. These measures include financial and business support schemes, tax incentives, sector-specific strategies and assistant in companies for participating in trade missions and events<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>11</sup>Generation Apprenticeship, "*IFS Apprenticeships*", retrieved from: [https://www.ifsapprenticeships.ie/Sectors/FSI/IFSA.nsf/vPages/Home/\\$File/IFS+App+6pp+DL+Web+\(7\).pdf](https://www.ifsapprenticeships.ie/Sectors/FSI/IFSA.nsf/vPages/Home/$File/IFS+App+6pp+DL+Web+(7).pdf), 4/11/2019)

<sup>12</sup> IFS Apprenticeships, "*Companies Engaged*", (retrieved from: <https://www.ifsapprenticeships.ie/Sectors/FSI/IFSA.nsf/vPages/Industry~companies-engaged?OpenDocument>, 4/11/2019)

<sup>13</sup> European Commission, *2018 SBA Fact Sheet-Ireland*, Luxemburg, Publications Office of the European Union, 2019

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In 2015 Ireland launched Enterprise 2025, which in 2018 reviewed due to global changes, such as Brexit, international tax developments, etc. This strategy aims at assisting Ireland achieving the goals that have been set on investments in Ireland's enterprises. One main action regarding internationalization is the reinforcement of the competitiveness of Ireland's tax regime to support start-ups, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) internationalization and business investment. In the context of Brexit, Enterprise 2025 aims to promote to SMEs activities in order to achieve business growth, innovation and internationalization<sup>14</sup>.

Also, on 2017 and the first quarter of 2018, seven measures were implemented, most of which are to help those companies that need to prepare for Brexit. These include:

- Organization of a series of nationwide Brexit advisory clinics to help Irish companies to prepare for Brexit by Enterprise Ireland.
- a 'Brexit SME scorecard' to help SMEs diversify to EU and international markets., launched by Enterprise Ireland.
- A Brexit advisory service by InterTradeIreland provides SMEs with a range of support measures to navigate the challenges of Brexit.
- A market discovery fund which helps Enterprise Ireland's client companies diversify into new markets and promote their new products in existing markets.
- A Brexit loan scheme is a EUR 300 million loan fund delivered by the SBCI through commercial lenders.
- A 'Technical Assistance for Micro Exporters' Grant Funding' scheme that helps businesses expand into new markets.

<sup>14</sup>Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, *Enterprise-2025-Renewed*, Dublin, Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, 2018, (retrieved from: <https://dbei.gov.ie/en/Publications/Publication-files/Enterprise-2025-Renewed.pdf>, 5/11/2019)

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- The Co-Innovate program, supported by the EU's Interreg VA program helps SMEs to innovate, differentiate and encourages cross-border collaboration.

The above measures show that the main challenge export-oriented Irish SMEs face is how to prepare for the UK's departure from the EU and how to expand their cross-border activities beyond UK's market. The UK is the second largest export market for Irish goods and the largest for services, accounting for around 17 % of total Irish exports. That means that Irish SMEs need to deploy all the strategies available to them in order to overcome this challenge<sup>15</sup>.

## 2.2 Good Practices on SMEs internationalization

In Ireland there are programs and organizations that support SMEs in their cross-border collaboration activities. Enterprise Ireland is the government organization responsible for the development and growth of Irish enterprises in world markets. It works in partnership with Irish enterprises to help them start, grow, innovate and export their products and services in global markets.

Enterprise Ireland is responsible for supporting prospective and emerging exporters to expand their activities. The Exporter Development Department works with companies considering exporting as a platform for upgrading client engagement model. Also, implements market research reports, international events and offers sales training and access to experts in order for companies to develop their international selling skills and improve employers' performance<sup>16</sup>.

One Enterprise Ireland's service is the "First flight" which is aimed at assisting companies to manage the risks, time and expenses associated with cross boarder activities. More specific, the 'First flight' program assists the company's management team to structure

<sup>15</sup> European Commission, *ibid*

<sup>16</sup> Enterprise Ireland, "About us", (Retrieved from: <https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/About-Us/>, b5/11/2019)

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the planning process into a systematic and consistent order. A questionnaire evaluates the company in the following areas and is completed by the company with the assistance of a development adviser. The questionnaire includes overview of company, company's performance, management resources, market knowledge, the business case, and budgets and funding.

"First flight" aimed specifically at companies who are new exporters or early stage exporters (exports of less than EUR 30000). Results expected to provide high impact and high value information that can be useful to SMEs. 'First flight' is viewed as the first step to a long-term internationalization and exporting strategy<sup>17</sup>.

A success story coming from the assistance provided by Enterprise Ireland is the Irish Dromkeen Food Ingredients (DFI), which is a SME that uses this spent brewer's yeast to make yeast products for the food industry. Enterprise Ireland helped DFI to create a new collaboration with a similar company in Belgium (Tas Consult) and have access on new technologies. The two companies' collaboration went beyond what was originally envisaged to develop an ongoing working relationship, involving working together to locate new markets for their products and adapted their process for making them<sup>18</sup>.

### 3. In-company trainers

#### 3.1 In-company trainers' skills and competencies

In Ireland, in-company training is regulated through the standards set by Ireland's National Training and Employment Authority (FÁS) in the trainers register and through various sectoral agreements. FÁS took the initiative together with Enterprise Ireland, to create a national register of trainer's database in order to make it easy to find qualified and approved

<sup>17</sup> European Commission, *Supporting the internationalisation of SMEs-Good practice selection*, Luxemburg, Publications Office of the European Union, 2008

<sup>18</sup> European Commission, *Observatory of European SMEs*, Luxemburg, Publications Office of the European Union, 2004

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training providers. For doing this, FÁS established a clear competence criterion for the national register of trainers.

The competence set has been designed according to the national qualifications framework in Ireland and the European qualifications framework. Trainers network proposes that trainers should have a professional degree qualification, of at least one level higher than their trainees.

The essential trainers' competences which have been recognized are the following:

**Personal competences:**

- Listening and communication skills
- Emotional intelligence /critical thinking
- Presentation skills
- Motivational skills
- Facilitation skills
- Coaching and mentoring skills
- Conflict, mediation and crisis Management
- Personal development
- Computer skills, ability to use a PC competently
- Sensitivity to equality and diversity sensitivity
- Adherence to code of conduct or statement of values

**Technical competences:**

- Understanding of learning theory
- Identification of training needs
- Understanding of training methodologies
- Learning design
- Designing learning objectives

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Selecting and using learning support materials and resources

Being a subject matter expert

Training administration

Applying learning technology

Supporting learners in their environment

Training evaluation and the assessment of learning

Dealing with special needs and diversity

Recognition of prior learning

### **Business competences:**

Innovation and emerging technologies

Information Communication Technology

Commercial acumen, business strategy and management (planning, budgeting)

Project management - leading the learning function

Stakeholder management

Understanding the changing nature of work at large

Training industry policy and regulation

Awards, standards and certification

Supporting special needs and diversity competence

Networking

Use technology to manage client's base

Organizational development and effectiveness<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup>Cedefop, *Professional development opportunities for in-company trainers*, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, 2010 (retrieved from: [https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/6106\\_en.pdf](https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/6106_en.pdf), 6/11/2019)

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### 3.2 Learning and certification opportunities of in-company trainers

There is no formal training path for those wishing to work as trainers in private industry, but many companies provide training for employees who want to take over the role of company trainer. Most of the large companies have training managers who are responsible for organizing in-company training. Many of these may have some formal trainer qualification which they may have obtained on a part-time basis<sup>20</sup>.

Most in-company trainers in Ireland hold some form of trainer qualification. So far, there is no legal requirement in Ireland for trainers to be qualified, though mandatory certification. In-company trainers in Ireland have access to a similar range of qualifications as in the UK<sup>21</sup>, and in both countries trainers' qualification can be linked to national qualification framework<sup>22</sup>. Also, Trainers in Ireland who seek qualifications can apply to the Irish Institute of Training and Development (IITD); and the UK based Chartered Institute of Training and Development (CIPD)<sup>23</sup>. Also, Since 2012 QQI (Quality and Qualifications Ireland) established by the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012. QQI is an independent State agency and is responsible for promoting quality and accountability in education and training services and thus, for trainers' certification<sup>24</sup>.

The Irish Institute of Training and Development (IITD) is a professional body which develops and monitors standards in training and development in Ireland. The IITD organizes Certificate and Diploma part-time courses in training and development in co-operation with several Institutes of Technology. In 2006 the IITD, in association with the National College of

<sup>20</sup> Cedefop, Ireland VET in Europe – Country Report, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, 2011, (retrieved from: <http://www.solas.ie/refernet/Documents/IRLVET2011.pdf>, 6/11/2019)

<sup>21</sup> Cedefop, 2010, *ibid*

<sup>22</sup> Cedefop, "Effective approaches to trainers' continuing professional development, career opportunities and recognition", Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, 2013 (retrieved from: [https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/TWG\\_trainers\\_CPD\\_PLA2\\_paper.pdf](https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/TWG_trainers_CPD_PLA2_paper.pdf), 6/11/2019)

<sup>23</sup> Cedefop, 2010, *ibid*

<sup>24</sup> QQI, "About Us", (retrieved from: <https://www.qqi.ie/Articles/Pages/About-Us.aspx>, 6/11/2019)

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Ireland, launched a part-time three-year BA Degree in Training and Development, aimed human resource practitioners or consultants working in small, medium and large enterprises. The degree aims to develop skills and knowledge in specialist training areas such as the design and delivery of training.

ÇdarÅs Na Gaeltachta provide also training for companies and employees. ÇdarÅs Na Gaeltachta is the state agency with responsibility for the economic, social and cultural development of the indigenous Irish speaking regions called the Gaeltacht. More specific, it provides a Development Scheme for managers and companies specialists. Programs are mainly focus on s information technology, management development programs and the various aspects of aquaculture and in-company training, in all areas of industrial technology<sup>25</sup>.

Except for public bodies, training can be also provided by VET providers and adult learning providers. In this case, most certification procedures are accompanied by training programs where competence standards serve as a basis for curricula<sup>26</sup>

## Conclusions

Apprenticeships in Ireland used to refer to craft careers, until 2016, when new apprenticeships were introduced, referring to the fields of ICT, finance and hospitality include software development, accounting technician and commis chef. In this context, national strategies developed for increasing apprenticeships schemes in companies. Regarding SMEs the initiatives that have been developed mainly focus on encouraging them to integrate apprenticeship programs which will meet their needs.

In relation to SMEs Internationalization, also many national policies have been developed. These policies concentrate in helping SMEs overcome the main challenge for

<sup>25</sup> Cedefop, 2011, ibid

<sup>26</sup> Cedefop, 2013, ibid

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them, which is the departure of the UK from EU, as UK consists the biggest market for the export-oriented Irish SMEs.

As in-company trainers could be very useful in companies' activities, Ireland's National Training and Employment Authority (FÁS) developed an international best practice in competence standards for trainers in Ireland. The trainers' competencies can be divided in three main categories: personal, technical and business. Most in-company trainers in Ireland hold some form of trainer qualification, but there is no legal requirement in Ireland for trainers to be qualified, though mandatory certification.

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