Irish labour market to benefit from increased output of education and training system

Expert Group publishes Trends in Education and Training Output

(Monday 2 November 2009) The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs today published its annual report on the supply of skills to the Irish labour market. The report, "Monitoring Ireland's Skills Supply: Trends in Education and Training Output", found that while higher level participation rates declined for maths, physics and chemistry at Leaving Certificate level between 2004 and 2008, there has been an increase in higher level participation in maths and science at Junior Certificate level with the share of students achieving a grade D or more at higher level also increasing. It identifies a pool of approximately 23,000 candidates who may potentially take higher level maths in the Leaving Certificate in two to three years.

The report, which is produced by the Skills and Labour Market Research Unit of FÁS on behalf of the EGFSN, shows that the output emerging from the education and training system in Ireland has continued to increase thereby potentially adding significantly to the supply of skills for the Irish labour market. With continued strategic investment, this upskilling and reskilling of the labour force will play a significant role in providing current and future enterprises with the competitive advantage necessary for Ireland to achieve sustainable export led economic recovery.

Other key trends identified include:

- The share of school leavers progressing to higher education has moved further towards the National Skills Strategy target of 72%. At over 60%, the share in the 2008 estimates was already more than three percentage points more than in 2007

- The attainment of recognised awards was not confined to school leavers which represents a positive move in terms of the up-skilling and re-skilling that is taking place for those who may already have left full-time education; more than a third of FETAC awards recipients (all award types) were aged between 30 and 49 years while one fifth of higher education awards were made to part-time students

- The number of highly skilled graduates has continued to increase with the number of third level graduates in Ireland reaching over 56,300 in 2007 (up from approximately 55,100 in 2006); furthermore, students are opting to take more advanced courses with the increase in graduate numbers concentrated at levels 8 and 9 (honours degrees, postgraduate certificates/diplomas and master degrees)

- The number of PhDs awards in Irish higher education reached its highest level to date in 2007 and exceeded 1,000 for the first time

- Increases in the number of CAO acceptances, combined with increases in post-graduate enrolments (enrolments in 2007/08 were 10% higher than in 2006/2007) should ensure a continuing rise in the outflow of skills from higher education
- There has been a shift towards higher educational attainment in Ireland's labour force; these shifts are in the direction of the target set out in the Government's National Skills Strategy. The share of the labour force with lower education or less is diminishing while the share with third level qualifications is increasing

The full report is available to download from the EGFSN website, www.skillsireland.ie.

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

"Monitoring Ireland's Skills Supply: Trends in Education and Training Outputs 2009" is the fourth annual report from the EGFSN on the outputs from the education and training system in Ireland. The report collates data from a variety of sources on the 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). The report complements the National Skills Bulletin, which is also produced annually by the EGFSN and looks at the demand for skills. Together, these two publications provide an annual snapshot of the supply and demand for skills in the Irish labour market.