

Tánaiste Welcomes Third Report of Skills Group

Mary Harney, T.D., Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, today (Tuesday 31st July 2001) welcomed the launch of the Third Report of the *Expert Group on Future Skills Needs*. The Group's report looks at Ireland's future skills requirements in key areas of the economy including the IT sector, Research, Life Sciences and the construction sector. The Report includes recommendations to meet the anticipated skills needs in these key areas.

The Tánaiste emphasised the importance to Irish economy of these key sectors and noted that the report reflected the priorities set out in the National Development Plan.

The Tánaiste said: "Much of our recent employment and economic growth can be directly attributed to the skills and flexibility of our workforce. However, sustaining our growth presents us with new challenges. Our success in creating more and better jobs has resulted in an inevitable tightening of the labour market. Demographic trends also mean that there will be fewer young people entering the jobs market or going on to further education."

The Tánaiste continued "These challenges make the work of the Expert Group more important than ever. But they also imply a need for a more innovative and flexible response which is both timely and relevant. The recommendations in this Third Report focus on the development of skills for those already in employment, on more flexible approaches to the delivery of education and training, and on skills-based immigration."

Commenting on the Expert Group, the Tánaiste said: "The *Expert Group on Future Skills Needs* has made a significant contribution to growth by rigorously analysing skills and labour needs and developing supply side solutions to meet them."

"In recognition of the key role played by the Expert Group, my colleague, Dr Michael Woods, Minister for Education and Science, and I are issuing a new mandate to the Group. The mandate positions the Expert Group as the central resource for advising the Government on skills needs and provides for a strengthening of the Expert Group's membership and resources to reflect the breadth and depth of its work."

The Tánaiste concluded by saying: "I again welcome the publication of the Expert Group's Third Report and look forward to the Group's continuing endeavours in identifying and addressing existing and emergent skills needs."

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