Enterprise Development Chiefs Welcome Plan to Develop Ireland's ICT Skills

The heads of Enterprise Ireland, Forfás, IDA Ireland and SFI today welcomed the actions in the Government's plan to address the high-level ICT skills needs of business in Ireland.

Commenting on the employment opportunities available for high level ICT graduates and professionals in the ICT sector and in other sectors including international financial services, the enterprise chiefs outlined that the *ICT Action Plan - Meeting the High-Level Skills Needs of Enterprises in Ireland,* published today by Government provides the beginning of a process towards providing a sustainable talent base for companies ICT needs.

Martin D. Shanahan, Chief Executive, Forfás said "The provision of high level skills for the ICT sector and other sectors is of strategic economic importance to Ireland. The ICT sector alone employs 75,000 people in 8,000 companies and an increasing share of that employment is for people with high level skills. We have established from industry the scale and nature of the skills needs. Recruitment demand is currently for computing and electronic engineers and the expansion and replacement demand for these skills is estimated at 2,500 per year. Coordinated, sustained actions in upskilling and conversion programmes, and doubling the output of graduates will ensure that recruitment difficulties do not become a persistent feature of the Irish enterprise landscape."

Frank Ryan, Chief Executive, Enterprise Ireland, commented, "This Action Plan is a timely initiative which will help Ireland take advantage of the significant business, export and job opportunities in a vibrant sector and which is forecast to increase over the coming years. The partnership approach of this plan provides an excellent template for how a range of stakeholders can work together to deliver the skills businesses need in Ireland, for those seeking high quality employment and for the economy."

Commenting Barry O'Leary, Chief Executive, IDA Ireland, said, "It is vital for those making an education or career choice, or wishing to up-skill, to focus on where current and future job opportunities exist and the key skills that are in demand. We currently estimate that approximately half of the vacancies in IDA companies in the coming years will require technology skills. These actions to increase the talent available to business will ensure a substantial boost to Ireland's ability to maximise opportunities in not only the ICT sector but across a range of sectors including international financial services, banking and business services."

Mark Ferguson, Director General, Science Foundation Ireland commented on how scientific skills are critical for modern life and business. He stated that "Ireland is competing in a global marketplace to retain and attract the brightest minds and research talent. The focus

in this action plan on the improvement of maths attainment is very much to be welcomed. Improving the proficiency in maths of students leaving second-level education will support the development of the ICT skills that are the engines of growth and innovation. It is through initiatives such as this that we will further enhance Ireland's reputation as a desirable country for the largest companies to locate their R&D operations, for ground breaking companies to be born, and as a country that understands the importance and value of science to society.

Ends.

The the *ICT Action Plan - Meeting the High-Level Skills Needs of Enterprises in Ireland is available at www.djei.ie and www.education.ie*

Report from Expert Group On Future Skills Needs

The Expert Group of Future Skills Needs report *Addressing High-Level ICT Skills Recruitment Needs: Research Findings* is available at www.skillsireland.com

This report presents findings into current recruitment difficulties within the ICT Sector. Forfás and the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (with the support of IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland), engaged in discussions with foreign-owned and Irish companies, to establish the nature of positions involved, the reasons for recruitment difficulties and to identify measures to help address them.

www.skillsireland.ie; www.forfas.ie