

Expert Group recommends Central Careers Portal Site.

Expert Group on Future Skills Needs / Forfás launch Careers Information and Labour Market Information in Ireland Report

The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs has recommended the creation of a Central Careers Portal Site. There is a low level of awareness of labour market and careers information in Ireland, the Group has concluded in a report published today (Tuesday, 11 July 2006). The report examined awareness levels of where employment opportunities currently are or are likely to emerge within the knowledge economy amongst a variety of groups including school students, college students, women seeking to return to the workforce and those with experience of redundancy. It shows that many of the groups are not aware of the information or how to access it.

Anne Heraty, Chairperson of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs said "what is clear from the report is that many of the careers websites have very valuable up-to-date information, but the level of awareness of these sites is low with usage ranging from 6 - 24 percent. There is duplication on many of the sites and most omit up-to-date labour market information. Students and adults need to make career decisions based on their own aptitudes and preferences, but they also need to do so based on the best career and labour market forecasts available. In the long run, acquiring skills that are in demand is the best thing for individuals and the economy."

The report highlights that there is a strong appetite from individuals at all levels for more information and guidance on where opportunities exist and how to access them. The report concludes that this information needs to be made available in a coherent and streamlined way to both individuals and career guidance professionals and recommends the establishment of a central careers portal site which will direct users to the most relevant information for them.

Launching the report, Minister for Education and Science Mary Hanafin T.D., said "people need access to careers information whether in school, college, entering the workplace, seeking a career change or looking to re-enter it after a period away from formal employment. This report examines the diverse needs of all these key employment groups and makes a number of important recommendations to improve the availability of up-to-the-minute careers and labour market information in Ireland. It also identifies ways in which opportunities can best be communicated through the career guidance system and by electronic means direct to individuals."

Officials from the Departments of Education and Science and Enterprise, Trade and Employment have examined the recommendations of the report with relevant interested parties who are working to establish a 'one stop shop' to access careers and labour market information.

Martin Cronin, Chief Executive of Forfás said, "the objective should be to provide timely, relevant, up-to-date information and allow users to make their own choices. Guidance professionals also need support in accessing and understanding this information."

Summary of key findings:

- There is currently a huge lack of awareness of available careers information resources.
- The development of a single careers portal is recommended. Its design should facilitate a high degree of information access by user groups with differing needs. It should contain careers, course and labour market information, organisational/company profiles and a range of assessment tools.
- There should be a high level of promotion of existing career sites until such time as a new national portal is established.
- There is a high level of interest across all user groups in easily digested labour market information about skills needs, occupational, employment and salary trends.
- The range of assessment tools available currently on Irish career sites is limited. A wider range of reputable self assessment tools, including CV builders, should either be made available directly on Irish careers sites or through appropriate linkages.