"Starting salaries for science engineering and technology graduates are amongst the highest of all Irish graduates" Minister Martin

Attractiveness of Science and Engineering careers highlighted by new report

Micheál Martin TD, Minister for Enterprise, Trade & Employment today (Friday, 23rd June 2006) launched a new report by Forfás which indicates that starting salaries for science engineering and technology graduates are amongst the highest of all Irish graduates. The report *Comparative Starting Salaries and Career Progression in Science, Engineering and Technology* was launched at a Discover Science and Engineering Awards of Science Excellence ceremony in Cork.

Speaking at the awards ceremony Minister Martin said, "This report highlights the exciting careers and levels of opportunity open to graduates and students in the science, engineering and technology sector. These graduates and students are at the forefront of Ireland's transition as a world leading knowledge economy, working at the cutting edge of innovation and research. I particularly welcome the findings of the report in light of the announcement of the new Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation, which the Government announced details of last week and for which funding of €2.7 billion has been allocated from now until 2008. Attracting students to the Science Engineering and Technology disciplines from primary through to fourth level will be critically important to delivering the long term aims of the strategy and I'm confident the outcomes of this report will enhance the attractiveness of the this sector to potential students. The investment in the Strategy for Science, Technology & Innovation will also ensure that the opportunities and development of the SET sector will continue well into the future".

"This report shows both graduates and those currently examining Science, Engineering & Technology as a career option that there are opportunities available to them, not only in these disciplines but across a wide range of areas. It is interesting to note that the report highlights the flexibility that a qualification in the Science, Engineering & Technology discipline offers to graduates in terms of the number of employment sectors and occupations that they can enter ranging from the healthcare sectors to Business Information Systems", added Minister Martin.

The main findings of the reports are:

- Across a range of qualifications from primary degree to PhD level the report shows that graduates in disciplines with a strong science and technology content tend to be better paid than graduates in other disciplines.

- Graduates in medicine and healthcare, disciplines which have a substantial scientific content, are amongst the best paid. At primary degree level 75% of dentistry graduates and 68% of paramedical graduates earn in excess of €33,000 in their first year.

- The next highest paid graduates at primary degree level are those in engineering and computing and science. Within the engineering disciplines chemical and processing engineers are the highest paid in their first year of work with 23% earning in excess of €33,000.

- Within the computer sector Business Information Systems graduates are the highest paid with 21% of these graduates also earning in excess of €33,000.

- Salaries compare favourably with non- Science, Engineering & Technology disciplines most notably the humanities, commerce and business studies and law. Only 3% of humanities graduates and 5% of commerce and business studies graduates earn more than €33,000 in their first year. None of the primary degree Law graduates surveyed earned over €33,000, and only 25% earned over €23,800.

- The trends continue at higher and graduate diploma, taught Masters degree and PhD level. Those with a strong science and technology content leading to higher starting salaries than graduates in other disciplines.

- At primary degree level the report confirms that since a severe fall off in 2001/2002, applications for engineering/technology which includes many Information and Communications Technology (ICT) courses have steadied. The fall off in 2001/2002 was attributable to the severe global downturn in the ICT sector during that period. The share of applications for science and applied science also shows signs of improvement and is now rising steadily. This is in contrast to the share of applications accounted for by administration/business which has fallen steadily since 2000 and for law which has been falling since 2002

(This press release is available on the Department's website www.entemp.ie Report available on Forfas website www.forfas.ie