

Press Release

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Skills road-map identified for future of Digital Media industry

Future Skills Requirements of the International Digital Media Industry: Implications for Ireland Report

A high quality mix of creative and technical skills will be required to meet the needs of the Digital Media industry of the future, according to a report published today (Monday, 31st July 2006) by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) and Forfás. The report examines how Ireland can best position itself from a skills perspective in order to benefit from an industry which was worth over \$965 billion in 2004 and is projected to grow to \$1.5 trillion by 2009.

Anne Heraty, Chairperson of the EGFSN said "Creative skills are crucial to the Digital Media industry. While technology and the associated technical skills are key drivers of the industry, they are a complement to creative ability and not a substitute for it."

Sean Dorgan, Chief Executive of IDA Ireland said "We view the digital media industry as an area with significant potential for future investment. It is important that we identify the necessary skills sets and talents required for this knowledge-driven industry to fully exploit future opportunities for Ireland".

The report, which examines skill requirements in some of the world's leading digital media clusters, highlights the need for greater specialisation in the courses provided in the Technology Institutes and Universities in Ireland. The need to use industry-standard technology in programme delivery and the need for greater responsiveness to changing industry requirements is also highlighted in the report. Andrew McDowell, Chief Economist of Forfás, said that "Ireland possesses a strong educational base in Digital Media from which it can build on. However, the education sector needs to develop capabilities to respond more quickly to changing industry standards, and this report recommends ways in which this can be done."

The detailed findings of the report will help education and training providers in Ireland keep their curricula and programmes up-to-date with developments in the industry and thereby maximise employment opportunities for their graduates. This report will also serve as a resource for Irish firms in the industry. By identifying the skills requirements of leading international firms, the EGFSN is setting out a skills road-map for them.

Key Findings and Recommendations

1. Non-technical skills such as project management, sales and marketing, communication and interpersonal skills are increasingly important in the industry.
2. "Ramping-up" of skills is required to stimulate overseas investment and to boost the indigenous industry. Specific proposals for achieving this include:
 - o Specialised courses and modules for the wireless and mobile sector, the film and television sectors, and the e-learning sector, among others.
 - o Creative courses (film making, design etc.) should incorporate more training in the use of technology.
 - o Course curricula should incorporate practical, industry-oriented elements, e.g. practical work on projects such as games prototypes and animation show reels. This should apply to both creative and technical courses, e.g. group projects could bring both content creators and programmers together to build a complete games prototype.

- Closer links between colleges and the industry through mechanisms such as structured work placements and internships for students, and the use of guest lecturers from industry.