



Review of the Occupations List end of year 2020

The State operates a managed employment permits system maximising the benefits of economic migration and minimising the risk of disrupting Ireland's labour market. The system is intended to act as a conduit for key skills which are required to develop enterprise in the State for the benefit of our economy, while simultaneously protecting the balance of the labour market. The system is, by design, vacancy led and driven by the changing needs of the labour market, expanding and contracting in tandem with its inherent fluctuations. The general policy is to promote the sourcing of labour and skills needs from within the workforce of the State and other EEA states. However, where specific skills prove difficult to source within the State and the EEA, the employment permits system offers a path into the Irish labour market for non-EEA nationals who possess those in-demand skills.

The system is managed through the operation of the Critical Skills and Ineligible Occupations Lists which determine employments that are either in high demand or are ineligible for an employment permit where there is a surplus of those skills in the domestic and EEA labour market. The Employment Permits Regulations, as provided for in the Employment Permits (Amendment) Act 2014, set out the Critical Skills Occupations List (CSOL) and the Ineligible Occupations List (IOL).

In order to maintain the relevance of these lists of occupations to the needs of the economy and to ensure the employment permits system is aligned with current labour market intelligence, these lists undergo twice-yearly evidence-based reviews involving a public consultation and guided by available research undertaken by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN), and the Skills and the Labour Market Research Unit (SLMRU) in SOLAS. Account is taken of education outputs, sectoral upskilling and training initiatives and known contextual factors such as Brexit and, in the current context, COVID-19 and their impact on the labour market. Consideration is also taken of the views of the relevant policy Departments and the Economic Migration Interdepartmental Group, chaired by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment.

This review commenced with the opening of the public consultation on 10 November 2020, with a closing date of 11 December. Twenty-seven submissions were received by the Department from a range of employers, representative bodies and NGOs.

The following sectors are featured under this review:

Agri/Food

Aviation

Construction

Health/Social Care

Hospitality

ICT

Processing and Plant

Transport/Logistics

The Irish labour market has undergone significant adjustment since the COVID-19 pandemic began in February last year, with the continuing impact being felt across the economy and labour market since then. Among the sectors most impacted by the crisis have been hospitality, retail and aviation. Consideration of the impact of COVID-19 on the labour market has had a significant influence on the outcome of this review.

Recommendation

The following changes have been made to the Employment Permits Occupations Lists:

- a) to remove the occupation of healthcare assistant (in hospital and residential care establishments) from the Ineligible Occupations List
- b) to add Dietician to the Critical Skills Occupations List
- c) to remove Social Worker, Occupational Therapist, Physiotherapist and Speech and Language Therapist from the Ineligible Occupations List
- d) a technical amendment to Schedule 2 updating the regulatory body for Physiotherapists to CORU.