

# Foreword

Developing relevant skills and using them effectively is crucial for Ireland's ability to thrive in an increasingly interconnected and rapidly changing world.

Globalisation, the digital transformation, the green transition and demographic change are combining to change and increase the skills needed to thrive in Ireland's workplaces and society. People will need a stronger and more well-rounded set of skills, including cognitive, social and emotional, and job-specific skills, to flourish in life both in and outside of work. The coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis has accelerated the digitalisation of learning and work, making upskilling and reskilling even more critical for many adults.

Ireland has achieved relatively strong skills performance in many areas. Youth are achieving high levels of skills performance; the tertiary attainment level among young adults is among the highest across the OECD; and Ireland performs better than the EU average in terms of digital skills, with strong growth in recent years. Ireland also does a good job at activating people's skills in the labour market, and their skills contribute to high levels of innovation.

However, Ireland still faces a number of important skills challenges. A concern is that many adults do not have the skills to succeed in economies and societies of the future, and participation in lifelong learning lags behind top European Union (EU) performers. Skills imbalances in the labour market are also relatively high, and workplaces could be better designed to stimulate the use of workers' skills. Furthermore, the governance of Ireland's skills system is complex and requires strong collaboration and co-ordination across government and with stakeholders.

Skills policy is already a priority in Ireland. In 2016, the National Skills Strategy (NSS) 2025 was launched, which sets a comprehensive vision for skills policy for the period up to 2025. A key element of the NSS 2025 was the establishment of new bodies, such as the National Skills Council and nine Regional Skills Fora, that make Ireland a leader in developing advanced skills governance arrangements.

Since setting the ambitious objectives of the NSS 2025 in 2016, Ireland has been profoundly transformed by the continuing impacts of global megatrends, the COVID-19 pandemic, Brexit and the Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine. To ensure that its NSS 2025 is still fit for purpose, Ireland should take stock of current policy priorities and review how the NSS 2025 might need to be adapted. To support Ireland in this endeavour, the OECD has conducted a collaborative and tailored OECD Skills Strategy project.

Building on detailed analysis and widespread engagement with stakeholders, this report presents 24 tailored recommendations for Ireland, which provide high-level strategic policy directions for Ireland across four priority areas. The guidance contained in this report provides Ireland with a strong foundation on which to build a further strengthened skills system. The OECD stands ready to support Ireland as it seeks to implement better skills policies for better lives.

The opinions expressed and arguments employed herein do not necessarily reflect the official views of OECD member countries.



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