ICCDPP
THE INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND PUBLIC POLICY

CATE
Ngā Kaitohutohu Rapuara Aotearoa
Careers and Transition Education Association NZ

Tertiary Education Commission
Te Amorangi Mātauranga Matua

# Country Report

10th International Symposium on Career Development and Public Policy, Auckland, New Zealand, November 2026

## Country name

## Ireland

*This country report has been prepared for discussion and information purposes in connection with the 10th International Symposium on Career Development and Public Policy. It draws on an online questionnaire on the Symposium themes, which national teams were invited to complete in advance.*

# ICCDPP: Navigating new horizons - Country perspectives survey

## Introduction

Q1. Do you agree to participate in this survey?

Yes

Q2. I confirm that I am providing a response on behalf of my country.

Yes

Q3. I confirm that I am happy for the responses to this survey to be shared publicly.

Yes

Q4. Is your country going to participate in the 2026 ICCDPP symposium in New Zealand?

Yes

Q5. Who have you consulted with before completing this survey?

The other team member who is registered to attend.

## About you

Q6. What is your name?

Dr Carol Guildea

Q7. What organisation do you work for?

Dept of Education and Youth

Q8. What is your job title?

Guidance Specialist

Q9. What is your email address?

carol_guildea@education.gov.ie

Q10. Are you happy for your contact details to be published on the ICCDPP website/ relevant documents as part of the publication of this data?

Yes

## About your country

Q11. What is the name of your country?

Ireland

Q12. Which groups can access career development services in your country?

| | Accessible and free to everyone | Accessible and free to some groups | Accessible to those who can pay | Not accessible |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Indigenous people** | X | | | |
| **Young people in schools** | X | | | |
| **Young people in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)** | X | | | |
| **Young people in university or higher education** | X | | | |
| **Young people not in education or work (e.g. NEETs)** | X | | | |
| **Adults in education** | X | | | |
| **Adults in work** | X | | | |
| **Adults not in education or work (e.g. unemployed workers and the economic inactive)** | X | | | |
| **Migrants** | X | | | |
| **People in the criminal justice system** | X | | | |
| **Employers/businesses** | | X | | |

Q13. Are there any other groups in your country, not listed in Question 12 above, that can access career development services?

All individuals in Ireland have access to free guidance through one or multiple forms.

## About your country

Q14. How far do you agree with the following statements?

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **The career development policies, programmes and services in my country are meeting the career needs of the population.** | | X | | | |
| **School leavers in my country are well prepared for successful transitions to work or further learning.** | | X | | | |

Q14. How far do you agree with the following statements?

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **The career development policies, programmes and services in my country are meeting the career needs of the population.** | | X | | | |
| **There is a strong evidence base to support the provision of career development services in my country.** | X | | | | |
| **AI is having a major impact on the education system in my country.** | | X | | | |
| **AI is having a major impact on labour market in my country.** | | X | | | |
| **AI is having a major impact on the provision of career development services in my country.** | | | X | | |

Q15. Are indigenous groups involved in the design of career development services in your country?

Yes, to some extent

## About your country

Q16. Please provide a short summary of your country's career development system. [Up to 300 words]

Ireland's career development system operates through a shared, cross-government model, reflecting the national view that guidance is a lifelong endeavour. Responsibility is spread across at least five key government departments (DEY, DFHERIS, DSP, DCDE, DETE, DSP).Services are also delivered through agencies and settings under other departments—such as prisons, and through the Health Service Executive, ensuring broad access to guidance across society.
The system is underpinned by a National Strategic Framework and Action Plan for Lifelong Guidance (2024-2030), aligned with Ireland's Further Education and Training (FET) Strategy and wider skills policies. These frameworks emphasise coordinated service delivery, practitioner development, and integrated labour market intelligence. The approach reflects recommendations from the OECD Skills Strategy Review of Ireland, which highlighted the need for stronger coordination, improved access to guidance across the lifespan, and a greater focus on skills relevance to the labour market. These recommendations have shaped reforms, including investment in guidance provision and better inter-agency collaboration.
DEY funding has recently supported the training and upskilling of guidance counsellors strengthening professional capacity across post-primary education in particular.
A core principle of the national framework, and of practice is that of universal design, ensuring equity, accessibility, and responsiveness to diversity, including disadvantaged and under-represented groups. Services are designed to be inclusive and adaptable across varied user needs.
Irelands guidance system is well connected in Europe through Euroguidance, CEDEFOP and many other initiatives/networks.

Q17. Please provide links to any key reports, articles or websites that provide insights into your country's career development policies and systems. [Up to 300 words]

OECD Skills Strategy Ireland: Assessment and Recommendations (2023): https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/oecd-skills-strategy-ireland_d7b8b40b-en.html [oecd.org]
Comprehensive international review of Ireland's skills system, highlighting lifelong learning, governance, and labour market alignment.

Q17. Please provide links to any key reports, articles or websites that provide insights into your country's career development policies and systems. [Up to 300 words]

Government of Ireland – OECD Skills Strategy Report (official publication page)
https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-further-and-higher-education-research-innovation-and-science/publications/oecd-skills-strategy-ireland-assessment-and-recommendations/ [gov.ie]
Shows how Ireland is responding to OECD recommendations within national policy and reforms.

National Strategic Framework for Lifelong Guidance (2024–2030) & Action Plan
https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-education/publications/key-publications-in-guidance
Core framework underpinning Ireland's career guidance system, with pillars on access, universal design, quality, and career management skills.

European Commission – Union of Skills (2025)
https://commission.europa.eu/topics/competitiveness/union-skills_en

qualifax.ie

Q18. Do you have any other comments that you would like to make about the way in which your country organises its career development services? [Up to 300 words]

Ireland's lifelong guidance system is organised through a highly consultative and collaborative approach, ensuring that policy and service design are informed by open national consultations, stakeholder engagement, and ongoing research. National strategies—such as the Lifelong Guidance Framework—are shaped through input from key stakeholder bodies, including government departments, education and training providers, employer organisations, and practitioner networks. A strong emphasis is placed on networking at all levels, from international and European cooperation (e.g. OECD, EU initiatives) to national coordination and regional/local service delivery, supporting knowledge exchange and system coherence. The approach is deliberately outward-looking, with Ireland both contributing to and learning from European and international best practice, ensuring its policies remain responsive, innovative, and aligned with evolving global labour market and skills developments.

## Productivity and the inclusive economy

Q19. To what extent do policies for education, training, and employment in your country reflect the following statements?

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Career development services contribute to economic growth.** | | X | | | |
| **Career development services contribute to workforce productivity.** | | X | | | |
| **Career development services deliver a positive return on investment on public spending.** | | | X | | |
| **Career development services support entrepreneurialism.** | | X | | | |
| **Career development services help to address employers' skills and labour needs.** | X | | | | |
| **Career development services can be accessed by small and medium sized** | | | | X | |

Q19. To what extent do policies for education, training, and employment in your country reflect the following statements?

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Career development services contribute to economic growth.** | | X | | | |
| **businesses (SMEs).** | | | | | |
| **Career development services improve levels of job satisfaction.** | | | X | | |
| **Career development services contribute to decent work (jobs with access to training, a living wage and other benefits).** | | X | | | |
| **Career development services support equality of access to learning and work opportunities.** | | X | | | |
| **Career development services contribute to the green transition.** | | | | X | |

## Productivity and the inclusive economy

Q20. Provide further information about the way in which policies and practices for career development services in your country support productivity. [Up to 300 words]

Ireland’s policies and practices for career development services support productivity by promoting a whole-of-government approach, aligned with national strategies. At least five core departments contribute to service design and delivery, ensuring that the full population is represented across education, employment, and community settings. In principle, services are freely available and universally accessible across the lifespan, though in practice challenges remain in achieving consistent access and engagement for all groups.
A key policy concern is fragmentation. Under Action 3.4 of the Lifelong Guidance Strategic Action Plan, the system acknowledges that services for those experiencing marginalisation are often delivered by multiple, siloed organisations, which can reduce coherence and limit user navigation. Since 2022, there has been a stronger policy drive to address these gaps, with new efforts emerging to extend guidance into special schools, community settings, and more diverse learner cohorts.
Productivity is also supported through a growing emphasis on digital skills, both as a labour market requirement and as an enabler of access to guidance services. However, disparities in aptitude, cultural capital, and societal norms continue to influence participation, meaning that not all individuals engage equally with available services—raising ongoing concerns around the equity of accessibility.
Ireland’s changing demographics have led to a stronger policy focus on migrant populations, with more targeted supports and culturally responsive approaches being developed.
Overall, while Ireland’s system is increasingly aligned with productivity goals through skills development and labour market integration, continued progress depends on improving coordination, inclusion, and equitable access.

Q21. Provide further information about the way in which policies and practices for career development services in your country support an inclusive economy. [Up to 300 words]

Ireland’s career development policies and practices contribute to an inclusive economy by embedding access, equity, and participation across education, employment, and community systems. A strong example is the work of the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE) through the National Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People (2025–2030), which takes a whole-of-government, rights-based approach to ensuring disabled people can fully participate in education, employment, and society. This aligns closely with the National Strategic Framework for Lifelong Guidance (NSFLG), particularly its focus on universal design, inclusion, and career management skills, ensuring guidance services are

Q21. Provide further information about the way in which policies and practices for career development services in your country support an inclusive economy. [Up to 300 words]

accessible to all.
The Department of Social Protection (DSP) plays a key role in supporting inclusion through targeted measures for the long-term unemployed, including Intreo services, Community Employment schemes, and activation supports, which provide guidance, training, and work experience pathways back into the labour market. These initiatives are central to enabling individuals to re-engage with employment and contribute productively.
Within education, ETBI-led Adult Education Guidance Services ensure that adult learners—particularly those outside the labour market—have access to free, impartial guidance, helping them make informed decisions about learning and work.
At European level, the Union of Skills reinforces inclusion by promoting fair mobility, lifelong learning, and access to upskilling pathways, particularly through tools like micro-credentials, which offer flexible and accessible learning opportunities for diverse groups, including those re-entering education.
Ireland's system is further strengthened by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) through the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), a clear, transparent 10-level system that maps qualifications nationally and across Europe, supporting recognition, progression, and user understanding.
Together, these policies create a more inclusive economy by enabling equitable access, lifelong participation, and clear progression pathways for all individuals.

Q22. Please provide links to any key reports, articles or websites that provide further insights into the relationship in your country between policies for career development, and policies for productivity and the inclusive economy. [Up to 300 words]

https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/oecd-skills-strategy-ireland_d7b8b40b-en/full-report.html

https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-further-and-higher-education-research-innovation-and-science/publications/irelands-national-skills-strategy/

https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/countries/ireland

https://economy-finance.ec.europa.eu/economic-surveillance-eu-member-states/country-pages-including-country-reports/country-report-ireland_en

https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/64d0718c9e/solas_fet_strategy_web.pdf

https://euroguidance.ie/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/National-Strategic-Framework-for-Lifelong-Guidance-Strategic-Action-Plan-2024-2030-1.pdf

https://commission.europa.eu/topics/competitiveness/union-skills_en

## Enhancing skills and developing technical and vocational education and training (TVET)

Q23. To what extent do policies for education, training, and employment in your country reflect the following statements?

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Career development services support people to develop skills** | | X | | | |
| **Career development services support people to access training** | X | | | | |
| **Career development services support the uptake of TVET pathways** | X | | | | |
| **Career development services** | X | | | | |

Q23. To what extent do policies for education, training, and employment in your country reflect the following statements?

**support lifelong learning**

Q24. What are the biggest challenges for participation in the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) system in your country? [Please tick all that apply.]

Parents do not see TVET pathways as attractive for their children
The influence of gender stereotyping on TVET choices
Shortage of employers offering training placements

## Enhancing skills and developing technical and vocational education and training (TVET)

Q25. At what age do young people generally move onto a TVET pathway if that is the path they take?

16 onwards

Q26. Does the age of pathway selection cause challenges for your TVET system?

No

Q27. Is there anything else that you would like to say about the age of pathway selection? [Up to 300 words]

Age doesnt seem to be a major factor in Ireland, we have supports in place

Q28. Provide further information on the ways in which policies for career development services in your country enhance policies for skills development, TVET, and lifelong learning. [Up to 300 words]

Ireland’s policies for career development services play a key role in strengthening skills development, TVET (further education and training), and lifelong learning by aligning guidance provision with national skills and inclusion priorities. Central to this is the National Strategic Framework for Lifelong Guidance (NSFLG) 2024–2030, which sets out targeted actions to improve access, coordination, quality, and career management skills. These actions explicitly link guidance to education and training pathways, ensuring individuals are supported to make informed decisions and to progress across the system throughout their lives.
The NSFLG also emphasises stronger integration between guidance and the world of work, ensuring that skills development policies are responsive to labour market needs. This aligns closely with broader national strategies in Further Education and Training (FET), where guidance is seen as essential to supporting participation, retention, and progression within TVET systems.
A further key enabler is the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE) through the National Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People, which promotes equal access to education, training, and employment. This rights-based approach reinforces lifelong learning policies by ensuring that individuals with disabilities are supported to engage in skills development and career pathways on an equal basis.
At delivery level, Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI) play a central role in operationalising these policies. Through their Adult Education Guidance Services and FET provision, ETBs offer free, impartial guidance, training programmes, apprenticeships, and community-based learning opportunities, supporting adults to upskill, reskill, and re-enter education or employment. These services are critical in bridging career guidance and TVET participation.
Overall, Ireland’s approach ensures that career guidance is not a standalone service but an integrated mechanism that enhances lifelong learning engagement, strengthens skills development systems, and supports inclusive access to TVET opportunities, contributing to a responsive and future-focused skills ecosystem.

Q29. Please provide links to any key reports, articles or websites that provide further insights about how career development services can enhance skills and support TVET. [Up to 300 words]

https://euroguidance.ie/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/National-Strategic-Framework-for-Lifelong-Guidance-Strategic-Action-Plan-2024-2030-1.pdf

https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-children-disability-and-equality/campaigns/the-national-human-rights-strategy-for-disabled-people-2025-2030/

https://www.etbi.ie/fet-guidance/

https://www.thisisfet.ie/about-fet/guidance-services/

https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/career-guidance-for-adults-in-a-changing-world-of-work_9a94bfad-en.html

https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/projects/lifelong-guidance

## Ensuring disadvantaged and vulnerable groups can thrive

Q30. To what extent do policies for education, training, and employment in your country reflect the following statements?

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Career development services help vulnerable and disadvantaged groups to thrive.** | | X | | | |
| **Vulnerable and disadvantaged groups can access career development services.** | X | | | | |
| **Career development services support vulnerable groups to access decent work.** | | | X | | |
| **Career development services support vulnerable groups to access the education and training system.** | X | | | | |
| **There is adequate funding for career development services targeting vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.** | | | X | | |
| **Policies for social inclusion intersect with policies for education, training, and employment.** | X | | | | |

Q31. Which disadvantaged and vulnerable groups does your government have policies to support and which are provided with bespoke or targeted career development services. [Tick all that apply]

| | Government has policies to support | Provided with bespoke or targeted career development services |
|---|---|---|
| **Indigenous people** | X | X |
| **Women and girls** | X | |

Q31. Which disadvantaged and vulnerable groups does your government have policies to support and which are provided with bespoke or targeted career development services. [Tick all that apply]

| | Government has policies to support | Provided with bespoke or targeted career development services |
|---|---|---|
| **Indigenous people** | X | X |
| **Men and boys** | | |
| **Ethnic minorities** | X | X |
| **Religious minorities** | | |
| **Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people** | | |
| **People from low-socio-economic backgrounds** | X | X |
| **People with low skill levels** | X | |
| **Migrants** | X | |
| **People with disabilities** | X | X |
| **People with health and mental health challenges** | X | X |
| **Younger people** | X | |
| **Older people** | | |
| **Other** | | |

**If Other, please specify:**
In policy, we may not always directly identify/name/call out marganalised groups as there are some groups that are not yet well defined/recognised. By naming some groups directly, we are excluding others by default. Our principles of 'inclusion, equity and universal design' are focused to meet the needs of all, some and few along a continiuum of support

## Ensuring disadvantaged and vulnerable groups can thrive

Q32. Can you provide any further information about the way in which policies for career development in your country support vulnerable and disadvantaged people? [Up to 300 words]

Ireland’s lifelong guidance policies place a strong emphasis on supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, with inclusion embedded as a core principle across the system. This is most clearly reflected in the “Access, Inclusion and Universal Design” pillar of the National Strategic Framework for Lifelong Guidance (NSFLG) 2024–2030, which directly targets equity of access and aims to remove barriers to participation in education, training, and employment. The framework promotes a cross-government approach, involving multiple departments and agencies working collaboratively to ensure that guidance services reach individuals across all settings, including schools, further education, community services, and employment supports.

Support for disadvantaged groups has become a high political priority, with strong ministerial backing and alignment with wider national strategies on equality, disability, and social inclusion. This has led to increased policy coherence and a shared commitment to delivering more inclusive guidance services. In recent years, there has been growing momentum, particularly since 2022, with a shift from policy development towards implementation and system reform,

Key developments include expanding guidance provision into **special schools**, as well as the introduction of **targeted provision and supports (TPL) for students with special educational needs**, ensuring they can access personalised career guidance and progression pathways. There is also a stronger focus on **collaboration between services**, addressing previous fragmentation and improving the user experience for individuals who may engage with multiple supports across education, employment, and community sectors.

Q32. Can you provide any further information about the way in which policies for career development in your country support vulnerable and disadvantaged people? [Up to 300 words]

Additionally, **new guidelines and frameworks are currently in development**, aiming to provide clearer standards and consistent approaches to inclusive guidance practice. These developments reflect a broader commitment to ensuring that career development services actively support those at risk of marginalisation, enabling them to build career management skills and participate more fully in society and the labour market.

Overall, Ireland’s approach demonstrates a clear and evolving commitment to inclusion, underpinned by policy alignment, cross-sector collaboration, and practical system improvements.

Q33. Please provide links to any key reports, articles or websites that provide further insights into the way that your country's career development system supports vulnerable and disadvantaged people. [Up to 300 words]

https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/e19981c6/Action_3.4_report_EN.pdf

https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/e19981c6/Action_3.4_report_EN.pdf

https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-children-disability-and-equality/campaigns/the-national-human-rights-strategy-for-disabled-people-2025-2030

https://www.walk.ie/Careers-Employment

https://www.walk.ie/userfiles/files/Progressing%20Accessible%20Supported%20Transitions%20to%20Employment%20.pdf

https://www.dcu.ie/instituteofeducation/news/2026/mar/dcu-report-launched-following-decade-long-research-walk-peer

https://stial.ie/for-schools-transition-resources

https://www.esri.ie/system/files/publications/RB202305_0.pdf


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