

**Press Release**  
**Friday, 29 August, 2008**



**SMEs NEED TO PRIORITISE TRAINING TO IMPROVE PRODUCTIVITY AND COMPETIVENESS**

Commenting on today's publication of the evaluation report for the Accel Skills Training Support Programme, 2006 – 2008, Skillnets Chairman, Domhnall MacDomhnaill, said companies should resist the temptation to save costs by cutting training budgets in the current difficult trading environment.

He said: "Time and again, companies that invest in the skills of their workers have better productivity and are able to compete in more difficult trading conditions. Improving the skills of workers is not the area to economise in the current environment."

Mr. MacDomhnaill said that the Evaluation Report for the Accel Training Support Programme again shows increased productivity and innovation among companies that participated and provided their workers with skills training that meets training needs.

Speaking about the programme, Sean Haughey, Minister of State at the Departments of Education and Science and Enterprise, Trade and Employment said "This report marks the culmination of a programme that has played a significant part in the further development of Ireland's human capital. This development has been part of the story of our economic success in recent years.

"New challenges are arising for the Irish economy and enterprises, particularly our small and medium sized companies. It has long been acknowledged that training in enterprise plays a central role in fostering innovation, creativity, adaptability and job creation in the wider economy. Training is a key element of capacity building for these enterprises to succeed in fluctuating economic conditions. I want to congratulate everyone involved in the Accel Programme and acknowledge the innovative approaches taken by many projects and their member companies."

Skillnets Ltd., the enterprise-led skills training organisation, was appointed as the Training Support Unit for the Accel Programme following a competitive tendering process. Over 9,000 companies participated in the Accel Programme, with 29,310 workers receiving skills training. The Programme received EU financial support of €16.8 million through the European Social Fund, with companies providing a further €7 million in cash and wage contributions.

**Satisfaction**

Skillnets Chairman, Domhnall Mac Domhnaill said: "The Evaluation Report confirms a high level of satisfaction among trainees with 90% confirming their satisfaction with both the quality and relevance of the training they received."

“Also, over 50% of Accel training included accreditation which trainees saw as a major benefit and opportunity to convert years of experience into recognised qualifications,” he said.

### **Value for Money**

Mr. MacDomhnaill said that the Evaluation Report reveals a total of 131,631 training days delivered at an average cost of €181 per day. He said this average cost of skills training delivered under Accel provided participating companies with exceptional value for money, particularly for such targeted training developed and delivered to meet the specific needs of workers and their employers.

### **Network Learning**

The training model offered by Skillnets involves bringing groups of companies together as networks on an industry sector or area basis to determine and deliver their training needs. The Skillnets model provides lower cost training with grant funding available through the National Training Fund to subsidise the running of networks and the training provided, and training targeted to the specific needs of companies, delivered in the way which workers and companies want. Skills training under the Accel Programme was delivered through 55 training networks.

To download a copy of the report you can log onto the Skillnets website: <http://www.skillnets.ie/skillnets/resources/publications.html>

**ENDS**

### **NOTE TO EDITORS**

Skillnets is an enterprise-led support body dedicated to the promotion and facilitation of enterprise training and other learning activities, as a key element in sustaining national competitiveness. It provides funding, advice and support to underpin the competitiveness of firms, enhance business performance and increase the long term career opportunities and employability of employees.

A Training Network (a ‘Skillnet’) is a group of enterprises cooperating in order to undertake a training related project that individual members of the group would normally be unable to undertake on their own. Skillnets Training Networks are comprised of groups of enterprises that come together to achieve a common training purpose or address a shared issue of importance to the development of skills and their long-term competitiveness.