12/31/2020

INOU Submission to the Ten Year Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy

INTRODUCTION

The Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed (INOU) welcomes this opportunity to make a submission on the development of the ten-year Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy.

"The INOU is a federation of unemployed people, unemployed centres, unemployed groups, community organisations and Trade Unions. The INOU represents and defends the rights and interests of those who want decent employment and cannot obtain it. We promote and campaign for policies to achieve full employment for all. We also campaign for an acceptable standard of living for unemployed people and their dependents. The INOU is an anti-sectarian, anti-racist, non-party political organisation which promotes equality of opportunity within society." (INOU Mission Statement)

The organisation has over 200 affiliated organisations and 500 individual members. We work at the local and national level on issues affecting unemployed people through the provision of training and welfare rights information services; analysis of Government policies and related advocacy work; and working with a wide range of other organisations on issues of common concern.

CURRENT CONTEXT

LABOUR FORCE SURVEY QUARTER 3 2020

On November 17th, 2020 the Central Statistics Office (CSO) published the Labour Force Survey (LFS) for the third quarter of 2020, which covers the months July to September. This release includes information using the International Labour Organisation standard methodology, alongside estimated figures taking into account the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Irish labour market.

According to the standard LFS methodology, 174,700 people were unemployed[1]: 46,700 more people than in Q3 2019. The unemployment rate was 7.1%, a figure last seen in Q1 2017. When the impact of COVID-19 is factored in, the numbers of people unemployed increases to 394,538, with an unemployment rate of 15.9%. While according to the COVID-19 adjusted Monthly Unemployment figures for December 2020, up to 510,997 people were unemployed and their unemployment rate was 20.4%.

The Principal Economic Status (PES) captures data on how people described themselves, for example whether they are at work or unemployed or a student or on home duties. In the LFS

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[1] To be classified as unemployed a person must answer 'yes' to two questions: (i) that they have been actively seeking work over the past four weeks; and (ii) that they are available to take up work over the next two weeks.

Q3 2020, 254,100 people described themselves as unemployed: an increase of 83,800 on the same quarter last year. In *Labour Market Insight Series 3[2]*, a supplementary analysis to this Labour Force Survey published by the CSO they note in the key findings that *"Those in receipt of the Pandemic Unemployment Payment (PUP) in Q3 2020 were almost twice as likely to self-classify themselves as* Unemployed *using Principal Economic Status (PES) at 28.1% as to be officially classified as* Unemployed *(15.3%)"*.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT THEMATIC REPORT 2020

On November 20th, 2020 the CSO published the *Educational Attainment Thematic Report 2020[3]*. This report draws on the data collected through the Labour Force Survey for Quarter 2 2020. The CSO notes that this report does not make any adjustments for the impact of COVID-19, though the increase numbers of people deemed 'inactive' could be seen as capturing the pandemic's effect[4].

In the section on education attainment and the labour market, the report notes "*Higher educational attainment levels are linked with higher employment rates. Persons aged 25-64 years old with a third level qualification are more than twice as likely to be employed (83%) than those with no formal education/primary education (36%) in Q2 2020. Conversely, those with no formal education/primary education were three times as likely to be unemployed (9%) than those with a third level qualification (3%). The proportion of those aged 25-64 years old with a third level qualification was 43% in Q2 2020, while more than one in twenty (6%) reported that they had primary education/no formal education only.*"

Later on in the report it says "*Just under two thirds (65%) of early school leavers aged 18-24 were not economically active compared to 45% of other persons aged 18-24 in Q2 2020. Between Q2 2019 and Q2 2020, the proportion of All persons aged 18-24 that were not economically active increased from 36% to 47%. Just under one in four (23%) early school leavers were employed in Q2 2020, with 12% unemployed. Early school leavers had a much lower rate of employment in Q2 2020 compared with other persons aged 18-24 (23% compared to 47%). The unemployment rate for early school leavers was one and a half times that for other persons aged 18-24 (12% compared to 8%).*"

A striking feature of the economic and social impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is who has lost their job, lost their income: people who could work from home, who had a certain level of

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[2]Available at https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/br/b-lfs/labourmarketinsightbulletinseries3q32020/v
[3] Available at https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-eda/educationalattainmentthematicreport2020/introductionandsummaryofresults/
[4] Technically speaking many people on a Pandemic Unemployment Payment do not meet the ILO definition of unemployment, many of them are waiting for their previous employment to re-open, so in the unadjusted figures they are deemed 'inactive' or 'unavailable for work'.

resources appear to have maintained their employment status, while those who could not became unemployed. In an increasingly digitalised world, people who have not developed these skills, who do not work in places where such skills are used and developed will find themselves further disadvantaged. It is in this context that the timing and development of the Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy is both welcome and critical.

PROGRAMME FOR GOVERNMENT – OUR SHARED FUTURE

In the *Programme for Government* published in mid-June 2020 there are twelve parts or missions including the *Mission: Better opportunities through Education and Research*.

On page 94 the Government states that "*Our approach will be guided by the goals of:*

- − *Improving the learning experience and success of learners.*
- − *Increasing progress of learners at risk of educational disadvantage and learners with special educational needs.*
- − *Helping those delivering education to continuously improve.*
- − *Building stronger bridges between education and the wider community.*
- − *Providing better national planning and support services.*
- − *Implementing evidence-based policies.*"

Later on, the Government states *"It is vital we invest in our Higher and Further Education sectors so we can continue to tackle inequality based on race, gender, and socio-economic background."* (p97)

While on pages 98-99, under the heading *Further Education and Community Education Sectors,* amongst other things it is very welcome that the Government says they will:

- - *Recognise the role of community education and its vital role in our communities by supporting its schemes and initiatives post COVID-19.*
- - *Enhance back-to-work schemes and initiatives to assist in upskilling those who are seeking new employment opportunities after the crisis.*
- - *Develop a comprehensive Green Further Education and Skills Development Plan, ensuring that learners are equipped with the environmental awareness and green skills that can drive future change.*
- - *Utilise the Human Capital initiative to deliver a wide range of education and training programmes for jobseekers, to support economic recovery and green skills development.*
- - *Develop and implement a standardised system of accreditation of prior learning taking account of previous education, skills, work experience and engagement in society.*
- - *Review the Back to Education Allowance to ensure it is able to support those unemployed as a result of COVID-19 to access education and training.*

- *Expand Springboard throughout Further and Higher Education, offering upskilling in areas of skills shortages to those who want to upskill, to those who are re-entering the workforce or to those who have been made redundant.*

While on page 100, as the Consultation paper notes, the Government says it will *"Develop and implement a new 10-year strategy for adult literacy, numeracy, and digital skills within the first year of the Government."* It will be essential that this strategy provides the supports and opportunities for adult learners who wish to avail of the other measures contained in the Programme for Government to do so and overtime realise their full potential.

ADULT LITERACY, NUMERACY AND DIGITAL LITERACY STRATEGY

Part 4 of the Consultation Paper on the development of the Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy (ALNDS) identifies five key themes:

1. Different meanings of literacy, numeracy and digital literacy for adults.
2. Improving awareness of and access to literacy, numeracy and digital literacy support for adults.
3. Bridging the digital divide.
4. Priorities and actions.
5. Measuring success.

This submission will use these headings, discuss the issues raised in the consultation paper and draw on the work of the Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed.

The INOU's membership has two strands: (i) people who are unemployed themselves; and (ii) local and national organisations working on a range of employment / unemployment, poverty, equality, and social inclusion issues. The organisation draws on the knowledge and lived experiences of our membership through the General Branch, the mechanism through which individual unemployed people play an active part in the organisation; through our regional Discussion Forums, Annual Delegate Conference and Training events at which our members participate. The INOU also provides a Welfare Rights and Information Service, primarily online and by phone, but also (pre-COVID-19) through stands at Jobs Fairs and other events run by, for example the Department of Social Protection and Local Development organisations. A broader range of people and organisations avail of this service and its key publication *Working for Work.* The organisation also works with other community and voluntary sector organisations on issues of common concern and how these should be addressed to realise a more inclusive and equitable Ireland: literacy is one such common issue.

A critical element for the Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed is how the development of this ten year strategy will interact with the Department of Social Protection's

Pathways to Work strategy, which is worryingly noticeable by its absence in Part 3 of the Consultation Paper. Given that unemployed people in receipt of a Jobseeker's payment are obliged to interact with the Public Employment Service, be that the service provided by the Department itself through Intreo, or through contracted services like the Local Employment Service or JobPath providers, an opportunity presents itself to engage with people who could benefit from improving their literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills.

How this is done is of critical importance, perceptions about skills, competencies or lack thereof are extremely sensitive issues, and it requires capable frontline staff to tease out with the person the nature of the skills gap to be addressed, and what would be the most appropriate way of doing so.

To that end the INOU believe that it will be essential that the services and supports provided to improve people's literacy, numeracy and digital literacy must:

- incorporate a belief in the potential and capacity of the person;
- support people to make informed choices;
- work with them to make such choices;
- work in partnership with other relevant organisations;
- demonstrate equality and social inclusion principles and practice;
- strive to meet Public Sector Duty obligations[5]; and
- be enabled by an ethos of continuous professional development, effective recruitment, and good management.

DIFFERENT MEANINGS OF LITERACY, NUMERACY AND DIGITAL LITERACY FOR ADULTS

The consultation document definition of literacy covers a broad range including functional; interactive; critical; media; media and information; financial; environmental; and health. There are many people who may feel they do not have a literacy problem per se, but who may well struggle with one or more of these areas of life as they may feel they have insufficient knowledge to evaluate the information presented to them as they would like.

The advantage of presenting the issue in this manner is that it broadens it out, and may serve to lessen some of the stigma that people perceive and experience, as few people would be competent on all of these issues. Yet there is a danger that people whose literacy skills are

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[5] A legal obligation under the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014.
Section 42 (1) states: A public body shall, in the performance of its functions, have regard to the need to —
  (a) eliminate discrimination,
  (b) promote equality of opportunity and treatment of its staff and the persons to whom it provides services, and
  (c) protect the human rights of its members, staff and the persons to whom it provides services.

weakest, who may need the greatest level of supports, could become lost if the focus becomes too broad.

Of particular concern are people whose lived and work experiences may be greater than their attainment of formal education or qualifications. Literacy challenges across the spectrum covered in the consultation paper can discourage people from receiving recognition of their prior learning, and this in turn can have a negative impact on their employment and future prospects.

One issue that INOU member organisations have raised is the expectation in the wider provision of Further Education and Training that potential participants should be able to engage with QQI Level 5 courses when they are working with people who would struggle with completing a Level 4 course. Literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy challenges can be at the heart of this issue, and it is one that will need to be addressed. Particular care must be taken to ensure that learners can move from one type of course to another. Yet, there are times when it appears that learners, if they seek to continue and deepen their learning, are expected to make a leap of faith from one level to another. It will be essential to build in well sign posted literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy supports so that learners can access the provision they require and feel they will be well supported to do so.

A mixture of targeted and integrated provision will be required. Some of the targeted provision should focus on the needs of particular groups and individuals whose literacy challenges are a consequence of and contributing factor to their marginalisation in Irish society. Community based providers are particularly important for this type of engagement. Other targeted provision will focus on specific sectors and ensure that people develop their skills as a particular area of work evolves. Integrated provision could be particularly useful in supporting people to upskill, develop new skills, explore the transferability of their know-how to other aspects of their lives, including the potential to improve their employment prospects.

Increased digitalisation will continue to throw up issues for many people. Some of the initiatives undertaken by Government Departments listed in the Consultation paper are not really examples of 'supporting adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy'. They were more examples of a wider range of public information and services available online, which if people have the wherewithal to access can make life more manageable, for example no longer needing to queue to pay one's Motor tax. While meeting the needs of people whose employment has been closed by the response to the COVID-19 health pandemic, at a time when in-person interaction must be as limited as possible, has been facilitated by on-line access to the Pandemic Unemployment Payment. Some people have been able to continue their learning or start new courses on-line and so look to developing new skills at this challenging time. However, if people do not have the wherewithal to access online supports and services, either

through a lack of digital literacy or the necessary equipment, then increased digitalisation will present further barriers to people's social and economic inclusion over the next decade.

IMPROVING AWARENESS OF AND ACCESS TO LITERACY, NUMERACY AND DIGITAL LITERACY SUPPORT FOR ADULTS

Over a ten-year period, it will be essential to ensure that the range of provision will be such that adult literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy (ALND) levels in Ireland will improve markedly. The Consultation paper covers the issue of ALND across people's lives and society, but a critical aspect for the INOU is how a lack of these skills may prevent unemployed people from moving into employment and in particular decent employment. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) notes decent work *"involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men"*. Clearly good literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills are important to ensuring that people can access and enjoy all that decent work has to offer them.

To give practical effect to this it will be essential to:

- Provide good career and educational guidance to support people to access the most appropriate course.
- Ensure there is good sign posting within and across the system so people of working age know where they can go to get the most appropriate supports and provision.
- Run clear information campaigns on what is available, who is running what, and where people can access the most appropriate provision.
- Ensure learners seeking to address their literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills are provided with the necessary resources to facilitate their participation.
- Support the community and voluntary sector, an important access point to learning and other opportunities for people experiencing socio-economic exclusion, to play its part in meeting people's ALND needs.

BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

At the second Future Jobs Ireland[6] summit, held in November, 2019 Saadia Zahidi from the World Economic Forum (WEF) gave the keynote address. In her address Saadia noted the arrival of the fourth industrial revolution which will be driven by cyber physical systems, networks, and artificial intelligence. This changing world of work has implications for the skills that people will

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[6] Further information on the *Future Jobs Ireland 2020* summit is available at https://dbei.gov.ie/en/What-We-Do/Business-Sectoral-Initiatives/Future-Jobs/Future-Jobs-Ireland-Summit/

be expected to have and to develop over their working life. Saadia noted that there will be a premium on soft skills and advanced cognitive skills including analytical thinking and innovation; active learning and learning strategies; creativity, originality and initiative; technology design and programming; critical thinking and analysis.

Saadia noted that a reskilling revolution is required and that collaboration at scale is needed to find the resources to address the skills gap: Learning 4.0 was the term used. WEF has developed a 'skills gap accelerator model' which focuses on leverage points including lifelong learning and upskilling; future-readiness and employability; innovative skills funding models; and skills anticipation and job market insight. These developments and challenges are not solely the domain of strategies like the National Skills Strategy or Futures Jobs Ireland, they are ones that the Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Strategy must seek to address. Otherwise, socio-economic inequality and exclusion will grow wider.

The current pandemic has highlighted the extent of the digital divide including the challenges facing people trying to complete their education ranging from no or poor broadband to inappropriate equipment to overcrowded accommodation. The system itself has also struggled to facilitate on-line provision at short notice, on the scale required and for an uncertain duration. Even when people had the wherewithal to pursue their learning, many have noted how much they miss the class or training room setting where they can ask questions more easily and interact with other learners informally.

Face-to-face engagement is a critical aspect of the provision seeking to address people's literacy needs. Community based providers have availed of on-line tools to support learners, maintain the links between the provider and the learner, and develop their own skills to support their work in this way[7]. It would be important to capture the learning from the challenges COVID-19 has thrown up, how people coped, and the responses they developed. It would be particularly important to ascertain what would be their advice if such tools were to be used over a longer time period. Some providers used loan schemes for laptops and tablets to facilitate learners' engagement, a critical question to answer is: how this could be supported on a wider and on-going basis.

One of the issues arising in the current crisis is how to engage with new learners. Many people who have started new courses have done so online and therefore it would appear have a certain level of digital literacy already. Online tools could open up new doors for people who may not otherwise engage, but a critical question to have asked and answered in the ALNDS, is

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[7] In the INOU's e-bulletin April 2020, the organisation's Training Unit describes the steps they took to ensure the Local Training Initiative programmes *Building Futures* and *Shaping Futures* could continue to run even though Ireland was in a lockdown https://www.inou.ie/analysis/e-bulletin/2020/04/22/learning-online/

how to support people to find these doors if they are unaware of them, unsure of them or possible wary of them.

Community based provision has a key role to play in supporting people to find that entry point, alongside on-going information campaigns across a broad range of media platforms, including the radio and television for people for whom reading is a skill yet to be acquired and developed.

For other people using social media platforms will be important to support people who have a certain level of digital literacy to enhance these skills and avail of opportunities to enhance their lives and prospects.

PRIORITIES AND ACTIONS

The INOU is keenly aware that ALND issues are broader than a lack of them on people's ability to secure a decent job, that for many people ALND challenges also impact on their health, their ability to support their children's learning, their engagement with the state. It will be essential that the Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy takes on board this wider impact, which are well articulated in the Consultation paper. However, for the INOU people's ability to secure and maintain decent employment is vital, therefore the priorities and actions listed in this section will focus on this aspect of the ALNDS.

The provision of good information on the options that are available to unemployed people and people employed in low skilled employment will be critical. The Public Employment Service in conjunction with the Education and Training Boards have key roles to play in this regard. In particular so that people can assess their learning needs in a supportive environment and identify the most appropriate option for them to address their literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs.

To really make the impact required over the coming period requires improved integration and transition between the employment services / supports and education and training opportunities, opportunities that are meaningful for the unemployed person and which should lead to better outcomes.

Integral to this is getting the referrals / matching piece correct, which in turn requires drawing on the expertise across the key various providers. And within this access to good quality guidance is critical. Such guidance would assess peoples' existing skills, identify where there are gaps and provide good quality information on how best to address them.

Access to opportunities to improve one's literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills could be the start of a person's engagement in lifelong learning. Given the strong links between a

person's educational attainment and employment status, to properly address socio-economic exclusion, the costs of participation in such learning must be addressed.

Blended learning, online learning present opportunities for people to engage in ways that can be more affordable, facilitating them to balance their learning needs with family and other responsibilities. To that end ensuring people can improve their digital literacy skills to support them to move along the continuum of learning, ensure that they have the skills to engage in their learning so that they derive maximum benefit for it will be essential.

To respond to the adults' literacy and numeracy needs requires dedicated provision that ensures the person can learn in a supportive environment, where the fact that they are adult learners is fully recognised in, for example, the materials used. For other learners a sector specific approach may be more productive, where people feel that the skills they will require will be useful to them in their working lives.

It will be vital to support and resource good quality community based learning, and to properly support the community and voluntary sector, an important access point for many people experiencing socio-economic exclusion, to play its part in the provision of lifelong learning. An important part of this work would be mapping out clear progression links to other education and learning opportunities so adult learners can see a real pathway to a better future.

MEASURING SUCCESS

This can be a challenging issue when dealing with personal and communal development, which are so often at the heart of addressing issues associated with adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy. If the person has sought to improve their literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills to support the formal recognition of their work expertise, then a measurement of success is whether or not they achieved such recognition. On the other hand, someone may be seeking to improve their skills so that they can manage their own life better, the lives of their family. For this person the improvement may have a greater impact on their health and well-being, their sense of belonging and inclusion in Irish society. But how do you measure this in a way that people who may not realise the personal, social and economic impact of ALND gaps and challenges, come to understand the importance in investing in the provision of this type of learning.

In the Social Inclusion Community and Activation Programme (SICAP), a distanced travelled tool has been developed to capture the progress people can make through involvement in their supports and services when, for example, accessing employment may not be the most appropriate measurement.

Organisations working on the ground in the provision of literacy note that an informal approach often works better for people in greatest need, in particular if their experience of the formal education system was not a constructive one. To that end the gathering of data that facilitates the measurement of progress for as broad a range of people as possible can present its own challenges. The roll-out of the PLSS generated some very lively debates as, in effect, it coincided with the introduction of GDPR and raised a lot of concerns for people about who could really ask what of whom and to what end.

It will be absolutely critical that the measurements used are seen as assisting in addressing the challenges that Ireland currently faces across the broad spectrum of ALND. To that end establishing a baseline off which to measure progress will be important: the work of the CSO, OECD, and in particular the PIACC survey will be helpful, though some of the statistics quoted in the Consultation paper date from 2013.

Qualitative research also has an important role to play and can be particularly useful in capturing the benefits that are less tangible, but are as important, if not more so, than the more tangible ones. Over a ten year period it will be important to plan a programme of qualitative research and to support organisations working on the ground to capture as fully as possible the impact of their work.

It will also be important to capture the role of learning provision at QQI Levels 1-3, which for many people seeking to improve their literacy and numeracy skills are the more appropriate level. In some cases people may seek to move on to other programmes and courses at a higher level, and it will be important that there are clear routes for people who wish to make this journey. Capturing this journey, and what was critical to its achievement will be important. But it will also be important to acknowledge that not everyone will wish to make such a change in their life, that for many learners being able to mange better on a daily basis will be an end in itself, and a big personal achievement that should be acknowledged as a good outcome.

LINKING WITH THE NEW NATIONAL FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING STRATEGY

Another important strategy for the INOU is the national *Further Education and Training (FET) Strategy*. The second FETS was published on July 16th 2020 and will cover the period 2020 to 2024[8]. In the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science press release on the day it said *"The strategy sets out a five-year roadmap for the sector which is built around three key pillars of building skills, fostering inclusion and creating pathways and aims to address the economic and societal challenges faced over the coming years."* Such pillars

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[8] Available at https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/64d0718c9e/solas_fet_strategy_web.pdf

are also important for a strategy seeking to address adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills.

On page 30 of FETS it says *"A challenge that pervades FET planning is that of a sudden cyclical economic downturn. FET planning must ensure agility to respond to a large base of unemployed people, or very vulnerable workers in need of up-skilling and re-skilling to re-join or remain in the workforce. This need is currently exacerbated by Covid-19 and the serious potential economic risks of Brexit."* Further on in the document it says *"Of course, there is a short-term imperative for FET to lead the response to the critical up-skilling and re-skilling needs of those who have lost their jobs as a result of Covid-19."* (p43)

The literacy challenges facing Ireland are not new, though the range of meanings / definitions contained in the ALNDS Consultation paper highlight the changing nature of the issue, and its capacity to block people's pathways in life if not adequately addressed. It will be important that the longer term focus of this strategy is not lost sight of, or inadequately resourced as Ireland seeks to address the challenges COVID-19 continues to present.

In the FETS building on the role and work of SOLAS and the Education and Training Boards alongside the Department of Social Protection's Intreo service is noted as important in supporting people to improve their employment prospects. In this regard FETS highlights three strands of FET provision: transversal skills development to help employability; building the digital capabilities now required for almost every job; and specific Level 4-6 courses targeting growth sectors and occupations. Two of these pillars would be important for the new Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy, but the range of courses would be different (Level 1-3) and the focus must be much broader than the needs of the labour market.

To that end it is welcome that on page 47 of FETS it notes *"There are many cohorts with diverse needs, such as people with disabilities, new migrants, Travellers, the long-term unemployed, ex-offenders and women returners. All these require focused types of support to address their particular circumstances and needs. For such groups, the FET system should adopt a more targeted approach to addressing barriers around participation, completion and progression for marginalised and prioritised cohorts. ETBs should work in partnership with community and voluntary organisations who can represent or reach out to particular groups and facilitate a pathway to re-engage with education through FET."* The new Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy must spell out how it will address diverse needs and the particular challenges facing people because, for example they are unemployed; have a disability; belong to an ethnic minority including Travellers; parent alone; left school early; were in prison; have managed so far in life but now realise that to engage with a changing world addressing their literacy and numeracy skills is vital.

It is also welcome that on page 45 of FETS it states that *"Active inclusion and community development have always been a central tenet of the work of ETBs and FET providers, with an extensive reach into and across local communities."* And later on the same page, "*Community education plays a critical role in this regard, supporting participation and re-engagement in education and training, with around 50,000 learners across FET each year. An extensive network of community education providers work in partnership with ETBs, using their local reach and connectivity to develop learning projects to address local needs and empower their learners and communities."* Such recognition of the role of community based organisations, the importance of active inclusion and community development must be incorporated into the Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND CONSIDERATION