



**etbi**  
Education & Training  
Boards Ireland  
*Boird Oideachais &  
Oiliúna Éireann*

Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI)

Submission re

*Ireland 2040 – Our Plan*

*National Planning Framework*

**Education and Training Boards Ireland**

Piper's Hill

Kilcullen Road

Naas, Co Kildare W91 K729

Telephone: +353 (0)45 901 070

Web: [www.etbi.ie](http://www.etbi.ie)

General Secretary: Michael Moriarty

## **1. Introduction**

The Ireland 2040 Consultation Paper seeks to paint a picture of Ireland in 2040. Rather than leaving Ireland's future completely to chance, this plan seeks to be proactive and action-orientated to frame the best possible outcomes for the people of Ireland by 2040.

The combined challenges of sharing the benefits of economic gain and ensuring a real equality of opportunity, a genuine inclusive and caring society, and balanced geographical and infrastructural development, are complex and daunting. Our capacity to respond in a dynamic fashion to future community challenges is dependent not just on human endeavour but also on the capacity of state agencies to bring about balanced development where it really matters – in the local community.

Education and Training Boards (ETBs) – and their predecessors – have always been rooted in their local communities, where they continue to have a very positive profile in terms of education and skills development. Their capacity to effect change and to have a genuine transformational impact on local communities has been enhanced by the expansion of the ETBs' statutory functions arising from the enactment of the Education and Training Boards Act 2013.

With resources, ETBs can, and do, deliver for all age groups across all social strata, in terms of education, training and skills enhancement. ETBs work collaboratively with other agencies to coordinate services where appropriate. ETBs therefore play a significant role in terms of the realisation of national development goals. Being community based, they can and do deliver for their local communities, and over the decades, they have initiated many unique developmental education and training initiatives.

## **2. Vision of Ireland in 2040**

Ireland in 2040 must have retained the best elements of our distinct cultural heritage, and must also have embraced a culture which continues to uphold human rights in terms of equality of opportunity, community inclusiveness and fair and open access to the country's resources and benefits, including education and training. In the words of An Taoiseach, "The values of freedom and democracy, of openness, of tolerance, of community, of solidarity, and of respect for others"<sup>1</sup> are core and enduring Irish values.

---

<sup>1</sup> "Ireland at the heart of a changing European Union." An Taoiseach Enda Kenny's address to the Institute of European Affairs, 15 February 2017.

The European Commission recognises that further education and training is the backbone of economic development<sup>2</sup>. The stated objective of the Irish government is to build a world class further education and training (FET) system<sup>3</sup>, and equally to have the best education and training service in Europe within a decade<sup>4</sup>. Significantly, ETBs can assist to deliver on the following:

- Equality of opportunity and access to education and training;
- Geographical spread of education and training programmes, including skills training and re-training;
- Social inclusiveness in which the rights of individuals and communities are respected;
- Building social cohesion in an increasingly multi-ethnic and multicultural Ireland;
- Reskilling and upskilling the working population and/or jobless, to ensure that Ireland can compete effectively in the global economy.

### **3. National Planning Challenges**

The role of skills training as the backbone of economic development cannot be underestimated. The roll-out of local initiatives through ETBs and other state agencies must ensure that economic benefits are spread beyond the cities into all parts of community life throughout Ireland. Communities will continue to change in the years ahead, becoming more multi-cultural, more multi-ethnic, and richly diverse.

ETBs, as statutory authorities functioning as local education and training boards, with a multi-denominational ethos, are the perfect vehicles to support social cohesion.

In respect of spatial patterns of employment, ETBs' training centres and colleges are a vital cog in the preparation of students and clients for the workplace. Traineeships and apprenticeships are customised to the needs of local industries, whereby students are provided with the specific skills required locally. Moreover, ETBs have formal and structured relationships with local businesses and

---

<sup>2</sup> "A new impetus for European cooperation in Vocational Education and Training to support the Europe 2020 strategy". See <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52010DC0296&from=EN>

<sup>3</sup> Ruairí Quinn, former Minister for Education and Skills, 12 May 2014. See <http://www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/Press-Releases/2014-Press-Releases/PR14-05-12A.html>

<sup>4</sup> Richard Bruton, Minister for Education and Skills, 6 February 2017. See <http://www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/Press-Releases/2017-Press-Releases/PR2017-06-02.html>

enterprises through the local skills fora, which ensures that the skills training is actually relevant to local industrial and commercial needs.

#### **4. People's Health and Wellbeing**

The education sector has a very significant role to play in respect of both physical and mental health and well-being in general.

The well-known concern is the level of obesity amongst young people. Moreover, self-image has an impact on personal wellbeing.

It must be a priority for the state to ensure that health education and a positive attitude to exercise is at the core of young people's lives.

In this respect, schools and training centres could be constructed on education campuses which can justify the provision of a swimming pool as well as gymnasium and sports facilities. However, as is the case in ETB schools, these facilities should also be available to the general public in evenings and night times.

In respect of spatial patterns of employment, ETB training centres and colleges can ensure that their students and clients are job-ready. Traineeships are customised to the needs of local industry, whereby students are provided with the specific skills required locally. These campuses must be at the centre of community life.

ETBI currently has a mental wellbeing programme (Breathe) which promotes mental health among students. Wellbeing is now to be part of the Junior Cycle second-level curriculum, and should be part of all formal education curricula.

The wealth of a nation is dependent on the health of a nation. Significant investment in changing social attitudes to health and wellbeing must be accompanied by infrastructural investment in sports and leisure facilities which can form the core of community activity. The example of educational campuses with primary, secondary and further education facilities, complemented by high-quality leisure facilities, would meet this need. Planners should look at the broad-based benefits of this model in both urban and rural settings.

#### **5. Opportunities in the Regions and the Potential of Rural Ireland**

Building regional resilience must be underpinned by effective regional development. Infrastructural development by the state, such as broadband, transport networks, energy, water and housing, must

be the foundation for all other developments. These bring communities together and provide a stimulus for the development of the regions. Building on the natural resources of a region can be very effective, as exemplified in the case of “The Wild Atlantic Way” and “Ireland’s Historic East”, both of which have provided much-needed stimulus to economic activity in places previously overlooked. Moreover, craft and leisure facilities are becoming more relevant in a world where travel is easier, communication is better and leisure time more frequent.

Collaboration between local statutory bodies and agencies can deliver on planned development opportunities, but only if collaboration is effective, targeted and measured. A good example of such collaboration is the establishment of the Regional Skills Fora which involves ETBs engaging with local industry to ensure that training providers can meet real local needs.

Communities can help themselves if they have regional supports to exploit opportunities. Entrepreneurship education in schools is a new and innovative development being pioneered in ETB schools. Entrepreneurial education can alter how young people look critically at opportunities in life and which can be exploited if individuals have the right entrepreneurial attitudes and insights. This development alone highlights how ETBs can drive economic development through skills enhancement.

The fabric of local communities has been weakened inexorably by policies implemented over years which have effectively hastened the demise of rural Ireland. The drive towards centralisation and regionalisation has devastated communities and worsened the quality of life for many people. Now, proposals to close post offices and the fear that small rural schools could be targeted for closure only undermine any sense of community living in places other than large towns.

Yet, more people will work from home in this digital age, with the right vision and supports from local agencies, rural Ireland can be enhanced. The right mix of skills, with an entrepreneurial attitude, will incentivise the growth of SMEs in all parts of Ireland.

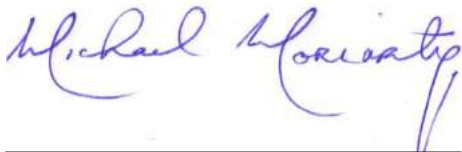
## **6. Conclusion**

Future generations can benefit from the foresight and insight of current generations. The enhancement of the quality of life for all, irrespective of location, whether urban or rural, must be the overall objective for 2040.

Climbing the skills ladder, which will help Ireland to remain competitive on a world stage, must be a key objective. The European Commission has indicated that a significant percentage of jobs today will not exist in 2030, while many new jobs and occupation have yet to be “invented”. The speed of

change has been phenomenal, and the rate of change will increase over the next two decades. Young people must be imbued with the generic transferrable skills that will allow them adapt to various occupations during their working lives. This reason alone highlights the importance of education and training, and highlights the dynamic and progressive role that Ireland's Education and Training Boards can play in the decades ahead.

Submitted by:



---

Michael Moriarty  
General Secretary

**Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI)**

**15<sup>th</sup> March 2017**