Lord Mayor of Dublin celebrates new ICT Initiative for Teachers

The Lord Mayor of Dublin, Councillor Emer Costello, George Ryan, Programme Manager FIT Ltd. and Aidan Clifford representing Ms. Jacinta Stewart Chief Executive Officer for the City of Dublin VEC, Thursday, 29th April, celebrated the success of the eTQF project which has involved over 200 teachers in Ireland, UK and Italy taking part in new Continuous Professional Development approaches to the use of ICT in education.

eTQF stands for a Framework to Support Teachers' CPD in the use of ICTs. The project initiated by FIT Ltd and funded by the EU Lifelong Learning Programme, aims to support teachers in their use of ICT in the classroom. The integration of ICT in the classroom is an essential element in the support of the future knowledge economy. Teachers and tutors formal and informal training in ICT can vary greatly and the eTQF project enables education providers, teachers and tutors to identify ICT skills, identify gaps and plan for improvement through continuous professional development. The project facilitates this through the development of a suite of tools and resources.

The project has developed an online tool which can be used by teachers, schools principals, education managers and education authorities to assess and establish teachers' competency in the use of ICT in education. The eTQF Tool is available to all in the education sector and will help to establish and improve the current use of ICTs as educational aids.

The eTQF Tool is based on an objective eTQF Framework which is aligned to the UNESCO ICT Competency Framework for Teacher. The eTQF project has also developed an online eTeach Community of Practice (www.eteachnetwork.eu). This website operates through the use of Web 2.0 technology which allows peer to peer learning and exchange of ideas. Teachers using the site are able to share ideas, discuss issues and contribute and review resources for ICT in teaching. An ICT training programme/manual called eTeach offers a step-by-step course in the integration of ICT into teaching practice.

George Ryan, FIT, said "The investment in the use of ICT in education has to go in line with the investment in education staff, teachers in particular. The eTQF has been a ground breaking project that provides teachers with simple yet effective tool to measure their own ICT competencies, plan further development and provide an ongoing support through an online peer-to-peer network. The eTQF tool and resources are open to educators at any level who understand the importance of continuous professional development"

The piloting of the eTQF initiative has been carried out across schools and colleges in City of Dublin VEC and South West College, Northern Ireland and has enabled over 200 teachers to test the innovative solutions offered by the project. Mr Aidan Clifford

Director of the Curriculum Development Unit and representing City of Dublin VEC complimented George Ryan and his staff for their enterprising spirit and professional approach regarding the promotion and development of the use and integration of ICT'S in Education and Training. Mr Clifford as Director of Curriculum Development confirmed that the City of Dublin VEC is fully supportive regarding the future development of the Project Products especially with a view to Supporting the Department of Education & Science with the Smart Schools = Smart Economy Initiative 2009 – 2012.

Speaking about the project the Lord Mayor said "ICT savvy graduates are essential to ensure Ireland's transition into a 'Smart Economy'. Incorporating ICT into every subject area of teaching allows students to master new technologies and ways of working. Students respond to new ways of learning, visual and aural and using ICT will help bring all interactive multimedia material into the classroom. It is crucial to provide teachers with access to relevant Continuing Professional Development (CPD) training and supports and the eTQF initiative is an excellent example."

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Fast Track into Information Technology (FIT) a registered charity funded by the ICT industry and Irish government. FIT is dedicated to helping people within disadvantaged communities progress and integrate into mainstream society through access to training in ICT and subsequent employment. FIT is also an active promoter of IT literacy, digital inclusion and innovation in education and has been successful in obtaining project funding to develop strategies and tools that address these issues. These operate under the Leonardo Da Vinci, Grundtvig and Transversal pillars of the EU Lifelong Learning Programme. As a result of these projects FIT has engaged with and supported a wide range of stakeholders at national and EU level.