

Bruton unveils plan to ramp up hi-tech sector

Sarah McCabe
and Fionnan Sheahan

THE Government will bump up the number of places available on technology courses in universities and increase work permits for ICT professionals.

The moves are part of a plan to create an additional 44,500 jobs in the ICT sector by 2018.

A host of actions are set out in the Government's 2014 'ICT Action Plan' launched yesterday by Jobs Minister Richard Bruton and Education Minister Ruairi Quinn.

The plan was launched at a Dublin-based ICT company, Trilogy Technologies, which employs 50 people.

An extra 1,250 ICT undergraduate places will be made available annually from 2014, aimed at ensuring that three-quarters of job openings can be filled from the education system 'in this country within four years.

At present, just 60pc are filled by Irish residents. Chief executives from large technology multinationals like PayPal have been vocal about the shortage of skilled Irish ICT workers.

"It is essential we have a good pipeline of highly skilled graduates to meet the demands of industry," Mr Bruton said.

But the need for foreign workers is still recognised. An extra 2,000 work permits a year will be created for foreign ICT professionals in order to meet the demands of the industry. Recent Irish emigrants and European nationals will be prioritised. Career fairs will also be organised abroad to help companies recruit for Irish positions.

The second-level curriculum is also being targeted. New courses in digital media literacy, programming and coding will be introduced as part of the new Junior Cycle being rolled out to replace the Junior Certificate exams.

The first ICT action plan, published in 2012, introduced bonus points for students sitting higher maths at Leaving Certificate level. Student participation in the course has jumped by 58pc since then.

"Our ambition is to make Ireland the location for people with ICT skills to come to and develop their talent to have the most dynamic businesses located here," he said.



Left: Rachel Ostos with Angea Dercheira and Laura Sanchez, originally from Spain but now living in Kildare, at the Jobs Expo 2014; above, Willie Sherlock from Coolock chats with Anthony Howley, originally from Mayo, but now working with Construction Jobs Switzerland. FRANK MCGRATH

Swiss hope to lure 50 of our builders at jobseekers' expo

Nicola Anderson

WHEN Irish builders go looking for work far from these shores, Switzerland does not exactly spring to mind.

But the old movie quote about the country where 500 years of democracy and peace produced nothing more than the cuckoo clock is being stood on its head.

With around 40,000 apartments needed to fill an accommodation shortage, one Mayo man is determined to lure Irish construction workers to Switzerland, offering wages three times higher than they might hope to get here - if they could get a job at all.

Anthony Howley of Swiss Construction Jobs was at

the Jobs Expo at Croke Park in Dublin yesterday to recruit 250 Irish to take up immediate positions.

One obstacle, Anderson admitted, is the language barrier but he is offering to teach the basics on the building site. "Most construction workers here pay €8 to €12 an hour, but in Switzerland, it's €32 an hour," he said.

The language barrier would not put off candidate Willie Sherlock from Coolock in Dublin.

A tiler by trade, he has been in Switzerland for months and with



Jobseekers queue up before the start of the Jobs Expo 2014, in association with DoneDealJobs, in Croke Park. FRANK MCGRATH

two children, he now has to think of leaving Ireland. "It's a case of having to find a job," he said. "They say the session is over but I don't

know who they're talking about because I find it worse now than ever." It's a similar situation for Kevin Dunne (34) from

Rosenallis, Co Laois - a carpenter who came back to Ireland after 12 years in San Francisco after his father fell ill.

"I noticed a big change when I came back - everyone was so miserable. It was a real shock," he said.

Since he was undocumented in the States, it would be very difficult now to get back in and Canada is now on his horizons.

Even if a job cropped up here, he doesn't think he would stay. "I'd sooner go elsewhere," he said, admitting: "I'm chasing the weather too I suppose."

Among the jobhunters were Tipperary couple Louise Tobin, who has a

degree in marketing, and Michael Collins, a driller by trade, who are also thinking of heading away to Canada.

With a two-year-old son, they want to go away before he starts school.

"I'm working on a pig farm at the moment but it's not what I'm used to," said Michael.

There are plenty of opportunities in Canada, according to Kevin Shields (27) from Enniscrone, Co Sligo, who left home three years ago and says it's the best thing he ever did.

Currently over recruiting some 50 construction jobs for major company, Ellisdon, Mr Shields said his family did not know he was home - and so he was off to surprise them last night.