

PRESS RELEASE

Forfás and Expert Group publish skills recommendations to support Ireland to become a leading country in Europe in data analytics services

(Wednesday, 7 May 2014) Ireland has the potential to become a leading country in Europe in data analytics services and create very highly skilled jobs for data analysts and data scientists proficient in areas such as mathematics, statistics and management science, combined with associated IT skills according to a new report published today by Forfás and the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs. The report estimates that Ireland has the potential to create between 12,750 and 21,000 job vacancies by 2020, arising through expansion and replacement demand.

There is a global shortage of the skilled professionals required to fill direct high-end jobs in this area and today's report, *Assessing The Demand For Big Data And Analytics Skills*, identifies measures to build up the Big Data and analytics talent pool in Ireland over the period up to 2020 in line with enterprise demand. The report proposes actions to address gaps identified between supply and demand and assist in harnessing the considerable economic and social potential of this area into the medium term.

The report notes that Big Data and analytics is a relatively new area of business activity characterised by rapid growth. Globally, there is a reported shortage of data analytics talent particularly individuals with the required 'deep analytical' skills. At present, no one country or region stands out in the provision of data analytics services and there is a significant opportunity for Ireland to gain ground here. The report highlights that for Ireland to become a leading country in data analytics services it is essential that our skills capability base is sufficient to drive performance within existing enterprises, start-ups and new foreign direct investment.

Welcoming the launch of the report, the Minister for Education and Skills, Ruairi Quinn, TD said: "If we want Ireland to become a leading country for data analytics, we need to ensure we have a supply of suitably qualified analytics talent who will choose careers in this area. This will require that both businesses and schools raise awareness and communicate these career options to young people, their parents and those looking to reskill."

Minister Quinn added "A key trend observed internationally is the interdisciplinary approach to Big Data and analytics education. Higher education institutions are looking at ways of using and re-orienting their existing resources across disciplines including computing, business, statistics, marketing and engineering. The collaboration of higher education with industry in the design and development of new data analytic programmes is another key trend and I am pleased that there are innovative examples here within our universities."

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation Richard Bruton TD said: "Big data is one of the Disruptive Reforms in our Action Plan for Jobs, and we have put in place a series of measures to support jobs growth in this fast-growing area. This includes the establishment of a technology centre to bring together industry and researchers to work on shared problems. However a key element of this is ensuring that we can provide companies with access to the skilled workers they need to support their growth. Today's report delivers on part of that plan - with proper action from

Government I am convinced that we can deliver the skilled workers needed and support the rapid jobs growth that is possible in this area”.

Chairperson of the EGFSN, Una Halligan said “Given the early stage of development of data analytics activity both in Ireland and internationally, a particular focus should be on improving senior executives’ understanding of the potential value of data analytics activities for enhancing business performance. This includes decisions on the talent and technology required and what structured data metrics to collect. The key to maximising the value of analytics is for firms and organisations to take an enterprise-wide approach to managing their analytical talent, including sourcing and nurturing talent; providing interesting and challenging work and deploying analytical talent effectively in line with strategic business needs”.

Martin Shanahan Chief Executive of Forfás commented “This joint Forfás and EGFSN report highlights the need to boost the output and quality of our analytical talent to take advantage of potential job openings and business opportunities. The report highlights the supporting conditions necessary if Ireland is to position itself as a leading data analytic country in Europe. These conditions include greater access to open data, a boost in domestic talent supply, and ensuring international competitiveness. Many of the elements to support the development of data analytics and Big Data are already in place in Ireland including the existing base of enterprises in this space and a growing base of relevant publically funded research activity, including the insight centre for data analytics (INSIGHT) and the Centre for Applied Data Analytics research, CeADAR.”

Assessing The Demand For Big Data And Analytics Skills considers skills demand across three main skills categories. Those in **deep analytical** roles have the statistical and analytical ability to analyse both structured and unstructured data. The need for firms to be able to identify and process the “right data” requires “**data savvy**” persons with the conceptual knowledge and communication skills to frame the right questions to be answered and to challenge the results- all with a view to making better business decisions. Those in **supporting technology** roles develop, implement and maintain the hardware and software tools and manage the databases. Good communication teamworking and problem solving skills are key skills requirements for all in these roles.

The 21,000 potential job vacancies for skilled professionals could arise under the report’s high growth scenario, from both expansion and replacement demand in the period up to 2020 - comprising 3,630 for deep analytical roles and 17,470 for big data savvy roles.

There is also potential for a further identified 8,780 job openings for supporting technology staff, however it is important to note that this job figure has already been included within the demand forecast numbers for ICT professionals in the Forfás/EGFSN report on *Addressing Future Demand for High-Level ICT Skills* and are the subject of initiatives to address such demand in the Government’s ICT Action Plan launched in March 2014.

The full report, *Assessing The Demand For Big Data And Analytics*, and its recommendations, and *Addressing Future Demand for High-Level ICT Skills* are available on the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs website www.skillsireland.ie and the Forfás website www.forfas.ie.

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