The Reform of Higher Education Systems and the Irish Experience

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STRUCTURE OF THE PORTUGUESE HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEMS: DEMOGRAPHIC CONSTRAINTS

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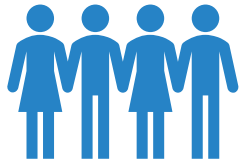
Overview of Presentation



Valuing and Strengthening Differentiation and Diversity

Irish Experience - Technological Universities

Reflections & Final Comments

VALUING AND STRENGTHENING DIFFERENTIATION AND DIVERSITY

Shift From Elite To Universal Participation

Globalization, an ageing population, the technological and digital revolution leading to increasing use of automation and artificial intelligence, climate change and moves towards a carbon neutral economy and resource scarcity – alongside changes arising from the Covid-19 pandemic – are **reshaping our societies, how and where we live and the world of work**.

Post-secondary education is being democratised around the world, transformed from something undertaken by elites to having 50+% of the population now participating in higher education.

These developments are **impacting and transforming post-secondary education** with huge implications for systems and institutions. The impacts and effects vary according to national context, but the trends are similar.

Macro-trends 1

Increasing educational participation is a **global phenomenon driven by demographic and economic growth, public policy and social/cultural ambition**.

Diverse range of educational providers, public and private, cater for a demographically and geographically diverse cohort of learners.

Attention is drawn to learners gradually being "left behind" by the current system and/or unable to access the system in any meaningful/sustained way.

Regardless of whether graduates live and work close to their home or are internationally mobile, they will be part of the **global talent pool**.

Macro-trends 2

Demographic changes are significant challenge. Traditional post-secondary **education cohort is declining while older people are growing percentage of the population**.

As economic growth advances and societies change, **countries have no option but to invest in their education and training systems**.

While our focus is on HEIs, it is **important to note that developing competencies for problem-solving and innovation, as well as analytical and critical thinking, does not start in higher education**.

Rethinking Post-secondary/Tertiary Education

Responding to growing demand for tertiary education by citizens and employers, **governments around the world are rethinking the way in which tertiary education is governed, delivered and funded**.

Focus on **greater mission diversity** by emphasizing horizontal rather than vertical differentiation which tends to enhance social stratification.

There is a **decided shift towards skills but the emphasis is on degrees** – because they provide a broader educational and intellectual foundation and passport to the future.

What Are You Trying To Achieve

Coherent portfolio of horizontally **diverse and distinctive** high performing, complementary, and actively engaged institutions:

- Providing breadth of educational, research and learner experiences offering widest chance to the broadest number of people;
- Working collaboratively to **maximize capacity beyond individual capability**.

Developing **knowledge and skills that citizens need to contribute to society throughout their lives**, while attracting international talent;

Graduates able to succeed in the labour market, fuel and sustain personal, social and economic development, and **underpin civil society**;

Operating **successfully nationally, across the EU and globally**; international in perspective and responsive to change.

Four Issues To Think About

1. Progressing from binary to eco-system
2. Place-based smart specialization for regions and institutions
3. Balancing knowledge, skills and training
4. Active aging and engaged citizens

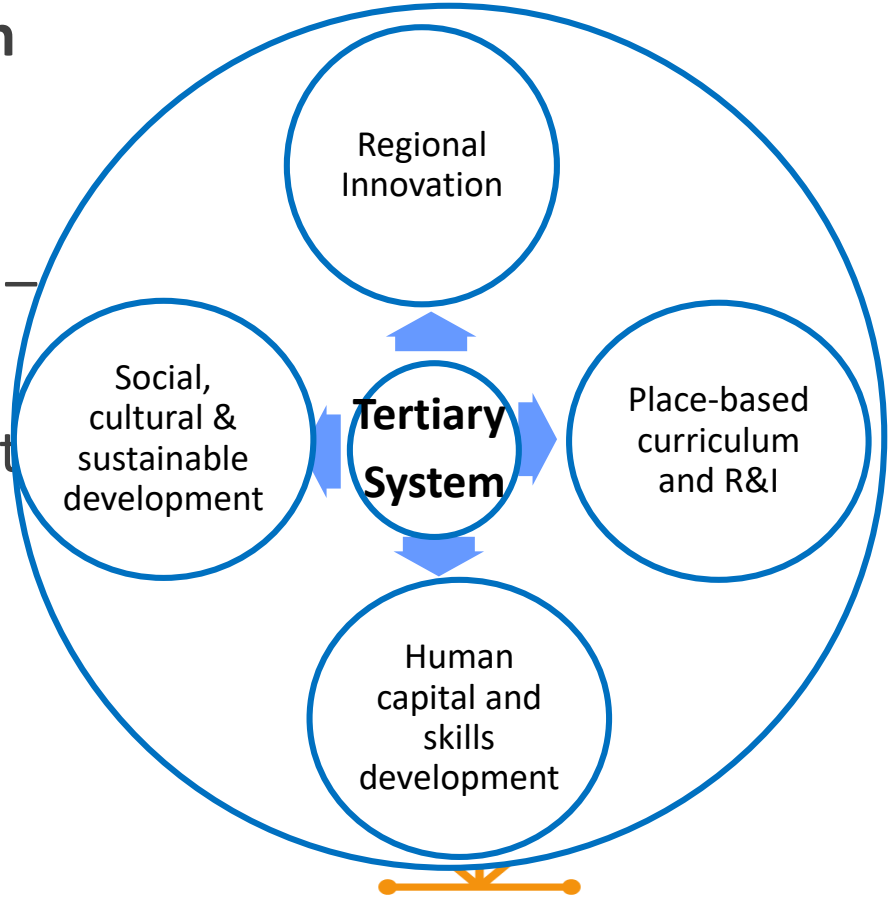
1. From Binary To Eco-system

Rather than individual HEIs pursuing own agenda, **focus on diverse /differentiated institutions – not stratified or hierarchical**.

Emphasis on **complementarity and collaborative working** – creating coherent tertiary education & training system.

Diversity of teaching and research-active providers to meet educational and societal requirements.

Universities and polytechnics, **working together with schools, enterprise sector/SMEs and civil society**.



2. Place-based Smart Specialization: Regions And Institutions

Strongly rooted in local/region as basis for strategy/priorities rather than homogeneity/imitation:

- **Adds value** to regional economy, building on local expertise, products, needs;
- **Recognises** graduates with modern skills raise overall productive capacity of SMEs – people are stickier than knowledge;
- Values scientific research as well as **non-technological/social innovation**
- **Governance arrangements** to ensure sustainable strategies and impacts.

Smart specialisation for institutions – each institution to identify and develop specialisation. Can't be comprehensively excellent.

3. Balancing Knowledge, Skills And Training

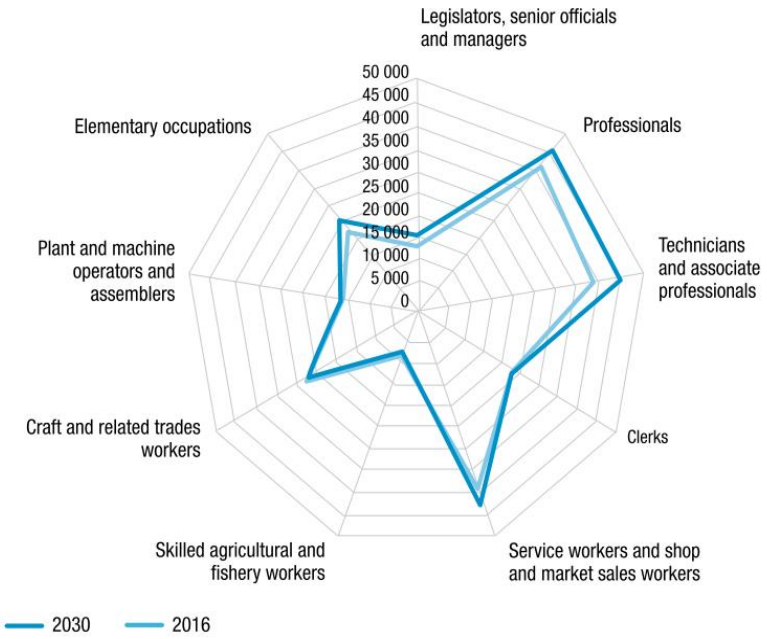
Advanced economies experiencing an **increasingly polarised labour market alongside a hollowing out of middle-level skills**.

While demand for high skills is increasing, **45% of jobs will still require middle-level skills by 2030**.

Increasing "**demand for individuals who possess a broader knowledge base, more specialised skills, advanced analytical capacities, and complex communications skills**."

Challenge is to ensure mission differentiation continues to provide wider and more diverse opportunities.

Figure 16. **Changing occupational structure of employment (EU-28+3)**



NB: Based on numbers in employment (estimates based on national accounts).
Source: Cedefop (2018 skills forecast).

4. Active Aging & Engaged Citizens

Share of working adults (25-64 years) participating in learning (2021) only 10.8% - same level as 2016!

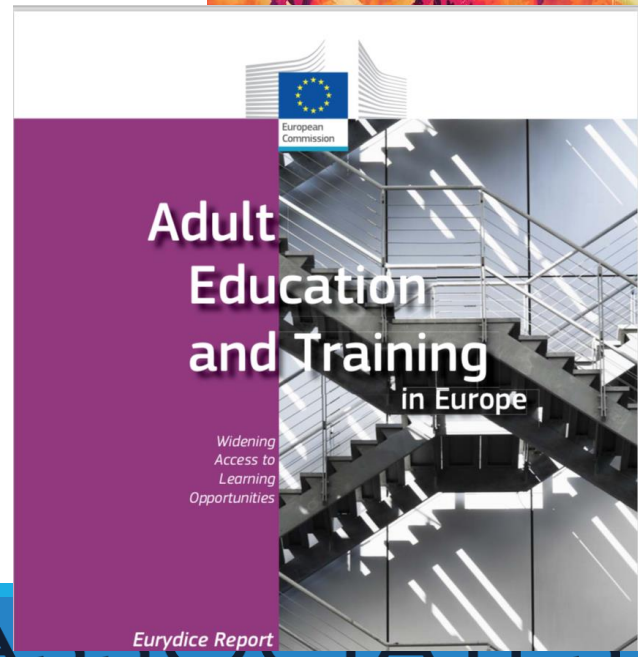
Demographic changes have serious implications for social and economic development.

Cannot ignore adult learners in the future.

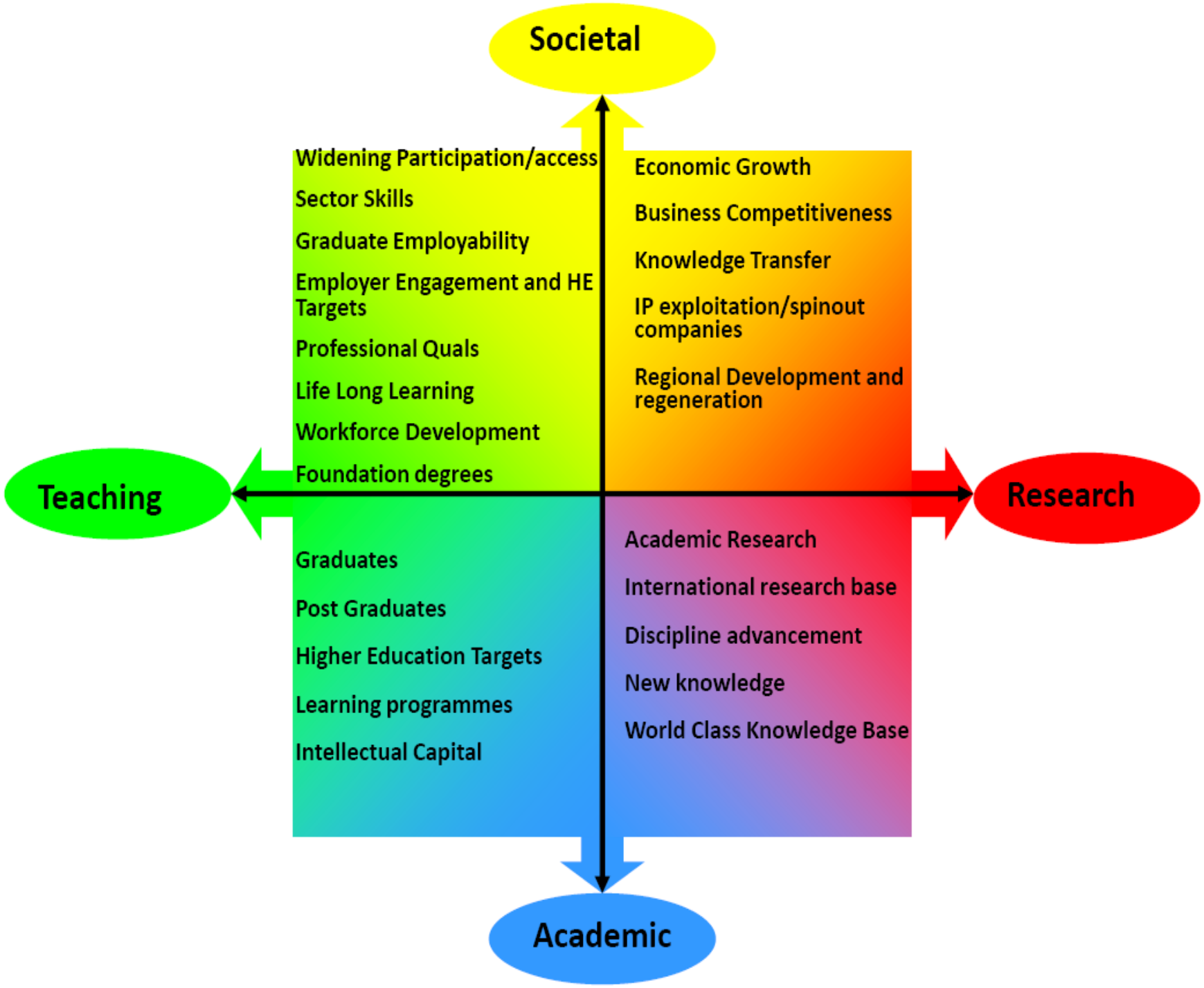
Adult learning improves employability, boost innovation, ensure social fairness and closes the digital skills gap.

More diverse and flexible education and training choices to enhance people's opportunities throughout their lives.

Active, engaged citizens are **key to sustainable democracies**.



What type of institution is yours?



Wedgwood, 2004, 10.

IRISH EXPERIENCE - TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITIES

Ireland – Key Developments

- National Strategy for Higher Education 2011
- Changing Landscape, TU Criteria & Legislation 2013-2018
- System Performance Framework & Strategic Dialogue 2014 -
- Mergers & Designation Process 2019-2022
- Government Actions & Funding 2019-
- Progressing a Unified Tertiary Education Sector 2022-

Context 1

Ireland has been radically transformed from being a labour-exporting society to one heavily dependent upon FDI and highly skilled labour and skilled-immigration.

From being heavily dependent on protectionist policies and agriculture, Ireland now has one of the most open economies in the world and one of the best performing in the EU. Without question, adoption of the knowledge economy paradigm has transformed Ireland.

The **big success has been massification; for a country lacking natural resources, the objective has been to get more people well-educated.**

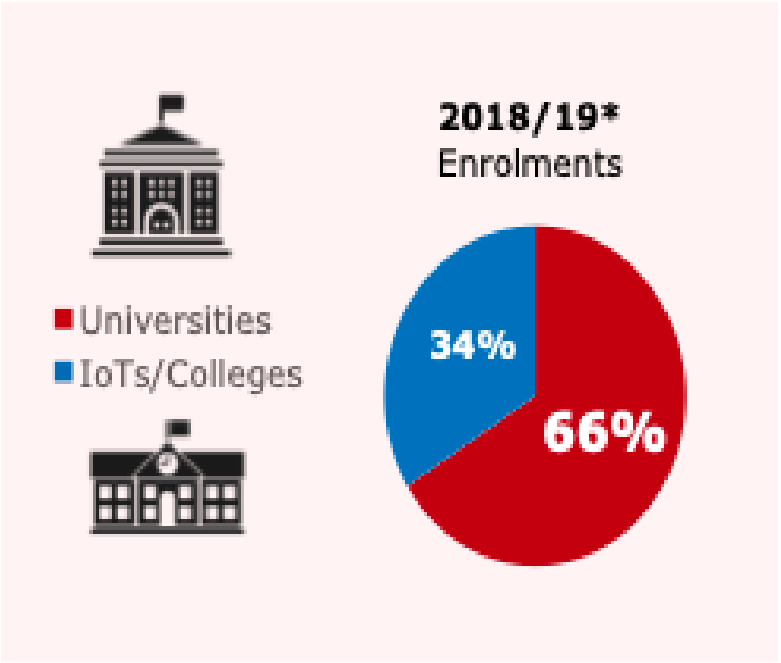
Approx. 91% complete secondary school, of which ~70% participate in HE.

Context 2

Regional Technical Colleges (RTC) created with support of European Social Fund (ESF).

- 1967-2000: 13 RTCs established to educate students for craft/professional level jobs. Colleges to play developmental role in their regions.
- 1992; 2007: All RTCs redesignated as Institutes of Technology (IoT) with authority to develop applied research and offer some PhD programmes.

Differentiation perceived as stratification, as majority of students attend traditional universities, and governance arrangements and funding differ.



National Strategy for Higher Education 2011

Strategy aimed to redesign system to meet future societal and labour market needs.

Building on 2004 OECD recommendations, National Strategy supported:

- **Strategic steering and shaping of HE higher education landscape creating a coordinated and "coherent" system of a smaller number of larger and diverse institutions, referred to as "directed diversity"** (Boland, 2009).
- Publicly-funded HEIs should respond more directly to national needs and accordingly should participate in regional clusters.
- Mergers of IoTs resulting in redesignation as technological universities (TU).
- TUs to have **distinct missions with performance challenges**.

Changing Landscape, TU Criteria & Legislation 2013-2018

Higher Education Authority (HEA) published key papers setting out roadmap for implementing significant reform in Irish higher education.

A key objective:

- Creation of more **coherent system of HEIs, coordinated by the HEA, to deliver complementary range of institutions and academic programmes needed by individuals, society and the labour market**.
- **High levels of inter-institutional collaboration** required so that specialisation at institutional level does not lead to diminished opportunities and choices for students at regional and national levels.

HEA Steered Process, 2013

Towards a Future Higher Education Landscape - HEIs to review their mission and consider how it would fit into coherent system now being developed.

*Technological University p*rocess and criteria for designation.

Guidelines on Regional Clusters to serve regional needs.

Institutional Responses to the Landscape Document and Achieving the Objectives of the National Strategy for Higher Education

A Study of Future Demand for Higher Education in Ireland, ESRI

Completing the Landscape Process for Irish Higher Education

Report to the Minister for Education and Skills on System Reconfiguration

TU Mission

Technological Universities will **address the social and economic needs of their region and will engage in industry-focused research**.

- **Focus on science and technology programmes that are vocationally and professionally oriented**.
- Expected to play a **pivotal role in facilitating access and progression** particularly through relationships with the further education and training sector.
- Merger of at least two IoTs required.

Designation Process

Application to the Minister

- Demonstrating **compliance with eligibility criteria**, e.g., students & staff
- Demonstrating **plans/arrangements in place for managing academic, financial and administrative matters**

Appointment by Minister of **Advisory Panel**

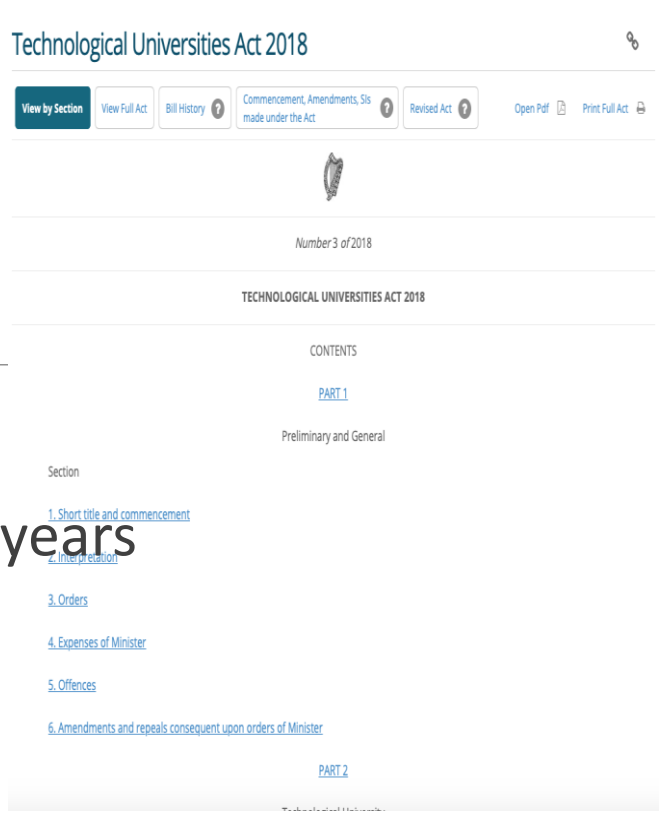
- At least 3 people; 2 have expertise at an international level
- Report with recommendation

Minister informs HEIs of proposed decision and reasons; may specify conditions

HEIs can make representations to Minister re. decision

Minister makes Order establishing technological university under specified name

TU Legislation & Criteria (2018)


Technological Universities Act 2018

View by Section | View Full Act | Bill History | Commencement, Amendments, SIs made under the Act | Revised Act | Open Pdf | Print Full Act

Number 3 of 2018

TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITIES ACT 2018

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PART 1

Preliminary and General

Section

1. Short title and commencement
2. Interpretation
3. Orders
4. Expenses of Minister
5. Offences
6. Amendments and repeals consequent upon orders of Minister

PART 2

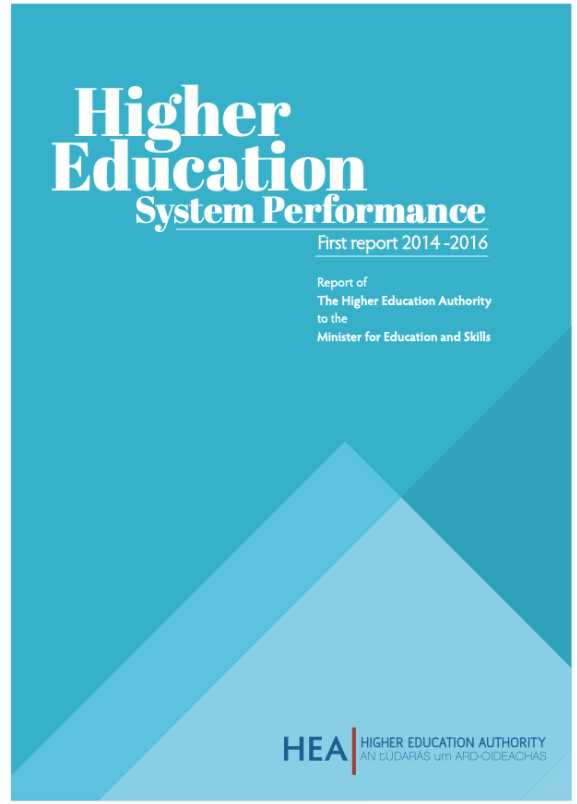
- **Students**
  - — At least 4% research students; capacity to increase to 7% in 10 years
  - — 30% students on flexible, co-designed programme or mature
- **Academic Staff**
  - — At least 90% hold masters or doctoral degree; capacity to increase to 80% with PhD within 10 years
- **At least 3 fields to doctoral level**; capacity to increase to 5 fields
  - — **R&I has positive social and economic impacts on region**
- **Capacity to effectively perform the functions of a TU** with ref to governance, academic, administrative and management, e.g., QA, links with region/stakeholders,

System Performance Framework & Strategic Dialogue 2014 -

System performance framework: set out priorities of government under a number of headings which include economic renewal; social and cultural development and equity; public sector reform; and the restoration of Ireland's national reputation.

Compacts and Strategic Dialogue: process of strategy and performance dialogue with HEIs.

Compacts reflect the individual missions, capacities, strengths and priorities of each institution and explain how they will contribute to regional, national and system objectives



Mergers & Designation Process 2019-2022

- Technological University Dublin, established January 2019. Merger of 3 IoTs
- Munster Technological University (MTU), established January 2021. Merger of 2 IoTs. Minister set conditions and requirement for further review.
- Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest, established October 2021. Merger of 2 IoTs
- Atlantic Technological University, established April 2022. Merger of 3 IoTs
- SouthEast Technological University, established May 2022. Merger of 2 IoTs

Government Actions & Funding 2019-

Landscape Funding, 2019, €11.8m for creation and expansion of TUs + €2.45m for collaborative projects

TU Transformation Fund (TUTF) 2020-2023, €90m to assist and support the development and progression of technological universities

Improve digital infrastructure, build capacity in research, and improve governance and systems integration. November 2022: €23.47m

Progressing a Unified Tertiary Education Sector 2022-

Minister launched policy vision for a more unified tertiary education and research system

Creation of a unified, balanced and integrated knowledge and skills system to enable a coherent and comprehensive range of learning opportunities

More diverse and aligned learning and development opportunities across a broad spectrum with clear and extensive pathways for learners and researchers and a more seamless system overall.

Intensified focus to inclusion across the whole of the tertiary system to address socio-economic disadvantage and underrepresentation of groups.

More effective and responsive transformation of FET/VET, HE and R&I adapting to future changes and challenges.

More agile, flexible and integrated approaches across the system to equipping the whole of the workforce and population with the skills and advancing knowledge in coherent ways.

More balanced regional development with FEIs and HEIs and research at the heart of this process.

REFLECTIONS & FINAL COMMENTS

Ireland

Strategy to enhance capacity and capability of IoTs via mergers to meet challenges and opportunities of 21stC

Increasing emphasis on tertiary – and greater coherence/collaboration between FET, TU and Universities

Enhance and leverage role of TE institutions by:

- Playing a key "convening" role in the formation of a local/regional innovation ecosystem;
- Addressing the skills gaps inhibiting innovation
- Providing global-local linkages for SMEs
- FET plans for College of the Future, and widening role of FET in the R&I eco-system

Issues Arising 1

TU transformation is a generational process

- Defining and building R&I capacity is also a generational process
- Mergers are complex
- Need to consider development as a process not a single act.

What dictates success is institutional leadership and strategic capacity.

Issues Arising 2

Mission differentiation is key.

- Concerns about boundary crossing/isomorphism
- Specialisation – being comprehensively excellent is not possible

Critical tools include:

- Criteria and designation process – mission/roles clear from the beginning
- Smart specialisation for institutions – otherwise disconnect between education/skills, research and regional needs
- Funding and process for monitoring
- Avoid one form of academic and research success

Final Comments

Sustainable prosperity requires greater diversity of educational and research opportunities and perspectives – and people to work in jobs we don't yet know about.

Greater recognition that a tertiary education system requires *diverse and distinctive* institutions, each contributing valuable knowledge and skills, with mutual respect, for in the interests of the *success of the overall eco-system* –

- **Strategy of institutional collaboration and alliances, and geographical clustering;**
- **System coherence = Maximising capacity beyond individual capability**.

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