



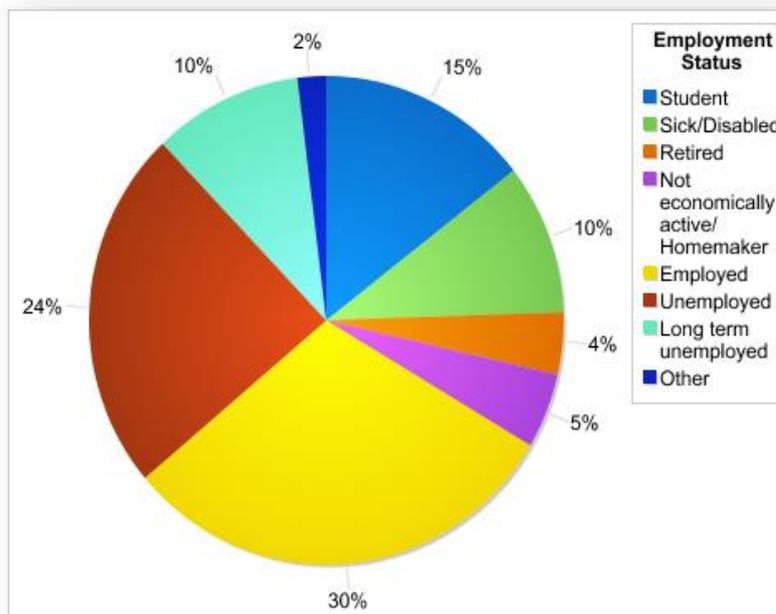
Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

Information Referral Service Freephone Helpline

1. Number of Queries

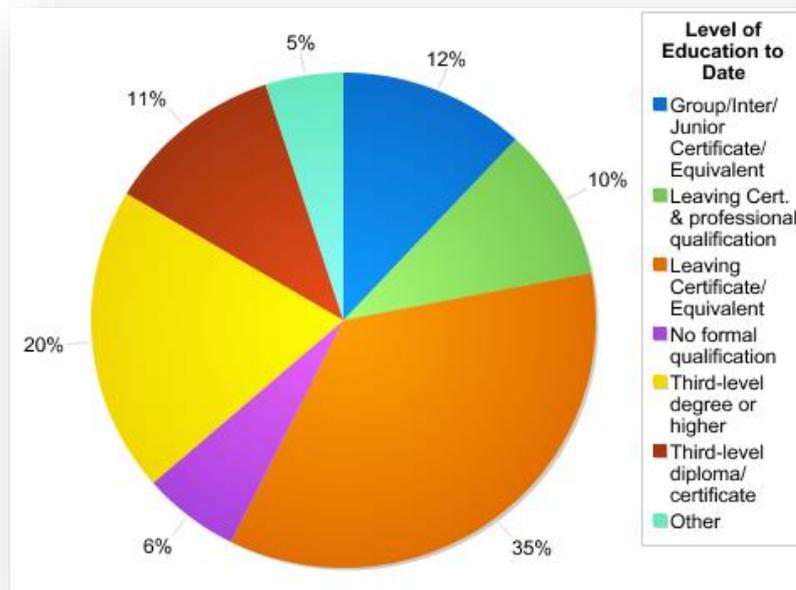
During the European Agenda for Adult Learning project timeframe (November 1st – 31st October 2015) there were **540** information queries. This is a **4%** increase than in the previous period. The majority of people contacting the service were Female **63%** and Male **37%**. A greater number of callers came from urban areas in Ireland **72%** compared to Rural areas **28%**. Queries came from all counties. The top three counties were: **Dublin, Cork and Galway**.

2. Employment Status



- **30%** of people contacting the service were **Employed**
- **34%** of people were **Unemployed**, **10%** of these being **Long Term Unemployed**
- **15%** of people were **Students**

3. Level of Education to Date

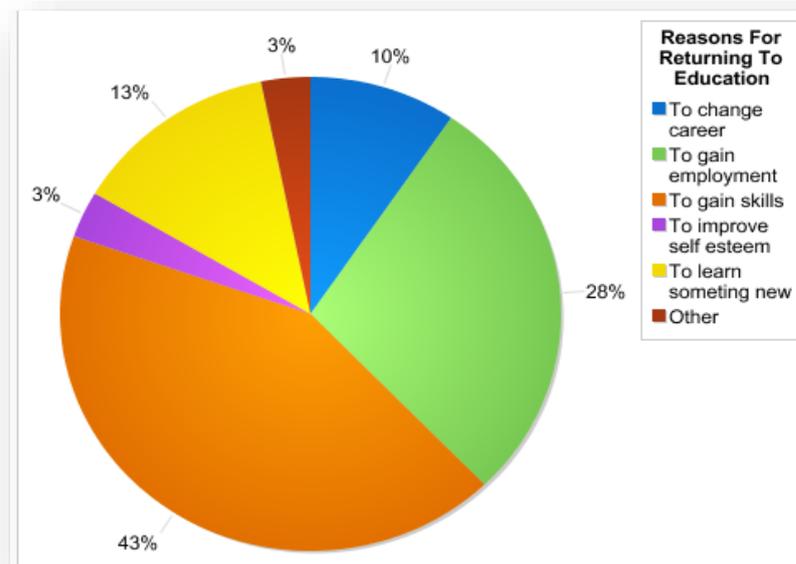


- **35%** of people contacting the service had their **Leaving Certificate**
- **20%** had a third level **degree or higher**
- **12%** of people contacting the service had their **Junior Certificate**
- **6%** of people reported having **no formal qualification**

4. Reasons for returning to education

The majority of people or **43% reported returning to education to gain skills**. The remainder stated they were returning to education to:

- **28%** to **gain employment**
- **13%** to **learn something new**
- **10%** to **change career**
- **3%** to **improve self esteem**
- **3%** to **Other**



5. Where did people hear about the service:

- **52%** heard about the information referral service **through the internet**
- **9%** heard about the service through the **google ads campaign**
- **16%** heard about the service through the **promotion of One Step Up** (through the promotional material and website)

6. What people were looking for:

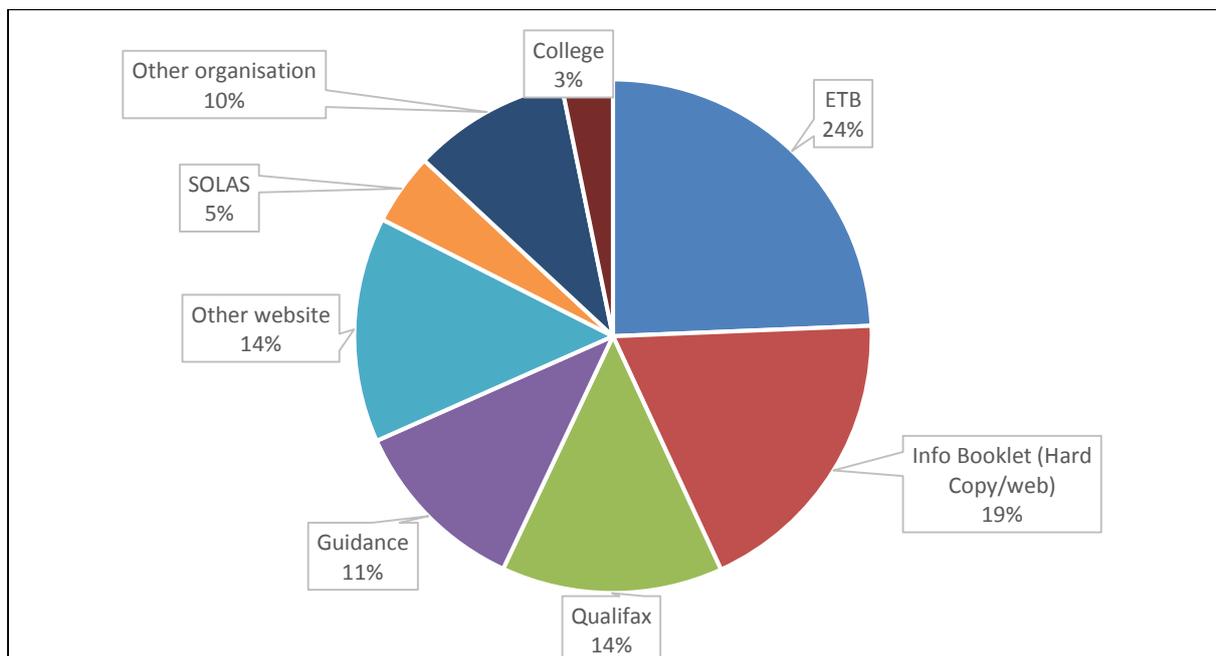
- **18%** of people were seeking to **return to education**
- **17%** of people were seeking **funding or had queries in relation to Social Welfare**
- **11%** of people were looking to complete their **Leaving Certificate**

7. The most popular courses requested were:

- Teaching/Training/Tutor for adults
- Computers/I.T
- Childcare

The majority of people or **44%** were looking for **full time** education options, **41%** were looking for **part-time** and **6%** **distance learning** options.

8. Where people were referred to:



The majority of people were referred to;

- **ETBs - 24%**
- **Information booklet - 19%** (either online or sent a hard copy)
- **Qualifax - 14%**
- **Other Websites – 14%**

Most callers were given **two or three referral points** depending on their query, this included directing people to our '**What Next**' Information booklet.

9. Barriers to returning to education

The three biggest obstacles to people returning to education were **lack of information, financial reasons, childcare** and **lack of suitable courses**.

Follow up calls

Follow up phone calls were carried out with **8% of people who contacted the Information Referral Service** during the reporting period. These call backs were conducted to identify if the supports and services available are meeting the needs of learners. Calls were carried out 3-6 months after initial contact was made with the Information Referral Service.

After contacting the Information Referral service:

- **38.7%** contacted their local **Education & Training Board**
- **32.3% didn't contact** any further service
- **9.7%** contacted their **Intreo/Social Welfare Office**
- **9.7%** used the online site **Qualifax.ie**

After contacting the relevant service only **53.8% found what they were looking for**. The remainder, **46% of respondents didn't find what they were looking for**, the main reasons stated were:

- What I was looking for wasn't available (**55.6%**)
- Offered a different course (**22.2%**)
- Lack of funding (**11.1%**)
- Time of course didn't suit (**11.1%**)

After contacting the service **the majority of respondents stated they may sign up for a course in the future (41%)** the remainder described their current situation:

- **35.3%** of respondents were in education and training.
- **11.8%** of respondents were looking for a job
- **11.8%** of respondents signed up to a course

Case Studies

Case Study One

A female caller contacted the information service looking for information on returning to education, specifically courses in the area of social media. She was referred to the ETB and found all of the information that she received from AONTAS fantastic, but felt because she lives in a rural area that it is impossible for her to do a course due to transport issues. She said all of the interesting courses are city based and her social welfare payment would not cover the transport costs. She said nobody understands the difficulties of rural isolation. She felt the courses on offer to her locally were not adequate and there was a lack of suitable courses coupled with a transport barrier. Her situation has remained the same and she was sent information about an upcoming education and training fair in her area.

Case Study Two

A male caller contacted AONTAS after hearing about us through the One Step Up website. He was unemployed and had left school after his junior certificate. He wanted to do a college access programme and AONTAS put him in touch with the Access Office in DIT. He also got in touch with the ETB and is starting a PLC course in September.

Case Study Three

A female caller contacted the service, she was unemployed and from Kildare. She wanted to do a childcare course but was unsure how to go about it. She requested a copy of the AONTAS Information booklet 'What Next'. AONTAS provided her with a copy of our information and the details of her local ETB. Her reasons for returning to Education were to gain employment. She managed to find a course through her local ETB and is currently completing her work experience.

Case Study Four

A male caller contacted the AONTAS Information referral service in search of full time study. He was unemployed for less than a year and his reasons for returning to education were to gain employment. He successfully completed his leaving certificate and would like to upskill and gain employment. He was looking for an articulated truck driving licence so he could get a job. He contacted SOLAS but did not get any response and got no help from the social welfare. He is currently in employment but still interested in pursuing a course in the future.

Conclusion

The data gathered during the project time frame has shown an increase in demand for information on education and training options, this is portrayed by a **4%** increase in calls to the service. The follow up calls carried out show some **positive results** with **35%** of respondents **stating they were in education and training** and a further **11% of respondents had signed up to a course**. However, there are still barriers for adults in returning to education and the follow up calls highlighted this, **46% of respondents didn't find what they were looking for due to the availability of course offerings** or due to funding issues.