



Ireland: 'Hollywood of the web'?

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by ElectricNews.Net

At the opening of the Irish Web Technology Conference on Tuesday night, the organisers were congratulated for making Ireland the "Hollywood of the web".

Roger O'Connor, Director of Business and Technology at the Department of Communications, made the comments to around 100 people from Ireland's IT industry attending the conference's opening event in Dublin's CineWorld complex, on Parnell Street. Minister of State Tony Killeen had been scheduled to open the event but was called away for a government vote.

The four-day event, organised by IrishDev, will feature over 50 lectures on topics ranging from early stage venture capital to the accessibility, usability and psychology of web design. A number of speakers will also address the legal and marketing aspects of web design.

"What is happening here with the Irish web conference is very exciting. They are representing a new initiative to try and bring about as much entrepreneurial spirit as possible and to bring the various players together and to get them to fire off each other in a very open way and a very exciting way. It's great to see this taking place," O'Connor said.

"The Irish software market is one of Ireland's fastest growing business sectors with annual growth rates of 10 percent in recent years. The modern Irish economy continues to be one of the fastest growing ones in recent years even now, even when things have slowed down."

O'Connor also pointed out some of the challenges facing the IT industry saying that the decline in the number of IT graduates is likely to continue for the next two to three years and that a recent OECD survey of 29 countries found Ireland ranked 16th for scientific literacy and 17th for mathematical literacy.

"However, the CAO acceptances are showing some signs of recovery and this should have a positive effect on future output," he said. He also pointed to the increase in PhD enrolments in scientific disciplines and said delegates at the conference had "a vital role

as role models and catalysts for effecting young people at secondary level, and third level into this field."

"The key message we would like to put out is the importance of having future skills in place and the capacity to grow the software development sector. We rely very much on software developers. We are one of the biggest software exporters in the world. We have a lot of major world leading companies here in Ireland and we manufacture a third of the PCs that are built in Europe."

The keynote speaker for the night was Fergus Burns of Nooked.com. Burns won the Irish Internet Association's 2007 net visionary award and was congratulated at the event by the O'Connor.

Burns explained to ENN why the event was so important. "It is getting everybody together. It is a look at all that is required. They are bringing in people from outside of Ireland which is key because they are giving them a different perspective. These guys brought in heavy hitters. It is building a network."

There was also a vigorous panel debate at the event. The members included: Charlie O'Connor, Fianna Fail TD for Dublin South; Eoghan McCabe of web design company Contrast; Martha Rotter, software developer with Microsoft; Joe Drumgoole of digital information management company PutPlace; Paul Walsh of the web accessibility company Segala; and Stephen Kennedy of the Executive Recruitment Company **Talent Partners**.

The panel members debated everything from how web development will affect recruitment companies and the importance of Web 2.0 to asking whether Google and Microsoft poaching skilled IT workers harms innovation in Ireland.

By Bryan Collins