

€9.7M PEACEPLUS Fund Launches Major Cross-Border Skills Alliance to Transform Ireland's South East

October 27, 2025



Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT) has officially launched the Southeast Higher Education/Further Education/Industry Cross-Border Alliance (SECBA) project. The initiative is a collaborative effort between higher education, further education, and industry partners across the border counties of Ireland and the south-east region of Northern Ireland.

The project, which runs until **October 2028**, secured a significant **€9,739,914 in PEACEPLUS funding** at the start of this year, a programme managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB). Its core mission is to strategically **bridge the gap between educational outputs and industry's evolving needs** across the region.

Key Partners and Strategic Focus

The SECBA initiative directly addresses regional skills challenges through a partnership involving:

- **Dundalk Institute of Technology** (Lead Partner)
- **Southern Regional College Newry**
- **Monaghan Institute**
- **Cavan Institute**
- **Workplus**

The project was formally launched at an event in DkIT that featured Deputy **Erin McGreehan T.D.**, SEUPB Programme Manager **Geraldine McKenna**, and DkIT President **Dr Diarmuid O'Callaghan**. Minister for the Economy **Dr Caoimhe Archibald MLA** also delivered a video address.

Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science James Lawless TD said: "I congratulate Dundalk Institute of Technology and its partners on the launch of the SECBA project, supported by PEACEPLUS. This important initiative will strengthen cross-border partnerships and help ensure that the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor continues to develop a highly skilled and educated workforce capable of meeting ever-evolving industry needs. The project also offers learners valuable opportunities to build knowledge and capacity in the region's key strategic growth areas."

The project focuses on three key areas to improve employability, stimulate innovation, and foster cross-border labour mobility:

- **Software Development:** Focusing on enhancing software development skills by integrating cutting-edge technologies such as **AI, machine learning, and cloud computing**.
- **Biopharmaceuticals:** Providing specialised training in **biotechnology processes** at all stages.
- **Business/Sports:** Focused on developing essential **management skills** relevant to both business and sports contexts, including management workshops and practical training sessions.

Impact on Workforce and Economy

The SECBA initiative aims to equip the workforce with skills to address the immediate needs of businesses and mitigate employment risks due to technological advancements. A total of **3,118 participants** are expected to be recruited, with **2,459 participants** expected to complete training and gain certification. Up to **185 SECBA CERT programmes** are scheduled to be delivered across the clusters.

Economy Minister Dr Caoimhe Archibald MLA said: "This programme is an excellent example of how innovative cross-border collaboration can boost employability, create new opportunities, and build a workforce ready to meet the evolving needs of industry. The SECBA initiative will equip almost 2,500 people with the skills needed in high-growth sectors such as software development, biopharmaceuticals and business management."

Erin McGreehan, T.D. and Chair of the Oireachtas Committee on Further and Higher Education, said: "The SECBA project represents the best of what cross-border collaboration can achieve with the initiative expected to significantly boost employability, encourage innovation, and stimulate sectoral growth, strengthening cross-border employment opportunities. This initiative is built on a clear recognition that the future of our economy and society depends on our ability to equip people with the right skills, at the right time, in the right way. Specialised training to strengthen skills in emerging technologies, biopharma industry needs, and management and sports-related competencies will be invaluable to industry in our region and beyond."

Deepening Cross-Border Collaboration

The launch event included a panel discussion focusing on the cross-border benefits, the impact on employers, and the long-term potential of the programme.

SEUPB Chief Executive Gina McIntyre said: “This particular PEACEPLUS programme investment area sets out to improve equal access to inclusive and quality services in education, training and lifelong learning. This will be done through developing accessible infrastructure, including fostering resilience for distance and online education and training. The benefits of SECBA will be felt widely. Training participants will gain valuable qualifications and experience. Local industries will benefit from a skilled and adaptable workforce. Educational institutions will deepen their engagement with employers and communities. And the broader regional economy will see increased competitiveness, labour mobility, and resilience. Cross-border collaboration is central to SECBA’s success. It allows the pooling of resources and the ability to deliver programmes that are greater than the sum of their parts. I wish the project every success and look forward to watching it progress.”

Dr Diarmuid O’Callaghan, DkIT President added: “It is an honour for Dundalk Institute of Technology to lead this SECBA project, which is set to transform education and industry in our region. We are delighted to collaborate with our valued partners Southern Regional College Newry, Monaghan Institute, Cavan Institute and Workplus to help protect businesses and upskill employees in our region, ensuring that the specific needs of local industry are met. The recruitment of over 3,000 people throughout this initiative along with the introduction of cutting-edge subjects into traditional education and the implementation of educational pathways through structured educational levels from basic to advanced, will help to develop a workforce prepared for ever-changing industry needs.”