



National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education – The Irish Experience

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Ireland's HE system

Publicly-funded institutions

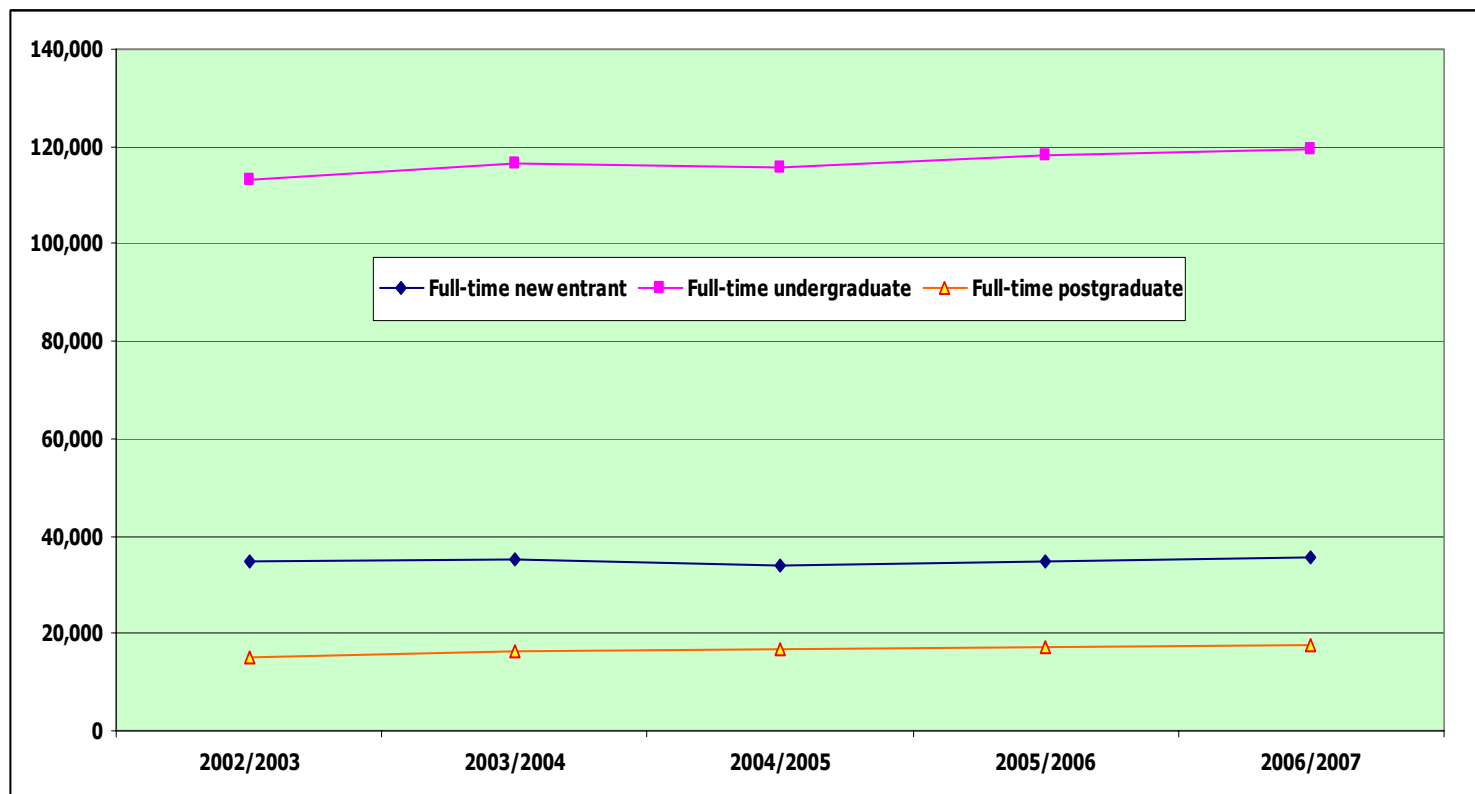
- Universities (7)
 - Institutes of Technology (14)
 - Colleges of Education
 - Others
-
- Private Institutions

Ireland's HE system

- Major expansion in participation in recent times
- FTEs 1980 c.41,000
- FTEs 2006-7 c.140,000

Overall entry rates to higher education in Ireland (entrants as a % of 17-18 year olds in the population)				
1980	1986	1992	1998	2004
20%	25%	36%	44%	55%

Enrolment Trends by Level for Universities, Colleges of Education, NCAD & RCSI, the Institutes of Technology 2002-03 to 2006-07





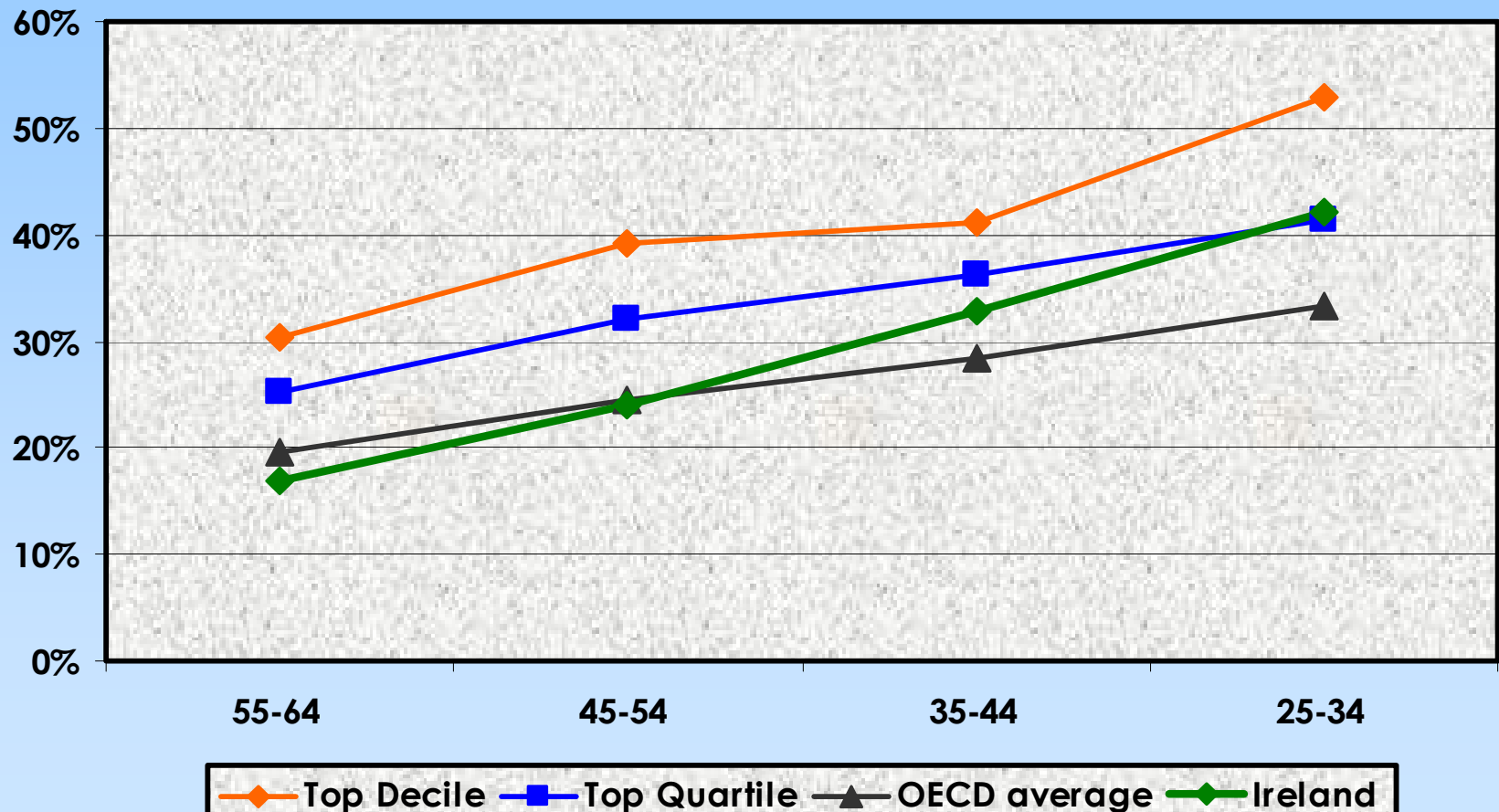
Ireland's HE system

Factors driving recent expansion

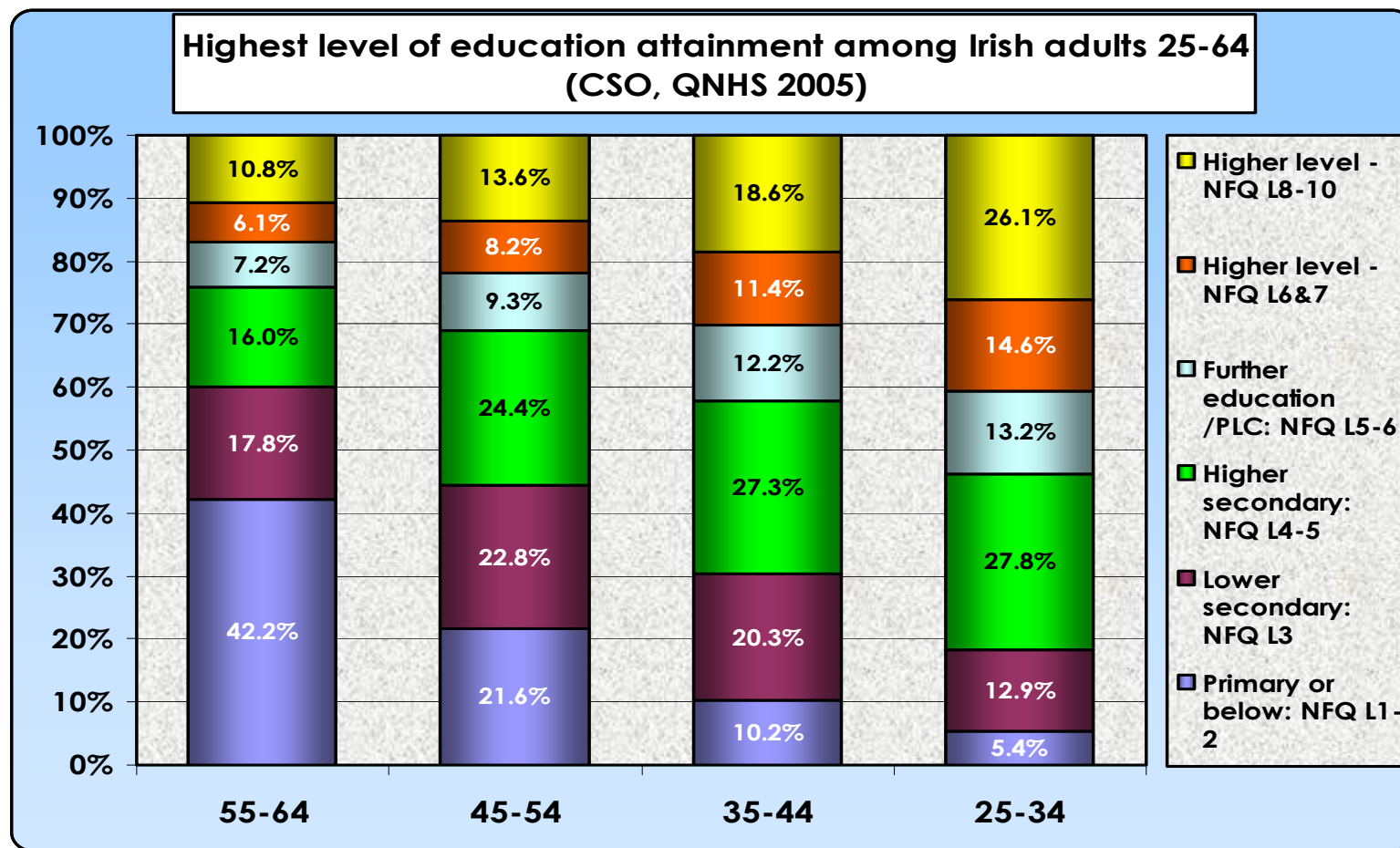
- Introduction of free 2nd level education – 1967
- Introduction of free higher education - 1996
- Industrial and economic growth – demand for graduates
- Higher aspirations – linking HE qualifications with professional advancement and prosperity

Higher-educational attainment

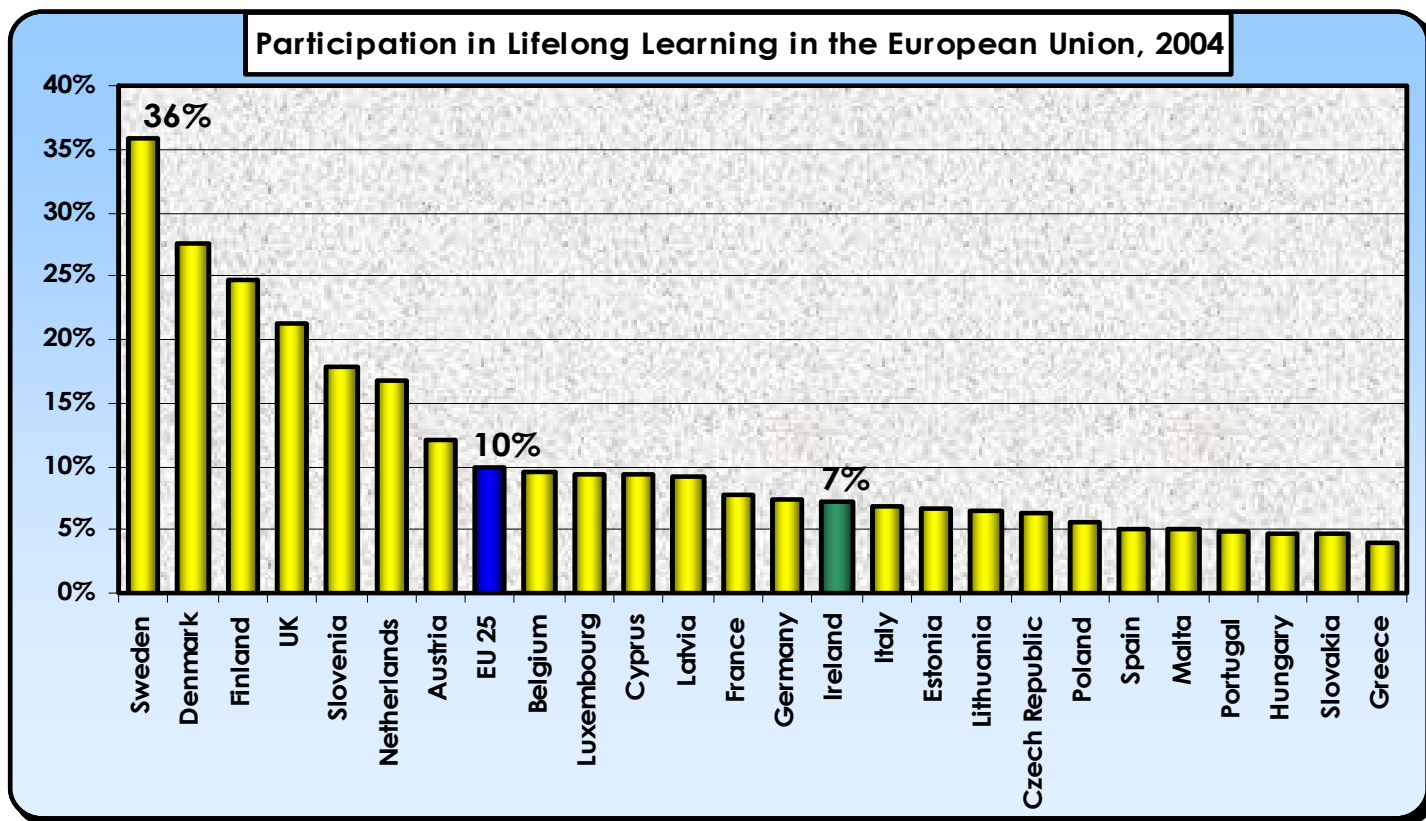
Attainment of higher education by age group, 2006



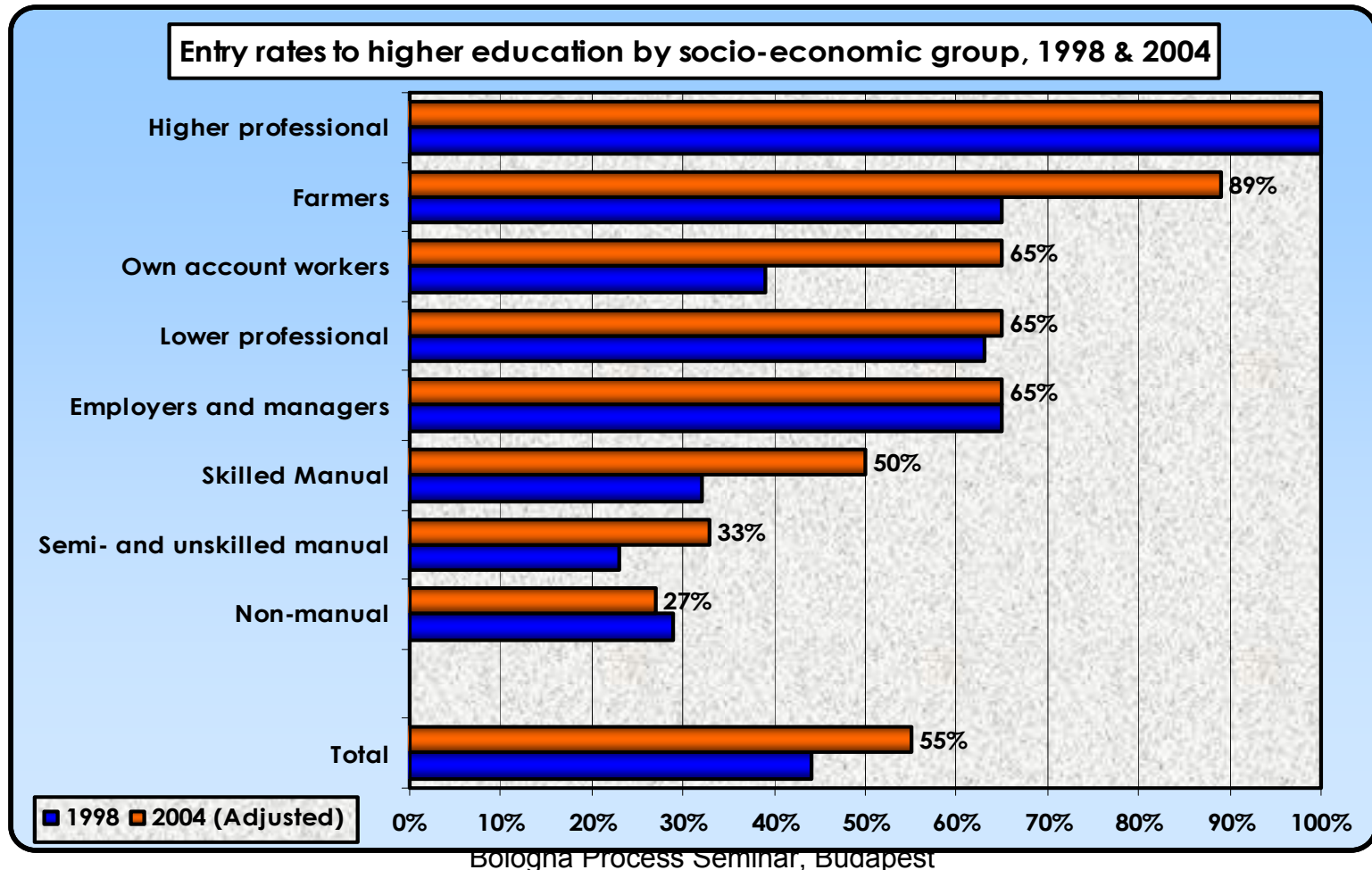
Highest educational attainment



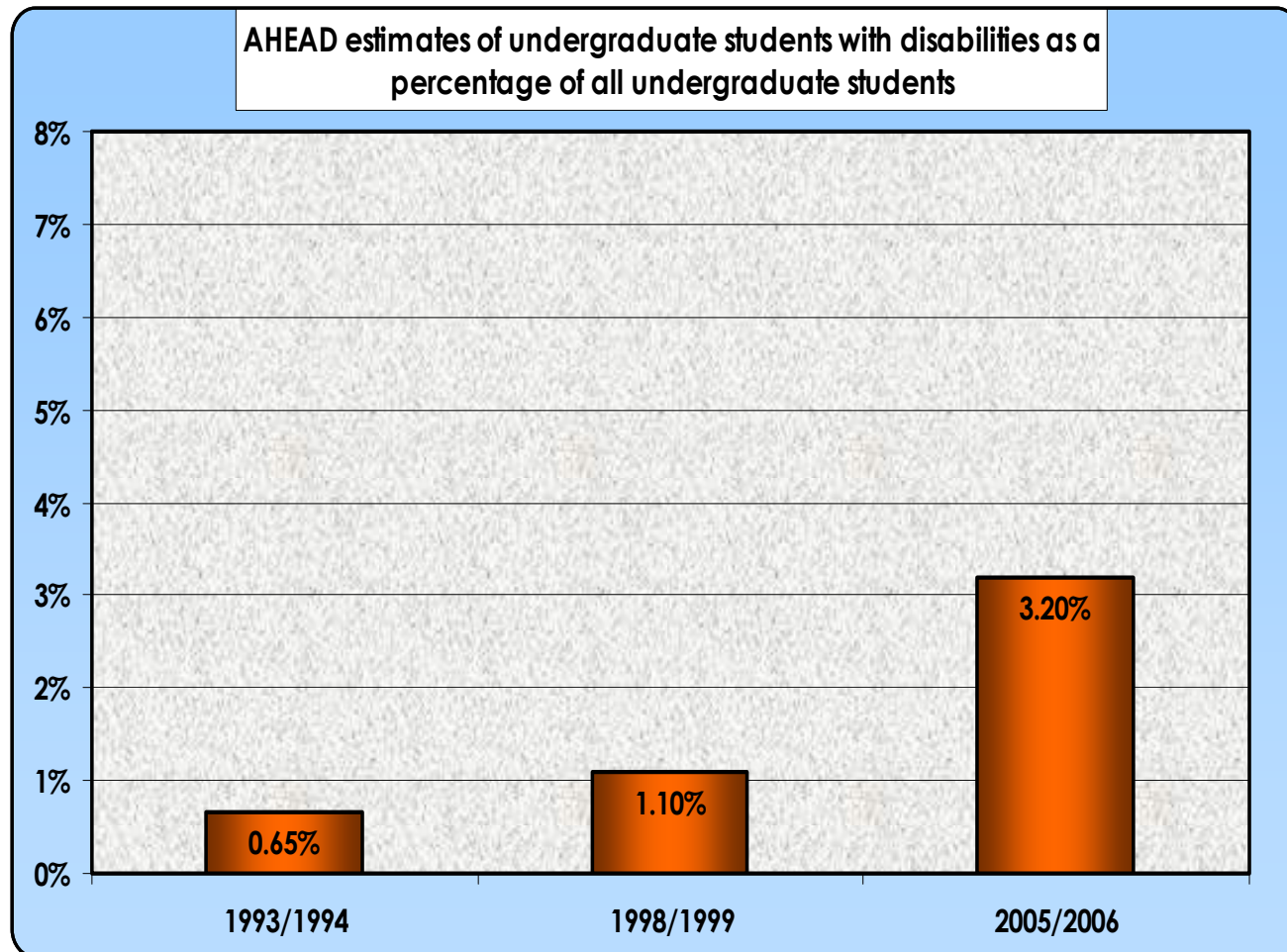
Lifelong Learning



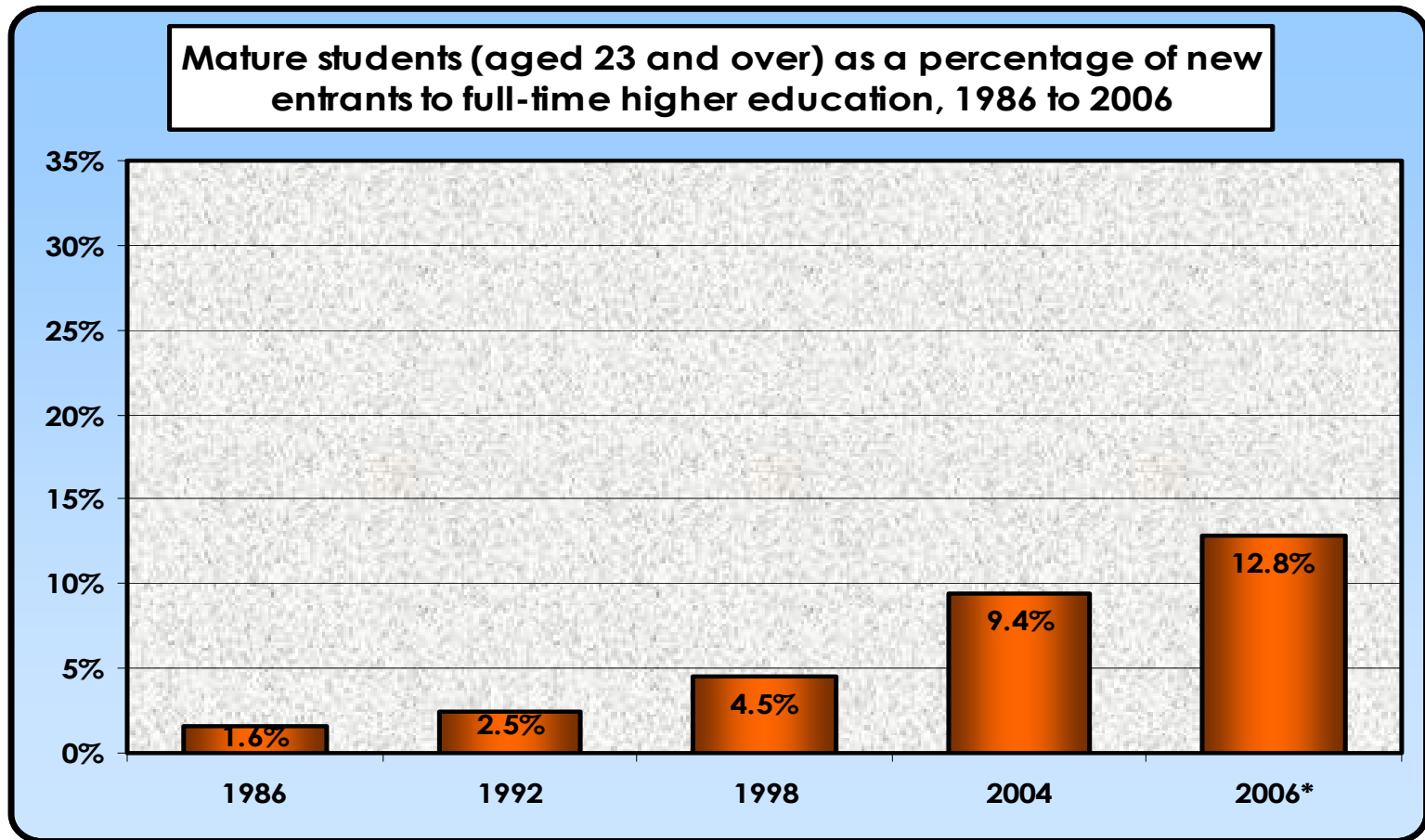
Access and socio-economic background



Students with Disabilities



Mature student participation



Factors supporting national access planning in Ireland

- Central, coordinating agency – National Office for Equity of Access to HE
- Part of statutory agency for funding and development of HE
- Coherent national vision for social and economic development – *Towards 2016*
- National Development Plan
- National Skills strategy: economic rationale supports social dimension



Why a national plan for equity of access ?

- Create a strong and wide understanding of the social and economic rationale for equity of access
- Integrate the access agenda into decision- and policy-making processes
- Bring hitherto uncoordinated, fragmented initiatives within a strategic national framework



Why a national plan for equity of access ?

- Ensure minimum, consistent level of service across HE sector for under-represented groups
- Opportunity to articulate new/emerging challenges - e.g. gender gap in performance
- Opportunity to emphasise key messages e.g.. need for intra-governmental coordination



Why a national plan for equity of access ?

- Opportunity to set targets for participation by under-represented groups



Issues in developing Ireland's plan

- Do we want an action plan for National Access Office or a national access plan?
- What is the timeframe for a national plan?
- Who are we targeting?
- What are the baseline participation rates for target groups?
- What targets should be set to drive progress?
- How will we measure progress ?



Key Challenges facing Ireland

- Access is still somewhat on the margins of HEIs
- We are comparatively poor on Lifelong Learning even though 60% of Irish labour force in 2020 are already in labour force
- Resourcing of undergraduate education
- Co-ordination / integration of agencies
- Data
- Widening gap between boys and girls



Key Challenges facing Ireland

- Traditional route of entry to undergraduate higher education still overly dominant (i.e. terminal examination at end of secondary school)
- Students with certain categories of disabilities still seriously underrepresented in higher education



Objective 1 for National Access Plan

Institution-wide approaches to access

- Institutional access plans
- Build capacity – support CPD
- Promote wider equality training



Objective 2 for National Access Plan

Enhancing access through lifelong learning

- Expand p/t and flexible learning provision
- Introduce financial support for p/t learning
- Enhance progression from FE to HE
- Supplementary Admissions route



Objective 3 for National Access Plan

Investment in widening participation in higher education

- Reward performance on access in recurrent funding allocation
- Strategic Innovation Fund
- Performance funding
- Promote rationale for investment in access and participation

Objective 4 for National Access Plan

Modernisation of student supports

- Promote awareness of financial support schemes, e.g.. www.studentfinance.ie
- Review support needs of low-middle income families
- Target resources to encourage up-skilling

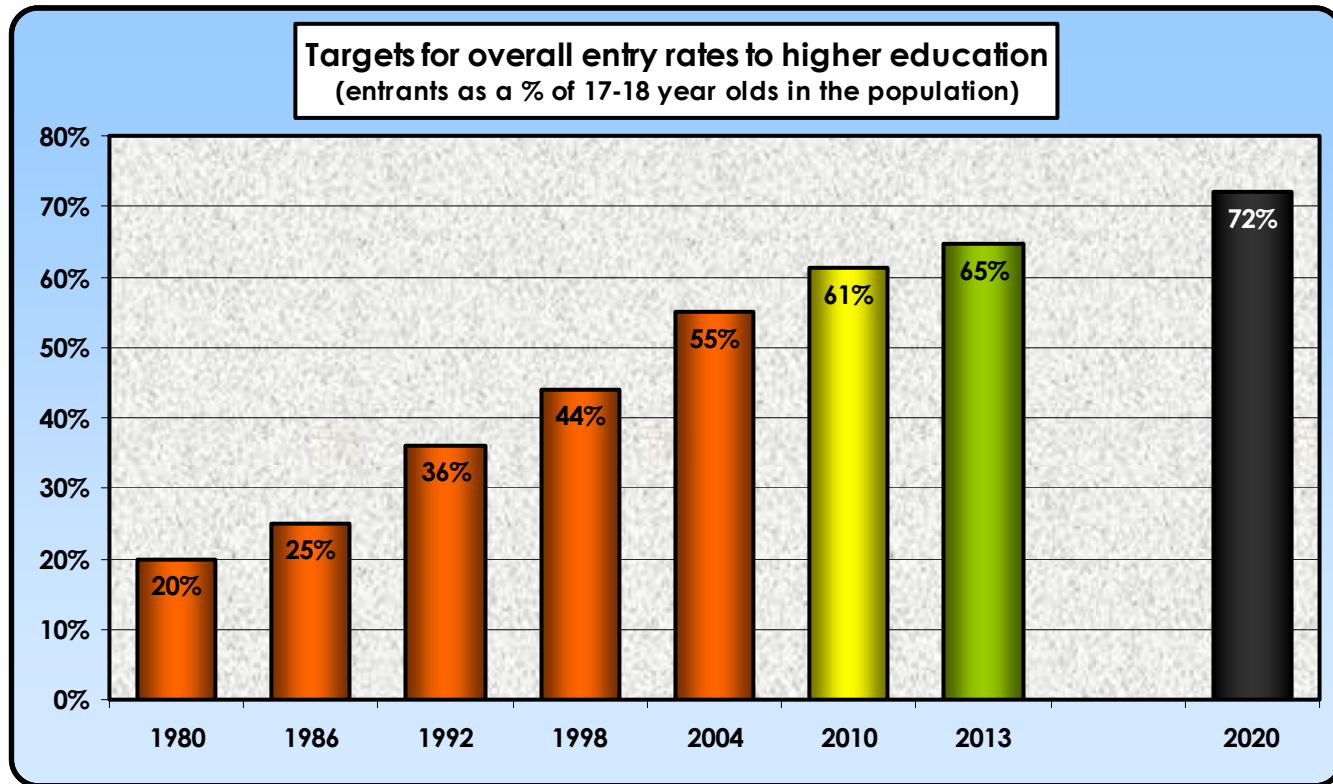


Objective 5 for National Access Plan

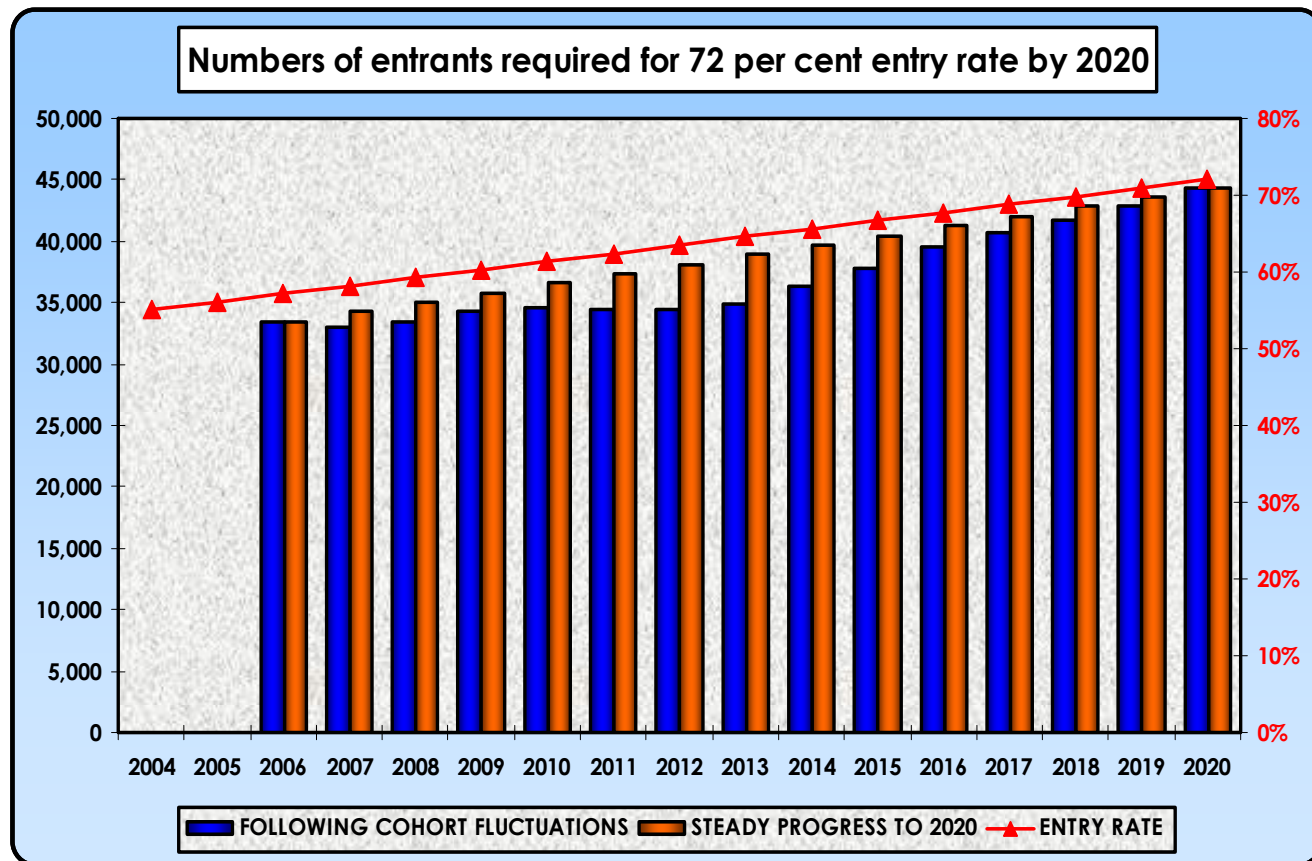
Widening participation in higher education for people with disabilities

- Dedicated disability officer in every HEI
- Develop inclusive practice around course materials, teaching and assessment
- Develop national approach to provision of alternate format for students with print disabilities

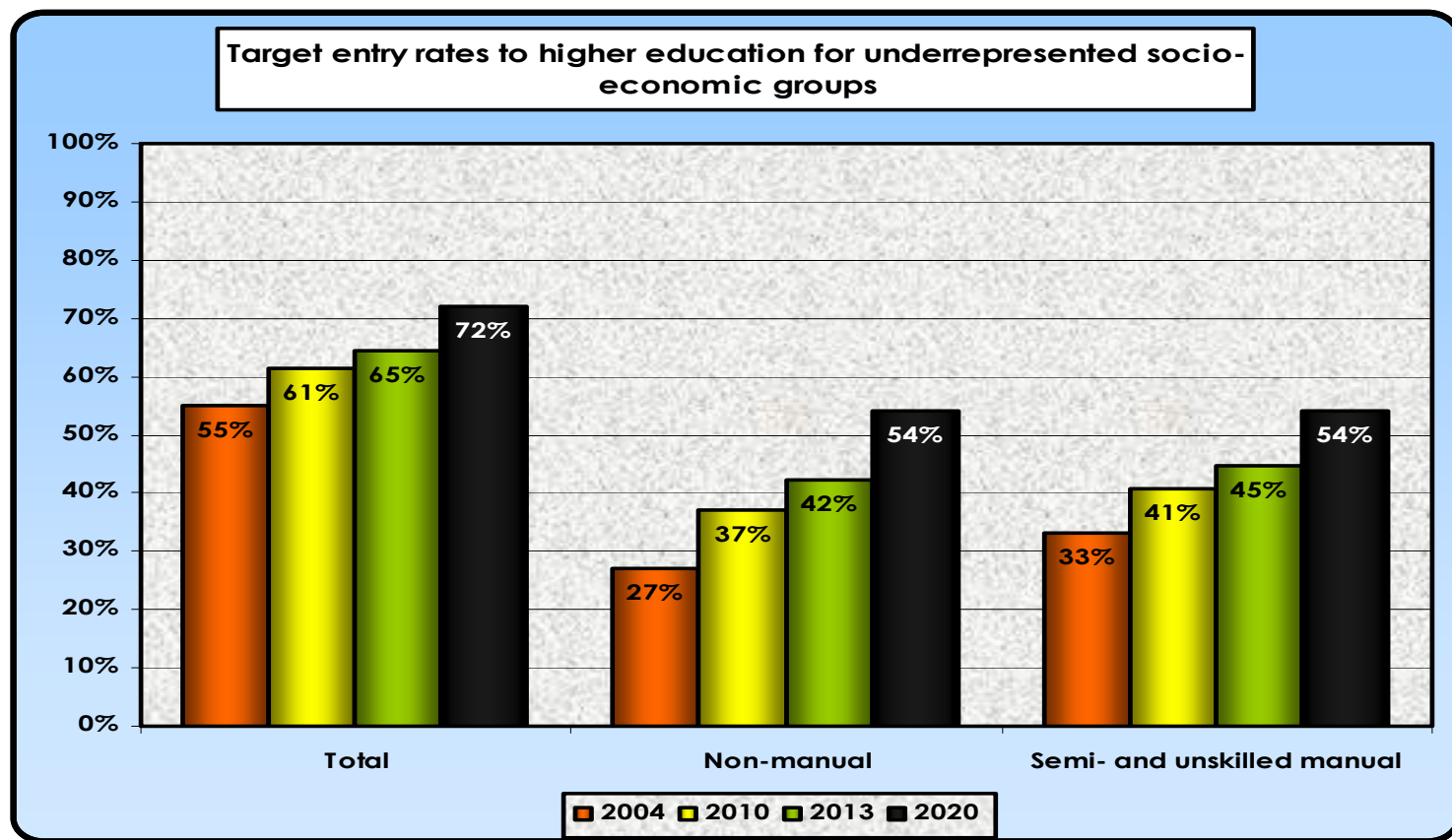
Annual entry rate targets



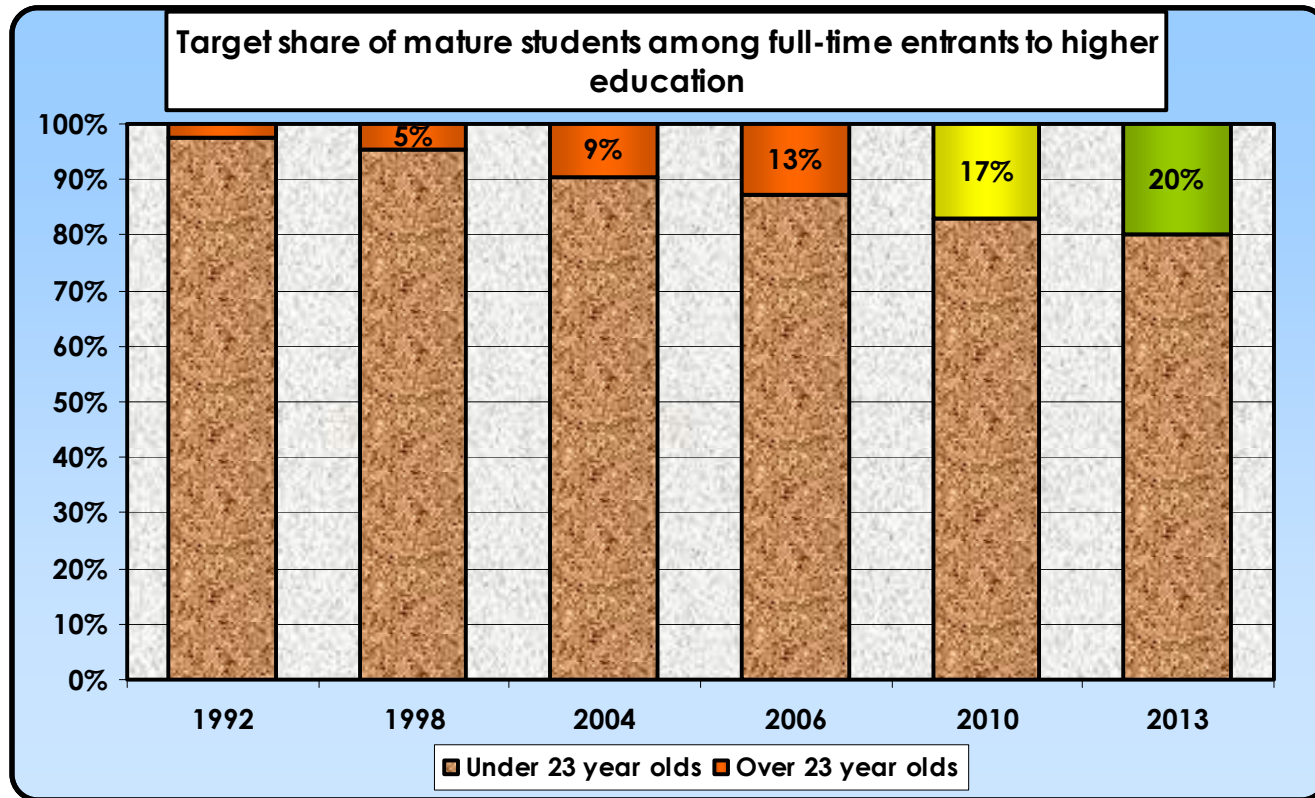
- Achieving the 72 per cent target for entry to higher education will require an intake of 44,400 (full-time) entrants in 2020, up from 34,250 in 2007. Steady progress towards the target will therefore require an annual additional increase of 778 entrants each year for the next twelve years.



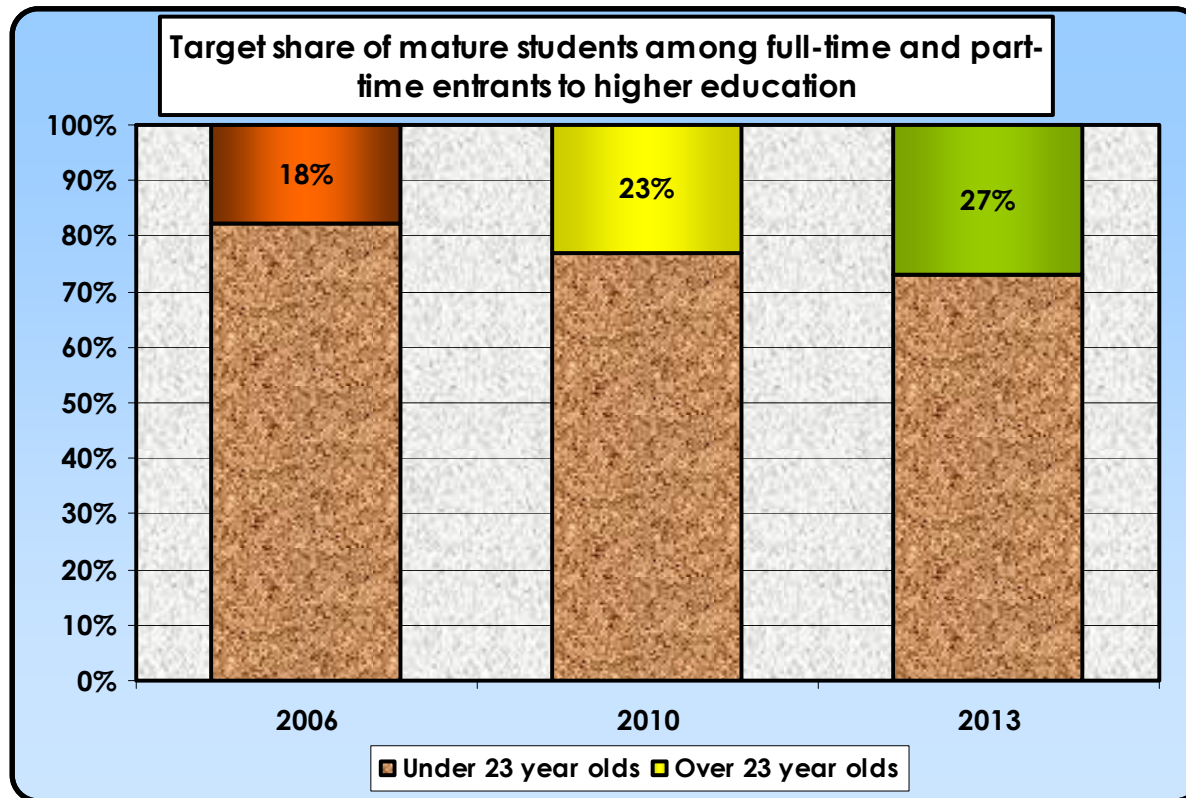
Targets: socio-economic groups



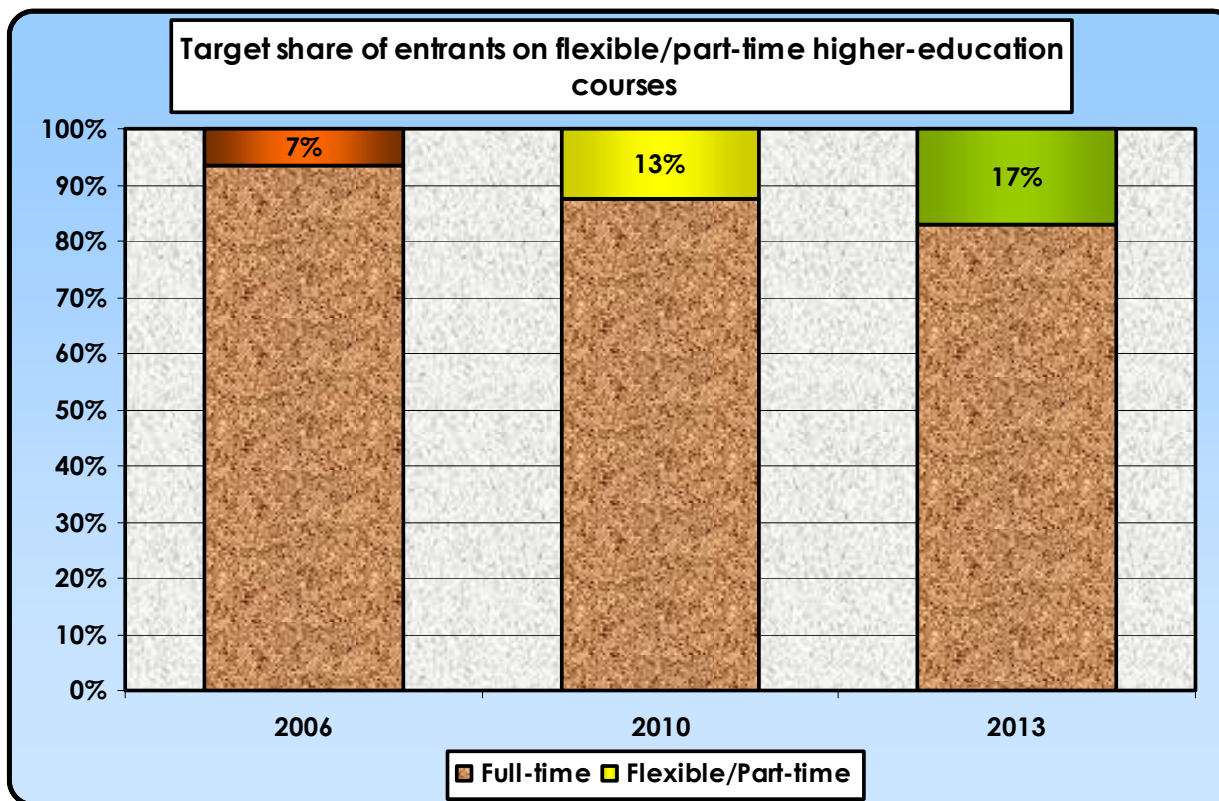
Targets: mature entrants



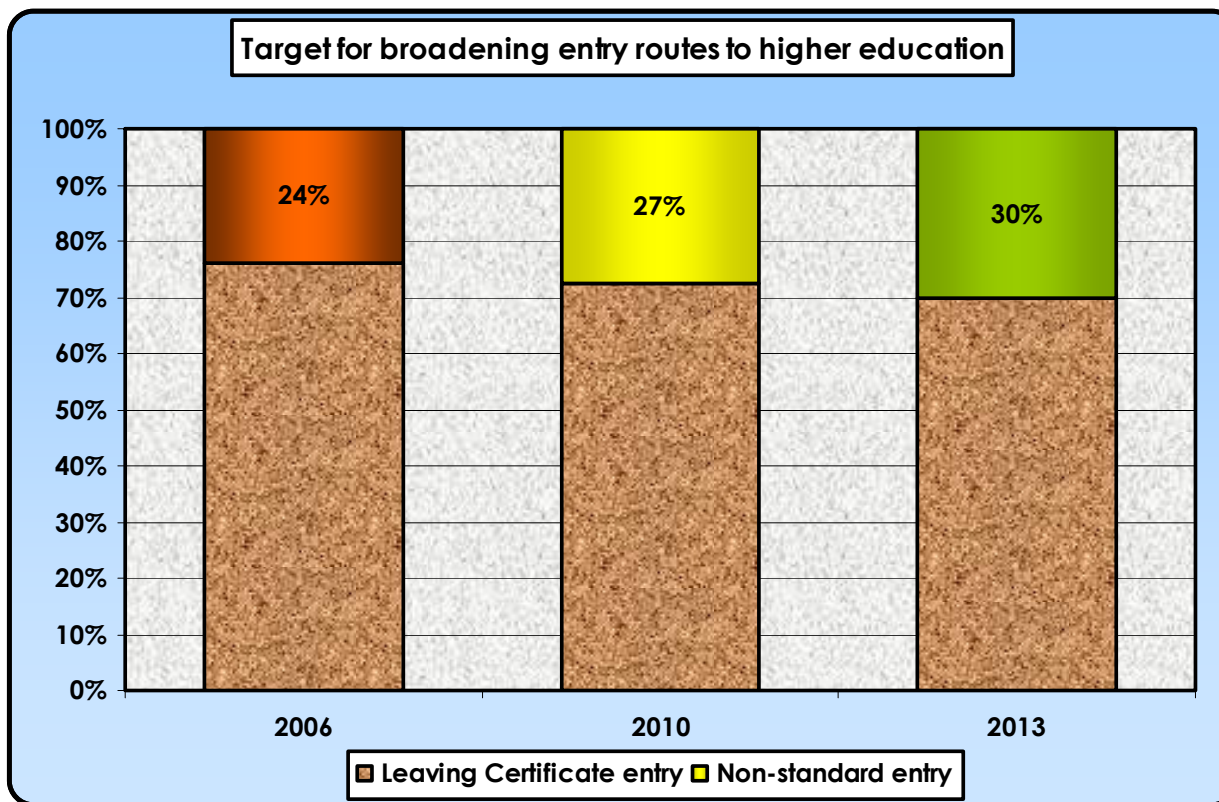
Targets: mature entrants



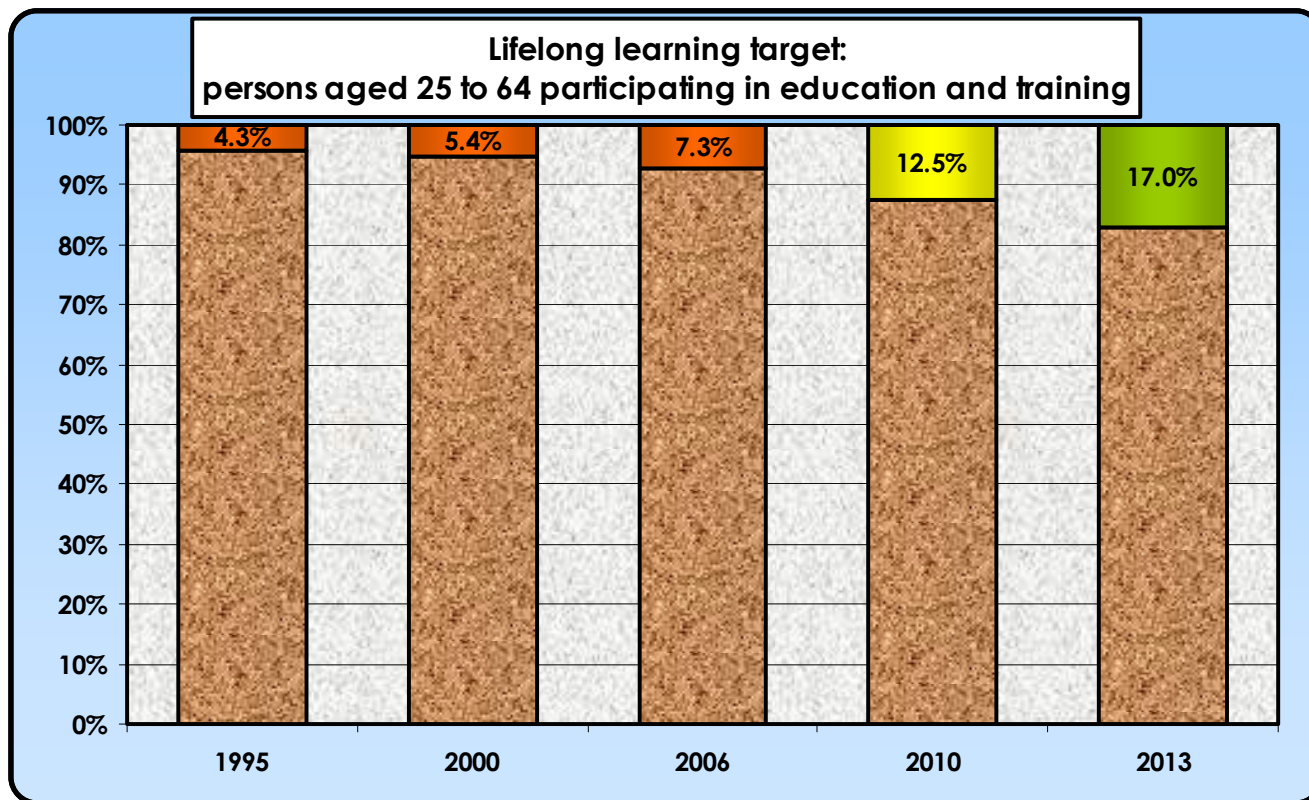
Targets: flexible provision



Targets: Entry routes



Targets: Lifelong Learning



Targets: Students with Disabilities

Disability targets –Number of students enrolled in higher education				
Category of disability	2003/04	2006/07	2010/11	2013/14
Physical disability/Mobility Impairment	175	190	285	380
Deaf/Hard of hearing	94	126	189	252
Blind/Visual Impairment	76	65	98	130
Multiple disabilities	48	85	127	170
Total	393	466	699	932



Monitoring and Implementation

- Equal Access Data collection
- HEA Student Records system
- Central Applications Office data collection
- Implementation of access plans at institutional level
- HEA-DES implementation group
- Major mid-term evaluation
- Continuing drive to enhance inter-agency coordination, sectorally and nationally



Thank you