



# National Skills Council

## NATIONAL SKILLS COUNCIL MINUTES OF MEETING OF 28 September 2021

**Chair:** Mr. Bob Savage, Vice President, Regional CIO for EMEA and Cork Site Leader, Dell Technologies.

**Council Members present:**

Mr. Jim Breslin, DFHERIS; Mr. William Beusang, DFHERIS; Prof. Mark Ferguson, SFI; Dr. Brendan McCormack, THEA; Mr. Paddy Lavelle, ETBI; Prof. David FitzPatrick, IUA; Mr. Padraig Walsh, QQI; Mr. Liam Ryan, SAP Labs Ireland; Mr. Martin McVicar, Combilift; Ms. Patricia Roberts, Hotel Proprietor; Mr. Paul Healy, Skillnet Ireland; Mr. Leo Clancy; Mr. Peter Mulrine, P Mulrine & Sons.

**Apologies:**

Ms. Patricia Coleman, DPER; Mr. Andrew Brownlee, SOLAS; Dr. Orlaigh Quinn, DETE; Mr. Dalton Tattan, DoE; Mr. John McKeon, DSP; Mr. Alan Wall, HEA; Mr. Martin Shanahan, IDA.

**In attendance:**

Ms. Joan Mc Naboe, SLMRU; Ms. Sandra McCullagh, NWCI; Dr. Andrea C Johnson, WITS; Dr. Aideen Hartney, NDA; Ms. Marion Wilkinson, NDA; Mr. Colman O'Flynn, Dell; Dr. Michelle Cullen, Accenture; Ms. Karina Dooley, Accenture; Ms. Nora Condon, SLMRU; Dr. Mary-Liz Trant, SOLAS; Mr. David Hegarty, DETE; Mr. Kevin Daly, DETE; Mr. Alan Power, DETE; Dr. Vivienne Patterson, HEA; Mr. John Howling, DPER; Mr. Tony Donohoe, EGFSN; Mr. Jonathon McMillan EI; Ms. Breda O'Toole, IDA; Dr. Ruth Freeman, SFI; Ms. Natasha Kinsella, RSF manager, Dublin; Mr. Joe Leddin, RSF manager, Mid-West; Mr. Leo Kilroy, DFA; Ms. Evelyn O'Connor, DoE; Mr. Keith Moynes, DFHERIS; Mr. James Maher, DFHERIS; Ms. Therese Callery, DFHERIS; Mr. Enda Hughes, DFHERIS; Mr. Fergus O'Shea, DFHERIS; Ms. Tanya Kenny, DFHERIS; Ms. Fiona O'Byrne, DFHERIS; Ms. Sarah Bardon, DFHERIS; Ms. Eilish Bergin, DFHERIS; Ms. Orla Lynch, DFHERIS.

**Secretariat:**

Ms. Stephanie O'Brien, DFHERIS; Ms. Emma Kinsella, DFHERIS; Ms. Patricia Flannery, DFHERIS; Ms. Eve McKay, DFHERIS; Ms. Karina Mahnoveca, DFHERIS.

## **1. Welcome from the Chairperson (including approval of minutes)**

The Chair welcomed, guest speakers, Joan McNaboe, SLMRU, Sandra McCullagh, National Women's Council of Ireland, Dr. Andrea C Johnson, Chairperson of Women in Technology and Science (WITS), Dr. Aideen Hartney, Director, National Disability Authority, Colman O'Flynn, Vice President, Business Transformation, Dell and Dr. Michelle Cullen, Managing Director and Head of Inclusion and Diversity, Accenture.

He also welcomed new members to the Council:

- Professor David FitzPatrick, President of TU Dublin, who has succeeded Professor Philip Nolan as representative of the IUA on the Council, and
- Leo Clancy, CEO of Enterprise Ireland who has replaced Julie Sinnamon.

Minutes of meeting of 25 May, 2021 were approved.

## **2. Strategic Discussion: Gender and Diversity in the Labour Market: Skills issues, impacts of COVID-19 and challenges around gender and diversity.**

### **Presentations:**

- I. National Skills Bulletin (NSB) Findings. Joan McNaboe, Skills and Labour Market Research Unit.
- II. Unequal division of care as a key barrier to women's participation in the labour market and skills attainment. Sandra McCullagh, Women's Economic Equality Co-ordinator, National Women's Council of Ireland.
- III. How do we attract diverse talent into STEM and more importantly, how do we develop and nurture that talent. Dr Andrea C Johnson, Chairperson of Women in Technology and Science (WITS).
- IV. Barriers that women and persons with disabilities face in accessing and participating fully in the labour market. Dr Aideen Hartney, National Disability Authority
- V. Examples of best practice of inclusion by enterprise; Recognising true ability at Dell Technologies. Colman O'Flynn, Vice President, Business Transformation, DELL and Gender and Diversity in the Labour Market. Dr Michelle D. Cullen, Managing Director and Head of Inclusion & Diversity, Accenture

Following presentations the Chair opened up the floor, the following questions were considered by members:

- In light of changes to the labour market outlined in the National Skills Bulletin, how can we ensure that women, persons with disabilities, and persons with vulnerabilities more generally can be enabled to participate fully in the labour market?
- How can we ensure that employers are engaging with and assisting people to overcome these barriers, and ensuring access to upskilling/reskilling opportunities?
- Given the change in culture around remote and flexible working, are we effectively exploiting the opportunities around inclusivity in and access to the labour market?

The discussion focused on the following points:

- Career guidance in second level schools needs to be improved, in particular for persons with disabilities to support them to transition to employment. Effective career guidance starts at an early age. Showcasing opportunities across a diversity of careers in STEM is key, and this includes educating career guidance counsellors at post primary level as to what STEM actually is.
- Role modelling is hugely important. *If you can see it, you can be it.* It is necessary for employers to be aware of this in the literature they produce to try and attract candidates. Diversity of images can help attract more and better talent. There is a need to attract females into jobs that were traditionally male dominated while at the same time attracting males into female dominated roles.
- A priority area for action must be broadening of paths into the labour market, realising good quality employment and fair compensation for all. The economic recovery is the opportunity to build back better.
- It was noted that, within the hospitality sector the pandemic has placed an increased burden on females to take on the responsibility of caring duties. This has a range of knock on impacts such as enforced part time work, pension entitlements, blockages to promotion and career progression.
- It was noted that in order to attract more women into engineering the narrative must change. Engineering is not all about bricks and mortar it also contributes to mental health and wellbeing. The narrative should commence at preschool age.
- It was noted that the statistic from SOLAS of 60,000 women on home duties and not in the labour market is a significant loss of talent and human development for the economy at a time of such skills shortages and significant digital transformation.
- Inadequate Government support in relation to childcare and caring for vulnerable family members is acting as a barrier to women accessing and remaining in the labour market. The care economy is as important as the green economy and a broader view of the caring economy needs to be taken.
- The work ahead is shared work. The Council has brought Government, enterprise, and education and training providers together, to share insights, learn from each other and seek to drive collective ways forward

### **3. The Council approved publication of the following reports:**

- National Skills Bulletin, SLMRU
- Skills for Zero Carbon: The Demand for Renewable Energy, Residential Retrofit and Electric Vehicle Deployment Skills to 2030, EGFSN
- Labour Demand Estimates for Ireland's National Housing Targets, 2021-2030, EGFSN
- Labour Demand Estimates for Commercial and Public Sector Retrofits, EFGSN.

### **4. AOB and Closing Remarks:**

The Chair thanked speakers and Council members for their attendance and contributions to the lively discussion.