

MINUTES OF MEETING OF NATIONAL SKILLS COUNCIL

14th May 2020



National Skills Council

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

Council members present:

Seán Ó Foghlú, DES; Mr. William Beausang, DES; Prof. Mark Ferguson, SFI; Mr. Liam Ryan, SAP Labs Ireland; Dr. Brendan McCormack, THEA; Mr. Pdraig Walsh, QQI; Mr. Paul Healy, Skillnet Ireland; Dr. Orlaigh Quinn, DBEI; Mr. Andrew Brownlee, SOLAS; Mr. Martin McVicar, Combilift; Mr. Peter Mulrine, P Mulrine & Sons.

Apologies:

Ms. Nessa White, ETBI; Ms. Julie Sinnamon EI; Mr. Martin Shanahan, IDA; Mr. Alan Wall, HEA; Mr John Mc Keon DEASP; Ms. Patricia Coleman, DPER.

Secretariat

Ms. Kathleen Gavin; Mr. Paul Keating; Ms. Emma Kinsella; Ms. Patricia Flannery.

In attendance:

Mr. Phil O'Flaherty, DES; Ms. Orla Lynch, DES; Ms. Joanne Tobin, DES; Mr. John Conlon, DEASP; Dr. Vivienne Patterson, HEA; Mr. Kevin Daly, DBEI; Mr. Tony Donohoe, EGFSN; Ms. Joan McNaboe, SLMRU; Mr. James Eustace; ETBI; Ms. Keelin Fagan, EI; Mr. John Howlin, DPER; Mr. Ray Bowe, IDA.

Agenda item	Key points discussed	Action
1. Welcome and minutes of previous meeting.	<p>The Chairman welcomed all members to the first virtual meeting of the NSC. He noted that Ms. Deirdre McGlone, Hotel & Travel Advisor has resigned from the Council to pursue a new business opportunity and he thanked her for her contribution to the Council.</p> <p>He also referred to the planned strategic discussion on remote working which although highly relevant to today's discussion would have to be deferred to a later date. Today's meeting will deal exclusively with the issues emerging for the Education and Training sector as a result of Covid-19.</p> <p>The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.</p> <p>All papers for the meeting were taken as read by members of the Council.</p>	No action required
2. Information Updates Industry supports, DBEI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Orlaigh Quinn, DBEI gave an overview of business supports that are available or have been adapted as a result of Covid-19. At the outset €1b was made available for working capital, loan schemes, online sales, mentoring and business continuity. • In May a further €6.5b package of supports was introduced to support businesses. In some instances legislation will be required prior to implementation. A national framework on work safety was recently launched. Ongoing investment being made on research. 	No action required

<p>Update from SLMRU</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joan McNaboe, SLMRU gave an update on the job losses as a result of Covid-19 by sector and occupation. In terms of sectors, those employed in the accommodation & food, wholesale & retail and construction sectors have been hardest hit to date. Under 25s, students, and in some sectors female and those without tertiary education, more adversely affected. 	<p>No action required</p>
<p>Update from DEASP</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A written update from DEASP was provided to Council members. 	
<p>3. Approval of SLMRU report on, Future of Jobs in Ireland – Automation Risk</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joan McNaboe, SLMRU gave an outline of the Report. 370k employees are at high risk of automation. Financial administrators, truck drivers, sales assistants, employees in the hospitality sector and routine operatives most at risk. The 25 – 54 cohort and those without tertiary education most at risk. Tipperary, Wexford, Waterford and the border counties will be most affected. It was noted that there is significant overlap between those presently impacted by Covid-19 and those most at risk from automation. 	<p>NSC approved the Report and agreed to its publication</p>
<p>4. Strategic Discussion</p> <p><i>What key principles and priorities should shape the response of the Tertiary Education System</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liam Ryan, SAP and Chair of the National Training Fund Advisory Group (NTFAG) introduced the principles and priorities identified by the NTFAG: In February the Group held a workshop for 2 purposes; to 	

<p><i>to the challenges from Covid 19?</i></p>	<p>facilitate an open dialogue among members on the group's themes and priorities and to agree on the Group's work programme for the next 12/24 months.- Including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The new strategic direction being set for the NTF ○ The responsiveness of training (HE and FET) to emerging skills needs ○ Enterprise engagement. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr John Sweeney attended and has issued a draft paper on the findings from the workshop. 'The NTF as a Strategic Asset in a post-COVID-19 Recovery.' • A further meeting was held in May at which 3 questions were raised for consideration by the NTF Advisory Group: <p><i>In light of the current labour market, which programmes should be expanded or introduced. Where can savings be made?</i></p> <p><i>Re digital skills, skills for the green economy, and the future skills needs of the economy how can the system deliver them in the most accessible and flexible way?</i></p> <p><i>How can the group ensure that supports for business, workers and jobseekers are addressing skill priorities?</i></p>	<p>The Council agreed to adopt the principles and priorities identified by the NTFAG</p>
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	<p>NSC members had a full discussion on the advice provided by the NTF Advisory Group against in the context of earlier updates. Items discussed included the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was noted that the NTF Advisory Group provides enterprise with an opportunity to advise and guide Government on shaping and prioritising the responses to the skills needs of the economy. • NTF income could potentially be reduced by €200m in 2020 as a result of Covid 19. • A joined up tertiary response that is agile and responsive will be critical to meeting the future skills needs of the economy. There will be 3 strands which will be crucial for a clear pathway to sustainable employment; A greater need for transferable and employability skills to compete; Digital Skills and a suite of flexible course provision. • DES is currently working with the tertiary sector with a view to increased online provision. • SOLAS is currently developing a discussion paper with proposals to respond to Covid-19 impacts. Liaison is ongoing with DES, DBEI, DEASP and HEA. • Springboard+ and HCI will be essential for economic recovery. Springboard+ 2020 will commence in September. The expert panel has recommended 9,500 places for funding and are 	
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	<p>awaiting DES approval. 90% of courses will be delivered on a blended learning basis.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pillar 1 of the HCI is also coming on stream. All courses will be level 8 & 9 skills conversion courses. • There is a need to increase the use of remote working, remote learning, remote labs and research. More short courses and the use of digital badges should be introduced. RPL is very important. • Critical to keep the Regional Skills Fora included in discussions around educational responses to ensure recovery is balanced across regions. • In terms of work placements the HE sector needs more support from industry. • The future of apprenticeships as a result of Covid-19 was discussed. • A new Apprenticeship Plan for 2021 onwards is currently being developed. • Brexit remains a challenge for business. • Skillnet Ireland noted that all their courses are now available through eLearning. Their 4 immediate priorities are: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Accelerated digital courses and digital adoption 2. Cost containment so as to not adversely affect growth 3. New ways of working and Business remodelling, 	
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	<p>majority of companies are looking to adopt a lean business model.</p> <p>4. Adapting to a safe return to workplace Post Covid.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is anticipated that with the CAO 'change of mind' option that more students will choose courses closer to their homes. • The Chairman noted that in looking at the short term skills priorities, the NSC must not lose sight of the long term priorities around the future world of work. 	
5. Strategic Discussion for next NSC meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chairman requested that members forward suggestions for the strategic discussion for the next meeting. • Topic for the strategic discussion will be agreed closer to the meeting. 	NSC members to forward to the Secretariat their suggested theme for the strategic discussion at the next NSC meeting.
6. AOB and closing remarks.		<p>The summer statement will be prepared by the Secretariat</p> <p>The next NSC meeting will be held on 10th September at 10am.</p>