



National Skills Council

MINUTES OF MEETING OF NATIONAL SKILLS COUNCIL

15th JANUARY 2018

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Chair:

Mr. Richard Bruton, TD, Minister for Education and Skills.

Council members present:

Dr. Graham Love, HEA, Dr. Pádraig Walsh, Quality and Qualifications Ireland;; Prof. Mark Ferguson, Science Foundation Ireland; Mr. Michael Moriarty, ETBI; Ms. Mary Doyle, Department of Education and Skills; Mr. Paul O'Toole, SOLAS; Mr. Seán Ó Foghlú, Department of Education and Skills; Mr. Martin McVicar, Combilift; Mr. John McKeon, Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, Dr Orlaigh Quinn, Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, Mr Martin Shanhan, IDA, Mr Liam Ryan SAP Labs Ireland, Prof Philip Nolan, Prof Brian Norton, Mr Pat Rigney, CEO.

In attendance:

Mr. Tony O'Donohue, EGFSN and IBEC; Ms. Kathleen Gavin, Department of Education and Skills; Mr Phil O'Flaherty, Department of Education and Skills, Mr Gavan O'Leary, Department of Education and Skills, Mr. Mark Christal, Enterprise Ireland; Mr David Moloney, DPER, Mr John Sweeney, Facilitator, Ms Nora Condon, SLMRU, Ms Selen Guerin, SLMRU, Mr David Hegarty, Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation.

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Apologies:

Ms. Julie Sinnamon, Enterprise Ireland.

Ms Anne O'Leary, Vodafone.

1. Welcome and minutes of previous meeting:

The Minister opened the meeting and minutes of the previous meeting were agreed with one amendment.

The Council were updated on the following:

- Indecon International Consultants have been awarded the contract for the Review of the NTF.
- Following the recent evaluation of the Post Leaving Certificate provision the evaluation report makes a series of recommendations that address:
 - improving the effectiveness and quality of PLCs;
 - identifying the most suitable structure for the delivery of PLC programmes;
 - optimising progression to employment/self-employment/further study/higher education;
 - improving social inclusion;
 - improving cost-effectiveness;
 - ensuring geographical spread and diversity of programmes; and
 - Improving teaching and learning supports.
- Applications for work permits have continued to grow in relation to the ICT Sector, particularly in skills needs that exist for professionals with a number of years' experience in niche areas of ICT.
- The EGFSN have commissioned IDC to produce a "Forecasting the Future Demand for High Level ICT Skills in Ireland, 2017-2022" report that will feed into the ICT Action Plan.

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2. Information item : Skill Shortages: Demand and Supply:

SOLAS SLMRU presented the latest position on Skills Shortages; Demand and Supply.

It was acknowledged that Springboard+, the ICT Action Plan and an increase in work permits have provided an increase in provision for the ICT Sector, however the majority of skills shortages remain in this sector. Demand for skills in this sector are rising, particularly in certain niche areas and the supply is reducing partly due to a decrease in CAO applications. This problem is not only in Ireland but throughout the EU.

3 Decision Item: Finalisation of Work Programme and Agreement of next Strategic Discussion Themes:

Following discussions, the Council agreed the following Strategic Discussion Themes:

April meeting:

- The Review of the National Training Fund.

July meeting:

- The Workplace of the future.

November meeting:

- Work ready graduates.
- Career Pathways Planning and Information.

It was agreed that a 1 page document focusing on future strategic discussion items would be prepared by the relevant Council members in advance of future meetings.

4. Strategic Discussion: Meeting Skills Needs through Lifelong Learning (LLL):

SLMRU presentation

Nora Condon from the SLMRU in SOLAS gave a presentation based on a SLMRU report titled *Lifelong Learning Participation among Adults in Ireland as at end Q4 2016*. The report aims to monitor Ireland's progress toward LLL targets.

The terms lifelong learning, formal learning and non-formal learning are used according to Eurostat (and Labour Force Survey) definitions

- Lifelong learning comprises formal, non-formal and informal education and training; however, statistics presented in the QNHS and Eurostat data do not cover informal learning and the data in the paper refers to the individuals aged 25-64 years who had engaged in formal and/or non-formal learning activities only.
- Formal education corresponds to education and training in the regular system of schools, universities, colleges and other formal educational institutions that normally constitute a continuous 'ladder' of full-time education for children and young people.
- Non-formal education and training is defined as any organised and sustained educational activities that do not correspond to the definition of formal education. It may or may not take place in educational institutions and cater to persons of all ages. It may cover educational programmes to impart adult literacy, basic education for out-of-school children, life skills, work skills and general culture.

The following is a summary of the presentation:

- One of the key targets set out by the Action Plan for Education (September 2016) includes an ambition to increase Ireland's lifelong learning participation rate to 10% by 2020 and to 15% by 2025. The EU has also set a lifelong learning target of 15% by 2020.
- The Quarterly National Household Survey (now known as the Labour Force Survey) measures 25-64 year-olds who engaged in formal and/or non-formal learning in the preceding four weeks.
- At the end of Q4 2016 there were almost 2.5 million adults aged 25-64 years in Ireland of which there were 167,100 lifelong learning participants giving a lifelong learning participation rate of just under 7%.

- Between quarter 4 2012 and quarter 4 2016 Lifelong learning participation declined slightly between quarter 4 2012 and quarter 4 2016, going from 8% to almost 7%.
- With the exception of those aged 55-64 years and the unemployed, the lifelong learning participation rate declined for most cohorts, regardless of learning type (i.e. formal or non-formal), gender, age, and work status or education level.
- At almost 7% in 2016, Ireland's lifelong learning participation rate was below the EU 28 average of nearly 11%.
- Ireland performs comparatively well when participation in formal learning activities is considered, ranking 9th overall; this remains unchanged when compared to 2011.

Priorities in order to increase lifelong learning participation rates

- the employed
- non-formal learning (short interventions)
- low skilled - importance of 2nd chance education
- older workers

A need to

- prioritise target groups
- offer flexible delivery & learning options
- raise awareness of the need to upskill (amongst employers/employees)
- liaise with Regional Skills Fora for work-relevant skills

Facilitated discussion

Following the SLMRU presentation, Dr John Sweeny facilitated discussion amongst the NSC members. Some of the topics covered in the discussion included:

- Ireland's current position and ambition.
- What are the barriers to participation?
- What can industry do?
- What can the Education and Training System do?
- What models of good practice exist?
- What needs to be prioritised?

Some of the feedback from the discussion included the following:

- Lifelong learning should not be focussed solely on numbers it should focus on the quality and delivery of the provision.
- Workforce development may not be on the radar for some employees, particularly those who are over 50 years of age.
- Some employers/employees do not think there is a need for a lifelong learning culture.

- Some employers are asking what is in it for them if employees benefit from lifelong learning opportunities to develop new skills.
- Initiatives such as the Regional Skills Fora and the Skills for Growth initiative will assist employers and employees understand their skills needs.
- SMEs are in a difficult position when it comes to on the job development for employees.
- Employers are providing constructive input into programmes such as Springboard+
- How best to stimulate demand for upskilling and reskilling for employees could include vouchers to source training.
- Upskilling and reskilling of employees has resulted in increased product amongst some IDA clients.
- Employers are not focussed on medium/long terms skills needs for their business.
- Larger employers have resources to upskill/reskill staff using in company training.

Next steps:

Using the discussion amongst the NSC members Dr Sweeney will in advance of the next NSC meeting in April, provide a paper detailing possible principles around lifelong learning that should be prioritised across the education and training system in order to improve Ireland's lifelong learning participation rates.

5. Discussion Item: Consideration of Priorities for 2018 in relation to Lifelong Learning

Some of the priorities identified to increase lifelong learning participation rates include the following:

- Employers and managers need to lead by example and employers need to support and encourage lifelong learning amongst employees.
- An awareness of the importance of lifelong learning needs to be disseminated from employers to employees.
- Flexible, innovative delivery of short interventions is crucial for employees to avail of non-formal lifelong learning.
- The continued partnership approach between education and training providers and employers is important to ensure that relevant and timely interventions are available in a manner that benefits employers and employees.

- The new capital investment fund will enhance flexible learning opportunities both in a formal and a non-formal setting.

6. Update Items:

General Updates were provided on the following:

- The EGFSN 2018 Work Plan.
- Springboard+ 2018.
- CAO Applications.
- Traineeship and Apprenticeship.
- Recurrent Grant Allocation Model (RGAM).
- Systems Performance Framework.
- Work Permits.

7. AOB and Closing remarks.

As Minister Bruton had official business to conduct before the meeting ended, Ms Mary Doyle closed the meeting. The next meeting will be held on April 16th 2018.

ENDS