

MINUTES OF MEETING OF NATIONAL SKILLS COUNCIL

10th SEPTEMBER 2020



National Skills Council

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 Beausang, DFHERIS; Ms. Patricia Coleman, DPER; Dr. Orlaigh Quinn, DBEI; Prof. Mark Ferguson, SFI; Dr. Brendan McCormack, THEA; Dr. Padraig Walsh, QQI; Mr. Paddy Lavelle, ETBI; Mr. Andrew Brownlee, SOLAS; Ms. Julie Sinnamon, EI; Mr. Liam Ryan, SAP Labs Ireland; Mr. Martin McVicar, Combilift; Mr. Peter Mulrine, P Mulrine & Sons; Ms. Patricia Roberts, Hotel Proprietor; Mr. Paul Healy, Skillnet Ireland.

Apologies:

Mr. Martin Shanahan, IDA; Dr. Alan Wall, HEA; Prof. Philip Nolan, Irish Universities Association.

Secretariat

Mr. Paul Keating; Ms. Patricia Flannery, Ms. Therese Callery.

In attendance:

Minister Simon Harris, DFHERIS; Minister Niall Collins, MoS for Skills and Further Education; Ms. Eve McKay, DES; Ms. Karina Mahnoveca, DES; Mr. Phil O'Flaherty, DES; Ms. Joanne Tobin, DES; Ms. Evelyn O'Connor, DES; Mr. John Conlon, DEASP; Ms. Geraldine Hurley, DEASP; Mr. Ruaidhri Neavyn, HEA; Prof. Brian Donnellan, IUA; Mr. Alan Power, DBEI; Mr. Don O'Connor, DBEI; Mr. Tony Donohoe, EGFSN; Ms. Joan Mc Naboe, SLMRU; Mr. James Farrell, IDA; Mr. Brendan McGinty, Skillnet Ireland; Ms. Joanne Lonergan, Advisor to Minister Harris.

Agenda item	Key points discussed	Action
1. Welcome from the Chairman	<p>The Chair welcomed all members to the meeting in particular new members.</p> <p>The Chair thanked and welcomed Minister Harris, and Minister Collins.</p> <p>New members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Jim Breslin, Sec Gen DFHERIS. ➤ Paddy Lavelle, who has replaced Nessa White as Sec Gen ETBI. ➤ Patricia Roberts, Proprietor/Managing Director of the Hotel, No 1 Pery Square, Limerick. Patricia replaces Deirdre McGlone. <p>The Chair thanked members who have left:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Kathleen Gavin - retired. ➤ Seán Ó Foghlú, Sec Gen, DES ➤ Nessa White, Gen Sec, ETBI. 	<p>All papers which were issued in advance of the meeting were taken as read by members of the Council.</p> <p>No action required</p>
2. Minister Harris and Minister Collins Introductory remarks	<p>Minister Collins stated that he is looking forward to working with the Council.</p> <p>Minister Harris - Welcomed Jim Breslin and Patricia Roberts to the Council.</p> <p>Minister Harris thanked Sean Ó Foghlú for his time on the Council and thanked Kathleen Gavin who recently retired.</p> <p>The Minister noted the serious challenges as a result of Covid-19 for the further and higher education sector, the economy and society.</p> <p>Minister Harris acknowledged the work of the Council members and thanked them for ongoing commitment to the Skills Agenda.</p> <p>Minister Harris referenced key roles for DFHERIS:</p>	<p>The Chair welcomed the remarks from both Ministers in supporting the role of the Council and in supporting the strategic discussion.</p> <p>No action required</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drive Economic growth/cohesion • Drive social inclusion • Pathways for progression. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition between FE and HE. • Apprenticeships. • 10-year National Adult literacy Numeracy and Digital Skills Strategy. • The digital divide/ • Upskilling/ reskilling. • Brexit. 	
3. Minutes of previous meeting	The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.	No action required
4. Information Items Latest on the Labour Market Position DEASP and Covid-19 Business Supports, DBEI Updates via Dashboard	<p>Written updates from DEASP and DBEI were provided to Council members in advance of the meeting.</p> <p>Updates via Dashboard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was noted that revised apprenticeship figures have become available. Dashboard to be updated accordingly. 	<p>No action required</p> <p>NSC Secretariat to reissue Dashboard to include revised apprenticeship figures.</p>
5. Council approval of National Skills Bulletin 2020	<p>Presentation by Joan McNaboe, SLMRU on the NSB 2020 (bulletin based on 2019 data).</p> <p>In quarter 4, 2019, the wholesale & retail sector accounted for the highest level of employment. This sector, along with the accommodation & food and construction sectors, has been most impacted by Covid-19. In quarter 4 2019, professionals accounted for the largest number of persons employed.</p>	Approved for publication by Council.

	<p>Occupations impacted by Covid-19</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sales assistants. • Hospitality occupations (e.g. waiters/waitresses, bar staff, kitchen assistants). • Cleaners. • Leisure & travel services (e.g. air travel assistants). • Drivers (e.g. taxi, bus/ coach). • Non-governmental admin roles. • Construction workers (e.g. skilled trades, operatives). • Childcare workers. • Hairdressers/barbers. <p>Future challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upskilling and reskilling needs • Impact of technology/automation • Sourcing skills through immigration • Brexit effects • Demographics • Continued monitoring of employment changes across occupations 	
<p>6. Council approval of EGFSN Reports</p> <p>Building Future Skills The Demand for Skills in Ireland's Built Environment to 2030. Tony Donohoe/Alan Power</p>	<p>Building Future Skills, The Demand for Skills in Ireland's Built Environment to 2030.</p> <p>Objectives of study- to assess and help meet skills demands on sector over coming decade (Housing, Infrastructure, Climate Change mitigation). To identify the nature and quantity of the scale of the skills needs of the Built Environment Sector to 2030.</p> <p>Development of a suite of recommendations that can be drawn upon to ensure that the future skills needs of the Built Environment sector are fully addressed by stakeholders through the education and training system and any other relevant sources of skills supply. Ten year timeframe of study- but advised recommendations be treated as short to medium term priorities by stakeholders, for substantial delivery within a two year timeframe.</p>	<p>Approved for publication by the Council.</p>
<p>Leading the Way Investing in Management Development for SME Productivity & Growth</p>	<p>SMEs account for over 1 million employees or almost 70% of employment in the Irish business economy. Crucial that investment is directed at SMEs to ensure future</p>	<p>Approved for publication by the Council.</p>

<p>Tony Donohoe/Don O'Connor</p>	<p>productivity and growth. Productivity of Irish SMEs is low by international standards.</p> <p>The Project Implementation Group will include all relevant stakeholders. The Chair of the Implementation Group will revolve each year. ISME and the SFA have agreed to take the Chair in the first two years.</p> <p>Issues discussed by the Council include:</p> <p>Andrew Brownlee, SOLAS: Must not underestimate the FET and Skillnet Ireland provision in this space. Ensure FET are part of the conversation. Many SMEs are hard to reach. ETBs currently running a national campaign - Leading Through Change from 14th September to 8th October to promote their remote working management and leadership. This is a pilot programme in collaboration with IDA, RSF and EI.</p> <p>Julie Sinnamon, EI: Welcomed the report and the high level of engagement in its preparation and asked for clarity on delivery of recommendations.</p> <p>Orlaigh Quinn, DBEI: Confirmed that a strong delivery mechanism would be put in place. The Cabinet Committee on Economic Recovery & Investment are working on the SME strategy and will bring in the work of the NSC Council.</p> <p>William Beausang, DFHERIS: Confirmed DFHERIS will support the work of the implementation group.</p>	
<p>7. Strategic Discussion Item: Building on the recommendations arising out of the NSC Summer Statement 2020 which have been reflected in the July Stimulus Package, <i>What further actions are necessary within the Further and Higher Education sector to respond</i></p>	<p>Oral updates from <i>DEASP, DEBI, DFHERIS, SOLAS, Skillnet Ireland and the HEA</i> on progress since the May NSC meeting and the July stimulus package.</p> <p>John Conlon, DEASP: July stimulus package has supported enhanced capacity across public services. Intreo case officers will be extended for a further year.</p> <p>Orlaigh Quinn, DBEI:</p>	<p>The Chair and the Secretariat will identify priorities for inclusion on the NSC Autumn 2020 Statement of priorities.</p>

<p><i>to the challenges emerging post Covid-19?</i></p>	<p>€2 billion Covid-19 Credit Guarantee Scheme will provide low cost loans to businesses including SMEs.</p> <p>Mark Ferguson, SFI: Covid-19 has accelerated the need for Digital, AI, and robotics. Israel is an example of grasping a major opportunity to move to higher level jobs. Reference to the Founder Forum where relevant stakeholders come together with investors, corporate and government leaders, to discuss the future of industries, new technologies and business models.</p> <p>Phil O’Flaherty, DFHERIS: Consultation on new Apprenticeship Plan underway. Deadline for submissions 18th September. Important in addressing key element of the programme for Government.</p> <p>Andrew Brownlee, SOLAS: All colleges will be open for business on a face to face basis by 29th September. General principal is to maximise onsite learning. €37m in funding will be used for people who have lost their jobs as a result of Covid. 14,000 places in 2020 and an additional 4,000 in 2021. Covid-19 is hitting apprenticeship programmes. Craft registrations are down 37% while registrations on new programmes are stable. Welcomed the new Apprenticeship Incentivisation Scheme where employers will receive a €2k up-front per apprentice and a further €1k after 12 months if apprentice is still on their books. There is a good response to the scheme -234 employers 286 apprenticeships. Constraints within IoTs could hinder the apprenticeship programmes. Addition funding has been allocated to further roll out the NZEB pilot project.</p> <p>Paul Healy, Skillnet Ireland: From 1st January 2021 custom declarations will be required. SI running a virtual course to complete customs forms. 3,000 business to avail of scheme. Since May the ReBounce initiative has been very successful. 18 trade associations have come together. 3,200</p>	
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	<p>businesses and 6.000 trainees have participated. Welcomed the July stimulus package which has allowed businesses to reopen in a safe way.</p> <p>William Beausang, DFHERIS: The HEA has written to providers re targeted provision of key places included in the July stimulus package.</p> <p>Martin Mc Vicar, Combilift: Welcomed the July stimulus package however more investment is needed to help SMEs recruit apprenticeships. Would advocate for funding for off the job apprentices to incentivise SMEs.</p> <p>Phil O’Flaherty DFHERIS: Acknowledged that apprenticeship costs are a complex issue and that it is a strong theme in the submissions received as part of the consultation process. He gave reassurance that it is very much on the radar in the context of framing the new apprenticeship plan.</p>	
8. AOB / Closing Remarks	<p>Brendan McGinty, Skillnet Ireland: Skillnet Ireland can add value to the skills agenda through collaboration with industry. NSC needs to think strategically of life after Covid as there will be an issue around remote working which will pose a real danger for FDI. There needs to be greater investment in digitalisation and broadband. Ireland Inc has a huge challenge to get to grips with situation.</p> <p>Orlaigh Quinn, DBEI: Collapse in job opportunities for low skilled workers is a challenge. National Economic Plan and AI Strategy is an opportunity to support the regional focus. Need to provide opportunities for upskilling and reskilling through public employment services.</p> <p>The Chairman thanked the group for their contributions.</p> <p>Topic for the strategic discussion will be agreed closer to the date of the next meeting.</p>	<p>The Autumn statement will be prepared by the Secretariat</p> <p>The next NSC meeting will be held on Tuesday 24th November at 2pm</p>

