

**Minutes of Meeting No. 70
of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs
Alexander Hotel, Dublin 2**

Present:	Una Halligan	Chair
	John Burke	Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
	Ned Costello	Irish Universities Association
	Bryan Fields	SOLAS
	Paul Healy	Skillnets
	Declan Hughes	Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation
	Vivienne Patterson	HEA
	Peter Rigney	ICTU
	Margaret Cox	I.C.E. Group
	Ray Bowe	IDA Ireland
	Siobhan Dowling	DAFM

Apologies:	Inez Bailey	NALA
	Liz Carroll	ISME
	Mark Christal	Enterprise Ireland
	Bill Doherty	Cook Medical
	Tony Donohoe	IBEC
	Kathleen Gavin	Department of Education & Skills

In Attendance from Secretariat:	Niamh Martin	Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation
	Catherine MacEnri	Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation
	Don O'Connor	Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation
	Gerard Walker	Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation
	John McGrath	SLMRU, SOLAS
	Jasmina Behan	SLMRU, SOLAS

1. Minutes of EGFSN Meeting Number 69

The minutes of the previous meeting, held on 21st September 2016, were approved.

2. Updates since the last meeting

a) Secretariat and Membership Changes

The Chair informed the Members that Aisling Penrose, Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation has departed the EGFSN Secretariat on promotion to the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. The Chair, on behalf of all the Members, wanted to note for the record, Aisling's contribution over the years to the work of the Group and welcomed her replacement Niamh Martin.

Jasmina Behan informed the Chair that she too will be stepping down from the Secretariat of the Group as she is leaving the Skills and Labour Market Research Unit in SOLAS. The Chair thanked Jasmina and wished to note

for the record Jasmina's outstanding contributions to the Group over the years and wished her continued success in her new role.

b) Meeting with Director General Viola, DG Connect, European Commission

The Chair Una Halligan, along with the Secretary General of DJEI (Ms Orlaigh Quinn) and Mr Gerard Walker, (DJEI) met with Mr Roberto Viola, Director General of DG Connect on 30th November to discuss digital skills.

c) Regional Labour Markets Bulletin published on the 13th October & Monitoring Ireland Skills Supply 2016 published on 18th November

The acting Secretary of the EGFSN, Declan Hughes updated the Group on the recent reports published by the Group.

The **National Skills Bulletin** was published on the **30th September 2016**. It highlights the labour market from an occupational level and outlines where the areas of shortages are appearing. A new traffic light system has been incorporated into this year's report to assist in identifying areas of skills shortages within the 135 occupations covered by the analysis.

The **Regional Labour Markets Bulletin** was published on the **13th October**. The Regional Labour Markets Bulletin 2016 provides an overview of the Irish labour market for each of Ireland's eight administrative regions: Border, Dublin, Mid-East, Midland, Mid-West, South-East, South-West, and West. The Report presents a comprehensive profile of Ireland's regions and provides information of relevance for evidence based policy making in the areas of education and training provision, career guidance, as well as relevant labour market activation initiatives and associated services for job seekers at regional level.

Monitoring Ireland's Skills Supply 2016 was published on the **18th November** and is the eleventh in a series of annual publications produced by the Skills and Labour Market Research Unit in SOLAS on behalf of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs. Such a **skills profile** shows the existing and potential pool of skills available to work in different sectors of the economy. The report highlighted that there were increases in the number of awards made in the further education and training (FET) and higher education sectors. While almost half of awards tend to be in social science, business and law (SSBL) or health and welfare, a growing number are now being made in the more technical areas of science, computing and engineering.

d) New Skills Architecture

DJEI and DES were engaged in discussions on the new Skills Architecture including the roles and mandates for the National Skills Council and the EGFSN and that it was expected that this would be agreed over the coming few weeks at Ministerial level. Acting Secretary, Mr Declan Hughes confirmed that the work of the EGFSN continues. The discussion on the work programme would be held over until there was clarity on the revised mandate.

3. Skills for Design

- Catherine McEnri, DJEI gave an update and outline of the final report.
- The secretariat also provided an overview of the outcome of the discussions from the Design Skills for Enterprise Stakeholder Validation Workshop that took place on the 29th November. It was confirmed that there was a large attendance at the workshop (approximately 40) where there was great enthusiasm in the discussions. Among the questions for attendees addressed on the day were: (1) What is design; (2) what are the design skills needs for an enterprise base?; and (3) whether there was a need for the realignment of the education system to meet design needs in enterprise?.

- The draft recommendations arising from the workshop were presented to the Members and came under the following broad headings: 1) Design Education Provision, 2) Company Training, Designer Upskilling and CPD, 3) Funding for Design, 4) Implementation and 5) Promotion of Design-driven Innovation.
- The Chair invited input from Members on the draft recommendations and there was some discussion on the matter.
- It was commented that the draft report covers a very interesting area, the importance of arts and STEM interface was critical.
- It was suggested that the practical learning for companies could be carried out through the Skillnets.
- SLMRU SOLAS emphasised the importance of including FET sector output in the analysis. It was commented that it could be more economic for the State to fund design skills through FET. SLMRU also commented that in manufacturing industries, design has become integral to their business. For example, the 'tool-making' business has become 'tool design' and Medical Device manufacturers are now using CAD (Computer-aided Design).
- It was added that 'design' is a transversal skill. Employees need to be 'digital, mobile and versatile'. Look at the car industry – they have gone from a traditional design area to an industry that embraces the newer ICT.
- IUA would support the establishment of an implementation Group. It is difficult to quantify the amount of funding HEA spends on 'design'; similarly it is difficult to quantify the amount of funding being spent on 'critical thinking'. The IUA added that there is a huge role for industry to play in skills development.

Action: It was confirmed that the final write up of the report would be complete over the coming weeks and that the findings would be an important input to the development of a national Design policy statement.

4. Review of EGFSN Recommendations, 2008 – 2015

- Catherine McEnri, DJEI presented a review of EGFSN recommendations 2008- 2015. The focus of the study was on what needs to be progressed and not what has been done. DJEI commented that stakeholder/industry engagement has improved since the first reviews. There are more internships and there are more work placements. It was observed that the traffic light system highlighted that the areas that had been neglected have now progressed; e.g. 'marine skills' and 'creativity and design' skills.
- A number of common skills emerged across the different sectoral reports including the importance of the soft skills, foreign language skills, entrepreneurship skills. The recommendations for consideration by the EGFSN are 1) the establishment of implementation groups for coordinating the delivery of all the recommendations in the report, 2) Progress Reports made available to the Expert Group at 3/6 months, 1 year and 2 year, 3) EGFSN reports recommendations should have an owner or a leader to take forward the action.
- Following the presentation, Members provided some feedback. The Chair observed that from the beginning of the period to the end, there was a dramatic improvement in industry's involvement in a

range of programmes, such as Springboard for example. The HEA noted that there has been a huge amount of engagement between industry and the educational providers behind the scenes. SLMRU of SOLAS noted that any engagement with the Regional Fora should use these findings as the first step. . Both the HEA and the IAU had a concern about the establishment of an implementation group for each report recommendations. The author stated that the body requesting the report would need to see it through so an implementation body would be required.

Action: Members to input any further updates they may have on the progress of the recommendations.

5. Review of Food & Drink Sector

- Don O'Connor, DJEI, presented findings on a study undertaken by the EGFSN in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture and Food on an update of the progress of recommendations made in the 2009 EGFSN Report on Skills Needs in the Food and Drink Skills sector. A short draft report was also circulated.
- Action 87 in the Dept. of Agriculture's Foodwise 2025 report, published in July 2015, requested that EGFSN produce an update on the Foods and Drinks sector (following on from the 2009 report). In 2009 there were 7 skills gaps with 9 recommendations.
- To inform the work of the EGFSN, over 40 people in the industry were interviewed. In addition, a stakeholder conference took place on the 18th November 2016. A presentation was made on the findings of the review and the outcomes from the stakeholder conference.
- It was stated that employment is nearly back to the figures of 2006 and, in 2015 exports in this area exceeded €10 billion. The current draft report highlights some general issues that require consideration— Brexit, in particular, sterling depreciation, and sustainability, epitomised by the 'origin green' campaign. Discussions at the workshop focused on the issues facing the sector including literacy and numeracy; engagement of employers in training staff etc.
- It was observed that communication between public bodies involved in supporting the sector is an important issue, given that currently there are more than a dozen bodies under 4 Government departments providing training and support. There is also a need to improve the coordination between business and education training providers.
- The Regional Skills Fora have a role to play and DJEI commended them for the positive energy they displayed by making connections and solving problems at a regional level. Twelve recommendations have arisen from the project, to date, under four headings: 1) Coordination; 2) Internships & Apprenticeships; 3) On-the-job Training; and 4) Foreign languages and cultural awareness capability.
- It was noted by Skillnets that provision by the State for the sector is very substantial.
- Additional work is required to gain agreement and to allocate leads for the recommendations.
- HEA confirmed that an Action Plan for Apprenticeships will be published in the New Year. HEA also confirmed that of the 25 new apprenticeships in development, 2 have commenced. A language strategy is close to publication by DES.
- Siobhan Dowling, DAFM responded by welcoming the work and providing some comments on the project and emphasising the Department's priorities. In Foodwise, there are 51 actions on Human

Capital and 16 of those actions are in the Food and Drink sector. One of the recommendations arising at the workshop was for a one-stop-shop 'portal' which will, among other things, provide information to secondary school students, including case studies/ testimonies from a cross section of those working in the sector on what their job entails. DAFM will work out the initial stages of the project, but it will then be allocated a permanent home. A meeting will be organised in February 2017 of private and public sector representatives who will act as a sub-group to steer this project. DAFM has also committed to hosting an annual stakeholder workshop/conference, bringing together many of the organisations represented at the recent workshop; this group will focus on national coordination of skills and human capital issues in the sector. It was noted that 'talent' is what every employer is looking for. In that respect, it is important that the widest base of available employees is aware of the opportunities in the food and drink sector. The attraction and retention of talent were mentioned as big problems.

- The Chair commented on the importance of Skillnets and EI working together. Smaller companies could share trainers. Regional Skills Fora are a new mechanism for bringing employers and education/training together and are seen as integral to the process of communication at a regional level.
- Following the presentation, there was much discussion by Members. It was noted that Skillnets and the Restaurants Association of Ireland (RAI) have just launched a scheme. It was agreed that there must be a commitment from industry to release employees for training. There was much comment that the food and drink sector is a low margin area and that the problem is sometimes not a skills shortage, but a matter of terms and conditions of employment. On the other hand, there are functions in the food and drink sector that are not low margin.
- SLMRU commented that SOLAS has been highlighting skills shortages; significant state-funding for training has been provided, and yet the same skill gaps persist. It would also be useful to assess the numbers taking up training in the area, but who return to the live register within a short period of time. SLMRU suggested that the Regional Skills Fora should be the first port of call for industry.
- It was commented that there is a need to carry out an evaluation on the numbers taking up training in the area who end up back on the live register.
- The acting Secretary concluded that there were areas that needed to be looked at further to address the gaps including the role of the regional skills fora, future collaboration between the providers and the demand-side and the need to evaluate why there is a discrepancy between the numbers who have been provided training and the numbers who take up jobs/leave jobs shortly. He also added that DAFM should be mindful of the existence of the careerportal.ie website.

Action: In 2017, there will be a further strategic review of the sector taking into account among other things the impact of Brexit. Gain agreement for allocation of leads to implement recommendations.

6. Any Other Business

SOLAS raised an issue concerning the methodology used in various 'scorecards'/'reports' emanating from various bodies/organisations. These scorecards give Ireland a ranking and these can vary enormously. There was consensus that as many of these reports (such as PISA) are a 'shop window' for FDI etc there should be consistency and there would be a benefit in trying to establish which reports are relevant, what they mean and which matter?

Gerard Walker of DJEI reported that the BioPharmaChem Ireland Strategy Group met in October to agree an action plan for the implementation recommendations in the EGFSN Biopharma Skills report. A listing of Biopharma science higher and further education programmes has been made available on the EGFSN website. He also attended the launch of the EU Digital Skills Coalition in Brussels on 1st December. A National Coalition for Ireland is being formed as part of this initiative led by the Irish Computer Society. The Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation has endorsed the formation of a National Coalition for Ireland. Gerard Walker is the Department representative on a Steering Group for Health Workforce Planning under the Department of Health. A final consultation document is to be made available on a dedicated portal for interested stakeholders to input their views.

Action: Members who may wish to input into this consultation should advise the Secretariat.

Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place in February PENDING a decision of the two Ministers in relation to the future role of the EGFSN.