

Mandate of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs for the period 2007 to 2009 as agreed by the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment and the Minister for Education and Science

Introduction

The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) has the task of advising Government on future skills requirements and associated labour market issues that impact on national potential for enterprise and employment growth. In addition to identification of any need for policy or structural changes over time, and being aware of associated operational programmes to meet national skills needs, of the commitment to progressively promote greater recourse to learning throughout life and capitalizing on instructive developments internationally, the EGFSN will discharge a central role in ensuring that labour market needs for skilled workers are anticipated and provided for.

In this context account will also be taken of relevant provisions of Towards 2016 - the Ten-Year Framework Social Partnership Agreement 2006-2015 - and of the National Development Plan 2007 to 2013.

Mandate

The EGFSN will operate under the aegis of Forfás as the central national authority on skills and labour supply issues for the enterprise sector, and on overall strategy for enterprise training in Ireland. The EGFSN will propose a comprehensive strategy for training individuals in the current skills required and those likely to be required by enterprises in the future. It will use its influence and authority to ensure that the strategic direction that has been mapped out over the period to 2020 is known to, and supported by, all interests with a role to play in its implementation. The EGFSN will, as necessary, update this strategy to reflect future developments that will impact on labour supply and demand.

In fulfilling this role the EGFSN will:

- ❑ Advise Government on projected skills requirements at national and sectoral levels and make recommendations on how best to address identified needs
- ❑ Advise Government on associated priority training requirements and the most cost effective ways of responding to them
- ❑ Advise on any skills requirements that cannot be met internally at a given time and so must be met through inward migration
- ❑ Advise on developments in content and delivery systems that support excellence in training quality elsewhere and on adaptations necessary to incorporate such developments into training provision here
- ❑ By reference to research findings, and in the interests of enhancing the relevance of publicly-funded training programmes, including their effectiveness in promoting the vocational advancement of trainees, and with a view to identifying and eliminating any duplication of resources - so ensuring greater efficiencies and value for public expenditure incurred - make recommendations on how existing systems and delivery mechanisms might be adapted to better effect
- ❑ Taking account of national and international commitments to promote learning and to progressively achieve higher qualifications throughout life, the EGFSN will be aware of training programmes that are supported through the National Training

Fund. It may convey views or recommendations in this regard to the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment and it should respond to any request for advice in this context that is received from him

- Ensure that recommendations made are adequately assessed by the relevant and responsible authorities and periodically inform members of the EGFSN of progress made in the implementation of such recommendations

Sub Groups

The EGFSN may delegate functions to sub-groups. Such sub-groups may include persons who are not members of the EGFSN itself but who possess particular expertise that is of direct relevance to the work at hand.

Skills and Labour Market Research Unit

The FAS Skills and Labour Market Research Unit (SMLRU) will contribute to the delivery of the above mandate. Through its data gathering, analysis and research activities it will support the work of the EGFSN. While the SMLRU will be located in FÁS, its work in this context will, as required, inform the delivery of components of the agreed annual work programme of the EGFSN and will be completed in line with content specifications and time scales that will be decided by the EGFSN. The SMLRU will operate the National Skills Database on behalf of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs.

The SMLRU will be funded through the National Training Fund. The justification for such funding, including the quality and range of inputs to the EGFSN that it supplies, will be reviewed annually by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment.

Chairperson and chairing meetings

The Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment will appoint the Chairperson of the EGFSN. The Chairperson will be a member of the EGFSN.

Working in close cooperation with the Secretariat of the EGFSN, the Chairperson will ensure the efficient delivery of annual work programmes. S/he will chair meetings of EGFSN and direct its deliberations.

In the absence of the Chairperson, the Head of the Secretariat will chair meetings of the EGFSN.

Appointment of members

The Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment will appoint members of the EGFSN. Representatives of educational interests will be appointed in consultation with the Minister for Education and Science. Not more than fifteen members will be appointed. Membership will include representation of the following broad categories:

- Business
- Workers
- Enterprise development
- Education and vocational training
- General public interest membership

Head of the Secretariat of the EGFSN

S/he will be an officer of Forfás. S/he will exercise this function on a full-time basis. S/he will be responsible for the management of all work undertaken or commissioned by EGFSN, including that undertaken or commissioned at its behest by the FAS Skills and Labour Market Research Unit (SMLRU).

The Head of the Secretariat will have responsibility for the efficient and timely delivery of all tasks that fall to the secretariat of the EGFSN to deliver or to oversee. This will include responsibility for ensuring that the secretariat itself is properly resourced and managed, that annual work programmes are proposed, agreed and delivered on time and that the outcomes of work undertaken are publicly promulgated and implemented, as appropriate, by those with responsibility for so doing.

Effective delivery of the tasks assigned to the EGFSN

The Head of the Secretariat, working in close cooperation with the Chairperson, will have responsibility for ensuring that management and operational systems are deployed in a way that will ensure the effective delivery of the different aspects of the mandate of the EGFSN.

The adequacy of these systems will be reviewed annually and, when considered necessary by the Chairperson, proposals for change or adaptation in the interest of greater effectiveness or efficiency will be put to the EGFSN for consideration and decision.

Reporting arrangements

An annual report, in conformity with information headings to be proposed by the EGFSN and agreed by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and the Department of Education and Science, will be provided to the responsible Ministers not later than end-March following the year to which the report refers.

The Chairperson will arrange to meet periodically, but not less than once yearly, with both the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment and with the Minister for Education and Science. The purpose of such meetings will be to brief the Ministers on the work of the EGFSN by reference to its annual report - which will have been made available to both Ministers in advance:

- ❑ to advise them on the policy, resources and operational implications for their respective Departments of agreed recommendations advanced by the EGFSN
- ❑ to exchange views on issues requiring priority attention in light of contemporary labour market circumstances
- ❑ to review the extent to which recommendations made are being implemented and to discuss the reasons for hesitance in implementing any and
- ❑ to discuss other issues of interest and notified in advance by either side

The Chairperson of the EGFSN may be accompanied at such meetings by whatever delegation s/he considers necessary.

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