

**Draft Minutes of Meeting No. 79  
of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs  
at 3pm 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 2019  
Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, Kildare Street**

<b>Present:</b>	Tony Donohoe	Chair
	David Hegarty	DBEI
	William Beausang	Department of Education & Skills
	Kathleen P Gavin	Department of Education & Skills
	Helen McMahon	EI
	Vivienne Patterson	HEA
	Ray Bowe	IDA
	Joan McNaboe	SLMRU, SOLAS
	Alan McGrath	SOLAS

<b>Secretariat:</b>	Kevin Daly	DBEI
	Alan Power	DBEI
	Niamh Martin	DBEI
	Katherine Griffin	DBEI
	Ruth Morrissy	DBEI

<b>Apologies:</b>	Peter Rigney	ICTU
	Don O'Connor	DBEI

**1. Minutes of EGFSN Meeting Number**

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

**2. ICT Skills Action Plan (moved from agenda item 3)**

Trudy Duffy updated the group on the implementation structure that is in place to ensure that the actions from the new ICT Skills Action Plan, Technology Skills 2022, will be appropriately monitored. On the new plan's supporting measures, DES provided updates on the Human Capital Initiative and the review of the career guidance system. The Chair also noted the recent publication of the group's report, *Forecasting the Future Demand for High Level ICT Skills in Ireland 2017-2022*, a key input into the development of the plan. He highlighted the importance of ensuring publication of the plan and the supporting EGFSN research is more fully aligned in future.

**3. Presentation on Skills for Trade and Economic Diversification (moved from agenda item 2)**

Mr Con Gregg from ILO gave a presentation on his experience working with developing countries who have undertaken projects to develop skills for trade and economic diversification (STED). He went through the various phases involved when setting up a project in a developing country – Diagnostic Phase (governance

planning); Sector study (similar to an EGFSN study); and Implementation phase. Each project would have a steering group on the ground and they would partner with a Government Department/body such as the Department of Labour and get insight into the skills available. The ILO would have an idea where there might be opportunities for development. They would consult with the partners and draw up a list of sectors that might benefit. The countries would select the sector that could most benefit from ILO's STED input.

The Chair thanked Mr Gregg for his informative presentation and opened the floor to questions and comments. There was a question concerning the formal validation piece that takes place after the research and whether it added value to the project. Mr Gregg confirmed that it was an ILO requirement; that normally there were no big changes highlighted at this stage and that it can provide a promotional opportunity for the project sponsors to reach a wider audience and get their message across.

A further question on the move from a full STED to a rapid STED was answered by confirming that any impacts on quality of results arising from a more rapid process haven't been identified yet as the process is in its infancy (happening in Ethiopia and Senegal now). Another question concerning availability of data was answered confirming that there is an issue with getting comprehensive data but they make use of employer surveys and data from educational and training providers to inform their projects.

#### **4. Brexit Implementation**

The Group was provided with an update on developments on actions in the Brexit report, including the establishment or launch of:

- A DBEI 'Getting Business Brexit Ready' landing page, with a dedicated section on 'Upskilling';
- DBEI's *Currency Risk Management for Irish SMEs* guide;
- Bord Bia's new Foreign Exchange Mentoring and Supply Chain Mentoring programmes;
- Enterprise Ireland's Customs Insight Online module;
- InterTradeIreland's 'Brexit and Beyond' online learning course, which will eventually encompass elements on Customs, People, Supply Chain and Data and Services, and separately, a study on the development of a SME Supply Chain development support;
- the Local Enterprise Office Network's 'Prepare for Customs' workshops; Revenue's Trader Engagement programme;
- a Brexit themed call for proposals by Skillnet Ireland; and Post Primary Languages Initiative's Languages Connect online portal.

The Group was apprised that the EGFSN report also recommended the revival of a recommendation originally made in 2015's *Addressing the Demand for Skills in the Freight Transport, Distribution and Logistics Sector, 2015-2020*: the establishment of a Logistics and Supply Chain Skills Group. Such a group, composed of FTDL industry and education and training provider representatives, was intended to drive the implementation of the recommendations made in that 2015 report.

The Group was informed that talks on establishing this group have taken place since late 2018 between the EGFSN Secretariat; the group's proposed chair, the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport; and a proposed industry Secretariat. The findings of the original 2015 study are viewed as the basis of the proposed group's work programme.

Matters have now progressed sufficiently that it is proposed to hold a pre-meeting with the proposed membership of the Group in late April, to formally validate the approach that has developed in discussions to date, and to decide on the steps necessary to formally establish the group.

In the discussion that followed, it was confirmed that there are strong Brexit themes emerging in the proposals for the latest Springboard call, the results of which will be confirmed in May. The EGFSN Brexit report was one of the reference documents for the 2019 call.

**Action: The Secretariat undertook to circulate for the information of the Group the latest implementation report for the Brexit study, as developed by its cross-government Implementation Oversight Group.**

## **5. Design Skills Demand Analysis, and Winning by Design Implementation**

Five out of the eight actions identified in the 2017 'Winning by Design' report have been completed. Recommendation 1, which involves undertaking a review of enterprise demand and the provision of higher and further education design courses across all education institutions will form part of the 2019 project. The study will aim to estimate enterprise sector demand for design skills over the medium term of five years 2020-2025.

The Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (DBEI) on behalf of the Expert Group for Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) has tendered for a concise piece of research and analysis, for the development of a 'Design Skills in Ireland' report. It will cover the three design disciplines identified as areas of focus for Ireland in the 2017 Winning by Design report – Digital Design, Product Design and Strategic Design. This will include identifying if there is a gap between the supply and demand of design skills in enterprise and recommending a series of actions to bridge any potential gaps. The tenderer will be required to integrate the findings from all these elements into a final report. The project will commence in May 2019 with a final report due by Q4 2019.

The Group's attention was drawn to the fact that applications for the Springboard Programme this year indicate that 'design thinking' is coming to the fore and is an area that is garnering interest for the first time. There are issues with the definition and scope of 'design'.

Additionally, the Chair asked the Group to consider what type of apprenticeship could be developed that could cover all aspects of design. It was suggested that digital design is the main area to consider when developing an apprenticeship. The Design and Crafts Council of Ireland has investigated with industry the possibility of developing an apprenticeship under the current apprenticeship framework but no decision to proceed has been made. It will continue to look at opportunities to enhance the creative industries in Ireland, including reconsidering the development of a design apprenticeship in the future.

**Action: The Secretariat undertook to circulate the RFT for the Design project to the members of the Group. The Secretariat also undertook to liaise with EI and Creative Ireland to update them on the aims of the project.**

## **6. Skills for the Construction Industry**

The Secretariat provided an update on the EGFSN project into the skills requirements of the construction sector.

**Strand 1** of the project is being undertaken in-house and will review the reports/strategies published on the construction sector - and in particular their associated skills recommendations - by both Government and industry over the last 10 years (EGFSN, Forfas, Government of Ireland, Construction Industry Federations, Property Services Ireland). The analysis aims to determine whether:

- There is any duplication or areas of overlap in the skills related recommendations
- If the recommendations were implemented and what progress has been made to date
- The effectiveness of this progress

The Secretariat has engaged with a number of relevant stakeholders, including the Construction Industry Federation, the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, Enterprise Ireland, Ibec, and Skillnet Ireland already.

Completion of this assessment is expected in Q2 2019.

Work on a productivity analysis of the Construction sector has been initiated by the Investment Projects and Programmes Office in DPER. This will form **strand 2** of the project. A request for tender for this analysis was issued recently. There will be two aspects to this review: a technical analysis of the available data on construction sector productivity from the CSO, OECD and EU KLEMS; and an examination of the causes of, and solutions to, poor productivity growth in the Irish construction industry. This latter part will be undertaken by external consultants with construction sector expertise- the research will explore practical ways of improving Construction's poor productivity growth, such as systems of mass production, standardisation, prefabrication and modularisation. The procurement process is open to leading international economic consultants.

An EGFSN sector study into skills requirements is a possible third strand of this project depending on the outcome of Strands 1 & 2.

**Action: The Secretariat undertook to circulate D/PER tender documents to EGFSN.**

## **7. SME Management Skills**

The Secretariat gave an overview of the proposal for the SME project, which will take a look into the current state of management capacity and practices in SMEs in Ireland. The EU Commission is funding the project and will be carrying out the procurement process and selecting the consultants. There will be a focus on the findings arising out of the World Management Survey from 2014. The group approved the proposal with minor modifications. The study will therefore examine the provision of management development training modules, courses, programmes, etc., by both public and private sector actors in Ireland, considering their relevance and cost. On the demand side, the study will examine training participation rates, barriers to participation, attitudes, etc

During this quarter, DBEI will be pulling together a steering group to push the project forward. There was a question regarding the definition of a small and medium sized enterprise. The Group agreed that it should be classified as an enterprise that has less than 250 employees as this is consistent with State policy. EI updated the Group on Spotlight for Skills programme.

## **8. Communications, including establishment of EGFSN twitter account**

The EGFSN Secretariat gave a powerpoint presentation on the communications strategy of the EGFSN and informed the Group that the secretariat would be establishing a twitter account, which will expand the communications channels available to the group to disseminate its key messages.

## **9. Good Practice for EGFSN projects – Steering Group Diversity**

The EGFSN Secretariat has undertaken a review of best practice and processes. The aim of the review was to develop a suite of formalised documents to underpin the work carried out by the Secretariat and would assist project managers and their teams over the course of projects. A suite of documents including project guidelines, a chairperson's guide, detailed project Gantt charts, and tendering guides have been created by the EGFSN Secretariat.

It was decided that the EGFSN Secretariat could improve Steering Group diversity by focussing on three additional criteria when building Steering Groups namely: gender, region, and non-agency enterprise base. it

was proposed that the EGFSN formally adopt a commitment that all project Steering Groups consist of, at least, a 70/30 split for gender representation. However, it was put forward that Government of Ireland has guidance on gender representation on Boards and this should be replicated in the EGFSN.

**Action: Clarify the Government of Ireland quota guidance regarding gender representation on Boards.**

#### **10. AOB/Next meeting**

The Chair brought it to the Group's attention that the EGFSN had been requested to consider looking at skills for green growth and the low carbon economy in 2019. The issue will be put on the agenda for the next EGFSN meeting in June/September. It was mentioned that Future Jobs also has a low-carbon pillar and it is a feature of Government Policy. It was also commented that the green economy angle might also be something to consider during the course of the Construction skills project being undertaken this year.

The Chair canvassed the Group regarding dates for the next meeting. No dates for the National Skills Council have been confirmed but it is likely that the next meeting will take place in May. Members were agreeable to having a meeting in June. Members were informed that they will be apprised of the date of the next meeting as soon as possible. Agenda items to consider for the next meeting include: SLMRU updates (Lifelong Learning report/Vacancy Overview/Monitoring Ireland's Skills Supply); an update on the EI Spotlight for Skills Programme; presentation by an external speaker.

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