

**Draft Minutes of Meeting No. 83  
of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs  
10 July 2020 - Webex**

<b>Present:</b>	Tony Donohoe	Chair
	Keelin Fagan	EI
	Shauna Dunlop	SOLAS
	Vivienne Patterson	HEA
	Laura Bambrick	ICTU
	Kathleen Gavin	DES
	David Hegarty	DBEI
<b>Secretariat:</b>	Kevin Daly	DBEI
	Don O'Connor	DBEI
	Niamh Martin	DBEI
	Ruth Morrissy	DBEI
	Katie Griffin	DBEI
	Alan Power	DBEI
<b>Consultants:</b>	Aecom – Catherine Murray, Sam Deegan	
<b>Apologies:</b>	William Beausang	DES
	Ray Bowe	IDA
	Joan McNaboe	SOLAS

### **1. Minutes of EGFSN Meeting Number 82**

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

### **2. Annual Activity Statement**

The Annual Activity Statement for 2019 was presented to the Group. It charts the work the group did in 2019. It is laid out in the standard format with four chapters. While the structure is the same, it has been newly designed with new graphics and a fresh look. The report covers:

- 1) Research and analysis activity by the group in 2019 – describing what projects commenced
- 2) Other policy inputs and activities of the group such as working with the employment permits section in DBEI and also our communications activities – engagement with stakeholders at seminars etc and also through sharing information on the website and social media
- 3) Work of the group on the implementation of previous reports
- 4) Looking to the work the EGFSN has planned for 20/21

The Annual Activity Statement was welcomed and approved by the Group

### **3.Design Skills**

The EGFSN Secretariat updated the Group on the work of the design implementation group. EGFSN members acknowledged the work being done by the design group.

### **4. Skills for the Construction Industry Report**

AECOM Ireland Ltd., the consultants appointed to develop the research provided an overview of their findings to the Group. AECOM were guided by a Steering Group chaired by Caroline Spillane, Director General of Engineers Ireland with its membership composed of public and private sector Construction sector stakeholders.

The group was informed of how the study became a study into skills needed for the 'Built environment' sector. The recommendations arising from the research were explained.

There are nine overarching recommendations, with further detailed sub-recommendations, for equipping Irish Built Environment activities with the pool of skills they require to deliver on housing, infrastructural and energy efficiency needs over the next ten years. The recommendations are to:

- Develop a coordinated campaign to promote Built Environment careers
- Examine scope for reforms to Built Environment education, training and qualifications
- Align skills with technological change
- Develop skills for climate change mitigation
- Foster entrepreneurial and management skills
- Place Construction Industry Register Ireland on a statutory footing
- Assess the merits of developing a 'Skills Passport'
- Explore the use of Procurement to stimulate skills development
- Maintain ongoing monitoring and evaluation of Built Environment Skills

The report was welcomed by the Group members. It was noted that there had been huge feedback and engagement by the Group into the report prior to this meeting. The group commented on the importance of examining the apprenticeships available in the sector and the need to look at upskilling opportunities for people already in it and noted that this was incorporated into the recommendations. It was important to focus on the productivity of the sector in the future and to encourage more female entrepreneurship. It was commented that enterprise agencies are involved on a daily basis with clients to promote entrepreneurial and management skills. The members highlighted that it was important to include a piece on the impact of Covid-19 on the sector.

The report was welcomed and approved for presentation to the National Skills Council in September 2020.

### **5.SME Management Development Report**

TU Dublin, the research consultants for the report presented its analysis to the Group. The EGFSN Secretariat then outlined the recommendations arising from the Report. They are to:

- Develop a Communications Strategy for Management Development that informs, listens and persuades
- Develop a Step-by-Step Pathway including by developing an online Management Skills and Practices Benchmarking / Assessment Tool
- Make the Offer more Coherent and Accessible including by developing the available management development opportunities cooperatively so that they become more accessible and coherent
- Put a Focus on Best Practice and Key
- Ensure Adequate Funding by identifying channels through which additional funding can be accessed and leveraging successful initiatives like SpringBoard+, Skills to Advance, the Human Capital Initiative, and Skillnet
- Measure Impacts by collecting and sharing data

The Chair invited discussion amongst the Group, noting it was an excellent report. The Group congratulated the project team for finalising the report following a lot of work into the important area of management development. Many noted that the research had been carried out prior to the arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic and this should be reflected in the report prior to its presentation to the National Skills Council.

Members noted the report highlighted the link between L & D and productivity and that companies do prioritise management development programmes but they do not invest in them.

Communicating the benefits of L & D will be a task for the implementation group. It was noted too that Covid-19 has forced people to take online learning and training courses and in a way, it has been a benefit to the L & D area as it's shown that it's quite easy to take a 2-hour online course to upskill without having to travel anywhere.

It was noted that 'Spotlight on Skills' will be a significant contribution to address some of the issues highlighted. Its online assessment tool that was jointly developed by EI and the SLMRU is going online now through the Regional Skills Fora and will be a welcome initiative for SMEs. 'Skills to Advance' and eCollege offerings are further resources for SMEs.

Subject to one or two edits, the Group was happy to approve the Report for presentation to the National Skills Council in September 2020.

## **6.AOB.**

The Chair noted that it was the final meeting of one of its members, Ms Kathleen Gavin due to her imminent retirement. He wished to note her tremendous contribution to the Group over the years and wished her well for the future. His best wishes were echoed by each member of the Group.

The next meeting of the EGFSN will take place on Monday 28<sup>th</sup> September 2020.

EGFSN Secretariat

July 2020