

**Minutes of Meeting No. 73
of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs
14th September 2017 at 3pm
Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, Kildare Street**

Present:	Tony Donohoe	Chair, IBEC
	Helen McMahon	Enterprise Ireland
	Bryan Fields	SOLAS
	John McGrath	SOLAS
	Kathleen Gavin	Department of Education & Skills
	Declan Hughes	DBEI
	Kevin Daly	DBEI
	Ray Bowe	IDA
	Alan McGrath	HEA

Apologies:	Peter Rigney	IDA Ireland
	Vivienne Patterson	HEA
	Mark Christal	Enterprise Ireland

In Attendance from Secretariat:	Niamh Martin	DBEI
	Alan Power	DBEI
	Don O'Connor	DBEI

1. Minutes of EGFSN Meeting Number 72

The minutes of the previous meeting, held on 4th May were approved.

2. 2016 Activity Statement

The Chair asked the Group whether they approved the draft Activity Statement for 2016. The Group approved the publication of the Annual Activity Statement pending some minor changes highlighted by Declan Hughes.

ACTION: Secretariat to publish the 2016 Activity Statement on www.skillsireland.ie

3. a ICT Action Plan (Methodology Refresh)

Alan Power introduced his paper to the Group. As regards the tender, Alan informed the Group that a Request for Tender was issued in early August and tenders have been received and evaluated. The standstill period is in train so the successful tenderer cannot be named at the moment. It is stated that, pending completion of the standstill period, the project is expected to kick off in early October.

The scope of the project is narrower than it was in 2013 and will largely focus on the demand side only- although ideas for boosting supply will be elicited during the key informant and enterprise consultation stage, for inputting into the development of the ICT Skills Action Plan.

In relation to the implementation Group, the Chair invited members of the EGFSN to nominate suitable candidates to participate in the implementation group. He advised that a knowledge or real interest in ICT will be important for the group.

The Chair also asked whether the scope of the project is sufficiently defined to capture emerging technologies such as machine learning, internet of things, AI etc. He was specifically referring to the use of SOC codes for the project. Alan Power reassured the Group that this was investigated and the SOC codes are sufficiently flexible. Bryan Fields highlighted how SOC codes don't given an insight into what the skills are but welcomes business involvement.

The Chair and the Group agreed that the consultants should engage with SLMRU to use data that exists already.

ACTION: Alan Power emphasised that the deadline for receipt of names of candidates to sit on the steering group is 22nd of September and invited the Group to send nominations to him directly by email.

3. b Brexit

Alan Power introduced his scoping paper to the Group and sought their approval to proceed with the project.

He briefed the Group on the proposed objectives of the study based on the challenges and opportunities posed by Brexit to Ireland. He stressed that any study undertaken by the Group should aim to add something new to the studies on Brexit's impact on trading and should not duplicate work already being done in other divisions/agencies/departments.

The proposed study would focus on the more complex trading environment generated by a hard Brexit. Mr Power reported that the project will largely focus on the updating of two previous EGFSN reports – the 2012 Report on Skills for Enterprise to Trade Internationally and the 2015 Report of Addressing the demand for Skills in the Freight Transport, Distribution and Logistics Sector. The project will seek to interrogate whether the current skills supply is fit for purpose in offsetting the potential trading and regulatory implications of Brexit.

The Chair asked the Group for their views on the current scope of the study. The Chair agreed that the two reports cited should be a basis for the study. He stressed, however, that perhaps it should be expanded to look more closely at the supply chain implications for exporters and importers and the immediate impact on skills.

Helen McMahon said that EI is currently providing the Brexit Scorecard offer for clients and that there are one to one meetings provided by the Brexit Unit at International Markets Week to support and advise clients. She further noted that the Capability and Mentoring Development team in EI has incorporated support for Brexit exposed clients in the content of programmes such as the International Selling Programme, Go Global for Growth, Excel Workshop etc. So there is a comprehensive response to support Brexit exposed clients.

Brexit hasn't impacted on operations yet according to their client companies. 40% of EI companies are actively producing strategies to deal with Brexit. It was noted that while companies should be pursuing strategies to capitalise on the opportunities arising from Brexit, the immediate skills implications that require addressing should be their main focus. This might involve upskilling rather than reskilling.

There was consensus from the Group that there should be coordination between all the Brexit units across Government to ensure there was no duplication of work into the skills area.

ACTION: There was consensus on the proposed scope of the study- but that it should be slightly expanded to take account of issues beyond those identified in the two reports e.g. the supply chain implications for exporters and importers.

3. c Early Childhood Education

Don O'Connor presented the Early Childhood Education project proposal to the Group. The study will examine the skills requirements for Tusla-registered Childcare providers.

The first part of the project will involve consultants devising a skills forecasting methodology, which can be re-used by DES/DCYA year after year. The closing date for receipt of tenders is 20th September. Once the consultants have been appointed, the EGFSN will appoint a governance Group who will interact with the consultants to ensure the model is suitable. The consultants outputs (due end of Q1 in 2018) will feed into a workforce planning strategy for the Sector.

EGFSN members indicated satisfaction with the project proposal with Bryan Fields commenting that it is a project that needs to be done despite conflicting messages regarding undersupply or oversupply.

ACTION: EGFSN to nominate members to sit on the Governance Group. Evaluation of tenders received to take place after 20th September.

3. d Winning by Design

The Chair introduced this agenda item highlighting that work on this report had commenced in 2016 and that the report has been refined and is now a useful contribution to the conversation on design skills in enterprise.

Kevin Daly on behalf of Ruth Morrissy, briefed the Group on the scope of the report and its recommendations. He referred to the valuable research carried out by Catherine MacEnri into the topic and described how Ruth Morrissy had been tasked with finalizing the report following Catherine's departure.

The report is to be pitched as an introductory piece of work scoping out what the next steps should be in terms of addressing the skills requirements in the area. Mr. Daly pointed out that the report does not quantify demand that is useful to DES in terms of projections and future planning but it provides a good starting point for further work in this area.

Kathleen Gavin agreed with the Chair and Kevin Daly, and was satisfied that the report could be presented to the National Skills Council at its October meeting. Ms. Gavin requested to record in the minutes that she wished to see Catherine MacEnri credited as the author of the Report and acknowledged Catherine's contribution to the production of the Report. The Chair and Group members were in agreement with this proposal.

The Group approved the publication of the report and its presentation to the NSC in October 2017.

ACTION: Report will be presented to the NSC in October and published thereafter.

3. e Skills for the Digital Economy

Kevin Daly presented the paper to the Group on behalf of his colleague Ruth Morrissy. The current proposed study will take a medium-term view of up to 5 years and will identify what sectors and roles across the economy are most susceptible to significant changes as a result of digitalization.

Kathleen Gavin sought some clarifications from Kevin Daly on the proposed methodology outlined in the paper. Specifically, she wished to know where data for Ireland had been sourced by the authors of the report 'Europe's Digital Progress Report 2017' and if the same methodology as the one used by the authors of the Europe report was being proposed by the EGFSN, how would the data be different.

Ms. Gavin had concerns regarding point 3 on the proposed methodology where it states that the research will be conducted to determine the 'most effective methods of upskilling'. DES believes that the point of the report is not to make judgements but to determine how enterprise can input into the upskilling agenda, as well as the educational sector.

Bryan Fields mentioned that the Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) has a question on digital literacy which could be a useful data source for the study. He mentioned that vacancy databases could be analysed for various key words and offered to provide further intelligence on this to the Secretariat if required. Mr. Fields enquired whether the study could examine the effect technology has on various occupations over time.

The Chair asked the question 'What is digital literacy'; technology will become simpler over time and more intuitive so digital literacy in the context of this report is something else – it concerns being able to succeed in the workplace despite advancements in technology where that technology eradicates the need for certain occupations in a sector but creates a new occupation in the same sector.

The Group agreed that the scope of the projects as it exists at the minute is vast. It needs to be refined. Bryan Fields said it would be very useful to identify particular sectors that would be most impacted and then identify particular roles within those sectors that would be impacted, before finally determining the competencies that will be required for those roles. Declan Hughes suggested that this could be made more manageable by concentrating the analysis, initially, on those roles that will be most impacted and also impacted soonest.

The Chair said that the project should focus on identifying the most vulnerable sectors in the Irish economy when it comes to digitalisation. It was agreed that the project should focus primarily on action 1 of the proposed methodology of the Scoping document, while minimising the other parts of the proposed methodology.

ACTION: Refine the proposal and methodology to focus primarily on Action 1 in the current 'proposed methodology' in the scoping document, while minimising the other parts of the proposed methodology. Group is to consider incorporating a series of case studies into the study to illustrate the impact of digital technology on skills.

3.f Review of National Strategies and Action Plans

Kevin Daly presented this quantitative review of all the current enterprise-related strategies and action plans to examine what are the skills demand implications of all these reports in their totality. The findings were:

- There does not appear to be any major inconsistency between the totality of the sectoral reports and the actual new additional jobs created in 2016.
- When compared to the totality of the sectoral reports, the job targets set in Enterprise 2025 and the Action Plan(s) for Jobs appear realistic and achievable.
- When compared to the totality of the sectoral reports, the IDA and EI's targets are also consistent, particularly when the EI target is discounted for job losses.
- It would appear on the basis of recent trends that the strong projected demand for additional labour to 2020 will continue to reduce unemployment and could result in labour supply pressures appearing across more sectors/roles.
- If labour shortages appear in multiple sectors, using 'potential impact on productivity' as a basis to make resource allocation decisions would help grow the economy in a resilient and effective manner.

The Chair concurred with the report's suggestion that labour productivity should be examined as a metric to address the challenges raised by a tightening labour market.

Kathleen Gavin mentioned that it might be worthwhile for the Chair of the National Competitiveness Council to make a presentation to the NSC on productivity in their next meeting after October.

ACTION: Kathleen Gavin suggested that a short paper from the EGFSN focusing on labour market productivity could be presented to the NSC in October. The Chair asked DES if they could flag it with the NSC as a possible agenda item in advance of the October meeting.

5. Any Other Business and date of next meeting

The next meeting will take place on Monday December 4th at 3pm in room 110 Kildare Street. The Chair asked NM to send a 'Save the Date' email to those member who are not at today's meeting.

Close of meeting 5pm..