



**Draft Minutes of Meeting No. 81
of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs
September 2019
Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, Kildare Street**

Present:	Tony Donohoe	Chair
	Keelin Fagan	EI
	Vivienne Patterson	HEA
	Ray Bowe	IDA
	Joan McNaboe	SLMRU, SOLAS
	Alan McGrath	SOLAS
	Laura Bambrick	ICTU
	William Beausang	DES
	David Hegarty	DBEI

Secretariat:	Kevin Daly	DBEI
	Don O'Connor	DBEI
	Niamh Martin	DBEI
	Ruth Morrissy	DBEI
	Katie Griffin	DBEI
	Alan Power	DBEI

Guest speaker:	Fionn Jenkinson	DPER
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Apologies:		
	Kathleen Gavin	DES

1.Minutes of EGFSN Meeting Number

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

2.Presentation by SOLAS

Joan McNaboe gave a presentation on Older Workers. There are 1.53million over 50's in the population. 425,000 people between the ages of 50-59 are in employment. There are 146,300 in elementary roles.

The report finds that it is important to have upskilling/reskilling policies in place to keep people in employment for longer. Focus should be put on flexible /remote working policies too in order to keep people in high-level employment.

3.Skills for the Construction Industry

As part of the Group's 2019 work programme, it was agreed that the EGFSN would undertake a *Skills for the Construction Sector* study composed of a potential three strands.

This would involve two preliminary pieces of analysis: firstly, an assessment of existing construction sector strategies undertaken by government and industry over the last ten years; and the Construction sector productivity analysis currently being undertaken by DPER.

Brief overviews of the key findings from these two analyses were presented by Alan Power and Fionn Jenkinson respectively. In the case of the productivity analysis, initial findings were presented. The Group was also asked to consider approving proceeding with a broader EGFSN study, the terms of reference for which were circulated.

Strand 1 considered a range of Construction related strategies and associated skills recommendations published over the previous decade. This assessment posed a number of questions of these strategies- were there any common themes in these strategies; had their skills recommendations been implemented; and if so, what was the effectiveness of these recommendations

Four overarching themes were identified: boosting skills and labour supply; properly aligning education and training provision with Construction skills needs; supporting construction sector export diversification; and boosting productivity and innovation. On the basis of its findings, the analysis made nine interim recommendations for Construction sector stakeholders. There was an overview of the approach to Strand 2, the DPER productivity analysis, as well as some of the areas for action that were identified as impacting on the Construction sector's poor productivity performance.

Strands 1 and 2 of this study highlighted certain deficiencies in the sector's skills base, be it in terms of supply, its coordination on education and training requirements, and its levels of productivity and innovation, which, it is recommended, will need to result in a recalibration of how the Construction sector operates. An in-depth skills analysis of the Construction sector, and the setting out of a roadmap to align the Construction skills base with future trends and demands to 2025, was therefore recommended.

Much discussion took place on the proposals and the initial findings. It was important to ensure the sector is future-proofed in terms of productivity. It was noted that SMEs are reluctant to engage in educational offerings despite courses being designed by the sector. Some cautioned on the over-reliance on the public sector to drive the changes needed. It was noted that the sector is very fragmented in terms of skills mix. Any analysis conducted by consultants should consider the skills required to improve productivity in the sector.

There was consensus around awaiting more detailed findings from the DPER productivity analysis, in order to inform the terms of reference for an EGFSN Construction sector skills analysis. It was agreed that the Secretariat would revise the terms of reference in light of these findings and circulate to the Group for its final approval prior to issuing a request for tender.

Action: Decision to proceed on strand 3 pending outcome of productivity analysis and circulation of updated terms of reference to EGFSN.

4. 2020 Proposals – a) Low Carbon Economy; b) International Financial Services

The EGFSN was asked to approve two studies for 2020.

- a) The Low Carbon Study will focus on forecasting the future demand (over the ten -year period 2020-2030) for semi-skilled workers, technicians, engineers and other related professionals that will be impacted by the delivery of actions in the Climate Action Plan 2019.

The primary objective of the research will be to assess the additional demands generated by the Climate Action Plan 2019 for semi-skilled workers, technicians, engineers and other related professionals over the period 2020-2030. For example, this will include actions to retrofit buildings, install car chargers, install hundreds of thousands of heatpumps and massively increase off-shore wind energy. The research will also quantify the supply of these skills and conclude with recommendations for how to minimise any potential skills gaps.

- b) The International Financial Services Study will focus on forecasting the skills required (over a five- year period 2020-2025) for Ireland to excel in rapidly developing International Financial Services (IFS) sub-sectors.

The primary objective of the research will be to assess the potential additional skills demands to fully exploit opportunities in nascent international financial services subsectors such as fintech, applied alternative assets, sustainability finance, artificial intelligence and blockchain. The first step of the research will be to identify all potential subsectors and categorise their likely development path in Ireland. The research will also quantify the supply of these skills and conclude with recommendations for how to minimise any potential skills gaps.

Decision: Projects were approved for the 2020 Work Programme.

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

An update was provided on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the 2017 Winning by Design report. The Group was also provided with a progress report on the work of the current Design study to estimate enterprise demand for design skills .

Action: The final report is due from the consultants in November and it will be brought to the EGFSN meeting in December for approval.

6.SME Management Skills

The EGFSN was briefed on the status of the European Commission-sponsored project on skills required to improve management development standards in Ireland.

The aims of the study are: to contribute to institutional, administrative and growth-sustainable structural reforms in Ireland in line with SRSS Regulation; to enhance the capacity of DBEI to analyse, formulate, develop and implement operational solutions for the optimal development of management skills in SMEs in Ireland.

The first meeting of the steering group for the SME Management Skills project will take place on 21st October.

The EGFSN welcomed the commencement of this project. The objective is to focus on the capability needs of SMEs at C-suite level. It is envisaged that the study will be completed by end Q2 2020.

7. Brexit Implementation

The Group was updated on the work of the Brexit Skills Implementation Oversight Group. The purpose of the group, which meets quarterly, is to monitor the implementation of the recommendations in the EGFSN report; identify, agree and progress actions to overcome barriers to their implementation; and provide a wider forum for ongoing communication and collaboration in addressing Brexit's trade related skills needs (i.e. trade diversification and facilitation skills). The last meeting of the Group took place in July with the next meeting scheduled for October 3rd. A third implementation report will be prepared. The Secretariat undertook to send this to members once it has been completed.

The Group was also informed that the first meeting of a Logistics and Supply Chain skills group is to take place in October 2019. The establishment of such a group was a recommendation contained in both 2015's *Addressing the Demand for Skills in the Freight Transport, Distribution and Logistics Sector, 2015-2020*, and 2018's *Addressing the Skills Needs Arising from the Potential Trade implications of Brexit*.

8. ICT Skills Action Plan Implementation

The Group was updated by DES on developments in relation to the implementation of the ICT Skills Action Plan, *Technology Skills 2022*, including the role to be played in the coming years by the introduction of the Human Capital Initiative.

9. Communications

Members were informed that the new EGFSN website was now live. www.egfsn.ie. They were also informed that a new twitter account had been established.

AOB/Next Meeting

The next meeting was scheduled for December 9th at 3pm in DBEI Offices, Kildare Street.