

**Draft Minutes of Meeting No.
of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs
28th June 2018 at 3pm
Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, Kildare Street**

Present:	Tony Donohoe	Chair
	Helen McMahon	Enterprise Ireland
	Selen Guerin	SOLAS
	Philip Crosby	Department of Education & Skills
	Paul Keating	Department of Education & Skills
	Ray Bowe	IDA
	Vivienne Patterson	HEA

Apologies:

Peter Rigney/ Laura Bambrick	ICTU
Kathleen Gavin	Department of Education & Skills
William Beausang	Department of Education & Skills

In Attendance

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

1. Minutes of EGFSN Meeting Number

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

2. ICT Action Plan –New ICT Skills Action Plan

The Report was finalised and presented to the EGFSN at the meeting on 28th March 2018 and presented to the National Skills Council at its April 16th meeting. At the EGFSN meeting on the 28th June, it was stated that the intention is that this report will be launched jointly with the new iteration of the ICT Skills Action Plan.

Some discussion took place. It was pointed out that more work needed to be done to firm up the actions in the new Plan to be more targeted (developing supply measures to match the anticipated growth in demand) and this was expected to be completed by September. No decision yet has been reached on the date for launching the ICT Action Plan. It is envisaged that the Skills Needs Analysis would be published simultaneously.

3. STEM Implementation Group

The Secretariat provided an update on its participation in this Group. It was mentioned that the STEM Group was looking at an audit of activity by Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) in the area and was seeking to clarify its goals – a brainstorming exercise had taken place on 8th June. It was mentioned that the proposed SFI audit would be useful to the ICT Steering Group. Smart Futures was mentioned as operating a system where contact had to be made by the schools before any significant interaction took place. This was not ideal. However, DES mentioned that there were ways to deal with the promotion of such projects. The Chair of the EGFSN pointed out that the acronym STEM covered a broad and very distinct range of subjects so one action may not address all subject areas. The question was also raised whether the acronym STEM was still valid as encapsulating all areas that warranted attention.

4. Brexit Skills Analysis

An update was provided at the EGFSN meeting.

Following presentation to the EGFSN on the 28th March 2018, the Report was approved by the National Skills Council at its meeting on 16th April 2018, and jointly launched by the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation and Minister for Education and Skills on 14th June 2018.

The comprehensive research and consultation that was undertaken as part of this study shows that there are clear skills gaps and challenges associated with Brexit that require mitigation. Overall, the Report recommends eight interventions to address the skills issues identified in this study.

In many cases they build on existing initiatives, ensuring that they are funded, promoted, enhanced and marketed effectively to those who need them. The Report finds that there is a significant amount of existing support, resources and training that can help organisations get 'Brexit ready'.

Some discussion took place on the Report. It was reported that discussions are well advanced by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation to establish a cross Departmental and Agency Implementation Oversight Group to monitor the implementation of the recommendations. It is hoped that industry will lead on the coordination of the implementation of its recommendations.

It was clarified that a coordinated government approach to Brexit will be facilitated through the existence of the Secretary General's Group, which is overseeing contingency planning.

It was confirmed that the report focuses on international trade and logistics. It was also mentioned that the Logistics Apprenticeship was due to begin in September 2018.

5. Foreign Languages Implementation Group

The Secretariat updated the Group on the progress of the work being done in the Foreign Languages skills space.

The Chair stressed that it is a very important area and that every recent EGFSN report has stressed the need to address the foreign languages gap in business. It was mentioned that the Foreign Languages Advisory Group (FLAG) is looking at establishing a 'language champion' programme for businesses. There is a need for strong voices from industry to lobby people of school-going age.

Action

KD invited DES to give an overview of the overarching STEM and Foreign Language Strategies at future EGFSN meetings.

6. Early Childhood Education

The Secretariat presented an update on the Skills Forecast Model for the Early Childhood Education and Care sector.

Consultants were engaged in late 2017 to construct a forecasting model which will forecast supply of, and demand for, skilled staff in the sector out to 2030, providing an estimate of the likely skills gaps that will arise at the relevant NFQ levels. The Skills Forecast will feed into a Workforce Plan for the Early Childhood Education and Care Sector to be carried out by DES and DCYA.

The Group was informed that the forecasting model has been delivered and is working. Census projections, just released, have now been included. The model is being tested and its parameters calibrated. New data may need to be collected, however, to underpin a couple of the model's key assumptions. Initial forecasts will then be discussed with stakeholders in the sector.

DES and DCYA intend to use the model as a basis for a Workforce Plan for the sector.

7. Digital Economy

Digitalisation is a major driver of productivity growth through the improvement of process efficiency and the quality of products and services. The aim of the EGFSN study is to assess the impact of digitalisation on job roles and sectors across the economy in Ireland and to identify potential enterprise and skills policy actions that could address the effects on the workforce. The study is taking a medium-term view of 5 years.

The EGFSN was informed that a Steering Group was formed to guide the development of the study and features key representatives from industry, government and government agencies. Two Steering Group meetings have taken place to date with the next meeting scheduled for early July 2018.

To date, a large volume of desk research has been completed and a sectoral occupational quantitative model is in the process of being developed. IDC have conducted interviews with policymakers and key informants from industry and representative groups to gain insights for the study. DBEI have also conducted several employee interviews to capture data on how staff are responding to changes to their jobs. The final report will combine all these elements to provide a thorough understanding of the impacts of digitalisation in Ireland.

It was originally anticipated that the report would meet the ambitious completion deadline of late June. However, due to the amount of time required to complete the

quantitative model accurately, this was not possible. It is now expected that the report will be completed in the coming weeks and will be presented to the EGFSN and NSC later this year.

8. Design

The EGFSN Secretariat updated the members on this item. Following the publication of 'Winning by Design' in November 2017, the EGFSN has been monitoring the implementation of the Design Skills Report Action Plan.

The first recommendation of the report called for a review of enterprise demand and the provision of higher and further education design course across all education institutions to provide a deeper understanding of this area. Based on the results of this report it is likely further actions will be identified to progress the development of the sector. Funding was not available to complete this further analysis in 2018. This work remains on the EGFSN work programme and it is expected to be completed in 2019. The implementation of the remaining actions (numbering 2-8) are being monitored quarterly. Progress is also being reported back to the National Design Forum in DBEI to ensure the maximum possible alignment on policy issues in the sector.

9. Food and Drink

A short update was provided to the Group. A meeting with the key stakeholders is due to take place on the 25th July 2018 and it is proposed to convene a further meeting towards the end of 2018.

10. Hospitality Skills Oversight Group Two Year Review

The report is due for publication in September 2018. The end-of-term report will recap on progress on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the 2015 Report. The report is being finalised.

A meeting of the HSOG held at the end of May marked the end of DBEI's involvement – providing secretariat support and assistance in progressing the implementation of the recommendations. The Terms of Reference for the Group pointed out that there would be a review at the end of two years. Fourteen meetings have taken place over the last two years and there have been a lot of progress amongst the members.

Action

The EGFSN Secretariat will finalise the report on the outcomes arising from the work of the Oversight Group and a report will be published in the third quarter of 2018. Members will be informed of the date for the launch of the Report. An update will be given in the September meeting regarding the establishment of a new Group.

11. Communications Strategy

The EGFSN Secretariat presented an overview of how communications are used presently within the EGFSN to promote the messages arising from the analysis and research work. It also put forward proposals on how to make better use of communications. A discussion took place on a proposed Communications Strategy.

The Group welcomed the opportunity to discuss the development of a communications strategy and identified social media as an area through which the EGFSN's key messages could be communicated. It was suggested that a social media strategy be prepared in tandem with an overarching one.

Much discussion took place on how to target the EGFSN's audience, including making better use of the EGFSN's website, www.skillsireland.ie. It was noted that different audiences require different communications approaches. Suggestions were made for alternatives to hard copy/printed reports. The Chair advised that this discussion should continue at the next meeting with more detail.

Action

The EGFSN secretariat will continue to develop a communications strategy with a view to presenting further information at the next meeting in September.

12. The use of administrative data in developing an evidence base for Further and Higher Education outcomes'

The HEA & SOLAS updated the EGFSN on the work being done linking information on students held by educational institutions with other administrative data sets.

The HEA presented information from a higher education perspective while SOLAS spoke to the Further Education and Training angle. The FE & HE projects aim to link the Programme Learner Support System (PLSS) with Administrative Datasets for Evidence-based Outcomes Analysis. Evidence-based outcomes analysis and tracking learners after completion of a FET and higher education courses, is only possible if learner information in PLSS can be linked with other administrative datasets using the unique identifier, i.e. the PPSN of the learner.

Using administrative data, both Further Education authorities and Higher Education authorities will be able to garner data on student outcomes and to track students when they leave the education system, for example: What do Graduates do; where do Graduates work; what do Graduates earn? By having this information, policymakers will be able to better evaluate course offerings and promote excellence in education.

13. 2018/19 Work Programme

Kevin Daly introduced this agenda item and briefly highlighted three project areas that are to be considered: Construction Skills; SME Management Training; and Global Business Services.

Skills for the Construction Industry

This study will review existing strategies and reports in relation to the skills needs of the construction sector and will examine the accuracy of the projections for future demand contained in these publications. Further to this, this study will analyse the recommendations to determine their efficacy in addressing the skills shortage and how appropriate actions can be successfully implemented.

Management & Development Training in SMEs

The aim of the project is to identify whether there are any market failures in the area of management training and development for SMEs, and to suggest ways of resolving these.

Skills in Global Business Services and Business Process Outsourcing

This study will focus on identifying the skills needs of Global Business Services and Business Process Outsourcing activities over a five-year timeframe, in terms of skills quantity, quality and diversity. This will be compared against the current supply for such skills over the coming years. Actions will be identified to boost the domestic skills supply of the skillsets typically deployed in Global Business Services and Business Process Outsourcing activities (Financial, Customer, Human Resources, Supply Chain and Information Technology management, as well as RD&I and Intellectual Property related roles), and to retain and attract talent from within the EEA and through the employment permits system. This will be with the objective of moving these sectors up the value chain.

Key Points

The Chair highlighted that all three areas are very important from a skills and innovation perspective and considered that further discussion should take place in September. He also surmised that the framework for project selection could be discussed. Kevin Daly stated that he was developing a paper on prioritisation criteria for project selection.

Action

Kevin Daly undertook to circulate the document on potential metrics to determine the EGFSN's research priorities once it was finalised.

Any Other Business/Next Meeting Date

The Chair closed the meeting and confirmed that the next meeting of the Group will take place on 27th September 2018. Further details will follow.

*Niamh Martin
Skills & Education Unit
Department of Business, Enterprise & Innovation
July 2018*