

**Draft Minutes of Meeting No. 80
of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs
at 3pm 24th June, 2019
Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, Kildare Street**

Present:	Tony Donohoe	Chair
	Helen McMahon	EI
	Vivienne Patterson	HEA
	Ray Bowe	IDA
	Joan McNaboe	SLMRU, SOLAS
	Joanne Tobin	Department of Education & Skills
	Alan McGrath	SOLAS
	Laura Bambrick	ICTU
Secretariat:	Kevin Daly	DBEI
	Don O'Connor	DBEI
	Niamh Martin	DBEI
	Ruth Morrissy	DBEI
	Nora Condon	SLMRU, SOLAS
Apologies:	William Beausang	Department of Education & Skills
	Kathleen Gavin	Department of Education & Skills
	David Hegarty	DBEI
	Katie Griffin	DBEI Secretariat
	Alan Power	DBEI Secretariat
	Keelin Fagan	EI

1.Minutes of EGFSN Meeting Number

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

2.Presentation by Department of Communications, Climate Action and the Environment – Eoin McLoughin

The presentation focused on opportunities presented by the ambitious actions in the Climate Action Plan and the skills needs anticipated if the actions are fulfilled. The Group was brought through a number of actions in the Climate Action Plan. Action 160 concerns assessing the employment and economic implications of transitioning to a low-carbon economy and specifically asks the EGFSN to consider the economic and employment implications of a transition to a low carbon economy. The wording is: *'Consider need for examination, by Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, of the current and future skills needs of enterprises associated with the transition to green growth and low carbon economy'*.

The Group discussed the plan and there was consensus that there is a lot in the plan and it is a challenge to identify targeted actions. It was emphasised that any work undertaken by the EGFSN will

have an enterprise focus. It was mentioned that like digital transformation, climate change is a megatrend and will have an impact across sectors. **The EGFSN will bring a proposal to the Group in September 2019.** It is important that there is no overlap with the work of NESC who will focus on the labour market aspects of the plan. It was also emphasised that any research should address skills priorities that are in line with the Climate Action Plan targets.

Action: Contact members in early September with a draft proposal for a Climate Action skills study.

3.Presentation by NERI Institute – Just Transitions – Ciarán Nugent.

The presentation focused on the ambitions for Ireland, including the proposal to turn Ireland into an energy exporter. The Just transitions plan has a midlands- focus. 4,400 jobs in wind energy could be created.

4.Presentation by SLMRU on Lifelong Learning, Vacancy Overview and Monitoring Ireland’s Skills Supply, Women on Home Duties report.

Joan McNaboe and Nora Condon covered these topics. Joan McNaboe informed the group that SOLAS had produced infographics for their Regional Skills bulletins. The ambition is to eventually migrate all their bulletins online. SLMRU have moved away from publishing regional reports and are using the network of Regional Skills Fora to disseminate their findings and research. Monitoring Ireland’s Skills Supply 2019 was approved by the National Skills Council on the 14th June. The report noted that Ireland has the second highest share of ICT graduates in the EU, while Ireland has the lowest number of graduates in the construction fields.

The vacancy report show that the volumes of vacancies aren’t increasing despite the growth in the economy and this could indicate the surge of self-employed in the economy. There could also be a link to the allocation of employment permits for certain eligible occupations.

The Women in Home Duties report received a lot of media attention. It looked at women on home duties from an educational perspective. Some of these women account for 16000 potential additional labour force (PALF). The next report from this series will focus on older workers (50-59- year olds) and how they can be encouraged to stay on in the labour market.

The Lifelong Learning Report notes that Ireland has a 13% rate. Also noted is the fact that lifelong learning increases with educational attainment and declines with age. The EU target for 25-64 year - olds is 15%.

5.ICT Skills Action Plan Implementation

Joanne Tobin updated the group on the latest developments arising from Technology Skills 2022, Ireland’s third ICT Action Plan. A new Springboard+ call went live in May and over 9,000 places will be available this coming academic year on 275 courses across the country. Around 3000 ICT places are available.

Four areas have been deemed by Government as being of critical importance: **digital skills**, transversal skills, management and leadership, and the workplace of the future. All courses address at least one of these areas in detail with many including all four. Aligned with the priorities set by the National Skills Council and by Future Jobs Ireland 2019, many courses focus on future proofing the skills of those in employment, particularly in roles that may be impacted by digitalisation.

2018 saw the completion of 671 full time places on ICT courses. 2020 will see the introduction of new apprenticeships in the areas of cybersecurity and in network engineering, amongst others.

6. Brexit Implementation

Kevin Daly introduced this item in the absence of Alan Power.

The number 1 skills issue currently is the shortfall in appropriately qualified customs agents. There will be a need for eight to nine times more agents working in customs in a hard-Brexit scenario.

Developments highlighted in the most recent Implementation report include 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 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.

Talks between the EGFSN Secretariat; the group's proposed chair, the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport; and industry stakeholders on establishing this group began in late 2018 and have progressed well.

A preliminary meeting with the key industry representative organisations (Chartered Institute for Logistics and Transport, Freight Transport Association of Ireland, Ibec Supply Chain Network, I-PICS: The Supply Chain Institute, Irish Exporters Association, Irish International Freight Association, Irish Road Haulage Association, ISME), chaired by the Department of Transport, was held in late April. Arising from this meeting, it was decided that- following on from the approach adopted for the Tourism and Hospitality Skills Oversight Group- a workshop to help clarify the career promotion and skills development priorities for logistics and supply chain would be held; this would help inform a 2-year work programme for the group, once formally established. This workshop, which was hosted by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sports, facilitated by Declan Allen of TU Dublin and Jane O' Keefe of Cork Institute of Technology, and attended by 25 stakeholders from across the logistics and supply chain sectors and education and training providers, took place on 29th May. Two themes were examined in the work shop- the issues of labour supply/career promotion and skills development within logistics and supply chain activities.

Priorities identified under labour supply included: the agreement of coherent, focussed messages that should be promoted to highlight opportunities within logistics and supply chain activities; the establishment of a network of Logistics and Supply Chain Champions, who can promote and raise the profile of the sector; enhanced outreach to second and third level students; and work at defining the career pathways in logistics and supply chain activities.

Priorities identified under skills development meanwhile included: the development of structured continuous professional development for the logistics and supply chain profession (such as that for HR, Finance, the legal profession); Management development; the development of digital skills and soft skills; continued promotion of relevant apprenticeship and traineeship offerings; the encouragement of educational pathways between Further and Higher Education; the future proofing of curriculum development to meet industry needs (greater responsiveness, given continuously evolving needs); and greater industry-academia partnership on research to support the work of the Skills Group.

The findings of this workshop are being used as the basis for the development of a draft Work Programme for the group. Bilateral meetings are now planned with key stakeholders to develop prospective actions, identify their leads, any delivery partners, and any key performance indicators to track their effectiveness. It is envisaged that the draft Work Programme will be presented for the approval of the prospective Skills Group in the Autumn of 2019.

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

Ruth Morrissy gave an update on the implementation of the actions contained in the Winning by Design Study and updated the Group on the progress of the new research project on the enterprise demand for design skills and an audit of further and higher education courses in design disciplines across the education institutions. 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.

Ruth informed the Group that the first meeting of the Steering Group took place in March. The purpose of the meeting was to validate the terms of reference of the study. The Steering Group's feedback was incorporated into the terms of reference and the study was put out to tender.

Following the standstill period Cruinn Associates were appointed as the successful tenderer. A project initiation meeting was held in late May during which the contracts were signed. On June 19th the second Design Steering Group meeting took place to further refine the methodology and incorporate arising feedback. Cruinn Associates are in the process of organising their first of three workshops being undertaken to inform the study. The first workshop will take place on July 2nd in DCU Alpha.

The study is expected to be completed by Q4 2019.

8.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.

In 2018 the EGFSN approved a project to investigate the management skills and practices of SMEs in Ireland with a view to identifying what needs to be done to improve standards. Proficient management practices have been associated, in international research, with firm productivity, growth, employment and survival. However, a report by the Management Development Council in 2010 showed Irish SMEs to be particularly weak across a number of areas. It is now time to conduct a new study, which may include repeating aspects of the 2009-10 study in order to allow for comparison.

The main focus of the project will be to determine, in as much detail as possible, how exactly Irish SMEs stand now, ten years later. The study will also focus on obstacles to better practices, it will audit the supply of training and supports available and will make recommendations for how Irish SMEs can be brought up to at least above average performance, compared across the OECD, and preferably into the top quintile.

The European Commission's Structural Reform Support Programme is providing €150k to pay for the project, based on a successful application made in late 2018.

A Steering Group has been formed and provided its inputs into the Terms of Reference, and the Commission has now gone out to tender in the past week.

It is expected that consultants will be hired in August and a first meeting of the Steering Group will be held in early September. It is expected that the project will be completed during Q1 2020.

Action: The Secretariat undertook to circulate the list of membership of the steering group that has been convened to oversee the project.

9. 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, Forfás, 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

At the EGFSN's meeting in December 2018, it was agreed that the Group would proceed with a study on Skills for the Construction Sector, which was to be composed of 3 strands:

- Strand one, an assessment of the Construction related strategies and their skills recommendations, undertaken by Government and industry over the previous ten years, in particular their implementation and effectiveness.
- Strand two, namely the Construction Productivity analysis being undertaken by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform; and
- Strand 3, whereby, on the basis of the findings of strands 1 and 2, the Group will decide whether to proceed with a wider EGFSN Skills Demand study. **This decision is scheduled to be put to the group at its September 2019 meeting.**

Strand one, which has been based on desk research and engagement with a number of stakeholders within Ireland's construction field, both public and private, is nearing completion. The assessment paper focusses on the progress achieved over the last ten years in four areas: 1) Enhancing Skills Supply, 2) Aligning Skills with Construction Sector Needs, 3) Export diversification, and 4) Enhancing productivity and innovation within the Construction Sector. These areas arise from the recommendations made by both Government and industry in Construction strategies since 2008 and reflect the high degree of duplication or commonality between the strategies.

The paper will examine the following areas under the four respective themes:

- Skills Supply: Employer Engagement with the Apprenticeship System, Marketing Construction as an Attractive Career Option, The Attraction of Overseas Talent (Irish Diaspora, EURES, Employment Permit System)
- Aligning Skills with Construction Sector needs: Undertaking of a Construction Skills analysis, Convening of a Construction Skills Forum, the National Skills Architecture and alignment of provision with industry needs (National Skills Council, Regional Skills Fora, SOLAS/ETBs, Springboard+, Skillnet Ireland, NTF Employer Advisory Committee, development of Human Capital Initiative), the Greening of Construction Skills
- Export diversification: Overview of Enterprise Ireland work with Construction sector, Construction related undergraduate courses and international business/government tendering, Construction firm participation in International Graduate Mobility schemes
- Enhancing productivity and innovation within the Construction Sector: Promotion of Management Development, Promotion of Building Information Modelling, Construction engagement with Research, Development and Innovation

Action: Bring interim findings of research to Group in September 2019 and seek a decision regarding progressing to strand 3.

10. Communications

The EGFSN Secretariat gave an update on communications activities of the EGFSN Secretariat. Members were informed that the newly redesigned website will be operational over the coming weeks. A Twitter account has been established and will be launched at the same time as the refreshed website.

Action: Members were asked to submit updated bios and pen pics for uploading to the new website.

11. Annual Activity Statement

Members were informed that approval of the 2018 Activity Statement would be sought from them by email in the following weeks.

Action: Publish Annual Statement asap.

AOB/Next Meeting

The next meeting was scheduled for September 24th at 3pm in DBEI Offices, Kildare Street.

July 2019