

**DRAFT Minutes of Meeting No. 71
of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs
5th April 2017**

Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, Kildare Street

Present:	Tony Donohoe (TD)	Chair
	Mark Christal (MC)	Enterprise Ireland
	Bryan Fields (BF)	SOLAS
	Kathleen Gavin (KG)	Department of Education & Skills
	Peter Baldwin (PB)	Department of Education & Skills
	Declan Hughes (DH)	Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation
	Vivienne Patterson (VP)	HEA
	Ray Bowe (RB)	IDA Ireland
	Peter Rigney (PR)	ICTU
	John McGrath (JMcG)	SOLAS

Apologies:

In Attendance

from Secretariat:	Kevin Daly (KD)	Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation
	Niamh Martin (NM)	Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation
	Catherine MacEnri (CMcE)	Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation
	Gerard Walker (GW)	Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation
	Nora Condon (NC)	SLMRU, SOLAS
	Joan McNaboe (JMcN)	SLMRU, SOLAS

1. Minutes of EGFSN Meeting Number 70

The minutes of the previous meeting, held on 7th December 2016, were approved.

2. Governance

a) Revised EGFSN Terms of Reference

b) Discussion on the National Skills Council and its relationship with the EGFSN

Mr Tony Donohoe introduced himself as the new Chair of the EGFSN and welcomed all members to the 71st meeting of the EGFSN.

He spoke about the new skills architecture and referred to the Terms of Reference for the two bodies at the centre of the skills analysis framework. He handed over the discussion on this to Peter Baldwin (DES). PB described the role of the two bodies – the National Skills Council (NSC) and the Expert Group and Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) and how they would interplay.

The role of the EGFSN is to produce research reports into skills needs, draft recommendations and to develop a strategy to implement those recommendations in collaboration with those bodies that will be implementing the actions. The reports will be referred to the NSC. The NSC will receive, consider and approve prior to publication agreed action plans based on EGFSN research findings and recommendations. The EGFSN will retain the role of horizon scanning.

The NSC will consider the reports submitted to them from the EGFSN, and other bodies (Regional Skills Fora, SLMRU etc) and produce an annual prioritisation plan of identified skills needs to inform

the allocation of funding across the HE, FET and Skillnets. The NSC will be launched on the 27th April 2017.

Declan Hughes (DJEI) reiterated the significance of the work of the Expert Group in carrying out horizon scanning and identifying urgent skills needs. He stressed that the modus operandi needs to be sustained, that being: Continued engagement/consultation with the supply (educational bodies) and the demand (employers) side. The EGFSN will be tasked with bringing clarity to skills needs identification and will propose a route map to implement the recommended actions necessitated by the skills gaps. It will also be a disseminator of information to the Regional Skills Fora who will act as an effective multiplier.

The Chair, Tony Donohoe emphasised the role of the EGFSN in horizon-scanning and the need to have a system in place to prioritise requests for analysis. He added that a discussion on the Work Programme will take place later in the meeting.

3. Dept of Education and Skills Updates

a) National Skills Strategy/Action Plan for Education

DES presented on this item and informed the Group that the National Skills Strategy (NSS) is a 10 year strategy. Many of the 140 NSS actions are contained in the Action Plan for Education and also the Action Plan for Jobs. Some of the actions require medium term implementation. 89% of the actions are on target (and for those not, it's generally due to funding issues).

DES provided some highlights from each level of the Education actions including progress in the area of:-

- 1) Development of 21st century skills including European languages – the planned introduction at primary level for example and also the development of CPD for teachers. DES confirmed that the Languages Strategy's publication is imminent.
- 2) Entrepreneurship;
- 3) STEM;
- 4) SME Skills (LEOs);
- 5) FET/HE;
- 6) Lifelong Learning
- 7) Flexible learning;
- 8) Springboard – focusing on ICT & (Medtech & Biopharma) for those in employment

b) Apprenticeship Action Plan

PB (DES) described how 5 of the 25 new apprenticeship programmes planned for 2017 have been, or are about to be, launched. There is a further call for proposals on May 4th, 2017. A discussion ensued regarding the need to focus on re-directing funding from unemployed to the employed.

PB (DES) explained that there is an increasingly collaborative approach across further and higher education to the development of new apprenticeships. Peter Rigney (ICTU) enquired whether the expected increase in apprenticeships would lead to less CAO applicants and therefore more funding. PR enquired about the status of the PLC review.

Mark Christal (EI) and PB (DES) discussed the NTF and that a proposal to increase the National Training Levy is currently out for public consultation.

c) Regional Skills Fora

KG (DES) provided an update on work of the Regional Fora. DES is confident that each forum is making strong progress. SLMRU information is being validated against the work of the RSF. The fora are delivering on what they were set up to do. EI/SOLAS/HEA/DES/DJEI are looking at what's coming from the RSF. A tender for training has issued. The provider-side is delivering. The regional

relationships are working. There is an element of autonomy in the regions - they are not being directed from central government, which is proving positive.

4. Vacancy Overview 2016

Joan MacNaboe gave a presentation on this item. She is the author of the draft report. The purpose of the Vacancy Overview Report is to show where vacancies are occurring –the nature of the vacancies (whether due to expansion, replacement or churn). Some of the key findings are: Difficult to fill sectors include the information and communications sector and the health care sector. Emerging skills include data analysts, process engineers and scientists. J McN sought input into the report from the Group. The draft report was circulated to the Group by email after the meeting.

5. EGFSN Work Programme 2017/8

The Chair introduced Kevin Daly who presented the paper that had been circulated to the Group in advance of the meeting and asked members to focus on the questions in the document for the purposes of the discussion on the Work Programme.

The questions were:

- Is there scope to prioritise analysis on areas that will have the greatest impact for the economy as a whole (eg. Focus on the most likely areas of critical skills shortages in 18 months)?
- Which sectors will be most affected by Brexit from a skills point-of-view, and what analysis should be prioritised to respond to this?
- Are there key cross-sectoral skills that warrant further investigation by the EGFSN and is it the role of the EGFSN to conduct this analysis?
- Should any of these, or other new factors, be considered in prioritising items for the 2017/8 Work Programme?
- Is it worthwhile assessing current policy documents and actions plans, from a skills point-of-view, to test their collective coherence and ensure skills issues are appropriately identified and are being addressed?
- Are there any specific priority sectors the Group needs to look at in 2017/8? Are there sectors which have been looked at previously that need to be re-visited?
- If the Group plans to produce sectoral reports in 2017, what format should they take – similar to recent EGFSN reports or different format in some way? Where can we add value?
- What future timeframe should the EGFSN use when undertaking its research?
- How best can the EGFSN consider and incorporate these reports (from SLMRU) into its Work Programme and advice to the National Skills Council and others?

The Chair invited each member to respond to the questions posed. A general discussion ensued among members.

Timeframe

There was a view that the long-term horizon scanning is fine but there are issues that require a more immediate focus. It was considered that 18 months is too short a timeframe for any beneficial research into an area. The issue of Brexit was discussed and it was said that its impact would be felt in about 3 years – 2 years to complete the Article 50 procedure and 1 year afterwards. Some members viewed long-term planning as fine but Brexit presents a huge time challenge. It affords opportunities as well as threats. There was a view that advances in the Group's work should be visible to stakeholders even if the delivery of recommendations takes longer. Bryan Fields (SOLAS) took the view that 10 years was too long – the immediate issues are Brexit, the US Presidency and the City of London/relocation of businesses issue. Declan Hughes commented that there was room to have two approaches to analysis; firstly, there was a case for the 2-3-5 year timeframe analysis, specifically looking at worst case scenarios in companies and secondly, there is room for the longer term analysis focusing on markets and technologies including the disruptive agents such as emerging technologies and sectoral trends (pharma, food, optics, regenerative medicine, cloud to fog computing).

Brexit

In the context of Brexit, the Chair mentioned that IBEC has worked with Accenture to develop a 'Brexit toolkit'. BF mentioned that the RSF have a role to play in the context of Brexit. There was a view that the Group's approach to horizon-scanning should include 'worst case scenario' planning. Brexit will have a huge impact on the strategies of the further and higher educational sector.

Technology

DES mentioned the concern among businesses regarding the pace of developments in the IT sector. This needs to be factored in to the work of the group. Companies seem to be favouring 12-week training programmes for graduates. These shorter training programmes allow companies to deal with technology changes quicker. The re-skilling and upskilling space is a huge area for discussion regarding horizon-scanning. Lifelong learning becomes even more pressing as technological advancements are made. Technology/IT affects all sectors.

Gig economy

John McGrath (SOLAS) referred to emerging ways of working. Young workers are signing up to temporary contracts. Companies in turn are offering temporary contracts to workers. This has an impact on how businesses operate – fixed costs are stripped out. Lifelong learning is important here. SOLAS is doing research in this area.

JmcG mentioned that the Group should be alert to emerging issues and to factor analysis of these emerging issues into any work programme. There should be a process in place that these issues can be brought to the Group as they arise.

Re-visit sectors/new sectors.

KD (DJEI) sought further input from the Group on issues that have already been considered as subjects of research such as Fintech/ Internationally-traded services/ Early childhood care and he also invited suggestions from the Group on further potential areas of research.

KG (DES) mentioned that in the area of Early Childhood care, regulatory compliance is being strengthened. The skillsets are being formalised. It's an area where there isn't very robust data available. DES would work with DJEI to create a structured process for the EGFSN/ NSC to approve new projects.

Vivienne Patterson (HEA) suggested inviting an expert to present at the EGFSN meeting to discuss the emerging trends and the disruptors. See AOB below.

6. 'Winning by Design' – A review of design skills

Catherine MacEnri (DJEI) presented results of the analysis into design skills contained in the revised Design Report. The Design area is multi-faceted and difficult to define in terms of the skills requirements for the non-design intensive sectors of the enterprise base. It was expressed that Design is a victim of a disruptor – 'smart technology'. Design is a 'methodology'. CMcE sought clarification on the status of the report and it was agreed that the next steps for approving the report are: there will be final engagement with DES & HEA to agree proposed actions and an implementation plan, the report will go back to the EGFSN for approval and then it will be submitted to the NSC for approval of the actions and implementation plan.

7. Update on the Future Skill Needs in the Food & Drink Sector

The Chair noted that the Food & Drink Report had been finalised and invited comments from the Group. The Report was approved, subject to minor edits from DES. DH confirmed that D/AG agreed to take ownership of some of the actions (8 & 9).

8. Updates on previous EGFSN reports – implementation

a) **Hospitality Skills**

b) **ICT Skills Action Plan**

Gerard Walker (DJEI) gave a brief overview of the work of the Hospitality Oversight Group and the progress made under the ICT Skills Action Plan.

The demand for ICT professionals is increasing. Work Permits issued for ICT jobs has increased year on year to 3200 this year. ICT conversion courses are very successful in bringing more skilled ICT employees to the market. There is a continuing need to increase the supply of graduates to take up jobs in this sector. Ireland has moved towards a Higher Growth scenario as set out in the EFGSN 2013 report on 'Addressing Future Demand for High-Level ICT skills'. DES is working on the Digital Skills Strategy. It has been noted that there was a decrease of 16 % in CAO applicants 1st preferences in levels 6/7 and a decrease of 1% of CAO expressing 1st preferences for level 8 ICT courses this year. One of the reasons for this is possibly the increase in construction jobs coming on stream. KG (DES) added that there are higher progression rates in ICT now which suggests that the supports that are there to help struggling students are working.

GW mentioned that the launch of the Irish Digital Skills Coalition is taking place on 27th April.

GW gave a brief update on the work of the **Hospitality Skills Oversight Group**. A key recommendation in the EFGSN Hospitality Skills report published in 2015 was the need to set up a National Oversight and Advisory Group comprising all the key Hospitality sector stakeholders. The role of the Group is to monitor progress on the implementation of the recommendations of the EFGSN. In addition the Group provides a forum for on-going collaboration in addressing the skills needs of the sector and to identify and progress actions to overcome barriers on its implementation. An interim progress report is due for publication imminently.

9. **Lifelong Learning**

Nora Condon (SOLAS) gave a presentation on lifelong learning work being carried out by SOLAS. The purpose of the work is to monitor Ireland's progress towards the EU 2020 lifelong learning target of 15%. Some of the key findings are:

- There were almost 2.5 million adults aged 25-64 years in Ireland in quarter 4 2016.
- There were 167,100 lifelong learning participants in Ireland.
- Ireland ranked 20th out of 28 member states in terms of participation rates.
- This gives Ireland a lifelong learning participation rate of just under 7%.

There was debate about the nuances of the definitions of types of learning and the validity of the data.

10. **Any other business/Next meeting date**

JMcG (SOLAS) sought clarification on the use of logos on reports that are due for publication soon. It was confirmed that the NSC will have its first meeting towards the end of May 2017 so where reports are published before then the EFGSN and SOLAS logos can be used.

The Group recorded its appreciation of the expertise and commitment of Una Halligan, outgoing chair of the EFGSN. Una chaired the Group since 2009 and was a member since 1999.

The next meeting of the EFGSN will take place on 4th May in DJEI offices, Kildare Street at 11am. The meeting will include a presentation from an OECD representative who will talk about the future of work and disruptors.

EFGSN Secretariat
13th April 2017