

National Competitiveness Council Terms of Reference

1. Establishment

The National Competitiveness Council (NCC) was established by decision of the Government on 2 May 1997. The current Terms of Reference of the Council were revised and approved by Government in March 2018.

2. Work Programme

The Council shall be responsible for the management and direction of its own work programme.

3. Functions

Without prejudice to the generality of Section 2, the functions of the Council are:

3.1 To prepare and submit to the Taoiseach and the Government, through the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation:

- (i) an annual report benchmarking the competitiveness of Ireland's business sector against international peer countries, and
- (ii) an annual report outlining the main competitiveness challenges facing the business sector in Ireland over the medium term, and the policy responses required to meet them.

These reports shall be published following their noting by Government.

3.2 To prepare and publish such other reports on competitiveness issues as the Council considers appropriate, with recommendations on measures required to improve competitiveness. The Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation shall be apprised of these reports prior to their publication.

3.3 To undertake from time to time such other competitiveness related functions as the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation may direct.

3.4 The NCC is responsible for analysing developments and policies in the field of productivity and competitiveness in Ireland in accordance with the European Council recommendation of September 2016 on the establishment of National Productivity Boards by Eurozone countries.

4. Membership

4.1 The membership of the Council will consist of:

- persons with relevant expertise in competitiveness and productivity;
- a range of people with business experience;
- representatives of employer and employee bodies;
- a representative of the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation.

4.2 Council members shall be appointed by the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation, who will also appoint a Chairperson from amongst the members. The Minister shall have regard to maintaining appropriate gender balance in the composition of the Council.

4.3 The number of members shall be at the discretion of the Minister.

4.4 Representation at meetings shall, as a rule, be limited to Council members and nominated advisors.

4.5 The Council may also, from time to time, invite external speakers to address the Council on specific issues.

5. Advisory Representatives

5.1 The following Departments make available representatives to attend Council meetings in an advisory capacity:

- Taoiseach
- Finance
- Public Expenditure and Reform
- Communications, Climate Action and Environment
- Housing, Planning and Local Government
- Education and Skills
- Transport, Tourism and Sport
- Agriculture, Food and the Marine
- Justice and Equality
- Employment Affairs and Social Protection

5.2 The Council may invite additional representatives of Government Departments and Agencies to attend Council meetings in an advisory capacity where appropriate.

5.3 When necessary, alternates may attend on behalf of advisory representatives, with the prior agreement of the Chair.

6. Term of Office

6.1 On 31 December each year three members of the Council shall retire from office.

6.2 Subject to paragraph 6.4, the members to retire each year shall be those who have been longest in office, based on their date of appointment, or re-appointment where appropriate. Where more than three members hold identical periods in office for the purposes of this paragraph, those to retire shall (unless they otherwise agree amongst themselves) be determined by lot.

6.3 A retiring member shall be eligible for re-appointment.

6.4 No member shall serve on the Council for longer than 6 years in total, including any periods for which they were re-appointed as members. A member who has served on the Council for 6 years shall be required to retire on the 31 December of the year in which he/she completes 6 years' membership of the Council.

7. Meetings and Procedure

7.1 Subject to the requirements of this Section, the Council shall regulate its own procedures.

7.2 The quorum for a meeting of the Council shall be not less than five members present.

7.3 The Council will seek to reach decisions by consensus. Where this is not possible, decisions shall be determined by a simple majority of votes of the members present and, in the event that voting is equally divided, the Chairperson shall have a casting vote.

7.4 The Chairperson may at any time call a meeting of the Council or shall call a meeting of the Council at any time when requested to do so in writing by any five members of the Council.

7.5 Views expressed by the Council in its publications or by individual Members of the Council speaking on its behalf, shall not necessarily represent the views of the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation or any Member of the Government.

8. Information

The Council shall keep the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation informed of its activities on a regular basis and the Chairperson shall be afforded the opportunity to present the key findings and recommendations of its work to the Minister, at minimum on an annual basis.

9. Secretariat

The Strategic Policy Division in the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation shall provide the Secretariat to the Council.

10. Confidentiality

The disclosure of information, except in the exercise of their duties, obtained by any member of the Council or any committee or consultative group appointed by it, shall be prohibited.

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