

## Minutes for NCP Meeting 117

Meeting: National Competitiveness and Productivity Council No 117  
Venue: IDA Ireland, Three Park Place, Hatch Street Upper, Saint Kevin's, Dublin 2  
Date: 8.30 am – 10.30 am, Thursday 5 September 2024

### Members Present:

Dr Frances Ruane, Chair  
Michael Taft, Research Officer, SIPTU  
Dr Laura Bambrick, Head of Social Policy and Employment Affairs, ICTU  
Neil McDonnell, Chief Executive, ISME  
Ciarán Conlon, Director of Public Policy, Microsoft Ireland  
Breda O'Sullivan in place of Michael Lohan, IDA  
Leo Clancy, Chief Executive, EI  
Brian McHugh, CCPC  
Bernadette McGahon, IRDG  
Maeve Dineen, Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman  
Liam Madden, Independent Consultant, Semiconductor Industry  
Luiz de Mello, Director at OECD  
Gary Tobin, Assistant Secretary, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment  
Andrew Munro, Department of Justice  
Roshin Sen, Department of Social Protection  
Paul Hogan, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage  
John Shaw, Department of the Taoiseach  
John McCarthy, Department of Finance  
Evin Coady, Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery, and Reform  
Colm Hayes, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine  
Garret Doocey, Department of Transport  
Evin McMahon, Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications

### Apologies

Fergal O'Brien, Executive Director, Lobbying and Influence, Ibec  
Edel Clancy, Musgrave Group  
William Beausang, Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science  
Cian O Lionáin, Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media  
Anne-Marie Brooks, Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth

### Secretariat

Dermot Coates  
Rory Mulholland  
Keith Fitzgerald  
Erika Valiukaite  
Jordan O'Donoghue  
Xiangyi Song

	Action
<p><b>117.1 Chair's Introduction, Minutes &amp; Matter Arising</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Chair opened the meeting.</li> <li>▪ The Chair thanked IDA Ireland for hosting again.</li> <li>▪ The Chair thanked Ruairí Ó hAilín from Enterprise Ireland for attending this meeting and presenting to the Council.</li> <li>▪ The Chair welcomed Jordan O'Donoghue who has joined the Secretariat, and Xiangyi Song to her first Council meeting.</li> <li>▪ The minutes from NCPC meeting 116 were approved.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>117.2 Ireland's Competitiveness Challenge 2024</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Council reflected on the finalisation of the publication of <i>Ireland's Competitiveness Challenge 2024</i>.</li> <li>▪ The Chair thanked the Members for their valuable feedback throughout the process.</li> <li>▪ It was highlighted that the published report has received a significant media attention, including coverage by The Irish Times, RTE, and The Business Post, which underscore the importance of communicating the competitiveness agenda.</li> <li>▪ Members suggested that in future there should be more engagement with political parties so that <i>Challenge</i> recommendations might be included in political manifestos.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>117.3 Pre-Budget 2025 Paper</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Dermot Coates provided an update on the status of the Pre-Budget Outlook 2025 paper.</li> <li>▪ The provisional publication date was suggested as the 12<sup>th</sup> of September.</li> </ul>	Secretariat will circulate a draft to the Council for feedback shortly
<p><b>117.4 Update on the Competitiveness Summit</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Chair gave an update to the Council on the Competitiveness Summit which was hosted by the Taoiseach on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of September.</li> <li>▪ Discussions focused on the three key themes which reflect the Council's new Competitiveness and Productivity Framework: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Adapting to European and Global Disruption (International Environment)</li> <li>○ Enhancing Ireland's Infrastructure Offering (Infrastructure), and</li> <li>○ Supporting Irish Enterprises to Scale and Prosper (Business Environment)</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Dr. Luiz De Mello provided an international perspective on competitiveness, drawing on OECD data.</li> <li>▪ The Council was informed that a Memo for Government will be presented on the following week jointly from the D/Finance and D/ETE on a set of follow-up actions/decisions arising from the summit.</li> <li>▪ Council members discussed the problems of cost disease, whereby technologically stagnant sectors experience above average cost and price increases, take a rising share of national output, and slow aggregate productivity growth. <b>The Council noted that</b> this is not a problem exclusive to Ireland, and was compounded by the inherent problems in measuring productivity.</li> </ul>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Chair expressed gratitude to John Shaw and his team for organising the Summit and emphasised the importance of engagement with Ministers from various Government Departments to ensure consideration of the Council's recommendations for achieving sustainable growth and promoting societal well-being.</li> <li>▪ Members questioned if there is a role for the Council to act as an advisory board for the implications of proposed policy.</li> <li>▪ Council members suggested IGEES should carry out more regular economic evaluation of policies and should do so at an earlier stage.</li> <li>▪ Members also identified that one obstacle to successful policy implementation was a lack of expertise and the ability to keep expertise within Departments due to Civil Service progression structure.</li> <li>▪ The Council also discussed the complexity within Government structures, especially how civil servants contribute to decision-making processes and how these can be streamlined.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>117.5 Presentation from Enterprise Ireland</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ruairí Ó hAilín made a presentation in regard to how Enterprise Ireland is looking at firm productivity – <i>Productivity Engagement Approach</i>. This presentation focused on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Productivity visualisation tools in use in EI;</li> <li>○ Productivity-focused client engagement approach.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ The Council engaged with the new approach and welcomed the insights available from this data, particularly regarding industry variation and market conditions.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>117.6 Upcoming Work</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Secretariat provided an update on the upcoming work, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The creation of the data insights series, using Flourish to showcase Ireland's competitiveness in comparison with other leading competitive countries, conducting peer comparisons within Europe and visualizing various aspects of Ireland's rankings.</li> <li>○ There is work underway on a Retrospective Review report which aims to evaluate the Government follow up to the Council's recommendations between 2020 and 2023. The Secretariat aims to publish this by the end of this year.</li> <li>○ The Secretariat also proposed that the next Regional Seminar (Q1 2025) will be held in Waterford.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Dermot Coates (Head of Secretariat) provided an update on the DETE-ESTI Joint Research Programme. It was noted that the Steering Group had met on the 15<sup>th</sup> August to discuss potential projects and timelines for the next phase of the programme which will run to 2026. It is provisionally proposed that the new phase of the research will include three themes: <i>Policy Impact and Data, Productivity Dynamics, and Twin Transitions</i>.</li> </ul>	<p>Secretariat and the Chair will continue to update the Council Members on these items</p>

#### 117.7 AOB

- Gary Tobin noted the Draghi Report is due for publication on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> September, and that it will likely have significant implications for the competitiveness and productivity landscape across Europe.
- Brian McHugh expressed the hope that the CCPC's recommendations will be seriously considered by Government in Budget 2025.
- Date for the next Council meeting:
  - 21<sup>st</sup> November 2024 @ at 8.30am, IDA Ireland.