

Minutes for NCP Meeting 115

Meeting: National Competitiveness and Productivity Council No 115
Venue: Department of Foreign Affairs, Iveagh House, Dublin 2
Date: 8.30 am – 10.30 am, Thursday 8th February 2024

Members Present:

Dr Frances Ruane, Chair
Laura Bambrick, Head of Social Policy & Employment Affairs, ICTU
Ciarán Conlon, Director of Public Policy, Microsoft, Ireland
Donal Leahy on behalf of Leo Clancy, Chief Executive, Enterprise Ireland
Neil McDonnell, Chief Executive, ISME
Brian McHugh, Chairperson, CCPC
Fergal O'Brien, Executive Director, Lobbying and Influence, Ibec
Edel Clancy, Group Director of Corporate Affairs, Musgrave Group
Michael Taft, Research Officer, SIPTU
Gary Tobin, Assistant Secretary, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
Liam Madden, Independent Consultant, Semiconductor Industry
Luiz de Mello, Director at OECD (virtually)

Advisors Present:

Ann Marie Brooks, Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth
William Beausang, Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science
Andrew Munro, Department of Justice
John Shaw, Department of the Taoiseach
Garret Doocey, Department of Transport
John McCarthy, Department of Finance
Paul Hogan, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
Evin McMahon on behalf of Lisa Keyes, Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications
Colm Hayes, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
Colin Menton, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform

Apologies

Bernadette McGahon, Research & Innovation Services Manager, IRDG
Michael Lohan, Chief Executive, IDA Ireland
Niall Egan, Department of Social Protection
Cian O'Lionáin, Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media
Maeve Dineen, Chair of Ireland's Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman
Rory Mulholland, Secretariat, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
Karen Hogan, Secretariat, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
Pádraig O'Sullivan, Secretariat, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment

Secretariat

Dermot Coates
Keith Fitzgerald
Erika Valiukaite

	Action
<p>115.1 Chair's Introduction, Minutes & Matter Arising</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Chair opened the meeting. ▪ The Chair thanked the Department of Foreign Affairs for hosting again. ▪ The minutes from NCPC meeting 114 were approved. ▪ The Chair welcomed the members who attended remotely, Luiz de Mello and Liam Madden. 	
<p>115.2 Update on the Recommendation 3.6 from Challenge 2022</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dermot Coates, Head of the Secretariat, provided an update on the paper which is undertaken by the Department on foot of a Council recommendation in <i>Ireland's Competitiveness Challenge 2022</i>. ▪ Council members welcomed the update and had some follow up questions in terms of what concepts and data analysis are covered in the paper. It was also suggested that this paper must be based on evidence and should be published as soon as possible. 	
<p>115.3 AI Information Session with Microsoft Ireland</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ciarán Conlon provided a brief overview of an upcoming AI information session in Microsoft. It was suggested that other topics were also welcomed and could be considered for the session. ▪ Some members expressed interest in energy requirements of data centres and Microsoft's views on energy intensity. ▪ The date for the AI Information Session will be finalised and circulated to the Council members shortly. 	
<p>115.4 Ireland's Competitiveness Challenge 2024</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Keith Fitzgerald (Secretariat) outlined the proposed themes for this year's Challenge report. ▪ It was suggested that this year, as with previous Challenge reports, Chapter 1 will be based on immediate issues facing the economy which will include macroeconomic sustainability as outlined in the Competitiveness Framework. ▪ Based on discussion with members at previous meetings, the following are the themes which should be included in the next Challenge report: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ AI (Competitiveness Framework: Technology & Innovation) ○ Importance of the Single Market (Competitiveness Framework: International Environment) ▪ Members and Advisors were also requested to provide observations in writing on the above themes, as well as input on any other topics which they felt should be raised in this year's Challenge. 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Council Members were invited to share their views on the themes discussed or any additional areas that they feel would be important to address. <p>Members Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Members suggested that thematic approach is important. ▪ It was also agreed with that the Council should look at AI now, and then energy. ▪ Members also welcomed the theme of lifelong learning. ▪ Taxation was suggested as one of the areas of focus, in particular, the marginal tax rate. ▪ Trading and investment also important areas to consider given that some members suggested that Ireland has been taken off the map for future investments and small changes to R&D Credit did just enough to get Ireland into play in terms of investment in engineers. ▪ Council members also suggested to include an overall feature of the environment – more turbulent and volatile context and the implications for competitiveness and productivity. ▪ Planning and legal system were also discussed. There was a focus on judicial reviews, how EU developments interact with Irish legal system and efficiency of courts in different sectors. ▪ Regulatory issues of Single Market as well as administrative burden which is becoming a significant issue were also a concern to Council members. However, some members suggested that this might be a solution and certain firms see regulation as a positive rather than a challenge. ▪ Members welcomed the reference to long-term perspective of labour market issues and suggested that immigration should be mentioned as it is important to Irish labour market. It was suggested that we need to know how to deal with demographic gaps and allow workers to import their life here as opposed to just their labour. 	
<p>115.5 Bulletins Update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Keith Fitzgerald provided an overview of the planned Bulletins for this year. ▪ The Secretariat is currently working on 3 bulletins: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Competitiveness and the Housing Market in Ireland. ○ Competitiveness Framework. ○ Global Innovation Index. ▪ The Secretariat and Chair are hoping to publish all three of these bulletins in the coming weeks. 	<p>Publications will be circulated to Council Members in the coming weeks</p>

<p>115.6 Regional Workshop</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dermot Coates provided an update on the Workshop. ▪ Discussions have been ongoing with the University of Limerick as the hosts for the Regional Competitiveness Workshop. ▪ The University of Limerick is going to come back with provisional dates, but it is anticipated the workshop will take place sometime in April. ▪ The Secretariat will share more details with the Council members when these have been confirmed. 	
<p>115.7 NCPC Engagement and Communications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Chair presented the revised Competitiveness Framework and received positive feedback at KPMG event in Cork. ▪ The Chair has also been invited to present at a LinkedIn conference. 	
<p>115.8 AOB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Date for the next Council meeting: 18th April 2024 @ at 8.30am 	<p>Secretariat will issue invites shortly</p>