

Minutes for NCPC Meeting 107

Meeting: National Competitiveness and Productivity Council No 107
Venue: WebEx
Date: 8.30 am – 10.30 am, Thursday 31 March 2022

Members Present:

Dr Frances Ruane, Chair
Ciarán Conlon, Director of Public Policy, Microsoft, Ireland
David Hegarty, Assistant Secretary, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
Dirk Pilat, Deputy Director for Science, Technology and Innovation, OECD
Martin Shanahan, Chief Executive, IDA Ireland
Leo Clancy, Chief Executive, Enterprise Ireland
Laura Bambrick, Head of Social Policy & Employment Affairs, ICTU
Jim Woulfe, Chief Executive, Dairygold Co-operative Society Limited
Patrick Walsh, Managing Director of Dogpatch Labs
Jeremy Godfrey, Chair, Competition and Consumer Protection Commission
Fergal O'Brien, Director of Policy and Chief Economist, Ibec
Michael Taft, Research Officer, SIPTU
Margot Slattery, ISS World Service, Global Head of Diversity and Inclusion

Advisors Present:

John Shaw, Department of the Taoiseach
Maria Graham, Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government
John McCarthy, Department of Finance
Paul Bolger, Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications
William Beausang, Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science
Jasmina Behan, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
Cian O'Lionain, Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media
Niall Egan, Department of Social Protection
Garret Doocey, Department of Transport
Liam Coen, Department of Justice (Standing in for Andrew Munro)

Apologies

Neil McDonnell, Chief Executive, ISME
Geraldine Hurley, Department of Social Protection
Sinead McPhilips, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
Andrew Munro, Department of Justice

Secretariat

Dermot Coates
Linda Kane
Patrick Condon
Karen Hogan

	Action
<p>107.1 Chair's Introduction, Minutes & Matter Arising</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Chair opened the meeting, and welcomed three new Council Members to their first meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Michael Taft, Research Officer at SIPTU ○ Laura Bambrick, Head of Social Policy & Employment Affairs at ICTU ○ Jeremy Godfrey, the Chair of the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission ▪ As well as new Council Advisors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Garrett Doocey (D/Transport) ○ Jasmina Behan (D/PER) ○ Niall Egan (DSP) ○ Cian O Lionáin (D/TCAGSM) ▪ The Chair noted that Pat Beirne, CEO Mergon Group, had advised her that he is unable to continue on the Council, due to new work commitments. ▪ The minutes from NCPC meeting 106 were approved. 	
<p>107.2 NCPC Engagement and Communications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Chair introduced the agenda item and invited the Secretariat to present on NCPC engagement and communications and to inform the Council of recent developments. ▪ (These updates were outlined in the Discussion paper circulated in advance of the meeting). <p>Domestic Engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The following questions were asked of Council Members: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Does the Council agree that the decision tree is an appropriate tool for deciding where the Council should direct resources? ○ What other means of engagement could be used to improve the Council's interaction with domestic stakeholders? <p>Members comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Members agree with the structure and content included in the decision tree. ▪ Some members suggested that a presentation by the COTW would be of value to the Council. 	<p>Secretariat to consider the feedback and revert to the Council</p>

Regional Stakeholder Engagement

- Two methods for potential consultation were discussed
 - A potential NCPC stakeholder event could be held in a regional location in partnership with a local entity.
 - An online consultation on the NCPC website.
- The following questions were asked of Council Members:
 - How can the Council better incorporate regional issues into our publications?
 - How can the Council improve its engagement with regional stakeholders? Should the Council organise events in different parts of the country to meet with these stakeholders?

Members comments:

- Members noted that there is a lack of data on regional issues in Ireland. Sourcing accurate data is resource and time heavy.
- Members agree that regional engagement is important, and it is vital that the NCPC represent all of Ireland.

European NPB Mandate

- Section 3 of the 'NCPC Engagement' Discussion Paper highlights the evolution of the NCPC into Ireland's National Productivity Board and discusses the recent developments in the Network for the productivity boards.
- The objective of this agenda item is to discuss NCPC engagement and communications with other National Productivity Boards and to discuss how to further engage in this space.
- The following question was asked of Council Members:
 - How can the Council deepen our engagement with the European National Productivity Board Network?

Members comments:

- Council members were supportive of further engagement with the NPB Network.
- One member proposed that the NCPC should focus on comparing Ireland to countries of similar size and attributes.
- One member noted that the NCPC should seek best practice on regional dimension from other NPBs.

IBEC note that they have done work in this area and would facilitate with data.

<p>NCPC Bulletins</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The objective of this discussion is to inform the Council of the latest NCPC Bulletin and the coverage it received as well as discuss upcoming bulletins. <p>Members comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Council members were supportive of a bulletin on inflation. Some noted that although inflation is a global issue, responses to it will diverge amongst different countries. ○ One council member noted that an important role of the NCPC is to spell out the reality of inflation. ○ The Chair thanked members for their comments and suggestions and noted that labour supply in particular is a whole of economy issue which would be one of the larger long-term impacts of COVID-19 related disruption. 	
<p>107.3 Ireland’s Competitiveness Challenge 2022</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There are two parts to this agenda item: ▪ A discussion of the Government Response to the Council’s recommendations and how these are tracked going forward. ▪ A discussion to gather Council Member views on Challenge topics <p>Section 1: Government Response (Chair)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The objective of this discussion is to discuss how to best address the Government Response to Challenge 2021. <p>Issues for Discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>The Council’s well-developed process for issuing targeted, actionable recommendations is a key strength of our existing annual report structure. Are there ways this process can be improved further? How best can the Council monitor progress on past recommendations to ensure tangible improvements are being made?</i> <p>Members comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Council members were supportive of the Secretariat monitoring progress on Council recommendations in order to ensure the Council’s advice gains traction within the policy system. <p>Section 2: Topics for Inclusion in Challenge 2022 (Chair)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The objective of this discussion is to gather Council Member views on Challenge topics. 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inflation/ costs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Members noted that inflation is a global external issue. It is important to focus on domestic cost pressures to avoid inflation issues worsening. The consensus was that we should focus on issues we can control. ▪ One member noted that a productivity lens should be placed over the whole document. ▪ Members noted that it will be difficult to balance the overheating domestic market vs international disruptions. Numerous inflationary pressures, some outside domestic policy levers control. ▪ Labour Market <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ One member raised the topic of examining the positive impact on competitiveness and productivity of collective bargaining. ▪ Two members noted that addressing the labour market is crucial as staff shortages continue to be felt. ▪ One member brought up the National Training Fund Levy. Members agreed that it would be positive to examine the impact this funding can have on compound productivity. ▪ Another member stated that the 'Living wage' should be included in the document. Many other members agreed noting that Tánaiste will likely bring to Government after Easter. 	
<p>AOB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Date for the next Council meeting. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 28 July at 8.30am 	