

Minutes for NCPC Meeting 108

Meeting: National Competitiveness and Productivity Council No 108
Venue: WebEx
Date: 8.30 am – 10.30 am, Thursday 28 July 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
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, Executive Director, Lobbying and Influence, Ibec
Neil McDonnell, Chief Executive, ISME

Advisors Present:

John Shaw, Department of the Taoiseach
Maria Graham, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
William Beausang, Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science
Cian O'Lionain, Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media
Garret Doocey, Department of Transport
Andrew Munro, Department of Justice
Sinead McPhilips, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
Jessica Lawless, on behalf of Jasmina Behan, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform

Apologies

Leo Clancy, Chief Executive, Enterprise Ireland
Margot Slattery, ISS World Service, Global Head of Diversity and Inclusion
Michael Taft, Research Officer, SIPTU
Paul Bolger, Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications
Geraldine Hurley, Department of Social Protection
Niall Egan, Department of Social Protection
John McCarthy, Department of Finance

Secretariat

Dermot Coates
Linda Kane
Patrick Condon
Karen Hogan
Niall Judge
Conor Kavanagh

	Action
<p>108.1 Chair’s Introduction, Minutes & Matter Arising</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Chair opened the meeting. ▪ The minutes from NCPC meeting 107 were approved. ▪ The Chair noted this meeting should be brought forward next year. 	
<p>108.2 Ireland’s Competitiveness Challenge 2022</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Chair introduced the agenda item and invited the Council to engage in discussion around each Chapter’s overall content and recommendations. <p>Chapter 1 – Members comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It was noted that there is a need to acknowledge the State’s ability to deal with growth we have experienced – capacity constraints in relation to housing/infrastructure/energy/waste-water – these are not medium-long term issues and should be foregrounded in the report as immediate issues. ▪ It was also noted that the State is struggling in terms of the capacity of the public sector system - day-to-day services rather than just physical infrastructure, and there are concerns of current spending outpacing capital spending. ▪ It was noted that it is important for Council to stress that although there are factors impacting cost of living which are outside of State control, some are within the State’s control. Make this point up front. <p>Chapter 2 – Members comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Members noted the importance of resource allocation in terms of zombie firms and new firms - could pay more attention to this area. ▪ Members noted that talent is at the heart of innovation – important to attract and retain. Intersection of people and technology drives innovation. Research is part of solution, but not the sole solution. ▪ Members welcomed the reference to harnessing digital and noted the importance of digitalising public services and digital regulation. ▪ It was raised that the chapter has too much focus on existing firms and should say more on conditions to enable new firms. ▪ Members also noted that the impacts of Fit for 55 not quite known yet. The economy will incur a cost – analysis on this would be useful. <p>Chapter 3</p> <p>Members comments:</p>	<p>Secretariat to consider the feedback and revert to the Council</p>

- Members raised the question of a socioeconomic bias in relation to apprenticeships and noted the Council need to be careful of that in terms of framing.
- Members noted there are gaps in Chapter with regards to Lifelong Learning (LLL), in-work training, skills mismatch, the National Training Fund. Members asked whether training vouchers could help incentivise LLL.
- Members noted text around Individual Learning Account's disruptive nature – Council recommends a need to be cautious but if there is room to improve, we should do that.
- Government is grappling with environmental skills needs – this is an evolving space.
- Secretariat provided an update on Michael Taft's written submission of feedback in his absence - with regards to median earnings, we should be referring to purchasing power and peer-group, and labour should not be referred to as a 'cost' but instead employee or labour compensation.
- Members noted that in respect to digital, the issue is looking at basic digital literacy and the concept of 'leaving no-one behind'. There is an alignment here with looking at underrepresented groups. Need skills that go beyond just digital and broaden to skills driving organisational change.
- Members noted that the Pensions Commission recommendation should be linked in with older workers.
- It was noted that apprenticeships are not covered by min/living wage. They are a key area for transition, but so is engineering and other occupations.

Chapter 4

Members comments:

- Members noted the importance of regulatory certainty. Timing is an issue. Certainty of timescales are important. Government looking at marine space, planning permission and grid connection.
- It was noted that bid-rigging – can add to costs – look at 'Hamilton Review' – useful for council to support implementation of recommendations.

Chapter 5

Members comments:

- Members noted that SME financing is something to emphasise. Worth emphasising problem is not so much availability of credit but how it is provided.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Members noted that legal costs should broaden to include others than litigation and should be a recommendation. ▪ It was noted that the ability for successful defendant to recover costs is an issue. ▪ It was raised that time to resolution is another cost. ▪ Members noted that great to see childcare included, and text should focus more on cost to parents. Issue is with 2 parents and 2 children and there is a need to improve subsidies. 	
<p>108.3 NCPC Bulletins 2022</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Secretariat provided the following update: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 3 new bulletins since previous meeting in March (Inflation, IMD Competitiveness Rankings, NCPC 25 Year Anniversary). ○ Very good media engagement overall. ○ Proposed topics for remainder of 2022 include Climate Action, Living Wage and International Trade. ○ Members are welcome to send suggestions on other topics. 	
<p>AOB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Will provide written update of DETE-ESRI steering group. ○ Date for the next Council meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 20th October 2022 @ at 8.30am 	