

Minutes for NCPC Meeting 106

Meeting: National Competitiveness and Productivity Council No 106
Venue: WebEx
Date: 8.30 am – 10.30 am, Thursday 2 December 2021

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
Neil McDonnell, Chief Executive, ISME
Kevin Callinan, General Secretary, Fórsa
Micheál Collins, Assistant Professor of Social Policy, University College Dublin
Martin Shanahan, Chief Executive, IDA Ireland
Leo Clancy, Chief Executive, Enterprise Ireland
Pat Beirne, Chief Executive Officer, Mergon Group
Brian McHugh, Head of CCPC (Acting)

Advisors

John Shaw, Department of the Taoiseach
Maria Graham, Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government
Ray O'Leary, Department of Transport
Sinead McPhilips, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
John McCarthy, Department of Finance
Georgina Hughes Elders, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
Paul Bolger, Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications
William Beusang, Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science
Jasmina Behan, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform

Apologies

Jim Woulfe, Chief Executive, Dairygold Co-operative Society Limited
Patrick Walsh, Managing Director of Dogpatch Labs
Geraldine Hurley, Department of Social Protection
Fergal O'Brien, Director of Policy and Chief Economist, Ibec
Isolde Goggin, Chair, Competition and Consumer Protection Commission
Andrew Munro, Department of Justice
Margot Slattery, ISS World Service, Global Head of Diversity and Inclusion

Secretariat

Oliver Gilvarry
Linda Kane
Patrick Condon
Karen Hogan

	Action
<p>106.1 Chair's Introduction, Minutes & Matter Arising</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Chair opened the meeting, and welcomed Brian McHugh, acting head of the CCPC and Jasmina Behan from D/PER. ▪ The Chair noted that today is the last Council meeting for two members, Micheál Collins and Kevin Callinan, and thanked them both for their contributions to the Council over the years. ▪ The minutes from NCP meeting 105 were approved. 	
<p>106.2 Work Plans 2022</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Chair introduced the agenda item and invited the Secretariat to go through each of the pieces of work under consideration for the 2022 work plan (these were outlined in the Discussion paper circulated in advance of the meeting). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Preparation of Ireland's Competitiveness Challenge 2022 ▪ The Secretariat asked members comments on the two questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Does the Council believe that an earlier discussion on the topics to be included in Ireland's Competitiveness Challenge 2022 is appropriate? Should this list of topics be finalised at the March 2022 meeting? ○ Is the July 2022 meeting the appropriate moment to secure Council sign-off on a near complete Competitiveness Challenge 2022? How might written procedures be incorporated into the approval process? <p>Members comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Members agreed with the plan to present a proposed list of topics at the March meeting. However, it was noted by some members that flexibility after this point may still be necessary. ○ Members agreed that the sign-off in July is appropriate. ○ It was agreed that a written procedure could be implemented if absolutely necessary. ○ Members agreed that it was important to have an introductory piece highlighting the current state of the economy, with appropriate data. ○ Other NCP Reports <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Secretariat asked for members comments on the following questions: 	<p>Secretariat to consider the feedback and revert to the Council</p>

- Should the Cost of Doing Business report and the Competitiveness Scorecard be combined indefinitely?
- What publication schedule do Council Members and Advisors believe is most appropriate for the Competitiveness Scorecard?
- Are there opportunities to coordinate with other bodies also producing similar data analysis?

Members comments:

- Some members noted they find the data provided in these reports useful for Budget Submissions and noted that these data were seen as objective whereas relying on their own organisation's data can lead to a question of partiality.
- Members noted that merging the two reports makes sense as it reinforces the analysis and may be helpful to make a more explicit connection if there are overlapping indicators.
- Members recognised that the issues the Secretariat raised in the discussion paper in relation to data sources means it is unlikely to be able to produce a standalone indicators report in 2022.
- Members noted that to fulfil the remit of the Council an annual statement of competitiveness is important. The Chair asked if members would see this as a longer annual bulletin-type on key metrics with a major report published every 3 years. Some members noted moving to a 3-year interval could be too spread out depending on developments and that the annual report should not be too short. Reference was made to exploring other reporting models such as those of the OECD.
- The Chair pointed out that Northern Ireland is producing similar reports and that completely separate reports could be seen as underestimating effective competitiveness on the island. Some members agreed that looking at these reports together sounded like a good idea, especially if Northern Ireland is already collecting useful data.
- Members noted that with rising inflation the CODB report may be more important now than in previous years.
- Members pointed out that indicators do not move much year to year, and if there was an annual statement and deeper analysis every 3 years, they would endorse the direction of travel.
- [NCPC Bulletins](#)

- The Secretariat asked for members comments on the following three questions:
 - Does the Council feel the decision to focus on Bulletins rather than the Competitiveness Scorecard in 2021 has improved our communications?
 - Do Council Members and Advisors wish to replicate broadly this pattern in 2022?
 - If so, what topics do Council Members and Advisors feel the Secretariat should prioritise in 2022?

Members comments:

- Members agreed the bulletins are working well and the consensus was to continue with the same approach.
- Members noted the importance of topics, good communication, international sources, real time data and the role the Council plays in triggering debate.
- Members raised the following possible topics 2022 bulletins and made related observations:
 - Inflation
 - Perhaps too big a topic on its own, so can look at different elements.
 - Labour Market
 - Accessing the labour market is difficult for many at the moment.
 - Activation and lower income households – people choosing to stay out of employment so as not to lose access to housing.
 - Labour Supply was boosted in the 90s by EU enlargement, and Ireland will not likely see that boost again. This issue is topical for MNE's.
 - Low levels of female labour participation and lifelong learning.
 - Entrepreneurship and innovation – spirit of achieving a more balanced economy and reducing concentration. The Chair noted this was linked with the most recent bulletin on Firm Dynamism.
 - Re-enforcing previous Council content on important matters, e.g., trade restructuring, changing tax structure, infrastructure deficits.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate and Energy – Domestic issues around energy, plans for the transition to a lower carbon economy and the infrastructure requirements. • Climate Justice and Migration – big topic in European sphere. • Climate change agenda for certain sectors and impact in CODB. ○ Members noted that the CCPC has a research team which will be working on competition policy issues in 2022, for example, economic concentration rates over time, entry and exit in markets and profit margins over time. ○ The Chair thanked members for their comments and suggestions and noted that labour supply in particular is a whole of economy issue which would have large long-term impacts. 	
<p>106.3 NCPC Engagement and Communications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Secretariat provided an update on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government Response • Joint Oireachtas Committee • DETE-ESRI Research Programme • Latest NCPC Bulletins 	
<p>AOB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Date for the next Council meeting. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Secretariat will confirm dates before the end of the year. 	