

Minutes for NCP Meeting 118

Meeting: National Competitiveness and Productivity Council No 118
Venue: Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, 23 Kildare St, Dublin 2.
Date: 8.30 am – 10.30 am, Thursday 21 November 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
Fergal O'Brien, Ibec
Michael Lohan, IDA
Leo Clancy, Chief Executive, EI
Pat Kenny, in place of Brian McHugh, CCPC
Bernadette McGahon, IRDG
Edel Clancy, Musgrave Group
Maeve Dineen, Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman
Liam Madden, Independent Consultant, Semiconductor Industry
Gary Tobin, Assistant Secretary, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
John O'Toole, in place of Niall Egan, Department of Social Protection
Paul Hogan, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
John Shaw, Department of the Taoiseach
Evin Coady, in place of Colin Menton, Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery, and Reform
Robert O'Driscoll, in place of Colm Hayes, Department of Foreign Affairs
Garret Doocey, Department of Transport
Evin McMahon, in place of Paul Bolger, Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications
Maria Dunne, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

Apologies

Luiz de Mello, Director at OECD
Andrew Munro, Department of Justice
John McCarthy, Department of Finance
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>118.1 Chair's Introduction, Minutes & Matter Arising</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Chair opened the meeting. ▪ The Chair thanked the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment for hosting. ▪ The Chair welcomed Maria Dunne to her first Council meeting as the departmental advisor from the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine. ▪ The minutes from NCPC meeting 117 were approved. ▪ The Council discussed a number of geo-political developments, such as the publication of Draghi Report, and the election of Donald Trump as the President of United States. It was suggested that the Council remain agile and responsive as the geo-political situation develops, and that the Council remain focused on addressing those factors that are within domestic control. ▪ IDA and Enterprise Ireland agreed to present at the next meeting, with a focus on how these developments might influence indigenous businesses and foreign direct investment in Ireland. 	
<p>118.2 Government Response to Challenge 2024</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Members reflected on the publication of the Government response to <i>Ireland's Competitiveness Challenge 2024</i>. ▪ The Council specifically looked at Recommendation 1.3 and requested an update on progress made by the Companies Registration Office. ▪ The significant length of the <i>Challenge</i> report was raised and it was suggested that in future, the report should provide a more succinct summary alongside the main report. ▪ The success of the Competitiveness Summit was noted. ▪ There was a discussion regarding NCPC engagement with the political system in relation to a future Programme for Government, noting the ongoing election. 	
<p>118.3 Workplan for Q4 2024 and 2025</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Head of Secretariat (Dermot Coates) provide an update on the Workplan. ▪ It is planned that the Challenge 2025 report will be finalised for publication in May, ensuring better alignment and separation from the annual Budgetary process. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This also suggested that the quarterly Council meetings have to be arranged to support this timeline. ○ The Secretariat will issue a template where members can suggest key themes for the report and returned by January. The input will be collated and presented at the February meeting, following which drafting by the Secretariat can begin. ○ A first draft of the report including recommendations will be issued by the Secretariat for consideration of Members and Advisors. Following written feedback received by Council thereafter, the Secretariat will incorporate this into the Report. ○ The final version of the Report to be issued to Council ahead of the following Council meeting which is proposed at the beginning of May. The Report will 	

<p>need to be finalised immediately after to be ready for submission to Government.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Similarly to this year, the Council will issue a Pre-Budget Outlook paper focussing on any issues identified in the Challenge next year, where recommendations are relevant for Budget 2026. ▪ Members discussed the idea of using social media to inform a wider audience about the Challenge 2025 report. 	
<p>118.4 NCPC Communications and Engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Chair reflected on the changes to the Council’s website, with improved accessibility for users and new design while also encouraging members to provide any feedback for further improvements. ▪ Gary Tobin from DETE reflected on the recent engagement in the 2024 Small Advanced Economies Initiative (SAEI) Principals meeting in Helsinki. There were a number of issues discussed such as competitiveness, trade policies, green transition, and quantum computing which are also relevant to the work of the Council. ▪ Members discussed some other concerns, such as labour and house shortage, as well as capacity issues, that may also be the key themes for the upcoming SAEI meeting in Dublin next year. 	
<p>118.5 Discussion with AI Advisory Council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bronagh Riordan, Chair of the subgroup of the AI Advisory Council on Ireland’s AI Ecosystem, provided an overview of her work which followed by a discussion with the Council. ▪ The AI Advisory Council is open to further engagement with the NCPC in relation to the Recommendation 5.2 in <i>Challenge 2024</i> report, which highlights the need to increase investment in AI and foster opportunities to strengthen Ireland’s competitiveness, to remain the leading position globally. ▪ Members pointed out that Ireland has a lot of areas requiring development. AI Advisor Council may bring a strong improvement to the structure, and more opportunities. 	
<p>118.6 New Research on Productivity by NERI</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Chris Smart from the Nevin Economic Research Institute, collaborated with Michael Taft, produced a research paper <i>“Productivity in Ireland’s Domestically-Owned Market Economy: a Comparative Survey”</i>. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Chris pointed out that Ireland’s economy heavily relies on foreign-owned firms, with domestic productivity lagging significantly. This requires targeted analysis to address these challenges. ○ It was suggested that transport and hospitality are underperforming in terms of productivity, while administrative services and professional/scientific sectors show higher productivity levels. 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ The presentation isolates domestic productivity to encourage research on improving competitiveness and sustaining Ireland’s leading economic position.▪ A short Q&A followed the presentation with members welcoming research results from this project, and further discussions took place in terms of the methodology used and reflecting on specific sectors.	
<p>118.7 AOB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Date for the next Council meeting:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ 13th February @ at 8.30am	