



Minutes of the 436th NESC Council Meeting, 19th December 2019

The meeting took place in the Clock Tower, Department of Education, Dublin 1.

Attendance: Elizabeth Canavan (Chair), Brid O'Brien, Sean Healy, James Doorley, Karen Ciesielski, Oonagh Duggan, Kate Ruddock, Sean Armstrong (DHPLG), Garrett O'Rourke (DPER), Feargal O'Brolchain (DoF), Ian Talbot, David Hegarty (DBEI), Geraint Ellis, Edgar Morgenroth, Patricia King, Philip Hamell, Michelle Norris, Sinead O'Flanagan, Anthony McCashin, Rónán Hession (DEASP), Ciarán Lawlor (DEASP), Joe Cunningham, Kevin Callinan and Damien McDonald.

Secretariat: Larry O'Connell, Anne Marie McGauran, Damian Thomas, Helen Johnston, Jeanne Moore, Cathal FitzGerald, Noel Cahill, Edna Jordan, Sinéad Nic Coitir, Barry McGee and Sinead Mercier.

Apologies: Eleanor Denny, Paul Donnelly, Denis Duggan, Orlaigh Quinn (Dave Hegarty attending), John McCarthy (Sean Armstrong attending), Derek Moran (Fergal O'Brolchain attending), Robert Watt (Garrett O'Rourke attending).

1. Minutes of the Meeting September 2019

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed without amendment.

2. Transition Teams: Dr Cathal FitzGerald presented the draft report, *Addressing Employment Vulnerability as Part of a Just Transition in Ireland*. He outlined three parts: an ambitious focused approach to low carbon and digital transition; the synergies of an inclusive and just transition approach; and policy recommendations to manage the impact on vulnerable workers, firms and sectors. He thanked the members of the Working Group and the Chair, Dr Sinead O'Flanagan. The Council welcomed the report and there was a wide-ranging discussion focused on the importance of a sustainable inclusive Ireland which focuses on jobs, but not exclusively; practical applicability of the report; good governance and the range of players required to ensure a just transition; the need for a bold vision; early intervention in training needs and clarity about what high quality jobs are; and the relevance of Brexit preparations and how these can be utilised. It was agreed the report would be finalised through written procedure.

3. Just Transition Review Group: Dr Jeanne Moore outlined the draft Terms of Reference of the Review Group, the approach to membership, and the key steps for 2020. The Council noted this was a considerable undertaking and would have resource implications. The discussion noted the importance of this work, the opportunities associated with Just Transition but also the need to respond to monitor wider and potentially overlapping developments. The Terms of Reference were approved, subject to minor amendment by written procedure.

4. Welfare and Employment in Ireland: Dr Helen Johnston provided an overview of the draft report, *Irish Social Welfare: Future Trajectory and Specific Reform Proposals* and background paper, *Welfare and Employment in Ireland: Challenges Facing the Welfare State*. The Council welcomed the papers and noted they represented a comprehensive approach that looks in a fine-grained way at Irish social welfare policy. The Council noted that while the trajectories outlined are important, as well as the challenges, there is a need to make the case compelling as to what needs to change. Key points in the discussion included: illustrating changes for people, what the costs and trade-offs are, and the impact of wider policy changes to pensions and quality public services. It was agreed the work would be revised and discussed again at the next Council meeting.

5. Council dates for 2020: Chair highlighted the agreed dates for four Council meetings in 2020.

The next meeting will take place on Thursday, 26th March 2020.