



## An Chomhairle Náisiúnta Eacnamaíoch agus Shóisialta National Economic & Social Council

### Minutes of the 433<sup>rd</sup> NESC Council Meeting, 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2019

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

**Attendance:** Elizabeth Canavan (Chair), Shay Cody, Joe Cunningham, Garret Doocey (DTTAS), Laura Behan, (DTTAS), Geraint Ellis, Brid O'Brien, Sean Healy, James Doorley, Damien McDonald, David Hegarty (DBEI), Oonagh Duggan, Michael Ewing, Kate Ruddock, Ian Talbot, Paul Donnelly, Philip Hamell, Liz Canavan (Chair), Diarmuid Torney (DCU), Laura Devaney (DCU), Colin Ryan (DHPLG), Sinead O'Flanagan, Eleanor Denny, Feargal O'Brolchain (DoF), David Maloney (DPER), and Rónán Hession (DEASP)

**Secretariat:** Rory O'Donnell, Anne Marie McGauran, Damian Thomas, Helen Johnston, Jeanne Moore, Cathal FitzGerald, Larry O'Connell, Noel Cahill, Edna Jordan, Richard Holland, and Sinéad Nic Coitir.

**Apologies:** Patricia King, Orlaigh Quinn (Dave Hegarty attending), John McCarthy (Colin Ryan attending), Derek Moran (Fergal O'Brolchain attending), Robert Watt (David Maloney attending), John Enright, Edgar Morgenroth, and Tom Parlon.

NESC Deputy Chairperson, Liz Canavan opened the meeting, and welcomed a new member – Joe Cunningham of ICTU.

#### **1. Minutes of the Meeting Dec 2018**

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed without amendment.

#### **2. Transport and Climate Change Policy :**

Dr Laura Devaney (DCU) gave a presentation on the report co-authored with Dr Diarmuid Torney (DCU) on **Advancing the Low Carbon Transition in Irish Transport**. Dr Rory O'Donnell outlined a draft report, 'Climate Change Policy: Getting the Process Right', drawing on NESC analysis and the DCU report. Members noted Government's key role is coordination, vision-setting and providing reassurance to the public. It was argued that a research entity, linked to the new Climate Action Council, is needed, as is greater spending on infrastructure for public transport. SEAs need to take climate change impacts into account. The report should emphasise the social dimension of transport, and the co-benefits of decarbonising transport; and should spell out the next steps. It was suggested that the SDGs offer an overall framework to ensure policy coherence. Any action plan should measure the impact of measures taken, and clarify where ultimate responsibility lies. Businesses are ready to do more, but action is harder in isolation. Society is more advanced in this area than we think, and the report should stress the urgency of the climate situation. In closing the discussion, the Chair noted that the report would feed into the emerging government climate Plan. It was agreed that the report (with amendments) would be circulated for sign-off and submission to government.

#### **3. Low-Carbon & Digital Transition Project:**

NESC has been tasked under the Government's **Future Jobs Ireland 2019** Strategy to carry out work to support Ireland's transition to a lower carbon and digital future. Dr Larry O'Connell, of the Secretariat, outlined an approach to the work proposed establishment of a Council Working Group to help preparation of a Council report by the end of the year. Members welcomed this initiative and agreed to nominate members of the working group.

#### **4. Transport Orientated Development (TOD):**

Dr Cathal FitzGerald presented the Secretariat's analysis, which was welcomed by members. They made a number of comments: the paper should refer to potential sanctions for non-engagement, and list de-carbonisation as an additional benefit of transport investment. It was suggested that the NESC workshop include a TOD practitioner, along with academic experts. The meeting signed off on the report for publication and the proposal for a workshop subject to minor edits.

#### **5. Welfare and Employment in Ireland:**

Dr Anne-Marie McGauran gave a presentation of a paper, 'Gender, Family and Class Issues in Ireland's Social Welfare System', which is part of a series of papers on Welfare and Employment. Members welcomed the paper's focus on the need to gender-proof the system, particularly the new auto-enrolment savings scheme, but suggested it might further clarify society's values in relation to gender roles, the issue of what is a support and what is a trap, the differences between social assistance and social insurance, and how various aspects of the system interact.

Dr Helen Johnston presented a paper, 'Towards a More Integrated Income Support System?'. She noted that the Secretariat also proposed to look at income distribution and at taxation. Members agreed with the paper's emphasis on the need for supports and services, and stressed the need for caution in rationalising or simplifying means tests. Consideration should be given to piloting a participation or basic income type scheme, with a focus on the future of work. A second tier of child support might warrant further attention. An additional point could be made about improving decision-making in order to reduce the number of appeals that are required.

The meeting agreed that a Working Group should be set up to look at all the issues in this series of papers, and that an overarching 'framework' paper should be prepared.

#### **6. Any other business:**

Noting that Richard Holland, Head of Administration in the Secretariat, will be retiring later this month, the Chair thanked him for his hard work, and wished him well in his retirement. She also noted that Director, Dr Rory O'Donnell, will be retiring during the summer, and that work is underway on appointing a successor.

**7. Next Meeting:** It was noted that the next meeting would take place Wednesday 26 June 2019 (since amended to 20<sup>th</sup> because of the National Economic Dialogue).