



Minutes of the 395th NES C Council Meeting, 18th January 2013

This meeting took place in Department of Education and Skills, Marlborough St. Dublin 1, at 10 am.

Minutes of the Meeting of November 2012 were approved.

Attendance: Martin Fraser, Chair, John Shaw, Sean Healy, Caroline Fahey, James Doorley, David Begg, Shay Cody, Mary Daly, Karin Dubsy, Oisín Coghlan, Michael Ewing, Matt McGann, John Moran, Patricia Murphy, Tony Donohue, Ian Talbot, Tom Parlon, Mary Walsh, Michelle Norris, Anna Davies, John McHale, Sean Ó Rián, and Manus O’Riordan.

Secretariat: Rory O’Donnell, Larry O’Connell, Helen Johnston, Anne Marie McGauran, Jeanne Moore, Noel Cahill, Claire Finn, John Sweeney.

Apologies: Pat Smith, Michael O’Sullivan, John Murphy, Niamh O’Donohoe, Edgar Morgenroth, Geraldine Tallon, Brid O’Brien, Seamus O’Donohoe, and Sally-Anne Kinahan.

- 1. Opening Discussion:** The chair invited John Moran, Secretary General of the Department of Finance, to comment on the economic situation. He pointed out that Ireland’s position was much improved in the past year, but emphasised the need to rigorously adhere to the deficit reduction plan. He drew attention to the importance of enhanced competitiveness in Ireland’s economic recovery and requested that NES C consider this in its future work.
- 2. The Social Dimensions of the Crisis:** It was agreed that an amended report would be discussed at the February 2013 meeting.
- 3. Council Work Programme:** There was a wide ranging discussion on possible future work. There was support for the suggestion that the Council should undertake further work on Ireland’s five-part crisis. Members suggested a number of elements that should be included in that work: environmental and natural resource issues, domestic demand, longer-term issues concerning banking and finance, population ageing, the future shape of the welfare state, taxation and service provision, models of service provision, inter-generational solidarity and where Ireland wants to be in the years ahead. The idea of work on emigration was canvassed.
- 4. AOB-Work methods:** Members expressed a desire to improve the working method of the Council. There were different views of the desirability of Council working groups. Regardless of differences on this issue, it was agreed that Council meetings should not be used to set out existing positions rather than engage in real deliberation, address trade-offs and seek agreement on recommendations. Members expressed a desire for greater Council involvement in setting the parameters of projects. It was agreed that the Secretariat would prepare a note on work methods that might be adopted in the forthcoming work on the five-part crisis and other projects.
- 5. AOB-NES C’s Sustainable Development Mandate:** The Director reported on progress during 2012: a Council statement on the ‘Draft Framework for Sustainable Development’, incorporation of Comhar works on the NES C website and allocation of most Secretariat resources and two Council meetings to preparation of two major reports on climate change. Some members expressed a fear that elements of Comhar’s work would not be continued. It was agreed that further discussion on this would take place directly with the Chair.
- 6. The next meeting was set for:** Friday 15th February, Clock Tower, 10.00 am.