



Minutes of the 411th NESC Council Meeting, 20th June 2014

The meeting took place in The Clock Tower, Department of Education and Skills, Marlborough St, at 10 am.

Attendance: Martin Fraser (Chair), Michael Layde, Peter Baldwin, Sean Ó'Foghlú, Paul O'Toole, Niamh O'Donoghue, John McKeown, Michael O'Sullivan, Seán Ó Riain, John McHale, Mary Walsh, Brid O'Brien, Caroline Fahey, Seán Healy, James Doorley, David Hegarty, Oisín Coghlan, Michael Ewing, Karin Dubsky, Tony Donohue, Shay Cody, Sally Anne Kinahan, Frank Allen and John Murphy.

Secretariat: Rory O'Donnell, John Sweeney, Anne-Marie McGauran, Jeanne Moore, Noel Cahill.

Apologies: Mary Daly, Edmond Connolly, Edgar Morgenroth, Ian Talbot, Anna Davies, Tom Parlon, Seámus O'Donoghue, and Pat Smith.

1. **Minutes of the Meeting of May 2014** were approved.

2. **Ireland's Labour Market Structural Reforms:** John Sweeney of the Secretariat made a presentation summarising the paper before the Council and outlined possible options for ongoing NESC work in this area. The Chair thanked him for this, and asked for Council reflections on the paper. There followed a wide ranging discussion of labour market policy in which there were diverse views on the likely success of the main reform programmes in place.

Among the issues raised were: the strong focus of both Intreo and JobPath on those on Jobseeker's Allowance although joblessness is wider than that; the challenges facing young people; the need for close links between activation policies, on the one hand, and FET and higher education, on the other; how JobPath will link with other public services which jobseekers need (e.g. childcare); the importance of linking employers to the development of FET; the challenge of merging the cultures of different State organisations; the importance of wider labour market conditions for activation; the increasing polarisation of jobs and the job opportunities which the LTU are able to take up and the importance of avoiding the no-pay-low-pay cycle; the value of local labour market knowledge in providing quality services; the evidence for the effectiveness of the JobPath approach; the need for good evaluation, possibly longitudinal, and the need for evaluation to recognise the progression of individuals from their starting point; the need to invest in the staff of Intreo and JobPath; the possible contribution of NESC's existing work on institutions and quality service provision to addressing the challenges now faced in building new activation and FET systems; the possibility that, in ongoing work on labour market policy, NESC might focus on the regional dimension of employment markets. A number of departmental and agency officials responded to the discussion, including the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Skills, the Secretary General of the Department of Social Protection and the Mr Paul O'Toole of Solas. All outlined how some of the issues raised in the discussion were under consideration or being addressed. The Secretary General of the Department of Jobs, Enterprise & Innovation informed the Council of progress in preparing the Action Plan for Jobs 2015 and offered to brief the Council further on this in the autumn.

The Chair concluded that the labour market is evolving and worth thinking about for long-term study. He will reflect on this and NESC may come back to it later in the year.

3. **Other Business:** None

The next meeting was set for: **Friday, 18th July**, Clock Tower, 10.00 a.m.