

## **Minutes of the 420<sup>th</sup> NES Council Meeting, 15<sup>th</sup> May 2015**

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

**Attendance:** John Shaw (Chair), Michael Ewing, Oisín Coghlan, Karin Dubsky, Siobhán Egan, Michael O'Sullivan, Seán Ó Riaín, Mary Walsh, Anna Davies, Gavan O'Leary, Bríd O'Brien, Karen Murphy, Seán Healy, David Hegarty, Owen Ryan, Ian Talbot, Shay Cody, Frank Allen, Edmond Connolly and John Murphy.

**Secretariat:** Rory O'Donnell, Larry O'Connell, Anne-Marie McGauran, Jeanne Moore, Helen Johnston, Damian Thomas, Noel Cahill and Richard Holland.

**Apologies:** Patricia King, James Doorley, Mary Daly, Pat Smith, Tony Donohoe, Tom Parlon, John McCarthy, Edgar Morgenroth and Seamus O'Donohoe.

- 1. Minutes of the Meeting of March 2015** were approved.
- 2. Discussion:** Dr Jeanne Moore gave a presentation on the Council paper *Environmental Sustainability: Engines for Innovation and Ambition*, and the accompanying research paper, *Greening Ireland? Two Irish Case Studies*. The issues discussed included the extent to which the policy areas studied were focused on environmental sustainability, what the outcomes of these case study policies were, the context in which these policies developed and operate, the input of environmental groups to the research, the importance of communicating the concept of sustainable development to citizens, the extent to which those affected by environmental policies can input to shaping these policies, how policy can focus on the potential of the green economy, whether the upcoming UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) or the EU Semester process can provide an engine to drive environmental sustainability. The Council agreed that the report, and the accompanying paper, will be agreed by written procedure.
- 3.** A discussion followed of the second Council paper, *Ireland's Recovery: Developments, Learning, Prevailing Narratives and Challenges*. A number of issues were raised, including how Ireland can avoid its propensity to move from crisis to crisis, how to address long-standing structural issues and inequalities and not return to previous norms, if world class public services can be financed with a reduced tax take, public willingness to pay for public services, the extent of real reform in the public sector and what changes are needed for it to provide world-class public services. It was suggested that the report should be framed around underlying challenges for Ireland and the key hard choices to be made in policy. Key challenges to address include jobless households, domestic enterprise, social services, housing, urban infrastructure and land, environmental sustainability (including climate change), and taking further the public sector reform agenda in order to facilitate tailored capacitating services and accountability. It was agreed that the Secretariat would identify key themes and issues and prepare analysis of strategic challenges. It was suggested that the work refer to the National Risk Assessment.
- 4. Other Business:**  
The chair commended Dr John Sweeney for his huge contribution to NES work and public policy as a leading expert on activation and education, and wished him well in his retirement.

The next meeting was set for: **Friday, 19 June 2015**, Clock Tower, 10.00 a.m.