

APJ 2017 Agency Clients Advisory Group – Enterprise Ireland

2nd September 2016

Note of Meeting

Chair: Minister Mitchell O'Connor/Minister Breen

Present:

- Brendan Mahon, Banagher
- Alan Coleman, BriteBill
- Declan Hutchinson, Coolrain Sawmills
- John Byrne, Corlytics
- Larry Murrin, Dawn Farm Foods
- Michael Phelan, Endeco
- John O'Brien, O'Brien Fine Foods
- Susan Spence, Softco
- Gerry Reynolds, Takumi

Key issues arising:

- The Minister welcomed the group, set out the background to the APJ process and invited each of the Enterprise Ireland client companies to outline the top 5 issues for their business and the priorities for the Action Plan for Jobs 2017 to further support job creation. This was followed by a general discussion.
- Addressing skills needs is one of the main priorities for the group to support job creation. Among the key issues raised were the need for a greater focus on developing "work ready" graduates; expanding the skills pool particularly in sectors where there are skills shortages (e.g. ICT, fintech); shorter, more intensive training courses (3-6 months) to address particular skills needs (e.g. coding, data management); and prioritising middle management training. Recent developments to increase apprenticeships are welcome but greater awareness of the employment opportunities, particularly among parents is required.
- Measures to mitigate the likely impact of Brexit on exporters were discussed – these included supports for enterprise to improve productivity (e.g. Lean) and to diversify into new markets, and measures to control business costs and reduce the administrative burden.
- The group also highlighted the need for more investment in infrastructure to support our growing economy – priorities include the delivery of high speed broadband, high quality mobile phone coverage, improved road connectivity between our main regional centres and addressing congestion in our cities.
- Other issues raised include the role of local authorities in addressing local barriers to enterprise investment and facilitating enterprise and jobs growth; developing alternative sources of

finance and ensuring the cost of credit is competitive relative to EU competitor countries; and facilitating SME access to public procurement opportunities. Consideration needs to be given to developing reference sites.

- Those attending were reminded that the Agency Clients Advisory Group is subject to the Transparency Code.

Also in attendance:

- John Murphy, Secretary General, Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation
- Declan Hughes, Assistant Secretary, Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation
- Jim McGrath, Special Adviser to Minister Mitchell O'Connor
- Eugen Forde, Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation
- Wendy Gray, Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation
- Karen Hynes, Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation
- Mary Twomey, Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation
- Fran Atkinson, Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation
- Orla Battersby, Enterprise Ireland