

# INDUSTRY PARTNERS FORUM

8<sup>th</sup> September 2016

Room 12a, Kildare Street

## Note of Meeting

Chair: Minister Mary Mitchell O' Connor/Minister Pat Breen

### Industry Partners

- Susan Dargan, State Street Ireland
- Donal Dennehy, Nutricia Infant Nutrition
- Chris Martin, Musgrave Group
- Martin McVicar, Combilift
- Linda Nolan, Mybio
- Michael O'Donnell, Biomarin International
- Seán O'Driscoll, Glen Dimplex Group

### Apologies:

- Liam Casey, PCH International
- Ciaran Harvey, Pramerica
- Aisling Hassell, Airbnb Ireland, Dublin
- John Herlihy, LinkedIn Ireland
- Eamon Keane, Xpreso
- Louise Phelan, Paypal
- Heather Reynolds, Eishtec
- Dave Shanahan, Adagio Life Sciences

### Key issues arising:

- The main purpose of the meeting was to get the Industry Partners' views on the issues and priorities for APJ 2017, with a particular focus on two of the main issues to support job creation – skills and access to finance.
- The Department of Education and Skills provided an overview of progress to date on delivering skills for a growing economy, including the National Skills Strategy priorities, measures to enhance enterprise/education engagement, rollout of new apprenticeships and addressing skills shortages in particular sectors.
- Among the main skills related issues raised are:

- addressing skills shortages – the continuing shortage of engineering skills is a concern for manufacturing and services sectors; other issues include developing computer programming and digital skills at secondary level, and pooling the provision of specialist skills (e.g. web development, digital marketing, legal services) through innovation hubs for SMEs;
- the availability of ‘work-ready’ graduates – among the proposed solutions are industry placements, management modules in higher education courses and cross-industry apprenticeships. A greater focus on developing soft skills is also required;
- apprenticeships – more apprenticeships and greater awareness of the employment opportunities/career paths are needed. The time taken to get approval for apprenticeships from the Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) is also an issue. It is also important to continue to offer traditional apprenticeships (e.g. butchers, bakers);
- prioritising middle management training – this is a particular challenge for companies that want to scale; and
- ensuring Ireland is an attractive place to live and work to attract mobile talent – key issues include the cost of living, taxation, the availability of rental accommodation/housing, and access to schools/international curriculum.
- The Department of Finance and the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI) provided an overview of initiatives introduced by the State in recent years to improve access to finance and current priorities.
- The discussion focused on barriers to growth and ways to address them including:
  - Other non-banking finance initiatives such as a profit participating loan scheme – this is particularly important given an apparent reluctance of Irish businesses to explore equity financing options;
  - completing the restructuring of domestic SME loans;
  - enhancing the competitiveness of Ireland’s offering in export finance;
  - exploring the use of corporate social responsibility (CSR) as a way to encourage prompt payment and improve the cash flow of SMEs; and
  - facilitating alternative vehicles for lending (e.g. capital markets; fund managers).
- Other issues raised included the implications of the transposition of the EU Accounting Directive for private Irish business.
- The Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation will follow up with the Departments of Education and Skills, and Finance on issues raised with a view to including actions in APJ 2107 to address the issues.
- Those attending were reminded that the Industry Partners Forum is subject to the Transparency Code.

**Also in attendance:**

- Declan Hughes, Assistant Secretary, Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation
- Kathleen Gavin, Department of Education and Skills
- Phil O’Flaherty, Department of Education and Skills
- Eoin Dorgan, Department of Finance
- Nick Ashmore, Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI)
- Máire Flanagan, Department of the Taoiseach
- Keith Kelly, Department of the Taoiseach
- Karen Hynes, Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation
- Paraig Hennessy, Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation
- Mary Twomey, Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation
- Fran Atkinson, Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation
- Alan Power, Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation