

**Minutes of the Meeting**  
**Advisory Group on Small Business (AGSB)**  
**Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2018**

**Attendance**

Minister Pat Breen (Chair)  
Nina Brennan, DBEI  
Eoghan Richardson, DBEI  
Eamonn Balmer, DBEI (Minister's Office)  
Laura Byrne, DBEI (Secretary)  
Hilary Burke, DBEI

Fiach MacConghail, The Digital Hub  
Lorraine Higgins, Retail Excellence Ireland  
Sven Spollne-Behrens , SFA  
Eoghan Hanrahan, Enterprise Ireland  
Sarah Freeman, Chambers Ireland  
Tim Fenn, Irish Hotels Federation  
John Dillane, Top Part Motor Factors  
Edel Gahan, IFA  
Karen Hennessy, Design & Crafts Council of Ireland  
Joe Kelly, National Association of Community Enterprise Centres  
Cora O'Brien, Tax Institute

**In addition:**

Felix O'Kane and Stephen Walsh (DBEI) attended for the discussion on the pre-budget submission.

Ciaran O'Loughlin and Breda O'Brien (DBEI) later joined the meeting to give a presentation on the regulation on Mutual Recognition of Goods.

**Apologies;** Gail McEvoy, CPA Ireland; Neil Mc Donnell, ISME, John Dilane, Top Part Motor Factors; Ian Talbot, Chambers Ireland

**Opening Remarks**

Minutes from October 2017 were approved. The following topics were discussed in detail, main points and actions are attached as follows:

**AGSB Pre-budget Submission**

- Broadband a significant impediment to business especially online
- Online marketing – legitimate retailers trying to compete with cheap imports from outside the EU

- Continued concern of the uncertainty over Brexit and its possible impact
- Access to Finance, Insurance premiums, Local Authority Rates, disparities of Rural vs Urban
- Difficulties SMEs face in comparison to large organisations when attracting talent to Ireland
- VAT rates of 9% (hospitality to remain) and 23% (goods) to be reduced
- Good news regarding high occupancy for Hotels particularly in Dublin and a positive upturn in Community Enterprise Centre occupancy
- Felix O’Kane and Stephen Walsh (DBEI Strategic Policy Division) sat in on the conversation to hear the concerns of the AGSB

**Action:** Request for members to provide submissions 3 weeks in advance of the next AGSB meeting (May 1<sup>st</sup>)

### **OECD – Event in Mexico**

Minister Breen commented on the very positive experience he and his Departmental officials experienced at the recent OCED conference in Mexico and noted the upcoming OECD SME and Entrepreneurship Review of Ireland due to begin shortly before passing over to Eoghan Richardson (DBEI) to provide some detail and expected timeline:

- 18-month process
- Similar conducted already in Canada, Israel and Italy
- Encouraged members to look at recent reviews
- Weeklong event for Stakeholders to be held in June with 5 National Experts attending
- Emphasis on Productivity
- OECD will provide an unbiased view to possible findings
- Outcome will be a strategy document for the way forward with key recommendations
- Broadly welcomed by the AGSB

### **Actions:**

- DBEI to send on OECD stats on productivity
- AGSB to partake in the stakeholder events in June
- More information to follow as soon as available

## European Commission's proposed Goods Package

The regulation on Mutual Recognition of Goods, seeks to help producers sell their products across Europe without any additional requirements if they are lawfully sold in one Member State.

- Presentation made by Ciaran McLoughlin of the NSAI liaison unit of DBEI.
- Applies to sale of goods where no common EU rules apply
- Businesses will complete a self-assessment document (Mutual Recognition Document)– proof to other states of sale in parent country
- Member states still have the right to refuse entry to market – **MRD doesn't guarantee access**
- Companies will have recourse to dispute through SOLVIT if they feel their rights are being denied
- Not much feedback received to date

**Action:** Public Consultation closing 30<sup>th</sup> March, Ciaran invited the AGSB to respond directly to himself ([Ciaran.McLoughlin@dbei.gov.ie](mailto:Ciaran.McLoughlin@dbei.gov.ie)) with additional information outside of the deadline.

## SME Envoy Survey – Start-up/Scale up of Businesses in Ireland

- Survey takes 10-15 mins to complete
- Members encouraged to participate
- Anonymous
- AGSB to encourage own membership to participate
- Targeted investment and supports on an EU scale
- More businesses respond will give a better picture of Irish SMEs

**Action:** DBEI will resend the survey out to the AGSB members

## General Data Protection Regulation – GDPR

Minister Breen expressed his concern to ensure SMEs are as prepared as possible for the implementation on the 25<sup>th</sup> May 2018.

- AGSB members actively promoting across their membership
- Feedback suggests businesses are not prepared enough, some sectors have little real awareness of it
- Businesses are fearful of the implications of a breach of GDPR
- AGSB members have conducted roadshows, information sessions, workshops, created manuals etc
- Request for simple language so that business owners understand their obligations

- Members expressed the lack of capacity in GDPR training – information can be found on the GDPR website <http://gdprandyou.ie/organisations>
- Noted possible advantages for those who get on board quickly – can show they are GDPR compliant

**Actions:**

- Minister Breen noted DBEI will conduct a Social Media Campaign to drive awareness amongst SME sector
- Presentation on GDPR followed by a discussion to be tabled for next AGSB Meeting of Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> May

**AOB – Actions/Requests**

- Next meeting to take place on Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> May, 2.30 pm in Dublin but outside of the Department, venue to be confirmed.
- Presentation on GDPR at the next meeting
- Request for the topic of Insurance to be put on the agenda

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April 2018

Laura Byrne (Secretariat)  
Entrepreneurship and Small Business Policy Unit