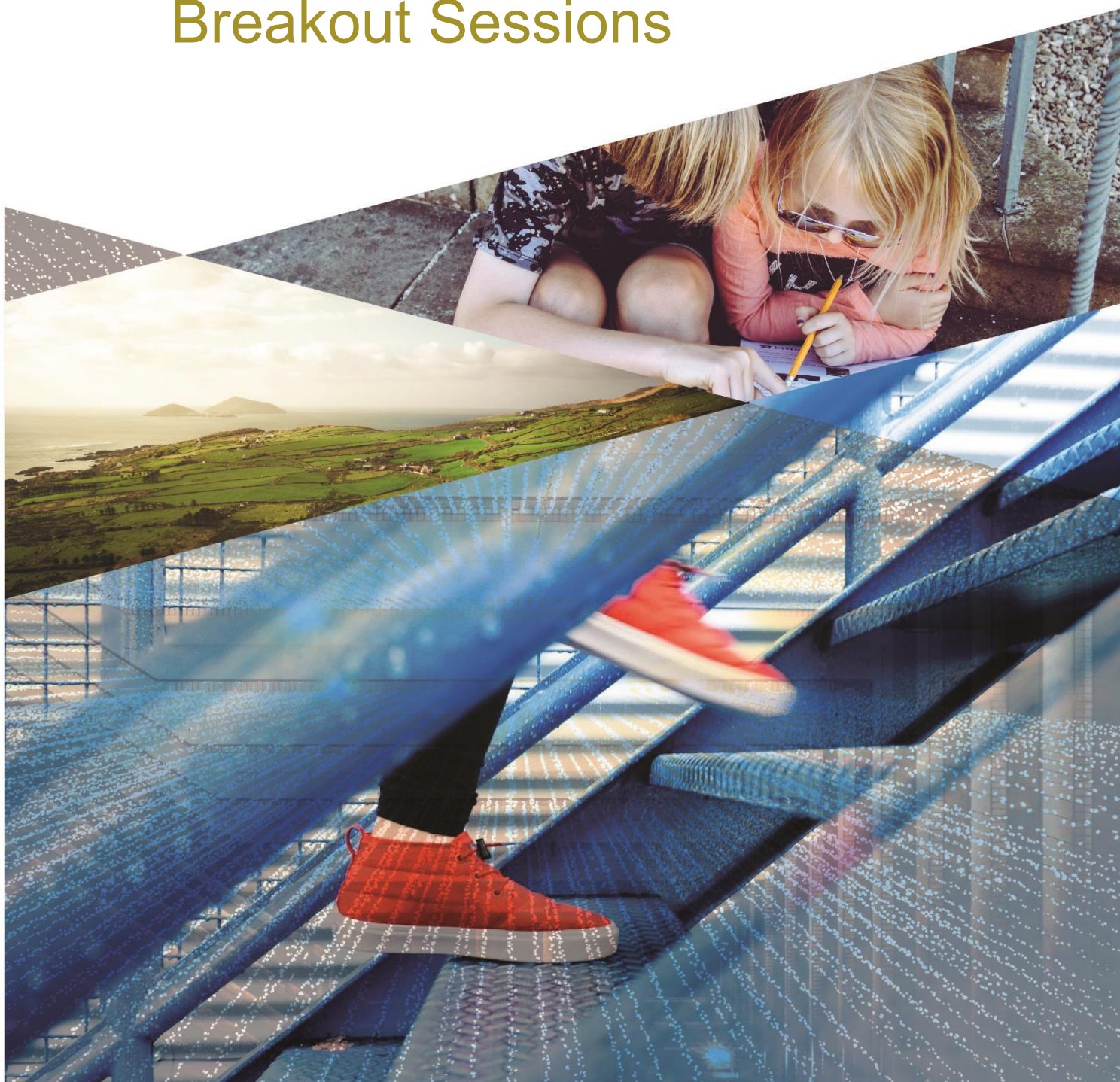Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

FUTURE JOBS
IRELAND

Preparing Now for Tomorrow's Economy

Breakout Sessions

Overview of Breakout Session

This year, three themes are being explored in the breakout sessions:

1. Clustering;
2. New Modes of Working; and
3. Transitioning.

You have been assigned to a Breakout Session as indicated by the colour coding on your name badge. Attendees have been chosen to ensure there is a broad mix of interests and backgrounds.

Each Breakout Session is being chaired by a Government Minister who will be aided by a senior official from their Government Department.

Theme	Minister
Clustering	Minister Humphreys
Clustering	Minister Creed
New Modes of Working	Minister Ring
New Modes of Working	Minister Doherty
Transitioning	Minister Bruton & Minister Breen
Transitioning	Minister McHugh & Minister Mitchell O'Connor

The role of the Minister is to facilitate input by attendees and to get a sense of the key points which the Minister will bring back to the panel discussion.

Separately there will be two notetakers to capture contributions and to allow officials to reflect further on any points following the Summit. As Future Jobs Ireland is not a one-off report, but rather a programme over a number of years that will be built on incrementally, attendees who may wish to provide contributions post-Summit can do so by emailing futurejobs@dbei.gov.ie.

The session will run for approximately an hour. Chatham House rules will apply to allow for an open dialogue.

The following pages give an overview of each of the three themes.

Clustering

Enterprises are more likely to succeed if they are part of a supportive ecosystem which provides opportunities for engagement with:

- other enterprises either within or across sectors with common interests or challenges; and

- a range of other actors that have a role in enterprise development (both domestically and internationally), for example: education and training providers; research and development institutions; enterprise and incubation centres; venture capital and other funders; and public bodies such as enterprise development agencies and local authorities.

Such engagement can be described as 'clustering', while 'clusters' can be defined as concentrations of interconnected companies, specialised suppliers, service providers, firms in related industries and associated institutions that compete but also cooperate. Collaborations through clustering and the formation of clusters can stimulate innovation and increase productivity and competitiveness through knowledge spillovers, access to a specialist talent pool, value chain development and development of specialised services.

Clusters can develop organically through agglomeration dynamics, but their growth, and the extent of productive interrelationships within them can be accelerated within a supportive ecosystem. Because of this, clustering initiatives, i.e. policy interventions that support the emergence and development of formal clusters, are widely used across the EU to support sectoral and technological specialisation and economic development. Cluster policy as promoted by the European Commission has focused on 3 main pillars:

1. Clusters as accelerators for innovation and industrial change
2. Cluster excellence – underpinned by high quality cluster management
3. Inter-regional and international cluster cooperation – promoting cluster collaboration within and beyond Europe

Industry leadership, good governance structures, and dynamic company participation are critical to the formation of effective clusters to ensure that they are focused on enterprise relevant outcomes. Clustering initiatives supported by the State can help to strengthen these interactions and develop linkages in the wider ecosystem. Clustering initiatives span a range of areas including cluster building and management, collaborative innovation and technology development, education and training, linkages and networking, cluster expansion, and international collaboration.

Ireland's current enterprise support framework promotes collaboration, clustering and linkages between enterprises and other elements of the ecosystem through a range supports and initiatives. For example, investments in Research Centres and Technology Centres have been a catalyst for growing industry-academic collaboration, linkages and networks throughout the country and across a range of sectors. Other programmes that are supportive of clustering include:

1. Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland's *Global Sourcing initiative*

2.   The *Regional Enterprise Development Fund* - includes support for enterprise led clustering initiatives
3.   The *Regional Technology Clustering Fund* – focuses on enhancing the capacity of Institutes of Technology as drivers of regional enterprise-academic collaboration and clustering
4.   *Skillnet Ireland* and *Regional Skills Fora* have encouraged the formation of strong networks of industry and education providers

While many of these supports encourage clustering, there is however, a high degree of variability in the extent to which firms in Ireland, who may be sectorally and/or spatially aligned, are making enduring connections with each other on the ground, and with other actors who are of potential relevance to them. It is also the case that potential relationships internationally that are so important in the context of global value chains, could be much more extensively developed through cluster to cluster engagement. As a small economy, comparable in scale to many regions in Europe, it is important for Ireland to ensure we build and scale our clusters to achieve critical mass and impact.

We would like to explore what makes a successful cluster in an Irish context and how we might approach the development of a National Clustering Policy that can shape the supportive ecosystem to facilitate further growth of large scale, self-sustaining, business led clusters, whose scale and influence in an international context can help strengthen the performance of Ireland's enterprises.

Suggested Questions for Discussion

1.   What are the critical successful factors for a successful cluster in an Irish context? For example, how important is it to have formalised cluster organisations and coordinators/cluster managers?
2.   What is the role of Government in supporting the development of formal clusters?
3.   Should the focus of a national clustering policy be sectoral or horizontal or both?
4.   How do we develop or network regional concentrations of companies and other components in a cluster to develop the potential and critical mass of participants?
5.   What more can industry, including industry networks, do to support clustering?
6.   What has been the catalyst for clustering among firms in Ireland?
7.   How can we support internationalisation of clusters, to collaborate, develop new linkages and avail of EU supports?
8.   How can clusters strike a balance between cooperation and competition?
9.   How do such clusters become self-sustaining?

New Modes of Working

Working arrangements and schedules have traditionally been determined by employers' requirements and societal norms. Once, a 9 to 5, Monday to Friday and working on-site pattern was both expected and demanded. Now technological advances, marketplace expectations and societal developments have broadened the spectrum of working options outside of the traditional working pattern. New modes of working include part-time working, job sharing; flexible working (e.g. glide time); full and part remote working (including home-working and hub-working); compressed hours; hot-desking; etc. When such options are of a high quality, they can benefit the employer, the employee and broader society.

New Modes of Working can bring opportunities benefits including:

- Help increase participation in the labour force. Enabling people to enter the labour market helps to raise living standards in a sustainable way for all our citizens and creates a more inclusive society. Increasing the availability of options will particularly benefit those people with caring responsibilities, older people and people with disabilities.
- Stimulate rural and regional growth, lessen accommodation pressures in cities, reduce commuting pressures and support the transition to a green economy.
- Improve participation levels for all groups and help mitigate the risk of overheating the economy by increasing labour supply, addressing skills shortages and managing labour costs. A responsive labour market is important for creating a resilient economy.
- Offer a better work-life balance for employees and can provide solutions for those who would otherwise take unpaid parental leave but cannot afford to do so.
- Help employers attract workers from a larger talent pool which is especially valuable in a tight labour market.
- Make employers more attractive to workers who value flexible working and other options highly. In a tight labour market, employers may not be able to compete in terms of higher wages but can compete in terms of supporting new modes of working.
- Assist employers' customer support services by facilitating working outside of normal business hours.
- Help with staff retention - progressive work practices increase loyalty and motivation resulting in greater productivity.
- Reduce costs and carbon footprint of work e.g. heating and space in office settings; transport emissions etc.

New Modes of Working can also introduce challenges including:

- Not all job roles are suitable for new modes of working e.g. in the retail sector, therefore it must be recognised that there will be differential access across sectors and roles.
- Introducing additional modes of working may increase complexity for management and require additional training, organisational and HR policies, and technologies to assist managers oversee teams.

- Additional complexity may also arise in ensuring that rights and responsibilities, arising from the legal and regulatory employment framework, are respected. For example, occupational health and safety, working time.
- Loss of workplace based personal and social interactions can have a negative consequence for the organisation and employees concerned. This may necessitate the introduction of a structured communications system, for example, scheduled team calls or face-to-face meetings.
- Certain working arrangements e.g. remote working may complicate other important goals for example employee training. Therefore, accessible training channels (online / distance learning) would need to be available.

Research has shown that remote working is growing in popularity in Ireland e.g. Indeed.com found that the number of people in Ireland searching for jobs using the term 'remote working' increased by 171% in 2017. A 2018 Vodafone survey has also evidenced the popularity of remote working with 34% of respondents answering that they would be likely or very likely to move jobs depending on the availability of smart working solutions. Partial remote work is more widespread within organisations than fulltime remote working. In 2016 an Ibec survey of their membership found that 30% (110) of companies had a practice of remote work one or two days per week, while 5% had a practice of remote work five days per week.

Technology supporting new modes of working is continually developing and Ireland's investment in communications infrastructure through the National Broadband Plan will open up further possibilities.

The Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation is conducting research to understand the prevalence and types of remote working arrangements within the Irish workforce and the attitudes towards such arrangements. The research will also identify the influencing factors for both employers and employees partaking in remote working. Under Future Jobs Ireland, the Department of Justice and Equality has committed to commencing a national consultation on the extension of flexible working options to all employees and the development of guidance to facilitate employers to offer more family-friendly working options.

Suggested Questions for Discussion

1. What are the barriers to the greater use of new modes of working in Ireland?
2. What supports could be given to encourage greater adoption of new modes of working?
3. Do workers have a right to request new modes of working, and if not – should they?
4. What downsides are there and how can these be mitigated?
5. What other measures can be adopted to ensure an appropriate work / life balance?
6. Do employees have a right to 'switch off' and how can this be protected?
7. Can we learn from the public sector and is there a role for the public sector in terms of being an employer of example in this regard?

Transitioning

Ireland faces unprecedented structural economic change in the coming decades through the transition away from fossil fuels to a low carbon economy and the digitalisation of the world of work. These transitions will have many complex and challenging implications for our society, some of which are foreseeable while others will be unexpected. However, the scale of the impacts is expected to be profound and will affect everyone in our society, with many workers being forced to retrain for new careers in different or entirely new occupations and industries. These changes will raise challenges for the role of government in shaping these transitions.

As our economy transitions and traditional industries and practices are disrupted, decoupling our economic growth from carbon emissions and capturing the benefits of digitisation and automation will become increasingly critical in maintaining our competitiveness. We must plan for the societal disruption caused by this transition and prepare retraining and reskilling opportunities when possible to ensure individuals and communities can make the necessary changes. Ireland's international reputation and competitive offering could be undermined by failure to address climate change or adopt new technologies. Social dialogue will be important to allow employer and employee representatives to participate and contribute to this process.

Transitioning has been explicitly incorporated as a suite of actions as part of Future Jobs Ireland 2019 and the Climate Action Plan. Both plans have requested that the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) undertake work to further identify possible actions for Government in this area. Under the Climate Action Plan 2019, NESC will develop and establish a Just Transition Review Group to advise the Climate Action Delivery Board, while as part of Future Jobs Ireland 2019, NESC is developing recommendations for Transition Teams which are intended to coordinate the Governments response to the economic disruption at sectoral/regional level associated with the digital and low carbon transitions. NESC will finalise their work by December this year.

In the meantime, the Government has already made some progress developing its approach to transition. In response to the move away from peat-based energy generation, the Government is supporting a Transition Team which has been established in the Midlands. This team is playing a critical role coordinating interventions at a local level to help workers impacted by the wind down. The learnings from this initiative will help inform how the Government organises its response to future economic disruptions associated with the digital and low carbon transitions.

As part of Budget 2020, the Government announced several important initiatives to help manage transition. The appointment of a new Just Transition Commissioner for the Midlands will support a Transition Team which has been established in the region. The Government also ring-fenced €30 million to off-set the impacts of transition in the midlands, including dedicating €6 million for a Just Transition Fund.

Managing transition is going to remain a feature of Irelands economic development agenda for the foreseeable future. The role of policy will be to help workers and businesses prepare and adapt to the challenges presented by technology and decarbonisation of the economy, while also ensuring we are well positioned to take advantage of the opportunities that arise.

Future Jobs Ireland provides a whole of government framework that will enable the development and coordination of policies to effectively manage transition both in terms of the low carbon economy and the digital economy. To help inform how government prioritises its transition policies, this breakout session will explore some of the issues that need to be considered.

Suggested Questions for Discussion

1. How can we identify and engage with vulnerable workers to ensure they can reskill/retrain as occupations and industries change?
2. What skills should be prioritised to help respond to the challenges and opportunities of transition in the years ahead?
3. How do we position our training and education providers to support transition?
4. How can Irish SMEs be encouraged to invest in training to adapt to transition?
5. What sectors/industries are most at risk of disruption from transition over the next decade?
6. How do we improve the capacity of Irish businesses to absorb new technologies and ways of working?
7. What are the skills needs of the emerging green economy?
8. How do we ensure all our regions can benefit from the opportunities presented by digitisation and the transition to a low carbon economy?
9. What infrastructure will be required to harness the opportunities and mitigate the risks associated with the transition to new technologies and the low-carbon economy; e.g. telecommunications, energy, digital infrastructure, etc?

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