

Minutes

**Retail Forum Working Group
Future of Retail – Digitalisation and Skills
Meeting 3
20 May 2022**

CHATHAM HOUSE RULES APPLY

Attendees: Appendix A

Minutes: The minutes from this meeting are to be agreed under Silence Procedure and will be available on www.enterprise.gov.ie

Objective: The **Future of Retail – Digitalisation and Skills** working group is tasked with identifying a set of achievable actions to feed into a Retail Action Plan that will be presented to the Minister for Retail, Damian English T.D. at the Retail Forum meeting on 08 June 2022.

1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed attendees and advised that this is the final meeting of the Working Group and that the actions agreed by this Working Group will be included in the Retail Action Plan.

The Chair added that the Retail Action Plan will also include agreed actions from the Town Centre First/Night-Time Economy and Green Transition Working Groups in addition to recommendations from the Retail Sector Study.

The focus of the meeting was to finalise the draft actions and to provide the Working Group with an opportunity to raise any points not previously discussed.

General Comments arising:

- Some retailers require incentives to get involved in skills development and training opportunities. Financial incentives were suggested as were non-financial incentives to encourage increased participation in skills development and training on behalf of the sector. retail sector in the. It was highlighted that the OECD survey currently underway may address this issue. WG members are inputting to the survey.
- DETE informed the group that it would update it on progress regarding the Leading the Way tool and for the members to drive engagement with the Tool.
- Considering perceived barriers, the Chair asked members to consider what had previously worked. Is it financial, non-financial, marketing, or other support?
- Members advised that they would be happy to have a conversation with DETE on what other sectors are doing to drive participation in skills development and training.
- Members proposed the solution of a dedicated website targeted at retailers for retail specific information on State supports (financial/non-financial). *(The Chair stated how discussions were in train on this issue across all Working Groups and that there would be potential to develop something with DETE for gov.ie*
- Members advised that if a dedicated website would not be feasible, then a dedicated webpage on gov.ie would be a good starting point. Retail career information could potentially be housed on a retail section on the [Careers Portal website](#).

Skills Actions

A discussion followed on each of the draft actions:

Action 1 - Consult with Logistics and Supply Chain Skills group/Hospitality skills group regarding career-path mapping.

DETE said that this is an important area of focus to promote the sector amongst second level and third level students. Action 1 could be joined with other actions, such as action 2 and action 6

Action Ongoing

Action 2 - Map out the mentoring Schemes that exist for the retail sector.

DETE suggested that this action could join action 3 relating to professional development of the retail sector.

Action Ongoing

Action 3 - Identify opportunities for the retail sector in relation to Leading the Way and professional development (CPD).

It was suggested that this is an area to monitor to identify opportunities for the retail sector.

Action Ongoing

Action 4 - Invite Irish Universities Association to present to the Working Group on the development of Micro-credentials

The IUA has met with the secretariat and the Working Group was updated on the work of the IUA microcreds project at a previous meeting. This aspect of the action has been completed. However, it was noted that micro credentials are an exciting opportunity and an action to keep informed about developments in the area was suggested.

Comments arising:

- Members advised of a IUA and Skillnet webinar taking place on Monday 23rd of May *IUA / Skillnet Ireland Webinar: University and Skillnet Collaboration - Why and How?* (DETE issued information on the webinar to members after the meeting).

Action Complete

Action 5 – Explore certification/accreditation etc.

It was put forward that this action may not be relevant as it was acknowledged that there are a wide range of certification opportunities existing for the retail sector.

Comments arising:

- Members expressed the importance of acknowledging training completed by employees.
- Member advised that Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) will be built into micro credentials. RPL is considered throughout the further and higher education training infrastructure.
- SOLAS have published a document called [*Shifting Sands - Navigating the patterns emerging in the Irish labour market post-COVID-19*](#)

The Chair asked members if there is a gap with Retail certification.

Comments arising:

- Members replied that there isn't a gap
- Need for employers to focus on providing training / continuous life-long education opportunities for employees. Owner / Management development is essential – it's a retention tool. This is being addressed in action 3.

Action Ongoing

Action 6 - Map existing skills training for the retail sector

This concerns conducting a gap analysis to identify if there is a need to develop additional retail-specific training.

Action Ongoing

Digital Actions

Action 7 - Explore ways to ensure that retailers with demonstrable and proven potential develop and grow capacity selling online.

The Chair noted how further work (evidence building, data gathering) is required to identify the current gaps in support for retailers to develop their online trading capability. One potential way to look at this would be through a workshop for retailers, Retail Forum members and relevant experts. There is a challenge for retailers who are not exporters to seek support to develop online capability.

Comments arising:

- Not all retailers can avail of supports under the existing criteria for the online trading scheme.
- Members advised that they only have anecdotal evidence concerning the challenges for retailer to start and grow their online presence. No hard data available.
- Retailers with bricks and mortar premises often don't have the time or resources available to attend training / information sessions on online training.

Action Ongoing

Action 8 - Identify level of digitisation (technology) in retail businesses.

DETE Digital Unit updated the group on the new Digital Advisory Forum, and the function of the new AI Ambassador.

The Chair advised that the Retail Forum will continue to seek updates on from the Digital Unit in DETE on the Digital Transition Fund and Digital Advisory Forum and issues impacting on retail.

Comments arising:

- Some retailers are looking to manufacturing processes (e.g., Lean etc) to see how those processes could be incorporated into aspects of a retail business e.g., using data for decision making.

Action Ongoing

The Chair advised members that the final draft action plan will be circulated to all Retail Forum members and Working Group members. Other Departments will be informed of the Actions and their role in achieving them.

Actions Discussed

	Lead	Action	Detail	Timeline
1.	DETE Working Group Members Regional Skills Fora/	Consult with Logistics and Supply Chain Skills group/Hospitality skills group regarding career-path mapping.	The Logistics and Supply Chain Skills group/Hospitality skills group have developed career path illustration/maps to convey what a career in the sector looks like. Explore ways to promote interest in working in the retail sector amongst TY students – a career-path map would help.	Short-term
2	Working Group Members DETE	Map out the mentoring Schemes that exist for the retail sector.	To promote retail as a career of choice.	Short-term
3	DETE Working Group Members	Identify opportunities for the retail sector in relation to Leading the Way	Engage with SME Management Skills Implementation Group. to see potential benefits for retail.	Short-term
4.	DETE	Invite Irish Universities Association to present to the Working Group on the development of Micro-credentials	Micro credentials are being developed for other sectors.	Short-term
5.	Regional Skills Fora/ICTU Working Group Members Irish Universities Association, SOLAS, FE, Education and Training Boards	Explore accreditation/certification opportunities for retail businesses and their workers. Consider opportunities for Industry to work with the ETBs to develop specific retail courses Explore Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) initiatives for retail		Medium-term

6.	DETE Working Group Members	Map existing skills training for the retail sector	There is a need to identify and raise awareness of existing training available to those working in retail and who wish to work in retail.	Medium-term
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DRAFT Digital Actions:

	Lead	Action	Detail	Timeline
7.	Working Group Members	<p>Explore ways to ensure that retailers with demonstrable and proven potential develop and grow capacity selling online.</p> <p>Consider potential of a workshop to focus on setting criteria for new digital scheme to be considered as an Action in the Retail Action Plan</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify and quantify the no and types of retailers that have capability to increase online trading but currently don't meet the eligibility requirements for the ORS 2. Examine how TOV or ORS is currently not delivering for retailers and could be improved upon. 	Medium-term
8.	Working Group Retail Representative bodies, Members DETE	<p>Identify level of digitisation (technology) in retail businesses.</p> <p>Explore funding support for businesses to acquire basic technologies to support their business processes.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Retail sector to identify scale of EPOS Systems in use in active retail enterprises in Ireland. 2. Determine if there are any existing suitable Schemes (National Digital Strategy, LEOs) or incentives to upgrade EPOS systems and if not, what would be needed? 	Medium-term

Appendix A

Digitalisation and Skills Working Group

Attendance List:

Organisation	First Name	Surname
Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment Chair)	Deborah	Dignam
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment	Marc	McEntegart
Chambers Ireland	Shane	Conneely
BWG	Cathy	Kearney
CSNA	Vincent	Jennings
Retail Ireland Skillnet	Róisín	Woods
Regional Skills For a	Natasha	Kinsella

Apologies:

Organisation	First Name	Surname
ICTU	Gerry	Light
Retail Excellence	Duncan	Graham

DETE Officials	Niamh	Martin
	Sandra	Mullen
	Helen	Keane-MacDonough