Minutes

Retail Forum Working Group
Future of Retail – Digitalisation and Skills
Meeting 1 - 08 April 2022

CHATHAM HOUSE RULES APPLY

Attendees: Appendix A

Next meeting: 10am**,** Thursday 28 April 2022

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.   Agenda Items
The Chair welcomed the members of the working group and thanked them for their participation. The agenda items for discussion at the meeting were:

Digitalisation
- Consider how to further support retailers with under 10 to trade online
- Investigate Group platforms for retailers – geographically-based or product-based
- Role of technological developments in retail processes (e.g. AI)

Skills
- Retail as a career of choice
- Aligning sector skills with sector development e.g., are digital skills aligning with digital transformation in retail
- Role of mentoring programmes for retailers and employees

A tour de table followed where each member outlined their ideas and suggestions and issues that they believed were important priorities for the group to work through.

Three meetings of the working group will be held in advance of the 08 June meeting.

2.   Issues/Challenges raised

Digitalisation
- Address how retail enterprises with demonstrable and proven potential who are excluded from current programmes can access supports to develop an online trading presence.
- Under 10 employee's metric is not realistic when considering digitisation supports and does not support SMEs. Needs to consider where retailers are on their digital journey - Take a cohesive approach looking at supports based on where growth and scale.

- Success metrics are too focused on exporting.
- Scalability of Tech – there may be a point at which a business due to the use of technology may not need 10 employees.
- Digital adoption for retailers - must ensure that basic retail infrastructure such as EPOS systems are in place before retailers can develop more sophisticated technologies. Raises considerations around fraud, payments, customer service, complaint management, privacy etc needs to be factored.
- Group platforms are challenging. Retailers need to have the basic infrastructure i.e., up-to-date EPOS system in order to be able successfully participate in such initiatives.
- Digitalisation can assist in the operational aspects of retail but there is a need for employees to develop more soft skills to drive experiential retail and –high value customer engagement.

Skills
- The challenge is talent retention and future proofing the sector by providing appropriate skills training.
- Important to attract a talent pipeline to the Retail Sector and not just to focus on upskilling opportunities.
- The Sector must showcase career opportunities across the Sector that can compete with high value knowledge sectors.
- Employers need to offer employees more than just financial renumeration and to consider how they can offer a package of benefits that will assist the employee to work either within the sector or move to another sector.
- Increase awareness of the skills development and training opportunities that are available in the Retail Sector.
- Certification of qualifications is very important.
- Micro-credentials are attractive– SMEs prefer short courses. Businesses are time poor.
- The link between the Retail Sector and the Department of Social Protection should be encouraged and strengthened in employment activation.
- Mentoring: Innovation Exchange links multinationals with SMEs. The SFA offer the Mentor Works programme which is 100% free and open to SMEs.
- Coaching panels would be beneficial for management development in the retail sector.

3.   **Actions**

DRAFT Skills Actions:

	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	Short-term

			convey what a career in the sector looks like.	
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. Explore Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) initiatives for retail	Micro credentials are being developed for other sectors. Look at FE offering	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

Possible Action	Consider developing training which could be delivered to transition year students about the diverse career opportunities in retail.	
Possible Action

Working Group Members, forum | Further categorisation of the retail sectors. | Determine the different retail subsectors so supports and training can be more targeted.

Retail is a large and diverse sector with many different product types and categories. It would be beneficial in understanding the needs by retail sub-sector allowing for more targeted supports and training (pureplay, omni-channel, b2b, b2c, etc.). |

DRAFT Digital Actions:

	Lead	Action	Detail	Timeline
7.	Working Group Members	Explore ways to ensure that retailers with demonstrable and proven potential develop and grow capacity selling online.	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	Medium-term

			and could be improved upon.	
8.	Working Group Retail Representative bodies, Members DETE	Identify level of digitisation (technology) in retail businesses.	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

Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment
April 2022

Appendix A

Attendance List:

ORGANISATION	FIRST NAME	SURNAME
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE) (Chair)	Deborah	Dignam
BWG	Cathy	Kearney
Chambers Ireland	Shane	Conneely
CSNA	Vincent	Jennings
ICTU	Gerry	Light
Retail Excellence	Duncan	Graham
Retail Ireland/Skillnet	Róisín	Woods
Regional Skills Forum Dublin	Natasha	Kinsella
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE)	Mark	McEntegart

DETE Officials	Niamh	Martin
	Sandra	Mullen