

GROUP – Agency Clients Advisory Group – Enterprise Ireland

18th September 2017

Note of Meeting

Chair: An Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation, Frances Fitzgerald T.D. and Minister for Trade, Employment, Business, EU Digital Single Market and Data Protection, Pat Breen T.D.

Attendees:

- Peter Cosgrove, ATA Tools
- Karen Malone, Centaur Fund Services
- Michael Burke, Chanelle Pharmaceuticals Manufacturing
- Philip Martin, Cora Systems
- Michael Tyrell, Dublin Aerospace
- Gerry Crowe, Nicholas O'Dwyer
- Katherine O'Sullivan, O'Donnell Design
- Kevin Buckley, Spearline Labs
- Frank Keane, Vitalograh

Introduction:

Minister Breen welcomed the attendees and set out the context for APJ 2018. He outlined the APJ process, and mentioned the forthcoming invitation for the Farmleigh High Level Consultation Forum. Each of the EI client companies was invited to outline its top 5 issues. The Tánaiste joined the meeting during the tour the table, after which EI's representative outlined a number of its Brexit related initiatives and supports for innovation and start-ups.

Key issues identified:

- Labour market:
 - Newly qualified recruits do not have the skill sets required by enterprises (technical skills or soft skills).
 - Apprenticeship and traineeship are often undervalued as a training/education option by potential applicants and their parents.
 - The quality of career guidance needs to improve.
 - There is a shortage of people with 5 to 10 years' experience (many young engineers left during the recession), their return needs to be encouraged but housing difficulties need to be addressed.
 - Work permits can be difficult to secure.
 - Greater incentives are required to encourage people out of social welfare.
 - Recruitment is becoming more difficult and pressure on wages is appearing.

- Brexit:
 - Businesses will have multiple experience of Brexit: some companies will need to stabilise, reposition and re-direct their activity; others will need to diversify their exports, review their supply chain, or reduce their cost base to adapt to increased price competition from the UK; for a small number of companies, the main issue will be staff cross-border mobility.
 - Trade missions provide opportunities to network in export markets. Companies should be able to influence the destination of trade missions.
 - EI supports are welcomed but the application process can be burdensome and lengthy.
 - Indigenous companies are increasingly mobile, but they are not supported to the same extent as FDI.
 - State supports need to be comprehensive while complying with State Aid rules:
- The infrastructure deficit needs to be addressed to increase regional connectivity (road, air, broadband) and provide accommodation for businesses and people;
 - The planning application process needs to be streamlined and become more predictable.
 - Office space needs to be developed in the regions to provide “back office” solutions to businesses that are otherwise located in Dublin.
 - County Council Managers could play a more significant role to create and maintain momentum for regional growth.
- Innovation support provided by EI is welcome; there may be opportunity to increase the number of H2020 grants (where the success rate is high) if companies had more assistance to do so.
- Entrepreneurship needs to be encouraged with entrepreneurship programmes and supported by tax incentives.
- Other issues mentioned: the valuation of rates by Local Authorities, procurement rules, delayed regulatory changes, the cost of regulatory compliance, late payment by agencies and semi-states bodies.

Also in attendance:

- Dr Orlaigh Quinn, Secretary General, DBEI
- Declan Hughes, Assistant Secretary, DBEI
- Dr Anne Ribault-O’Reilly, APJ Unit DBEI
- Fran Atkinson, APJ Unit, DBEI
- Eugene Forde, Enterprise Agencies and Programmes Unit, DBEI
- Kevin Sherry, Executive Director, Enterprise Ireland
- Marie Bourke, Competitiveness and Economic Analysis, DBEI
- Mary Clare O’Sullivan, D/Taoiseach