



An Roinn Fiontar,
Trádála agus Fostaíochta
Department of Enterprise,
Trade and Employment

Enterprise Digital Advisory Forum 16 November 2022

Discussion of Skills and the Digital Transition Fund

Attendees

Barry O'Brien (IBM)
Edward McDonnell (CeADAR)
Eoin Costello (DigitalHQ)
Erik O'Donovan (Ibec)
Kathryn O'Donovan (Google)
Kieran McCorry (Microsoft)
Patricia Scanlon (AI Ambassador, Soapbox Labs)
Shona D'arcy (Kids Speech Labs)

Remote Attendees

Terri O'Donovan (J&J)
Donal Flavin (IDA Ireland)

Officials

Minister of State for Trade Promotion, Digital and Company Regulation, Dara Calleary TD
Jean Carberry, Gráinne O'Carroll, Marc McEntegart (DETE)
Ruairí Ó hAilín (Enterprise Ireland)
Gerry O'Grady (Local Enterprise Offices)

Discussion

Minister Calleary opened the meeting by welcoming members and setting out the agenda for the day's discussion:

1. Approval of minutes of the last meeting of the EDAF
2. Updates from DETE on the National AI Strategy
3. Presentation from CeADAR on the role of the AI Innovation Hub
4. Presentation on the Disruptive Technologies Fund
5. Update on Digital, including progress to date on the National Digital Strategy and EU Digital Files
6. AOB

1. Approval of minutes of last meeting of the EDAF

It was noted that DigitalHQ made a submission to the EDAF ahead of the most recent meeting, leading to some discussion. There was broad agreement that the minute of the last meeting of the forum be amended to reflect this and circulated alongside this minute to ensure that this has been recorded.

2. Updates from DETE on the National AI Strategy

Jean Carberry of DETE gave an update on the progress to date under the National AI Strategy, *AI – Here for Good*. This included an update on the recently completed National Youth Assembly on AI; a report is currently being compiled on the views presented by young people at the event, to be published in the coming months. It also included discussion of the ongoing work on the Cybersecurity Strategy, as well as a National Centre for Cybersecurity.

Responses/Proposals from forum members:

1. In the course of the above update, it was noted that DETE has also convened a Working Group on Trustworthy AI Principles and Guidelines. Members of the forum outlined reference material that may be of use in informing the work of the working group, including the Turing Institute's material on AI, the OECD's work in the area, and the US' AI Bill of Rights.
2. Participants also asked that the Department and the Minister consider how the group can support this work, looking toward the work programme for 2023 (this is referred to again under AOB).
3. There was an acknowledgement of the need for clear communications around AI, with a broad acknowledgement of the existing narrative and concerns around AI as a technology. It was acknowledged that the EDAF may be able to play a part in helping to gather and develop alternative narratives around the technology. Case studies were noted as particularly useful in this regard.

3. Presentation from CeADAR

Edward McDonnell of CeADAR gave a presentation setting out details of CeADAR and its history, as well as the formation of the European Digital Innovation Hub (EDIH) network.

Full slides of this presentation are included as Appendix 1.

Responses/Proposals from members:

1. One element of this presentation was that the application process for EDIH support for businesses in Ireland will include a digital maturity self-assessment. The similarity between this digital maturity self-assessment process described and that proposed as part of the Digital Portal (to be developed under the Digital Transition Fund) was noted. Members acknowledged that it would be beneficial to get an impression of the various

different assessment tools that already exist for businesses in Ireland. Enterprise Ireland and DETE to engage further with CeADAR on this point.

2. Re: Small and micro-enterprises, the importance of clear communication was noted again. Members also queried the volume of applicants the EDIHs might process in a year, and how best for similar support to be delivered at scale to the majority of micro-enterprises in Ireland.

4. Presentation on the Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund

DETE gave an update on the Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund (DTIF), administered by Enterprise Ireland. Noted that Call 4 results had recently been finalised, Call 5 currently being evaluated. Half of all partners are SMEs, 11 consortia announced, with two involving AI.

Responses/Proposals from members:

1. Forum members observed that the application process for the fund may discourage some applicants, with a particular emphasis placed on the duration between application and payment (one applicant described a period of 15-16 months). It was noted that delays can be a significant issue for SMEs, but that a timeline like the one described can prove difficult even for multinationals. Broadly, the view of the DTIF was positive, but could be improved by addressing issues. DETE will investigate the timelines involved.

5. Update on Digital, including progress to date on the National Digital Strategy and EU Digital Files

DETE gave a broad overview of the current progress on the National Digital Strategy (NDS). This update drew on a draft report on the NDS to be published in the near future; it was proposed that the full document setting out the progress on the NDS be circulated to the forum.

This was followed by updates on the progress towards the EU's AI Act and the Data Act.

Responses/Proposals from members:

1. The forum discussed the current approach taken in the AI Act and noted that a general approach to AI now seemed likely, however for businesses there would remain questions around the definition of "high risk."
2. On the topic of "general purpose AI" it was noted that the new wording suggests that this is now no longer a question of "risk" specifically, but about the technology (and components of the technology) more generally.

6. AOB

1. Members of the forum raised the recommendations raised by group at the September meeting on skills, requested greater clarity on how recommendations from the group are progressed. DETE outlined that, on foot of the last meeting of the forum, a paper was submitted to DFHERIS. Two weeks before this meeting, DFHERIS brought a memo to Government that referenced the contribution of the EDAF.
2. In response to discussion around what more the EDAF may be able to do, Minister Calleary proposed that the topic of the work programme for the forum be added to the agenda for the next EDAF meeting. There was general agreement on this point.
3. DETE noted that OGCIO has committed to a Gov-tech Advisory Group, asked if the Enterprise Digital Advisory Forum would be willing to serve in that capacity. There was broad agreement from those in attendance.
4. Minister Calleary closed the meeting by encouraging EDAF members to attend the Digital Ireland Conference on 23 November.

EDAF Secretariat

November 2022