

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Towards an Employment and Skills Strategy
for the Dublin City Region

prepared by

WRC Social and Economic Consultants

for

Dublin Employment Pact
with the Support of the
DRA and the four Local Authorities



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The first four chapters of this report provide the evidence base and analysis that informs an *Employment and Skills Strategy for the Dublin City Region* as presented in Chapter 5. The report was commissioned by the Dublin Employment Pact (supported by the Dublin Regional Authority) in the context of the evolution of an *Economic Development Action Plan for the Dublin City Region*. The Dublin City Region is defined as the territory covered by the four relevant local authorities i.e., Dublin City Council, South Dublin County Council, Fingal County Council and Dub Laoghaire Rathdown County Council.

Chapter 1 outlines the background to the development of an Employment and Skills Strategy for the Dublin City Region (DCR). In setting the context, it provides an overview of recent trends and developments in the economic and employment / unemployment situation at international and national levels, drawing attention to the scale and depth of the issues arising. It emphasises the need to take effective strategic action on unemployment and the parallel challenge of growing employment and suggests that these issues should be designated as a national priority at the same level and at the same time as dealing with the banking and fiscal crises. The chapter draws attention to ongoing shifts in economic activity at a global level that precede the current fiscal, banking, and employment/unemployment crises and to the manner in which Ireland has responded to the ensuing restructuring challenge. In that regard it notes the unique space in the Irish economy that is occupied by the DCR as well as the region's disproportionate dependence on the services sector for its employment base (almost 9 in every 10 jobs) making for a particular case that requires a tailored strategic response.

Chapter 2 presents a statistical analysis of the DCR in terms of: (i) population trends including the diversity in the makeup of the population and trends in migration; (ii) the economy and employment base of the region (noting the dependence on a diverse services sector base); (iii) occupations and qualifications (noting the high levels of qualifications amongst the region's workforce); and, (iv) unemployment and long-term unemployment (noting, for example, the heterogeneity of the unemployed with particular reference to qualifications and the high proportion of the unemployed with third level qualifications in comparison to the 1980s).

Some of the key findings presented in Chapter 2 are:

- following a period of continual increase, the population of the DCR declined in 2009 and that decline was concentrated amongst persons in the 20 to 29 age group (while the population outside of the region increased);

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- over the period Q3 2007 to Q2 2009 the net loss of employment geographically located in the DCR was approximately 71,500 jobs - 65,200 of these jobs were lost by people resident in the region, the rest to workers commuting into the region to work;
 - a substantial component of employment loss in the manufacturing and construction sectors in the region is likely to be structural (those particular jobs will not be available again even in the event of an upturn);
 - recent trends in the sectoral and occupational composition of employment change show that it is the lower qualified and less skilled who have disproportionately experienced unemployment - however, there is much greater heterogeneity (particularly as regard qualifications) in the composition of the unemployed than was evident in the 1980s and early 1990s; and,
 - within the DCR there are now approximately 100,000 persons unemployed based on Live Register figures for October 2009 and almost one in four of those unemployed on a Live Register basis are long-term unemployed.

Our analysis of the key findings points to a number of policy implications. First, the loss of young and possibly highly skilled people may result in the loss of key skills to the DCR. Population and 'diversity' loss in general (noting that the largest single group to leave the region are those from the Accession countries) may also threaten the region's status as Ireland's only comparable metropolitan city region as well as further dampen an already depressed level of domestic consumption. As such, policies focused on the retention of qualified and skilled workers are of particular relevance to securing the future economic development of the region.

Second, as well as employment loss attributable to the bursting of the construction bubble and the more general recession, the pre-existing trend in the decline in manufacturing employment has been exacerbated by the crisis. This has had the effect of further increasing the region's reliance on the services sector for employment. In order to generate sufficient employment opportunities to absorb the structural losses in employment (construction, manufacturing) as well as the loss of employment in cyclically dependent sectors (e.g., retail, personal services) and to generate employment opportunities for first-time entrants to the labour market, it will be necessary to broaden and deepen the sectoral and employment base in services. Notwithstanding the impressive and tenacious performance of the internationally traded services sector (in terms of GVA, contribution to GDP, and regional productivity) it is not a major generator of employment even allowing for the fact that each job in this sector supports approximately one additional job outside of the sector. In short, the level of recovery will need to be substantial as well as "job rich" if many of those currently unemployed are to find employment and the annual inflow to the labour force absorbed.

Finally, as indicated above, while not yet at levels seen in the late 1980s, long-term unemployment is now beginning to increase and evidence from previous crises shows that there is a strong tendency for high levels of unemployment (and particularly long-term unemployment) to persist following shocks to the labour market. Given that - (i)

the structure and dynamic of the economy has altered radically since the late 1980s and the early-mid 1990s; (ii) the composition of the unemployed is substantially different from that time (e.g., in terms of skills and diversity); and, (iii) areas of employment growth are particularly difficult to forecast with any degree of accuracy even in the short-term - one of the key questions arising concerns the relevance, adequacy, and fitness for purpose of the current employment services as well as the further education and training policy package and its associated implementation system.

Chapter 3 reflects on the growing significance of city regions (including Dublin) in the global economy and the potential role of the knowledge economy as an element of the policy response for the DCR. The capacity and capabilities of the education and training system in the city region are also referenced as they will be of critical importance in growing employment and promoting skills formation and development.

The literature suggests that successful regions are successful because they have the environments and policies to not only grow technology and talent but also to attract technology and talent. A range of factors are significant in facilitating their development and their capacity to nurture a sustainable knowledge economy. These factors include what have been referred to as 'hard' (e.g., quality of labour supply, quality of public services, local taxation policy, and transport infrastructure) and 'soft' (e.g., attractive housing, amenities and leisure facilities, security, and the atmosphere or 'buzz' of a city) factors. Cross-cutting these factors are tolerance and equality.

As Ireland's only comparable metropolitan city region, the DCR is effectively competing with other city regions. There is a growing body of literature to suggest that the DCR should be supported in its development as a region and that any false dichotomy between the wellbeing of the region and other regions in the country should be eschewed. Rather the issue is creating a positive dynamic between a prosperous city region and the other regions of the country. Realising a vision of the DCR as a dynamic national hub fostering sustainable employment and a high quality of life requires the attention of policies and policy-makers not just in the specific domain of employment and skills but also of policies and policy-makers in a wide range of areas including transport, housing, amenities, arts and culture, environment, health, and energy. Achieving coherence between the national and regional elements of policy and associated institutional structures that impact on these diverse areas is a central issue in this regard.

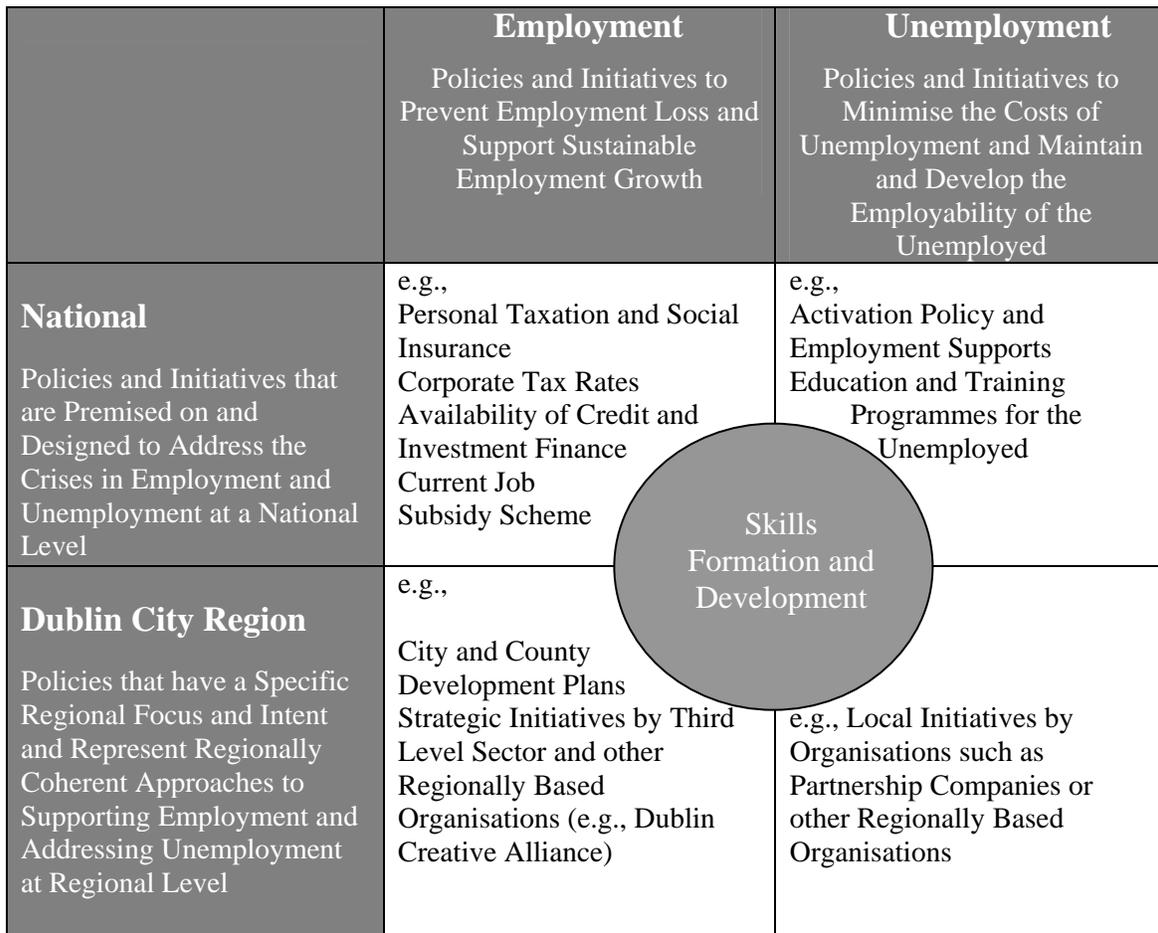
One of the key strengths of the region with a view to realising the knowledge economy is the substantial capacity of the region's education and training system as well as the significant level of investment in cutting edge research and development. That said, the further education and training and the higher education system face challenges in meeting both the quantum and diversity in demand that they are likely to meet given high levels of unemployment. The higher education system in particular is faced with the challenge of widening its role in supporting the social and economic development of the DCR through pursuing policies that focus not solely on generating knowledge but also on ensuring that such knowledge is accessible to new and expanding businesses and people in work as well as out of work.

Chapter 4 reviews a wide range of policy literature and social partner perspectives to identify recent - and sometime older - thinking in respect of key issues of relevance in developing an Employment and Skills Strategy for the DCR. In that regard we note that whereas it is useful to trawl the policy landscape in order to inform the proposed strategy, it is equally important to note that many of the old assumptions no longer hold thereby creating *an imperative to strategise and to plan on the basis of the present new reality*. That said, the principal lessons from the literature that can be brought to bear on the proposed strategy are the following:

- There is a need for a forum or mechanism that is representative, focused on the region, and granted the authority to oversee the ongoing development of the regional economy with a particular emphasis on internationally traded services and possible growth areas such as e-learning and digital media;
- In order to meet the challenges ahead, there is a need for co-ordinated action across all relevant stakeholders to include employers, training and education providers, unions, professional associations, regional bodies, and the community and voluntary sector;
- Human capital is a key component of our economic and social future. Core / generic skills and the use of technology should be prioritised and embedded in all publicly funded education and training provision. Further education and training needs to be client-focused and market relevant rather than provider, trainer, or programme-driven;
- There is need for fundamental reform of the education, training and welfare systems with a view to realising the knowledge society;
- Given its infrastructure, reputation and capacity, the third level sector should collectively position the region as a location of choice in the International Education market;
- There is a need to retain as many people in employment as possible so as to maintain their employability and to avoid the dangers and costs of unemployment - redundancy should be a last resort;
- There is a need to intensify and improve the quality of engagement with people who are unemployed - integrate the placement function with the unemployment benefit administration function;
- There is a need to generate opportunities for contact with work for people who are currently unemployed and a particular need to support people who are least qualified and in the absence of market-led demand, there is a need to generate employment opportunities for the unemployed;
- There is a need to anticipate and prepare for opportunities in the Smart / Green economy; that is, to ensure the development of the skill base necessary to take advantage of the new economy and to ensure an adequate supply of skilled people in particular areas (e.g. environmental engineers, marketing experts, linguists, actuaries, risk management experts etc.);

- We need to further exploit our advantages in the export services sector and to more effectively use our success in that sector as leverage into areas such as environmental services, education/e-learning, and digital media/creative industries.

Chapter 5 sets out the elements of the proposed strategy. We note that in order to ensure an adequate and strategically focused response to the crisis, there is a need for all stakeholders to accept and understand the scale and depth of the employment / unemployment crisis facing the DCR. In that regard we stress the need for a co-ordinated, multi-stakeholder (e.g., the state, employers, workers and citizens) response with the state playing a facilitative and co-ordinating role.



Framework for Articulating an Employment and Skills Strategy for the Dublin City Region

As set out in the diagram above the proposed strategy has regional and national dimensions as well as specific reference to employment policy and policies to address unemployment. Skills formation and development are central features of the overall strategic response required. The strategy will also require close co-ordination of a range

of policy areas (e.g., employment, labour market, skills development, planning, transport, education, enterprise etc.) to support the ongoing viability of a modern city region. It is our contention that the economic and employment context is such that now, as never before, there is an imperative consonant with a range of policy aspirations (e.g., employment growth, economic competitiveness, lifelong learning, equality, anti-poverty and social inclusion) to address the issues through a coherent, strategic approach.

The ongoing development of the *Economic Action Plan for the Dublin Region*, the Lord Mayor's Commission on Employment, the drafting of the Development Plans for the four local authorities, and the strong representative nature of existing fora (e.g., the Creative Dublin Alliance, the Dublin Employment Pact) provide the means and opportunity to coordinate the expression of an Employment and Skills Strategy that is initiated and located at regional level, acted on by leaders at the regional level and addressed, as required, to the relevant policy makers and decision-makers at national level. We consider that the existing grouping of the four Local Authority Managers in the region is best placed to drive the strategy from a regional perspective with the support of the Creative Dublin Alliance (whose membership should be expanded to include employment and skills expertise) as well as the Dublin Regional Authority and the Dublin Employment Pact, which could act as a facilitator to support the process of engaging relevant agencies and developing specific details and plans associated with the rollout of the strategy. *An indicative set of actions that can be taken by the Local Authorities to create momentum for an Employment and Skills Strategy for the DCR is provided at Annex I.*

Strategic Aim

The strategic aim of the Employment and Skills Strategy is to ensure the ongoing economic viability of the DCR and its status as Ireland's only comparable metropolitan city region through ensuring the attractiveness of the region as a place in which to invest, to work and to live.

Strategic Objectives

The strategic objectives of the Employment and Skills Strategy for the DCR are to:

- Protect and generate jobs;
- Deliver high quality and relevant vocational education and training;
- Ensure the realisation of the full potential of the human capital of the city region;
- Enhance the productivity and competitiveness of the city region;
- Prepare the city region to take advantage of opportunities in the global economy; and,
- Protect the unemployed from the effects of long-term unemployment and de-skilling.

Core Principles & Core Value

In order to meet the needs of the heterogeneous labour force in the DCR the strategy should be underpinned by the following core principles: Inclusivity; Equality (of Access,

Opportunity and Outcome); Respect; Responsiveness; Value for Money; and the Pursuit of Excellence.

We recommend that the concept of equality should be the core value underpinning the Strategy with a view to promoting self-determination, self-realisation, independence of thought while acknowledging and accommodating diversity and the promotion of choice.

The Components of the Strategy

The elements of the proposed Strategy can be summarised as follows: Growing Employment, Sharing Employment, and Preparing for Employment. As such, the specific components of the proposed Employment and Skills Strategy for the DCR are:

- (i) Protecting and Growing Employment;
- (ii) Minimising the Costs and Effects of Unemployment; and,
- (iii) Maximising the Skills and Competency Base of the Region's Labour Force.

These are underpinned by recommendations regarding the transversal issues of Governance and associated Structural and Organisational Reform.

While a range of recommendations are made in respect of the components of the strategy they, of necessity, are at the level of providing a direction for the types of specific initiatives and programmes required. The specification of these initiatives and programmes is thus a down the line matter but one that crucially involves not just addressing their content but also their mode of delivery and governance.

1st Strategic Component: Protecting and Growing Employment

Recommended Actions to Grow Employment

- Enhance and promote internationally the image and status of the Dublin City Region as a place to do business, to visit, and in which to live. Key areas for action include branding and marketing the key strengths and resources of the region, ensuring that infrastructural planning and development is focused on doing business in the region and underpinning quality of life, and supporting cultural and creative excellence.
- In consultation with business interests and relevant state agencies in the context of the development planning process, the Local Authorities should carry out a planning audit to see how changes in planning criteria/zoning combined with a regional inward investment drive could maximise future new employment in the city region.
- Develop a clear set of strategic sectoral objectives for sectors that have the potential to create sustainable employment and ensure that employment targets are

established and clearly related to specific policy instruments and initiatives. This will involve making an assessment of current strengths and future opportunities in a grounded manner. The key is to identify the competitive and other advantages of the DCR region and use these as a platform for employment growth.

- Maintain and develop the region's status and capabilities in relation to FDI-led exports in services and manufacturing and pursue the further diversification of FDI in high-end services such as ICTs, business services, and digital media.
- Identify and implement specific initiatives that have the potential to enhance competitiveness and growth in all sectors and that are in line with national policy goals concerning: building a smart economy (e.g., upgrading ICT infrastructure and training); building a green economy (e.g., undertaking energy conservation measures with long-term cost reduction potential).
- Develop specific sectoral initiatives in potential growth areas such as tourism, education services, health, and business services.
- Identify people with creative abilities, entrepreneurial acumen and/or particular scientific/technical skills and 'match-make' them with established business-oriented expertise and, as appropriate, financial support. Provide quality mentoring and training and on the basis of viability and employment potential, provide seed capital and other incentives such as through the taxation system.
- Provide opportunities, mechanisms and supports for the realisation of creative/entrepreneurial potential with a particular focus on sustainable employment creation potential, value added and export orientation.
- Undertake to employment proof all state and local authority expenditure in the region with a view to maximising the employment content of central government and local expenditure.

Recommended Actions to Protect Jobs

- The state should provide a business relevant package of incentives and supports for businesses to maintain existing levels of employment and that avoids or minimises deadweight and displacement. Currently there is much discussion regarding the merits and limitations of various approaches (e.g., job subsidies, PRSI reductions) and the choice of supports needs careful consideration if such supports are to be cost effective.
- Employers should explore - and should be actively assisted to explore - all alternatives to redundancy with employees (e.g., compressed hours, part-time options, reduced weeks, job share, e-working, career breaks). In the current climate the positive benefits of flexible working arrangements should be maximised in terms of promoting enhanced work-life balance. It would be naive not to think of the likely reductions in individual wages that arise in this regard but the presence of job loss as the alternative outcome needs to be considered as less desirable.

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- Employers should be assisted to find ways of cost containment that will lead to enhanced productivity and competitiveness such as improved management skills, stronger business and market intelligence, and reduced costs of doing business (e.g., taking into account rent, energy, waste management, communications etc.) that will ultimately benefit the company, its employees, and the economy as a whole.
 - Where workers are required to work reduced hours in order to maintain their employment they should be supported to use the ‘down time’ to engage in training with a particular emphasis on acquiring and developing generic skills. Ideally, and where possible, that training should be delivered in the workplace.
 - In the case of all companies in receipt of state aid, make the availability of certain supports and/or tax breaks conditional on them at least maintaining existing levels of employment over the course of the period for which state aid is made available to them.

2nd Strategic Component: Minimising the Costs and Effects of Unemployment

Recommended Actions to Minimise the Costs and Effects of Unemployment

- Review / evaluate the fitness for purpose of existing arrangements and ensure, in the interim, that all players are operating to best practice levels in respect of adult employment and vocational guidance, including assessment and profiling.
- Create a modern and comprehensive employment service that is capable of effectively meeting the needs of people seeking employment and commanding high levels of utilisation by employers. The strategic goal of the service should be to ensure that all job seekers are assessed and directed to appropriate employment or education and training opportunities in a timely manner.
- Require all public organisations and businesses in receipt of public funds to identify a range of positions in respect of which they can provide redundant and unemployed workers with the opportunity to exercise and maintain their skills. These employment opportunities should be commensurate with their skills and competencies. It must be emphasised that what is being recommended here is not “work placements”, “work experience” or “workfare”. What is required is the provision of real opportunities for redundant and unemployed workers to maintain their skills and retain their dignity through being enabled to exercise and keep fresh their skills while also acquiring new skills in the workplace.
- Introduce a Job Rotation Programme (JRP). Job rotation has never featured as part of active labour market policy in Ireland. There is the opportunity to learn from elsewhere - particularly Scandinavian countries - but also from pilot projects that have been developed at home (e.g., by the Dublin Employment Pact under the EQUAL Programme) to devise a JRP that can contribute to achieving mutually desirable and compatible objectives in respect of up-skilling workers in

employment and providing unemployed workers with the opportunity to maintain and upgrade their skills.

- Design and introduce a quality employment programme that will replace all existing public employment programmes such as Community Employment and the Social Economy Programme. Since the late 1980s a range of single purpose employment programmes have been introduced that embody different operational criteria and that cater for different groups of unemployed people, albeit sharing a common core objective - employment. In the face of the scale of the current crisis, the issue is not rationalisation or adjusting existing programmes but achieving a quantitative and qualitative enhancement of the role of a public employment programme. This will require a radical re-think on issues such as their delivery and financing. In that regard it is recommended that a single employment programme be introduced that will provide varied opportunities for unemployed people to contribute to the public good in areas such as the arts, culture, health care and the environment. Moreover, it is recommended that Local Authorities would be the local delivery mechanism for this programme.

3rd Strategic Component: Maximising the Skills and Competency Base of the Regional Labour Force

Recommended Actions to Maximise the Skills and Competency Base of the Regional Labour Force

- Reaffirm that one of the principal rationales for skill development from an economic perspective is to enhance the productivity of workers and thereby contribute to increased competitiveness and sustainability (and in the current context, recovery).
- Commit to the development of ‘world class’ learning skills in the entire workforce. Such skills are useful in all contexts and are fundamental to enhancing productivity, flexibility and competitiveness (e.g., identifying and solving problems, communication, ICTs, literacy, numeracy, language).
- Require that ICT skills acquisition and literacy enhancement is built into all education and training provision. Ideally, there is a need to specify a minimum standard of ICT competence and ensure that this is reached by all persons participating in publicly funded education and training programmes.
- Identify and commit to the development of key specific skills including hybrid skills that will be required in the domestic and export markets of the future (e.g., language skills, high-end ICT skills, marketing skills etc.)
- Empower the consumer of education and training services (i.e., redundant workers, unemployed) by providing a guarantee of a right to access appropriate education and training courses commensurate with the consumer’s educational and training needs. For example, through provision of a cashable voucher set at

the average cost of one year's participation in state supported education and training (all inclusive cost).

- Stimulate both the quantity and quality of educational and training provision and providers through: (i) opening up skills provision to the market - knowledge of the specific skills and competencies required at a given time is more like to exist in the market than in the delivery system; and (ii) requiring higher standards of trainers through on-going training.
- Create and build a new role for employers in the area of skill and competency development of the workforce.
- As part of a National Employment and Skills Strategy require that all businesses over a certain size (say 50 plus employees) are required to have a Skills Development Statement and Policy in much the same way as businesses are required to have a Health and Safety Statement. All businesses with a Skills Development Statement (SDS) should be eligible for state assistance on a matching funds basis (50:50) to implement their stated policies in that regard. Specific initiatives should also be identified to ensure that owners and workers in small enterprises have access to skills development.
- Ensure that the quantity and range of skills and competency development programmes provided - particularly with the assistance of public funds - is driven by real market demand rather than the capacity to supply.

Transversal Issues: Leadership, Governance and Policy, Structure and Organisational Change

Recommended Actions

- At regional level, the pursuit and co-ordination of the strategy should be led by the Dublin Employment Pact working closely with other relevant groupings such as the four Local Authority Managers, Dublin Regional Authority and the Creative Dublin Alliance and feeding off and into initiatives such as the Lord Mayor's Commission on Employment – this will be necessary to develop momentum and critical mass in favour of planned and strategic change within the region.
- The regional actors and leaders should advocate for change in national policy and reform of implementing structures as necessary with a view to maximising the ongoing economic viability of the region. In that regard we recommend that the regional actors/leaders seek buy-in from the Department of the Taoiseach with a view to creating a forum at national level that draws in relevant line departments (Enterprise Trade & Employment, Education & Science, Social and Family Affairs) and other actors. This forum should ensure that the purpose of the strategy is clear and that no gap emerges between the high-level goals and the actual realisation of these in practice. The forum established to progress the strategy should involve other actors who are relevant to ensuring the success of

the strategy including, for example, the Local Authorities and other members of the Creative Dublin Alliance.

- Under the guidance of the Department of the Taoiseach, relevant line departments should collaborate to produce a comprehensive Employment and Skills Strategy at national level that has a regional focus.
- Part of the process should involve a review of the fitness for purpose of all state organisations with a role in stimulating employment and combating unemployment.
- If, in due course, there is an elected Mayor for Dublin, responsibility for co-ordination could be devolved to that office.
- National and regional educational and training clearing houses should be established that will provide comprehensive registers of training places in respect of all courses on offer so that prospective trainees can be made fully aware of options open to them.
- The referral and training systems should be separated (i.e., should reside within different organisations) with a view to creating an efficient and focused assessment and referral system that interacts with a responsive and flexible training system.
- The delivery of specific skill aspects of vocational education and training should be opened up to market in order to maximise efficiency and flexibility and to build the overall training capacity within the region. All providers (e.g., within the public sector, partnership companies, private sector, third sector) will be subject to FETAC/HETAC quality assurance and will work to clearly defined and closely monitored targets.
- Consideration should be given to providing prospective trainees who require specific skill inputs with credits to purchase from the provider who best meets their needs.
- The capacity of the existing state system to provide core, generic skills and skills for learning should be maximised through appropriate training for trainers and, as required, recruitment of personnel with specific expertise in this regard.

Annex 1

Suggested Actions for Local Authorities (LAs) to Realise an Employment and Skills Strategy for the Dublin City Region

As outlined in the report successful regions are successful because they have the environments and policies to not only grow technology and talent but also to attract technology and talent. In line with this we also considered the growing body of literature that stresses the importance of the DCR in the Irish context and its contribution to national economic wellbeing - particularly in terms of its contribution in the areas of the knowledge economy and the broader area of internationally traded services.

In practical terms the literature also shows that a range of factors are significant in facilitating the development of successful city regions, particularly in respect of the types of supports required to underpin a sustainable knowledge economy at regional level. These factors include what have been referred to as 'hard' (e.g., quality of labour supply, quality of public services, local taxation policy, and transport infrastructure) and 'soft' factors (e.g., attractive housing, amenities and leisure facilities, security, and the atmosphere or 'buzz' of a city). Cross-cutting these factors are tolerance and equality.

Realising a vision of the DCR as a dynamic national hub fostering sustainable employment and a high quality of life requires the attention of policies and policy-makers not just in the specific domain of employment and skills but also of policies and policy-makers in a wide range of areas including transport, housing, amenities, arts and culture, environment, health, and energy. In short, there is a dynamic between fostering a working city and a fostering a living city.

The potential of the LAs to contribute to protecting and growing employment in the region lies in recognising the different ways in which their competencies and actions (or inaction) can influence employment and skills in the region in their capacity as: (i) planners; (ii) employers; (iii) providers of specific services; and, (iv) as facilitators of regional development.

Critical factors underpinning and informing the proposed initial actions towards realising an Employment and Skills Strategy for the DCR are to:

- Present a coherent and planned region-wide approach to the development of the region's economy and its employment and skills base;
- Ensure that the reality of the economic and employment base of the region (as presented in the strategy report) is built into the planning and development process;

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- Generate momentum and critical mass towards establishing a DCR imperative in national policy and programming based on the unique space occupied by the region in the national economy and the unique needs that arise in that regard; and,
 - Inform relevant actors of the unique economic and associated employment context and skills requirements that pertain in the region based on the data and information provided in the strategy report.

Actions 1

LAs as Planners and Key Agents in Shaping Regional Infrastructure and Environment

LAs have an important role to play in fostering regional competitiveness. In terms of the National Competitiveness Council's recent analysis of the factors driving competitiveness LAs can play an important role in influencing *the cost and quality of utilities, land price and use, and business service costs*. On the broader analysis of competitiveness provided by the World Economic Forum LAs can influence competitiveness by ensuring that the region is a *desired location for business activity and international tourism*. Making the region more competitive should be a key focus of LAs activity. To do this it is necessary to identify how the policies and actions of the LAs actually contribute to the region's competitiveness; for example, by undertaking a competitiveness analysis of their plans that will explicitly identify and guide their actions to maximise the region's competitiveness. Making a region capable of attracting and retaining technology and talent requires that its infrastructure (in terms of housing, environment, human services, communications, transport, social and cultural) is on a par or above that of competitor regions. We note that many of these issues are recognised in the Economic Development Action Plan – in addition we propose the following employment focused actions:

- Formally adopt the proposed Employment and Skills Strategy or aspects thereof and commit to its implementation;
- Integrate an employment and skills focus into the Creative Dublin Alliance (CDA) – invite representation from the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment and the Department of Education and Science;
- Undertake an employment focused planning audit across the DCR taking into account what we now know about the structure and nature of employment, unemployment, enterprises and sectors in the region – on the basis of that audit, develop an employment focused meta-plan for the DCR taking into account relevant aspects of the respective Development Plans for the four regions;
- Based on the above referenced plan, identify objectives (social, economic, cultural, environmental etc.) that would be amenable to being progressed through quality employment programmes. Identify the quantum of meaningful, supported jobs that could be created and lobby for the creation and support of such schemes.

Actions 2

LAs as Employers

As employers the LAs have the capacity to be leading examples of employment and human resource development policies. Protecting employment and growing employment will see the LAs being to the forefront in areas such as ensuring lifelong learning for their employees through, for example, introducing a job rotation programme as recommended in the report.

- Introduce a Job Rotation programme across the four local authorities through which unemployed persons will be provided with meaningful work experience, the opportunity to enhance their skills and to keep contact with the world of work. The DEP model of Job Rotation developed under the EQUAL Community Initiative provides a strong working model for this.

Actions 3

LAs as Service Providers

Identify meaningful work (at all levels) that needs to be undertaken within the councils that can be offered to unemployed people and graduates to allow them to maintain links with the world of work and to enhance their skills and, where possible, to complete qualifications that were interrupted by the recession e.g. are there possibilities in the environmental and energy spheres (retro-fitting, energy conservation, water conservation, environmental protection and enhancement etc.) for redundant apprentices and/or qualified tradesmen, gardeners and landscapers? What is the quantity and quality of such work that could be undertaken by qualified persons?

Actions 4

LAs as Network Facilitators

- Convene and support a network of managers or decision-makers in key service delivery areas of relevance to supporting employment and skills formation in the region. Participants in the network should be introduced to the key thinking in the Employment and Skills Strategy and the Economic Development Action Plan. They should be provided with the support and space to interact and to inform each other of plans, opportunities and possible synergies that might otherwise not be shared and/or realised. They should also be encouraged to make practical proposals regarding the realisation of aspects of the strategy;
- The network should be used as a means of developing the profile of the DCR and in building momentum towards the realisation of a region-wide perspective through an Employment and Skills lens. Possible participants could include, in the first instance, representatives of the LAs, FÁS, Fáilte Ireland, VECs, Skillnets, the Institutes of Technology, the Universities and Forfás. Representation from

other interests such as the IBEC, SFA, ISME, ICTU and the Chambers of Commerce could also be considered;

- Link the above-referenced network to the CDA using the DRA as a co-ordinating body and the DEP as a technical resource to ensure coherence and cross-fertilisation of ideas;
- Through the network, identify potential growth sectors (with an emphasis on employment capacity) and develop joined up, realisable plans and actions to enhance the development of those sectors and sub-sectors. This will involve broadening the focus of the existing Economic Action Plan beyond the niche sectors (e.g. digital media) that form a necessary part of the modern economy but which, of themselves, are unlikely to provide an adequate quantum of employment opportunities;
- Through the network, consider the development of a region-wide comprehensive register of education and training opportunities. The approach undertaken by Clare VEC under the EQUAL Community Initiative could be used as a starting point (see <http://www.clarelearningnetwork.org/clln/www/index.asp?magpage=0>);
- Develop a DCR website that is designed to promote the region as a whole and that contains information about or links to enterprise supports, educational opportunities, employment opportunities, social, sporting and other recreational facilities and infrastructure, arts activities etc; and,
- Recruit a team of high profile persons to act as ambassadors for the development of the region focusing on specific aspects of the region's social, cultural and economic capital.