

North South Ministerial Council  
Joint Secretariat



An Chomhairle Aireachta  
Thuaidh Theas  
An Chomhrúnaíocht

**PAPER NSMC ED 2 (15) JC**

**NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

**EDUCATION MEETING**

**NSMC JOINT SECRETARIAT OFFICES,  
ARMAGH**

**11 DECEMBER 2015**

**JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ**

1. The twenty first NSMC Education meeting was held at the NSMC Joint Secretariat Office in Armagh on 11 December 2015. The meeting was attended by Damien English, TD, and Minister of State, Department of Education and Skills, John O'Dowd, MLA, Minister for Education and Minister McIlveen, MLA, Minister for Regional Development. Minister English chaired the meeting.

**REVIEW OF WORK PROGRAMME**

2. Ministers welcomed the results of a review of the Education Sector North/South work programme, carried out by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and the Department of Education (DE) at a joint workshop held in June 2015, which confirmed the validity and relevance of the current work programme.
3. Ministers noted that officials have agreed actions to further develop joint working and co-operation.

## **EU FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES**

4. The Council noted the scope and preparations for the delivery of the Shared Education theme of the Peace IV Programme. Calls for funding are expected in 2016.
5. Ministers welcomed the on-going collaboration and engagement of the National Agencies in both jurisdictions in exploring the potential for collaboration on the Erasmus+ programme.
6. The Council noted that the Education Departments will continue to work together to develop concepts which could form the basis of an Erasmus+ application for 2016 in relation to language learning. .

## **EDUCATIONAL UNDERACHIEVEMENT**

7. The Council noted that Ministers have agreed to commission, through a competitive tendering process, external expertise covering experiences in both jurisdictions in relation to addressing educational underachievement. The commission will cover an 18 month period from date of award of contract to final report to the Departments.

## **COOPERATION BETWEEN INSPECTORATES**

8. The Council noted the publication of two North/South Inspectorate reports on good practice in literacy and numeracy in May 2015 and their dissemination to practitioners.
9. Ministers welcomed the continuing collaborative work of the Inspectorates covering :
  - (i) capacity-building for ETI inspection of Irish-medium education;
  - (ii) the ETI's assistance with the DES Inspectorate's development of expertise in pre-school/early years inspections;
  - (iii) the quality assurance by the DES Inspectorate of the Education and Training Inspectorate's (ETI) review of the outcomes of its programme: 'Promoting Improvement in English and Mathematics'; and
  - (iv) the ongoing programme of inspection exchanges, joint working on inspections and co-operation between management of both Inspectorates.

## **SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS**

10. Ministers noted the progress being made by the two Departments and Middletown Centre in facilitating the delivery of the Centre's range of services since the completion of the expansion project in March 2015. They also noted that Departments are making arrangements for a follow-up inspection of the Centre to be carried out during 2016.
11. The Council noted that the Education Ministers had visited the Middletown Centre on 25 March 2015 following the NSMC Education Sector meeting. The visit was in recognition of the Education Ministers' desire to ensure the Centre continues to play an important role in the support provided to children with autism, their parents and education professionals.
12. Ministers noted the continuing progress on sharing of information and experiences between the two Education Departments across the broader agenda of Special Education Needs.

## **TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS**

### **Teacher Mobility**

13. The Council welcomed the on-going co-operation between the Teaching Councils in both jurisdictions on measures to reduce obstacles to the mobility of teachers. This includes the waiving of fees for the assessment of qualifications of teachers accredited by the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland and the simplification of the process for applying for teaching posts in the South.
14. Ministers noted that the Education Departments have asked the Teaching Councils to provide a qualitative assessment covering any remaining issues impacting on teacher mobility. This will include the impact of the introduction of the 2 year Postgraduate Certificate in Education in the South and the impact of the European Directive 2005/36/EC. The Directive provides for the mutual recognition of professional qualifications between member states across a range of professions including teaching.

### **Irish Language Requirement**

15. The Council noted that both Education Departments are currently considering a proposal from St Mary's University College, Belfast and Marino College to collaborate to support access to the Scrúdú le hAghaidh Cáilíochta sa Ghaeilge (Irish Language Requirement) by applicants from Northern Ireland. Currently a teacher from the North who does not have the Irish Language Requirement qualification is able to apply for teaching posts in the South. After taking up a teaching position, teachers have up to 3 years to obtain the qualification.

## **North/South Project: History and Digital Storytelling**

16. Ministers welcomed the continuing commitment to a cross border professional learning collaboration between the Professional Development Service for Teachers and Curriculum Advisory and Support Service. Their joint project, due to begin in late 2015, involves the cross curricular use of Digital Storytelling in a small number of schools from both jurisdictions using History as a basis for promoting the skills of storytelling and chronology.

## **Standing Conference on Teacher Education North and South (SCoTENS)**

17. The Council noted that both Education Ministers officiated at the 13th Annual SCoTENS Conference on the theme of 'Teacher Education and Social Justice' took place in Limerick on 15 and 16 October 2015.

## **SCHOOL, YOUTH AND TEACHER EXCHANGES**

18. Ministers noted the ongoing activities of the North South Education and Training Standards Committee for Youth Work.
19. The Council welcomed the on-going involvement of the National Youth Council of Ireland and the Youth Council of Northern Ireland in the group established and supported by funding from an ERASMUS+ programme, to optimise ICT for effective youth work.

## **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

20. The Council agreed to hold the next NSMC Education meeting in spring 2016.

**Joint Secretariat  
11 December 2015**

**Website [www.northsouthministerialcouncil.org](http://www.northsouthministerialcouncil.org)**