

**Michael Keogh, Assistant Secretary General  
Department of Education and Skills**



Michael Keogh is an Assistant Secretary General at the Department of Education and Skills with responsibility for Finance, Information Technology, Human Resources, Corporate Services, Teacher Payroll and Pensions and the European Social and European Globalisation Funds.

**Marianne Thyssen  
European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility**



Commissioner Thyssen holds an MA in Law. From 1998-2008, she was Municipal Councillor in Oud-Heverlee. She was a Member of the European Parliament from 1991 to 2014. During this time she was also Head of the Belgian delegation of the EPP Group and First Vice-President of the EPP Group. From 2008-2010, Commissioner Thyssen was Party Leader of the Flemish Christian-Democratic party.

**Maria Iglesia  
Directorate General of Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion**



Maria is Head of the Unit responsible for Ireland, Portugal, Hungary and the UK, leading the team responsible to ensure efficient and effective programming and implementation of the ESF for these four countries in the area of employment, social affairs, skills and labour mobility. Since 1993 she has held a number of positions in the European Commission in DG AGRI, SANTE and EMPL. She has a scientific background and has studied Political Sciences, holding a Master on European Economy by the ULB (Brussels).

**Seán Ó Foghlú  
Department of Education and Skills**



Seán Ó Foghlú has been the Secretary General of Ireland's Department of Education and Skills since 2012. As the most senior civil servant in the Department, Seán leads an organisation that administers and provides strategic direction to Ireland's primary and second level schools, its further and higher education sectors, and a wide range of state agencies that are responsible for curriculum design, school examinations, special education support, the funding and oversight of further and higher education, teacher education, workforce training, research and evaluation.

**Peter Baldwin**  
**Former Assistant Secretary**



Peter Baldwin was Assistant Secretary General at the Department of Education and Skills where his responsibilities included Further Education and Training. Peter has previously had responsibilities in a range of different areas of education including primary education and special education. He has also previously worked in the government department responsible for industrial development with specific responsibilities relating to the ICT sector.

**Dr. Jane O'Kelly**  
**Further Education and Research Centre, DCU**



Dr. Jane O'Kelly is a lecturer in the DCU Institute of Education. Her research interests include learning communities, further education and training, blended learning and peer and self-directed learning. She lectures in Creative Instructional Design, Research methodologies and approaches, Work-based reflective practice and professional practice in education. She is the coordinator of the BSc in Education and Training flexible mode and manages the placement year for students seeking accreditation as tutors in further education and training.

**Paul O'Toole**  
**SOLAS**



Mr. Paul O'Toole is the Chief Executive Officer of SOLAS. SOLAS (An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna) is the Further Education and Training Authority for Ireland. It is responsible for funding, strategic planning and co-ordinating further education and training programmes. Mr O'Toole previously held the position of Director General, FÁS. He served as the first Chief Executive of Tourism Ireland from July 2001. Prior to this he worked in Bord Failte from 1990 to 2001 in tourism development, marketing and corporate affairs.

**Claire McGee**  
**Ibec**



Claire McGee is Ibec's senior executive for innovation and education policy. She works mainly on the education and skills and innovation agenda, with an emphasis on promoting greater investment in research and greater industry-education engagement. She is the author of Ibec's policy recommendation on Embedding Entrepreneurial Thinking into Education and in 2018, will focus on encouraging all education intuitions to support the development of employability skills through all disciplines.

**Dr. Vivienne Patterson**  
**Head of Skills, Engagement and Statistics, HEA**



Dr. Vivienne Patterson is Head of Skills, Engagement and Statistics at the Higher Education Authority. Her responsibilities include management of the both the Springboard+ Programme, an initiative to upskill and reskill those on the live register to bring them back into the workforce and the provision of national apprenticeships in higher education. Her role in the HEA involves active strategic engagement with agencies such as EI, IDA, IBEC and AmCham to strengthen the relationship between higher education promotion and future employment and innovation.

**John Gleeson**  
**General Motors**



John Gleeson joined GM in 2013 as the Senior IT Operations Manager with responsibility to build an IT Centre of Excellence in Ireland post GM's Bankruptcy in 2009. John has responsible for this program across all IT disciplines and must ensure that the new IT organisation meets the GM plan. Prior to joining GM, John worked for Dell Computers as Head of the Project Management office. He also worked for HP as the Senior IT Operations and Program Manager.

**Noel Kelly**  
**Tusla**



Noel took up the position of Director of Educational Welfare Services with Tusla in July 2016. A former primary school teacher, Noel has also worked as the Education Manager with Northside Partnership, developed and managed an Early School Leavers Initiative and was one of the first Home School Community Liaison Coordinators in Ireland. In recent years he developed and managed the Preparing for Life programme one of Ireland's evidence based prevention and early intervention programmes which generated very positive child outcomes.

**Bríd O'Brien**  
**INOUE**



Bríd is the INOU's Head of Policy and Media and plays a key role in formulating and developing INOU policy on unemployment, social welfare and the development of an inclusive and equitable labour market. On behalf of the INOU Bríd works with colleagues in the Community and Voluntary Sector on issues of socio-economic justice; and is one of the Community and Voluntary Pillar representatives on the National Economic and Social Council.

**Louise Cole**  
**Youthreach**



Louise, the Co-ordinator of Bray & North Wicklow Youthreach. Louise is just over 9 years in Youthreach and prior to this worked as a Client Service Director in Marketing and PR for over 10 years. Louise's vision for Bray Youthreach is to create an environment for students and staff that is both inclusive and progressive; ensuring that students not only reach their academic goals but also become both self-aware and socially minded and ready for the next part of their lives.

**Brian Dack**  
**Probation Service**



Brian Dack is Assistant Director in the Probation Service. Brian has responsibility for Probation Service policy for the Prison, Risk and Resettlement areas, and in particular Probation Service policy for Young Persons on Probation.

**Elaine Slattery**  
**Céim ar Chéim**



Elaine Slattery is manager of Céim ar Chéim for the past 19 years. Elaine is a trainer of Restorative Practices, supporting the delivery of training through the Restorative Practices Project, Limerick to schools, youth organisations and residential centres in Limerick City. She is on the Board of Directors of Moyross Garda Youth Diversion Project, the Le Chéile Restorative Justice Steering Committee and the Association for Criminal Justice & Research Development Working Group for Restorative Justice and was previously appointed to the National Children's Advisory Council.

**Niamh Skelly**  
**Crosscare**



Niamh Skelly has 10 years' experience working with young people at risk and involved with Garda Youth Diversion Projects. Niamh also works in residential settings with adults and young people experiencing homelessness. Niamh currently works with Crosscare as part of the multiagency Best Practice Development Team for Garda Youth Diversion Projects. The purpose of this team is to support best practice across the entire network of GYDP's nationally.

**Dr. Selina McCoy**  
ESRI & TCD



Dr McCoy is an Associate Research Professor at the Economic and Social Research Institute in Dublin, and Adjunct Professor in the School of Education and the Department of Sociology, Trinity College Dublin. She has been a member of the Independent Network of Experts in Education and Training (for DG Education and Culture) since 2014. Her research interests include gender and social differentiation in educational outcomes, the experiences of students with special educational needs and post-school transitions, particularly the transition to further and higher education.

**Rose Ryan**  
Maynooth University



Rose Ryan is Director of Access at Maynooth University and is responsible for the Maynooth University Access Programme which has led on the development of institutional and national policy in the area of widening participation. Rose is currently chair of the FET2HE Network ([www.FET2HE.ie](http://www.FET2HE.ie)) supporting greater access to higher education by students with further education awards. Rose is progressing the 'Turn to Teaching' programme aimed at addressing the acute under-representation of students in the teaching profession from disadvantaged backgrounds.

**Claire Shorten**  
Maynooth University



Claire Shorten unexpectedly lost her sight in her first year in Maynooth University. She came back to the University some years later and embarked on a Degree in History and Geography. Clare was able to access a range of supports including a personal assistant, assistive technology, academic tuition and transport. Clare recently completed her degree and has begun the professional Masters of Education programme so she can become a secondary school teacher. She continues to receive support which is now focused on supporting her as a teacher as well as a student.

**Dr Jim Murray**  
Director of Academic Affairs and Deputy CEO, THEA



Dr Jim Murray is a historian by training. He is currently Deputy CEO and Director of Academic Affairs at the Technological Higher Education Association, the representative and advocacy body for Ireland's 14 institutes of technology. In this role, he is responsible for developing sectoral cohesion on academic and quality assurance matters.

**Aidan O'Brien**  
Head of EU Funds Unit, Department of Justice and Equality



Aidan O'Brien is the Head of the EU Funds Unit of the Department of Justice and Equality, which is responsible for administration of funds from the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Asylum Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF). As head of Unit, Aidan O'Brien is responsible for overseeing the management and administration of all activities relating to projects receiving funding in the areas of migrant integration, gender equality and social inclusion.

**Caitríona Mac Aonghusa**  
Business in the Community Ireland



Caitríona has worked with Business in the Community Ireland since 2009. Throughout that time, she has co-ordinated the EPIC programme - Employment for People from Immigrant Communities. This successful programme has worked with nearly 3,000 people from over 100 countries to support them find employment and training. During her time in Business in the Community, Caitríona has also worked as a CSR advisor to member companies and as a co-ordinator in Business Action on Education, linking businesses with schools.

**Maria Staunton**  
GMIT Innovation Hub



Maria Staunton is currently Programme Manager of the EMPOWER Programme. Maria managed the GMIT Innovation Hub over the last eleven years. She has also been involved in developing and running enterprise programmes (New Frontiers, EAP, Female entrepreneurship, GMIT Student Innovation Awards). Maria has established new initiatives at the iHub such as Inc60, Mayo Open Coffee Club and the Spirit of Entrepreneurship event which was nominated for a European Enterprise Award.

**Sarah Benson**  
Chief Executive Officer, Ruhama



Sarah Benson is the Chief Executive Officer with Ruhama, an Irish NGO working nationally with women affected by prostitution including victims of sex trafficking. Sarah is a Director of the Board of the National Women's Council of Ireland, and is currently also Chairperson of CAP International, which is a coalition of 23 frontline services across working directly with those affected by prostitution/sex trafficking in 18 countries across the globe. She recently concluded a 6 year term as the Irish Expert on Violence Against Women for the European Women's Lobby Observatory.