

## Press release

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# North Western regional education and research leaders meet at department's second Regional Dialogue

From [Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science](#)  
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Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science Simon Harris today welcomed the second in a series of dialogue meetings between senior department officials and institutional leaders aimed at driving stronger regional collaboration on some of the major challenges facing the country.

Today's meeting for Roscommon, Sligo, Galway and Mayo is the second of six dialogue meetings taking place around the country over the coming weeks, with department officials engaging with leaders from the further and higher education, research and innovation sectors on key government strategies including regional rebalancing, housing, health, climate and enterprise.

Speaking today ahead of the meeting at the University of Galway, Minister Harris said:

"I warmly welcome the second Regional Dialogue meeting taking place today and I want to acknowledge the tremendous effort, support and collaboration of the institutions in the region in convening and preparing for today's engagement.

"The Regional Dialogue Initiative is an opportunity to listen to each other and better understand how we can expand and deepen the transformative impact the tertiary system has on the lives of individuals, on the vibrancy of our communities and the health of our economy.

"We want to understand more about what our sectors can do together to make their regions stronger, and that means focusing on the things that matter most right now: inclusive societies, better regional economies, and adapting to climate change.

"We know that the further and higher education, research and innovation sectors are already doing incredible work in these areas, but we want to discover more about the ambitions and plans of our sectors, the challenges that are there and how we can all work together to develop ideas and actions that will work for the region."

Today's North Western regional dialogue meeting will see the department engaging with institutional leaders representing University of Galway, Atlantic Technological University, Galway and Roscommon ETB, Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim ETB, St Angela's College - Sligo, and University of Galway's Centre for Medical Devices and Insight Centre for Data Analytics.

Representatives of SOLAS, SFI, the National Tertiary Office, Údarás na Gaeltachta, Mayo, Galway and Roscommon County Councils, Enterprise Ireland, Bluewise Marine and Regional Skills Forums will also be in attendance.

The Regional Dialogue Initiative was set up by the department in response to inputs from the sector highlighting how a unified tertiary sector in regions can contribute to achieving both department and wider government policy priorities.

The six dialogue meetings taking place in regions around the country over the coming weeks will explore synergies between further education and training, higher education and research, and bring together the leadership and expertise necessary to support the delivery of department's policy objectives, aligned with key government strategies including regional rebalancing, housing, health, climate change, and enterprise development.

The dialogue and information sharing gained through these dialogues will also form the basis for the development of a Tertiary Education Strategy provided for under the Higher Education Authority Act 2022.

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## About the Regional Dialogue Initiative

As part of the response to feedback gathered in the Public Consultation, and based on the premise of two-way high-level dialogue, the Regional Dialogue Initiative has been created by DFHERIS to enable regions to develop and progress actions to achieve policy objectives of both DFHERIS and the wider government.

The dialogue will be between DFHERIS and regional HE, FET, and R&I sector leaders, and other key stakeholders meeting together to discuss a series of agreed thematic agenda items focussed on the progression of a more unified tertiary system aligned with the achievement of departmental and wider government priorities.

By opening up dialogue at a regional level DFHERIS is seeking to:

- enable regions to expand and develop actions to achieve DFHERIS policy objectives and the wider government objectives to which they are aligned providing a richer evidence base for future DFHERIS policy and funding strategies
- progress a more unified tertiary system by meeting leaders together and stimulating the development of regionally-based unified actions focusing on the impact and contribution that the system can make to government priorities
- communicate the work of DFHERIS in a coherent way that is relevant to our stakeholders and to seek feedback on this, strengthening the potential for collaborative work on shared objectives
- raise the profile and expand the visibility of DFHERIS, expand the stakeholder network and open up more effective engagement at a regional level

## Schedule of meetings

## Northern and Western region I

- counties covered: Donegal, Leitrim, Monaghan, Cavan (plus Dundalk)
- meeting date: 15 June 2023
- meeting location: Cavan Crystal Hotel, Co Cavan

## North Western Region II

- counties covered: Roscommon, Sligo, Galway, Mayo
- meeting date: 23 June 2023
- meeting location: University of Galway

## Southern region I

- counties covered: Clare, Limerick, Kerry, Cork, Tipperary
- meeting date: 26 June 2023
- meeting location: University College Cork

## Southern region II

- counties covered: Waterford, Kilkenny, Carlow, Wexford
- meeting date: 28 June 2023
- meeting location: SETU Arena, Waterford

## Eastern and Midlands region II

- counties covered: Dublin, Kildare, Wicklow
- meeting date: 29 June 2023
- meeting location: Chartered Accountants House, Dublin

## Eastern and Midlands region I

- counties covered: Laois, Offaly, Longford, Westmeath, Meath, Louth
- meeting date: 7 July 2023
- meeting location: TUS Athlone Campus

Dialogue and information sharing between DFHERIS and stakeholders will provide a strong foundation for the development of the Tertiary Education Strategy as provided for in the Higher Education Authority Act 2022.

## Unified Tertiary System

The department is developing a policy vision to progress a more unified tertiary education and research system, details of which were noted by Government on 24 May 2022.

The vision is for a well-functioning, unified tertiary system for knowledge and skills, composed of complementary further education and training, higher education and research and innovation sectors, characterised by:

- flexible, diverse and aligned learning and development opportunities
- clear, navigable and extensive pathways for learners, researchers, educators and innovators
- coherent skills and qualifications frameworks aligned to current and future skills needs
- diffusion and creation of new knowledge, skills and innovation across the system
- resilience, adaptiveness and preparedness for the challenges and opportunities future changes may present (for example technological, demographic and climate change)

- comprehensive regional and national systems, policies, support and resources that are coherent and balanced in meeting these objectives

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