

Press release

Northern and western regional education leaders meet at department's inaugural Regional Dialogue

From [Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science \(/en/organisation/department-of-further-and-higher-education-innovation-and-science/\)](https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation/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 first 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 the Northern and Western region is one 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, enterprise and a share island.

Speaking today ahead of the meeting in Cavan, Minister Harris said:

"I warmly welcome the first 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 regional dialogue meeting will see the department engaging with institutional leaders representing Atlantic Technological University, Dundalk Institute of Technology, Cavan and Monaghan ETB, Mayo, Sligo & Leitrim ETB, Donegal ETB and Louth and Meath ETB as well as Dublin City University and University of Galway.

Representatives of the National Tertiary Office, SOLAS, Science Foundation Ireland, the Regional Skills Forum, the IDA and Donegal County Council 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 the department's policy objectives, aligned with key government strategies including regional rebalancing, housing, health, climate change, enterprise development and a shared island.

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.

Notes

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: ArcLabs Innovation Centre, SETU West Campus, Waterford

Eastern and Midlands region II

- counties covered: Dublin, Kildare, Wicklow
- meeting date: 29 June 2023
- meeting location: to be confirmed

Eastern and Midlands region I

- counties covered: Laois, Offaly, Longford, Westmeath, Meath, Louth
- meeting date: 7 July 2023
- meeting location: to be confirmed

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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