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Martin Hughes

Clerk to the Joint Committee on Business, Enterprise and Innovation

Leinster House

Dublin 2

RE: Request for a written submission on the General Scheme of the Employment Permits (Consolidation and Amendment) Bill

22nd November 2019

Dear Mr Hughes,

Thank you for your letter of 4th November requesting a written submission from CIF on the General Scheme of the Employment Permits (Consolidation and Amendment) Bill.

The CIF has reviewed the Draft Heads of Bill, the Regulatory Impact Assessment on the draft Bill and the comprehensive briefing note prepared for the Joint Oireachtas Committee.

CIF acknowledges and welcomes the fact that the draft Bill contains both specific and general recommendations following on from the Review of Economic Migration Policy carried out in 2018, which highlighted the inflexibility of some aspects of the current system and the resulting need for reform.

The resulting draft Bill increases the flexibility of the Employment Permit system and maintains a focus on the importance of meeting the ongoing and emerging skills supply and labour demands of the economy.

CIF welcomes the consolidation of the existing Employment Permit Acts, 2003 and 2006 respectively, into one single piece of legislation, which will assist in making the Employment Permit system more flexible and responsive to employment and labour market needs in the future.

The moving of some operational details from primary to secondary legislation in the form of Regulations will also help to streamline the system by bringing greater clarity to applicants and building greater efficiencies in the system.

CIF has been engaged with the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation over the past 24 months in relation to the process of regular review of the occupation lists for employment permits and has made several submissions to the Department in this regard.



The current review of the occupation lists, and the CIF's proposed inclusion of a number of key occupations on the Critical Skills List, aligns with some key elements of the draft Bill, namely the changes to the labour market needs test to more accurately reflect modern advertising practices and the introduction of a special circumstances employment permit to address a need that may arise from time to time for which no formal training is available in Ireland.

Direct construction employment at the end of Q3 2019 stands at 149,300 persons with construction employment forecast to increase to 220,000 by 2024. The attraction and availability of skilled personnel is, and will remain, a critical issue facing the construction sector in the years ahead. Shortages exist across many key occupations despite attempts by the sector to train new entrants.

The cyclical nature of construction investment impacts on construction employment by comparison to general industry employment by producing shortages and dilution in many highly skilled occupations at different times of the investment cycle. This emphasises the importance of maintaining a sustainable pipeline of public capital investment.

While innovative technological developments are happening in most construction companies, labour is still the sector's most important asset. The construction sector's productivity potential lies in the quality of its labour force.

CIF has asked Government to lead all stakeholders in the promotion of careers in construction and the development of a coherent and collaborative framework for Built Environment education and training in Ireland, which provides consistency across all programmes with identifiable graduate competences fit for the future needs of the sector.

CIF wishes the Joint Committee well in its deliberations on the draft Bill.

Should you have any questions relating to the above please feel free to contact the undersigned.

Yours sincerely,



Jeanette Mair

Head of Economic and Policy Research

