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Institiúid Teicneolaíochta Leitir Ceanainn
Letterkenny Institute of Technology

**National Planning Framework
Ireland 2040 – Our Plan**

**Submission
Letterkenny Institute of Technology**

March 2017

National Planning Framework

Vision to 2040

This submission is written in conjunction with other submissions being made by LYIT stakeholders namely; Donegal County Council, Letterkenny Chamber of Commerce and IBEC North West Regional Executive Council. Each of these bodies has set out categorically what they see as the future for the North West region but also particularly for County Donegal.

Consistent with the guideline in *Ireland 2040 Our Plan Issues and Choices* the focus of this submission is matters that:

- are of national significance;
- are strategic in nature; and
- have a 'spatial' or place-based focus.

Ireland 2040 Our Plan Issues and Choices

It is clear that important lessons from the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) are reflected in the *Ireland 2040 Our Plan Issues and Choices* document where it is recognised that the National Planning Framework (NPF) will necessarily have to:-

- Be a statutory document, approved by the Oireachtas;
- Be backed by Government, both in terms of the Executive and across Departments and Agencies;
- Be aligned with and supported by public and private investment;
- Be a strategy as opposed to a 'wish list', that will involve hard choices;
- Address all parts of Ireland, avoid the perception of 'winners' and 'losers', but avoid unrealistically seeking to treat all parts of the Country in the same way;
- Include an economic dimension, but not be solely based on economic considerations;
- Include a particular focus on implementation and evaluation, with capacity for review.

Ireland 2040 Our Plan Issues and Choices in referencing the uneven regional growth and recognising the dominance of Dublin notes that "If Belfast, Derry/Londonderry and other smaller cities and large towns in Northern Ireland are included, a more balanced picture emerges, highlighting the importance of an all-Island approach".

The Position Paper in its examination of the all-island context references the great uncertainty that exists as a result of Brexit. This all-island subsection identifies a need for a consideration of:

- The strategic potential of the Dublin-Belfast (eastern seaboard) corridor and how it can be developed to better influence planning decisions between the two Capital cities on the island of Ireland;
- The need to look beyond administrative boundaries for effective development of regions by working together through structures such as the North West Gateway Initiative and the North West Strategic Growth Partnership in partnership with local government (Donegal-Derry/Londonderry & Strabane);
- Greater alignment of infrastructure planning which underpins the objectives of both the NPF and Regional Development Strategy in Northern Ireland to address mutual cross border spatial challenges;

- The potential for cross-border or all-island clustering of economic activity and how best the NPF can help build the long term economic resilience of areas along our borders;
- Joint thinking and management approaches to environmental management and protection.

Regional Development Strategies and the North West Cross-border Region

As part of the preparations for the *National Development Plan 2000-2006*, the Department of Finance commissioned the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) to identify key priority areas for investment in the 2000-2006 period that would maximise the contribution to Ireland's growth potential and sustainable employment growth. ESRI's study recommended that the best strategy for promoting balanced regional development was to invest in a series of nodes which would provide a development focus for their surrounding hinterlands. The selected major regional centres for development were Dublin, Cork, Limerick/Shannon/Ennis, Galway, Waterford and Letterkenny/Derry. It was also suggested that the economic development of the North West region hinged on the development of the Letterkenny/Derry node.

A key recommendation from the ESRI was that a national spatial strategy be developed to concentrate on the selection of a second tier of nodes important to regional development. The *National Spatial Strategy (NSS) 2002-2020* included the addition of the smaller population centres of Sligo and Dundalk as nodes and a further linked node to include Athlone/Tullamore/Mullingar. The NSS focuses on providing better balanced social, economic and physical development through what were referred to as nine gateways or engines of growth. Letterkenny with Derry was designated as a linked gateway and the only cross-border gateway, the North West Gateway.

Shaping our Future, the Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland (RDS) 2025, published in 2001, identified Derry-Londonderry as a major regional city for the North West, including Donegal. In the ten year review of the RDS it was noted that cross-border co-operation and collaboration provide opportunities to boost the economic performance and competitiveness across the island and goes on to note that more can be achieved through collaboration than competition. *RDS 2035*, the revised regional development strategy for Northern Ireland, published in 2012, addresses the potential of Derry-Londonderry and Strabane in a cross-border context. In *RDS 2035*, the North West is defined as the council areas of Derry and Strabane and also extends into County Donegal. The population of these two Northern Ireland council areas is estimated at 150,000 with the urban centres of Derry-Londonderry, and Strabane accounting for approximately 72% of that population. *RDS 2035* identifies that Derry-Londonderry sits naturally as the core settlement and regional gateway city for the North West; and as the principal city of the North West, with a University, it is a key cross border and international gateway providing access by road, rail and sea to the North West Region. Strabane is identified as having the potential to cluster with Derry-Londonderry as part of a North West region which stretches cross border to Letterkenny.

The key points in the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) 2002-2020 were:

- NSS supports Dublin's pivotal role in national economic success. It is essential for balanced regional development that the performance of the Greater Dublin Area be built upon and physically consolidated.
- Strengthening the critical mass of the existing gateways of Cork, Limerick/Shannon, Galway and Waterford, to complement Dublin's successful national spatial role offers the most immediate prospects of establishing more balanced patterns of development over the next few years.

- Four new national level gateways are identified: Dundalk, Sligo, and two "linked" gateways Letterkenny/(Derry), and Athlone/Tullamore/Mullingar. A linked gateway is one in which two or more strong towns work in partnership to promote economic and social development in their region.

In relation to the Letterkenny-Derry Gateway the NSS argues that Derry is the fourth largest city on the island and given its size, location and functions, Derry has been identified as a major regional city for the North-west including Donegal. The NSS mirrors the vision for Derry in "Shaping our Future" the Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland and states Derry's role has been reciprocated in the NSS in that Letterkenny has been identified as having a spatial and developmental function that could be co-ordinated with that of Derry to enhance critical mass and energise the wider Donegal and North-western areas. The NSS also details Letterkenny's strengths as a significant centre in its own right, as the focal point of transport networks in Donegal, having substantial capacity for development, good education (with Letterkenny Institute of Technology) and healthcare facilities as well as good connections to Derry, itself an important transport hub.

National Development Plan (NDP) 2007-13 and the Northwest Gateway

The NDP 2007-13 outlined that Letterkenny's population growth had been the highest among the Gateway centres, at about 30% between 2002 and 2006. Characterising the two urban areas of Letterkenny and Derry with an estimated population of over 100,000, the NDP details that Letterkenny and the North-West's future success are contingent on fostering enhanced linkages within the northwest gateway and between the Gateway and other parts of the island of Ireland and a strong and innovative enterprise sector linked to a dynamic education sector and the provision of services in a complementary manner on either side of the border.

Investment priorities via the NDP for the Northwest Gateway set out in the NDP included:

- Implementation, by the relevant local authorities, of an integrated strategy for the strategic development of Letterkenny as an integral part of the Northwest Gateway;
- Enhancement of road links to other Gateways along the Atlantic Road Corridor;
- Further improvements on the N2 route, in co-operation with the Northern Ireland Authorities, to greatly improve the road link to Dublin over the period of the Plan;
- Further investment at Derry Airport and continued support for Donegal Regional Airport;
- Enhancement of the capacity and resilience of energy supply networks;
- Strengthening the innovation capacity at Letterkenny Institute of Technology and building on complementary strengths at Magee College in Derry;
- Initiatives to deepen the skills base of the labour force in order to facilitate the creation and attraction of higher value-added enterprise functions; and
- Improvements to the stock of healthcare and social infrastructure such as regional hospital and specialist care services on a shared basis between Donegal and facilities in Northern Ireland.

National Development Plan and the NWGSA

In February 2008 the Minister for Education and Science announced details of the allocation of funding under Cycle 2 of the Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF). Among the successful projects was the North West Gateway Strategic Alliance (NWGSA) proposal which aimed to develop closer collaboration between LYIT and the Ulster University (UU). The North West Gateway Strategic

Alliance project was a collaborative proposal with Ulster University in accordance with commitments in the NDP and was significant in being the only cross-border proposal funded via SIF.

The proposal was framed in terms of the four key elements for the future management of Irish higher education: the NDP policy context, alignment of institutional plans and activities with national priorities and outcomes, enhancing institutional strategic planning, and the oversight and development role of the HEA. The argument was made that the proposed alliance was in line with government policy on both sides of the border and particularly the priority under All-Island Co-operation in the National Development Plan (NDP) 2007- 2013 for: *A significant upgrading of higher education capacity in the North West and the border region through strategic alliances between the educational institutions, North and South.*

The proposal identified a number of specific areas where the critical mass formed through this alliance could deliver significant benefits for the North West Gateway, including:

- additional high quality programmes of study to help retain graduates in the North West Gateway - additional facilities and enhanced support services for a greater student population
- improved research capacity and activity and the further commercialisation of research findings through partnerships with industry
- increased resources to adequately support regional development and the workforce development agenda - widening participation and improving support systems for non-traditional learners
- enhanced lifelong learning opportunities encompassing flexible modes of delivery and eLearning - stronger identity and voice for this unique cross-border Gateway.

Data gathering in respect of the scoping study commenced in May 2008. Indecon Intl/London Economics analysis in their final report (March 2009) found that despite the gains of recent years, educational attainment in the region remains low in comparison with elsewhere on the island of Ireland and the level of higher education course provision (on a per capita basis) is relatively low. The NWGSA area has an appreciably large and critical mass of population (c. 500,000 in 2006) and areas of high population density include the linked Gateway Letterkenny-Derry. Other demographic data in the report showed that the population of the linked Gateway grew by 3.3% during 2002-2006 and that Letterkenny was the fastest growing urban area in Republic of Ireland with a higher education institution (during 2002-2006).

Indecon Intl/London Economics also found that the socio-economic profile of the NWGSA region indicates a need for the region to 'catch-up' with elsewhere in the island of Ireland in terms of higher education provision and in terms of higher educational attainment among its residents. Surveys carried out as part of the Scoping Study revealed very strong support among local businesses and employers for enhanced co-operation between the Ulster University and LYIT with the staff survey revealing very strong support among staff and students at both LYIT and UU for enhanced cooperation between the two partner colleges.

Key opportunities identified through the NWGSA Scoping Study included

- further development of educational programmes, primarily at postgraduate level and with flexible delivery modes, e.g. part-time or online, that address the population's lifelong need for access to higher education
- joint initiatives in the development of programmes with an emphasis on STEM subjects
- collaboration in research, particularly in those areas where LYIT has current strengths

- joint approaches to the provision of services to businesses in the region.

Northwest West Gateway Initiative (NWGI) and ‘A Fresh Start’

The NWGI was launched in 2006 at the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference in Dublin and included a commitment by the Irish and British governments to look closely at the particular needs of the North West in drawing up programmes under EU structural funds and to address:

- A non-statutory integrated spatial planning and development framework for the region involving government departments and local authorities on both sides of the border;
- An examination of the potential for joint investment in key infrastructure projects involving economic development agencies on both sides of the border;
- Joint analysis and actions by the same agencies and other departments in areas such as trade and investment promotion, tourism, skills/training, further and higher education, innovation and business development;
- Better co-ordination of public services, notably health, education and information services.

The inclusion in the November 2015 ‘A Fresh Start’ agreement of initial funding for the NWGI represents a recognition of the progress achieved by Donegal County Council and Derry City and Strabane District Council in developing new collaborative cross-border arrangements at local government level to promote the development of the North West region. There is evident potential for the NWGI to achieve real momentum, and the commitment in this agreement for regular meetings of senior officials from the NI Executive and the Irish Government to review progress and examine funding opportunities for mutually beneficial infrastructural projects is significant.

Higher Education Strategies

The *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030*, published in 2011, sets out changes for the sector that are aimed at providing for:

- a more flexible system, with a greater choice of provision and modes of learning for an increasingly diverse cohort of students;
- improvements in the quality of the student experience, the quality of teaching and learning and the relevance of learning outcomes; and
- ensuring that higher education connects more effectively with wider social, economic and enterprise needs through its staff, the quality of its graduates, the relevance of its programmes, the quality of its research and its ability to translate that into high value jobs and real benefits for society.

In addition, the HE strategy encourages the further adoption of the *regional cluster* model. Regional clusters are characterised as a group of HEIs with distinct missions working together in close coordination and cooperation to determine and meet the needs of a wide range of students, communities and enterprises in their region. An effective cluster it is suggested will deliver joint programme planning, collaborative research and outreach initiatives, agreements on mutual recognition and progression, and joint strategies for advancing regional economic and social development. It is also envisaged in the national strategy that HEIs will engage with other statutory providers of education and training such as the ETBs to develop integrated regional learning strategies.

Referencing cross-border collaboration the strategy states: *There is also significant potential for institutional collaboration on a North-South basis to advance cross-border regional development and strategically advance Irish higher education on an all-island basis.* In fact, the HE Strategy is enthusiastic about the possibilities for alliances between institutes of technology and partner universities in Northern Ireland. *These would be potentially very exciting and creative ways to align the higher education resources of those regions with the needs of students, enterprise and other stakeholders and should be encouraged where possible.*

Graduating to Success: A Higher Education Strategy for Northern Ireland, published in 2012, commits to supporting HEIs in collaborating on teaching and learning on a cross-border basis, in particular where it is geographically advantageous to do so, and where there are benefits for the institutions involved and for students. The NI Department of Employment and Learning (DEL) also pledged through the strategy to work in partnership with the HEIs and the Irish Government to reduce the obstacles to student mobility between North and South, and to implement the recommendations of the IBEC-CBI Joint Business Council report on undergraduate mobility. One of the sixteen projects detailed in the strategy is focused on cross-border co-operation and particularly in border areas, Project eleven: Facilitate cross-border co-operation and student mobility with its emphasis on collaboration in border areas. The action associated with this project details that *there is considerable scope for cross-border co-operation in higher education, particularly in border areas. The Department will support the HEIs in seeking opportunities for collaboration in teaching and learning.*

LYIT's Strategic Plan 2014-17

LYIT's Strategic Plan 2014-17 *Our Commitment to the North West Gateway Learning Region*, the Institute's third strategic plan, was approved in 2014 and launched at the end of the 2014/15 academic year. The Institute's previous plan was also strongly aligned with national policy objectives and particularly those elements of policy with greatest resonance for the border region the Institute serves.

Revised Mission and Vision statements were drafted for Strategic Plan 2014-17:

Mission:

Letterkenny Institute of Technology will confirm its significant national profile for excellence in higher education through the pursuit of an ambitious development agenda informed by public policy, strong regional engagement, and a fundamental commitment to a student-centred ethos.

- Nationally Significant
- Regionally Engaged
- Student Centred

Vision:

- To be widely recognised as a leading higher education institute for the quality of our graduates and our employment-focused education programmes.
- To retain the excellent relationship that we enjoy with our student body and be an exemplar for student services and campus facilities.
- To play a key role in driving the development of the North West region through research, innovation and enterprise initiatives and our well established partnerships with education and industry bodies.
- To support the implementation of public policy and particularly the national higher education strategy, exploiting LYIT's particular strength and track record on cross-border engagement.

Reference in the title to the North West Gateway reflects LYIT's continued strong commitment to cross-border collaboration and implementing important national policy objectives.

LYIT is a member of the West / North West Regional Cluster with the National University of Ireland, Galway; Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology; Institute of Technology Sligo; and St. Angela's College, Sligo. LYIT also signed the Connacht-Ulster Strategic Alliance (CUA) with Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology and Institute of Technology, Sligo in July 2012 to deliver on jointly agreed objectives that meet the HE needs of business and the wider community of the Connacht – Ulster region. Under the strategic domain of Collaboration and Regional Engagement, LYIT's strategic plan details a determination to achieve national recognition for a cross-border North West FE and HE cluster.

LYIT and Donegal County Council Partnership

Recognising the very important responsibilities that both Donegal County Council and Letterkenny Institute of Technology have in delivering on national and regional policy objectives, both partners in striving to further develop their capacities to achieve their respective missions agreed a framework for enhanced collaboration.

Initial aims of the partnership, signed on 8 June 2016, are consistent with the Donegal County Council Corporate Plan 2015-19, the Donegal Local Economic & Community Plan 2016 – 2022, and LYIT's Strategic Plan 2014-17. The initial aims of the partnership are:

- Promote sustainable economic development and job creation by working with stakeholders to address their various education and training needs.
- Support the further development of the local education infrastructure to enhance the region's reputation as a leading location for education provision.
- Develop the region's capacity for Research and Innovation.
- Promote and support Entrepreneurship, Investment, and Enterprise.
- Conserve, manage, support and promote the region's arts, culture, environment, heritage and the Irish language.
- Deliver on the potential of cross-border collaboration through the North West Gateway Initiative and the opportunities available via Interreg funding.
- Examine opportunities for the sharing of resources to assist each of the partners to improve service provision.

North West Cross-border Educational Partnership

Letterkenny Institute of Technology (LYIT), Ulster University (UU), North West Regional College (NWRC) and Donegal Education and Training Board (DETB) are committed to actively engaging with Donegal County Council and Derry City and Strabane District Council in developing new collaborative cross-border arrangements to promote the regional development work of the North West Gateway Initiative. The North West Cross-border Educational Partnership is the output from the active engagement of the partners over the past eighteen months and will be launched in the near future. Led by Local Government and involving close and co-ordinated partnership working with Central Government in both jurisdictions, the North West Strategic Growth Plan was developed with the strategic assistance of the International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD). This plan identifies that for the North West 'to remain competitive and at the cutting-edge, the education partners must increasingly collaborate and adopt a joined-up approach to attract students to their campuses' The North West Strategic Growth Plan also acknowledges the importance of education 'and especially expansion and investment in third-level education, is central to the continued growth of the knowledge economy of the North West.' The growth plan also highlights the need for a greater focus on R&D and details the positive outcomes that have been delivered through collaboration with

the education partners, such as, the Regional Science Park complexes in both Derry/Londonderry and Letterkenny.

The focus for the partnership's activity will initially be drawn from the benefits of a regional cluster as detailed in the Irish HE strategy and the cross-border objectives as set out in the Northern Irish HE strategy. Positive benefits from this initiative will include:

- better planning and organisation of programmes,
- greater impact through pooling of effort and development of shared services, more attention to student pathways and progression including cross-border student mobility,
- coordinated approach to enterprise and supporting other stakeholders in the region.

The partnership will also address the opportunities identified by Indecon Intl/London Economics through the North West Gateway Strategic Alliance (NWGSA) project. These opportunities encompass:

- further development of educational programmes, primarily at postgraduate level and with flexible delivery modes, e.g. part-time or online, that address the population's lifelong need for access to higher education
- joint initiatives in the development of programmes with an emphasis on STEM subjects;
- collaboration in research, particularly in those areas where LYIT has current strengths, and
- joint approaches to the provision of services to businesses in the region.

The North West Cross-border Educational Partnership will support the delivery of the education strategies of both jurisdictions and will be a particularly important player in respect of cross-border commitments. Appropriate funding for the partnership will support LYIT, Ulster University, North West Regional College, and Donegal ETB leverage the benefits of what is a unique collaboration spanning apprenticeships to world leading research.

Understanding Donegal and the Region

Many of the unique characteristics of County Donegal present challenges to regional planning the most obvious of these being Donegal's relationship with the border, a factor that may well be further complicated under Brexit. County Donegal is the fourth largest County in the State with a land mass of 4,861 sq km or 6.9% of the total land area of the State. Donegal has a significant cross border dimension with 93% of its entire land boundary with the NI counties of Derry, Tyrone and Fermanagh and the remaining 7% (or 9km stretch) with County Leitrim at its most southerly point. In addition, two major population centres in NI, Derry and Strabane, adjoin the border and are only 35km and 27km from Donegal's largest population centre, Letterkenny. This significant population concentration does provide opportunities and efforts are in place to further exploit the obvious potential synergies present in having two major hospitals within 40km of each other. Transport links between Dublin and Donegal are via the N2 to the north of the county and the N3 to the south of the county each involving what will be two crossings of an EU border following Brexit. Donegal has no railway infrastructure with the nearest points of access to the rail network in Derry for the northern part of the county, and Sligo for the southern part of the county. In addition, the Donegal Gaeltacht is very significant nationally with a population of over 24,000 representing close to 25% of the total Gaeltacht population in the State and approximately 26% of total Gaeltacht land area. Donegal is very fortunate in terms of its natural landscape and has more than a 1,000 km Atlantic coastline, Inishowen being the starting point of the very successful Wild Atlantic Way.

Donegal County Council is predicting an increase in population from 160,000 to 200,000 over the period to 2040. In addition, Donegal had the most significant internal migration of any county in the country over the period 2011 to 2016 with people moving from more rural parts of the county and congregating in the Letterkenny area and on the outskirts of Derry City. This migration has further strengthened the inter-relationship between the population centres of Letterkenny and Derry. Over the period 2006 to 2011 the population of Letterkenny continued its significant established growth trajectory rising from 17,586 to 19,588; ensuring that Letterkenny replaced Sligo as the largest town in the West/ North West region. Combined with the further expansion of Derry City, currently the fourth largest population centre on the island and the spread of its hinterland into Donegal means that the North West City Region of Derry/Letterkenny will be hugely significant by 2040.

Employment in Donegal 1970-2017

Donegal in the early 1970s offered little employment opportunities with what employment there was being in the traditional industries of fishing, agriculture, construction and textiles. Replacement industry for the declining traditional employment sectors was slow in coming with notable successes being Courtaulds, which was established in Letterkenny in 1976, and Fruit of the Loom established a base in Buncrana in the late 1980s. Courtaulds was taken over by Unifi in 1984 and employed close to 800 at its peak. Fruit of the Loom grew to employ more than 3,000 throughout the region and peak employment levels for both Unifi and Fruit of the Loom occurred in the late 1990s. However, by 1999 the numbers employed at Fruit of the Loom began to decline. In 2004 the Unifi factory was closed and by May of 2006 the last Fruit of the Loom facilities had ceased production.

At the beginning of the new century, there was an influx of new FDI companies into Letterkenny particularly in the Financial Services and IT industries which was complemented by the establishment of number of innovative companies elsewhere in Donegal¹. Pramerica was founded in Letterkenny in 2000 with less than 100 employees and has grown significantly in the intervening period and now employs more than 1,300 employees. Pramerica provides a range of business and technology services to their US parent company, Prudential Financial, Inc. SITA's growth in Letterkenny can be traced backed to 1999 when it was part of the Irish-owned business Eland Technologies with a single digit number of employees and was supported in its growth by LYIT. SITA a specialist in air transport communications and IT solutions now has close to 150 employees in Letterkenny. Optum/United Health came to Donegal in 2006, when it acquired existing US health insurance provider Pacificare who had a presence in Letterkenny from 1999. Optum is a health services and innovation company with an emphasis on using data, technology, people and actions to better the way healthcare works and now has more than 650 employees in Letterkenny, it is part of the family of companies that make up the USA based UnitedHealth Group. Zeus has been based in Letterkenny since 2007 where they manufacture precision polymer products for the medical, aerospace, automotive, analytics, semiconductor, environmental industries and employment at the recently extended Letterkenny plant is expected to grow to 220 in the near term. E+I Engineering is an electrical switchgear manufacturer offering unique in-house integrated power solutions tailored specifically to client's requirement and has a presence in Burnfoot since 2004. Employment at the Donegal facility has grown to more than 300 employees. Part of Radox Laboratories, the global diagnostics group, Radox Teoranta was founded in Dungloe in 2008 as a next generation life-sciences and engineering research and manufacturing centre. Radox Teoranta is involved in scientific research into conditions impacting human health such as Alzheimer's and diseases of the kidneys and liver with plans in place to grow employment in Dungloe from the current 100 employees to 540 by 2020. Clearly great credit is due to

¹ Company profile information was compiled from company websites, press releases and news articles.

the IDA, Enterprise Ireland, and Údarás na Gaeltachta in attracting these innovative companies to Donegal and supporting them in their growth over the past decade and more. LYIT and Donegal County Council together with other stakeholders also played their part in supporting the growth of these dynamic, knowledge economy companies and through the availability of a skilled workforce these companies have prospered.

LYIT and the Region

The Institute is organised around four academic schools: Business, Engineering, Science, and Tourism at two campuses in Letterkenny and Killybegs. Students in the main are studying on ordinary degree courses (Level 7), honours degree courses (Level 8), taught postgraduate programmes (Level 9) and research degrees (Level 9 and 10); the total student population now exceeds 3,500. LYIT is very closely aligned with its industry partners and works with industry to address their training and research and development needs. CoLab, LYIT's incubation, enterprise, research and innovation centre is currently home to 200 knowledge workers, working with 40 High Potential Start-up businesses, host to LYIT's nationally funded Research Centre, WiSAR, and CoLab is a base for postgraduate researchers. The TIONCHAR project in 2015 determined "impact multipliers" to measure institutional impacts on their local economy. Among other factors, the multipliers capture the positive benefits to a local economy of retaining graduates in their local region. LYIT came out top of all the Irish HEIs in terms of the "raw" multiplier falling to fifth overall and highest of the Institutes of Technology for the "balanced" multiplier which accounts for the opportunity cost of exchequer funds. The Institute has recently achieved significant success in capturing research funds and this funding will be translated into greater regional capability over the next five years. LYIT is alert to the many opportunities that are emerging in the technological world, a phenomenon that Klaus Schwab, Founder of the World Economic Forum referred to as The Fourth Industrial Revolution. Technology opportunities is driving many of the Institute's engagement with industry and further developing our research capacity is key to continuing to support the growth of the innovative industries in our region.

From 1987 to 2007, economic growth averaged more than 6% per year, through the 1990s and early 2000s the employment opportunities for LYIT graduates were significant at technician and technologist level but graduates had in the main to move to Dublin and to a lesser extent to Galway, Limerick, Belfast or Cork for this employment. The ongoing recovery has offered better quality employment in our region and has necessitated a significant upskilling of graduates for these new opportunities.

The regions and regional HEIs now find themselves in the competitive environment that is the focus of the IDA strategy *Winning: Foreign Direct Investment 2015-2019*. LYIT is up for this challenge and continues to build capacity to enhance our preparedness through: collaboration with our many industry partners, engagement with the development agencies, and via strong alliances with our educational partners.

Conclusions

1. LYIT supports the inclusion of the North West City Region of Letterkenny/Derry-Londonderry/Strabane as a key growth centre in the NPF – recognising its capacity and potential to be a driver of effective regional development for the wider Northern and Western Region of the island of Ireland.

2. In addition, it is important that these key growth centres are supported via government departments in collaboration with the other sectors to guarantee that strategic choices are appropriately supported to ensure the selected growth centres can achieve the scale required to offer a counter balance to Dublin.



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