



Smarter World, Smarter Work

An Ibec campaign

Preparing Ireland for
a new era of work



“How we work is changing dramatically. We need to embrace this change, with all its challenges. The right approach will deliver a new era of quality job creation and improved living standards.”

Danny McCoy, Ibec CEO

Smarter World, Smarter Work

Ireland must be at the forefront of the workplace revolution.

How we work is changing

Globalisation, rapid digitalisation, changing lifestyles and new consumer preferences mean jobs and careers are being transformed. And the pace of change is accelerating. This brings great opportunities, but also risks.

The archetypal worker used to be a man on a production line or a ‘salary-man’ in an office. This will not be the case into the future. The needs of businesses and individuals are shifting, and so too are career paths.

The new world of work is more exciting, but also less predictable.

What will these new jobs look like, is our education and social protection system ready, and is Ireland and Irish business positioned to thrive in this new environment?

How organisations, government and individuals respond to these trends will fundamentally affect the quality of our jobs and our lives into the future. It will determine the ability of businesses to prosper and, more fundamentally, it will shape our society and living standards for generations.

Ibec’s Smarter World, Smarter Work campaign looks at what’s changing and sets out an ambitious vision for our economy and our society. Crucially, it identifies what action we need to take now if we are to reap the rewards and avoid the pitfalls.



“The workplace of the future is more exciting, but less predictable. Our ability to anticipate and respond to emerging trends will shape our economic and social future.”

Paraic Curtis, SVP and GM, TE Medical





"We are entering a new wave of digital automation and artificial intelligence which will reshape many of today's jobs, and create new jobs with a likely increased demand for creativity and problem solving skills. With Ireland positioned as one of the digital front runner countries in Europe, we have shown agility in responding to the opportunities these new technologies present."

Fionnuala Meehan, VP and Head of Google Ireland



Our vision

Our vision is of a new era of quality job creation and improved living standards. An era defined by an embrace of technological and workplace change in business, at home and right across society. An era that provides individuals and organisations with the environment and supports they need to thrive and reach their full potential.

Irish business must lead the way.



Ireland is ranked one of the top countries globally for the availability of skilled labour

IMD World Talent Ranking

Irish citizens are among the most positive about technological change and globalisation

IMD & Eurobarometer

Our approach

Ibec's Smarter World, Smarter Work campaign will set out a positive vision for the future of work, identify the priority actions needed to deliver this ambition, and influence policy decisions accordingly. It will propose a range of actions across four key areas:

Investment in skills and employability

New jobs require new skills. At all stages, for all ages, the training and education system must equip individuals with the knowledge and skills they need to reach their full potential.

Flexibility at all life stages

We all need to embrace new ways of managing working life – individuals, employers and government. We need to rethink traditional career paths, embrace new ways of working and ensure public policy actively encourages work.

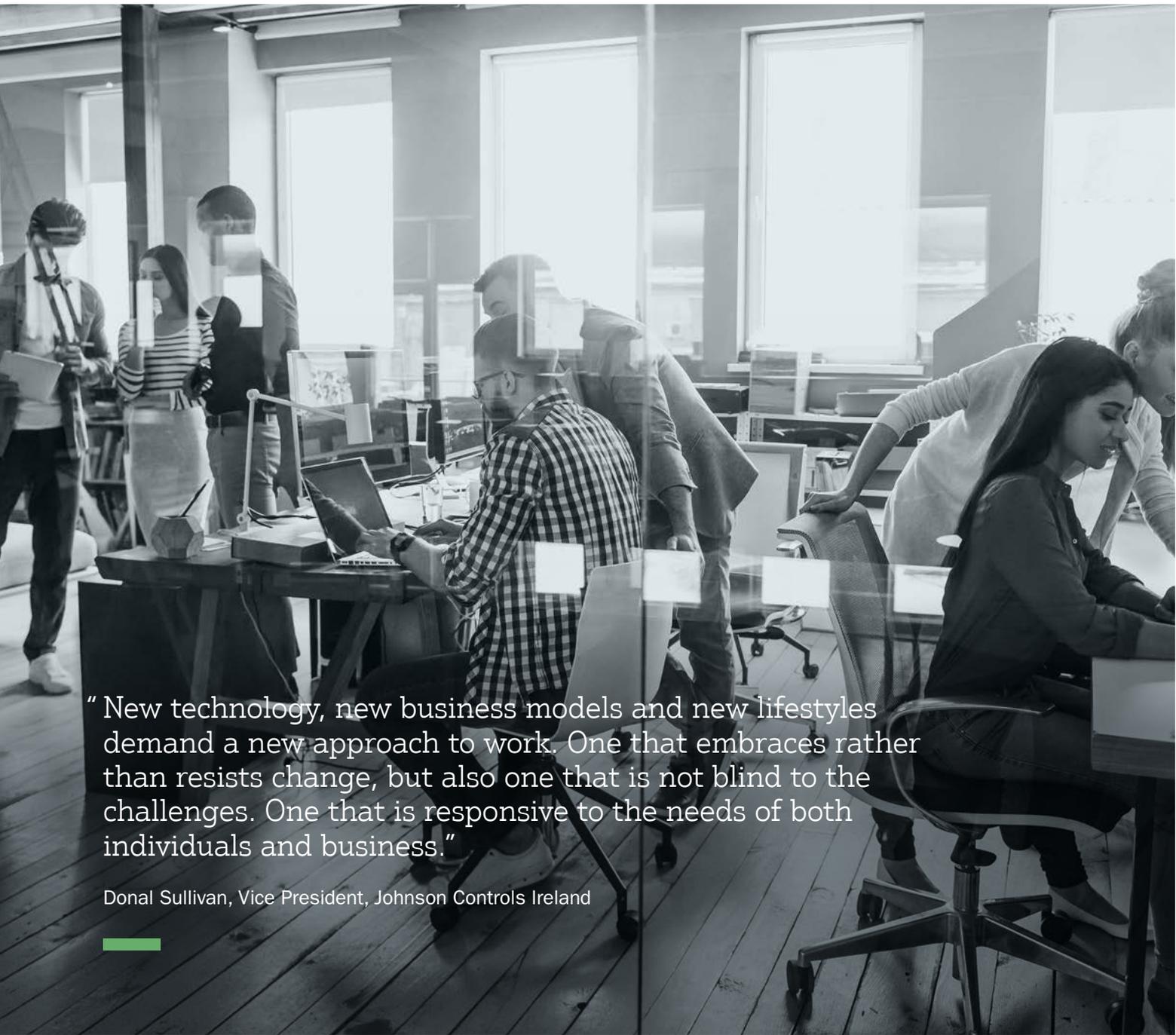
A dynamic labour market

Creating and attracting new jobs means staying competitive. A responsive labour market that supports job creation and high living standards, while also safeguarding our dynamic business model is vital.

Smoother career transitions

Economic, technological and social change means people are moving between working and non-working life more often during their lives. Our employment, social protection and pensions system needs to support easy transitions.

Ibec, on behalf of Irish business, is engaging in a substantial lobbying and communications effort to ensure the position of business is understood, championed and implemented. It is a broad agenda, which includes some very difficult economic and social challenges, but if we make the right choices the rewards will be huge.



“New technology, new business models and new lifestyles demand a new approach to work. One that embraces rather than resists change, but also one that is not blind to the challenges. One that is responsive to the needs of both individuals and business.”

Donal Sullivan, Vice President, Johnson Controls Ireland



Investment in skills and employability

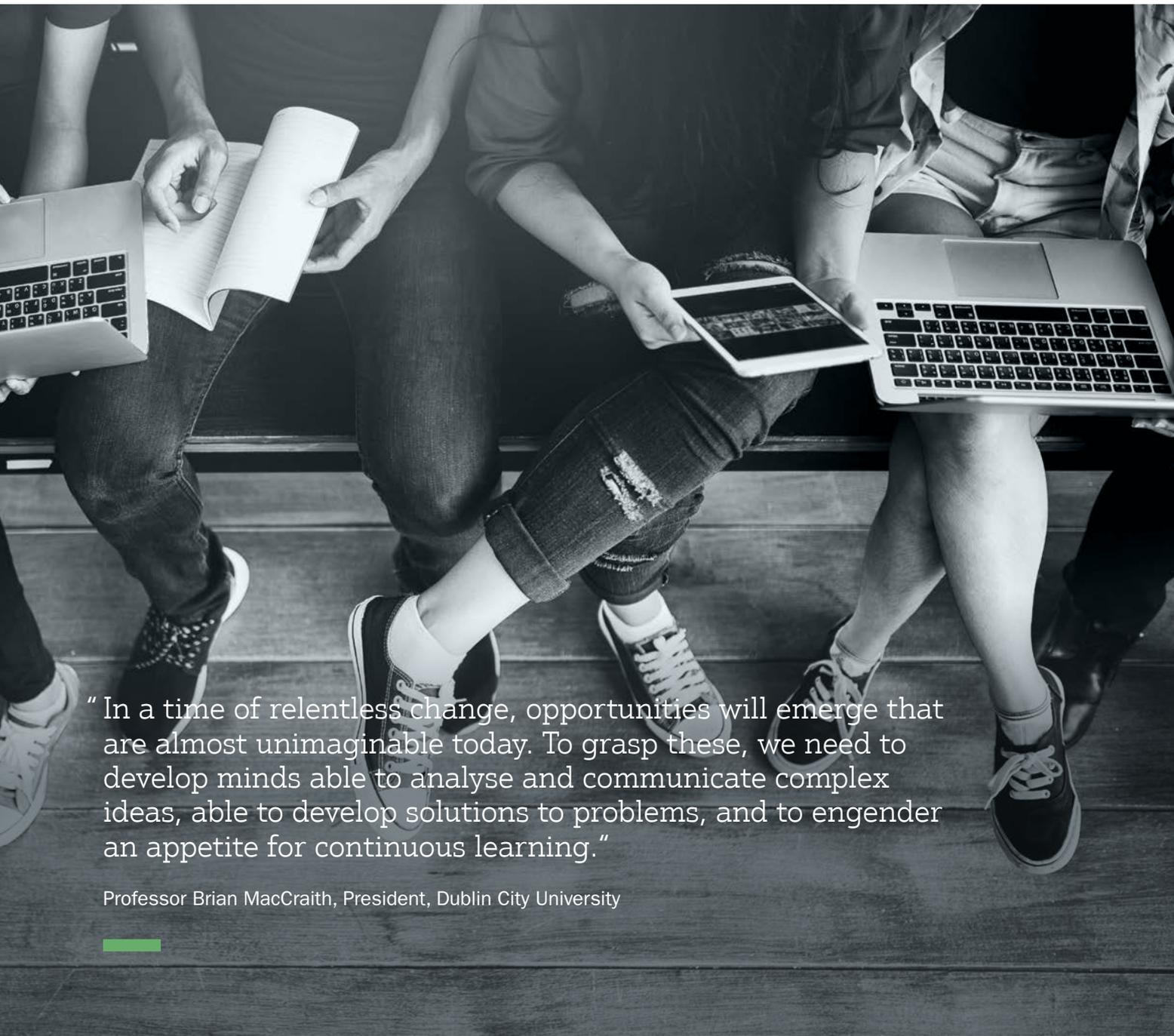
Automation, digital platforms and other innovations are changing the types of jobs being created and the nature of work itself.

This rapid change presents big challenges. It is causing a growing polarisation of labour-market opportunities between high and low-skill jobs and disrupting employment patterns. It also has the potential to exacerbate income and opportunity inequality.

To address this, public policy must focus on investing in an individual's employability rather than maintaining roles that will eventually become redundant. It must prioritise an inclusive and lifelong approach to skills development. At present, Ireland's lifelong learning rate is less than half the benchmark set by the EU and significantly below what is required by a knowledge-based economy.

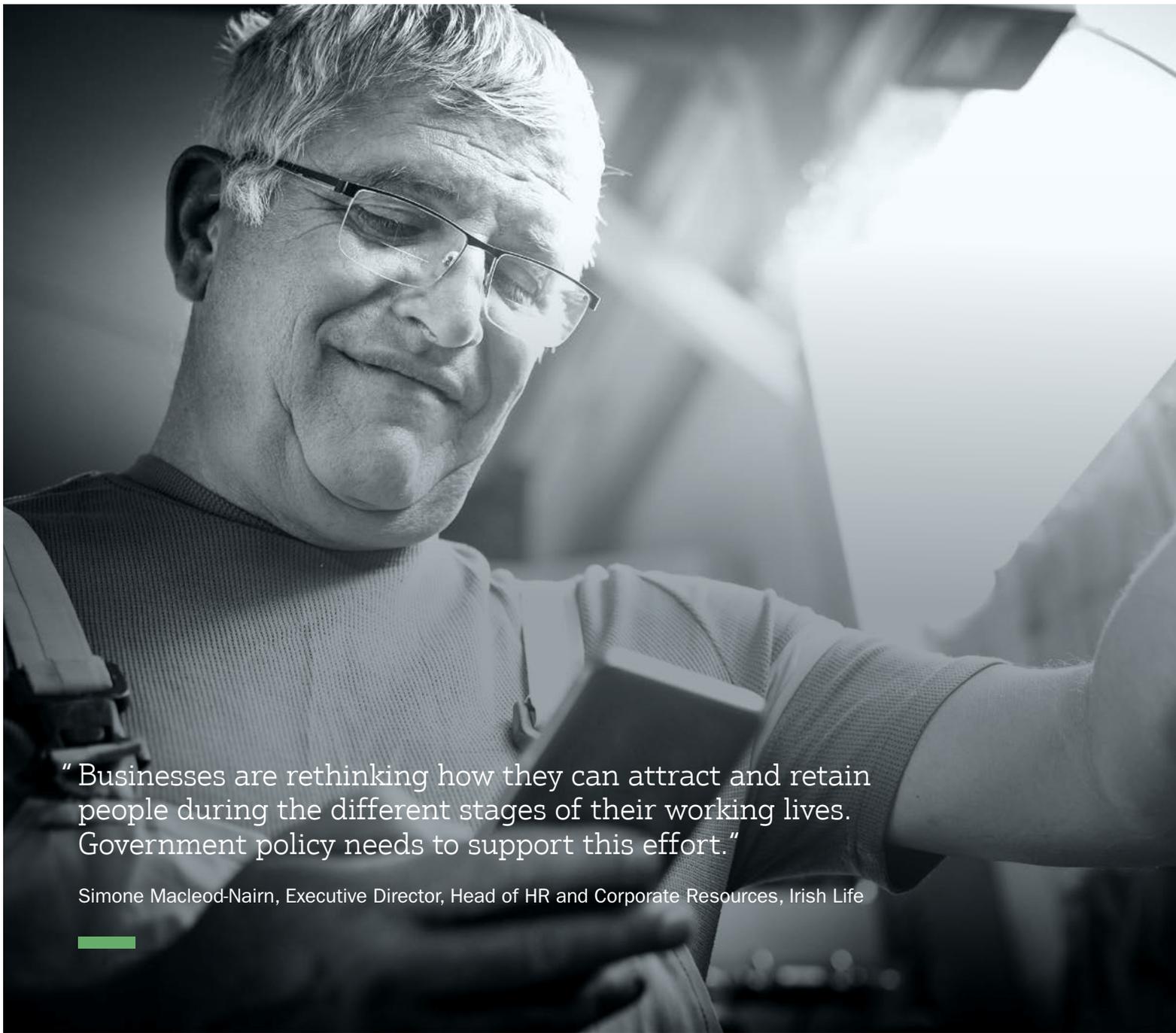
The ability of an individual to fulfil their career potential depends on attributes and skills that are developed at an early stage in the education system. Employability and entrepreneurial skills are required for an unpredictable future workplace. Flexibility, resilience and an appetite for learning must be ingrained in what we teach and how we teach it in schools and colleges.

Curriculum reform and career guidance is required so that subjects reflect the changing world around us and we need to improve the professional development offered to teachers.



“In a time of relentless change, opportunities will emerge that are almost unimaginable today. To grasp these, we need to develop minds able to analyse and communicate complex ideas, able to develop solutions to problems, and to engender an appetite for continuous learning.”

Professor Brian MacCraith, President, Dublin City University



“Businesses are rethinking how they can attract and retain people during the different stages of their working lives. Government policy needs to support this effort.”

Simone Macleod-Nairn, Executive Director, Head of HR and Corporate Resources, Irish Life



Flexibility at all life stages

The workplace of the future will be very different. It will be more diverse and more flexible. A fundamental rethink of how we manage and support this new working environment is required.

More varied career paths bring new stresses, with more periods of change and flux as individuals move through their working lives. Balancing social and personal needs with the demands from employers and work can be difficult. At the same time people are living longer and healthier lives.

To manage this transformation, employers will need to facilitate and champion new, more adaptable ways of working, including making greater use of technology. How career paths are managed will also need to be re-examined.

Public policy also needs to change to better support those at work. We need an approach to childcare, lifelong learning, retirement, pensions and taxation that keeps people engaged with the labour market, and which doesn't discriminate or disincentivises work.

A dynamic labour market

How we regulate our labour market will be a key factor in determining our ability to attract and retain jobs in the economy. Businesses need to be able to compete successfully in international markets. A balanced relationship between the employer and employees is essential.

Our focus must be on providing well designed and stable labour market regulation that allows for flexibility – enabling employers to respond to changing business demands, while also creating opportunities to build decent work for those wishing to vary their levels of participation in the workforce.

In a globally competitive economic environment, we need labour market policies that support the development of workplaces that are driven by dynamic science and technology. We need flexibility in our working practices, flexibility to engage, whether directly or collectively, and we need to be able to attract the talent needed to sustain strong economic growth.

Well-designed policy supporting competitiveness and job creation will maximise the potential of individuals to devise the next generation of innovative products, processes and services needed to support sustainable employment. We need to position Ireland at the very forefront of the workplace revolution.

Ireland is ranked among the top countries in the world for the flexibility and adaptability of our workforce

IMD World Competitiveness
Year Book



“ It is time to reset the narrative that flexible-hours or part-time working is always poorly paid and undesirable. Many workers actively choose to work in sectors where flexible hours are available as it suits their work-life balance.”

Margot Slattery, Country President, Sodexo



Smother career transitions

Economic, technological and social changes mean people are moving between working and non-working life more often during their lives. Often by choice, but sometimes because of economic circumstances.

However, while careers may be less predictable, people should be able to trust in work. Workers should be able to make plans for their lives without unnecessary inconveniences and risks to their careers. Employment interruptions and transitions need to be organised in such a way that workers have the necessary support structure to combine working and non-working life.

Smooth transition between work and non-working life is a crucial element in the quality of work and employment. It is key to enabling more people to participate and remain in the workforce and combine paid work with other responsibilities and activities, including family.

The current employment, social protection and pensions systems need far-reaching reform. These should not be regarded as services we turn to only in tough times. Instead they should provide pro-active, innovative and responsive supports, in tune with the needs of a dynamic and rapidly changing society and labour market.



Careers are becoming more complex and workers are changing job more often than in the past

New technology will create many new quality jobs, but some jobs will inevitably go

Over 60% of children today will work in jobs that currently do not exist

World Economic Forum

About Ibec

Ibec is Ireland's largest lobby group representing Irish business both domestically and internationally. Its membership is home grown, multinational, big and small, spanning every sector of the economy. Together they employ over 70% of the private sector workforce in Ireland. Ibec and its trade associations lobby government, policy makers and other key stakeholders nationally and internationally to shape business conditions and drive economic growth. It has over 240 professional services staff in seven locations including Brussels and has 42 different trade associations in the group.

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