

Minister Eoghan Murphy TD,
Minister for Housing, Planning, and Local Government,
Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government,
Custom House,
Dublin, D01 W6X0

2 November 2017

Dear Minister Murphy,

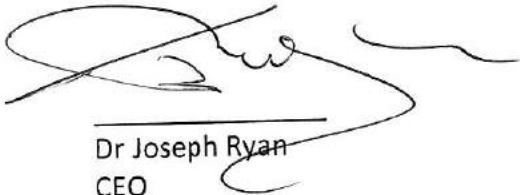
Thank you for your kind words in the context of this organization's contribution to date on the National Planning Framework and for your invitation to submit further views on the draft in its current state. I have taken over from my predecessor, Professor Tom Collins, and very much appreciated the opportunity to be part of what is a most important national dialogue and one that will have overarching impact on the nature and character of our country over the coming decades. I share your vision to set out an agreed and inclusive ambition for a path that can offer a sustainable and enhanced quality of life for an expanding population and in a balanced manner.

The discussions to which I was privileged to be a party as component of this process were compelling and robust. They were notable in their agreement on the centrality of education as a catalyst for both regional and national sustainability. There was also discussion around the manner in which the National Planning Framework is significant as unifying spine for a suite of other national policy initiatives that can benefit from the integration within a more holistic policy context. At a specific level, the advance in the Technological Universities Bill was noted and, at the time of writing, there are four consortia currently electing to pursue this path. I mention this as prelude to the comment that education might better be represented in the final report. It would be unfair to claim that education does not feature currently; there are many mentions and Section 5.6 directly addresses Education and Life Long Learning. Within the latter, there is specific mention of the potential inherent in the development of Technological Universities. However, although the putative entities with ambition in this space are now known, they are not named. I can appreciate the sensitivities, but a plan that fails to engage with the detail is open to criticism. There is specific reference to the DIT campus at Grangegorman as a critical flagship infrastructural project but this is outside of any mention of

the core drive to realize the Technological University for Dublin which has the potential to be a game-changer in respect of access and scope of provision and not alone in the greater metropolitan region. There is no mention at all of the potential that technological universities might have on the west and north-west, the south and south-west, or on the south-east. It is appreciated that what will result here is a framework but there is scope, I propose, to add a little more flesh to the education bone.

The Technological Higher Education Association, as representative and advocacy body for all institutes of technology in Ireland, will make a final submission on the draft plan through the open call that closes later this month. But I wished to do you the courtesy, Minister, of acknowledging your direct invitation, to compliment you on continuing the drive in respect of this most important national initiative, and by way of focused response, to encourage you and your team to be bolder and more specific in relation to the critical contribution that education can make to shaping our shared future.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dr Ryan', with a horizontal line underneath it.

Dr Joseph Ryan
CEO
Technological Higher Education Association (THEA)