

**ACTION
PLAN
FOR JOBS**

2015



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Foreword by An Taoiseach, Enda Kenny, T.D.



This Government appreciates the life-changing impact of a new job – the lift it gives to a person, a family, a community. It is the most tangible sign of economic recovery that anyone can feel.

We began the Action Plan for Jobs process in 2012, mapping out the huge amount of little steps necessary to support enterprise in the creation and maintenance of jobs. It is working.

We are on track to exceed our target of 100,000 additional jobs by 2016 – we are already 80,000 of the way there. I have said that my goal for this year is adding 40,000 more. And we are setting a goal to bring employment to 2.1 million by 2018 – 2 years earlier than our original target – effectively restoring all jobs lost during the economic crisis.

The unemployment rate has come down from its peak of 15.1 per cent to 10.6 per cent and I believe that it is credible that, by sticking with our jobs plan, we can look forward to it being under 10 per cent by the end of the year.

To achieve our vision of a stable and prosperous economy, we need to continue to make progress on our other goals: restoring our competitiveness, winning more foreign direct investment, encouraging more Irish entrepreneurs to take the leap, improving SME access to finance, as well as progress on a range of other goals.

We will work to make 2015 the year in which we secure the recovery by focusing on getting Ireland working.

Many of the actions in this Plan build on the important work we have done since 2012, in areas such as education and skills, development of Irish industry and FDI, and domestic sectors like retail and construction.

Bold new actions are also needed. One priority this year is to get the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland up and running. We will embrace all good suggestions that help us build a stronger economy by continuing to seek out and implement good ideas from every available source. Our work with the Global Irish Network and with our industry partners will continue to help identify promising actions across our economy.

The Action Plan is only a part of the pro-enterprise, pro-jobs agenda we have set for ourselves.

This Spring we will bring forward an updated overall macro-economic strategy to grow the economy, deliver full employment and to maintain responsible management of the public finances. We will also set out a medium-term capital plan designed to address emerging economic and social infrastructure bottlenecks that could constrain the economy.

Work is progressing on a national enterprise strategy and a skills strategy. A new strategy to grow the International Financial Services Sector will shortly be brought to Government.

Our work in 2015 will also have a particular focus on regional development, medium-term labour market activation and welfare reform, to ensure that work always pays, as well as strategies for a number of other specific sectors.

This Government has worked hard to return stability to the economy and to the labour market. We know that what has been achieved has only been possible because of the strength of the commitment of the Irish people to turning this country around.

My ambition for this country, for our people, for what we can achieve this year, remains high.

We are on the right track, with the right attitude and heading in the right direction.

Through this Action Plan for Jobs we are building solid foundations for sustainable business and jobs growth that will serve our country well into the future.

With this Plan we are reaffirming that job creation remains the number one priority across Government.

Enda Kenny, T.D.

Taoiseach

January 2015

Foreword by the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, Richard Bruton, T.D.



When I launched the first Action Plan for Jobs with the Taoiseach and Tánaiste in February 2012 unemployment stood at 15.1 per cent. The idea that our economy could put 100,000 extra people back to work by 2016 was met with questioning, and often dismissive, looks. But that was the ambition we set ourselves because we were convinced that with the whole of Government working together, and in partnership with industry and workers, we could reverse the catastrophic collapse that previous policy choices had created.

As it turns out, we did get our numbers wrong, but not in the way many expected. The response of Irish entrepreneurs, managers and workers to the challenge of rebuilding our economy has been so strong, so committed that we are now on track to meet and exceed our targets well ahead of schedule. The private sector alone has created those 100,000 additional jobs already, though the public sector has continued to shed jobs so the overall impact is 80,000 extra in jobs since we started this annual process.

What is particularly encouraging is when you get behind these figures a little. Nearly all of the extra jobs are full time. Every region has seen their jobs numbers increase. Jobs that depend on the domestic sector – like construction and retail – are also now adding numbers. I knew when we started out on the Action Plan process that the recovery would have to start with exporting sectors and that our chances would be driven by our ability to compete on the international stage.

The outcome of that conviction, and the policies that underscored it, is that in 2014 both IDA and Enterprise Ireland have had record years. Combined they created a net additional 15,000 jobs, which in turn, support a similar number in support services and related sectors. This is making a real impact all over the country. Notably, Enterprise Ireland – who look after Irish owned exporting companies – added over 8,000 of those new jobs. This means that Irish companies are right at the heart of our recovery, working side by side with our international colleagues. That is exactly as it should be.

Looking ahead I believe that the next wave of jobs will be driven by small Irish companies – the type of SMEs that tend to create up to two-thirds of all new jobs in a growing economy.

For all this progress the reality is that our recovery still needs to be secured. We can, and I believe we will, reach full employment by 2018 – but only if we keep pushing hard to deliver the right type of policies. They are the policies that will keep us competitive on the international stage, keep us at the cutting edge of research and innovation and crucially, keeps ensuring that Government helps rather than hinders entrepreneurs from creating the jobs that deliver the tax revenues that allow us invest in vital services.

This year's Action Plan continues to keep a focus on competitiveness and areas of real potential, like energy and intellectual property but it puts a very heavy spotlight on encouraging even more new start-ups and also introduces new approaches to deliver on balanced regional development. We are determined that every region will benefit from the recovery and we will be announcing over the coming weeks and months a series of actions to help drive the achievement of this goal.

Another new aspect of this year's plan is the introduction of impact assessment measures. This means that each action can now be measured against objective criteria such as increased sales or exports, improvement in skills provision, increased start-ups and so on. This new approach will allow further refinement of the Action Plan process and help facilitate more targeted and impactful policy interventions.

Finally, we retain the oversight structures that are absolutely essential to the Action Plan's success. Driven by the Taoiseach, both our Departments jointly Chair an implementation body that publishes quarterly report cards on progress made against stated Actions. This will continue as it ensures that every commitment is tracked, every action and its owner is held accountable and finally, that we succeed in delivering the vast majority of the tasks set down within the timetable set out. Without this commitment from the Taoiseach and his office the Action Plan process would risk becoming simply another plan that gathered dust on a shelf. That hasn't happened and the results are visible to all.

And they are results that only encourage us to push harder to achieve even more because we have confidence that our approach is working.

Richard Bruton, T.D.

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation

January 2015

Update on the Action Plan for Jobs Five Strategic Objectives

The Action Plan for Jobs (APJ) has five overarching strategic objectives (see below), which it seeks to achieve by implementing each instalment in its multi-annual series. The next few pages illustrate the progress that has been made on each of these objectives over the course of the first three annual plans implemented to date. This 2015 Plan has been devised such that all five strategic objectives are delivered upon.

Action Plan for Jobs Five Strategic Ambitions

1. To support 100,000 additional jobs by 2016
2. To get Ireland back to a top-five ranking in international competitiveness
3. To stimulate the domestic economy and generate employment in locally traded sector
4. To build an indigenous engine of growth that drives up the export market share of Irish companies
5. To build world-class clusters in key sectors of opportunity

In addition, throughout this Plan is a selection of stories of how actions implemented by Government under the Action Plan for Jobs process have assisted individuals and firms to establish and grow. You can find these stories in the document within these blue boxes.

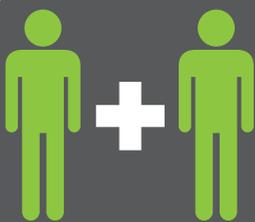


APJ STRATEGIC AMBITION 1: TO SUPPORT 100,000 ADDITIONAL JOBS BY 2016

Unemployment rate down
from over 15% in 2011 to
10.6% at end 2014.



Source: CSO



Every extra job in
exporting firms supports a
new job in locally traded
businesses (i.e., 1:1)

Source: DJEI SPD



16,420



From 2011 to 2014 direct
employment in EI firms is up by
almost 16,420 and an additional
21,350 indirect jobs.

Source: DJEI SPD



80,000



The latest CSO data, shows that
80,000 additional people are at work
compared to Q1 2012 when the
Government launched the
Action Plan for Jobs



22,265



From 2011 to 2014 direct
employment in IDA firms is up by
22,265 and an additional 15,600
indirect jobs.

Source: DJEI SPD



**APJ STRATEGIC AMBITION 2:
TO GET IRELAND BACK TO A TOP-FIVE RANKING IN
INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS**



BUSINESS

2nd in the Eurozone
for ease of doing business

Source: World Bank's "Doing Business 2015."



LABOUR

1st in the world
for availability of
skilled labour

Source: IMD World Competitiveness Year Book 2014



INVESTMENT

1st in the world
for inward investment by
quality and value

Source: IBM 2014 Global Location Trends Report



INVESTMENT

1st in the world
for investment incentives

Source: IMD World Competitiveness Year Book 2014



Source: Global Innovation Index 2014 (Ireland is at 11)



Source: IMD World Competitiveness Year Book 2014



APJ STRATEGIC AMBITION 3: TO STIMULATE THE DOMESTIC ECONOMY AND GENERATE EMPLOYMENT IN LOCALLY TRADED SECTORS



Since 2011, the numbers of people at work has grown by



in agriculture

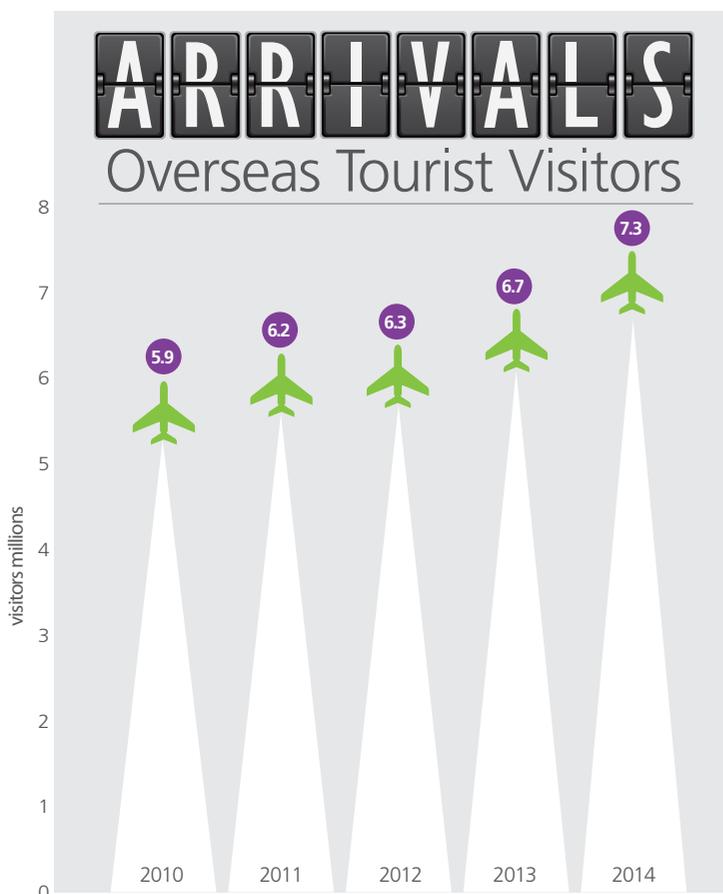


in accommodation and food services

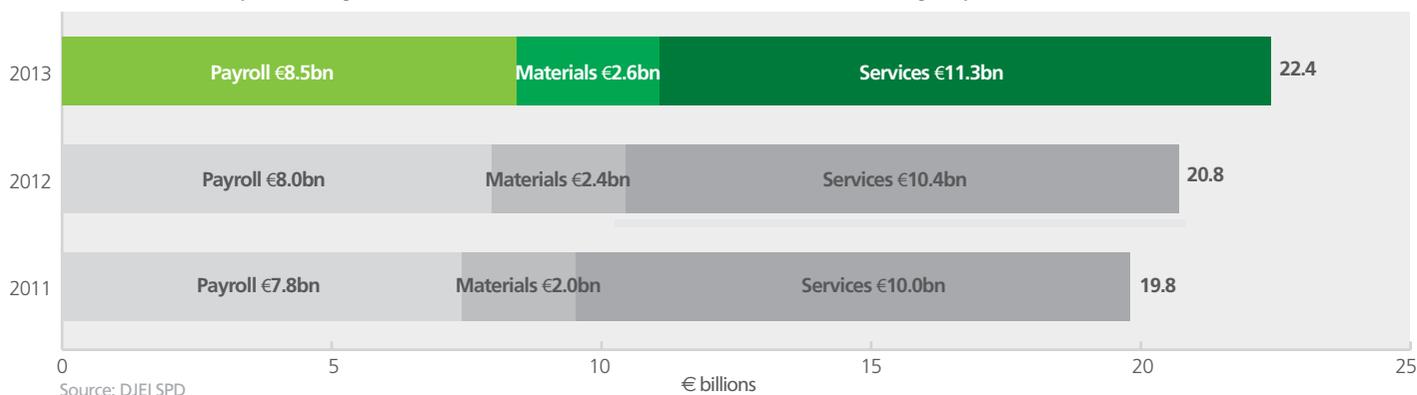


in retail, construction, healthcare, and education

Source: CSO



Spend by IDA assisted firms in the local economy up 13% from 2011



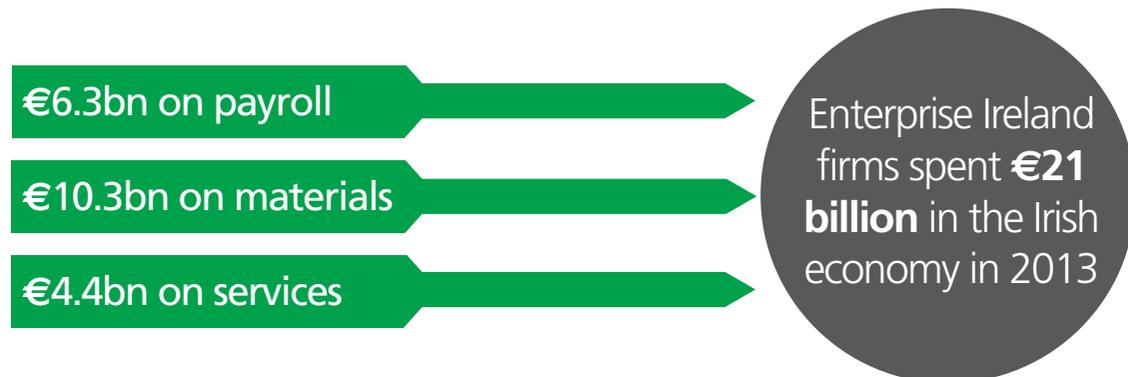


APJ STRATEGIC AMBITION 4: TO BUILD AN INDIGENOUS ENGINE OF GROWTH THAT DRIVES UP THE EXPORT MARKET SHARE OF IRISH COMPANIES

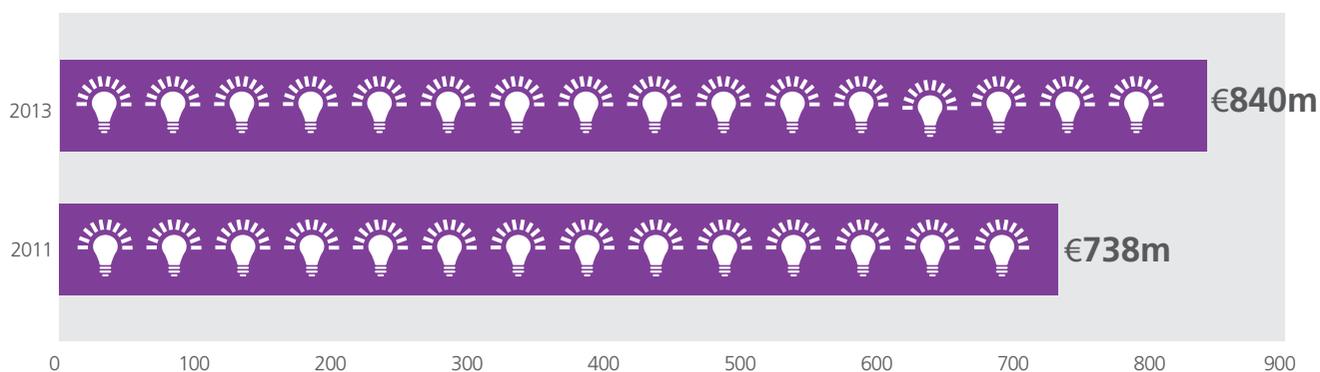
Enterprise Ireland supported firms' exports of goods and services reached new record of **€18bn in 2014** (€17.1bn in 2013, €16bn in 2012, €15.3bn in 2011)



Source: DJEI SPD



Source: DJEI SPD



R&D in EI companies undertaking research increased by 13.8% from 2011-2013 to €840m

Source: DJEI SPD



**APJ STRATEGIC AMBITION 5:
TO BUILD WORLD-CLASS CLUSTERS
IN KEY SECTORS OF OPPORTUNITY**

IRELAND IS HOME TO:

9 OF THE 10

top global software companies



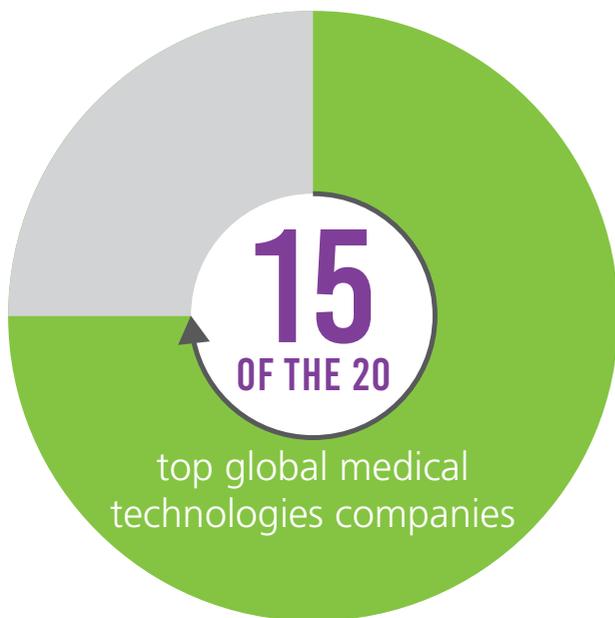
Source: IDA



OF THE 5 TOP

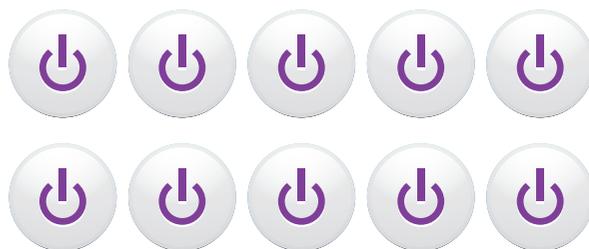
US games publishers

Source: IDA



Source: IDA

ALL 10 OF THE TOP 10



"born on the internet" companies

Source: IDA

9 OF THE 10

top global pharmaceutical companies



Source: IDA



Source: IDA

Executive Summary

Significant progress has been made since 2011 in restructuring and transforming Ireland's economy and in reforming the way we support business and job creation in Ireland.

Now in its fourth year, the Action Plan for Jobs (APJ) process continues to have an impact. Almost 80,000 more people are at work since the launch of the first Action Plan for Jobs in 2012. Indigenous exports and foreign direct investment are at all-time record levels. Our competitiveness ranking internationally has climbed to 15th¹. The rate of unemployment has declined from a peak of 15.1 per cent at the start of 2012 to below 10.6 per cent at end 2014.

In addition to the progress on our competitiveness performance and job creation, we have stabilised the public finances and the restructuring of the banking system continues apace. The domestic banks passed the key EU stress tests in 2014 and the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI) was established. Ireland is now a stand-out performer among our peers, with the IMF forecasting the strongest rates of growth for Ireland in the euro-area in 2015².

In 2012, 2013 and 2014, on a quarterly basis we have reported in detail on the implementation of measures in the Action Plan for Jobs to support the transformation of the economy, with a success rate of over 90 per cent. The OECD reviewed the Action Plan for Jobs process in early 2014 and concluded that it is a key instrument of institutional reform and delivering on the Government's concerted approach to addressing the reform and employment challenge.

However, this is not a time for complacency as we will still have further progress to make to reach the ambitious targets set for the Action Plan for Jobs reform process, address the jobs challenge, and underpin the New Economy built on enterprise innovation, technology and skilled people.

The achievement of 100,000 additional jobs by 2016 will be an important milestone and we are confident that this will be achieved. Beyond this, we need to set an even more challenging goal for the country – we want to replace all of the jobs lost during the economic crisis and bring employment to 2.1 million in 2018. The Action Plan for Jobs 2015 will be a further step along the way in meeting this medium-term goal for Ireland.

The themes in this year's Action Plan for Jobs build on the reforms of previous years in the areas of competitiveness, innovation and entrepreneurship and in fostering new sources of growth for the economy.

The objectives and actions set out in this Plan are designed to achieve specific impacts in terms of jobs, exports and startups, market penetration and innovation, efficiency of public interaction with business, finance and access to talent. Our key objectives include to ensure an adequate supply of finance for growth, improve competitiveness, reduce red tape, increase sales and exports and stimulate the domestic economy through local employment in sectors such as construction and retail, tourism, hospitality and agriculture and food. There are specific actions to improve skills provision and increase activation of the unemployed. Actions are set out to expand reform measures to boost entrepreneurship across all areas of the economy and society. We will take further actions to enhance firm-level productivity and to increase the levels of research, innovation and technology development for the benefit of enterprise.

¹ IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook 2014

² IMF, World Economic Outlook, October 2015

Reducing red tape, streamlining public interactions with enterprises and improving service efficiency remain key priorities for government and we have set out a range of measures to increase the ease of doing business. We also want to increase access to procurement opportunities from all government departments and agencies that engage with enterprises. We have set out further initiatives to decrease the cost of doing business. In the area of access to finance we have a range of measures focused on ensuring businesses have the required range of finance products to grow their sales, exports and jobs into the future.

A key part of the process is the engagement with enterprise and our Industry Partners. We have consulted with, and been challenged by, a wide range of stakeholders including the National Competitiveness Council (NCC), entrepreneurs and the enterprise sector generally, with representative bodies and unions. We will continue working with the Industry Partners Forum in 2015 in delivering the Disruptive Reforms.

In addition over the coming year, the Government will bring forward a new Enterprise Policy and Strategy Statement for the period to 2025, setting out the vision for enterprise development over that period to secure full employment, and the key supports and business environment measures to be taken to ensure Irish based enterprises are among the most innovative, productive, competitive and entrepreneurial in the world. A successor to the Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation is also being developed, which will provide the framework for the strategic direction to enable the delivery and support of effective research that produces outputs of maximum impact for Ireland's economy and society. In all, the updated medium-term economic and job creation strategies in a range of areas in 2015 include:

- An updated overall macro-economic strategy to grow the economy, deliver full employment and balance the public finances, to be published in the Spring;
- A medium-term capital plan designed to address emerging economic and social infrastructure bottlenecks that could constrain the recovery;
- A strategy for financing enhanced economic growth, and for ensuring that credit demand from growing businesses can be supplied;
- A national enterprise strategy;
- A national skills strategy;
- A national aviation strategy;
- A strategy to grow the International Financial Services Sector;
- An updated labour market activation and welfare reform strategy;
- A medium term strategy for early years and school-age care to support increased parental participation in the labour force; and
- A medium term agri-business strategy.

Disruptive Reforms

Disruptive Reforms are discrete projects within the APJ framework. They are proposed as having the potential to break out of conventional structures and to generate impact across a range of sectors and thereby give Ireland a lead, or build self-sustaining growth. In total, there are six new Disruptive Reforms to be advanced in 2015 as set out below:

National Talent Drive

This reform will focus on strengthening employability of learners and enhancing employer engagement at all levels, using collaborative funding initiatives to ensure skills supply meets demand to underpin the New Economy. We will increase higher education ICT graduates by 60 per cent between 2015 and 2018, commensurate with resourcing, meeting 74 per cent of demand through domestic supply in 2018. We will provide technology summer camps and 1,250 extra ICT places for students in 2015. We will target 13,800 annual science, technology, engineering and maths graduates by 2018 (up from 10,200 in 2011), introduce new measures to attract and retain world class talent, making sure work pays for all, and that we provide a great place to live and work.

Delivering Regional Potential

This will include the launch of Competitive Funding Initiatives of up to €25 million to promote innovative collaborations to support entrepreneurship and innovation in the regions, exploiting regional competitive advantage. We will promote the required economic infrastructure and property solutions to attract investment.

Europe's Energy Innovation Hub

As part of this reform we will provide a one-stop shop to position Ireland at the forefront of innovation and attracting mobile investment in energy related research, management services, technologies and solutions, and drive energy efficiency in the public and private sectors to improve competitiveness.

Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland

This reform involves leveraging funding of €800 million, to provide tailored loans and a range of new products for enterprises across the country via existing and new to the Irish market financial intermediaries over the next 24 months.

Increasing Entrepreneurial Activity

By driving implementation of the actions in the new National Entrepreneurship Policy Statement we will double the jobs impact of start-ups in Ireland over the next five years, from 93,000 currently. We will increase the number of start-ups, the survival rate and the capacity of startups to grow to scale, all by 25 per cent.

Intellectual Property in Enterprise

This reform includes doubling the number of patents, industrial designs registered and other IP management activities of firms. The objective is to achieve best in class in the EU by enhancing support for firms, drive commercialisation through Enterprise Ireland (EI) / Knowledge Transfer Ireland (KTI) and introduce a Knowledge Development Box to ensure the tax environment is optimised for innovative enterprises located here. This reform will include 130 commercially relevant technologies transferred to enterprise and 35 new spinout companies.

Other Key Actions and Impacts

Growing Jobs

EI and IDA Ireland are embarking on new ambitious strategies to grow jobs, investment, entrepreneurship and exports for Ireland. In 2015, Enterprise Ireland will target the creation of 13,000 gross new full-time jobs in client firms. IDA Ireland will target the creation of 14,000 gross new jobs. The creation of new jobs in agency supported firms have important spillovers to other sectors of the economy through expenditure on Irish materials and services. It is estimated that every direct job created in agency assisted firms indirectly supports another job in the wider economy thereby making a strong contribution to the overall target of getting to full employment in 2018. Continued employment growth in the construction, retail and tourism sectors will ensure the target of 100,000 extra people at work by 2016 is achieved as early as possible in 2015.

Increasing Sales and Exports

Our recovery since 2011 is founded on a deliberate policy of driving export growth across the economy and supporting successful Irish based enterprises in international markets. Enterprise Ireland through its programmes and overseas office network will target support clients to achieve €19 billion in exports in 2015.

IDA Ireland will target the winning of 160 new investment projects for Ireland and EI will target 5 FDI food projects. We will extend the Special Assignee Relief Programme to 2017 and further improve the attractiveness of our offering. IDA Ireland and EI will work to secure an additional €30 million in sub-supply and sourcing contracts for Irish based firms to foreign subsidiaries in 2015, building on the progress since 2011.

We will provide over 300 tailored mentoring programmes to support growing enterprises. A programme of 18 overseas ministerial-led trade missions and events will take place in 2015.

Stimulating the Domestic Economy through local employment

We will take a range of measures to ensure that the success in international markets is mirrored in the domestic economy and that all regions can achieve their potential. The agri-food sector reaches into every part of the country and achieving the ambitious targets under Food Harvest 2020 (FH2020) for farm level investment and in food processing will impact directly on employment prospects in rural areas and provide significant stimulus to local economies. EI will support 28 significant food industry investments, including five from foreign multinationals. The Food Competitiveness Fund will help to improve productivity and employment in the food processing sector. To support entrepreneurship we will implement a new Food Works initiative to support startups in the regions. We will support local business to go on-line and compete for new business locally and through exporting by providing support for 2,000 trading online vouchers, of which 1,450 will be provided in 2015.

For the tourism sector we will promote Ireland internationally towards the target of 7.7 million overseas tourism visitors in 2015 and prepare a new Tourism Action Plan to set out specific actions to achieve the policy goals set out in the Government's tourism policy – "People Place and Policy - Growing Tourism to 2025". The Policy Statement has an overall target of bringing employment in the sector to 250,000 and overseas revenue to €5 billion by 2025. We will

develop a new brand for the South, East and Midlands of the country building on the success to date of the Wild Atlantic Way and implement the British-Irish Visa Scheme to ease access for visitors from new and emerging markets.

Increasing Activation of the Unemployed

The focus of the *Pathways to Work* strategy is to ensure that the increase in employment generated by the actions under this Plan translates into a reduction in the number of people dependent on jobseeker payments and in particular those who are in long-term receipt of jobseeker payments. The objectives for 2015 are to roll-out the Employment and Youth Activation Charter, begin the new account management approach to employers, roll-out JobPath, continue to roll-out the Youth Guarantee initiatives, and introduce a Back to Work Family Dividend.

Increasing Entrepreneurial Activity

The launch of the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) was a major reform delivered in 2014. In 2015 the LEOs will have ambitious and robust county strategies and targets for startups, enterprise engagements and supports to be effective first-stop-shops for enterprise information and supports and launch an Entrepreneur Partnering Programme. The launch of the Startup Refunds for Entrepreneurs Scheme (SURE) in 2015 will provide additional finance for entrepreneurs. We will build on the 2014 success of the awards programmes such as Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur and initiatives under the National Entrepreneurship Strategy. We will support 130 new entrepreneurs via the New Frontiers Programme, support 185 Competitive and High Potential Startups. There will also be a step up in ambition for the starting of export orientated companies and measures to see them more successfully grow in scale.

Competitiveness

Specific measures will be taken in 2015 to reduce administrative burden for over half-a-million business interactions by, for example, greater use of ICT, revoking outdated legislation, and greater awareness and promotion of health and safety best practice. Improvements to be delivered in 2015 include the rollout of new company law which is reducing the administrative burden of company registration and filing systems, the new Workplace Relations Commission, trusted partners for the issuing of work permits, and the Integrated Licensing Applications Service.

In 2015 we will support 945 participants in EI Management Development courses. We will support 100 firms on the Platform for Growth scheme and increase the numbers of graduates on the International Growth programme. We will sustain a focus on monitoring and improving our competitiveness to achieve a top 5 position internationally, focusing in particular on the areas identified by the National Competitiveness Council of greatest impact for business. The implementation of the Government's high-speed broadband plan will commence in 2015. The national postcode system will be implemented, making it easier in particular to undertake business-to-consumer ecommerce. We are making €39 million available in Energy Saving Supports for business in 2015 and local authorities will be encouraged to exercise restraint in adopting Annual Rates on Valuation which are used to calculate commercial rates.

Increasing Levels of Research, Development & Innovation (RD&I)

We will support enterprises and public research organisations to win €150 million in research funding from the EU under Horizon 2020 in 2015 as part of the overall national target of €1.25 billion over the full period of Horizon 2020. We will continue our €245 million programme of investment with industry in SFI Research Centres throughout the country. We aim to increase the number of enterprises who are R&D active in both IDA and EI portfolios, and the numbers of spinout and licences coming from our research base.

Increasing the Flow of Appropriate Finance to SMEs

Since 2011 Government policy has focused on supporting SMEs, at all stages in the business cycle, to access a broader range of financing options from bank and non-bank sources. There is now evidence of improvements in the flow of appropriate finance to SMEs. The refusal rate of credit has fallen significantly and new lending to the SME sector from banks has begun to rise. The take up of non-bank financing options sponsored by the State is improving significantly. The appetite of SMEs for new borrowing remains somewhat subdued but there is an encouraging shift in the make up for new investments.

In 2015, efforts will continue to reinforce measures already introduced and there will be a concerted set of initiatives to speed up this progress in both bank and non-bank spheres.

As the economy moves into a new phase of growth, there is now an opportunity to address both cyclical and structural constraints in the financing of the SME sector and the continuing issue of the need for prompt payments. This will require a clear focus on how best to maximise the benefits to SMEs of the evolving financial landscape in Ireland and the adoption of actions that develop a more diversified and competitive financial system, capable of financing the growth potential of Irish SMEs.

The establishment of the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland will provide a further boost for improving availability of finance for SMEs in 2015.

New Approach to Assessing Impact

In developing APJ 2015 we have embedded an assessment framework that links the APJ's objectives and actions to impacts, and which provides a better sense of the direction of progress and helps ensure that actions effectively contribute to the over-arching objective of increased employment.

We are introducing closer monitoring of impacts to measure performance and to test areas of opportunity against international benchmarks in the areas of job creation, startups, market penetration, innovation, efficiency of public sector interface with enterprises, cost competitiveness, finance and investment and access to talent. All agencies and departments have set out actions to contribute to the key indicators as part of this Action Plan for Jobs.

These reforms and initiatives are focused on making it easier to do business and to create jobs in every part of the country and we are determined through these actions to create the conditions to achieve the target of 100,000 extra people at work by 2016 and contribute to our longer-term goal of restoring the country to have 2.1 million at work in 2018.

1. Building on Reform and Measuring Success

This is the fourth in the series of Action Plan for Jobs initiated in 2012 and builds on the lessons from its predecessors. The results of the concerted action on job-creation are being seen:

- 26,800 extra people at work in the past 12 months;
- 80,000 additional people at work since Action Plan for Jobs was launched;
- Every region of the country, and virtually every sector of the economy, showing growth;
- Regions with history of high unemployment such as the South East – which Government has brought a new focus to, via the DJEI South East Action Plan – showing particularly strong performance. The South East has had the largest decrease in unemployment in the State; and
- Exports continuing to grow, with services exports up 10 per cent in the first nine months of 2014 and goods exports up 2 per cent, following on from strong performances in 2011, 2012 and 2013.

The aim of the Action Plan for Jobs is to create the conditions to support private sector-led, export-oriented economic growth and job creation. The process of formulating and implementing the Action Plans for Jobs is part of the delivery of significant institutional change and reform in Ireland across the employment, training and economic development system. As noted by the OECD³ in their 2014 review of the Action Plan for Jobs:

“The APJ’s most striking innovation in the Irish public policy context is a coordination mechanism that ensures high-level political buy-in and oversight, whole-of-government engagement and the establishment of quarterly targets underpinned by a robust monitoring system. These are important steps towards addressing long-standing gaps that undermine successful policy implementation.”

However, as also noted by the OECD there is scope to go further. Until we get to full employment we must go further. This 2015 Action Plan for Jobs takes up that challenge. It places a central focus on the achievement of impacts, with associated metrics that can be measured and tracked. It places a strong emphasis on mobilising employers to play their part in the employment and skills system to ensure the future needs of the economy are met. It highlights the importance of stimulating productivity, investment and growth in domestic sectors of the economy to help in addressing the employment challenge, as set out in the Statement of Government Priorities 2014-2016.

This Plan moves the finance agenda for enterprise on from that of removing barriers to access to finance to ensuring we have the right mix of finance products available to meet the needs of growth-oriented businesses, in particular through the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland.

This Plan builds on the major reforms delivered since 2013. The many areas where Government has delivered reform include:

- in the areas of entrepreneurship, the launch of the Local Enterprise Offices and launch of “Ireland’s Best Young Entrepreneur” competition;

³ OECD, Ireland’s Action Plan for Jobs: A Preliminary Review, April 2014

- improvement in skills provision through the launch of SOLAS, Education and Training Boards, Momentum programmes, employment incentive schemes such as JobsPlus and doubling of high-end skills as part of the second ICT Skills Action Plan;
- new staff in EI and IDA Ireland overseas offices in high growth and emerging markets;
- launch of the British-Irish Visa Scheme for tourist and business travellers;
- completion of the 100Mbps schools broadband programme;
- launch of an Open Data Portal for access to public sector databases;
- launch of an Energy Efficiency Fund and other measures such as raising standards in the retrofitting of homes; and
- implementation of major strategic initiatives in key sectors to grow jobs and exports in the agri-food through Food Harvest 2020, tourism initiatives such as the Gathering, new Retail Forum and other sectors.

These reforms have impacted on job creation capacity and potential in the economy, but we have more to do to achieve the target of 100,000 jobs by 2016. According to the CSO Quarterly National Household Survey, as of the third quarter of 2014 there were, seasonally adjusted, 1,916,900 people employed, an increase of 27,000 on the previous year (approx. 2,300 jobs per month), and an increase of almost 80,000 from Q1 2012 when the APJ was launched.

In terms of making Ireland the best small country in which to do business, we are continuing to make progress as a country in improving our international competitiveness. Since 2011, Ireland's international competitiveness rankings in both the IMD and World Economic Forum (WEF) competitiveness reports has improved – from 24th to 15th in the IMD's World Competitiveness Yearbook, and from 29th to 25th in the WEF Global Competitiveness Report. In the World Bank's "Doing Business 2015" report, Ireland is ranked 13th out of 189 countries. The Report "*Observatory on Europe*" - *Improving European Integration and Competitiveness for Growth* reports Ireland to be ranked 5th of the 28 EU Member States in terms of competitiveness, up two places since 2013. Furthermore, Ireland is ranked 11th in the Global Innovation Index 2014⁴.

In relation to Enterprise Agency-supported employment, total permanent employment in EI and IDA Ireland assisted companies in the industrial and services sectors increased by 5 per cent to over 350,000 in 2014. This continues the trend in positive employment growth since 2011.

Foreign Direct Investment was buoyant in 2014, with IDA Ireland securing 197 investments and reporting a net increase in employment in client firms of 7,131. IDA Ireland figures indicate that 45 per cent of the investments came from companies investing in Ireland for the first time, as Ireland's value proposition continues to resonate with new investors. The Government Policy Statement on FDI published in 2014 is designed to ensure that Ireland's inward investment offering continues to be attractive and competitive. The long-term trend of declining sub-supply purchases in the economy by foreign subsidiaries has been reversed and linkages are growing strongly.

⁴ Cornell University, INSEAD, and WIPO (2014): *The Global Innovation Index 2014: The Human Factor In Innovation*, Fontainebleau, Ithaca, and Geneva.

On the indigenous internationally trading side, exports reached a new record of €18 billion in 2014 and employment creation and startups were also strong. Similarly agri-food exports are estimated to have reached a new record of nearly €11 billion.

The Tourism industry also performed strongly in 2014 and showed an increase of 8.6 per cent in overseas visits to Ireland for the first eleven months of 2014 compared to the same period of 2013.

The National Policy Statement on Entrepreneurship in Ireland was published in 2014, which aims to support the creation of an additional 93,000 jobs from startup companies in the next five years.

Enterprise Agency Strategic Ambition

Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland are embarking on new strategic drives to support enterprise and investment in the economy over the coming years.

Enterprise Ireland's strategy is about maximising job creation in Irish businesses. It provides a vision for Irish enterprise for 2020 and details the strategic objectives, initiatives and actions that will be delivered by Enterprise Ireland by 2016. Employment growth within Enterprise Ireland supported companies will be fuelled by an increase in global demand for Irish products and services. Enterprise Ireland will lead a drive to increase the exports of client companies leading to significant employment growth in those companies. Agency clients are nationally dispersed and therefore Enterprise Ireland activities will have a positive impact on the prosperity of every region of Ireland.

Enterprise Ireland will work with ambitious and capable business owners, across the business development spectrum, to:

- Drive entrepreneurship - start more new businesses and achieve full growth potential;
- Stimulate innovation by accessing state-funded research and innovation to develop a competitive edge;
- Develop international scale, driving exports and supporting international growth strategies; and
- Build future competitive advantage.

There is also:

- A new support network to drive entrepreneurship, working through Local Enterprise Offices at regional level, to encourage aspiring entrepreneurs to come forward for assistance and increasing the rate of new business creation;
- A renewed focus on collaboration between academia and business, to derive optimal commercial benefit from state-funded research;
- A major drive for export growth, including an expansion of Enterprise Ireland's existing export platform, targeting markets of greatest growth in the future; and
- Key sectoral initiatives in high growth sectors such as food, manufacturing, software, internationally traded services and construction resulting in a more diversified trade portfolio for Enterprise Ireland clients, sustaining export receipts and long term economic and job growth.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) has been, and will continue to be, an integral part of Ireland's economic development strategy. Foreign owned firms contribute substantially to Ireland's exports, jobs, expenditure in the Irish economy and to Exchequer funds. FDI plays a key role in stimulating the development of 'new' sectors in Ireland, in enhancing our research, development and innovation (RD&I) performance and in accelerating the achievement of critical mass within sectors.

IDA Ireland follows a dual strategy of (a) attracting new companies, and (b) sustaining and growing existing companies. Enterprise policy initiatives aim to support existing companies to expand, transform and diversify in order to increase the strategic importance of Irish operations within their parent corporations. Two of the key aspects of the IDA Ireland Horizon 2020 strategy were to drive company transformation to ensure higher levels of job retention and to focus particularly on the growth in employment intensive services, which leads to the speedy creation of jobs.

Ireland's success in attracting foreign direct investment requires a focus on national competitiveness. Targeting of specific growth sectors and business models, increased competitiveness and an improved international reputation are key factors that contributed to the strong results in the past years.

Measuring Success

We need to ensure we are focussing on the right actions to achieve our ambitions and outcomes. The recent OECD review of the Action Plan for Job process noted the potential to better include targets linked to specific actions and outcome-based performance indicators to provide a real-time diagnostic on progress towards the achievement of objectives under the APJ, including under its Disruptive Reforms. We have developed a framework that links the APJ's objectives with policies and results to provide a better sense of the direction of progress and help ensure that many actions effectively contribute to those over-arching objectives.

There are a number of significant challenges in carrying out an assessment of the impact of the APJ. Firstly, it is important to note that there is a time lag between implementing specific policy measures and generating employment benefits. Secondly, for many of the actions it is difficult to establish a linear causal relationship between specific policies and particular effects as there are a large number of inter-related actions, covering the wide range of sectors and issues. These actions range from major to relatively minor and supporting measures and will have both direct and indirect impacts.

Other challenges include disaggregating the contribution of each specific action or suite of actions and isolating the impact of economic externalities on employment in Ireland. However, in developing APJ 2015 it has been possible to embed an assessment framework that links the APJ's actions to impacts, and which provides a better sense of the direction of progress and helps ensure that actions effectively contribute to the over-arching objective of increased employment.

The Assessment Framework

A list of ten contributing impacts to which actions can be linked has been developed. These impacts are concrete and measurable and will facilitate an assessment of the impact of the APJ post implementation. The goal of the Action Plan for Jobs is increased employment, as

measured by the CSO’s Quarterly National Household Survey. This goal can be realised through the impact of the various actions as specified in the APJ i.e.:

1. Increases sales or exports;
2. Stimulates domestic economy (retail, construction, tourism, agri-food);
3. Improves skills provision;
4. Increases activation of the unemployed;
5. Increases level of entrepreneurship / startup;
6. Enhances firm level productivity;
7. Increases level of RD&I;
8. Increases ease of doing business (including adequacy of economic infrastructure);
9. Decreases cost of doing business; and
10. Enhances the availability of funding mechanisms for SMEs.

International research indicates that an enterprise assessment’s logic model is of central importance. Consequently, these ten impacts are linked to the APJ’s five strategic ambitions through the following logic model:



Logical framework models provide a practical tool to describe what the APJ intends to achieve and how it is supposed to be achieved. The logic model involves clarifying programme objectives, choosing indicators, choosing an appropriate evaluation method based on the constraints of the programme and also establishing causality to determine the net impact of

the approach⁵. The ten APJ impacts are concrete and measurable to facilitate an assessment of the impact of the APJ post implementation. Benchmark metrics are supplemented with key data from the annual surveys of the Enterprise Agencies, such as employment, expenditure, sales, exports, value added, the number of new exporters, share of output exported by indigenous firms, and outputs from incubators/accelerators, etc. (See Annex 2).

Current Performance: Sales and Exports

In the face of difficult global market conditions, Ireland's overall trade performance has improved steadily since 2011. Net exports have continued to contribute to overall economic growth. A number of structural weaknesses remain that we will continue to address as part of the Action Plan process including diversifying our export base and destination markets and sources of inward investment, so as to ensure sustainable longer-term competitiveness. Indigenous exports are at record levels, having increased by one-third over the period 2010 to 2013. Enterprise Ireland estimates that export sales may reach over €18 billion for 2014 from €17.1 billion in 2013 and €16.2 billion in 2012. Exports to the BRICs have almost doubled to €1 billion since 2009. The export intensity of indigenous firms has also increased from 45 per cent in 2010 to 51 per cent in 2013. The number of firms exporting increased by 3.1 per cent in 2013, and EI estimates an 18 per cent increase in exporters since 2009. For the first time in 2013, services exports exceeded goods exports, providing a more balanced portfolio of trade. Further expansion into new markets is important for resilience and we need to build on the progress so far on deepening of trade links with the world's leading developing economies, for example, the share of our food exports to Asia reached 7 per cent in 2013 from 4.3 per cent in 2010. Similarly, IDA is making good progress on diversifying source markets for investment securing 20 per cent of new greenfield investments from high-growth and emerging markets in 2014. In addition, the export contribution of overseas tourism to Ireland (excluding airfares) has increased from €2.98 billion in 2011 to €3.8 billion in 2013. Performance in 2014 was also very strong with figures for the first 9 months of the year showing further revenue growth from overseas visitors of 9.3 per cent.

Selected Targets for 2015:

- Increase indigenous exports to €19 billion for 2015;
- Complete programme of 18 overseas ministerial-led trade missions and events;
- Target over 700 companies to have significant engagement with the EI Potential Exporter Division;
- Tailored mentoring programmes for over 300 EI clients;
- Provide €4 million in additional funding for high growth and emerging markets;
- Win 160 new FDI investment projects together with five food FDI projects; and
- New targets as part of IDA 2019 Strategy.

Current Performance: Domestic Economy (retail, construction, tourism, agri-food)

Current job creation performance in the domestic economy is improving, with the CSO data indicating that some of the largest employment increases have been in the domestic economy

⁵ Framework for the Evaluation of Enterprise Supports (2011), Forfás

areas. Overseas tourism visitors increased 8.6 per cent in the first 11 months of 2014 and the outturn for the year as a whole is estimated to be 7.3 million visitors, up from 6.2 million in 2011. Continued strong growth will be required to achieve the target of 7.7 million overseas visits in 2015. Construction activity is back in positive territory, with the Ulster Bank Construction Purchasing Managers Index in December 2014 recording the sixteenth month of positive gains. Construction activity is now growing in residential, commercial and civil engineering sectors, although this progress needs to be sustained to achieve the Government's targets in Construction 2020. Agri-food exports reached a record of €10 billion in 2013, with 58 per cent of exports outside the UK, and are forecast to reach €11 billion in 2014, ahead of targets set in Food Harvest 2020. Over the last three years, the long term trend of declines in sub-supply purchases by foreign subsidiaries in Ireland has been arrested. Purchases of Irish raw materials and services by overseas clients of EI, IDA and Údarás na Gaeltachta combined have increased by 26 per cent and 12 per cent respectively from 2011 to 2013. In addition, payroll expenditure by foreign-subsiaries in Ireland has increased by 8 per cent from 2011 to 2013.

Selected Targets for 2015:

- Complete roll out of 2,000 trading online vouchers (1,450 in 2015);
- Increase MNC global sourcing sales by EI client companies by €30 million;
- Support 28 significant food and drink industry investments, five of which will be FDI projects;
- Introduce a new Graduate Development Programme with a target of 10 graduates into the Food SME sector;
- Construct new social housing units; and
- Overseas tourism visitor target of 7.7 million for 2015 and to have 250,000 employed in 2025.

Current Performance: Skills Provision

The key area of competition among countries is in the development and attraction of high-end ICT, analytics and engineering skills. We are committed to maintaining the progress on meeting ICT skills demand through increasing domestic graduate supply, with the target set for 2018 of having 74 per cent of the supply needs of the sector being met through increased output from our higher education sector. Apprenticeship registrations in construction related trades have increased by 75 per cent between June 2013 and June 2014. The Government is committed to expanding apprenticeship into new areas and this will be the focus of the work of the Apprenticeship Council over the coming years. There are continuing demands and need for extra provision in a number of areas that will be the focus of engagement between the HEA and higher education institutes. Implementing a national Foreign Languages Education Strategy is a priority for the Department of Education and Skills, as are science and maths, and the awareness of the attractiveness of STEM careers.

Selected Targets for 2015:

- Provide places under the second iteration of Momentum;
- Roll out call for proposals for Springboard courses;
- Roll out Level 8 ICT Conversion programmes;

- Implement Skillnets ICT Conversion Programmes;
- 400 Smart Futures volunteers sourced;
- Meet employer demand for employment permits in the ICT sector, which is expected to reach 2,000;
- Investing in 1,250 extra places p.a. to achieve target to meet 74 per cent of demand with domestic supply by 2018;
- Target 13,800 annual science, technology, engineering and maths graduates by 2018 (up from 10,200 in 2011);
- Target of 4,500 Erasmus students per annum by 2020 (+50 per cent);
- EU lifelong learning target of 2020 target of 15 per cent; and
- New calls for apprenticeships and traineeships in 2015.

Current Performance: Activation of the Unemployed

At the macro level, Ireland's performance in terms of activation is strong and is improving. There was an annual increase in employment of 1.5 per cent or 27,700 in the year to Q3 2014, bringing total employment to 1,916,900. At the same time, over 100,000 people have left the Live Register to take up employment. Unemployment is down from a crisis peak of 15.1 per cent to 10.6 per cent at the end of 2014 and, critically, the pace of the reduction is accelerating. The Government's initiatives under Pathways to Work to enable jobseekers get back to work are proving successful. We need to continue to ensure that work incentives are adequate across the economy if we are to support unemployed jobseekers, and in particular those jobseekers who are long term unemployed, to compete for and take up employment opportunities. Social welfare income supports, if poorly designed can make it difficult for unemployed people to return to work. The introduction of the JobsPlus scheme, the Springboard initiative, the implementation of the Momentum programme and the roll-out of schemes such as Gateway and Tús together with the reform of the Community Employment programme indicate the Government's determination to address the challenge of long-term unemployment. The implementation of JobPath during 2015 will result in a further significant increase in the level of resources made available to help support long-term unemployed jobseekers return to work. Notwithstanding progress youth unemployment is still a significant cause for concern. Accordingly the Government will during 2015 continue the roll-out of the Youth Guarantee for Ireland including targeting places and new initiatives.

Selected Targets for 2015:

- 100,000 extra at work by 2016 (including 40,000 jobs in 2015);
- 2.1 million at work in 2018;
- Implement Pathways to Work 2015 and constituent metrics; and
- Begin a new JobsPlus strand for young people under the Youth Guarantee.

Current Performance: Level of Entrepreneurship / Startup

While the resilience of our exporting sector has been one of the economy's greatest strengths since the onset of the recession, this does not obviate the need to develop a more sustainable, broad enterprise base. The challenge is to grow new sectors, expand into new markets and

produce new products. This will require an enterprise environment that supports, amongst other things, enhanced levels of entrepreneurship and progress is being made. In 2014, building on the Entrepreneurship Forum's report, the Government published the National Policy Statement on Entrepreneurship in Ireland. This details a number of the immediate key actions to support the Government's ambition and confirms the commitment to continue to identify new approaches which will enhance and strengthen Ireland's entrepreneurial ecosystem and ultimately create jobs.

Selected Targets for 2015:

- Provide business development and financial supports to 185 High potential and early stage Startups;
- Support 130 new Entrepreneurs via the New Frontiers programme;
- Drive the establishment of spin-out companies that are of EI HPSU quality; and
- Launch 6 Competitive Start Funds to support 85 startups.

Current Performance: Firm Level Productivity

While current performance in terms of Irish productivity levels improved considerably between 2008 and 2013, much of Ireland's progress during this period arose from changes in the composition of employment in Ireland during the recession (for example a collapse in the numbers employed in the labour intensive construction sector), rather than broad based productivity growth. However, it is encouraging to note that Ireland is one of the few benchmarked countries to demonstrate positive total-factor productivity since 2010, a measure of an economy's long term technological dynamism. A range of domestic challenges remain to be tackled to ensure Ireland can achieve its productivity potential, for example enhancing the weak growth levels in net capital stock particularly with regard to investment in machinery and equipment.

Selected Targets for 2015:

- Support 945 participants on Management Development Programmes. 190 food companies supported by Lean Manufacturing and 120 food clients in the Leadership for Growth (L4G) Programme;
- IDA/Support transformation and productivity improvement with funding of €1.5 million;
- Support a total of 115 firms across all levels and activities, through LeanStart, LeanPlus and LeanTransform Programmes;
- Launch a Manufacturing Capital Equipment Grant providing up to €250,000;
- Pilot Platform 4 Growth online programme involving 100 firms; and
- Deliver the Innovation 4 Growth programme to 15 companies.

Current Performance: Levels of RD&I

Over the course of the last decade or so, Ireland's commitment to research, development and innovation has expanded significantly, both in terms of the level of investment and the human resources engaged in RD&I activity. Business expenditure on RD&I and the number of indigenous and overseas firms that are RD&I active has continued to increase since 2011. Key to innovation are people and the number of researchers in foreign owned and indigenous

firms in Ireland has increased by 15 per cent and 18 per cent to 11,980 and 9,650 respectively between 2011 and 2013 and further progress is needed to get to international benchmarks. Across the EU, Ireland is the overall leader in the indicator of the economic impact of innovation⁶, which captures the economic success of innovation in employment in knowledge-intensive activities, the contribution of medium and high-tech product exports to the trade balance, exports of knowledge-intensive services, sales due to innovation activities and license and patent revenues from selling technologies abroad. However, while Ireland has made good progress towards building up its scientific capabilities, overall innovation capacity remains weaker than in leading small advanced OECD countries such as Denmark, Sweden and Switzerland.

Selected Targets for 2015:

- Win €150 million in research funding for Ireland under EU Horizon 2020 in 2015;
- Increase researchers in enterprise to international benchmarks; and
- Target to double patent and trademarks and registered design performance.

Current Performance: Ease of Doing Business (including adequacy of economic infrastructure)

Ireland performs very strongly in international rankings in terms of ease of doing business. By reference to the OECD 32, Ireland is ranked first for ease of paying taxes, and performs well on protection for investors and starting a business. Some of the areas of improvement include in the issuing of work permits. Similarly, the waiting time for a hearing at the Labour Court has reduced and the waiting time for a hearing at the Employment Appeals tribunal has fallen. However our performance is weak in relation to dealing with construction permits, getting electricity, enforcing contracts, resolving insolvency, getting credit, and registering property. Where the potential for improved competition exists in any given market, Ireland's policies should promote rather than inhibit such competition.

Ireland's poor performance with regard to the legal profession (which to date is largely self-regulated) reflects poor scores in relation to inter-professional cooperation, compulsory chamber membership, and regulations on the form of business. Given the ongoing programme of budget consolidation, sustained under-investment in infrastructure has the potential to act as a limiting factor with regard to future productivity growth. Previous Action Plans highlight the fact that, while Ireland has made significant investment in infrastructure in recent years, further investment is required to ensure that our critical infrastructure can support economic recovery and enterprise growth. The World Economic Forum Competitiveness Report finds that Ireland ranks 28th in terms of transport infrastructure. Without appropriate investment in transport infrastructure and service deficits, this congestion will erode our competitiveness, negatively impacting on quality of life and reduce the attractiveness of our cities with regard to foreign direct investment. In other key infrastructure areas such as next generation broadband significant commercial investment is now taking place, and further investment is planned in the provision of high speed fixed line and mobile broadband services. The Government has committed to a fibre based intervention to address areas where there is no commercial case for investment.

Selected Targets for 2015:

⁶ European Commission Innovation Union Scoreboard 2013

- A tender for the delivery of high speed broadband to all parts of Ireland that cannot be served by commercial operators will be issued in 2015; and
- Invest €3.6 billion under the Public Capital Programme in 2015 to create direct and indirect jobs, and to make Ireland a great place to live and work.

Current Performance: Cost of Doing Business

Ireland's cost base has improved across a range of metrics over the last number of years making Irish firms more competitive internationally and making Ireland a more attractive location for firms to base their operations in. Despite these improvements the National Competitiveness Council continues to caution that Ireland's cost base is out of line with other locations with which we compete for trade and investment and that there are a series of upward cost pressures emerging. Particular focus is required to address domestically influenced cost factors in the labour market, in the energy sector and in the property market as rapid increases in prices have the potential to produce adverse knock-on consequences in terms of prices and wage expectations across the entire economy. Such adverse cost developments put all of the recent hard-won competitiveness gains at risk. We need to sustain our efforts to get to a top five ranking in competitiveness.

Selected Targets for 2015:

- Steps to reduce the red tape for over half a million business interactions in 2015;
- New Legal Services Regulatory Authority to become operational;
- €39 million in Exchequer supports to further stimulate energy saving activity;
- Implement the Energy Efficiency Action Plan; and
- Swift progress of the Valuation (Amendment) Bill.

Current Performance: Credit and Investment for Growth

Limited funding flows in an economy damage the environment for entrepreneurship and limit the scope of firms to expand their operations. The Central Bank⁷ reports that annualised gross new lending to SMEs has increased from €1.9 billion (July to December 2013) to €2.1 billion (January to June 2014) an increase of over 10 per cent. Notwithstanding recent improvements, the area of credit for enterprise requires ongoing attention given the stated ambition of developing a more diversified and competitive financial system capable of financing the growth potential of Irish SMEs. Unchecked, restrictive credit conditions and the high corporate debt burden will act as a drag on growth and employment. This is why Government has placed a significant emphasis on enhancing the availability of bank and non-bank initiatives to support the role of the SME sector in our economic recovery. Legacy debt, economic uncertainty and capital erosion have been among the challenges faced by SMEs in recent years which would have inhibited investment and growth. However, through strong support mechanisms now being offered at local level by the LEO network and centrally by Enterprise Ireland for the domestic SME sector, there is a comprehensive framework now in place to provide viable, sustainable SMEs with every opportunity to access the funding they need be it bank financing, equity provision or venture capital support.

⁷ Central Bank SME Market Report 2014 H2

Selected Targets for 2015:

- Provide €800 million over 2 years of additional funding through SBCI;
- Credit Guarantee and Microfinance Schemes to SMEs to be reformed and promoted;
and
- To demonstrate the SME Online Tool at 10 events nationwide, increase the cumulative number of unique users, and to register an increase in the awareness of the tool.

Monitoring Progress and Success

All of this builds on the reform and work of previous Plans. In doing so we are directly linking activity under the Action Plan for Jobs to measurable outcomes so as to maximise and drive ambition, and convey the Government's intention to remain committed to the relentless pursuit of full-employment and increased prosperity for all. APJ 2015 sees a move towards ever closer monitoring and assessment of the impact of the range of job-supporting measures included in the Plan, as recommended by the OECD. A sample of the key baseline metrics across the impacts which contribute to the Plans overall strategic objectives are set out in Annex 2.

2. Disruptive Reforms

2.1 National Talent Drive

- **A Step Change in the level of engagement between the education and training system and employers to deliver on skills needed to build the New Economy.**
- **Attract and retain world class talent, make sure work pays and provide a great place to live and work.**
- **60 per cent increase in higher education ICT graduates, meeting 74 per cent of demand through domestic supply in 2018. Provide 1,250 extra ICT places for students in 2015.**
- **Target 13,800 annual science, technology, engineering and maths graduates by 2018 (up from 10,200 in 2011).**

Ireland's competitive advantage in international markets, as well as the competitiveness of our regions, will increasingly be driven by the availability of world class skills at all levels. Ireland has a well established reputation in this field but must continue to demonstrate responsiveness to the changing needs of society and employers.

This Disruptive Reform is being rolled out in the context of significant reform in the education and training sector to ensure a more dynamic, responsive and high quality system. The overall ambition for 2015 and beyond is to ensure that these reforms result in the availability of high quality skills at all levels, enhanced employability of learners, and strong engagement between the education and training system and employers. This will include a cohesive approach on competitive and collaborative funding initiatives across the range of programme areas from Springboard to Momentum, Apprenticeships, Skillnets and research fellowships both at national and local level.

Public investment in education and training since the 1960s has had a major impact on Ireland's social and economic development. It has also created a unique selling point and legacy for Ireland over many decades that has endured to this day: Ireland regularly features strongly in international rankings of talent and skills. Action Plan for Jobs 2015 will see continued emphasis on the importance of skill levels as a key element of Ireland's competitive position in terms of global investment and trade. That approach is having an impact with Ireland ranked first in the world for the availability of skills and fourth for the quality of its education system.

Over one million people are currently in full-time education in Ireland, including over 211,000 students enrolled in third-level courses across Ireland's universities and institutes of technology. The education and training system has responded to significantly increased demand in recent years: in the six years to 2014, the higher education system delivered 25,000 extra places.

There is strong alignment of mainstream education and training provision with the skills needs of Ireland's economy. Over 60,000, or 29 per cent of higher education students are enrolled in Science and Engineering courses and over 50,000 higher education students are enrolled in Social Sciences, including Business and Law, equating to 25 per cent of total student enrolments. The system has also responded to emerging skills needs in high-growth sectors,

including achieving 50 per cent increase in graduate output from high-level ICT programmes between 2008 and 2013.

However, these are also lessons that have been well-learned around the world. The OECD has called skills the new global currency of 21st century economies and many countries have placed a major focus on human capital development and investment in education and training, raising their skills profile, productivity and attractiveness to international investors.

It is against this global background that Ireland will compete to develop and attract talent in the coming years. For this reason, maintaining a strong level of investment to support high-quality outcomes in terms of skills will be critical to maintaining Ireland's international competitiveness.

Policies to support talent and ensure the effective use of skills go wider than the education and training system. The recently published FDI Policy Statement looks out to 2020 with both talent and providing great places to live and work key to sustaining and building on current levels of FDI job-creation over the remainder of the decade. Today the competition for talent is global, and talent has become increasingly mobile. It is critical that we continue to nurture talent to meet the needs of an advanced economy. Nurturing the talent pool in Ireland means being able to develop, attract and retain the talent required, and make sure that work always pays. A National Talent Drive that comprehensively addresses each of these aspects of talent supply will reinforce Ireland's positive reputation globally for the quality of its people and clearly establish Ireland as a hub for talent.

The aim of the National Talent drive is to seek to maintain Ireland's strong international position, deliver the right skills to ensure that Irish companies remain strong on international markets, and to ensure that our enterprises of the future emerge from entrepreneurs equipped with world class talents, as well as forming a key part of our FDI offering. The Government is also committed to broadening and deepening the economic recovery to benefit the lives of families and communities across the country. All of this generates a suite of actions across the government system from education, activation, research and the broader business environment.

Government alone cannot deliver on our high level ambitions. Critical to the success of this Disruptive Reform will be active and sustained engagement, and the development of strong partnerships, between the education and training system and employers at a national and regional level.

Key elements of this include the development of a new National Skills Strategy, the development of apprenticeships in new economic sectors and driving delivery of the ICT Action Plan, including increasing domestic provision of high-level ICT skills. It also includes employer focused programmes for unemployed under Springboard/ICT Conversion Programmes and Momentum through systematic, continuous engagement and collaboration between education and training institutions and employers at national and regional level, and a new Foreign Languages in Education Strategy.

The development of a new National Skills Strategy will provide a crucial framework for understanding and providing coherent responses to the evolving skills requirements of society and the economy at regional and national level and to ensure that individuals have the right skills to participate fully in society and reach their full potential.

This will encompass all levels of the education and training system, with a particular focus on synergies between the higher and further education sectors. It will build on reforms to date, including the development of a strong network of engaged Higher Education Institutions and

further education providers which can meet Ireland's human capital needs across the spectrum of skills areas and appropriate mechanisms to engage with industry to ensure alignment of FET and HE provision with regional and national skills requirements.

Strong co-operation between employers and the education and training system has proved to be crucial in developing responses to skills needs, across a range of areas including ICT, data analytics, international sales, engineering and entrepreneurship in initiatives such as the ICT Skills Action Plan, Springboard and Momentum. Clear arrangements to connect employers, enterprise development agencies and the education and training system are crucial to strengthening engagement in areas such as: employer input to the development of education and training provision, creating sufficient and sustainable work placement opportunities and the development of apprenticeships in new economic sectors.

The Irish diaspora also represents a potentially rich pool of skills and talent. Engaging with them as part of Ireland's developing Diaspora Policy will be an important means of making emigrants and the wider diaspora aware of opportunities available for them to return to apply their skills and experience and enrich Ireland's talent pool.

Increasing supply of ICT Skills

A new ICT Skills Action Plan - developed by Government, industry and the education system - was published in March 2014, and builds on the first ICT Action Plan produced in 2012. The aim of the plan is to ensure that employers will be able to fully source their ICT skills needs in Ireland, through a mixture of domestic supply and skilled inward migration (both from within the EU and through the reformed employment permit system). The target is that by 2018, 74 per cent of supply will come from the Irish education system.

A High Level Steering Group on ICT Skills, co-chaired by senior officials from the Departments of Education and Skills, and Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, and comprising senior enterprise and education representatives, is responsible for monitoring and overseeing delivery of the Action Plan.

Significant efforts are being made to enhance the ICT talent pool in Ireland. Since 2008, there has been a 50 per cent increase in annual graduate output on ICT programmes from the higher education system. Actions are being taken to increase mainstream provision, through additional incentivised places. We will increase higher education ICT graduates by 60 per cent between 2015 and 2018 commensurate with resourcing. Our aim is to incentivise 1,250 additional places per year on Level 8 ICT programmes, to get to the ambitious target of meeting 74 per cent of demand through domestic supply by 2018. This is a further contribution to our target of doubling ICT mainstream output from 2012-2018. In 2014/15, some 660 extra places were made available. We will also target 13,800 annual science, technology, engineering and maths graduates by 2018 (up from 10,200 in 2011).

Targeted upskilling also forms a key part of the education and training system's response to ICT skills needs, and over 7,000 ICT places are provided on re-skilling programmes through Springboard and ICT Skills conversion courses. These are full and part-time courses developed in partnership with industry and include a work placement component. There are strong employment rates for graduates of these programmes (67 per cent of graduates in employment within 6 months), but also relatively high withdrawal rates. The Higher Education Authority is examining issues related to retention on ICT courses, and the National Forum for Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in higher education is funding a research project in this area.

A key goal is to enhance awareness of ICT careers to prospective students. Significant progress has been made in raising STEM participation in schools – notably a 74 per cent increase in higher level maths take-up in Leaving Certificate since 2011.

The Department of Education and Skills and the Higher Education Authority are co-funding a promotional campaign centred on a new website – www.ictworks.ie – which will highlight job opportunities and available ICT programmes throughout Ireland to students and their families in advance of the 2015 CAO deadline. The HEA will also support the use of third level facilities out of term to promote greater awareness and interest in technology, science and engineering among young people.

Other programmes are in place such as Smart Futures, but industry can play a key role, including by developing and participating in adopt a school programmes as proposed in the ICT Skills Action Plan and by highlighting female role models in industry to increase female participation on ICT courses and employment in the sector. The Action Plan commits the Government to meet employer demand for employment permits in the ICT sector, which is expected to reach 2,000 in 2015. We will maintain a strong ICT talent pool and promote Ireland as a centre for high-level ICT Skills. We will also engage proactively with the diaspora as part of our Diaspora Policy to promote job opportunities here, including in the ICT sector. We have worked through previous Action Plans to make sure every person reaches their full potential and can make their fullest contribution to society and to Ireland’s recovery and growth.

Although the labour market continues to be characterised with an excess supply, and unemployment remains unacceptably high, improvements are evident in labour market indicators and employer demand continues to grow, with over 100,000 jobs advertised on the Government’s Jobsireland.ie website in 2014 and the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs has reported some shortages in some niche skill areas.

The objectives for 2015 are to:

- Deliver the skills needed to underpin the New Economy built on Enterprise Innovation and Technology which we seek to create;
- Strengthen the employability of learners and enhancing engagement between the education and training system and employers to deliver high quality skills;
- Attract and retaining world class talent, including through efficient management of work permits systems and initiatives to attract high skilled individuals from around the world;
- Make sure work pays for all;
- Provide a great place to live and work;
- Develop new Apprenticeships in response to proposals from key sectors of the economy. It is estimated that the economy has a long run average requirement of between 3,500 and 4,000 annual registrations in the existing apprenticeship trades, both construction and non-construction. The Government is also committed to expanding apprenticeship into new areas and this will be the focus of the work of the Apprenticeship Council over the coming years;
- Develop and implement the new Foreign Languages in Education Strategy;
- Publish regional labour market profiles to better reconcile available skills with employers’ needs; and

- Publish the Further Education and Training Services Plan.

2015 Actions

A Step Change in employer engagement to build skills for the New Economy.	
1	Review the National Skills Strategy and publish a new Strategy in 2015. (DES)
2	Implement Cycle 2 of the Strategic Dialogue process for 2015 under the higher education performance framework 2014-2016, including monitoring of performance metrics for skills including those identified by the EGFSN and achieve a step change in enterprise engagement in higher education institutions. (HEA)
3	Through strengthened collaboration between Government, the education system and industry and as part of the goal of making Ireland the most attractive location in the world for ICT skills and ability, implement the key actions from the ICT Skills Action Plan 2014-2018. (HEA, HEIs, Employers)
4	Incentivise 1,250 additional places in 2015 on Level 8 ICT programmes. (DES, HEA , HEIs)
5	Devise and implement a programme around a single website portal, through industry and agencies working together, to attract international technical talent. (DJEI, EI/IDA)
6	Enhance collaboration and engagement between enterprise and higher education providers to roll out Level 8 ICT Conversion programmes as part of the Springboard 2015 programme. (HEIs, HEA, Employers)
7	Enhance industry input to programme content, provision of work placements and promotion of ICT programmes as part of the implementation of Skillnets ICT Conversion Programmes. (Skillnets)
8	Step up collaboration between government, industry and education through Smart Futures to raise awareness of STEM career opportunities for post-primary students, in line with the agreed 2014-16 strategy. (SFI)
9	Provide support to institutions in delivering Summer Computing Camps to encourage second-level students to consider ICT careers. Higher education institutions to continue to support Coder Dojo in provision of space, administrative supports and mentoring. The success criteria for this action include supporting a specified number of annual summer camps at a range of higher education institutions and offering ICT-related courses. (HEA)

10	Maintain the level of awards under the IRC Employment Based Programme to provide opportunities for MSc and PhD students to undertake a 'co-educational' experience in research and skills development while employed and embedded in a company or public organisation. (Irish Research Council)
11	Continue to implement the pilot phase of the Post Graduate Programme of Professional Practice to provide graduates with opportunities to develop cross disciplinary skills in STEM based sectors with enhanced engagement by employers to progress graduates to employment. (HEA, HEIs, Employers)
12	Increase the pool of researchers strongly positioned to take up employment in industry in Ireland. (SFI)
13	Roll out the 2015 call for proposals for Springboard courses, with a particular focus on priority areas identified by EGFSN including ICT; the medtech and biotech sectors; skills for enterprise to trade internationally; international financial services (IFS); entrepreneurship and business startup. (HEIs, HEA, Employers)
14	Publish an integrated 2015 Further Education and Training (FET) Services Plan that includes provision to meet the FET skills needs identified in various published EGFSN reports and sectoral studies. (SOLAS)
15	Target provision to meet regional employer needs, identified through regional labour market profiles and through local and regional employer engagement. (SOLAS,ETBs, HEIs)
16	Develop new Apprenticeships in response to proposals from key sectors of the economy. (DES, SOLAS, HEA, Apprenticeship Council, Employers and Education Bodies)
17	Implement the provision of places under the second iteration of Momentum. (DES)
18	Consider the provision for a 3rd iteration of Momentum with strong employer input that will provide additional education and training places for the unemployed. (DES, SOLAS)
19	Promote and support development of the <i>Skills to Work</i> brand to increase awareness of re-skilling options for jobseekers. (DES,DSP, D/Taoiseach, SOLAS, HEA, Skillnets)

20	Develop and commence implementation of a new Foreign Languages in Education Strategy. (DES)
21	Publish the national employer survey of higher and further education outcomes. (DES, HEA, SOLAS, QQI)
22	Progress curricular change in the context of the phasing in of the Junior Cycle reform with the new Specification for English being implemented from September 2014. (DES)
23	Roll out the a new account management approach to employers under Pathways to Work: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establish a professional account management and sales capability within Intreo targeted at employers ▪ Allocate a nominated account manager to large employers and implement the ‘employer charter’ (DSP)
24	Review the potential contribution of the Excellence through People programme to developing the competencies and retention of employment in Irish based companies. (NSAI)
Attracting world class talent to Ireland, including our Emigrants and Diaspora	
25	Continue implementation of the British-Irish Visa Scheme allowing for travel to and around the Common Travel Area between Ireland and the UK, for tourism and business purposes, on a single visa. (D/Justice and Equality, INIS)
26	Continue to ensure employers are able to secure Employment Permits for the critical skills they need, including ICT skills. (DJEI)
27	Initiate a Trusted Partner Registration Scheme for Employment Permits open to all eligible employers. (DJEI)
28	Implement 2015 Research Professorship Programme to attract leading research talent to Ireland in key areas of opportunity. (SFI)
Making sure work pays for all	
29	Progress the Tax Reform Plan announced in Budget 2015 subject to the Government having sufficient fiscal space. (D/Finance)

30	<p>Establish the Low Pay Commission (LPC), to undertake analysis and make a recommendation on the appropriate level of the national minimum wage.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(DJEI, Low Pay Commission)</p>
31	<p>Conduct a study on the prevalence of zero hour contracts (ZHC) and low hour contracts (contracts of 8 hours or less per week (LHC)) among Irish employers and their impact on employees, and make policy recommendations to Government.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(DJEI)</p>
32	<p>Continue to roll out the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP).</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(DECLG)</p>
<p>Providing a great place to live and work</p>	
33	<p>Invest in educational, health, justice, recreational and other social infrastructure, as part of the €3.619 billion Public Capital Programme in 2015 to make Ireland a great place to live and work (as outlined in Section 8.4 below).</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(DES, D/Health, D/Justice and Equality, DTTAS, DAHG)</p>

2.2 Delivering Regional Potential

A significant regional fund of up to €25 million in competitive funding will be announced to support regional initiatives.

The aim of the Action Plan for Jobs is to support enterprise growth and job creation in every region of the country. The pace of progress in the regions – and especially those with the highest unemployment levels - needs to be accelerated through targeted supports for enterprise and job creation. Vibrant and competitive regions are important, not just from an economic perspective, but also from a societal point of view. Growing the economic base of regions supports social cohesion and provides opportunities for young people in particular to continue to live and work in their local communities. Direct engagement with the diaspora from a local level also has the potential to open up local investment and job opportunities. This will be a focus of Ireland’s developing Diaspora Policy.

This Disruptive Reform seeks to maximise the job potential of each region. It will provide new funding for enterprise support in the regions and seek to leverage and orient existing funds to target initiatives that enable regions to achieve their full employment potential. A significant regional fund of up to €25 million in competitive funding will be announced to support regional initiatives through Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland and the LEOs, in particular.

Under the 2014 Action Plan for Jobs, the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation developed a framework for the preparation of regional enterprise strategies. This framework provides a model for co-ordinated action across public bodies and other stakeholders to maximise the potential of each region to support enterprise development and jobs growth, based on the strengths and assets of the region. The application of the template was tested in the Midlands region towards the end of 2014 and will lead to the publication and implementation of a Regional Enterprise Strategy for the Midlands in early 2015. Similar strategies for the other regions will be commenced over the course of the year, on a phased basis, and will include specific actions on the part of Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland, the LEOs, Údarás na Gaeltachta and other public bodies active in each region to promote enterprise growth and job creation. In this context, the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation and Enterprise Ireland will also work to explore how the Community Enterprise Centre network can best be enhanced to support regional job creation.

A new tourism brand and identity for the South, East and Midlands - based on the area’s comparative advantage in built and cultural heritage - will be developed in 2015 and will also contribute to job creation in those regions.

To promote economic and community development, under the Local Government Act 2014, each Local Authority will develop Local Economic and Community Plans by the end of 2015. The Regional Enterprise Strategies will support the increased emphasis on economic development at Local Authority level under these Plans, and will also feed in to the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies to be developed by the Regional Assemblies.

The increased emphasis on supporting the regions also provides an opportunity to place renewed focus on local and rural development and to enhance Údarás na Gaeltachta’s existing approach to regional and rural development. Údarás na Gaeltachta will continue a programme aimed at increasing investment in Gaeltacht areas. The Report of the Commission on the Economic Development of Rural Areas (CEDRA) was published in 2014. The recommendations of the report will continue to be reviewed and progressed through a high-level Inter-

Departmental Committee, including through the piloting of Rural Economic Development Zones. The implementation of the new Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 will also commence in 2015, following agreement of the Programme with the European Commission.

Direct engagement with industry and entrepreneurial stakeholders has highlighted the key issue of broadband provision for economic growth, innovation and entrepreneurship in regional locations. In November 2014, the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources published online maps that identify where commercial providers will deliver high-speed broadband access by the end of 2016. The State will invest in all the remaining areas to ensure that every home, school and business in Ireland has access to high-speed broadband. It is estimated that 600,000 homes and 100,000 businesses will require direct State intervention to provide high-speed broadband access. A tender for the delivery of high speed broadband to all parts of Ireland that cannot be served by commercial operators will be issued in 2015, following a public consultation process on the mapping exercise and the submission of an application for EU State Aids approval.

2015 Actions

Supporting Enterprise at a Regional Level

34	<p>Develop and publish a suite of Regional Enterprise Strategies, based on consultation with key stakeholders at regional level and on the analysis of the strengths of each region, commencing with the publication of strategies for the Midlands and South East regions.</p> <p>The strategies will include a series of specific actions and targets for delivery by a range of public bodies to support enterprise growth and job creation in the regions and will complement the statutory Plans to be developed as part of Local Government reform.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(DJEI, EI, IDA, other relevant Departments and public bodies)</p>
35	<p>Ringfence up to €25 million for competitive regional funds in support of the Regional Enterprise strategies.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(DJEI, EI, IDA, LEOs)</p>
36	<p>Build on the success achieved to date on the Competitive Feasibility Funds and launch 4 targeted funds during the year in the West, Midlands, MidEast, and one sectoral fund.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(EI)</p>
37	<p>Develop a tourism brand proposition and identity for the South, East and Midlands of Ireland, that will help in scaling up the asset base and achieve international “stand-out” for the region based on its comparative advantage in built and cultural heritage.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Fáilte Ireland)</p>
38	<p>Prepare and implement annual Local Enterprise Development Plans for each of the 31 Local Enterprise Offices, setting out targets to support entrepreneurship, enterprise growth and job creation.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(LEOs, EI, LAs)</p>

39	<p>Create a minimum of 500 new jobs and continue to support existing jobs in Údarás na Gaeltachta client companies in the Gaeltacht, including through supports for post-research/pre-commercialisation units in the Life Sciences, Food and Business Support Services and Creative Enterprises sectors, and ongoing support for community development initiatives.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(ÚnaG)</p>
40	<p>Annual Enterprise Development Plans for each Gaeltacht area will be prepared and implemented, setting out targets to support entrepreneurship, enterprise growth and job creation.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(ÚnaG)</p>
41	<p>Establish three new Regional Assemblies.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(DECLG)</p>
42	<p>Regional Assemblies to commence preparation of regional Spatial Economic Strategies.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(DECLG)</p>
43	<p>Údarás na Gaeltachta will implement measures to support early stage business development with a particular focus on regional competitive advantage in specific sectors, including cultural tourism, audio-visual and digital technology, marine resources, niche manufacturing, food & beverages and creative language-based services.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(ÚnaG)</p>
44	<p>Following the progress made in Athlone, Waterford and Letterkenny in 2014, continue a programme of identifying specific locations where the private sector is not currently providing property solutions, to help to support the attraction/embedding of Foreign Direct Investment in those locations.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(IDA)</p>
45	<p>Continue to work to attract Foreign Direct Investment in areas outside of Dublin and Cork.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(IDA)</p>
46	<p>Growing on the successful strategy of providing property solutions in regional locations, continue a building and refurbishment programme to help to support the attraction/expansion of Foreign Direct & Indigenous Investment in regional/rural locations in the Gaeltacht.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(ÚnaG)</p>
47	<p>ETBs and higher education institutions to target provision to meet local and regional employer needs, identified through regional labour market profiles and through local and regional employer engagement.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(SOLAS,ETBs HEIs)</p>

Support for Local and Rural Development

48	Each Local Authority will make an integrated Plan, for the promotion of economic development and local and community development in its area. (DECLG, Local Authorities, LCDCs)
49	Implement the new Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 following agreement of the Programme with the European Commission. (DAFM)
50	Continue to review and progress recommendations of the CEDRA report to promote rural development, including through the piloting of Rural Economic Development Zones. (DECLG)
51	Continue to implement the Local and Community Development Programme (LCDP) on a transitional basis pending the rollout of its successor programme, the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) which will have a strong focus on community activation, social inclusion and community development, while also focusing on and prioritising those hardest to reach. (DECLG, LCDCs, Pobal)

Delivery of High-Speed Broadband

52	Issue the tender for the delivery of high speed broadband to all parts of Ireland that cannot be served by commercial operators. (DCENR)
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2.3 Europe's Energy Innovation Hub

Ireland will become Europe's Energy Innovation Hub by 2020 through targeted and co-ordinated action taken by a new research and industry partnership.

Energy is an area offering substantial economic and job creation growth opportunities for Ireland. Ireland has substantial clean energy resources, a very strong ICT sector, and an innovative and entrepreneurial culture and enterprise base. Our scale is also an advantage whereby new technologies can be rolled out, for example in the electricity grid, at a scale that is small enough to move early but large enough to demonstrate new solutions of global interest.

The development of Ireland as Europe's Energy Innovation Hub will build on existing strengths and the transformation in energy markets internationally, to develop new smart grid and energy management, storage and control solutions along the energy value-chain for international markets and seek to maximise related manufacturing opportunities. Ireland is an attractive international location for high skill technology activity and there is a growing critical mass of players that could enable Ireland to develop a leading global position in the development of new energy services.

This Disruptive Reform is intended to provide vision, coherence and identity to Ireland's energy enterprise and jobs potential. This Disruptive Reform will deliver a Government-wide approach and policy commitment to exploiting the economic opportunities that arise from moving to a low carbon society over the medium to long term. It is intended to provide clear access to services, to the research landscape and to regulatory solutions for innovators.

It will provide a branding for the Irish energy enterprise sector in terms of exporting products, services and solutions and attracting FDI. It will bring visibility to Ireland's own progress in deploying new technologies which is an important part of the branding, and also creates early markets for emerging sectors.

Working with DJEI, EI and IDA Ireland, Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland has identified the areas of growth and of most potential opportunity for Ireland and to attract significant private enterprises and investment to Ireland in terms of sustainable energy supply chain opportunities.

Our current areas of success include:

- Advanced energy efficiency in buildings and industry, rooted in ISO standards, with many Irish-based MNCs being identified as leaders, and with a healthy ecosystem of consultants and experts. Ireland has early mover advantage, having been involved in developing the international standards;
- Ireland has a natural advantage in new energy related sectors that allows us to develop and perfect new technologies up to a decade ahead of other countries. Ireland has a range of engineering, ICT and services skills, expertise and products developed in Ireland that are in increasing demand internationally;
- Ireland is home to many of the world's leading technology companies, many of which have identified the development of new technologies to service the energy sector as an important element of their future growth strategies which are diversifying into the

energy related areas. As they seek to develop their products in this area Ireland provides a natural home for their research, innovation and demonstration activities;

- There is also a vibrant domestic enterprise sector that is developing world leading new products, such as in smart energy control and monitoring technologies;
- Significant energy related developments such as the substantial number of data centres that are major users of energy with green credentials and our recognised success in Big Data and data analytics;
- Grid integration of renewables, with associated 'smart grid' components. Ireland is garnering international attention for having integrated one of the highest levels in the world of renewables in a stand-alone system and integrating renewables on our power system at a faster rate than any other large scale power system in the world. The expertise and technologies we are using today will be the ones that others will demand in the future;
- Substantial momentum in local community centred initiatives, such as Dundalk 2020, and a network of Sustainable Energy Communities led by local authorities or other local initiators. These are often about building human capital and local delivery models as much as advanced technology deployment;
- Technology focused 'hubs' and 'clusters', for example Energy@Cork, Smart-Eco Hub (Dundalk-Newry) and locational clusters such as the new DCU Innovation campus and ESB creation of an North Atlantic Green Zone;
- Ireland offers an administratively simple and efficient structure of electricity network operators, with transmission networks managed by Eirgrid and distribution networks managed by ESB Networks. Similarly, Ervia is now responsible for gas and water. All three companies are committed to an open and progressive approach to innovation. This open approach to innovation is highly attractive to international businesses developing new products and services and is a major advantage to smaller Irish based technology companies; and
- Growing base of research, innovation and demonstrative activities in public research system and energy is comprehended by many of the priority areas identified in the National Research Prioritisation Exercise which is our national Smart Specialisation Strategy for Research and Innovation.

This Disruptive Reform has been developed in the context of significant developments underway or expected in this policy area at national and international level. For example, the public consultation process for the new Energy Policy Paper, launched in May 2014 resulted in over 1,200 responses being received. The significant response demonstrates the strong interest in choosing the optimal route for future energy policy. The drafting of the paper will take place in the first half of 2015 with a view to publication of a finalised Energy Policy White Paper by September.

To structure discussion, six policy priority areas were identified for consideration:

Priority 1: Empowering Energy Citizens

Priority 2: Markets and Regulation

Priority 3: Planning and Implementing Essential Energy Infrastructure

Priority 4: Ensuring a Balanced and Secure Energy Mix

Priority 5: Putting the Energy System on a Sustainable Pathway

Priority 6: Driving Economic Opportunity

The last of these priorities, Driving Economic Opportunity, is particularly pertinent to the Energy Innovation Hub Disruptive Reform, as it focuses on how energy policy can facilitate increased investment, innovation, job creation and economic development without acting as a barrier to these important factors for the economic and social recoveries prioritised by the Government.

In addition DCENR's new Energy Research Strategy Group is working in parallel with the Energy Policy White Paper process with the objective of developing and overseeing the implementation of a strategy and roadmap for energy research in Ireland. This work involves extensive industry and academia stakeholder consultation in order to determine a future research strategy for Ireland.

The Government has also established a new Horizon 2020 Strategic Research Proposals Group to identify large-scale EU funding opportunities for businesses and researchers in Ireland and nurture applications that will give big wins for Ireland in areas such as energy. The Group comprises a dedicated team of senior executives and officials from all research funding Government Departments and Agencies. It is focused exclusively on identifying opportunities and mobilising EU funding applications for large scale projects of strategic value, and will position Ireland favourably in order to achieve the ambitious national target of €1.25 billion in EU funding. In 2015 the European Union is expected to publish the EU Strategic Energy Technology (SET) Plan, 2015-2017, aimed at transforming energy production and use. Ireland can play a strong role in the EU's goal of achieving global leadership in the production of energy technological solutions.

This Disruptive Reform contributes to Ireland and the EU's progress towards a low-carbon economy and society built on innovative research, effective strategic planning and an emphasis on timely and appropriate action.

Among the products and services where Ireland can establish world leadership could include:

- Technologies to allow large scale integration of renewable energy;
- Smart Grid devices and technologies that provide consumers greater control over their energy usage;
- Products that support the convergence of electricity, heat and transport in highly efficient ways; and
- Financial and legal expertise to manage new ways of doing business in a transformed industry.

This Disruptive Reform will foster collaboration, building larger and stronger solutions to accelerate innovation and to compete internationally and create the conditions for collaboration through a strong political signal and a mandate for innovation on the part of the public actors.

2015 Actions

Energy Innovation Hub	
53	<p>Establish a new Inter Departmental Committee to drive the development of Ireland as Europe's Energy Innovation Hub, and provide a focal point for liaison with stakeholders.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(DJEI, DCENR, DECLG, DAFM and relevant Agencies)</p>
54	<p>Promote Ireland as Europe's Energy Innovation Hub, built on excellent research and innovation, and demonstration and enterprise activities. Develop a targeted campaign to achieve greater international awareness of the opportunities to develop leading edge energy products among companies with an existing or new presence in Ireland.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(SEAI, IDA, EI, SFI)</p>
55	<p>Create an integrated one-stop portal of national energy assets and infrastructure, energy related enterprises and innovators and research activities.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(SEAI)</p>
56	<p>Progress initiatives to exploit the full range of opportunities identified in the SEAI/EI/IDA report on Energy Supply Chain Opportunities for Ireland. IDA, EI, SFI and SEAI to work with indigenous and international enterprises across the energy value chain to develop their activities in Ireland. This will involve ICT multinationals already in Ireland locating new or additional energy activities, attracting multinational energy companies to locate research, innovation and demonstration activities in Ireland and indigenous companies, both ICT and energy, participating in demonstration activities and developing new products and services for international markets.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(SEAI, IDA, EI, SFI)</p>
57	<p>Develop a truly open Innovation Energy Research System between public research organizations and enterprise, drawing together relevant research and innovation activity underway across the public research system in Ireland.</p> <p>In particular catalyse:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Major HEI/Industry research partnerships using, e.g., SFI's Partnership and Spokes schemes programmes; ■ International collaborative research applications through Horizon 2020 and US Ireland schemes; ■ Recruitment of leading energy researchers to Irish HEIs, using, e.g., SFI's Research Professorship scheme; ■ Collaboration between relevant Research Centres and Industry in Ireland e.g. Energy, ICT, Geosciences etc. using the SFI Spokes scheme; ■ Placement of HEI researchers in relevant energy industries using e.g. SFI Industrial Fellowship scheme; and ■ Development of at least one large bid in the Energy field to Horizon 2020 e.g. for infrastructure / test bed / demonstrator that would be used nationally and internationally. <p style="text-align: right;">(SFI, HEIs, EI, IDA, SEAI)</p>

58	<p>Accelerate commercialisation of research and technologies through greater linkages with enterprise and entrepreneurs.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(EI, SFI, SEAI)</p>
59	<p>Promote Ireland's 'Smart Innovation Grid', creating a smooth access path for companies and entrepreneurs to the services suited to their needs. This will allow for genuine cross-cutting collaboration among the range of agencies and departments likely to have a role in a given sector.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(SEAI, SFI, IDA, EI)</p>
60	<p>Use the Public Sector (including schools and hospitals) as exemplars of Smart Energy Management, and set targets for achieving savings through energy efficiency, monitoring and control. In addition, public bodies to review how policy guidelines and regulations can best promote energy efficiency and ensure that new technologies and solutions can be adapted quickly in the Irish context.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(SEAI, DCENR, DECLG)</p>
61	<p>In addition, public bodies to review how policy guidelines and regulations can best promote energy efficiency and ensure that new technologies and solutions can be adapted quickly in the Irish context.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(SEAI, DCENR, DECLG)</p>
62	<p>Promote the use and application of energy efficient technologies and solutions in the manufacturing and services enterprises in Ireland, building on the success of exemplars and demonstration projects to date, to establish leadership in energy management and promote the increased adoption of ISO and other energy related standards in both building design and energy management.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(SEAI, EI, IDA)</p>
63	<p>Develop 5 additional proposals for Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) or similar test bed actions for innovative procurement related to energy, building on the success of the SEAI/EI/SBIR for multi-user electricity charging in 2014.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(SEAI, EI)</p>
64	<p>In line with the National Research Prioritisation Exercise, provide appropriate energy sectoral strategy recommendations for consideration in the context of the new National Science, Technology & Innovation Strategy. This end-to-end approach to research strategy will provide the strongest potential for the research sector to contribute to national energy policy priorities and to job creation in the wider economy through the development of innovative commercial products, processes and solutions.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(DCENR, SFI, HEA, SEAI, EI)</p>
65	<p>As part of the Public Sector Energy Efficiency Action to expedite the achievement of the 33 per cent Energy Efficiency target for the Public Sector, work with public sector organisations with an annual energy spend of €500,000 or more, to go to the market to identify solutions for the delivery of energy reduction services.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(DCENR, Public Bodies)</p>

2.4 Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland

€800 million extra in the next 24 months will be lent to SMEs through the new SBCI.

The establishment of the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI) is a major policy initiative that in the first instance will provide up to €800 million in additional funding to the SME sector over the initial period of its operations. Operating as a strategic SME funding company, the SBCI's goal is to facilitate access to funding for Irish SMEs by facilitating the provision of:

- Additional credit aimed at SMEs in particular flexible products with longer maturity and capital repayment flexibility, subject to credit approval;
- Market access for new entrants to the SME lending market, creating real competition;
- New forms of credit in the Irish market; and
- Funding at lower cost which partner lenders must pass on to SMEs.

All of these elements will contribute to the creation of a more dynamic and competitive environment for SME funding. In particular, a combination of longer tenure and better conditions with potentially lower cost pricing will provide SMEs with access to patient intelligent capital that will support their long-term development, stimulate increased investment in growth, and generate additional employment opportunities. The SBCI's new forms of credit will give SMEs a greater capacity and, indeed incentive, to make investments on the basis of cash flow that is more tailored and customised to their business needs. This type of financing is an integral feature of countries with robust and dynamic SME sectors and it is essential, from both a growth and employment perspective, that the development of the Irish SME sector is supported in a similar manner.

The SBCI will also seek to address demand side issues in relation to SME financing. By ensuring financing at a lower cost, of a longer tenure and with more flexible conditions attached this new entity will provide an important 'signalling' effect in relation to releasing any 'latent' or 'pent-up' demand for finance from SMEs. It will also act as an important confidence building measure within the SME sector. Additionally, it will serve to raise awareness levels regarding availability of financing which could encourage more 'would be' borrowers to apply for funds.

The SBCI's funding will be made available to SMEs through both bank and non-bank specialist lenders. The release of long-term funds by promotional (or state-backed) financial institutions, through frontline (or traditional) finance providers, is a successful and effective model for funding SMEs throughout Europe. For example, the model that is used by both KfW (the German promotion bank) and ICO (the Spanish State Investment Bank) to support the financing of their respective SME sectors. The SBCI's initial funding partners are:

- The European Investment Bank (EIB);
- Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW); and
- The National Pension Reserve Fund (ISIF).

These three partners are providing long-term funding at attractive rates to the SBCI to support the financing of Irish SMEs. The SBCI will seek to distribute its funding across multiple on-

lenders in an effort to both diversify its portfolio of frontline lenders and also to enhance competition in the market place.

By providing stable low cost funding to all qualifying institutions (including new entrants) the SBCI should serve to intensify competition within the SME finance market, which has become over-concentrated.

The establishment of this new wholesale lending institution could also serve as a key incentive for new market entrants, including foreign-owned bank and non-bank financial institutions, to engage in SME lending. Indeed since its establishment in September 2014 the SBCI has been working with a number of non-bank financial institutions (such as leasing and invoice discounting providers) to develop alternative products for the Irish SME sector in order to deliver increased choice and enhanced competition. The SBCI is a vital new part of the country’s financial architecture. This innovative approach to funding SMEs will enhance the long-term potential of the sector to drive economic growth and job creation in Ireland. Given the SBCI’s potential to improve both the supply and demand for credit, the effective implementation of its business plan and associated operational elements over the course of 2015 will be critical. The SBCI and the newly established Irish Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF) will, in relation to SME financing, operate as enabling institutions, working with public and private actors to both augment the impact of existing initiatives and where appropriate develop new measures. As indicated in the Budget 2015, both the SBCI and the ISIF, working closely with Enterprise Ireland, will have a key role in developing the finance products and platforms associated with a new integrated Export Finance Strategy that is being co-ordinated jointly by the Department of Finance and the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation. Furthermore, both of these key financing institutions have the potential to leverage additional private sector investment into the economy, including the SME sector.

As part of the reporting on SME financing by the SME State Bodies group, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Recovery and Jobs will be updated on SBCI funding to the sector as the corporation implements its business plan through 2015.

2015 Actions

Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland	
66	Implement the SBCI Business Plan for SME lending over the course of 2015, including achieving key milestones as set out in the SBCI plan of: first lending to SMEs and roll-out of products in Q1 2015; bringing new non-bank lenders to the market in Q2/Q3 2015; and bringing a pipeline of other banks and non-bank lenders on board by Q4 2015 and beyond. <p style="text-align: right;">(SBCI)</p>
67	Contribute to the roll out of products for the export sector as part of the new Export Finance Strategy. <p style="text-align: right;">(SBCI)</p>
68	Work to align the revised Credit Guarantee Scheme with the operations of the SBCI. <p style="text-align: right;">(DJEI, D/Finance, SBCI)</p>

2.5 Increasing Entrepreneurial Activity

Double the jobs impact of start-ups in Ireland over the next five years, from 93,000 currently.

The Government's National Policy Statement on Entrepreneurship in Ireland was published in October 2014 and represents the first time an Irish Government has published a comprehensive national strategy for entrepreneurship. The key target contained in the plan is to double the jobs impact of startups in Ireland over the next five years, from the current level of 93,000. In order to deliver on this we must:

- Increase the number of start-ups by 25 per cent - representing 3,000 more startups per annum;
- Increase the survival rate in the first five years by 25 per cent - 1,800 more survivors per annum; and
- Improve the capacity of startups to grow to scale by 25 per cent.

The Government has set out a vision for Ireland to be among the most entrepreneurial nations in the world and to be acknowledged as a world-class environment to start and grow a business. To achieve the ambition, we will improve the key interlocking elements that impact on entrepreneurship and make up the entrepreneurship ecosystem in Ireland. These are:

- Culture, human capital and education;
- Business environment and supports;
- Innovation;
- Access to finance;
- Networks and mentoring; and
- Access to markets.

No one policy intervention will generate substantial impact on the entrepreneurship ecosystem, but various actions if taken together will combine to create greater synergies. The overarching National Entrepreneurship Statement serves to co-ordinate all areas of Government policy in the area of entrepreneurship to drive these synergies. The actions set out in the National Entrepreneurship Policy Statement will be delivered and overseen by an inter-departmental/agency Implementation Group. Further details of the precise actions being pursued are listed in the Entrepreneurship chapter (Chapter 7).

2015 Actions

National Entrepreneurship Strategy

69 The National Entrepreneurship Policy Statement actions will be progressed by an interdepartmental/agency Implementation Group chaired by DJEI.

(DJEI)

2.6 Intellectual Property in Enterprise

- **Double Ireland's performance in Intellectual Property to join Europe's best-in-class by 2018**
- **Put in place a 'Knowledge Development Box' income-based tax regime for intangible assets**

Knowledge Based Capital

Increasing the level of investment in knowledge-based capital will be an important source of enterprise growth and competitiveness into the future, with job potential for Ireland. DJEI data indicates that currently 7 per cent of sales of indigenous firms is from new products and services, which is below international benchmarks. Increasing intellectual property management and exploitation capabilities within firms across all sectors of the enterprise base is an important step in addressing this gap.

International indicators for intellectual assets management show that there is opportunity for Ireland to strengthen its performance in this area and thereby improve its innovation performance overall. Currently Ireland's patent applications per billion GDP (PCT) at 1.53 is below European comparators such as Denmark, Finland and Sweden which range from 2.55 to 2.97 per billion GDP. In relation to Community Trademarks per billion GDP Ireland's performance is somewhat better at 5.46 per billion GDP and the European average is 5.91⁸. We are significantly behind other countries in registering community designs at 1.28 per billion GDP compared to Denmark at 8.14 and Finland at 4.78 per billion GDP. We need to increase the number of RD&I active firms, have more IP generated and managed from Ireland, increase patents, licences and spinouts from our research base and ramp up the proportion of sales in enterprises from new products and service innovations.

IP policies and supports must evolve to ensure that the environmental conditions and firm supports in place are appropriate and competitive for supporting Irish based firms to engage in IP activities that lead to innovation-led growth, including fit-for-purpose data infrastructure (see Section 3.3 below).

In 2014 Knowledge Transfer Ireland was launched and is a significant step in making it easier to commercialise, and ultimately create jobs from, ideas developed through publicly funded research. The key service offered is a web-portal that enables companies to identify experts, research centres and technology-licensing opportunities to benefit their business.

The broader IP environment should also support firms in realising internationally competitive returns from their IP activity and attract RD&I and IP-related activity to Ireland. DJEI has initiated a study to determine how best to support the enhancement of the Intellectual Property activity of the firm base in Ireland, being overseen by an IP Advisory Group which includes representatives from industry and agencies.

⁸ European Commission (2014) Innovation Union Scoreboard 2014

Knowledge Development Box

Budget 2015 provides a Road Map to secure Ireland’s place as the destination for the best and most successful companies in the world. Our competitive corporate tax system plays a key role and the 12.5 per cent tax rate never has been and never will be up for discussion. The Road Map responds to a changing international environment and ensures that we continue to attract and retain companies of real substance offering real jobs.

The Road Map includes steps to make Ireland an even more attractive location for companies to develop intellectual property. Companies now invest as much or more in knowledge-based capital as they do in physical capital such as plant and machinery. Consequently, Government intends putting in place a ‘Knowledge Development Box’ income-based tax regime for intangible assets in 2015. It will be along the lines of patent and innovation boxes which have existed for many years in countries that compete with us for foreign direct investment and will be within the agreed international parameters for fair tax competition.

A public consultation process will gather views on how the Knowledge Development Box should operate. The intention is that the Knowledge Development Box will be best in class and at a low competitive and sustainable tax rate. This intellectual property offering will be a key element in attracting future foreign direct investment to Ireland.

There are four pillars under this Disruptive Reform:

1. Make Ireland the best environment for generating and managing IP;
2. Ensure firm-level supports and advice for managing and commercialising IP are competitive and meet enterprise needs;
3. Continue to accelerate the commercialisation of IP from publicly funded research and ensure 130 commercially relevant technologies transferred to industry and 35 new spinout companies in 2015; and
4. Through the Knowledge Development Box assure our international competitiveness in IP.

2015 Actions

Intellectual Property	
70	Bring forward the key recommendations from the DJEI study on how best to support the enhancement of the Intellectual Property activity of the firm base in Ireland and how best to ensure firm level supports are competitive and appropriate. (DJEI, Enterprise Ireland, IDA, SFI)
71	Continue to support IP activity e.g. patenting, industrial designs within firms. (EI)
72	Host a National Knowledge Transfer symposium. (EI/KTI)
73	Deliver Industry-Research Performing Organisation Collaboration Agreements including a Practical Guide, an industry Decision Tree and suite of Model Collaboration Agreements. (EI/KTI)

74	<p>Publish an international Knowledge Transfer benchmarking report.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(EI/KTI)</p>
75	<p>Review and make initial recommendations to update the national Intellectual Property Protocol to reflect ongoing changes in the industry-academic research landscape and to ensure that the Protocol remains an industrially relevant “living” document.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(EI/KTI)</p>
76	<p>Develop a proposal for the continued support and evolution of the national Technology Transfer System.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(EI/KTI)</p>
77	<p>Through Knowledge Transfer Ireland (KTI) and Enterprise Ireland’s suite of commercialisation and technology transfer supports, ensure the effective commercialisation and efficient transfer of economically important research outputs to industry in order to develop existing and new enterprises including 130 commercially relevant technologies transferred to industry and 35 new spinout companies.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(EI/KTI)</p>
78	<p>Introduce a “Knowledge Development Box” income-based tax regime for intangible assets in 2015 following completion of a public consultation on this issue during 2015.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(D/Finance)</p>

3. Progressing Disruptive Reforms from 2013 & 2014 Action Plans

Action Plan for Jobs 2013 introduced the idea of Disruptive Reforms, significant projects that require cross Government collaboration that can make a real difference to enterprise and jobs in a short space of time. The concept and approach continued into 2014 with substantial progress being made across all projects over the last two years.

In some cases the projects have led to new activity that is now mainstream in the policy system (e.g. initiatives to promote trading online and energy efficiency). Another - the ICT Skills Disruptive Reform - continues as a key element of the National Talent Drive Disruptive Reform in 2015 (see earlier section).

This section reports on how eight specific reforms continue to be rolled out, namely: Manufacturing Step Change, National Health Innovation Hub, Competitive Ecosystem for Big Data, Winning Abroad, Integrated Licensing Application Service, Local Enterprise Offices, Trading Online, and JobsPlus.

3.1 Manufacturing Step Change

2015 Action: Additional funding of €1.5 million for IDA Manufacturing Step Change Programme.

The ambition for manufacturing as set in 2014 is to achieve potential for employment growth of 40,000 and that Ireland by 2020 will be internationally renowned as a place that excels in manufacturing and where manufacturing accounts for a significant share of economic activity. The characteristics associated with our ambition for manufacturing include Ireland being:

- A place where manufacturing is focused on the customer – being agile, responsive and collaborative;
- A place where people make the difference – multi-disciplinary and highly skilled people with a distinctive capability in simplifying the complex;
- A place that innovates in product development and manufacturing processes – embracing leading edge technologies; and
- A place where quality is embedded across business operations - demonstrated by differentiation and a track record in highly regulated sectors.

A National Step Change in Manufacturing initiative was launched in 2014 to help place Ireland's manufacturing sector at the forefront internationally and: improve competitiveness, productivity and innovation; improve connections to the customer and expansions into new markets; and to engage in new ways of working. The *Expert Group on Future Skills Needs*, from consultations with companies, has identified a demand for manufacturing skilled trades for sectors such as food, medical devices, engineering and Pharma/Biopharma, and for apprenticeships/traineeships in formal operative level traineeships, manufacturing technicians, manufacturing machine operators, practical engineering apprentice (progression up to level 8), polymer technologists, and toolmakers.

The National Step Change envisages delivering a suite of supports that are tailored to the specific needs of a firm, depending on its stage of development and strategic intent, and regardless of ownership and/or scale. Additional funding will be provided by DJEI to increase the number of manufacturing operations that can transform their activities so as to sustain jobs into the future.

2015 Actions

Manufacturing Step Change	
79	In 2015 the IDA will launch a new programme to support transformation and productivity improvement in the sector with funding of €1.5 million provided for 2015. (IDA)
80	In relation to strengthening the ecosystem for manufacturing firms in Ireland, review the pilot mid-tier initiative based on the cohort of Engineering companies and select a second cohort of enterprises for an initiative in 2015. (EI)
81	As part of the <i>National Talent Drive</i> Disruptive reform (see above), develop new Apprenticeships in response to proposals from key sectors of the economy. (DES, SOLAS, HEA, Apprenticeship Council, Employers and Education Bodies)
82	Enterprise Ireland will support a total of 115 firms across all levels and activities, through its LeanStart, LeanPlus and LeanTransform Programmes. (EI)
83	Enterprise Ireland will launch a Manufacturing Capital Equipment Grant providing up to €250,000 by way of grant to eligible SMEs for the purchase of capital equipment (subject to value for money criteria), that will boost productivity and lead to increased employment. (EI)
84	Enterprise Ireland and the IDA will develop a strategy to develop Ireland’s aviation related business sectors. A key part of the strategy will involve roll-out of the SC21 initiative to 18 more sub-suppliers. (EI/IDA)

See Section 11.5 entitled Innovative / Advanced Manufacturing also.

3.2 National Health Innovation Hub

2015 Action: Taking the Health Innovation Hub national.

The aim of the National Health Innovation Hub (NHIH) initiative is to drive collaboration between the health system and enterprise providing gains to the health and enterprise sectors. It aims to:

- Facilitate enterprise develop and commercialise new healthcare technologies, products and services by giving them appropriate access to the health service to validate and refine products;
- Facilitate the health system to find efficiencies and improvements by engaging with innovative companies creating solutions to problems (reducing cost, increasing service efficiency, improving patient outcomes, etc.); and
- Support innovative developments emerging from within the health system.

In 2014 the Joint Agency Project Team for the NHIH finalised recommendations on the optimum arrangements for establishing the national Hub. This followed an independent evaluation of the Demonstrator (pilot) Project established in Cork in 2012. The recommendations of the NPT formed the basis of proposals to Government which considered the next steps for establishing the Hub. In July 2014 Government agreed to the establishment of a National Health Innovation Hub that would be tasked with proactively developing, managing, and progressing relationships and connections with industry and the health system. The 2015 actions are designed to follow through on implementation of the Government decision.

2015 Actions

Health Innovation Hub

85

Establish a National Health Innovation Hub based on a competitive process.

(DJEI, D/Health, EI, Joint Agency Project Team, Oversight Group)

3.3 Competitive Ecosystem for Big Data

2015 Action: Building world class data management infrastructure.

The overall ambition of the Disruptive Reform is to build on existing enterprise strengths to make Ireland a leading country in Europe in the area of Big Data and Data Analytics. A number of significant initiatives and investments were progressed in 2013 and 2014 in partnership with the enterprise sector and Ireland is in a strong position to realise the stated ambition of this Disruptive Reform. On behalf of the Task Force on Big Data, DJEI commissioned a review of Ireland's progress towards achieving this goal which found that while this new growth opportunity presents complex and multiple policy challenges Ireland has made good progress across the key areas. In particular Ireland has developed a world class research capability through investments in INSIGHT and CeADAR, and in 2014 the Government launched the Open Data Portal to act as the primary source of public sector datasets. However in the face of strong European and international competition in this area the Task Force has identified a number of new actions that will harness Big Data for employment growth.

The specific objectives in 2015 are to:

1. Identify and focus on Ireland's competitive advantages and develop a specific Big Data agenda clarifying its leadership goals;
2. Building on our research strengths consolidate Ireland's leadership position in Big Data/Data Analytics within Horizon 2020 and continue to promote engagement by enterprise in Ireland;
3. Continue to implement the recommendations of the EGFSN's report "Assessing the demand for Big Data and Analytics Skills";
4. Develop a coherent eco-system to bridge the gap between R&D and innovation and take-up; and
5. Develop an internationally competitive Data infrastructure.

In light of the new policy actions required in 2015 the mission and focus of the Big Data Task Force will be renewed to provide effective overarching coordination and monitoring to ensure that the strategic goals are achieved. The Big Data market is in an emerging phase of development and in order to achieve the benefits of data-driven innovation, policy must take into account the full data value cycle and the role of all stakeholders. By focusing on developing a coherent ecosystem Ireland can bridge the gap between R&D, innovation and adoption and take the lead in developing concrete solutions and applications.

An important element of the ecosystem for data-intensive companies operating in Ireland is the system of data protection and the arrangements in place to ensure a robust approach to data protection consistent with EU law and international treaties. To ensure that Ireland has a best-in-class system in place, the Department of the Taoiseach will establish an inter-departmental committee on data protection issues and related structures, as well as a forum for dialogue with industry/civil society on related issues, and will progress a range of actions in 2015 (as set out below) in this regard.

2015 Actions

Big Data	
86	<p>Renew the mission and focus of the Big Data Taskforce with the goal to oversee progress towards the strategic goals of the Disruptive Reform.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(DJEI)</p>
87	<p>Identify and adopt specific targets for the Disruptive Reform including measurable KPIs.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Task Force on Big Data, DJEI)</p>
88	<p>Monitor progress annually, based on the KPIs, and produce a report updating/revising the main actions.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Task Force on Big Data, DJEI)</p>
89	<p>Oversee the implementation of the actions arising from the IDC review which sought to identify additional or revised policy actions in Ireland.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Task Force on Big Data, DJEI)</p>
90	<p>The Task Force on Big Data will review the opportunities for Ireland arising from the Internet of Things and develop specific policy actions to develop those opportunities.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Task Force on Big Data, DJEI, IDA)</p>
91	<p>Establish inter-departmental committee on data protection issues and related structures.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(D/Taoiseach)</p>
92	<p>Establish a forum for dialogue with industry/civil society on issues arising from the continuing growth in personal data usage and technology.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(D/Taoiseach)</p>
93	<p>Strengthen the resources of the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner (ODP).</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(D/Justice and Equality, DPER)</p>
94	<p>Establish a Dublin office for the ODP.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(D/Justice and Equality, OPW)</p>
95	<p>Engage intensively with EU partners and stakeholders in relation to ongoing negotiations on Data Protection regulation.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(D/Justice and Equality)</p>

3.4 Winning Abroad

2015 Action: Ringfence €4 million in 2015 to secure increased inward investment and export growth in high growth and emerging markets.

In APJ 2014, the Government - through the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation - allocated additional funding to the enterprise agencies to increase their focus and footprint in high growth and emerging markets and new areas of opportunities for exports and inward investment.

The increased investment through IDA Ireland in overseas offices is targeting the creation of an additional 10,000 new jobs (6,000 direct and 4,000 indirect) over 5 years through an investment programme which will see the provision of additional resources to IDA Ireland to be deployed overseas including in emerging markets, intensifying FDI employment growth.

The increased funding for staff and support for enterprises through EI is focused on the provision of additional on-the-ground support by Enterprise Ireland in overseas markets including China, South Korea, United Arab Emirates and South Africa and targeting companies having significant engagement with the Enterprise Ireland Potential Exporters Division. The services provided by Enterprise Ireland's overseas offices to Irish companies are a critical aspect of the fully integrated holistic package of supports available to Irish companies to support international growth and to maximise the opportunity for job creation in Ireland. It also includes working with first time exporters and providing a range of programmes to exporters to develop the capabilities of Irish enterprises to grow exports through programmes aimed at both existing exporters and potential exporters. New initiatives are being undertaken to promote Ireland's image abroad to drive increased trade, tourism and investment and implement Local Market Plans in priority markets and to undertake targeted initiatives in sectors including international education services, engineering services, cultural services, and design.

2015 Actions

Winning Abroad	
96	Ringfence €4 million in additional funding in 2015 to secure increased inward investment and export growth in high growth and emerging markets (DJEI, EI, IDA)
97	Through the Culture Ireland programme, build further opportunities internationally for emerging and established Irish companies and artists by presenting their work at strategically important global arts markets. (DAHG/Culture Ireland)

3.5 Integrated Licensing Application Service

2015 Action: Roll out the Integrated Licensing Application Service

The introduction of an Integrated Licence Application Service to reduce the administrative burden on businesses was a disruptive reform in Action Plan for Jobs 2013. It was intended the service would be rolled out to the retail sector by Q4 2013. This action was delayed primarily due to the public procurement process embarked upon and the service is now scheduled to be delivered by Q1 2015.

A Steering Group with membership from the key licensing authorities with a remit for retail licensing was established to oversee the process and it was agreed to progress the option of an outsourced provision, through a finance-design-build-operate model.

The Department of Jobs Enterprise and Innovation went to the market to secure an external provider, working with the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA), the Chief State Solicitor's Office (CSSO) and the Attorney General's office to prepare the request for tender (RFT) and develop a detailed functional specification, in consultation with representatives from some key licensing authorities. The RFT reflected the requirements of licensing authorities including managing licence application forms, registration of licensees, managing licence applications and renewals, remittance of licence fees, transmission and security of data, training, customer support and marketing of an Integrated Licensing Application Service. Additional background work in terms of reviewing the licensing processes and the underpinning legislation for the 29 core licences across 40 licensing authorities that are being considered in the first phase of this project was undertaken and formed part of the Request for Tender documentation.

A Request for Tender for a Single Supplier Framework Agreement for the provision of an Integrated Licensing Application Service was issued through e-tenders and in the EU Official Journal in February 2014. Following a formal evaluation process the LGMA has agreed to award the tender and contract conclusions are ongoing with the preferred bidder. The service is to be available to the Licensing Authorities by Q1 2015.

2015 Actions

Integrated Licensing Application Service

98 Roll out the Integrated Licensing Application Service and seek feedback from the Retail Consultation Forum.

(DJEI and relevant public bodies)

3.6 Local Enterprise Offices

2015 Action: Further Develop and Promote the New LEO Network

Since the introduction of the necessary legislation, the establishment of the 31 newly branded LEO offices, and commitment of additional staff in 2014, the focus has been on development of enhanced customer service (training, website, protocols with State bodies), seamless continuity of services (project supports/job creation, training and mentoring of startups and business expansion), and installation of oversight structures. In addition LEOs have delivered a very successful competition to find Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur which gave rise to over 1,000 applications for investment in new business projects from people under 30 years of age. LEOs have also been engaged in many new actions emanating from the Action Plan for Jobs and the Entrepreneurship Policy Statement, for example via the delivery of Trading Online Vouchers. Now that the LEO network is successfully up and running the focus will continue to be on setting ambitious business targets, strengthened customer service and improved communications and promotion of LEO supports, activities and successes.

2015 Actions

Local Enterprise Offices

99	Continue to develop and promote the Local Enterprise Offices as the <i>first-stop-shop</i> providing advice and supports to entrepreneurs and new business in the micro and small sector. <p style="text-align: right;">(EI, LAs, LEOs, DJEI, DECLG)</p>
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3.7 Trading Online

2015 Action: Roll out of 2,000 trading online vouchers (1,450 in 2015).

The Trading Online Voucher Scheme was introduced and piloted under the 2013 Action Plan for Jobs and rolled out nationally under the 2014 Action Plan. The Scheme is a key action under the National Digital Strategy (NDS) which was published in July 2013. It aims to get 2,000 more small businesses trading online by end 2015 and offers a financial incentive of up to €2,500 to small and micro businesses to develop their online trading capability. It is an example of an effective partnership between DCENR, DJEI, Enterprise Ireland and the Local Enterprise Office (LEO) network. More information on the Scheme can be found at www.dcenr.gov.ie/nds and on the website of each LEO.

The digital economy represents 5 per cent of GDP, is growing at approximately 20 per cent per year and supports almost 100,000 direct and indirect jobs. Irish consumers spend around €700,000 per hour, 24 hours a day online. With up to 70 per cent of Ireland's annual online spend currently going overseas, targeting Irish businesses for online trading is a key jobs and economic imperative. In Ireland today, however, less than 1 in 4 small businesses are selling to customers online. European Commission research suggests that companies which develop a meaningful online trading presence grow twice as fast, export twice as much and employ twice as many people.

The Trading Online Voucher scheme opened for applications nationally in July 2014. Initial quota allocations totalling 1,076 Trading Online Vouchers were made in 2014, spanning the 31 LEOs (based on small/microbusiness density in each area). The LEOs and their mentors are working with applicant companies to ensure high quality applications. More than 550 vouchers have been awarded to successful applicant companies and the roll-out of the full 2,000 vouchers will continue in 2015. The outcomes of the Scheme are to help small businesses grow their sales, exports and ultimately jobs. Early indications from the pilot involving 50 companies in Dublin City were positive. The pilot indicated that after six months:

- 7 out of 10 companies said that the voucher application process helped them in determining how online trading would fit into their business;
- 45 per cent said participating in the programme had helped make their company more efficient;
- 70 per cent of companies are getting more customer inquiries;
- 55 per cent have had or are expecting more sales as a result;
- Most companies are primarily trading domestically, but export expectations have increased with business expecting to get 30 per cent of sales from export markets within 6 months. The UK is by far the most important export market initially; and
- 60 per cent expect they will need to recruit within 12 months – of these companies the average expectation was a need to recruit 1.5 staff.

One of the voucher scheme recipients, Darren Lennox from The Billiard Company made the following comment on the pilot programme: *“By taking part in this voucher scheme it has helped us take stock of the overall direction of the business which has enabled us to identify new opportunities whilst improving our current product and service.”*

2015 Actions

Trading Online

100	Following the national launch of the scheme in 2014, complete the rollout of 2,000 Trading Online Vouchers (1,450 in 2015) through the Local Enterprise Office Network. (DCENR)
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3.8 JobsPlus

2015 Action: New Youth JobsPlus initiative.

Action Plan for Jobs 2013 contained a Disruptive Reform aimed at making it more attractive for businesses to hire additional employees from the Live Register: the *JobsPlus* initiative. Prior to this there were already a suite of measures that supported employers to employ or provide access to the labour market for those on the Live Register, but take-up of some schemes was low. Consequently, the Government decided to replace the PRSI exemption and Revenue Job Assist schemes with a simplified initiative.

The objective of the new JobsPlus scheme was to provide a simple, easily understood and attractive scheme that encourages employers to recruit from the cohort of the long term unemployed.

JobsPlus provides two levels of payment: a payment of €7,500 over two years to an employer for each person recruited who has been unemployed for more than 12 but less than 24 months, and €10,000 over two years to an employer for each person recruited who has been unemployed for more than 24 months. The incentive is payable monthly in arrears.

Since its launch in the summer of 2013, over 2,500 employers have availed of the opportunity to give over 3,400 unemployed people on the Live Register a chance to get back into employment.

The *Pathways to Work 2015* strategy, which complements the APJ process, places a particular emphasis on measures to help long-term and young unemployed people find a route back into employment. Its measures include an enhanced version of JobsPlus specifically for young unemployed people.

2015 Actions

JobsPlus

101 As part of Pathways to Work, a new JobsPlus strand for young people will be available in 2015 under the Youth Guarantee.

(DSP)

4. Finance for Growth

The Government has clearly identified SMEs as the lifeblood of our economy and recognise that they play a crucial role in economic and employment growth. The onset of the international financial crisis and the systemic problems within our national banking system, in conjunction with cultural payment issues have collectively conspired to create an extremely challenging environment for SMEs in relation to accessing finance.

Across the OECD the outbreak of the 2008-09 global financial crisis profoundly changed the business environment for SMEs and entrepreneurs with access to finance particularly affected. Both pre- and post-crisis, Irish SMEs are among the most reliant on bank financing in Europe. Consequently Irish SMEs have been disproportionately exposed to the weaknesses in the banking sector.

Since 2011 Government policy has focused on supporting SMEs in accessing an appropriate supply of financing from both bank and non-bank sources. In 2014 a number of key policy initiatives were developed which are contributing to the evolution of a more robust and effective institutional architecture for the financing of SMEs. These include:

- The establishment of the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI) providing up to €800 million of funds;
- The development of an innovative SME State Support On-line tool (www.localenterprise.ie/smeonlinetool) to provide an individual with a list of the possible government business supports available to their particular business;
- Government agreement to amend the Credit Guarantee Act 2012 and introduce a new more flexible Credit Guarantee Scheme;
- The announcement by the Minister for Finance of the commencement of work on an integrated Export Finance Strategy in 2015;
- The implementation of the Enterprise Ireland Development Capital Scheme Strategy;
- The commitment by EI of €99.5 million to a number of funds under its Seed and Venture Capital Scheme (2013-2018);
- The review of the Microfinance Fund Ireland (MFI);
- Participation by ptsb in the Credit Review Process;
- Transitioning of the NPRF into the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF); and
- The roll-out of a National Information Campaign on Late Payments.

The support environment for SMEs has also been enhanced by the establishment of the network of Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs). While excessive SME debt has been a legacy of the downturn in recent years, the banks under Central Bank oversight have been engaged in a systematic exercise to offer resolutions to distressed SMEs focussed on the borrower's maximum affordability. Recent releases by the main banks indicate that the majority of these SMEs in difficulty have had new arrangements put into place. This area is one which will continue to be monitored and reviewed through 2015.

As the economy moves into a new phase of growth there is now an opportunity to develop a policy agenda that addresses both cyclical and structural constraints in the financing of the SME sector and the continuing issue of the need for prompt payments. This will require a clear focus on how best to maximise the benefits to SMEs of the evolving financial landscape in

Ireland and the adoption of actions that contribute to developing a more diversified and competitive financial system, capable of financing the growth potential of Irish SMEs.

2015 Priorities

In seeking to build on the progress to date and to further support the financing of growth within the SME Sector our focus in 2015 will be to implement a series of actions under the following thematic areas:

- Support and influence the effective implementation of major policy initiatives to ensure that the maximum benefits are afforded to SMEs;
- Continue to raise awareness and understanding amongst SMEs and entrepreneurs of the full suite of State business supports that are available;
- Ensure that the LEO network is a key conduit in providing information, support and advice to small businesses on access to finance issues and strengthen the linkages between enterprise capacity building, accessing finance and business guidance;
- Deepen our engagement with international funding institutions;
- Facilitate and support the development of a more diverse range of financing options for SMEs;
- Maintain a strong focus on policy impact, evaluation and learning; and
- Develop measures to ensure prompt payments and promote improvements in the payment culture and practices in Ireland.

Since 2012 the SME State Bodies Group has been responsible for developing and implementing the integrated set of actions on Access to Finance as set out in the various Action Plans for Jobs, and this will continue in 2015. The Group has also been prepared to develop new initiatives, over and above what is in the initial Action Plan in response to new challenges or policy opportunities that may emerge during the course of the year. The establishment of the SBCI is a clear example of a more comprehensive and ambitious delivery over the initial Action Plan for Jobs commitment. Furthermore there is also an increased emphasis on exploring how different initiatives can be combined to enhance the potential benefits to the end user, the SMEs. Therefore while maintaining a strong output focus is paramount, it is important that this flexibility and innovation to deploy resources and develop more effective actions to support SMEs is encouraged and recognised in terms of the monitoring of the Group's overall work and final output.

4.1 Effective Implementation to Maximise Benefits to SMEs

Given the progress that has been achieved to date, there is a need now to ensure effective implementation of the major policy initiatives that the Government has introduced to support the SME sector. The ESRI undertook a major research programme on the issue of SME financing and the final report from this considerable body of work "*Financing SMEs in Recovery*" was published in October 2014. The suite of policy recommendations contained in this report focused strongly on the need to enhance and embed the existing range of policy measures already in place. The SME State Bodies Group will concentrate on how to maximise the potential benefits for SMEs of the evolving financial architecture in Ireland. In particular there needs to be concerted focus on ensuring that the extensive suite of initiatives that are

now in place facilitate the availability of appropriate, diverse and sustainable funding options across the business lifecycle of an SME.

As highlighted earlier in the Action Plan the establishment of the SBCI is a major disruptive reform that will provide up to €800 million in additional funding to the SME sector. The SBCI is a vital new part of the country's financial architecture and given its potential to improve both the supply and demand for credit the effective implementation of its business plan and associated operational elements over the course of 2015 will be critical.

As indicated in the Budget 2015, both the SBCI and the ISIF, working closely with Enterprise Ireland, will have a key role in developing the finance products and platforms associated with a new integrated Export Finance Strategy that is being co-ordinated jointly by the Department of Finance and the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation. Furthermore both of these key financing institutions have the potential to leverage additional private sector investment into the economy, including the SME sector.

Over the course of 2014, the Department of Finance collated and examined on a monthly basis granular data from both the Bank of Ireland and the AIB. This has contributed to a more informed understanding of the SME bank lending environment and facilitated a stronger focus on new lending.

In seeking to inform ongoing policy development and implementation it is important that the SME State Bodies Group develops an appropriate set of metrics that will enable a fuller picture of the trends in SME lending from both bank and non-bank sources, including the full range of state sponsored initiatives that are now in place.

It is important to recognise that in relation to commercial entities the type of data available varies in terms of both quality and data and as such part of the work of the SME State Bodies group will involve engaging with commercial entities around the issue of improving the provision of data on SME lending. Similarly, individual government departments and agencies will also be required to establish and collate an appropriate set of metrics for each SME financing initiative for which they are statutorily responsible.

The SME State Bodies Group will then be responsible for reporting on this issue to the Cabinet Committee on Economic Recovery and Jobs twice yearly. Aside from providing an overall picture of trends in lending to SMEs, this exercise will also serve to enhance ongoing policy deliberation and development.

A feature of the work of the SME State Bodies Group to date has been the commitment to evaluate and review initiatives with a view to improving their effectiveness. Part of the work of the Group in 2015 will be to support the roll out of reconfigured product offerings such as the revised Credit Guarantee Scheme and the simplified operation of the Microenterprise Loan Fund through Microfinance Ireland (MFI). The Group will also continue to review existing schemes and make recommendations for appropriate changes to improve their effectiveness and facilitate a higher take up by SMEs. Additionally there is scope for the SME State Bodies Group to identify potential opportunities to combine initiatives so as to maximise their potential benefits to SMEs.

2015 Actions

Effective Implementation	
102	Implementation of the SBCI Business Plan for SME lending over the course of 2015. (SBCI)
103	The Department of Finance and the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation will roll-out an integrated export finance strategy in 2015 with financing products and platforms being developed by the SBCI and the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF) in conjunction with Enterprise Ireland. (D/Finance, DJEI, SBCI, ISIF, EI)
104	Collate and monitor data, including Central Bank data, on lending to SMEs from both bank and non-bank sources, including the full range of state sponsored initiatives and report on this issue to the Cabinet Committee on Economic Recovery and Jobs twice yearly. (SME State Bodies Group)
105	Detailed data from AIB and Bank of Ireland will be collated and examined, on a monthly basis ensuring a more informed understanding of the SME bank lending environment, with a particular focus on new lending. (D/Finance, Credit Review Office)
106	Following the passing of the appropriate primary legislation implement and promote the new Credit Guarantee Scheme. (DJEI, Credit Review Office)
107	Implement the recommendations of the review of the MicroEnterprise Loan Fund Scheme. (DJEI)
108	Survey the SME demand for credit. (D/Finance)

4.2 Communications – Raising awareness amongst SMEs and Entrepreneurs of supports

Raising awareness amongst SMEs and entrepreneurs of the range of state funded supports that are available remains an ongoing challenge for the public policy system. As such we will ensure a continued emphasis on implementing a comprehensive and integrated communications strategy involving the widest possible range of stakeholders in both the public and private sectors. This will include a continuation of successful initiatives developed in 2014, namely:

- Further enhance and promote the Supporting SMEs Online Tool;
- Deliver a regional road show presence at key national, sectoral and policy events; and
- Work with other agencies and representative bodies to develop tailored audience-focused information material.

It is evident that effective communications need to be integrated from the outset into the various policy measures in supporting the SME sector. Enhanced awareness of available supports will ensure take-up is maximised among our target audiences. Equally, an effective communications strategy should also function as a mechanism for harnessing the views and experience of the SME sector in relation to what is working and also the challenges they are continuing to face with regards to financing growth. There is certainly scope to utilise new and existing communication channels to promote individual SMEs and industry partners' positive experiences of participation in state sponsored initiatives, notably the network of 31 Local Enterprise Offices. This would serve to more effectively highlight the potential benefits of participation in such schemes to a wider audience of SMEs. Maintaining an ongoing dialogue with the SME sector in this way can also encourage two-way learning, provide a forum to consider policy solutions, and build trust in the policy development process.

2015 Actions

Raising Awareness of Supports

109	Deliver the next phase of an integrated communication strategy. (SME State Bodies Group)
110	Launch www.actionplanforjobs.ie and supporting advertising campaign to leverage support for and drive utilisation of the 'Supporting SMEs' online tool and increase awareness of the existence of State supports for business. (DJEI)

4.3 Engagement with International Funding Institutions

Multilateral Development and National Promotional Banks

Since 2012 there has been an emphasis on increasing our engagement across Government with both the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Investment Fund (EIF) in developing and implementing mechanisms designed to maximise the provision of financing to SMEs. The establishment of the SBCI affords a clear opportunity for a deeper and more intensive collaboration with the EIB in particular and, to the extent that it becomes involved in risk measures, with the EIF also. The SBCI's participation in EIB Taskforce of National Promotional Banks is indicative of the type of engagement that is now possible with the establishment of a national SME-focused promotional lending institution. Closer co-operation with the EIB and EIF also provides a potential opportunity to develop initiatives that would support the SBCI's broader developmental mandate. Similarly, building on its positive relationship with the German state investment bank KfW, the SBCI will also continue to explore the potential for cooperation with other National Promotional Banks in seeking to enhance the funding environment for SMEs in Ireland.

EU Financing

There are also increased possibilities to access financial instruments under the current Financial Regulation of the EU Budget. With the SBCI established as a national SME-focused lending institution, operating with a public policy mandate and potentially able to serve as a

platform to deliver financial instruments, there would appear to be a great opportunity to maximise our engagement with relevant elements of the Multiannual Financial Framework, so as to ensure that there are no untapped or underutilised sources of funding for SMEs. In this context the emphasis should be on targeting those financial instruments which are potentially of most benefit to SMEs in Ireland.

2015 Actions

Engagement with International Funding Institutions	
111	The SBCI to participate in the EIB Taskforce of National Promotional Banks. (SBCI)
112	Examine the potential for closer cooperation with other National Promotional Bank's (NPBs) in developing initiatives to promote the financing of growth in Ireland. (SBCI, D/Finance)
113	Further increase our engagement with the EIB and EIF in developing and implementing mechanisms designed to maximise the provision of enhanced financing to SMEs. (D/Finance, SBCI, DJEI, EI)
114	Maximise our engagement with the relevant elements of the Multiannual Financial Framework – e.g. the Horizon 2020, COSME - so as to ensure there are no untapped or underutilised sources of framework or other funding available to SME sector. (SBCI, D/Finance, DJEI, EI)

4.4 The LEOs Network – Enterprise Capacity Building

SME skills and strategic vision are a key ingredient of any attempt to diversify the source of financing, particularly alternative non-bank financing. As outlined above, improving SMEs awareness and knowledge of the financing options that are available, including state sponsored supports is essential.

However, in addition to enhancing knowledge about the range of bank and non-bank financing instruments that may be available, there is also a need to support SMEs in developing a more strategic approach to business financing. This will enable them to have a better understanding of how different instruments could serve their financing needs at specific stages of the life cycle, the advantages and risks associated with them, and how best to leverage these different sources including the potential synergies between different financial instruments.

This will necessitate a stronger emphasis on the integration of SME capability building, guidance and financing measures. Consequently the LEOs network will be the key conduit in providing information, support and advice to micro and small businesses on access to finance issues.

2015 Actions

Enterprise Capacity Building

115	Explore how best to support SMEs in building their financial capabilities. (DES, DJEI, D/Finance)
116	The LEOs network to play a key role providing information, support and advice to small businesses on access to finance issues, via appropriate training, mentoring and provision of information, based on the availability of up-to-date information or training from the appropriate third-party sources. (EI, LEOs, Revenue, MFI)

4.5 Diversify the Range of Financing Options for SMEs

Equity Financing

As part of broadening the financing mix for SMEs, there is a need to encourage firms away from the current high level of reliance on debt financing towards a greater use of equity to fund investment. According to the previously mentioned ESRI study the contribution of equity, venture and growth capital in Ireland is above average in an international context. The ESRI suggests that in practice the scope to substantially increase the share of this type of funding may be limited. Conversely this above average usage of equity financing could be seen as providing a platform for building awareness of the potential of this funding mechanism and increasing the range of companies prepared to utilise it to finance investment. Indeed, the ESRI indicates that there are opportunities to expand the use of equity financing by the more domestically orientated cohort of Irish SMEs.

In Budget 2015, the Minister for Finance outlined a number of key changes to the Employment and Investment Scheme (EII) and the Seed Capital Scheme (SCS) that are designed to increase the usage of these funding mechanisms for SMEs. The main changes for the EII proposed in the budget were:

- Increasing the amount of finance that can be raised by a company under the EII to €5 million annually subject to a lifetime maximum of €15 million;
- Investment in the management and operation of nursing homes, medium-sized enterprises in non-assisted areas, and internationally traded financial services that are certified by Enterprise Ireland, will now qualify under the scheme;
- The holding period for shares has been extended from 3 to 4 years; and
- The inclusion of hotels, guest houses and self-catering accommodation in the scheme has been extended for a further three years.

The Minister also announced as part of the Budget his intention to relaunch the Seed Capital Scheme as the new 'Startup Refunds for Entrepreneurs Scheme' (SURE) in the coming months. The purpose of this rebranding is to more accurately communicate the intended purpose of the relief and will be followed by a coordinated marketing campaign. The relief is aimed at encouraging those who previously were in PAYE employment to start their own business.

The Government, through Enterprise Ireland has made €175 million available as part of the Seed & Venture Capital Scheme (2013 – 2018) to stimulate job creation and support the

funding requirements of young innovative Irish companies. The overall vision of the Seed & Venture Capital Scheme (2013-2018) is to increase the availability of risk capital for SMEs to support economic growth through the continued development of the Seed & Venture Capital Sector in Ireland to achieve a more robust, commercially viable and sustainable sector. Enterprise Ireland has committed €99.5 million to a number of funds under this scheme. These funds are currently fundraising and will target investment in the wider information and communications technologies and life sciences sectors of the economy. A further call for expressions of interest under the Scheme will be issued in Q2 2015.

The Development Capital Scheme, launched in 2012, is aimed at addressing a funding gap for mid-sized, high-growth, indigenous companies with significant prospects for jobs and export growth, by creating funds that would invest between €2 million and €5 million in medium sized established companies by way of equity, quasi equity and/or debt. Enterprise Ireland made a total commitment of €75 million to three fund managers under the Development Capital Scheme, MML Growth Capital Partners Ireland, BDO Development Capital Fund, and the Carlyle Cardinal Ireland Fund. This will significantly increase the availability of funding for Irish growth SMEs over the coming years. Under the Innovation Fund Ireland Scheme Enterprise Ireland has invested in four funds alongside the NPRF/ISIF with the NPRF/ISIF also investing independently in a further number of funds. These international funds are investing in Irish companies and have established a presence in Ireland.

It is recognised that developing a more robust and effective equity environment is a long-term structural change that will require an integrated set of actions designed to change the behaviour and culture of entrepreneurs, companies and investors. There is however scope for the SME State Bodies Group to implement a series of measures that would assist in progressing this agenda and, in particular, encourage more firms to consider equity financing as part of the possible suite of funding options across the life cycle of their business.

Alternative Financing

Evidence from Ireland and other OECD countries, in particular the UK and USA, highlights the potential to scale up the volume of alternative lending instruments targeted at SMEs. Alternative financing activities such as peer to peer business lending, invoice trading, and crowdfunding can be a valuable source of funding to micro and small businesses either as a complement to traditional bank funding or as an alternative to traditional bank intermediation in instances where bank credit has either been refused or not sought in the first place.

2015 Actions

Diversifying the Range of Financing Options for SMEs	
117	The ISIF to explore the feasibility of introducing a new SME Equity/Mezzanine Fund to provide capital to SMEs. (ISIF)
118	Enterprise Ireland to work with the European Investment Fund to progress the establishment of a European Angel Fund in Ireland. (EI)

119	The Department of Finance to work with the relevant stakeholders in raising awareness of the EII Scheme and promoting it as vehicle for channelling investment to grow enterprises and support employment. <p style="text-align: right;">(D/Finance, DJEI)</p>
120	Issue a competitive second call for expressions of interest under the Seed and Venture Capital Scheme 2013-2018. <p style="text-align: right;">(EI)</p>
121	The SME State Bodies Group to produce recommendations to further support the development of alternative SME financing instruments. <p style="text-align: right;">(SME State Bodies Group)</p>

4.6 Policy Impact, Evaluation and Learning

In seeking to improve policy effectiveness the SME State Bodies Group will maintain its strong focus on policy impact, evaluation and learning. In part this will involve exploring how best to leverage the research capabilities within the public system through closer collaboration on specific projects with the Strategic Policy Division (DJEI) and the Economics and Tax Divisions in the Department of Finance, as well as external bodies such as the ESRI and NESC. Similarly through engagement with bodies such as the OECD the Group will continue to draw on international best practice and experience in developing and implementing initiatives to support the financing of growth in the SME sector.

2015 Actions

Policy Impact, Evaluation and Learning

122	Host a policy conference on Financing the Growth Potential of SMEs. <p style="text-align: right;">(D/Finance)</p>
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4.7 Trade Credit and Prompt Payments

A particularly important source of non-bank credit which is used by firms is trade credit. By trade credit, we refer mainly to the purchase of goods on credit from suppliers but it can also refer to the purchase of goods on advances from customers. Trade credit is one of the most widely used sources of funding by Irish firms and the highest in the Eurozone.

Approximately 34 per cent of Irish firms used trade credit facilities to fund working capital. When used, it accounted for nearly 38 per cent of total funding. For investment, approximately 6.1 per cent of firms used trade credit and it accounted for just over 58 per cent of total funds when used⁹. This data suggest that 70 per cent of Irish SMEs and large corporates use trade credit. The numbers highlight the continued importance of this particular type of financing for firms in Ireland.

⁹ ESRI Analysis of ECB/EC SAFE Survey

Trade credit is a crucial component of financing for many SMEs and disruption to the supply chain flow of payments can often be the deciding factor between solvency and bankruptcy. However, the potential impact of any potential policy intervention in this area must be scrutinised as active involvement in restricting terms and conditions of payments runs the risk of cutting firms off from this type of funding rather than making it more accessible.

The Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation is responsible for monitoring legislation enacted to ensure Prompt Payment and promotes improved payment practices in Ireland. The economic crisis has presented significant challenges across enterprise in Ireland, but for SMEs in particular the issue of late payments is of critical concern. Late payments in commercial transactions have an adverse effect on businesses by straining cash flow, adding financial costs and fuelling uncertainty for many businesses. Companies providing goods and services need cash flow certainty and are entitled to expect that their payments will be made in a timely manner.

One initiative to improve payment performance in Ireland is the Government requirement that all central Government Departments pay their suppliers within 15 calendar days of receipt of a valid invoice. In recognition of the importance the Government attaches to the issue of prompt payments and in an effort to help ease cash flow difficulties for Irish small businesses, the 15 day prompt payment requirement for all central Government Departments was extended in 2011 to include the State Agency Sector.

The development of a Prompt Payment Code of Conduct (PPC) portal is another important step in addressing the culture of late payments in Ireland. The introduction of the PPC will continue the Government's drive to get credit flowing in the Irish economy by encouraging prompt payment for all business transactions. The development of this portal is a joint initiative between the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, the Irish Institute of Credit Management (IICM), the main business representative bodies in Ireland (ISME, SFA, Chambers Ireland & IBEC) and the Banking & Payments Federation Ireland (BPMFI).

Signatories that sign up to the PPC through the online portal, will undertake to:

- Pay suppliers on time within the terms agreed at the outset of the contract, or in accordance with legislation;
- Give clear guidance to suppliers by providing them with clear and easily accessible guidance on payment procedures; and
- Encourage good practice by requesting that lead suppliers encourage adoption of the Code through their own supply chains.

The successful delivery of the PPC combined with the implementation of the Late Payment Directive and the 15 day prompt payment arrangement for the Public Sector, will represent significant progress in driving a change in the payment culture in Ireland.

2015 Actions

Trade Credit and Prompt Payments

123

Develop and launch the Prompt Payments Code (PPC) portal to improve cash flow between businesses and to drive a change in payment culture in Ireland.

(DJEI, IICM, BPMFI & Business Representative Bodies)

124	<p>Establish a Prompt Payment Forum to support the delivery of the PPC and examine further initiatives to sustain a responsible payment culture in Ireland.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(DJEI)</p>
125	<p>Examine and report on the feasibility of incorporating the government decision for all public bodies to pay suppliers within 15 days into national legislation.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(DJEI)</p>
126	<p>Examine the potential for introducing prompt payment criteria in public procurement guidelines to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Prevent or discourage companies from paying their suppliers late or imposing unreasonably long payment terms; and ■ Require contracting authorities to include terms in their contracts passing the benefits of prompt payment down their supply chain. <p style="text-align: right;">(DJEI)</p>

Vicky Crosby, TaxAssist Accountants

Availed of the JobsPlus scheme



TaxAssist Accountants is a walk-in accountancy service offering accountancy and taxation services to small businesses with no jargon and with fixed fee pricing. Vicky Crosby runs three TaxAssist offices in Ireland - Roscommon, Longford and Mullingar. Vicky, along with many other businesses was finding that the biggest overhead was staffing costs. She happened to check out what Government schemes could help. Not only did she spot JobBridge and JobsPlus but she was quick to notice that both were very complementary. Over the last three and a half years, TaxAssist has taken on four JobBridge interns giving them experience. Not only that but Vicky has in fact hired three of the four as

full-time, with the assistance of the JobsPlus scheme. Today Crosby Business Services employs seven full time staff and has one intern on a JobBridge placement.

“Having invested over €150,000 into my new company I had to look at options that were available to me as a small business for getting a team together and being able to train them,” Vicky noted. “JobBridge and JobsPlus have been a life line to my business in terms of finding the calibre of staff I need, while helping with cashflow and building up my now 3 strong offices.”

“Take for example, my most recent intern Michelle. She started off on JobBridge as an account Technician and just excelled. To say Michelle is an asset to my business and fantastic at what she does doesn’t even sum it up. So when her internship was finishing up, the JobsPlus programme meant I could make her full-time while getting some help to pay her salary. And it was all relatively straight forward in terms of application processes. JobBridge and Jobsplus are now the back bone of growing my business.”

Michelle Maye is that latest intern to be hired full-time. She explains her journey with JobsPlus and TaxAssist: “I started my JobBridge internship with the TaxAssist branch in Longford in. I had no previous experience in the area and found the internship gave me that experience I needed to pursue a career in this area. At the beginning, I did find things hard as I tried to find my feet within TaxAssist but with the help of everyone I soon began to find my place within the team. So when my internship finished, I was so chuffed when Vicky offered me a full time position. If I didn’t qualify for JobsPlus, I don’t know where I’d be now. I am very happy in TaxAssist and I am extremely thankful to Vicky for giving me this opportunity.”

About JobsPlus

One of the major disruptive reforms of the Action Plan for Jobs process in 2013 (*Action 41 and 42, Action Plan for Jobs 2013*), JobsPlus provides a financial incentive to employers who recruit employees who were long term unemployed on the Live Register. www.jobsplus.ie

To find out what Actions are there for JobsPlus this year, check out Action 101.

5. Increasing Activation of the Unemployed

Since they were launched in 2012, the Action Plan for Jobs and Pathways to Work strategies have complemented each other as twin approaches to labour demand and supply respectively. This approach, which continues into 2015, has proven to be effective in bringing about a jobs recovery. More than 143,313 people have left the live register to take up jobs in the past twelve months. This means that 36 per cent of those who were on the live register at the beginning of the twelve month period have left it to go into employment.

More than 50,000 people who were long-term unemployed at the start of 2012 have found work and unemployment has fallen from a crisis peak of over 15 per cent to 10.6 per cent now. In previous recoveries economic growth was described as jobless, not because employment did not grow but because it took a long time for this growth in employment to translate into a commensurate reduction in the numbers of people on the Live Register.

A key objective of this Government is to ensure that the increase in employment generated by the actions under this Action Plan does translate into a reduction in the number of people dependent on jobseeker payments and in particular those who are in long-term receipt of jobseeker payments. Towards this end the Government has, under Pathways to Work, developed a programme of activities to ensure that as many jobs as possible of the jobs created under this Action Plan are filled by people taken from the Live Register.

Pathways to Work sets out seventy milestones to deliver on this objective. These measures include:

- Working more closely with employers;
- Increasing the capacity of the Public Employment Service;
- Evaluating the effectiveness of labour market programmes;
- Targeting more places and opportunities for young unemployed people and those who are long term unemployed;
- Promoting employment supports; and
- Ensuring the effectiveness of referral from Intreo to further education and training.

Progress against the delivery of the Pathways to Work objectives will be reported separately, with updates on progress of the above items included in the reports on the Action Plan for Jobs. Pathways to Work can be found www.welfare.ie.

The objectives for 2015 are to:

- Roll-out the Employment and Youth Activation Charter: Employers who sign this Charter commit that at least 50 per cent of candidates considered for interview will be taken from the Live Register;
- Begin the new account management approach to employers within the Department of Social Protection. This will mean employers who interact with the Department to find recruits for their businesses will have a dedicated accounts manager to assist them;
- Roll-out JobPath, through which third-party providers with proven track records will be hired to provide additional employment services focused on the long-term unemployed.

- Continue to rollout the Youth Guarantee initiatives to support young jobseekers; and
- Introduce a Back to Work Family Dividend which will help lone parent and long-term jobseeker families to return to work.

2015 Actions

Increasing Activation of the Unemployed

127	Continue the development and reform of the State's public employment services to help ensure that the number of people on the Live Register is reduced as the economy recovers and that the labour market responds flexibly and efficiently to employment growth.	(DSP)
128	Implement the actions agreed under the Comprehensive Employment Strategy for Persons with Disabilities.	(D/Justice and Equality)
129	Participate actively in the Department of Social Protection's Work Placement Programme and the National Internship Scheme.	(D/Defence)
130	Promote and assist, as appropriate, the progression of relevant actions in National Youth Strategy which support youth employment and youth employability initiatives, including skills development and experiential learning opportunities for young people and the provision of valuable volunteer opportunities.	(DCYA)
131	Support the voluntary youth work sector in accessing the proposed new Youth Programme and the Youth Entrepreneurship Fund by facilitating links between local youth services and the Local Enterprise Offices/Microfinance Ireland.	(DCYA)
132	Progress work on implementing the EU Recommendation on Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning in consultation with relevant Government Departments and other stakeholders.	(DCYA)
133	Subject to securing the required resources, develop and roll out a Youth Employability Programme in 2015 to support youth work initiatives that increase young peoples' employability, enhance their acquisition of transversal skills and aid their preparedness and progression to employment.	(DCYA)
134	Continue to promote mobility and learning opportunities in the youth work sector and the take-up of EU funding mechanisms available such as the new Erasmus+ Programme.	(DCYA)

135

Bring forward new measures in the field of childcare supports and market activation.

(DCYA)

Leigh O'Brien & Windmill Lane Pictures

Got a job after completing a Momentum programme



Despite completing an Honours Degree in Design and a Degree in Interactive Digital Media in DIT, Leigh O'Brien had been unemployed for just over a year.

While Leigh possessed many skills, he just couldn't find a job in his chosen field of game design. He also had drive and determination, but as the years went on his confidence was dropping and he was finding that he didn't possess the high-end industry skills needed to enter this developing and growing industry.

Leigh applied for the Momentum and their Game Development Programme after hearing of the course through a radio ad. After successfully passing the

interview process, he entered the Programme in February 2013 and graduated eight months later, in September 2013.

Shortly after graduating, Leigh got the call he'd been waiting for since he first started to study digital media – after spotting an ad and working with his support team in the Momentum course, he got his 'dream job' at Windmill Lane Pictures; Ireland's leading Post Production Facility specializing in VFX for the Game, Animation and Film industries.

Here's Leigh about the Programme: "Without attending the Momentum Programme in Pulse College, I would definitely not have secured this position. Unlike any other courses I completed, Pulse gave me the technical skills in programmes like Unity, Maya, 3DS Max and After Effects that Windmill Lane, and this entire industry, looks for. No university I went previously to had constant contact with the industry. It was really noticeable that all the lecturers work in the business - I never had that before. The Programme Manager for our course was key to getting me in the door to Windmill Lane, but I had the industry skills and the confidence to win the interview. I cannot thank Pulse, and the Momentum Programme enough."

About the games industry

- The overall games sector is expected to grow from US\$59.3billion today to US\$82.4billion in 2015, a compound annual growth rate of 8.2 per cent.
- Employment has increased five-fold since 2004 with over 2,000 directly employed in the games industry alone today. This number underplays the complementary linkages that the games sector has with other related activities such as animation, film, consumer-internet and e-learning.

About Momentum

Momentum (*Action 158, Action Plan for Jobs 2014*) provides free education and training projects at certificate level for jobseekers unemployed for 12 months or more. These projects give jobseekers both training and work experience in sectors of the economy where there are job opportunities. Full and part time courses are offered in sectors including digital media, health care and social services, food production and processing.

<http://www.momentumskills.ie/>. Go to Action 17 and 18 to find out what is planned for Momentum this year.

6. Growing Irish Enterprise and Foreign Direct Investment

From the onset, the Action Plan for Jobs has pursued an export-led approach to dealing with the jobs crisis which existed at that time. The foreign earnings that accrue from the export of goods and services from firms based in Ireland provide the revenue to ensure those businesses thrive, provide the payroll to the workers they employ which in turn circulates in shops and businesses in every community, and contribute to the revenue allocated by the State to deliver vital services to our citizens. In short, increasing sales and exports was and is at the heart of what it is the Action Plan aims to achieve.

This approach has been commended by international observers, most notably the OECD in their review of the process in 2014. More importantly, the many measures taken to increase sales and exports under the three previous Plans have proven successful in terms of the value of Ireland's exports over the period. The latest available data shows that exports of Irish goods and services have risen to a record €184 billion in 2013 and we have continued to run current account surpluses over recent years. Our strong growth in goods and services exports are being driven by sectors which we have specifically targeted as part of the Action Plan for Jobs, including the pharma and manufacturing areas. All of this is a consequence of the ingenuity, talent, perseverance and drive of firms across the country, supported directly and indirectly by the State, through some of the toughest international trading conditions ever faced.

Exporting firms, supported by State agencies, are important job creators and their successes are the base upon which continued economic growth and sustainable employment creation across the country will be built. Enterprise Ireland supported companies created more than 19,000 gross new jobs in 2014, resulting in a net increase of almost 8,476 in the Enterprise Ireland client base. IDA Ireland, the Irish Government agency responsible for attracting foreign direct investment, has reported the creation of 15,012 new jobs by IDA client companies during 2014. When job losses were taken into account, the net increase in employment was 7,131, one of the highest net levels of job creation in a decade. The employment growth in these companies is directly linked to their ability to grow sales and exports. Exports in Enterprise Ireland supported companies reached €17.1 billion in 2013 and it is expected that the 2014 outcome may show further growth to €18 billion.

In 2015, the State will continue to directly and indirectly support potential and existing exporters through the suite of actions set out in this section of Action Plan for Jobs 2015, targeting the creation of new jobs and to support firms to achieve strong exports performance in 2015. Whether it is via our work to grow and embed foreign direct investment here or our actions to strengthen and promote our world-class export base, the measures outlined below will ensure that every potential and existing exporting business in every part of Ireland receives the support they need to establish and prosper.

These efforts are supported by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and its Embassy network through its close cooperation with other Government Departments and State agencies. The Export Trade Council, which is chaired by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, oversees implementation of the Government Trade, Tourism and Investment Strategy (a Review of which was published in February 2014) and works to strengthen cooperation and coordination across all Government Departments and State agencies involved in the promotion and development of trade, tourism, investment and education.

It reviews Local Market Plans which are produced annually for each of our 27 priority markets. These plans are developed by Local Market Teams, which are chaired by the Ambassador of Ireland and consist of representatives of the Embassy and State agencies that are present in the market.

The support offered by the State to exporting businesses in Ireland will be strengthened by the opening of five new Embassies and three new Consulates General in key locations across South East Asia, Europe, Africa and the Americas. These Embassies and Consulates will provide a platform for further promotion of Irish exports, investment, tourism and education.

Public procurement will continue to provide an important opportunity in the domestic market for Irish companies, with an annual spend by the Government sector of €8 billion on goods and services. Public procurement also provides an opportunity for innovative firms to win contracts which can serve as reference points for competing in overseas markets.

It is important too, that in addition to taking decisive action on an annual basis, we now look over the longer term to set out the vision for Ireland's enterprise policy over the coming decade. We will set out the overarching framework and strategic actions needed to ensure that Ireland's enterprise policy is sufficiently robust in the context of a changing competitive environment and intensified global competition for trade, investment and people in order to deliver on Government's ambition to have 2.1 million people in employment in 2018 and to ensure sustained growth over the coming decade to 2025. In 2015 this will include publication of a study on the economic opportunities and impacts, including sectoral effects, of a potential Transatlantic Trade and Investment Agreement (TTIP).

Ireland's enterprise policy will continue to be informed by independent and robust evaluations (ex-ante, interim and ex-post) as relevant to ensure ongoing appropriateness, effectiveness and efficiency.

The objectives for 2015 are to:

- Continue to implement the Government Trade, Tourism and Investment Strategy, the Africa Strategy and develop Strategies on Global Sourcing and Business Process Outsourcing;
- Develop Ireland's national enterprise policy that will set the strategic direction over the next decade to 2025 and framework for action across Government;
- Develop and implement strategies for sectors such as Education, Design and IFS;
- Publish a new IDA Ireland Strategy to grow foreign direct investment over the next 5 years;
- Develop a 2025 Agri-Food Strategy. The strategy will outline the key actions required to ensure that the agri-food sector maximises its contribution to economic growth and exports in an environmentally sustainable manner over the coming decade, building on the progress achieved under FH2020;
- Work to increase SME awareness of public procurement opportunities and identify further measures to assist public sector procurement;
- Continue to promote and advance Irish interests in multilateral trade negotiations at EU and WTO level;
- Undertake a programme of 18 overseas ministerial led trade mission and events in 2015; and

- Continue to develop the coordinated approach to international reputation-building efforts across Government.

2015 Actions

Growing Irish Enterprise and FDI	
136	Implement the Enterprise Ireland Strategy to target the creation of 13,000 new fulltime permanent jobs and to support clients to achieve €19 billion in exports in 2015. (EI)
137	Publish the Independent Study on economic opportunities and impacts, including sectoral effects of a potential Transatlantic Trade and Investment Agreement. (DJEI)
138	Potential Exporters: Hold 9 Potential Exporter Awareness Events and 9 Potential Exporter Workshops across the country and target over 700 companies to have significant engagement with the EI Potential Exporter Division. (EI)
139	Implement the Review of the Government Trade, Tourism and Investment Strategy, published in February 2014. (DFAT, DJEI with relevant Departments and agencies)
140	Continue to implement the Africa Strategy, which provides a comprehensive framework for the development and management of Ireland’s official engagement with Africa, and use such initiatives as the Africa Ireland Economic Forum to identify new opportunities for investment and trade and enable Irish-based companies to play a greater role in Africa. (DFAT, DJEI, DAFM, EI)
141	Progress implementation of the agreed Global Sourcing Strategy across Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland to increase global sourcing sales by EI client companies by €100 million over 3 years and €30 million in 2015. (EI, IDA)
142	Implement tailored mentoring programmes for the benefit of more than 300 EI clients in 2015. (EI)
143	Build on Phase One of the Pilot Industry-led clustering initiative involving fifty companies by implementing the recommendations of the clustering Review carried out in 2014. (EI)
144	Develop and implement a programme of trade missions and other trade, tourism, investment and education events focused on key target markets, including exploratory and high potential markets as defined under the Review of the Trade, Tourism and Investment Strategy. A substantial number of these missions and related events will be led at Ministerial level. (DFAT, DJEI with relevant Departments and agencies)

145	Enterprise Ireland to develop a series of collaborative initiatives to drive exports and investment in priority markets in partnership with IDA Ireland, Bord Bia, Science Foundation Ireland and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. (EI, DJEI, DFAT)
146	Implement a targeted programme to attract senior level key Inward Buyer Visits from key companies to match Irish supply capability in key sectors. (EI)
147	Publish a new 5 Year IDA Strategy to give effect to the Government's 2014 FDI Policy Statement. (IDA)
148	Target 14,000 new gross jobs yielding approximately 7,000 net new jobs in 2015. (IDA)
149	Roll out the delivery of Winning Abroad (see earlier section 3.4). (IDA)
150	Work to win another 160 new FDI investment projects in 2015. (IDA)
151	Continue to win investments from High Growth and Emerging Markets together with new forms of FDI, the focus of which will be in IDA's new strategy to be launched in Q1 2015. (IDA)
152	Establish an expert group to examine and report on recommendations to increase foreign and domestic investment in Ireland's film and TV sound stage studio infrastructure - and thereby increasing jobs - in the face of growing demand for audiovisual content across multiple platforms. (DAHG, DJEI, D/Taoiseach with relevant agencies, including IDA, EI and IFB)
153	Continue to develop the coordinated approach to international reputation-building efforts across Government, including through the regular updating of key messages on Ireland's economic progress and trade, tourism and investment strengths and their communication by Ireland's Embassy Network. (DFAT, D/Taoiseach with relevant Departments and agencies)
154	Provide advice and support to Enterprise Ireland supported companies and research institutions in the defence and security sector in the area of research and innovation (D/Defence)
155	Include the needs of family owned businesses more clearly in Enterprise Ireland Client Management Development Offering. Establish a family business cohort within the new 'Platform 4 Growth' 2015 programme to share best practice and ensure content addresses the needs of family owned businesses. (EI)

156	Implement the policies and actions outlined in the International Education Strategy.	(DES, EI)
157	Establish and implement four new market initiatives to target specific end-market opportunities matched to the Irish supply capabilities.	(EI)
158	Work to increase SME awareness of public procurement opportunities.	(EI)
159	Support Irish companies seeking to participate in procurement overseas through engagements for SMEs with International Financial Institutions.	(EI)
160	Engage with SME representative bodies, DJEI, Enterprise Ireland and Inter-trade Ireland through the SME working group to identify further measures to assist public sector procurement.	(DPER/OGP)
161	Develop metrics to assess the market during the procurement process to improve future procurement competitions.	(DPER/OGP)
162	Publish pipelines of procurement activities on www.procurement.ie to inform SMEs of opportunities that will arise during the year.	(DPER/OGP)
163	Transpose the EU Public Procurement Directive and the EU Utilities Directive.	(DPER/OGP)
164	Grow the capacity and capability of Irish enterprises to successfully tender for public procurement contracts, through the continued delivery of Meet the Buyer, Go-2-Tender, Advanced Go-2-Tender and Consortia building.	(ITI)
165	Engage with public bodies and training agencies to assist in identifying procurement opportunities that are best suited to facilitating social clauses aimed at reducing long term unemployment and improving access to training opportunities in disadvantaged areas.	(DPER)
166	Examine ways of improving the supply of innovative products and services, where appropriate, in public procurement.	(EI, DJEI in consultation with relevant Departments and agencies)
167	Develop Ireland's national enterprise policy that will set the strategic direction over the next decade to 2025 and framework for action across Government.	(DJEI)

168	Develop an overarching synthesis report encompassing the range of evaluation of agency programmes to inform and ensure continuing value for money.	(DJEI)
169	Continue to undertake independent evaluations of enterprise agency programmes and initiatives including, for example, an evaluation of the LEAN Transform programme to start in Q4 2015.	(DJEI)
170	Finalise a plan for the delivery of priority eHealth projects in the context of the overall eHealth strategy, including the roll-out of the health identifier infrastructure.	(D/Health, HSE/eHealth Ireland)
171	Take steps to establish Clinical Research Facilities (CRFs) in Dublin, Cork and Galway and provide a collaborative framework to link all CRFs by 2016.	(HRB)
172	Take steps to establish a national biobanking system and support infrastructure by 2016.	(HRB)
173	Work with IFB and other agencies to explore the capacity to expand the industry. Increase fulltime employment equivalents in the film and audiovisual sector by 1,000 jobs by supporting the Irish Film Board to fund at least 15-20 Irish feature films and developing creative co-production feature film opportunities for 5-10 creative co-productions. Overall, over 40 projects will be supported, including feature documentaries, animation, TV Drama and short films.	(DAHG, Irish Film Board)
174	Continue to support a range of Irish language arts, publishing, creative writing, training and other schemes, as well as festivals and drama companies by providing funding for existing programmes and activities.	(Foras na Gaeilge)
175	Continue to support the expansion and development of an international aviation services centre at Shannon.	(Shannon Group)
176	Explore with DJEI the development of a technical guidance service for business on standardisation and regulatory matters delivered through the Enterprise Development Agencies, Industry and Business Associations, and the Local Enterprise Office (LEO) network.	(NSAI)

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Commencing 2015 the NSAI will implement a 3 year development strategy with objectives to develop:

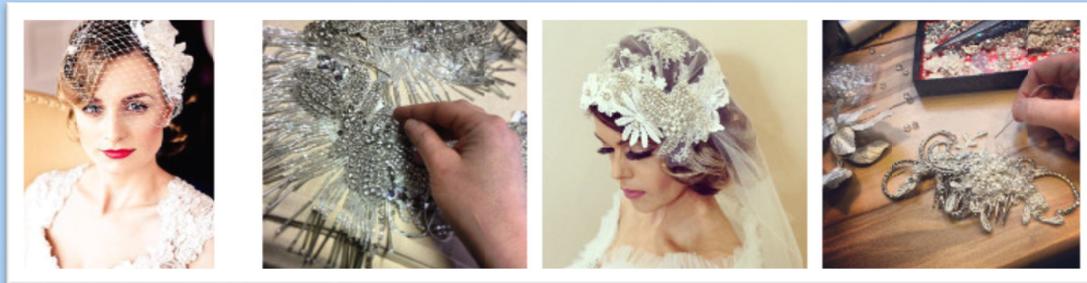
- capacity to adequately service large multinational Medical Device companies with a presence in Ireland;
- capacity to adequately service indigenous Irish companies emerging within the industry; and
- a significant contributor to the advancement of patient safety within the European Union healthcare system through timely access for patients to safe new technology Medical Devices.

(NSAI)

Willow & Wild, by Bonzie

Supported by the Local Enterprise Office network

Willow & Wild by Bonzie create hand crafted garments in Co. Waterford. Using modern technologies and centuries' old techniques, each Bonzie piece is hand crafted, using handpicked textiles that are sourced from the finest mills around the world. Each piece has intricate unique detailing, ensuring that no two pieces of Bonzie clothing are the same. They received mentorship from their Local Enterprise Office as they expanded their business.



According to Yvonne Crotty their rapid success is thanks in no small part to the assistance they received over the past two years from their Local Enterprise Office. "We would not be in the position we are today had we not received the kind support and encouragement from the Local Enterprise Office. The current economic climate is an unforgiving one but we had a shoulder to lean on throughout the initial stages of the business."

"The team at Enterprise Office are so approachable, encouraging and supportive in our entrepreneurial endeavours. From the get-go they offered mentoring support, additional training in areas that we needed to improve on, helpful and expert advice when we needed to explore new business avenues. To this day we attribute our growing brand to the support and kindness shown by the Local Enterprise Office, from the receptionist, the admin staff and up to the CEO."

"Thanks to the Enterprise Office we have been fortunate enough to receive assistance with marketing our brand and we had an opportunity to promote our work at *Showcase* the largest craft expo in Ireland where we secured a very exciting new opportunity for our Artisan Label. We were originally selected as one of the resident Artists in the purpose built Kite Design Studios. This is an exciting Collective of Local Crafters based in the heart of the newly developed Viking Quarters in Waterford City run by the Local Enterprise Office and the Waterford City Council. While Kite Design Studios was a fantastic incubator for our business in its early stages, as a result of that supportive environment we have now moved on to a studio of our own, again with the help of the Enterprise Office."

Bonzie signed a contract with the Victorian Trading Co., a US based mail order catalogue. This major step for the Waterford business has resulted in one of Bonzie's signature products being made available for sale all over the US.

<http://www.bonziedesigns.com/>

About the Local Enterprise Office network

Establishing the Local Enterprise Office network was a key action of last year's plan (Action 7, Action Plan for Jobs 2014) to help small businesses in Ireland.

More is planned for the network this year, which you can read about by going to Section 3.6 in this document, and specifically Action 99.

7. Entrepreneurship

Central Bank research shows that startup companies in the first five years of existence account for two thirds of all new jobs created in Ireland. Entrepreneurs are heroes of the economy, creating businesses, jobs and growth, and Ireland has some amazing entrepreneurs, but not nearly enough. As part of the Action Plan for Jobs, the Government committed to develop and implement a Strategy to increase the number of entrepreneurs in Ireland and thereby support thousands of extra jobs.

The Government's National Policy Statement on Entrepreneurship in Ireland was launched in October 2014 and sets out the Government's strategic objectives as a facilitator within the Irish entrepreneurship ecosystem, covering the six key elements that impact on entrepreneurs and startups, and signposts the direction which policy will take in the coming years. Under each objective we shall identify key benchmarks and develop actions with public agencies and private actors in the field to deliver continuous improvement.

7.1 Progressing the National Policy Statement on Entrepreneurship

The six key elements that make up the ecosystem for entrepreneurship in Ireland are:

- Culture, human capital and education;
- Business environment and supports;
- Innovation;
- Access to finance;
- Networks and mentoring; and
- Access to markets.

For the entrepreneurship environment to be truly effective, these six elements must be mutually reinforcing, forming a coherent whole and supporting entrepreneurs throughout the entrepreneurship lifecycle. Actions to support the entrepreneurship environment in 2015 include a pilot of a new Entrepreneur Partnering Programme scheme which is being designed for a region to match entrepreneurs with host enterprises, where they can hot-house their ideas and businesses for a period of up to one year, benefiting from the expertise and guidance of the host business. DJEI, through its agencies EI, the LEOs and IDA Ireland will seek to match experienced business leaders and their organisations in a region to support founders and early stage startups. Host businesses will be invited to participate in the programme by the IDA Ireland and EI and will be pre-screened to ensure they fit the needs of founders and startup businesses. Please see associated Disruptive Reform entitled Increasing Entrepreneurial Activity in Section 2. In addition to the Disruptive Reform and horizontal initiatives, sector specific programmes will be progressed in 2015, For example, the successful Food Academy initiative to support and nurture start up food businesses. Food Academy has two aspects, Food Academy start and advanced. For Food Academy start, Bord Bia have trained and provided material to the network of 31 LEOs who interact directly with smaller companies. Food Academy advanced is run by Bord Bia in conjunction with retail outlets.

The specific objectives for 2015 are to:

- Progress the actions from the National Entrepreneurship Policy;
- Utilise the New Frontiers Programme optimally to support emerging entrepreneurs;
- Continue to promote LEO's as one stop shops for small business; and
- Develop an action programme of support for pre-investment HPSUs.

2015 Actions

Culture, Human Capital and Education	
178	Broaden and deepen work to support entrepreneurship in schools. (DES)
179	Examine the Entrepreneurship in the Schools activity in each LEO area and develop strategies to increase participation and impact. (EI, LEOs, DJEI)
180	Continue to support female entrepreneurship via promotional and support programmes. (EI)
181	Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur: Building on the successful launch and response to the IBYE (Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur) Programme during 2014, assess the impact and outcomes and develop an appropriate 2015 Programme. (EI/LEOs)
182	Student Enterprise Award: Building on the successful 3 rd Level Student Enterprise Award Programme target a greater number of student participants (Target 500) and enhance the quality of the applications contributing to a greater Entrepreneurial spirit in this student cohort. (EI)
183	Support entrepreneurship by training more scientists in SFI supported research teams to launch their own businesses and supporting translation of research to commercial opportunities. (SFI)
184	Develop a new, disruptive, societal impact scheme including public consultation on topics to be funded. (SFI)
185	Map relevant entrepreneurship activities in higher education institutions as part of the overall strategy for higher education engagement with enterprise and embed entrepreneurship support within the HEI System Performance Framework. (DES, HEA)

186	Develop an enterprise engagement strategy for higher education to include entrepreneurial education as an important part of the national framework for enterprise engagement.	(HEA)
187	Set out performance indicators and measures to benchmark entrepreneurial activity in Irish higher education.	(DES, HEA)
188	Work with the Department of Social Protection to promote the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance, and support these startups with appropriate interventions e.g. mentoring, micro-loans.	(EI, LEOs, DSP)
Business Environments and Supports		
189	Support 130 new Entrepreneurs via the New Frontiers programme.	(EI)
190	Provide business development and financial supports to 185 High potential and early stage Startups.	(EI)
191	Each LEO will identify how it can facilitate hubs where startups can be established in a supportive network before moving on to accommodate for the next cohort of emerging enterprises. A key approach will be to build on the 100+ Community Enterprise Centres across the country by implementing local protocols to ensure the LEOs are fully integrated into the enterprise development plans of each county.	(EI, LEOs)
192	The Centre of Excellence in Enterprise Ireland will develop a competitive fund to promote innovation within and across LEO's to enhance the support environment for startups, with a particular emphasis on regions that have struggled to achieve employment growth. Enterprise Ireland will also publish a report each year on the startup environment across the LEOs network, identifying areas of excellence and areas for improvement and innovation.	(EI, LEOs)
193	Under the new pilot Entrepreneur Partnering Programme, match founders and startups with leading enterprises in a region, which will act as hosts and mentors for up to one year to bring budding businesses to the next level of success.	(EI, LEOs, IDA, DJEI)
194	Support a further cohort of new food entrepreneurs under Food Works 3 and promote market outlets for food start-up companies.	(Bord Bia, EI, Teagasc)

195	Develop a joint strategy for the positioning of Ireland to take advantage of new opportunities in the Electronic Payments sector, so as to support innovation, entrepreneurship and attract mobile investment.	(EI/IDA)
196	Examine the Advisory Group on Small Business (AGSB) recommendations from December 2014 and report back to the Group.	(DJEI)
Innovation		
197	Continue to promote the Immigrant Investor Programme (IIP) and Startup Entrepreneur Programme (STEP) to leverage the potential of migrant entrepreneurs and investors.	(D/Justice and Equality and others)
198	Expand the international technology sourcing initiative to a new overseas location of high value intellectual property which can serve the basis of new spinout company opportunities in Ireland.	(EI)
199	Develop an action programme of support for pre-investment HPSUs.	(EI)
200	Develop an action programme of support for scaling post-investment HPSUs.	(EI)
201	Promote Ireland internationally as a startup location and attract 15 new overseas startups to establish their business here.	(EI)
202	Drive the establishment of 15 research spin-out companies that are of EI HPSU quality.	(EI)
203	Devise an implementation plan following recommendations from the evaluation of European Space Agency Membership. Target 5 new high performance entrant companies for European Space Agency (ESA) engagement.	(EI)
204	In collaboration with the European Space Agency manage the initialisation of the European Space Agency (ESA) Incubator.	(EI)
205	SFI will target 34 licences and 6 spinouts from the twelve SFI Research Centres in 2015.	(SFI)

206	Initiate scoping study for development of a Coastal Resource Hub & Marine Innovation Park at Páirc na Mara, Cill Chiaráin, Co. Galway.	(ÚnaG)
207	Develop advanced property solutions for innovative companies seeking to move from the incubator phase to market. Units will be suitable for specific sectors, including Life Sciences & Food as well as further property solutions for Business Support Services and Creative Enterprises.	(ÚnaG)
Access to Finance (see Chapter 4 also)		
208	Increase the usage of Equity financing by SMEs	(DJEI, D/Finance, Revenue, EI, LEOs)
209	As announced in Budget 2015, extend the existing 3-year tax relief for new startup companies until end-2015.	(D/Finance)
210	Launch 6 Competitive Start Funds to support 85 Startups.	(EI)
211	Build on the success achieved to date on the Competitive Feasibility Funds and launch 4 targeted funds during the year in the West, Midlands, MidEast, and one sectoral fund.	(EI)
212	Competitive Start Fund (CSF) for the Agri-Sector: Following the launch of the Competitive Feasibility for the Agri-Sector in September 2014, explore launching a Competitive Start Fund to further support potential startup businesses in this sector.	(EI)
Networks and Mentoring		
213	Increase the level of startup support in Ireland by supporting commercially managed accelerators.	(EI)
214	A Working Group will implement reforms in mentoring.	(DJEI)
Access to Markets		
215	Continue the successful Food Academy initiative (which is run in conjunction with retail outlets) to nurture startup food businesses through workshop style training and assistance with routes to market.	(Bord Bia)

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Implement a structured programme to support new HPSU's to access new overseas markets and customers.

(EI)

7.2 The Startup Gathering – 5 Days – 5 Cities – 5 Industries

A national week of events promoting entrepreneurship and showcasing Ireland's startup sector to entrepreneurs from all over the globe including the Irish diaspora, with the message 'Start, Scale, Succeed from Ireland'.

'The Startup Gathering' is a new initiative which will be led by the not-for-profit organisation Startup Ireland as a key building block towards making Ireland a global startup hub by 2020. The Startup Gathering is an ambitious project which at its heart is 'of the startup sector, by the startup sector and for the startup sector in Ireland'. It builds on the success of initiatives such as 'The Gathering' and 'The Wild Atlantic Way' in a sustainable, regionally balanced way.

To help make Ireland the best place in the world to establish/locate a high impact startup, five days of events will take place annually in the second week of October (from October 5th to 10th in 2015) in each of Ireland's cities (Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford) with a focus on the industry strengths present in each city. Using the successful model of 'The Gathering' the week will leverage and augment many existing events and projects that are themed around entrepreneurship, startups and existing industry clusters present in each city.

The five industries will be those 'strength in depth' sectors currently located in Ireland namely ICT, Medical Devices, BioPharma, Agri/Food and Business Services.

The goal for the Startup Gathering 2015 is to facilitate in excess of 50 events and networking opportunities nationally during the week for at least 15,000 members of the Irish public and international visitors thereby creating the conditions for the creation of at least 2,500 new jobs in the following 12 months.

This will involve:

Engaging the Nation

Through a national call for events and projects in the area of entrepreneurship, startup support and innovation which will be issued in February by Startup Ireland. Proposals fitting the criteria for the Startup Gathering will be added to the online schedule. The week of the Startup Gathering will open with the first annual conference for Ireland's startup sector (comprising startups and their supporters in Research Centres, Tech Transfer Offices, incubation/coworking space providers, commercial attaches at embassies, professional services providers (accountants, lawyers, patent agents), innovation managers at large corporates, investors, State enterprise support agencies and mentor/angel investors).

While the Startup Gathering will seek to complement the building of world class entrepreneurial hubs in Ireland's cities, it will also seek to achieve a greater regional spread of such hubs by inviting the regions to submit projects to be included in the week of The Startup Gathering. These 5 Regions will be West, Midlands, South West, South East and North East.

Sample events planned in each city for the following days include Startup Weekends, Hackers/Founders team building events, “Meet Startup Communities” open days in each city, Startup Grind Meetups celebrating local role models, a national ‘Startup Demo Day’ where national and international startups can pitch to Ireland’s top accelerators, investors, mentors and corporates, both national and international, Entrepreneur Career Fairs and Diaspora Networking Events. Existing annual state supported entrepreneurship and innovation events and ‘Entrepreneur Career Fairs’ and ‘Diaspora Networking Events’ will be aligned with the timing of Startup Gathering week where possible and appropriate.

Education plays an essential role in shaping attitudes and culture from the primary school level up. A key event of the week will be ‘The Entrepreneur in Your Community’ visits by role models to classrooms across the country. The week will end with a State Dinner on the theme of ‘Why invest in Ireland’s startup sector’ hosted by the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise & Innovation. The international invitees will be from strategic target areas such as venture capitalism, corporate venturing, corporate backed accelerators, intern programme placement managers.

Building on the relationships and networks created by ‘The Gathering 2013’, Startup Ireland will leverage its stakeholder partnerships and its national and international network to coordinate and promote the Startup Gathering, with support from relevant state agencies. Irish startups need an international perspective from inception. The Startup Gathering will bring numerous startups and investors from around the world to Ireland thereby helping Irish startups form international contacts and partnerships thereby maximising their potential to sell internationally and create jobs in Ireland.

Diaspora Startup Fund

Encouraging emigrants with good startup ideas to return to build their business from Ireland will be a key theme of the Startup Gathering. Startup Ireland will lead an international Kickstarter campaign to raise a ‘Diaspora Startup Fund’ to support the flights to Ireland of 50 Irish emigrants for the Startup Gathering to investigate pursuing their startup opportunity back in Ireland.

Maintaining Momentum towards Ireland become a global startup hub

The medium term impact sought from the Startup Gathering is the creation of a significant improvement in the framework conditions supporting high impact entrepreneurship in Ireland. To facilitate this, a complementary set of mutually reinforcing actions (namely the Startup Gathering census of Ireland’s startup sector, website resources for entrepreneurs and supporters and the Startup Gathering annual survey of Ireland’s startup sector) are planned by Startup Ireland in conjunction with the Startup Gathering initiative to maximise the impact of the Startup Gathering in an all year round way. This integrated approach of mutually complementary actions will yield substantial future dividends for Ireland’s startup sector.

While this event will be led by Startup Ireland and have key involvement from the private sector, the involvement and active support of many State bodies and agencies will be fundamental to the success of The Startup Gathering.

The Startup Gathering initiative will support a number of strategic objectives which are stated in the National Entrepreneurship Policy Statement. The Key objectives of The Startup Gathering are as follows:

- To help build a diverse pipeline of indigenous and international high growth startups to attract international Venture Capitalists to locate in Ireland;

- To help attract international high impact startups to locate to Ireland and scale up from here leveraging the service providers available in Ireland;
- In an increasingly competitive international environment for securing startup hub status the Startup Gathering will help differentiate Ireland internationally thereby increasing international inward engagement with Ireland’s startup sector;
- To promote linkages and increase partner opportunities for Ireland’s state supported Research Centres;
- The Startup Gathering Census will produce an online internationally visible map that will increase the international visibility of Ireland’s startup sector and serve as the year round guide for the Startup Gathering festival;
- The Startup Gathering National Survey will be presented to DJEI and will identify any obstacles to Ireland becoming a global startup hub and suggest constructive solutions to help improve framework conditions for entrepreneurship in Ireland;
- The Startup Gathering website will provide a signposting of resources and supports available to entrepreneurs in Ireland thereby improving accessibility to Ireland’s innovation system;
- To help raise the profile of Ireland’s startup sector in the international media through the creation of quality content concerning events that take place during the Startup Gathering;
- To help strengthen Ireland’s talent base and entrepreneurial networks to help promote and stimulate a strong culture of high quality entrepreneurship;
- To promote Ireland as a destination for startup tourism with international delegations coming from around the world for the week of the Startup Gathering;
- To create culture change by providing the opportunity for students to learn by doing by participating in relevant events and meeting international entrepreneurs; and
- To attract ICT professionals from around the world that are interested in the startup opportunities offered by Ireland as a hub for technology startups.

Startup Gathering	
217	Develop and rollout the successful delivery of the Startup Gathering 2015. (Startup Ireland with support from DJEI and other relevant Departments and agencies)
218	Encourage potential high growth startups and mobile entrepreneurs to come to Ireland during the 5 days for the events that are aligned with their industry sector. (Startup Ireland and relevant Departments and agencies e.g. EI, IDA and D/FAT)

Eamon Keane, Xpreso

Overall winner of Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur Competition



A delayed delivery of food was the beginnings of a start-up for Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur Eamon Keane from Dublin. Now, his company Xpreso has 8 full-time staff and, with seeding funding secured, can maintain 10 staff members for the next 12 to 18 months. Here's Eamon about how his company came about and how we found the IBYE competition.

It all started with a pizza...

"The idea for Xpreso comes about when I was waiting for a take away pizza I'd ordered online and, an hour later, there was still no confirmation the take away had received the order, I couldn't track the driver and at this point I was pretty hungry. So I decided I wanted to solve that problem by allowing you to see which take away is busy and order from the one which will arrive in the shortest time. We started building software to allow you to predict before you order what time it will arrive and track it in real time. And so we were building that software when we actually saw a better opportunity in the middle of last year in the courier sector."

The journey to being Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur

"The first round was a business plan which was useful, especially for companies starting out. Then there was a short 15 minute pitch for the South Dublin LEO; we won that and then there was a very good day with pitch training which allowed us to prepare our live pitch for the final.

"It was surprising to see the breadth of good young entrepreneurs out there that you wouldn't necessarily see. A lot of people around the country who just wouldn't actually get any attention and I suppose now you meet them you're like, that's pretty impressive.

"Once we won, I couldn't stop smiling for a couple of hours! The fact that we're now going to be adopted by Google is going to be great, I think we could have some good areas of collaboration with them. And the €50,000 prize fund we've won will allow us to hire another developer to accelerate our product development. I'm very appreciative of this opportunity."

What's next

"We currently employ 8 people and we've another starting in January so basically with seed funding we're about to secure it will allow us to maintain staff of 10 people for 12-18 months and then we'll expand beyond that if we get more traction or get more funding, basically move quickly so that the opportunity doesn't pass us by."

About Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur competition

Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur competition (*Action 10, Action Plan for Jobs 2014*) aims to encourage and support entrepreneurship as a career choice and to encourage the development of new innovative businesses by Ireland's young entrepreneurs. With over 1,110 young entrepreneurs entering in 2014, this competition is to return in 2015. See Action 181.

8. Competitiveness

In terms of making Ireland the best small country in which to do business, we are continuing to make progress as a country in improving our international competitiveness. As set out earlier since 2011, Ireland's international competitiveness rankings in both the IMD and WEF competitiveness reports has improved – from 24th to 15th in the IMD's World Competitiveness Yearbook, and from 29th to 25th in the WEF Global Competitiveness Report. In the World Bank's "Doing Business 2015" report, Ireland is ranked 13th out of 189 countries. The Report "Observatory on Europe" - Improving European Integration and Competitiveness for Growth reports Ireland to be ranked 5th of the 28 EU Member States in terms of competitiveness, up two places since 2013. Notwithstanding this progress, APJ 2015 sets out a broad range of actions to further improve Ireland's competitive position.

The ongoing research of the NCC is central in this regard. The NCC recently outlined its priorities for Ireland's competitiveness in its annual policy report, Ireland's Competitiveness Challenge 2014. This report, which is produced under the Action Plan for Jobs 2014, outlines the Council's view of the main competitiveness issues confronting the business sector in Ireland over the medium term, and sets out a series of policy responses required to address these challenges. The report finds that while recent competitiveness improvements leave Ireland well placed to take advantage of any upturn in global markets, we remain vulnerable on a number of fronts.

In addition, the NCC's submission to the Action Plan for Jobs is an important input into the devising of the Plan. In this year's submission the Council notes that the Plan focuses primarily on shorter-term, tangible actions (i.e. actions that can commence, or be delivered upon, over the next 12 months). The Council has, therefore, built on its analysis to identify a range of prioritised short-term actions, which can build the foundations for our longer-term international competitiveness. The Council focuses on major themes central to the job-creation objective of the Action Plan for Jobs, including addressing cost competitiveness, investing in economic infrastructure, enhancing our skills base, developing our enterprise base, and improving access to finance.

This APJ addresses these issues across the entirety of this Plan not just in this section. For example the National Talent Drive Disruptive Reform directly addresses our skills base, while the SBCI Disruptive Reform and Chapter 4 deal with access to finance issues. Nevertheless, this section sets out some specifically targeted actions to address competitiveness concerns such as reducing red tape, institutionalising the drive for competitiveness, investment in infrastructure to underpin economic growth, enhancing firm level productivity, decreasing the costs of doing business, and the role of Corporate Social Responsibility in enhancing competitiveness.

For deeper analysis of Ireland's performance in key areas, why they are important for Ireland's competitiveness and where the NCC believe Ireland needs to get to in the medium to longer term, please refer the NCC publications *Ireland's Competitiveness Scorecard 2014* and *Ireland's Competitiveness Challenge 2014*.

8.1 Easier to do Business

In many respects, improving the ease of doing business offers the greatest potential to enhance our competitiveness, as improving administrative processes and practices is generally within the control of public bodies and does not necessarily require investment. In fact, streamlining administrative process for businesses can simultaneously reduce overheads for public bodies and simplify engagement with businesses for officials.

Notwithstanding an improvement in Ireland's performance in international competitiveness rankings, the NCC has highlighted the fact that Ireland's relative cost competitiveness is now deteriorating vis-à-vis our main competitors. The NCC has also highlighted the need for continued structural reforms to ensure that improvements in competitiveness are sustained. Thus the Government has agreed that building on the actions already underway, Departments will commit to improving the ease of doing business as part of APJ 2015.

The view has been expressed that the full impact of actions taken to date to improve the ease of doing business has not been realised because firms are not as aware as they could be of the impact of such steps. The Actions taken by the Public Sector to date show the real and tangible benefits to companies from public bodies reducing the administrative burden on businesses. The cross-Departmental project to reduce the administrative burden on business by 25 per cent is estimated so far to have produced potential overall savings of €317 million per annum for businesses. This highlights the merits of focusing on improving the environment for businesses, particularly in their engagement with public bodies. In 2015, for example, the implementation of the new postcode system will improve the ease of businesses interaction with public bodies, as well as their own operations through:

- Delivery of improved efficiencies with regards to logistics (including emergency service response);
- Improved efficiency and accuracy of internal business processes as a result of improved accuracy and consistency of databases across public and private sectors;
- Better planning and analysis capabilities across public and private sectors; and
- Facilitating improved efficiencies and quality improvements in the mail sector.

It has been estimated that the cumulative impact of the actions set out below will be to simplify over half a million interactions between the State and firms in 2015. For example the new post code and job-matching systems have the potential to positively impact on more than 180,000 firms each, the changes to business surveys set out below can improve more than 85,000 business interactions, the new e-services to be delivered for motor taxation and financial statements can improve almost 40,000 interactions, and the consolidation of legislation can enhance the administrative system for up to 45,000 users. Overall, it is by taking such small, sensible steps across the public sector that we can continually improve the operating environment for hundreds of thousands of employers across the country, making business easier, cutting costs, and enhancing the environment for job creation.

2015 Actions

Take steps to reduce the red tape for over half a million business interactions in 2015

219	Roll out the new National Post Code system which will improve logistical efficiency, the accuracy of databases across both the public and private sector and planning and analysis capabilities in both sectors. (DCENR)
220	Develop / procure a new employer vacancy and job-matching system. (DSP)

New e-Services to Make Business Easier

221	Incorporate provision in the forthcoming Planning Bill to allow planning authorities and An Bord Pleanála to accept electronic planning applications and appeals, and also to deal with such applications and appeals by electronic means. (DECLG)
222	Introduce an end-to-end online application system for environmental licences at EPA. (DECLG)
223	Introduce an on-line Private Security Authority licence renewal and payment facility for businesses. (D/Justice and Equality)
224	Move to an e-process for insurers to notify of motor insurance policies that are cancelled prior to their expiry, where current volumes are 72,000 and are paper-based. (DTTAS)
225	Roll out the mandatory filing of financial statements that accompany tax returns inline eXtensible Business Reporting Language (iXBRL) (Revenue)
226	Improve computerised applications and payment systems in the new Rural Development Programme to reduce compliance burden for farmers. (DAFM)
227	Increase level of online applications and computerised applications and payment systems to reduce compliance burden for farmers from 56 per cent to in excess of 60 per cent for 2014 Single Payment Scheme applications. (DAFM)
228	Further encourage e-submissions for the Annual Employment Survey (AES) and Annual Business Survey of Economic Impact (ABSEI) over the upcoming survey cycle. (DJEI)

229	Develop and introduce new e-filing functionality in the designs area which will make it easier for business to apply to register industrial designs in Ireland and will be in line with best international practice.	(DJEI, Patents Office)
230	Develop an e-learning module, and work directly with SMEs on their chemicals exposure assessments and marketing.	(HSA)
231	Extend the number of HSA health and safety e-learning modules and increase user numbers, providing more cost effective solutions to the training of employees, managers and students.	(HSA)
232	Develop an interface with the NTA to supply the supporting evidence electronically to enable small public service vehicles (taxi, hackney and limousines) to be taxed online.	(DTTAS, NTA)
Legislative Change to Cut Red Tape		
233	Existing maternity, adoption, parental and carer's leave legislation will be consolidated into the Family Leave Bill. This will enable both employers and employees to access just one piece of legislation and also ensure as far as possible a consistent approach to such leaves.	(D/Justice and Equality)
234	Revoke outdated Dangerous Substances legislation and replace it with a streamlined, lower cost and enterprise friendly system for the licensing of petroleum storage and dispensing facilities. This should help stimulate the economy by providing certainty to those seeking to invest in new or upgraded facilities.	(HSA, DJEI, DECLG)
Cutting the Compliance Burden and Streamlining Processes		
235	Streamline the application procedures for Fire Safety Certificates and Disability Access Certificates as required under the Building Control Regulations, in the interests of efficient administration and furthering Government policy to make Ireland a better place to do business.	(DECLG)
236	Further develop the Building Control Management System (BCMS).	(DECLG)
237	Review the operation of the Building Control Amendment Regulations 2014 (SI No. 9 of 2014) after 12 months of operation and report with recommendations on matters arising.	(DECLG)
238	Use the HSA Chemicals' Helpdesk which is focused toward SME support to offer a broader array of supports including hands-on advice.	(HSA)

239	Extend BeSMART to the construction and agriculture sectors, facilitating the planned employment growth in these sectors by reducing the administrative cost of compliance and making a real impact, on reducing accidents, increasing compliance but also cost savings.	(HSA)
240	Provide information to increase firms' ease of doing business in ecodesign and compliance.	(DCENR)
241	Further streamline cost of meat inspection service where costs have already reduced from €42 million in 2008 to around €28 million in 2013.	(DAFM)
242	A Memorandum of Understanding covering enhanced data cooperation between Revenue and the CSO to produce wider and deeper statistical analyses will reduce the administrative burden on businesses arising from CSO surveys.	(Revenue, CSO)
243	Move the Road Transport Operator licensing appeals process from the District Court to an independent Appeals Officer, to cut down on time delays and decrease costs.	(DTTAS)
244	Create a national IT based Road Management and Utility System, which when deployed will deliver: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A streamlined road opening licence application processes; ▪ Significant potential for cost reductions both for local authorities and industry; ▪ More efficient rollout of utility infrastructure including broadband; and ▪ More efficient road management. 	(DTTAS, RMO, LGMA, LAs)
245	Progress the development of e-licensing systems in areas such as archaeological excavation licensing and wildlife permits. These will improve service to both business and the general public.	(DAHG)

8.2 Institutionalising the Drive for Competitiveness

A central tenet of successive Action Plans has been ensuring that we never again take our competitiveness for granted. The Government has already taken steps to strengthen the institutional arrangements which support competitiveness. For example, the Government has put in place a formal structure to ensure that all official Government decisions are analysed for any potential impacts on competitiveness before they are made. The Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation further strengthened the mandate of the National Competitiveness Council, appointed key industry figures to the Council, expanded its sectoral reach and tasked it with inputting to the Competitiveness section of the Action Plan for Jobs (see above).

As part of APJ 2014, led by the Taoiseach, Government undertook to focus on competitiveness in all areas of economic activity. This is aimed at enhancing Ireland's competitiveness, particularly in the area of costs, and achieving a top-five international competitiveness ranking, making Ireland the best small country in which to do business and creating the jobs we need. The outcome of that process is evident across this Plan most notably in the actions committed to cutting red tape and make doing business easier. Notwithstanding recent competitiveness gains this focus by Government will continue in 2015 under this year's Action Plan.

2015 Actions

Institutionalising the Drive for Competitiveness	
246	<p>Following on from the action in 2014 to institutionalise the drive for competitiveness, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Recovery and Jobs, and other Cabinet Committees as appropriate, will continue to monitor progress on competitiveness issues identified by the National Competitiveness Council and others and consider further actions to improve Ireland's international competitiveness and consider initiatives to make it easier to do business in Ireland. The Cabinet Committee(s) will be supported by the relevant Senior Officials Group and the APJ Monitoring Committee in this work.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(D/Taoiseach, All Departments)</p>
247	<p>Benchmark key business costs and publish a report highlighting areas where Irish enterprise costs are out of line with key competitors.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(NCC)</p>

8.3 Infrastructure Investment to Underpin Employment Growth

The NCC assessment is that our infrastructure still lags other countries and recommend that expenditure levels mirror that of comparable countries. The NCC highlight in particular the importance of investment in telecommunications, transport, energy and waste management. The fiscal outlook for 2015 is better than in previous years. Ireland's economic recovery is well under way, which is strengthening our tax receipts and reducing the expenditure pressures of the Live Register as increasing numbers of people move into employment. The combined effect of these positive developments means that for the first time since 2009 the Budget no longer involves a cut to the overall level of spending. In October the Government published its Comprehensive Expenditure Report 2015 – 2017 setting out expenditure allocations and measures for 2015, and the expenditure ceilings for 2016 and 2017.

The Government has used the opportunity to hold overall spending steady and make some targeted increases in areas of priority. As can be seen from the table below, over €3.6 billion will be invested by the State in capital projects over the timeframe of Action Plan for Jobs 2015. This investment will be across government, in support of social and economic infrastructure that will support direct employment through construction related activity, and indirect employment through competitiveness-enhancing projects, as well as making Ireland a better place to live and work.

Over the next three years, public expenditure policy and management will continue to focus on how to best use resources and, in parallel with both the *Action Plan for Jobs, Pathways to Work* and other strategies, will be important to support sustainable economic and social progress.

Investment Area	€ million
Agriculture, Food & the Marine	198
Arts, Heritage & the Gaeltacht	62
Children & Youth Affairs	35
Communications, Energy & Natural Resources	89
Defence	66
Education & Skills Group	568
Environment, Community & Local Government	494
Finance Group	24
Foreign Affairs & Trade	5
Health Group	382
Jobs, Enterprise & Innovation	489
Justice Group	107
Public Expenditure & Reform	137
Social Protection	25
Transport, Tourism & Sport	938
Total Gross Capital Investment in 2015	€3,619 million

Great Place to Live and Work

Such investment in capital projects can have an immediate employment impact by way of jobs in the construction sector and related activity, as well as supporting the longer term competitiveness of the economy. In addition, much of this capital spend will help make Ireland a better place in which to live and work. For example, in 2015 we will:

- Invest €530 million in capital funding in 2015 which includes the delivery of an additional 16,000 permanent school places for primary students and 3,000 permanent school places for second level students. The investment will also support the provision of enhanced or replacement facilities for 2,000 primary school students and 4,000 second level students and the advancement of a range of projects in the higher education sector, including the DIT Grangegorman project. It is estimated that the allocation of €530 million will support 4,500 direct and 900 indirect jobs in 2015.

- Invest €382 million in capital funding in 2015, which includes provision for the continued development of the five priority projects, - the Children's Hospital, the development of a replacement mental health hospital at the Portrane campus, the National Plan for Radiation Oncology, the relocation of the National Maternity Hospital Holles St to the St. Vincent's University Hospital campus, and the primary care infrastructure programme and a considerable number of smaller health care infrastructure projects across the country.
- Invest €107 million in capital funding, which includes the refurbishment of the Mountjoy prison and provides associated work training facilities, the completion of the building of the new prison in Cork, the development and refurbishment of seven courthouses and a range of smaller works on other courthouses, and also commence with the development and building of three new Garda Divisional HQ's at Kevin Street, Dublin; Galway and Wexford.
- Invest €870 million in land transport capital funding and €414 million current funding to support necessary key ongoing maintenance and renewal of the existing land transport network, minor investment to increase capacity to address congestion in our cities, most notably LUAS Cross City in Dublin and other low-cost public and sustainable transport improvements, and a resumption on a small-scale of building additional road capacity, which will begin to address congestion issues emerging and seek to maintain the competitiveness gains made through past investment.
- Invest €42 million in Sport, including support for the development of a National Indoor Arena at the National Sports Campus.
- Invest €17.35 million in Tourism including provision for further improvements of our product on the Wild Atlantic Way continuing the improvement of discovery and signature points as well as the development of other tourism projects such as Spike Island, the Kilkenny Medieval Mile, Killarney House and the Dublin Heritage Trail.
- Invest €62 million in capital funding, which includes the development of a permanent exhibition space and interpretative centre at the GPO, the development of visitor facilities at Teach an Phiarsaigh, Ros Muc and other investments as part of the Ireland 2016 programme, the refurbishment of the National Gallery, support for the film and audiovisual industry and job creation and maintenance in the Gaeltacht.

8.4 Enhancing Firm-level Productivity

In the long run, an economy's productivity performance is the ultimate determinant of success and productivity offers significant potential to enhance competitiveness and living standards as it allows for sustainable pay increases without eroding cost competitiveness.

Irish productivity levels improved considerably between 2008 and 2013 with average annual growth of 2.6 per cent in GDP terms. In GNP terms, average annual growth of 1.85 per cent was recorded. GDP productivity levels now exceed the OECD-32 average, although in GNP terms they continue to remain slightly below average. While it is encouraging to note that Ireland is one of the few OECD countries to demonstrate positive total-factor productivity since 2010, tackling barriers to investment in high growth sectors is vital to support real and sustainable productivity growth leading to increased employment.

The ramping up of world trade as we emerge from the global economic crisis presents the potential for Ireland's productivity performance to be boosted by the increased competition and the diffusion of technology and skills.

However, a range of domestic challenges remain to be tackled to ensure Ireland can achieve its productivity potential, for example enhancing the weak growth levels in net capital stock particularly with regard to investment in machinery and equipment. A National Step Change in Manufacturing initiative was launched in 2014 to help place Ireland's manufacturing sector at the forefront internationally and: improve competitiveness, productivity and innovation; improve connections to the customer and expansions into new markets; and to engage in new ways of working. To further assist this goal the IDA will launch a new programme to support transformation and productivity improvement in the sector with funding of €1.5 million in 2015.

The objectives for 2015 are to:

- Develop the management capability of Irish enterprises; and
- Encourage adoption of ICT to enhance firm level productivity.

2015 Actions

Enhancing Firm Level Productivity	
248	Support 760 participants on short course Management Development Programmes and 185 on long course Management Development Programmes. (EI)
249	Complete the pilot Platform 4 Growth online learning management development programme involving 100 companies and roll out a revised offering to participants in 2015. (Numbers will be subject to analysis of the Pilot). (EI)
250	Provide Innovation 4 Growth programme to 15 companies in 2015. (EI)
251	To support the ongoing growth and transformation of foreign subsidiaries in Ireland provide IDA clients with access to significant Enterprise Ireland Management Development Programmes. (IDA, EI)
252	Establish a Working Group to produce proposals aimed at firms in Ireland maximising the advantages of Irish, European or International Standards and Certification in order to strengthen their management capability and international competitiveness. (NSAI)

253	To support Construction Sector Productivity, implement a Building Information Modelling (BIM) staged development programme to support companies advancing to Level-2-BIM capability leading to increased business performance, productivity and competitiveness improvements and facilitate access to emerging international opportunities.	(EI)
254	Embed graduates in international markets for Enterprise Ireland clients to help them to internationalise and grow their business in new or existing markets through the Graduates 4 International Growth Programme (G4IG).	(EI)

8.5 Supporting Competitiveness through Corporate Social Responsibility

In the post-recession period, there has been an increased awareness amongst businesses and their customers of the importance of enterprises acting in a responsible manner. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is concerned with the impacts an enterprise has on its stakeholders, the environment, and the community in which it operates. Increasingly, good CSR practices are distinguishing the best companies from their competitors by the manner in which they engage with their customers, suppliers, employees and local communities.

In its *Competitiveness Challenge 2014*, the NCC addressed the issues of trust, social capital, Corporate Social Responsibility and corporate governance, and the role that these factors play in the competitiveness agenda. The Council points out in its report that while trust is intangible, it is an important international currency. A reputation as a secure and responsible location in which to do business is central to competitiveness.

Customers and prospective employees are more conscious than ever of the ethical record of companies. 40 per cent of job seekers read a company's sustainability report, and graduates increasingly cite a company's CSR policy as a factor in determining their employer of choice. For companies seeking to attract skilled and knowledgeable workers, CSR is no longer an optional "add-on", but is becoming a necessity for larger companies, in particular, to compete in the war for talent.

As part of the 2014 Action Plan for Jobs, the Government published its first National Plan on Corporate Social Responsibility - Good for Business, Good for the Community. A Stakeholder Forum was established to progress the objectives of the Plan and the vision that Ireland will be recognised as a Centre of Excellence for responsible and sustainable business practice through the adoption and implementation of best practice in CSR in enterprises and organisations as widely as possible.

The 2015 Action Plan will build on the progress made in 2014 and we will continue to raise the profile of CSR as a means of improving competitiveness at enterprise level while also making a meaningful contribution to the communities in which businesses operate.

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Through the CSR Stakeholder Forum and its sub-groups, progress the objectives of the National Plan on CSR, and specifically:

- Develop an awareness campaign to increase awareness of CSR and its value to business and to society;
- Encourage enterprises to develop and implement CSR policies and practices;
- Develop CSR resources tailored to the need of SMEs; and
- Develop a series of actions to anchor CSR in the public sector.

(DJEI, CSR Stakeholder Forum)

8.6 Decreasing the Cost of Doing Business

Generating sustainable broad based export-led growth is essential to rebuilding the Irish economy. To achieve such growth, Ireland's international competitiveness must be maintained and enhanced relative to our key competitors. Improved cost competitiveness makes Ireland more attractive to foreign investors to base and develop their operations, and allows Irish firms to compete more effectively in foreign markets and in our home market. More broadly, a reduced cost base can help to create a virtuous circle between the costs of living, wage expectations and cost competitiveness.

Ireland's cost base has improved across a range of metrics over recent years. This has made Irish firms more competitive internationally and made Ireland a more attractive location for firms to base their operations in. However, despite these improvements, Ireland remains a high cost location for a range of key business inputs and addressing Ireland's international cost competitiveness must, therefore, remain a key economic priority for Government.

The trends evident in the Harmonised Competitiveness Indicators indicate that overall relative cost competitiveness in Ireland is now dis-improving, and that a series of upward cost pressures are emerging. Low rates of inflation (or possible deflation) across the whole euro area increase the difficulty of extending improvements in cost competitiveness through price reductions.

The National Competitiveness Council is concerned that recent price falls in Ireland are largely a cyclical response to both national and international economic downturns rather than being driven across the broad economy. The Council has stated that the Irish economy has reached a turning point in terms of cost competitiveness. As previously emphasised by the Council, further structural or policy induced changes are necessary to ensure that prices do not escalate and erode competitiveness as the Irish economy returns to stronger rates of growth. The key issues raised by the National Competitiveness Council include:

- Labour costs are rising again following a number of years decline and that future increases should be aligned with productivity growth;
- Industrial electricity prices are above the euro area average and a continued focus is needed on measures to reduce controllable costs; and
- An upward trend is evident across a range of business service costs.

Energy Efficiency

The Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources is pursuing the energy efficiency agenda across all sectors of the economy. A number of important landmarks were achieved over the lifetime of previous Action Plans, including the launch of the Energy Efficiency Fund, the establishment of the National Energy Services Framework as well as a comprehensive suite of supports for commercial and public sector bodies.

A focussed Public Sector Energy Efficiency Action Plan will be implemented in 2015 to expedite the achievement of the 33 per cent energy efficiency target for the public sector as early as possible, well ahead of the 2020 timeline. Additionally, the Department will spend €39 million of capital funding this year on energy efficiency programmes. The various programmes support over 2,000 jobs in the construction sector.

In 2014, the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources published Ireland's National Energy Services Framework (NESF) which supports the rollout of energy performance contracting (EPC) to public and commercial facilities across the country. This Framework is aimed at developing robust projects that are investment-ready, stimulating the development of a market for Energy Services Companies (ESCOs) and supporting sustainable employment in construction and professional services.

The Framework provides guidance on routes to project development, together with sources of finance and the support available from SEAI to help develop projects in the public and commercial sector. The key aim of the Framework is to encourage the development of robust projects which are investment-ready for financing entities (such as the National Energy Efficiency Fund).

There are 20 organisations (private and public) managing 23 active exemplar projects. There are three further projects, which SEAI are liaising with, who may in time utilise the Framework and Fund for support. Finally, there are an additional 13 projects from 12 organisations who are conducting 'special investigations', which is an early stage assessment to see if there are potentially viable projects. In total, technical assistance funding of €900,000 has been allocated to support the Framework and Exemplar projects.

As part of the Public Sector Energy Efficiency Action Plan, we are working with public sector organisations with an annual energy spend of €500,000 or more, to go to the market to identify solutions for the delivery of energy reduction services.

The Energy Efficiency Fund was established in early 2014 with the primary objective to address one of the predominant barriers to economic activity in the sector – the availability of credit that is structured properly and of appropriate term. This financing gap is being experienced across all sectors of the economy, not least the public sector.

The Fund is established with investment from the Government, Glen Dimplex and London and Regional Properties. The Fund is regulated by the Central Bank. The first deal was closed by the Fund in 2014. A second round of capital raising was completed at the end of 2014, with a third potentially to follow in 2015/2016.

The objectives for 2015 are to:

- Implement the Energy Efficiency Action Plan and provide Exchequer funding to further stimulate energy saving activity in certain sectors;
- Review and update the National Energy Services Framework;

- Further progress the Valuation (Amendment) Bill providing for, in certain circumstances, self-assessment of valuation by occupiers; and
- Place downward pressure on legal costs via the new Legal Services Regulatory Authority.

2015 Actions

Decreasing the cost of Doing Business	
256	Encourage local authorities to exercise restraint in adopting the Annual Rates on Valuation (ARVs) for 2015, a reserved function of elected members. (DECLG, Local Authorities)
257	Provide €39 million in Exchequer supports to further stimulate energy saving activity in the residential and community sectors. (DCENR)
258	Invest €3.619 billion Public Capital Programme in 2015 to make doing business easier, reduce the cost of doing business, and invest in educational, health, justice, recreational and other social infrastructure to ensure Ireland is a great place to live and work. (All Departments)
259	Implementation of the Energy Efficiency Action Plan. (DCENR)
260	Review and update the National Energy Services Framework. (DCENR)
261	Ensure swift progress of the Valuation (Amendment) Bill. (DPER)
262	Review the regulatory framework for airport charges. (DTTAS)
263	In order to ensure legal business models are better informed, better established, better operated, better regulated, better for consumers and enterprise and better for the economy, Government will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Resume Report Stage of the Legal Services Bill in the Dáil; and ▪ Complete legislation for the new Legal Services Regulatory Authority to become operational. (D/Justice and Equality)
264	With the Film Board, the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht is continuing to work to create a more competitive environment to grow the film, television and audio visual content production sectors here and advance the targets set in the Creative Capital Report adopted by Government in 2011. (DAHG)

8.7 Regulating for a Better Future

Good quality regulation is central to continuing economic recovery and creating jobs. Improving the effectiveness of economic regulation is essential for Ireland to be internationally competitive and an attractive place to do business. That is why Government published its new Policy Statement on Sectoral Economic Regulation in 2013 with the aim of providing a clearer policy and strategic context in which sectoral Departments would establish and articulate in legislation, policy direction.

The Statement requires that apart from any other legislative arising from policy or mandate reviews, Sectoral Ministers will introduce legislative changes to provide for:

- the setting of a hierarchy of policy objectives with national objectives prioritised;
- policy/mandate reviews on a statutory basis at least every seven years; and
- a performance and accountability framework for regulators and regulated sectors.

The Government recognised that a key factor in determining the pace of implementation would be the legislative programme and the completion of national policy and regulatory mandate reviews. For this reason key actions at sectoral level were reflected in the Action Plan for Jobs 2014 and while there has been good progress in terms of implementation, more work remains to be done.

Therefore given the continuing and central importance of economic regulation to job creation and national competitiveness, implementation actions at sectoral level and review actions at central level, are reflected in the 2015 Action Plan on Jobs.

2015 Actions

265	Continue the implementation of actions outlined in the Government Policy Statement on Economic Regulation in the Energy, Communications and Broadcasting sectors. (D/Taoiseach, DCENR, DTTAS, Law Reform Commission)
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Lincor & the Health Innovation Hub

One of the successful companies in the Health Innovation Hub

Lincor is an Irish company with offices in Cork and Dublin which, in recent years, has expanded to open offices in France, UK, Australia and USA. Lincor works in the health industry, developing software-based solutions direct to the point-of-care to improve patient outcomes through education, information and better communications. With 135 hospital installations globally, Lincor is recognised as the leader in the development of patient engagement technologies.

As Lincor looks to develop applications that directly affect patient care, a key component of this development is the ability to engage directly with clinicians and practitioners of specific areas of patient care such as respiratory care and neonatal care. Therefore, the opportunity to engage with the pilot Health Innovation Hub presented the ideal scenario to work with and develop solutions in co-operation with the experts.



Two significant projects are now under study between Lincor and the Cork University Hospital and managed by the pilot Health Innovation Hub. The first project involves the installation of Lincor “PatientLINC” technology into the Respiratory and Cystic Fibrosis ward to provide world-class patient education to enhance the engagement of the patient in their care and to begin using data from the ward to enhance patient care plans. The second project, NEOVIEW™ involves the development of a suite of applications for use at the incubators of the Neonatal ICU ward. This is targeted to provide: virtual visitation for families in the NICU; improved parental wellbeing through enhanced cot-side education; reduced procedural errors through enhanced education and monitoring and virtual physician presence in the NICU.

The Health Innovation Hub initiative has been instrumental in creating the linkages between the hospital and Lincor and in helping to define the scope and the success criteria of the projects. They have also provided project management expertise in ensuring the success of these projects.

Lincor sees this collaboration as an opportunity for them to significantly enhance their IP portfolio, thus feeding their product pipeline and allowing them to generate increased revenues as a direct result of accessing the technologies developed under these projects. This collaboration will add clear differentiating value to Lincor’s current offering, by providing novel solutions that are directly applicable to the “Meaningful Use” healthcare programme in the USA which includes improving quality, safety, and efficiency of healthcare and engaging patients and family.

<http://lincor.com/>

About the Health Innovation Hub

The Health Innovation Hub was one of the disruptive reforms of Action Plan for Jobs 2013 (*Actions 49-51, Action Plan for Jobs 2013*) that was developed further in last year’s plan (*Actions 84-88, Action Plan for Jobs 2014*). Its purpose is to support Ireland’s healthcare industries and the Irish healthcare system to collaborate in developing new solutions that improve costs. You can read about the 2015 plans at Section 3.2 and in Action 85.

9. Research, Development and Innovation

Measures to promote innovation are an important component of Ireland's research, development and innovation (RD&I) systems. Innovation support makes a critical contribution to enterprise policy, and to the goal of developing a competitive national economy, through the stimulus given by innovation to high value economic activities and jobs. By encouraging the development of new economic activities RD&I policy measures strengthen Ireland's competitive advantage and build potential new areas of economic activity.

Ireland has a diverse range of policy measures in support of enterprise innovation for both indigenous firms and multinational companies. Many of these measures are now well-established and have helped to increase RD&I activity and investment. Research prioritisation has aligned publicly funded research around 14 priority areas that are most likely to deliver economic and societal returns. The enhanced coordination driven by research prioritisation has brought greater coherence to the public research and innovation funding system, which will lead to greater efficacy and efficiency. More importantly the Research Prioritisation Action Group has undertaken a significant exercise to understand enterprise research needs within the priority areas and what is currently available within the public research system and this analysis is providing valuable guidance to the research funders in shaping their new programmes. An independent panel was convened at end 2014 to review progress and will report in early 2015 on next steps to sustain progress and ensure that we remain on track to secure the envisaged impacts in terms of skills development, knowledge creation and economic impact are being achieved.

The Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) which was formulated in 2006 formally expired at the end of 2013, albeit that the context had changed hugely in the meantime. In the interim, resource constraints and the economic downturn nationally and globally meant that, de facto, policy has been focused mainly around four core strategic policies: (a) prioritisation of public funds into areas of research that offer most potential for economic recovery and social progress (b) consolidation of resources in units of scale and scientific excellence (c) increased collaboration (academic – industry; within academia/ Research Performing Organisations (RPOs); and international) to maximise return on investment and to optimise success under EU Framework programmes, (d) facilitating the translation of knowledge and the transfer of technology into jobs.

While these policies will continue to underpin Government strategy going forward, in light of a more optimistic economic outlook, there is now an opportunity to set them in context and to be more comprehensive in the articulation of STI strategy at national level. To ensure that the new strategy benefits from a whole of government perspective, the Department of Jobs, Enterprise & Innovation is convening an Inter-Departmental Committee representative of all key Government Departments tasked with developing a successor to the Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation which will provide strategic direction to ensure the delivery and support of effective research that produces outputs of maximum impact for Ireland's economy and society.

Horizon 2020 is an important element in providing international linkages and enhancing the excellence of the Irish RD&I system. It will provide Ireland's SMEs, multinationals, and research institutions valuable opportunities to participate in high-calibre research collaborations with our European counterparts. Based on national investment in research in recent years, Ireland is participating in EU Programmes from a far stronger position than ever before.

A critical mass of research activity has developed in both the public and private sectors and we are well positioned to perform very strongly under Horizon 2020. The Government has set an ambitious objective of winning €1.25 billion over the lifetime of the 7 year programme, double the return from the previous programme the Seventh Framework Programme 2007-2013. Given this ambitious target and the increased level of competition for these funds it will be necessary for all stakeholders and actors in the research and innovation system to mobilise participants, develop highly competitive applications and in particular, build synergies to lead and win larger applications.

Among the expected outputs achieved in 2015 are: Enterprise Ireland will support 825 Industry-Led Collaborative research projects and 12 major food and drink innovation investments. To support demand driven innovation the SBIR will be expanded to two new contracting authorities.

The objectives for 2015 are to:

- Develop a successor to the national Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation to 2020;
- Implement recommendations arising from the review of research prioritisation;
- Increase the level of innovation performed by enterprise;
- Increase the level of collaboration between enterprise and academia;
- Support knowledge transfer between enterprise and public research performers;
- Mobilise the system to develop and win larger scale H2020 grants;
- Enhance the availability of world class research and STEM skills in Ireland; and
- Develop the enabling infrastructure to translate RD&I into improved products and services, both public and private.

2015 Actions

Increasing the levels of RD&I	
266	Continue to drive implementation of Research Prioritisation through the Government’s Prioritisation Action Group and complete the review of the Independent Panel established to review progress. (DJEI, Research Prioritisation Action Group)
267	Develop a successor to the Strategy for Science, Technology & Innovation to cover the period to 2020. (DJEI)
268	Develop directory of innovation supports to make our offering clear to enterprise. (DJEI, EI, IDA, SFI)
269	Support 825 Industry-Led Collaborative research projects. (EI)

270	Pilot scheme for the extension of innovation vouchers for food companies.	(DAFM)
271	Further scale up of SFI Research Centres through the SFI Spokes Programme. Target one or more funded spokes with at least €1 million industry cash contributions.	(SFI)
272	Ensure research centres landscape offers the full continuum of support to companies from basic to applied research facilities.	(DJEI)
273	Expand the SFI Partnerships scheme to further develop industry and research collaboration in key areas.	(SFI)
274	Conclude evaluation for the business case for the establishment of a Meat Technology Centre, or other research mechanism, to support the sector.	(EI)
275	Establish a Network for all Enterprise Ireland funded Technology Gateways in order to better meet industry needs. This will ensure that there is a “no wrong door” policy throughout the network and those companies can, where appropriate, leverage the strength of the entire network for their research needs.	(EI)
276	Based on the 2014 SME Innovation network pilot exercise implement roll out a national SME Innovation Network.	(EI)
277	Develop research skills and capacity in key areas of opportunity or need including Sustainable Food, Energy and Manufacturing to improve Irish competitiveness.	(SFI)
278	Enhance Industry Engagement with Ireland’s Research System to increase national competitiveness.	(SFI, DFAT, D/Taoiseach)
279	Commence the implementation of the findings from the 2014 Campus Incubation evaluation report.	(EI)
280	Host a large research collaboration and spin-out investor event (e.g. Innovation Showcase /Big Ideas).	(EI)

281	Following on from the launch of the SBIR in 2014, identify a pipeline of potential SBIR projects and expand SBIRs to 2 new contracting authorities.	(EI)
282	Publish and implement a new Marine Research and Innovation 2014-2020 strategy, to include a strong emphasis on research in support of the sector.	(DAFM)
283	Strengthen the research links between marine functional foods and marine biotechnology research / industry stakeholders and establish links with the wider food research / industry community including Food for Health Ireland.	(DAFM)
284	Drive the national Horizon 2020 European engagement agenda.	(High Level Group on H2020, EI)
285	Develop initiatives to support researcher careers and enhance applications to Horizon 2020.	(IRC)
286	Explore joint funding opportunities with UK funding agencies, including Research Councils UK, the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs UK, and others. This action will build complementary research competence for Ireland and Irish companies.	(SFI)
287	Engage with relevant industry sectors and public sector bodies to maximise the downstream commercial opportunities of the EU Copernicus Programme.	(EI)
288	Building on the experience with previous co-fund applications, the Irish Research Council will submit a co-fund application under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Action aimed at Post-Doctoral researchers.	(IRC)
289	Maintain the enhanced participation of SMEs and micro-businesses in the IRC Enterprise Partnership Scheme (EPS) and thus cultivate enterprise focused researchers in the formative years of their research careers.	(IRC)
290	Promote the quality PhD framework to relevant Institutions and track implementation of the framework at Institution level.	(HEA)
291	Address national societal challenges by partnering on research with government entities and civic society.	(IRC)

292	Publish the Health Information Bill which will, inter alia, streamline the ethics approval process for health research not governed by statutory regulation and EU law. (D/Health)
293	Publication and enactment of Technological University Bill. (DES)
294	Use the standardisation system intelligently to expedite the commercialisation of new technology and to reduce the risk of project failure. (NSAI)

10. Stimulating the Domestic Economy

The preceding sections outlined the measures the Government will take in 2015 as part of our continuing export-led approach to employment generation. However, the Government's strategy has also placed a central importance on Ireland's locally trading businesses as reflected in Action Plans in recent years.

The most obvious manifestation of this was the launch in 2014 of the nationwide system of Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs). The establishment of the LEOs means that all categories of business, including sole traders, micro businesses and small and medium sized companies, have access to Government supports and advice. Previously some businesses, for example, companies who were too large to access local microenterprise supports, but were not exporting and therefore did not qualify for Enterprise Ireland supports, fell through the cracks between different agencies. As a result of Action Plan 2014, this is no longer the case. 2014 saw other supporting measures for the domestic economy such as the launch of Construction 2020, a strategy for a renewed construction sector, the establishment of a more formal mechanisms for structured, on-going engagement between Government and the Retail sector, and continuation of the reduced 9 per cent rate of VAT on tourism related activities and abolition of the travel tax.

As the measures set out below demonstrate, under Action Plan for Jobs 2015, the Government will maintain its strong commitment to ensuring jobs are created and sustained in local businesses as essential elements of our communities and domestic economy. Whether operating in agri-food, tourism, retail or construction, these important firms will be supported over the next twelve months in a variety of ways ranging from direct investment, support to begin trading online, visa arrangements to attract greater visitor and customer numbers, and on-going implementation of the FH2020 Strategy.

The objectives for 2015 are to:

- Finalise the Tourism Action Plan, increase Dublin's international appeal as a capital city and develop a tourism brand proposition and identity for the South, East and Midland regions;
- Progress approved recommendations on Town Centre Retailing and continuing the roll-out of the Trading Online Vouchers;
- Promote lean and efficiency improving techniques, such as the use of Building Information Modelling, amongst Irish construction firms;
- Continue implementation of the Construction 2020 and Social Housing Strategies;
- Develop and launch of the 2025 Agri Food Strategy and progress implementation of the Prepared Consumer Foods Strategy;
- Implement new Rural Development and Seafood Development Programmes;
- Continue implementation of the British-Irish Visa Scheme to further ease travel to and around Ireland and the UK for tourism and business purposes for visitors from high growth and emerging markets;
- Further build on the success to date of Origin Green; and
- Continue to implement Ireland's Integrated Marine Plan – *Harnessing Our Ocean Wealth*.

10.1 Agri-food

The agri-food sector continues to play an integral part in Ireland's economic recovery and is our largest indigenous industry, contributing €26 billion in turnover and generating 12.3 per cent of merchandise exports. The sector accounts for around 170,000 jobs or 9 per cent of total employment, and makes a particularly significant contribution to employment in rural areas. Food and Beverage exports increased to a record value of €10 billion in 2013 representing an increase of 9 per cent on the previous year and a 40 per cent increase since 2009.

FH2020, published in 2010, set out a strategy for '*smart green growth*' mapping the future direction of the sector. The Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine launched 'Milestones for Success 2014' in September 2014 which highlights the headline growth and achievements under FH2020. This detailed progress report sets out clearly what has been achieved over the past four years and provides facts, figures, analysis and examples to illustrate how the overall agri-food sector has moved from a decline in 2009 to its current position as an important driver of economic recovery. Progress measured to date indicates that the value of primary output has increased significantly and has effectively reached its target of a 33 per cent increase. Export performance has also been strong and at end 2013 was halfway towards achieving the 2020 target of €12 billion. Value added has increased to €7.5 billion again halfway to its target increase of €2.5 billion by 2020.

Milestones for Success 2014 reports on progress achieved to date through increasing export reach in global markets and illustrates how the focused inter-agency approach, reaching out to strategic markets and building valuable networks and contacts in these countries, is reaping dividends. China is now our 6th largest export market and agri-food exports to China have trebled in the past three years. Significant export capacity is also being established in the Middle East.

CSO Trade statistics for January – October 2014 show that the standard published Food and Beverages categories (less tobacco) increased by 6.6 per cent in exports compared to January - August 2013 which demonstrates the continuing strong performance of agri-food exports relative to overall export growth. (The value of overall merchandise exports was €291 million, an increase of just 0.5 per cent above the Jan/Aug 2013 figures). If the current level of export growth were to be maintained for the remainder of the year then Food and Beverages exports for 2014 would reach €10.7 billion. With the addition of Forestry total agri-food exports would approach €11 billion for 2014.

The agri-food industry is enjoying a period of strong performance. Food and drink companies currently account for a 30 per cent share of the ISEQ index. Export growth has been assisted by a series of Ministerial led trade missions, and industry leaders, with assistance from state enterprise agencies, have made strategic capital and capability investments in growth areas such as dairy, whiskey and processed foods. In the dairy and whiskey industries alone, investment plans of up to €600 million are being actively pursued by industry leaders, while in 2013, Enterprise Ireland invested €203 million in capacity, innovation and equity ventures to allow agri-food companies become more agile in order to secure export sales on global markets. On the 25th November 2014, the 2025 Agri-Food Strategy process was launched. The Strategy will be developed by a Committee comprising leading figures from the agri-food sector. The 2025 Agri-Food Strategy will set out the key actions required to maximise the contribution of the sector to economic growth, job creation and environmental sustainability

over the next decade. The final report of Committee of the 2025 Agri-Food Strategy will be presented to Government in July 2015.

The Rural Development Programme

The Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 (RDP) will be a key support in enhancing the competitiveness of the agri-food sector, achieving more sustainable management of natural resources and ensuring a more balanced development of rural areas. Ireland's draft RDP was submitted to the EU Commission in early July 2014 and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine is currently involved in ongoing and intensive bilateral discussions with the Commission to resolve any outstanding issues. These negotiations are being pursued as a matter of priority to secure early approval of the RDP.

The proposed measures for inclusion in the draft RDP were designed on the basis of extensive preparatory analyses and extensive stakeholder consultation over a period of 18 months. The draft RDP includes:

- a substantial new Agri-Environment Scheme (GLAS);
- continued strong support for Areas of Natural Constraint (formerly the Less Favoured Areas Scheme);
- significant support for on farm capital investment;
- a range of knowledge transfer measures;
- support for collaborative farming;
- support for organic farming;
- targeted support for the beef sector via the highly innovative Beef Data and Genomics Programme; and
- the LEADER element of RDP (delivered by DECLG).

The next step in the process is for the EU Commission to submit formal observations on the draft RDP. The draft RDP and the observations received from the Commission will then form the basis for a period of discussion with the Commission and the subsequent formal approval of the RDP. Given the wide ranging nature of the content of the RDP and the extensive internal consultation to be undertaken by the Commission, it is difficult to predict exactly how long these discussions will last. However, DAFM is in ongoing informal contact with the Commission, and the approval of the RDP will be pursued as a matter of priority. In total, some €4 billion of EU and National funding has been allocated to the new RDP, which is a clear statement of the Government's commitment to continued investment in rural Ireland.

2015 Actions

Agri-food

295 Enterprise Ireland to support 28 significant food and drink industry investments, five of which will be FDI projects.

(EI)

296	Enterprise Ireland to introduce a new Graduate Development Programme with a target of 10 graduates into the Food SME sector to improve company financial and technical capability.	(EI)
297	Work with the industry to implement a new beef genomic scheme.	(DAFM)
298	Roll out a schedule of food related Ministerial Trade and Investment Missions to boost exports to priority markets and attract additional inward investment.	(DAFM and EI)
299	Implement the new Seafood Development Programme 2014-2020 (EMFF).	(DAFM)
300	Attract graduate talent into the sector through the Bord Bia Marketing Fellowship and Strategic Growth Programme to improve export sales.	(Bord Bia)
301	Support innovation in Irish meat companies to develop new products and extend shelf-life thereby creating larger export market potential.	(Teagasc, EI)
302	Develop strategic alliances with Irish food processing companies to target science based innovations for job creation.	(Teagasc)
303	Implement the key initiatives agreed under the Prepared Consumer Foods Strategy.	(DAFM/DJEI)
304	Implement a new strategy for development and growth of Moorepark Technology Ltd to drive innovations and growth in Ireland's food industry.	(DAFM)
305	Support the expansion of the craft brewing industry, which has the potential to become a major element in the Irish drinks industry.	(DAFM)
306	Continuation of the food competitiveness fund (FCF).	(DAFM)
307	A trade marketing campaign targeting current and new customers for Origin Green suppliers will be escalated in Europe to enhance the reputation of Irish food on global markets showcasing Irish leadership on sustainability and building on the success of Origin Green.	(DAFM)

308	Bord Bia will appoint 10 new Origin Green Ambassadors and assign to global food and drinks companies as part of their M.Sc. in Business Sustainability programme.	(Bord Bia)
309	Sustainable Food Systems Ireland will identify opportunities and develop commercial project proposals, with the relevant government agencies, to address requests for assistance in the Agri-food sector from international customers including government agencies, international organisations or international private sector companies.	(DAFM)
310	Develop Options Plus programme to facilitate information sharing to farm families in relation to off-farm employment, business development and training and attract graduate talent into the sector through the Teagasc Walsh Fellowship to improve analytical and innovation capacity in sector.	(Teagasc)
311	Put in place the legal framework to recognise beef producer organisations in order to rebalance bargaining power in the sector.	(DAFM)
312	Continue to pursue appropriate measures at national and EU level with the banks to respond to price volatility in the dairy and other commodity sectors.	(DAFM)
313	Establish Agri Food Strategy 2025 Committee and launch report in July 2015.	(DAFM)

10.2 Marine

Taking our seabed area into account, Ireland is one of the largest EU States, with a marine territory of approximately 880,000km², more than ten times our landmass. In addition to supporting a rich range of ecosystems, habitats and species, Ireland's coastline, inshore and offshore waters:

- Contain some of Europe's largest and most valuable fisheries resource in Europe;
- Are the western gateway for shipping to Europe's busiest seaports;
- Are an ideal location for finfish, shellfish and seaweed aquaculture;
- Are among the world's richest and most accessible renewable energy (wind, wave and tidal) resources;
- Provide opportunities to develop new products and services, for example in the marine technology and biotechnology area; and
- Offer spectacular tourism and leisure opportunities and a rich maritime culture and heritage.

The direct economic value of Ireland's ocean economy was estimated at some €1.2 billion or about 0.8 per cent of GDP in 2010. The sector had a turnover of €3.5 billion and provided employment for about 16,300 people (full time equivalent).

Harnessing Our Ocean Wealth (HOOW) - Ireland's Integrated Marine Plan (IMP), published in mid-2012, sets out a roadmap for the Government's vision, high-level goals and integrated actions across policy, governance and business to enable Ireland's marine potential to be realised. The Plan is an initiative of the Inter-Departmental Marine Coordination Group (MCG), chaired by the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine. The Marine Coordination Group brings together senior officials of Departments with an involvement in marine issues, together with the Marine Institute, to drive forward the Government's marine strategy and coordinate issues that require cross-departmental action.

Implementation of *HOOW* will continue across the range of Departments and agencies in 2015. In addition, the Second Annual Ocean Wealth Conference will be held, coinciding with the publication of an Annual Review of Progress in implementing *HOOW*. The conference will showcase the benefits of an integrated approach to the marine sector and will aim to promote investment, jobs and growth in the sector. Specific details and updates on the implementation of *HOOW* are provided on www.ouroceanwealth.ie.

2015 Actions

Marine	
314	Progress the implementation of Ireland's Integrated Marine Plan – Harnessing Our Ocean Wealth. (Marine Coordination Group (MCG))
315	Implement a new National Strategic Plan for Aquaculture. (DAFM, MAPD)

10.3 Tourism

Tourism is one of Ireland's most important economic sectors and has played a significant role in Ireland's economic renewal. Given Ireland's small population, the nation is heavily dependent on the exporting sectors to generate the level of economic activity required to maintain our living standards and to contribute to the taxation that funds public services. Tourism is a services export, and in order to maximise this, the primary focus of the Government's new Tourism Policy Statement – "People, Place and Policy – Growing Tourism to 2025" is on growing overseas tourism.

The Tourism Policy Statement sets out a series of policy objectives to be achieved in order to deliver, by 2025, the headline targets of €5 billion in overseas visitor revenue, total employment of 250,000 in the tourism sector, and ten million overseas visitors. In order to identify and implement specific actions that are required to achieve the objectives in the Tourism Policy Statement, there will be a series of three-year Tourism Action Plans, overseen by a Tourism Leadership Group. The first Action Plan will be published in 2015.

2015 Actions

Tourism	
316	<p>Publish a detailed “Tourism Action Plan” to deliver initial actions required over the period 2015-2018 in order to achieve the objectives set out in the Tourism Policy Statement. The Tourism Policy Statement sets a target of 250,000 people employed in the tourism sector by 2025.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(DTTAS)</p>
317	<p>Dublin, as the capital city, is the primary driver of Ireland’s tourism industry. Fáilte Ireland will work with industry and agency partners to grow the city’s international appeal.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Fáilte Ireland)</p>
318	<p>The Arts Council will increase the numbers of individuals and organisations supported across a wide range of arts venues, festivals, arts organisations and touring initiatives around Ireland in 2015 to some 350 individuals and 500 organisations.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Arts Council of Ireland, DAHG)</p>
319	<p>Continue to develop cultural digitisation initiatives in order to enhance Ireland's roots tourism offering.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(DAHG, GRO, National Library, National Archives)</p>
320	<p>Develop self-guiding tours/trails based on apps and cultural and artistic collections either on <i>Europeana</i> or other websites in order to enhance our tourism offering to visitors from both home and abroad.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(DAHG, NCIs, philanthropic supporter and technical experts)</p>
321	<p>Develop further heritage tourism initiatives, including a programme of trailway development in National Parks and Nature Reserves, in partnership with key stakeholders. Collaborate with the relevant Departments and Agencies to ensure that National Parks, Nature Reserves, National Monuments and historic buildings contribute as signature experiences along the Wild Atlantic Way, in particular through the development of a national park trails network, so as to add to the attractiveness of these areas for tourists.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(DAHG, Fáilte Ireland, National Trails Office)</p>
322	<p>Support a range of projects through the Heritage Management Grant Scheme 2015 that apply good heritage practice to the management of places, collections or objects, including buildings.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Heritage Council, DAHG)</p>
323	<p>Support the development of a project to digitise the National Folklore Collection of Ireland. The initial phase of the project will advance the digitisation of a significant part of the Schools' Collection in time for the centenary of the 1916 Rising.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(DAHG, UCD, DCU)</p>

10.4 Retail

The Wholesale and Retail sector accounts for the largest share of employment in the Irish economy, with approximately 270,000 people employed. The sector has a reach into every locality in the country and is part of every community. In addition, Retail indirectly supports jobs in other areas, such as logistics and distribution and provides an important outlet for Irish products. In spite of a general improvement in the number of people at work nationally over the last 18 months, employment increases in the Retail sector have been sluggish.

The Government's Statement of Priorities up to 2016 stresses the importance of supporting the recovery of the domestic economy to create jobs, particularly in areas like retail, construction and tourism. Measures which the Government has introduced such as the 9 per cent VAT rate and the Home Renovation Incentive scheme - although primarily aimed at the Hospitality and the Construction sectors respectively - have had a positive knock-on effect on retail.

One of the main challenges for the Retail sector during the recession has been the erosion of consumers' disposable income. Budget 2015 was the first for many years to have increased people's disposable incomes. The tax and social welfare measures announced in the Budget will put money back into people's pockets and should have clear benefits for all sectors of the economy, and in particular for Retail.

Furthermore, the retention of the 9 per cent VAT rate, the extension of the Home Renovation Incentive to include rental properties, and the additional funding to be provided to the JobsPlus scheme in Budget 2015, should all have a positive impact on the Retail sector.

In 2014, as part of the Action Plan for Jobs, the Government established a Retail Consultation Forum. This Forum provides a platform for a structured engagement between the Retail sector and relevant Government Departments and agencies. Its purpose is to allow key issues of relevance to the retail sector to be discussed, with a view to identifying practical actions which could be taken by Government, or by industry itself, to support the sector. The Forum will continue to examine issues of relevance to the retail sector on a thematic basis in 2015.

The Joint Oireachtas Committee on Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation will publish a report on Town Centre Retailing in 2015 and this will be considered by the Retail Consultation Forum with a view to identifying actions that can be taken to support retail in town centres.

Other areas that will be progressed in 2015 to support the recovery of the Retail sector include the continued roll-out of the Trading On-Line Voucher scheme which will be complemented by the roll-out of the National Post Code system, a focus on the provision of skills to the sector, the delivery of the Integrated Licence Application Service for the Retail sector, and a number of structural measures to support the sector.

2015 Actions

Retail	
324	<p>Review the recommendations of the Joint Oireachtas Committee report on Town Centre retailing; develop an action plan to advance recommendations which are considered feasible for delivery, and monitor progress in implementing those recommendations through the Retail Consultation Forum.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Retail Consultation Forum, relevant Departments and public bodies)</p>
325	<p>Identify best practice initiatives which are being taken by Local Authorities to support retail at a local level which could serve as exemplars for consideration by other Local Authority areas.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(CCMA, DJEI)</p>
326	<p>Ensure that the situation of the retail sector is considered in the development of Regional Enterprise strategies, with a view to identifying any specific initiatives that could be taken to support the sector in the regions.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(DJEI)</p>
327	<p>Consult with the Department of Education and Skills, SOLAS, Skillnets and other relevant training providers, where appropriate, to identify how training programmes which are particularly relevant to the retail sector can be expanded or newly introduced to enhance the skills profile of the sector.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(DJEI in consultation with relevant training providers)</p>
328	<p>Following the national launch of the scheme in 2014, complete the rollout of 2,000 Trading Online Vouchers (1,450 in 2015) through the Local Enterprise Office Network (see also Section 3.7).</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(DCENR, LEOs, DJEI)</p>
329	<p>Roll out the National Post Code system which will facilitate on-line trading and help tackle fraud in this area.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(DCENR)</p>
330	<p>Roll out the Integrated Licensing Application Service for the retail sector and seek feedback from the Retail Consultation Forum (see also Section 3.5).</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(DJEI and relevant public bodies)</p>
331	<p>Review the 2012 Forfás report on businesses licences with a view to identifying further actions which can be taken to reduce the administrative burden for the Retail sector in this area, including, where appropriate, the rationalisation of licences.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(DJEI in consultation with relevant public bodies)</p>
332	<p>Commence the Living City initiative to support the rejuvenation of eligible areas of Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Waterford, Galway and Kilkenny.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(D/Finance)</p>

<p>333</p>	<p>Building on measures taken in 2014, continue to tackle illicit trade which impacts on the retail sector.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Revenue)</p>
<p>334</p>	<p>Carry out further analysis on the Retail Export Scheme, including through consultations with D/Finance, to determine the scope for an increase from the ceiling of €2,000 for individual high-value goods that must be presented to customs officials for inspection on departure from the State.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(DJEI, D/Finance)</p>
<p>335</p>	<p>Through the Retail Consultation Forum, continue to identify and address issues which can help support quality employment in the retail sector.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Retail Consultation Forum)</p>

Olivia Smyth & The Stork Exchange

Use the Trading Online Voucher Scheme

Based in Dublin Airport, The Stork Exchange provides a rental service of baby and children's travel equipment to visitors to Ireland with young children. The idea for the business came about from a bad experience Olivia had with renting equipment herself. Olivia explains: "We booked a car seat for my 7 month old daughter along with our car hire on holidays. We were handed an old, dirty looking seat that was the wrong size for our baby but had to take it as there was nothing else. When we took the cover off during the holiday to wash it, we found a maggot. So you could say my business was inspired by a maggot!"



What started with 1 car seat available to hire has grown to 250 seats for hire, as well as other equipment like strollers, highchairs and travel cots. Olivia quickly realised that most of her business was coming through their website, but as the product line grew, the site became no longer fit for purpose. It desperately needed to be redeveloped but business funds were tight. Olivia learned of the Trading Online Voucher Scheme through her Dublin City Local Enterprise Office and decided to apply. Olivia on the scheme: "At a time when the business was growing and needed a lot of financial investment, the Trading Online Voucher was a welcome support. The application process through the local enterprise office was pretty straightforward. In fact, the time invested in the application process ended up being useful for us as a business as it made us review our business plan and revise our online trading plans upwards."

Using the voucher, The Stork Exchange developed a purpose built website with an integrated booking system which allows Olivia and her team to efficiently manage bookings and closely monitor stock. Clients can also book and pay for the service online. "As a good proportion of the client base are travellers from the US and Australia, having a new online service means they can book what they want while we're sleeping, because of the time difference. Now I have time to do more marketing – I now write a blog on the site and do other social media work I couldn't get around to before. I'd really recommend the Trading Voucher, it was a godsend."

The company now hires two people in Dublin and services from Cork and Shannon airports will commence later this year. Olivia will hire at least one additional fulltime staff this year.

<http://www.thestorkexchange.ie/>

About the Trading Online Voucher Scheme

The Trading Online Voucher Scheme was one of the disruptive reforms (*Actions 76-78, Action Plan for Jobs 2014*). It is designed to help the small companies to access the opportunities open to them through trading online by issuing a voucher of up to €2,500, matched by own investment, for the implementation of a trading online component to their business.

Find out what is planned for this scheme by reading Action 100.

<https://www.localenterprise.ie/Discover-Business-Supports/Digital-Voucher-Scheme-Launched-Nationally/>

10.5 Construction and Housing

In May 2014, the Government published '*Construction 2020 – a Strategy for a Renewed Construction Sector*' - to deliver a fresh start for construction. The Strategy is aimed at ensuring that Ireland has a strong and sustainable sector, capable of building the houses and infrastructure we need as a society, and making its full contribution to economic recovery.

It is also an essential part of the Government's effort to return the economy to full employment in 2018. We have said that we are determined to help all those on the Live Register find meaningful and rewarding work, including the many construction workers who lost their jobs with the sector's collapse.

Restoring construction to normal levels of activity can also help ensure that economic recovery reaches and is felt in all parts of the country.

Construction 2020 contains a detailed programme of work, including 75 time-bound actions, across a range of issues including: housing; the planning process; availability of financing; monitoring and regulating the sector; and ensuring a highly skilled workforce and opportunities for construction jobseekers. We have made good progress to date.

Ensuring this momentum is maintained will be a priority for us in 2015.

When we launched the Strategy, we acknowledged that securing its implementation would require a big effort, and a whole-of-Government approach. We said we were determined to see it advanced with determination, energy and commitment.

Since publication, our commitment to delivery has been further underpinned by the appointment in July of a Minister of State with responsibility for Housing, Planning and Coordination of the Construction 2020 Strategy. We have also established a dedicated Cabinet Committee to ensure that focus is maintained at the highest level of Government.

A number of significant milestones have been achieved, and we are seeing welcome and positive signs of recovery in the sector.

The CSO's most recent Quarterly National Household Survey shows that there were 7,000 more people working in construction in the third quarter of 2014 than a year previously (a growth rate of 6.7 per cent); and GDP produced by the building and construction sector grew by 7.3 per cent. On an annual basis, the volume of output in building and construction increased by 10.1 per cent in Q3 2014. This reflects an annual increase of 19.1 per cent in residential building, a 13.4 per cent rise in civil engineering and a 2.5 per cent increase in non-residential building work.

Progress made under Construction 2020 includes:

- A new Social Housing Strategy setting out a comprehensive approach to the delivery of social housing to 2020;
- Proposals for major reform of the planning process to include revision of Part V requirements for developers; retrospective application of reduced development levies; a vacant site levy; and 'use-it-or-lose-it' planning permissions;
- A dedicated taskforce on Housing Supply in Dublin which has examined housing demand and supply across the four Local Authorities, initially focussing on measuring short term viable supply;
- A roadmap for the development of the National Housing Framework; and

- An examination of and report on the availability of development finance - the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF) under the auspices of the NTMA is exploring ways, through its commercial mandate, to support financing projects that will enhance the supply of housing.

The Government took further steps to boost activity in Budget 2015. We extended the Home Renovation Incentive to rental properties whose owners are liable to income tax in order to support legitimate operators in the rental and construction sector, and help upgrade the quality of private rental stock. We also removed the 80 per cent windfall tax applying to chargeable gains on the disposal or development of land attributable to planning decisions made since October 2009 so that the 33 per cent rate of capital gains tax and other standard taxation arrangements will now apply. In addition, the Living City Initiative, announced in Budget 2013 and extended subsequently to 6 cities, targets certain areas that are most in need of regeneration in Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Waterford, Galway and Kilkenny.

Discussions with the relevant Local Authorities is ongoing with regard to eligible areas in their cities, and the Minister for Finance is hopeful that the Initiative will be fully rolled-out in 2015.

The initiative is made up of a series of residential and commercial tax incentives, the purpose of which is to try to break the spiral of urban depopulation and decay which afflicts many of these cities by encouraging families to return to live and work in these inner city locations.

2015 Priorities

We have made strengthening the domestic economy and prioritising new jobs for the unemployed a particular priority for this Government. Restoring normal levels of activity to the construction sector can make an important contribution in this regard.

We are also focussed on supporting increased housing output, especially in Dublin where supply remains a problem. People need to be able to access decent homes to own or to rent, whether in the private or social sectors. Increased supply will not just help ease upward pressure on prices and rents, it will also help us to maintain the competitiveness gains we have made as a country in recent years.

We will therefore maintain our strong focus on implementation of Construction 2020 throughout 2015.

In particular, we will ensure that new planning legislation is progressed early in 2015, providing for implementation of: the Review of Part V; retrospective effect for new lower rates of development contributions; enabling of a vacant site levy; and a “use it or lose it” approach for planning permissions.

We will also put in place further planning legislation to implement the planning provisions of the Mahon Tribunal, and to establish an Independent Planning Regulator. We will also put in place e-planning and other provisions to streamline the planning and appeals process and to improve customer service.

We will advance work on the National Planning Framework.

Building on work already underway, we will produce the first annual National Housing Report, identifying any supply/demand mismatches, in Q2. The Housing Supply Coordination Task Force for Dublin will continue its work in support of increased supply in the Capital. We will bring forward a national policy towards professionalising the private rental sector.

To ensure adequate finance is available for viable developments, especially in housing, we will host a funding event early in 2015 to bring together those working in the industry and in finance.

To ensure that the benefits of increased activity reach those on the Live Register, we will work with the construction industry to ensure that employers are aware of incentives to recruit people who are long-term unemployed and we will support their re-entry to the workforce.

2015 Actions

Construction and Housing	
336	<p>Implement Construction 2020 so as to deliver a dynamic, competitive and sustainable construction sector, capable of contributing to economic growth and job creation, and equipped to meet the future infrastructure needs of the country, including addressing the challenges in housing supply.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(D/Taoiseach, D/ECLG and relevant Government Departments)</p>
337	<p>Implement the Social Housing Strategy 2020, which will provide 35,000 new social housing units over a six year period and will provide housing support to up to 75,000 households in the Private Rental Sector through the new Housing Assistance Payment (HAP).</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(DECLG and relevant Government Departments)</p>
338	<p>We will launch a public consultation and consider whether measures are required to encourage the timely development of zoned and serviced land.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(D/Finance)</p>
339	<p>Support 270 direct/indirect jobs arising from the major refurbishment programme for the National Gallery of Ireland and a further 130 jobs in the development of a permanent exhibition space and interpretative centre at the GPO, the development of visitor facilities at Teach an Phiarsaigh, Ros Muc and other investments as part of the <i>Ireland 2016</i> Programme.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(DAHG, ÚnaG, NGI, An Post)</p>

In Budget 2015, it was announced that the public service recruitment moratorium was being lifted. A targeted programme of recruitment into the Civil Service has commenced which will address service needs and a shortfall in key skills. In addition to this, extra funding was provided in Budget 2015 to allow for the recruitment of 1,700 new teachers and special needs assistants for the classroom, and a further 100 new Gardaí. 2015 will also see the Defence Forces maintain and deliver employment opportunities through recruitment of recruits and cadets.

2015 Actions

Other Areas	
340	<p>Progress the intake and training of 100 new Garda recruits.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(PAS, AGS)</p>

341

Maintain and deliver employment opportunities through recruitment of recruits and cadets to the Defence Forces.

(D/Defence)

Wind Turbine Project, Cork Lower Harbour Area

A flagship Energy Efficiency project

In 2008, a number of healthcare manufacturing companies in the Cork area came together to see if they could collaborate on common issues in relation to energy. They recognised that while energy was such a huge cost to all of their businesses, they were all not harnessing the power of their geographical location in the Cork harbour. They posed the question – if they worked together could they improve their environmental performance, improve cost competitiveness and reduce their energy costs? After some discussions, four of these member companies engaged in a Wind Turbine Project for the Cork Lower Harbour Area.

The four companies who lead this project – DePuy Synthes, GSK, Janssen Biologics and Novartis – manufacture some of the world’s best-known, advanced medicines and medical devices for a variety of uses. They are responsible for the employment of 4,000 people and have invested well over €2 billion in the Cork region over the past 20 years.

The group worked together to undertake comprehensive and proactive consultations with the Planning Authority, the local stakeholders and the statutory bodies involved in this area – and established that they all could install wind turbines on each of the four company sites, and thanks to their collaborative work, they were able to mirror each others lengthy applications, and simultaneously submit all necessary documentation.

There is now one wind turbine established at each of the DePuy Synthes, GSK and Janssen Biologics sites. The three wind turbines will generate up to 3MW of electricity at each site, improving each site’s environmental performance, reducing each site’s electricity costs by up to 30 per cent and simultaneously making them more attractive for inward investment.



The project will allow DePuy Synthes, GSK and Janssen Biologics to achieve a significant decrease in the CO2 emissions generated during their production processes, resulting in a positive impact for the environment. This equates to the removal of approximately 14,000 tonnes of CO2 each year, or equivalent to taking 7,300 cars off the road.

This is an example of the collaborative work being done for the Green Economy which has featured in previous Action Plan for Jobs documents (see Section 9.2 and Actions 289-304, Action Plan for Jobs 2014).

For what is planned in 2015 in the areas of the Green Economy, check out the Energy Disruptive Reform in Chapter 2 and Section 11.6.

11. New Sources of Growth

As set out in earlier sections, Action Plan for Jobs 2015 comes amidst generally improving economic conditions, and builds on reforms to date. The strategies pursued by Government, including Action Plan for Jobs, Pathways to Work, successive Budgets, and sectoral programmes, have all precipitated solid cause for optimism. Nevertheless, all economies must be aware of and adjust to global trends, and the challenges and opportunities that they present. These trends, sluggish global economic growth, and elevated levels of debt and unemployment at home, all increase the importance of developing new sources of economic growth. Action Plan for Jobs looks to the future to ensure that steps are taken now to prepare a path for further progress. For example, rapidly ageing populations combined with natural resource constraints mean that growth in advanced economies will increasingly depend on productivity-raising innovation. Specific opportunity areas identified include Smart Ageing, Design, Financial Services, the Internet of Things, Additive Manufacturing, the Green Economy, and Bioprocessing Research and Training. While there are many broad based and sector specific policies and initiatives throughout the Action Plan for Jobs to help Ireland's enterprise base respond to opportunities, this section sets out specific activity for these new and emerging sources of economic growth where early, targeted Government-led initiatives can lay the foundations for sustainable progress over the short to medium-term.

11.1 Smart Ageing

Smart Ageing is defined as using technology and innovation in both the public and private sectors to produce products, services, solutions and systems to improve the quality of life of people aged 50 and over. Ireland's opportunity in Smart Ageing was identified as a key priority through the Global Irish Economic Forum 2013 and was subsequently identified as one of 11 sectoral opportunities in the Action Plan for Jobs 2014. An Inter-Departmental Steering Group chaired by the Department of the Taoiseach was established to agree the approach to be taken in relation to Smart Ageing in Ireland and the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, on behalf of the Group, commissioned a mapping of Smart Ageing activity to provide a baseline of the activity in Ireland and to identify Ireland's strengths and opportunity areas. The group will report with an assessment of opportunities and next steps.

2015 Actions

Smart Ageing	
342	Bring final report and proposed action plan to develop the Smart Ageing opportunity areas for Ireland to Government for approval. (D/Taoiseach, DJEI and Inter-Departmental Steering Group)

11.2 Growing Sales Through Leadership in Design

The Government has designated 2015 the Year of Irish Design. Irish Design 2015 (*ID2015*) is an all-island initiative and will showcase the best of Irish design, both nationally and internationally. It represents an opportunity to promote and develop further Ireland's

capabilities in business-related design across all sectors of the economy and to improve capacity for quality design across the enterprise sector. In particular design is critical to success in new and emerging sectors like medical devices, ICT, gaming, mobile communications and media. Reflecting the excellent opportunities which the design sector represents for growth and further employment, the Government is supporting *ID2015* as an outcome of the Global Irish Economic Forum at the end of 2013. *ID2015* is being convened by the Design & Crafts Council of Ireland (DCCol), in collaboration with partner organisations, on behalf of the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and Enterprise Ireland.

Given our talent and reputation for creativity, Ireland has the ability to be a leader in design, to generate and attract successful businesses in these sectors. To move Ireland in this direction *ID2015* aims to:

- Promote the value of design nationally, especially among the business community;
- Promote Ireland’s design and creativity among the international design community;
- Promote better engagement between business and the design community, in Ireland so as to strengthen the design sector and encourage investment in design by businesses in order to increase competitiveness; and
- Leave a legacy to build on these aims over the longer term.

Through APJ 2015 we will broaden out initiatives in design to encompass the broader enterprise base. Among the targets over the period 2015 – 2019 are a doubling of inward buyer visits, of designs registered, together with 200 startups and 300 design companies being internationalised. Through a programme of over 300 Irish and international events, *ID2015* aims to:

- Create 1,800 additional jobs in the design and craft sector over 2015-2019;
- Generate 200 new design enterprises established in 2015;
- Generate an additional €10 million in design-related exports in 2015;
- Facilitate more than 300 company visits on international trade missions and design-based trade events (2015/16);
- 50+ SMEs involved in a ‘Design for Growth’ Programme (2015/16);
- Two Design ‘Accelerators’ (to fast track new design companies) by 2016; and
- Engage a 3 million audience for events in 2015 both at home and abroad, with an Advertising Value Equivalent (AVE) of €10 million (2015).

Specific Actions for 2015 are as follows:

- Establish sectoral and regional design networks, clusters and incubators across the island of Ireland to stimulate economic growth and encourage investment and collaboration in the design sector.
- Create a startup investment platform for creative industry entrepreneurs, aimed at accelerating some of the country’s most promising designers from a range of design disciplines.

- Support a series of cross-sectoral collaborations leading to new product development and markets through facilitating design teams to work with businesses across a broad range of sectors from multi-nationals to SMEs on action-based projects that demonstrate the value and impact of design in business growth, with a pilot in specific sectors such as the built environment or engineering.
- Create a national Design Development Programme for innovative design organisations, education providers and other innovative groups to initiate programmes and projects that will have a strategic impact on the development of infrastructure to support design companies and SMEs leading to job creation. This will include an initiative to incorporate Design and Enterprise into science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education.
- Undertake sectoral and targeted trade and investment missions in alignment with Enterprise Ireland’s programme of events. This will include hosting Showcase - Ireland’s Creative Expo®, the country’s largest international trade show, targeting 5,000 retail buyers from Ireland and overseas, maximising the potential for increased sales and exports.
- Establish an international trade fund which will be available to enterprises to fund the full spectrum of design disciplines to access international markets.
- Initiate a diverse range of projects such as workshops, conferences and events through a design innovation fund which will have a strategic impact on the development of supports for design companies and SMEs across the island of Ireland and demonstrate the business and employment creation benefits of good design practice.

2015 Actions

Growing Sales Through Leadership in Design	
343	<p>Deliver a national programme of events presenting Irish design across the island of Ireland, in addition to the programme of exhibitions commissioned for ID2015 and international exhibitions hosted in Ireland as part of ID2015.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(DCCoI, ID2015)</p>
344	<p>Deliver an international programme of events presenting Irish design in international capitals of design and commerce, aligning events with EI’s programme of sectoral and targeted trade and investment missions and supported through an International Trade Fund to assist Irish designers and makers in accessing international markets.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(DCCoI, ID2015)</p>
345	<p>Promote enterprise opportunities in universal design working with key stakeholders including NSAI, professional bodies, education sector and industry.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(National Disability Authority)</p>
346	<p>Develop a series of National Design Enterprise and Education initiatives including design hubs, design networks, startup and investment platforms, cross-sectoral collaborations, design challenges and funded design development programmes.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(DCCoI, ID2015)</p>

347	Establish a Steering Group of relevant Stakeholders to evaluate the design and craft sector with a view to devising a Strategy for the sector. <p style="text-align: right;">(DCCoI, ID2015, DJEI)</p>
348	Devise a strategy to ensure longer-term development of the design sector and business investment in design as part of the legacy of ID2015. <p style="text-align: right;">(DCCoI, DJEI)</p>

11.3 Developments in Financial Services

With over 35,000 people employed across the IFS industry throughout Ireland this is a valuable sector to the Irish economy. These jobs are spread across Funds, Asset Management, International Banking, Insurance and Reinsurance, Aircraft Leasing, Payments, Securitisation, Corporate Treasury and Pensions. Legal and professional services firms offering support services are also a significant and valuable component of the industry.

Given the value of this industry to the economy and the appointment by Government in July 2014 of a Minister of State with specific responsibilities for the sector, it was agreed by Government that a new International Financial Services (IFS) strategy will be published in 2015. The aim of the strategy is to ensure that existing jobs are protected and for the sector to be in a position to take advantage of new and emerging global opportunities for the remainder of the decade.

2015 Actions

Developments in Financial Services	
349	Publish a new Strategy for the International Financial Services (IFS) Sector. <p style="text-align: right;">(D/Finance, DJEI, D/Taoiseach, IDA, EI)</p>
350	Publish alongside the strategy an implementation plan setting out the actions and timelines for delivery across the Government Departments and Agencies involved in its delivery, in association with the industry sectors. <p style="text-align: right;">(D/Finance, DJEI, D/Taoiseach, IDA, EI)</p>
351	Ensure effective and coordinated marketing and promotion of the strategy in key overseas markets. <p style="text-align: right;">(IDA, EI, DFAT)</p>

11.4 Internet of Things

The Internet of Things (IoT) will be critical to Ireland’s economic future competitiveness both in attracting FDI and in building export orientated new enterprises. IoT has the potential to provide the same transformation as the personal computer did for business in the 90’s and the internet has done for business in the last decade. IoT is the next evolution of the internet and

companies in the next ten years will be using this technology to improve the competitiveness of their manufacturing, the quality of the products they manufacture and the speed, efficiency and customer satisfaction of the services they deliver. IoT will generate huge volumes of data through smart connected objects leading to challenges around quality and interoperability that will have to be addressed. In 2015 the Taskforce on Big Data will assess the most appropriate policy response to this new and emerging opportunity in order to stimulate the development of the IoT in a way that best supports enterprise and job creation.

2015 Actions

Internet of Things

352 The Task Force on Big Data will review the opportunities for Ireland arising from the Internet of Things and develop specific policy actions to develop those opportunities.

(Task Force on Big Data, DJEI, IDA)

11.5 Innovative / Advanced Manufacturing

By 2020 manufacturing will be different from what it is today. New materials (e.g. ceramics, metals and alloys, powder, polymers, graphene, 'smart' materials) and associated new processing methods have the potential to revolutionise existing industries as well as to create new ones. Miniaturisation technologies hold the potential for generating completely new categories of device such as micro-sized medical devices (micro-diagnostic devices), microelectronic machines, and speckled computing (wireless sensor networks). Additive manufacture (also known as 3D Printing) is enabling development of extremely complex products without the normal stresses and defects found in traditional manufactured objects. It also offers the scope to customise at no incremental cost and produce fewer items at lower cost. Bioprocessing is becoming increasingly relevant to a range of products, including the development of environmentally sustainable substitutes for fossil fuels or in the manufacture of more complex pharmaceutical molecules.

Allied with the pace of advances in technologies such as these, changing consumer demands, environmental concerns, and intensified globalisation and competition are driving new models of manufacturing. We can already see a shift toward increasing complexity with the convergence of sectors and technologies requiring multidisciplinary skills; the need for adaptive, flexible production processes to cater to increased customisation; the shift toward nano-scale; increased collaboration and the sharing of resources and broader networks across companies and countries. These changes offer significant opportunities for the future of manufacturing in Ireland, although they involve disruptive changes to established business practices and to ways of working.

The real opportunity (and challenge) is to position Ireland as a Centre of Excellence for manufacturing technologies - to build a reputation for being at the leading edge of technology development and adoption. This would involve: stimulating increased collaboration across companies and research institutes; developing the facilities for trial/test and demonstration of new technologies by large and small companies; making it easier for SMEs (in general) to engage with RD&I and/or at a minimum to adopt technologies in the workplace; and encouraging new technology-intensive and software start-ups that are focused on addressing the needs of the manufacturing sector. There is a role for organisations like the Irish Centre for

Manufacturing Research (ICMR) to develop industry-led projects aligned with next generation manufacturing technologies e.g. Additive Manufacturing and Factory 4.0 concepts.

2015 Actions

Innovative / Advanced Manufacturing	
353	<p>Present to the Minister for Jobs Enterprise and Innovation and relevant departments and agencies the findings of EI and IDA's engagement with manufacturing firms to assess the need for public investment in research infrastructure and activity to support high value manufacturing.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(IDA, EI, SFI)</p>
354	<p>An Action Plan specifically dealing with innovative and advanced forms of manufacturing will be developed, setting out short medium and long term actions in areas such as skills programmes, research and manufacturing facilities, research programmes etc. which would make Ireland a world class destination for existing and new indigenous and global manufacturers.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Innovative Manufacturing Group, DJEI)</p>
355	<p>A Guide/Directory will be prepared (including online) and regularly updated which will outline, in industry and user-friendly terms, Ireland's current offering in the area of manufacturing across areas such as skills programmes, production innovation supports, research facilities, researcher supports, etc. and an easily understood pathway to accessing supports for innovative manufacturers.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Innovative Manufacturing Group, DJEI)</p>
356	<p>A business case will be prepared for consideration of the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation for the establishment, governance and funding of an innovative manufacturing facility which would significantly enhance Ireland's strategic assets in innovative/advanced manufacturing (e.g. additive manufacturing, automation, systems integration, advanced packaging). The business case should address the needs of industry across the full range of supports required to including training, research, flexible manufacturing and demonstration spaces, manufacturing technology simulation etc. The facility should have the objectives of future proofing Ireland's manufacturing workforce, attracting leading national and international manufacturing innovators/ researchers and to serve as a beacon internationally for advanced manufacturing in Ireland.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(IDA, EI, SFI)</p>

11.6 Green Economy

The Green Economy continues to hold potential as a new source of growth for Ireland. The Green Economy encompasses a range of activities, spread across different sectors of the economy, which have the common objective of providing goods and services in a sustainable way that reduce the impact on the environment. It includes activities in areas such as sustainable food production, tourism, green financial services, waste management, renewable energy, smart grids and energy efficiency. A number of actions elsewhere in this Plan will help

to support the development of the Green Economy – in particular in relation to our Energy Innovation Hub Disruptive Reform, Sustainable Food production in the Agri-Food sector, and in the Construction sector through energy efficiency standards. The growing international emphasis on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving resource efficiency presents a major opportunity for indigenous enterprises to grow and export innovative products and services. Many Irish companies have already established their credentials as world leaders in providing green goods and services internationally.

Ireland is ranked 11th in performance in the Global Green Economy Index 2014¹⁰, but ranked only 33rd in terms of how it is perceived to perform. There is potential to improve this position. The focus, under this section of the Action Plan, will therefore be on additional actions to increase Ireland’s international reach (including trade opportunities) and to communicate the performance of Ireland’s Green Economy more effectively in order to encourage greater investment in the sector in Ireland. The opportunity will also be taken to explore the potential for the development of new employment opportunities in the Green Economy at regional level as part of the development of Regional Enterprise Strategies.

The Consultative Committee on the Green Economy, which was established as part of *Delivering Our Green Potential*, the Government’s Policy Statement on Growth and Employment in the Green Economy, will also continue to explore areas of opportunity to support job creation in the Green Economy.

2015 Actions

357	Carry out Cleantech Trade missions or include the Cleantech sector in multi-sectoral trade missions to highlight the products and services available from Irish companies in the sector and to develop export opportunities for them. (EI)
358	Contribute to the development of a European Union list of products as part of the negotiation of a plurilateral agreement liberalising trade in Environmental Goods in significant international markets (e.g. USA, China). (DJEI, EI)
359	Develop a strategy and appropriate tools to communicate the performance of Ireland’s Green Economy to global audiences more effectively to encourage greater investment in the sector in Ireland. (DJEI)
360	Examine the scope for improving access to finance for cleantech companies – which often have particular difficulties in accessing capital - to allow them to expand and export. (DJEI, EI and relevant actors)

¹⁰ <http://www.dualcitizeninc.com/global-green-economy-index/>

361	Consult with the Office of Government Procurement and Enterprise Ireland on the potential to increase innovation in public procurement which could support cleantech products and services. (DJEI, EI, OGP)
362	In developing Regional Enterprise Strategies, explore the potential for the development of new employment opportunities in the Green Economy at regional level. (DJEI)
363	Through the Consultative Committee on Jobs in the Green Economy, continue to identify new opportunities to support job creation in the Green Economy. (DJEI, Consultative Committee)

11.7 National Institute for Bioprocessing Research and Training

In December 2014, the IDA Ireland Board approved €7.5 million in core RD&I funding for the National Institute for Bioprocessing Research and Training (NIBRT) to expand RD&I activity through the recruitment of at least two Principle Investigators over the coming years and implement the NIBRT Board approved business plan and research strategy. The focus of the funding will be in the broad area of bioprocessing research and some areas that NIBRT has prioritised include:

- New generation therapeutic manufacturing: in particular manufacturing of antibody drug conjugates (ADCs);
- Research on single use manufacturing technology; and
- Big data in manufacturing: better use if data is derived from process and product analytics.

In addition, the existing Principle Investigators in NIBRT are developing a research plan to get started in ADC manufacturing in collaboration with other centres such as SSPC (Synthesis & Solid State Pharmaceutical Centre) and PMTC (Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Technology Centre) and this (combined with new recruitment) should position them well to win competitive grants from SFI, EU H2020 and industry.

2015 Actions

364	Invest in infrastructural and research project supports (innovation partnerships, spokes etc.) to encourage research, development and training in pilot scale (Technology Readiness Levels (TRL) 5-9) manufacturing and quality testing of next Generation Therapeutics (e.g. ADC etc.). (IDA,EI, SFI)
365	In response to continued growth in biopharmaceutical manufacturing investment, there will be a continued focus on this skill area in Springboard 2015, to increase the pool of available talent to meet the growing industry needs. (HEA, IDA)

Annex 1. Reviews to Inform Future Policy Development

2015 Actions

Evaluations and Reviews	
366	Develop a strategy to investigate new market opportunities in 4 high growth markets. (EI)
367	Review attitudes to flexible working arrangements to promote greater participation by fathers in family leaves. (D/Justice and Equality and other relevant Departments)
368	Develop an implementation strategy for a Better Energy Finance Scheme in Ireland. (DCENR)
369	Monitor public sector energy usage and publish an annual report on energy usage in the public sector. (DCENR)
370	Undertake a qualitative research project to follow-up on key issues identified in the national employer survey. (DES, HEA, SOLAS, QQI)
371	Review and disseminate of findings of 2014 Joint HEA/SOLAS employer survey. (HEA, SOLAS, QQI, INSIGHT)
372	Continue to systematically monitor and evaluate the impact of the Springboard initiative to further strengthen the contribution of the programme to supporting job creation and retention, reducing unemployment and meeting the skills needs of emerging industries. (HEA)
373	The Post Graduate Programme of Professional Practice programme, currently in pilot phase, will be evaluated. (HEA)
374	Examine the recommendation included in the Review of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regarding the introduction of a partial licence review mechanism. (DECLG)
375	Consider further exemptions for development from the requirement to obtain planning permission. (DECLG)

376	Consider streamlined process for modifications of existing planning permissions. (DECLG)
377	Facilitate, in conjunction with industry stakeholders and statutory agencies, the transition of voluntary Construction Industry Register Ireland to a statutory register by end 2015. (DECLG)
378	Complete research to identify clusters/sectoral ecosystems on an all-island basis with the opportunity to grow jobs. (ITI)
379	Conduct a mid-term review of the New Frontiers programme with a view to determining the nature of future support for entrepreneurship training. (EI)
380	Develop a Workforce Development Strategy. (SOLAS)
381	Execute a joint review of the SFI/EI commercialisation programme to establish the programme's impact on the creation of spinout companies and licensing opportunities. (SFI, EI)
382	Develop a strategy to improve the performance of Irish business in relation to securing contracts with International Financial Institutions. (EI and relevant Departments)

Annex 2. Strategic Ambitions, Examples of Impact Metrics and Action-Linkages

- To support 100,000 additional jobs by 2016
- To get Ireland back to a top-five ranking in international competitiveness
- To build world-class clusters in key sectors of opportunity
- To build an indigenous engine of growth that drives up the export market share of Irish companies
- To stimulate the domestic economy and generate employment in locally traded sectors

Objective	Baseline (2011)	Current Performance (2014)	2015 Targets	Relevant APJ Sections
To support 100,000 additional jobs by 2016	<p>Decrease in numbers employed by 320,000 from Q2 2008 to Q1 2012. Q1 2012</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Retail: 264,800 ▪ Construction: 104,300 ▪ Agri-food: 81,400 ▪ Accommodation & food 117,600 <p>IDA firms decrease in employment of 16,248 from 2007-2010. Job churn 6.2%.</p> <p>EI firms decrease in employment of 23,983 from 2007-2010. Job churn of 8.6%</p>	<p>80,000 extra at work from Q1 2012 when APJ was launched to Q3 2014, with employment at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Retail: 273,200 ▪ Construction: 110,900 ▪ Agri-food: 109,500 ▪ Accommodation & Food 135,800 <p>IDA firms increase in employment of 22,265 from 2011-2014. Job churn 4.2%.</p> <p>EI firms increase in employment of 16,420 2011-2014. Job churn 5.1%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Target of an additional 100,000 at work by 2016 and 250,000 additional at work by 2020. ▪ Achieve full employment in 2018, with 2.1m at work. ▪ Creation of 13,000 gross new jobs in indigenous firms in 2015 ▪ Creation of 14,000 gross new jobs in FDI firms in 2015 	Chapters 2-10

1. Increasing sales and exports				
Objective	Baseline	Current Performance	2015 Targets	Relevant APJ Sections
1.1 Increase in indigenous exports	€15.3bn in 2011	Exports of €17bn in 2013. €18bn forecast for 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase indigenous exports to €19bn for 2015 ▪ Complete programme of 18 overseas ministerial-led trade missions and events ▪ Target over 700 companies to have significant engagement with the EI Potential Exporter Division ▪ Tailored mentoring programmes for over 300 EI clients ▪ Provide €4m in additional funding for high growth and emerging markets ▪ Win 160 new FDI investment ▪ New targets as part of IDA 2019 Strategy 	2.1 - National Talent Drive
1.2 Increase in proportion of exports to high growth economies	Exports to BRICS in 2009 of €469m. Exports to Asia in 2009 of €783m.	Exports to BRICS in 2013 of €924m. Exports to Asia in 2013 of €1.2billion		2.2 - Delivering Regional Potential
1.3 Increase share of Indigenous Exports to non-UK markets	56% of exports to non-UK markets in 2010	64% of exports to non-UK markets in 2013		2.3 - Europe's Energy Innovation Hub
1.4. Exports % Sales – EI enterprises	46% in 2010	51% in 2013		3.2 - National Health Innovation Hub
1.5 Increase number of Exporting Firms		+ 3.1% in 2013		3.4 - Winning Abroad
1.6 Increase in number of FDI project wins	144 in 2011	197 in 2014		3.7 - Trading Online
			4 - Financing Growth	
			6 - Growing Irish Enterprise and Foreign Direct Investment	
			8.2 - Easier to Do Business	
			11 - New Sources of Growth	

1.7 Share of Greenfield projects from high growth and emerging markets to reach 20% in 2014.

16% of greenfield projects 2013.

20% of greenfield projects in 2014.

2. Stimulating the domestic economy (retail, construction, tourism, agri-food)				
Objective	Baseline	Current Performance	2015 Targets	Relevant APJ Sections
2.1 Increase local economy employment	Q1 2012 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retail: 264,800 Construction: 104,300 Agri-food: 81,400 Accommodation & Food: 117,600 	Q3 2014 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retail: 273,200 Construction: 110,900 Agri-food: 109,500 Accommodation & Food: 135,800 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete roll out of 2,000 (1,450 in 2015) trading online vouchers Increase MNC global sourcing sales by EI and IDA client companies by €30m Tourism to 250,000 by 2025 Support 28 significant food and drink industry investments, five of which will be FDI projects Introduce a new Graduate Development Programme with a target of 10 graduates into the Food SME sector Construct new social housing units Intake and training of 100 new Garda recruits Overseas visitor target of 7.7m overseas visitors for 2015 	<p>3.5 - Integrated Licensing Application Service</p> <p>3.7 - Trading Online</p> <p>4 - Financing Growth</p> <p>10 - Stimulating the Domestic Economy</p>
2.2 Increase in the domestic expenditure by exporting firms on payroll, and domestically-sourced supplies and services	2011 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> IDA enterprises: €19.8bn. EI enterprises: €19.2. 	2013 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> IDA enterprises: €22.4bn (+13% on 2011). EI enterprises: €21.0bn (+10% on 2011). 		
2.3 Increase in annual tourism visitor numbers to 7.7 million by 2015. Increase tourism Employment to 250,000 by 2025.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6.2m overseas tourists in 2011 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> c.7.3m visitors in 2014. Accommodation employment increased by 23,000 from 2011 to Q3 2014 Foreign earnings of €3.6bn in 2014 		

2.4 Increase Agri-food Exports to €12bn by 2020.	€9.28bn in 2011	<p>Estimated agri-food exports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ €10.19bn in 2013 ▪ €10.96bn in 2014 	Export target of €12bn by 2020	
2.5 Stimulate recovery in Construction Sector	<p>Construction employment in Q1 2012 was 104,300.</p> <p>Six years of declining output in the sector</p>	<p>Employment 110,900</p> <p>GDP from building and construction sector increased 7.3% in the past year</p> <p>Output increase 10.1% for year to Q3 2014</p> <p>60,000 sq m of office space under construction in main cities Q3 2014.</p>	<p>Continued implementation of the Construction 2020 Strategy</p> <p>Implementation of the Social Housing Strategy</p>	

3. Improving Skills Provision				
Objective	Baseline	Current Performance	2015 Targets	Relevant APJ Sections
3.1 Proportion of students taking STEM related disciplines	23%	26%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide places under the second iteration of Momentum ▪ Roll out call for proposals for Springboard courses ▪ Roll out Level 8 ICT Conversion programmes ▪ Implement Skillnets ICT Conversion Programmes ▪ 400 Smart Futures volunteers sourced ▪ Meet employer demand for employment permits in the ICT sector, which is expected to reach 2,000 ▪ Investing in 1,250 extra places p.a. to achieve target to meet 78% of demand with domestic supply by 2018 ▪ Target 13,800 annual science, technology, engineering and maths graduates by 2018 (up from 10,200 in 2011) ▪ Target for 30% of students to take 	2.1 - National Talent Drive
3.2 Domestic supply meeting demand for high-end ICT skills	42% of demand in 2012	57% of demand in 2014		
3.3 Students taking higher-level maths	8,235 in 2012	14,326 in 2014 (+74%), accounting for 27.8% of total		
3.4 Students on Erasmus to boost language, tech and business skills	2,511 in 2010/11	3,000 est. in 2014		
3.5 Increase availability of International Selling Skills.		Shortages of business sales executives 250-750 pa), sales account executives (200-500 pa)and in customer service occupations (200-500 pa)		
3.6 Promote upskilling and lifelong learning	7.9% of adults engaged	8.2% of adults engaged		
3.7 In-company investment in training and education	€132 million	€149 million		

<p>3.8 Apprenticeship new registrations</p>	<p>1,307 in 2011. 656 in non-construction trades.</p>	<p>1,687 est. in 2013. 917 in non-construction trades</p>	<p>higher level maths by 2020.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Target of 4,500 Erasmus students per annum by 2020 (+50%) ▪ EU lifelong learning target of 2020 target of 15% ▪ EI and IDA programmes for training and upskilling ▪ New calls for apprenticeships and traineeships in 2015. 	
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4. Increasing activation of the unemployed				
Objective	Baseline (2011)	Current Performance	2015 Targets	Relevant APJ Sections
4.1 Increase in numbers leaving the Live Register to take up employment per year	No net decreases	100,000 net left the Live Register to Q3 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 100,000 extra at work by 2016 ▪ 2.1m at work in 2018 ▪ Implement <i>Pathways to Work 2015</i> and constituent metrics ▪ Begin a new JobsPlus strand for young people under the Youth Guarantee 	2.1 - National Talent Drive 5 - Increasing Activation of the Unemployed
4.2 Decrease in youth and long-term unemployment rates	Long term unemployment rate Q1 2012 8.9% and 60% of the unemployed. Youth unemployment was 39% in April 2011.	Long term unemployment rate Q3 2014 7.9% and 56.7% of the unemployed. Youth unemployment was 23.2% in Q3 2014.		

5. Increasing Levels of Entrepreneurship

Objective	Baseline (2011)	Current Performance	2015 Targets	Relevant APJ Sections
5.1 EU ranking of adult population engaged in entrepreneurial activity	1 in 13.69 (7.3%) in 2011	1 in 11 in 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase the number of startups by 25% ▪ Increase the survival rate in the first five years by 25% ▪ Improve the capacity of startups to grow to scale by 25% ▪ Provide business development and financial supports to 185 High potential and early stage Startups. ▪ Support 130 new Entrepreneurs via the New Frontiers programme ▪ Drive the establishment of 15 spin-out companies that are of EI HPSU quality ▪ Launch 6 Competitive Start Funds to support 85 Startups 	<p>3.6 - LEOs</p> <p>8 - Entrepreneurship</p> <p>11 - New Sources of Growth</p>
5.2 EI HPSUs approved	93	101		
5.3 Enterprise Starts - CSO	11,237 in 2010	12,551 in 2012		
5.4 Numbers employed in enterprise starts- CSO	10,475 in 2010	11,207 in 2012		
5.5 New Company incorporations- CRO	1,093 per month on average in 2012	1,443 per month on average in 2014		
5.6. Increase participation on EI Entrepreneurship Programmes		485 (2013)		
5.7. New Frontiers Support for budding entrepreneurs	N/A	144 potential entrepreneurs assisted in 2013		

6. Enhancing Firm-Level Productivity				
Objective	Baseline (2011)	Current Performance	2015 Targets	Relevant APJ Sections
6.1 Increase in value added per employee EI Firms	-3% decline in 2011	+2.5% increase in 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support 945 participants on Management Development Programmes. 190 food companies supported by Lean Manufacturing and 120 food clients in the L4G ▪ IDA/Support transformation and productivity improvement with funding of €1.5m ▪ Support a total of 115 firms across all levels and activities, through LeanStart, LeanPlus and LeanTransform Programmes ▪ Launch a Manufacturing Capital Equipment Grant providing up to €250,000 ▪ Pilot Platform 4 Growth online programme involving 100 firms ▪ Provide Innovation 4 Growth programme to 15 companies 	8 - Competitiveness
6.2 Increase participation on management development courses	1,084 in 2011	1,093 managers in 2013		
6.3 Increase in number of firms participating in Lean Manufacturing programmes	150 companies participated on lean programmes and 23 on green programmes in 2011	<p>In 2013:</p> <p>143 lean projects in companies</p> <p>20 significant Lean Transform companies in 2013.</p> <p>Target of 130 indigenous companies in 2014</p>		
6.4. Increase IDA Company participation in Transformation Programmes		Target of 70 companies participating in 2014.		

7. Increasing Levels of RD&I

Objective	Baseline (2011)	Current Performance	2015 Targets	Relevant APJ Sections
7.1 Increase Business Expenditure on RD&I	Foreign Firms €1.8bn. Indigenous Firms €0.7bn	Foreign Firms €2.1bn (+17%) Indigenous Firms €0.8bn (+16%)		
7.2 Increase researchers employed in industry	Foreign firms 10,460. Indigenous firms 8,174	Foreign firms 11,980 (+15%) Indigenous firms 9,650 (+18%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Win €150m in research funding for Ireland under EU Horizon 2020 in 2015 Number of firms with RD&I investment > €100,000 (1,016) of indigenous and MNC (2017) Number of firms with RD&I investment > €2,000,000 (169) of indigenous and MNC (2017) Increase researchers in enterprise to international benchmarks Target to double patent and trademarks and design performance 	2.3 - Europe's Energy Innovation Hub 2.6 - Intellectual Property in Enterprise 3.3 - Competitive Ecosystem for Big Data 10 - RD&I 11 - New Sources of Growth
7.3 Indigenous Firms undertaking significant R&D	743 firms > €100K 2011 129 firms > €1m 2011	860 firms > €100,000 (+16%) 140 firms > €1m (+9%) Patent applications per billion GDP, 53 (Irl) v 98 (EU) Community trademarks per billion GDP, 5.46 (Irl) v 5.9 (EU) – Annual growth of 5% and 6.9% respectively Community designs, 1.28(Irl) v 4.75(EU)		
7.4 Increase success in securing EU/Horizon 2020 funding	€93m FP7 funding won	€108m funding won (+16% from 2011 to 2013)		

7.5 SFI researcher papers co-authored with industry		8%		
7.6 EI Supported Collaborative interactions industry and HE	139 in 2011	839 in 2013		
7.7 SFI supported collaborations with industry	583 in 2011 (246 MNCs and 337 SMEs)	900 in 2013 (460 MNCs and 441 SMEs)		

8. Increasing Ease of Doing Business

Objective	Baseline (2011)	Current Performance	2015 Targets	Relevant APJ Sections
8.1 Increase our international ease of doing business ranking	25th	15th	Steps across sectors to reduce the red tape for over half a million business interactions	8 - Competitiveness
8.2 Reduce barriers to startup a business	9th (2008)	22nd		
8.3 Employment Appeals Tribunal waiting time	76 weeks in 2011	63 weeks in 2014		
8.4 Labour Court hearing waiting time	13 weeks in 2011	10 weeks in 2014		
8.5 Work Permits average processing time	32 days in 2011	18 days in 2014		

9. Decreasing the cost of doing business				
Objective	Baseline (2011)	Current Performance	2015 Targets	Relevant APJ Sections
Achieve a top 5 Competitiveness position	25th	15th	€39million in Exchequer supports to further stimulate energy saving activity Implement the Energy Efficiency Action Plan	8 - Competitiveness
Waste	Landfill Gate Fees 2010 = €93 per tonne	Landfill Gate Fess 2014 = €113 per tonne (+22%)		
HICP	2011=100	Q3 2014=103.1		
Electricity	2010=100	October 2014=132.4		
Agri-Motor fuels	2010=100	October 2014=118.1		
Building materials	2010=100	November 2014=108.2		
Freight Transport	2011=100	Q3 2014=103.3		
Sea Transport	2011=100	Q3 2014=110.7		
Air Transport	2011=100	Q3 2014=126.0		
Warehousing	2011=100	Q3 2014=89.4		
Computer services	2011=100	Q3 2014=106.3		
Legal and Accounting Services	2011=100	Q3 2014=98.5		

Architecture and engineering services	2011=100	Q3 2014=97.6		
Advertising Services	2011=100	Q3 2014=102.5		
Hourly Labour Cost		Q2 2011 - Q2 2014 as follows – Euro-area= +4.6%, Ireland= +1.2%, UK= +1.8%, Germany= +6.8%.		
Average Hourly Total Labour Costs		For Ireland by sector y-o-y Q3 2014 Industry +2.9% Private Sector -0.7% Retail +2.5%		

10. Enhances the availability of funding mechanisms for SMEs				
Objective	Baseline (2011)	Current Performance	2015 Targets	Relevant APJ Sections
10.1 Increase in investment by enterprises	Q1-Q3 2011 Manufacturing Capital Investment €1.06bn	Q1-Q3 2014 Manufacturing Capital Investment €2.8bn (+163%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To demonstrate the Online Tool at 10 events nationwide in 2015 ▪ To increase the cumulative number of unique users of the SME online tool ▪ To register an increase in the awareness of the SME Online tool (as reported in the credit demand survey) ▪ Provide €800m over 2 years of additional funding through SBCI ▪ Credit Guarantee and Microfinance Schemes to SMEs to be reformed and promoted 	2.4 - SBCI 4 - Financing for Growth
10.2 Increase usage of the SME Online tool	N/A	30,228 unique users during 2014		
10.3 Increase take-up of the new Credit Guarantee Scheme	4			
10.4 Increase take-up of the Micro Finance Ireland	149 (Scheme launched on Oct 1 2012)	119 (Q3 2014)		
10.7 Goods Vehicles Investments	Goods vehicles registrations 2011: 17,415	Goods vehicles registrations 2014: 25,328 (+45%)		

Glossary of Terms

ADCs	Antibody Drug Conjugates
AIB	Allied Irish Banks
ARV	Annual Rates on Valuation
BIM	Building Information Modelling
BPFI	Banking & Payments Federation Ireland
BRIC	Brazil, Russia, India and China
CCMA	County and City Managers Association
CeADAR	Centre for Applied Data Analytics Research
CER	Comprehensive Expenditure Review
CRFs	Clinical Research Facilities
CRO	Credit Review Office
CSO	Central Statistics Office
CSSO	Chief State Solicitor's Office
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DAFM	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
DAHG	Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht
DCCoI	Design and Craft Council of Ireland
DCENR	Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources
DCYA	Department of Children and Youth Affairs
D/Defence	Department of Defence
DECLG	Department of Environment, Community and Local Government
DES	Department of Education and Skills
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
D/Finance	Department of Finance
D/Health	Department of Health
DJEI	Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation
D/Justice and Equality	Department of Justice and Equality
DPER	Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
DSP	Department of Social Protection
D/Taoiseach	Department of Taoiseach
DTTAS	Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport
EGFSN	Expert Group on Future Skills Needs

EI	Enterprise Ireland
EIB	European Investment Bank
EIF	European Investment Fund
EII	Employment and Investment Incentive Scheme
EMFF	European Maritime and Fisheries Fund
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
EPC	Energy Performance Contracting
ESRI	Economic and Social Research Institute
ETB	Education and Training Board
ESCOs	Energy Services Companies
FCF	Food Competitiveness Fund
FW	Food Works
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FET	Further Education and Training
FH2020	Food Harvest 2020
GEDI	Global Entrepreneurship Development Index
GEM	Global Entrepreneurship Monitor
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
H2020	Horizon 2020
HAP	Housing Assistance Payment
HEA	Higher Education Authority
HEI	Higher Education Institutions
HOOW	Harnessing Our Ocean Wealth
HRB	Health Research Board
HPSU	High Potential Start-ups
HSE	Health Service Executive
IBEC	Irish Business and Employers' Confederation
ICMR	Irish centre for Manufacturing Research
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IDA Ireland	Industrial Development Agency
IFS	International Financial Services
IICM	Irish Institute of Credit Management
IMP	Integrated Marine Plan

INIS	Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service
IoT	Internet of Things
IP	Intellectual Property
IRC	Irish Research Council
ISIF	Irish Strategic Investment Fund
ISME	Irish Small and Medium Enterprises Association
ISO	International Organisation for Standardisation
ITI	InterTradelreland
KfW	Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau
KPI	Key Performance Indicators
KTI	Knowledge Transfer Ireland
LA	Local Authorities
LCDC	Local Community Development Committee
LCDP	Local Community Development Programme
LEADER	Liaisons entre actions de développement de l'économie rurale
LEOs	Local Enterprise Offices
LGMA	Local Government Management Agency
MCG	Marine Coordination Group
MFI	Microfinance Fund Ireland
MNCs	Multinational Corporations
MTES	Medium Term Economic Strategy
NCC	National Competitiveness Council
NDS	National Digital Strategy
NESF	National Energy Services Framework
NFP	New Frontiers Programme
NGI	National Gallery of Ireland
NHIH	National Health Innovation Hub
NIBRT	National Institute for Bioprocessing Research and Training
NPRF	National Pensions Reserve Fund
NPT	National Project Team
NSAI	National Standards Authority of Ireland
NSS	National Skills Strategy
NTD	National Talent Drive
ODPC	Office of the Data Protection Commissioner

OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OGP	Office of Government Procurement
PMTC	Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Technology Centre
PPC	Prompt Payments Code
PTSB	Permanent TSB
PtW	Pathways to Work
QNHS	Quarter National Household Survey
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
RDP	Rural Development Programme
RD&I	Research, development and innovation
RFT	Request for tender
RPO	Research Performing Organisation
TRL	Technology Readiness Levels
SBCI	Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland
SBG	State Bodies Group
SBIR	Small Business Innovation Research
SCS	Seed Capital Scheme
SEAI	Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland
SVCS	Seed and Venture Capital Scheme
SFA	Small Firms Association
SFI	Science Foundation Ireland
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
SOLAS	An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna
SSPC	Synthesis & Solid State Pharmaceutical Centre
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics
SURE	Startup Refunds for Entrepreneurs Scheme
ÚnaG	Údarás na Gaeltachta
VAT	Value Added Tax
WEF	World Economic Forum

