

ACTION PLAN FOR JOBS 2018



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

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Foreword by An Taoiseach



This year's Action Plan for Jobs (APJ) is being published at a time of particular significance for Ireland and its economy. We are experiencing balanced and sustainable economic growth.

The latest CSO data show an annual increase in employment of 2.2% in the year to the third quarter of 2017, bringing total employment to 2,192,000 (seasonally adjusted). Over 312,000 jobs have been created since the launch of the first APJ in 2012.

At the same time, scanning beyond our shores we see uncertainties, risks and a rapidly changing global economy. The APJ provides a framework for us to identify the main challenges and opportunities for the year ahead as well as concrete actions to respond. This year the priority areas are preparing for Brexit, stimulating regional development, increasing participation rates, meeting skills needs and boosting innovation, productivity and competitiveness.

While the final shape of it is still unknown the Government is placing a strong emphasis on Brexit proofing our economy and ensuring our companies are prepared for the range of possible outcomes. This requires a focus on market diversification as well as increasing competitiveness, productivity and innovation.

Balanced regional development is an ongoing and significant priority. We have set a target that the rate of unemployment in each region should be no more than 1% higher than the national average by 2020. We are fully committed to delivering this. The recently published *Project Ireland 2040* provides for investment in infrastructure of more than €115 billion over the next ten years. This will ensure we have the modern and advanced infrastructure in all regions required for the dynamic and innovative economy we aspire to be.

One of the challenges now that we are moving towards full employment is to increase labour market participation to enable more people to benefit from, and contribute to, our economic growth. We must also continue to focus on ensuring we have the skills needed to meet the rapidly changing needs of enterprise including arising from automation, artificial intelligence and other technological advances.

One of my main priorities is to ensure that jobs being created are quality jobs and that people who work hard feel the benefits in their pockets. The Government has already taken a number of actions to reward working people. We have reduced income taxes and USC, introduced new treatment benefits and improved tax credits for the self-employed. We've introduced free pre-school for two years and childcare subsidies. Shortly we will publish an ambitious Pension Reform Plan ensuring that everyone has access to a supplementary occupational pension of their own.

This year's Action Plan for Jobs is one element of the Government's coherent and ambitious approach to planning for Ireland's future and achieving prosperity for all our people. We will work hard to make sure we deliver on all its actions for 2018.



Leo Varadkar, T.D,

Taoiseach

Foreword by Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation



I am delighted to publish the seventh Action Plan for Jobs (APJ) together with An Taoiseach. Thankfully, we are doing this in circumstances that are very different from those at the launch of the first APJ in 2012.

Then, the economy had experienced 5 years of severe recession and the unemployment rate was at 16%. Ireland's economic recovery is now well established, and the economy has been growing since 2013. With nearly 313,000 more people at work since the launch of the first APJ, we are close to the 2007 peak in employment. Importantly, our return to prosperity is shared right across the country with four out of five jobs created in the regions in the year to June 2017.

Despite the return of economic prosperity, we cannot rest on our laurels. Without a doubt, some regions are doing better than others, and we need to put a particular focus on those regions that are falling behind. Internationally, we face a number significant threats and uncertainties including the scope of the UK's decision to leave the EU and changes in tax regimes internationally. In addition, digital technologies such as robotics, artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things and digital fabrication will transform markets and impact on the business models of our enterprises.

This rapidly changing economic and technological environment could significantly alter our competitive advantages, disrupt our enterprise base and change our skills needs. We must anticipate change and respond and adapt. We must also be ready to seize new opportunities as they arise, and ensure that those opportunities can be accessed in every region.

Responding to this changing environment with the economy approaching full employment, the APJ 2018 focuses on embedding the progress made, positioning ourselves to take new opportunities as they arise and ensuring our enterprises have resilience to meet the challenges on the horizon. This approach is consistent with *Enterprise 2025*.

Our focus is on ensuring we remain on track to deliver on the Programme for a Partnership Government target to increase the number at work by 200,000 by 2020, including 135,000 jobs outside of Dublin. The target for 2018 is a 2.3% growth in employment, which equates to approximately 50,000 additional jobs.

With 55 actions, APJ 2018 focuses on the medium term to ensure that:

- Ireland's enterprise base can be successful amid the uncertainty created by Brexit;
- All parts of the country achieve their potential in terms of job creation;
- Those entering, re-entering, or in the workforce have the incentives and skills needed to prosper and lead fulfilling lives; and
- Our enterprise base remains successful by focusing relentlessly on competitiveness, productivity and innovation.

My Department is working across Government to ensure that we get the best outcome possible for business from the Brexit negotiations. In our response document to Brexit, “Building Stronger Business”, we outlined how we intend to minimise risks and maximise opportunities by helping Irish enterprise to compete, trade and innovate. Our ultimate goal is to ensure that we can continue to grow and remain resilient after the UK’s departure from the EU.

As part of the Government’s ongoing and continued preparations for Brexit, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade is undertaking adaptive contingency planning. Meanwhile, a Brexit preparedness information and awareness campaign is being coordinated by the Department of the Taoiseach. Enterprise Ireland and Bord Bia are continuing to roll out their series of tailored supports, and a €300 million Brexit Loan Scheme will be launched imminently. Ireland’s national trade and investment strategy ‘*Ireland Connected: Trading and Investing in a Dynamic World*’ is also contributing to increasing the impact and effectiveness of our international presence.

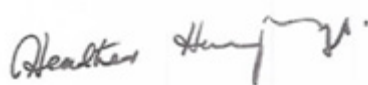
The actions relating to regional and rural development in this plan reflect the Government’s priorities in this regard. They demonstrate the coherence of our approach, with Regional Implementation Committees working with Government Departments to refresh and refocus the Regional Action Plans. These will be complemented by the implementation of the Action Plan for Rural Development, which I launched with Minister Ring in my previous Department, and a range of supports for agriculture, tourism and the rural economy.

Investment in infrastructure with further increases in the IDA property portfolio to boost foreign direct investment in the regions and the roll out of broadband across the country will also feature, as outlined in *Project Ireland 2040*.

As the economy approaches full employment, the APJ 2018 also seeks to remove barriers to participation in employment, increase the responsiveness of our education system to enterprise needs and its ability to meet specific skilling, up-skilling and re-skilling needs.

Finally, a range of actions that aim to boost productivity, competitiveness and innovation are included. In many cases, the objective is to increase our capacity to exploit new opportunities.

The APJ 2018 demonstrates the Government’s commitment to support the long-term growth of our enterprises, in particular our SMEs. It seeks to remove barriers to participation in employment, to strengthen our business ecosystem and to develop strategies that enhance sectoral performance and capture new opportunities. It will work in tandem with *Project Ireland 2040*, the *National Planning Framework*, and the aligned ten-year *National Development Plan (2018-2027)* – to ensure that new infrastructures support enterprise growth and enhance our quality of life countrywide.



Heather Humphreys
Minister for Business,
Enterprise and Innovation

An aerial photograph of a mountain range, likely the Alps, with a teal color overlay. The mountains are rugged and snow-capped, with deep valleys and ridges. The sky is a clear, light blue. The overall image has a high-contrast, graphic quality.

1

APJ2018:
Context and
Approach

Strategic Approach

Action Plan for Jobs (APJ) 2018 is the seventh in an annual series outlining the Government's joined-up approach to maximising employment across Ireland. While acknowledging that Governments do not create jobs, the approach recognises that all Government Departments have a role in creating the best environment for enterprise and job creation.

The Action Plans are underpinned by the following strategic goals:

- Create 200,000 additional jobs by 2020, including 135,000 outside Dublin;
- Grow trade and investment in existing markets and diversify into new markets;
- Deliver strong competitive regions to drive regional employment;
- Develop and attract high quality talent;
- Become a global innovation leader to grow and diversify the composition of our exports;
- Drive productivity across all sectors of the economy; and
- Achieve a top 5 competitiveness ranking.

The Changing Context and Immediate Aims

The context for APJ2018 is thankfully very different to that for APJ2012 and, as a result, the approach and character of APJ2018 is very different. In 2012 the Government launched the first APJ in response to a severe unemployment crisis. With the unemployment rate at 16%, APJ2012 and subsequent plans focused in the first instance on stemming the flow of job losses and also on taking every possible step to encourage job creation. This approach has seen almost 313,000 more people at work since the launch of the first APJ in 2012. The recovery has been underway since 2013 and the Irish economy is growing at a healthy pace. The outlook for next year and over the medium term is relatively positive.

With the unemployment rate now at 6.1% (January 2018), APJ2018 is focused on embedding the progress we have made, positioning ourselves to take new opportunities as they arise, and ensuring that our enterprises are focused around resilience in the face of significant challenges.

The four key immediate aims of the Action Plan for Jobs 2018 are:

1. That Ireland's enterprise base remains successful amid the uncertainty created by Brexit;
2. That all parts of the country achieve their potential in terms of job creation;
3. That those entering, re-entering, or in the workforce have the incentives and skills needed to prosper; and
4. That Ireland's enterprise base remains successful by focusing relentlessly on competitiveness, productivity, and innovation.

We have set a target to achieve employment growth of 2.3% in 2018 which equates to approximately 50,000 jobs. The steps to be taken across Government to achieve this target are set out in the following chapters.

Policy Priorities and Response

Since 2012 a number of policies to underpin medium-term sustainable growth have been developed that run alongside the Action Plan for Jobs, including **Enterprise 2025**, **Innovation 2020**, the **National Skills Strategy 2025**, the eight **Regional Action Plans for Jobs**, and the **Action Plan for Rural Development**. Published in November 2017 by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, **Building Stronger Businesses** sets out the Government's enterprise strategy and response to Brexit. While we continue to make strong progress, a number of challenges and uncertainties remain in the national and international economy that must be addressed to safeguard growth and resilience over the medium term.

Preparing for Brexit

There are a number of significant potential threats and uncertainties remaining, particularly around the future scope of the UK's trade relationship with Ireland and the European Union. The UK's decision to leave the EU will have a profound effect on Ireland – the stated intention to leave the Single Market and Customs Union undoubtedly poses a range of challenges for all firms, both those that are internationally trading and those focused on the domestic market. The degree of those challenges will depend to a great extent on the outcome of the Article 50 negotiations and the negotiations on the UK's future relationship with the EU once it leaves the Union. However, it is important that firms begin planning for this change.

Agreement on a transitional arrangement which will see the UK continue to apply all EU rules and regulations, and respect all current EU obligations, will provide certainty in the short to medium term and will mitigate against any 'cliff edge' effects while also providing time for firms and sectors to prepare for the longer term with the UK outside the EU.

Realising Regional Potential

Effective regional development and the revitalisation of rural Ireland are key priorities of the Government, which aims to ensure that the rate of unemployment in each region will not be more than 1 percentage point above the State average by 2020 and that all regions are realising their economic growth potential. While the recovery of the job markets is remarkable, regional disparities remain. In addition, Brexit will have potential impacts regionally that are likely to be more pronounced in Border areas where businesses are more dependent on the movement of people and trade across the border.

Meeting Enterprise Skills Needs

Robust growth is leading to capacity constraints and is giving rise to additional pressure, thereby potentially impacting on our competitiveness. As we approach full employment over the next two years, the challenge will be to increase overall levels of participation in the labour market and ensuring that existing and future skills needs are met.

Enhancing Competitiveness, Productivity, and Innovation

Irish productivity growth rates and levels have been above the OECD average since the recession. However as noted by the National Competitiveness Council, Ireland's performance has been greatly affected by the shifts in the composition of employment and by the influence of a few high value added sectors on output. The challenge therefore is to broaden the enterprise productivity base and ensure that economic growth is driven by productivity improvements. Ireland has also moved up the competitiveness ranking to sixth in the latest IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook. However, additional actions such as developing our infrastructure base are fundamental to enhancing our competitiveness and will help address bottlenecks and contribute to unlocking the potential of our regions.

Additional Challenges and Opportunities

In responding to these challenges the Government must also prepare to meet the challenges and opportunities arising from other significant transformations that are shaping the global economy and Ireland's place in it.

For example, the impact of digital technologies is becoming increasingly disruptive and pervasive, in particular, robotics and artificial intelligence (AI); internet of things; augmented/virtual reality; blockchain; autonomous mobility; and digital fabrication. The impacts of each of these technologies are expected to be important individually, but it is their convergence and integration that makes them potentially so disruptive. These technologies will transform markets and business models and redefine the sources of competitive advantage. For governments around the world, this presents both opportunities and challenges in key policy areas such as employment, productivity, competitiveness, and sustainability.

Ireland must also be at the forefront of the transition towards a low-carbon and circular economy. This transition will have a profound impact on the competitiveness and sustainability of our enterprise base and will create new enterprise opportunities through the development and diffusion of new technologies by Irish based firms. The bio-economy will have an important role to play in this transition through the improved production of renewable biological resources and their conversion into bio-based products and bio-energy, and has the potential to contribute to rural economic development.

In addition, changes to tax regimes internationally may impact on Ireland's attractiveness for investment relative to other jurisdictions. We must therefore ensure that our other sources of competitive advantage remain strong.

These national and international challenges and drivers set the context for the Action Plan for Jobs 2018. They call for a whole-of-Government approach, which defines the APJ process, to ensure that our enterprise base and our workforce are positioned to adapt and benefit from the opportunities that they will bring.

APJ Success Factors: Cross-Government Buy-In and Enterprise Engagement

One of the factors that has made the Action Plan for Jobs process such a success has been the input, support and partnership both with other Government Departments and external stakeholders, including enterprise in developing and progressing the plans. Over the course of the Plan's development, the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation initiated a series of consultative engagements with key external stakeholders to discuss their priorities for inclusion in Action Plan for Jobs 2018. This includes employer representative bodies, trade unions, the Community and Voluntary Pillar, a regional and sectoral selection of IDA and Enterprise Ireland client companies, an Industry Partners Forum, as well as an open public consultation notice. The Industry Partners Forum was created at the time of the launch of Action Plan for Jobs 2013 to ensure a collaborative Government-Industry approach to achieving the jobs impact. Comprised of business leaders from major employers, each Partner is expected to "bring their experience and skills to bear on implementing the Disruptive Reforms and on Government jobs and enterprise policy more generally". In 2016, the Industry Partners Forum was expanded to include a wider sectoral and regional representation – membership was increased from 6 to 15 representatives. This forms an important part of the development of the Action Plan for Jobs.

Looking Ahead: National Planning and Investment Strategies

The twenty-year *National Planning Framework* (NPF) and the aligned ten-year *National Development Plan* will deliver key investments that are necessary to support enterprise growth throughout the country. The NPF sets out the national overarching vision, priority policies and expectations around development and growth for Ireland's cities, regions, towns and rural areas that will guide investment decisions over the coming decades.

In setting out a longer-term spatial development plan for Ireland it integrates population, enterprise, environmental and infrastructure considerations that offer the potential to create places of quality that businesses will want to invest in, and that people will want to live, work, play and learn in.

Crucially, the NPF will be delivered through three Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies that have commenced preparation through the Regional Assemblies. An emphasis on competitiveness and enterprise throughout these new frameworks and strategies is a vital enabler of the APJ, and will help ensure that shared objectives can be delivered.

Conclusion

APJ2018 differs from previous annual plans; it reflects a new, changed context and some new challenges. It is not about rebuilding a broken economy, but more about solidifying progress and ensuring resilience.

International developments such as Brexit, the continued need to realise the potential of our regions, optimising our workforce, and the persistent need to be competitive, productive, and innovative- all combine to inform the actions set out in this APJ.

With the ongoing cross-Government support, industry engagement, and focus on implementation which have been the hallmarks of all APJs, this Plan will contribute to ensuring Ireland's continued progress, the success of our enterprises, and the delivery of our employment ambitions.



EMPLOYMENT AND PARTICIPATION

OBJECTIVES:

- Continue to deliver on the Programme for a Partnership Government target to increase the number at work by 200,000 by 2020, including 135,000 jobs outside of Dublin.
- Increase employment by 2.3% (50,000 new jobs) in 2018
- Reduce the national unemployment rate to 5.5% by 2020.

GOAL:

+200,000

jobs by 2020, including

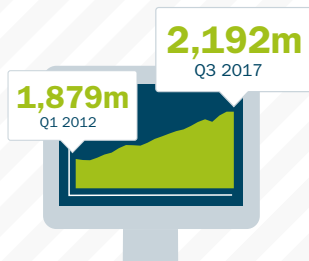
135,000

outside Dublin

PROGRESS TO DATE:

- Almost 313,000 more people at work (as of Q3 2017) since the first APJ was launched in Q1 2012 (seasonally adjusted).
 - For the first three quarters of 2017, annual employment growth was 2.8%, in line with the APJ target.
 - Total employment in the State increased to 2,192,000 (seasonally adjusted) in Q3 2017.
- Employment growth is spread across regions and sectors.
 - The unemployment rate was 6.1% in January 2018, down from a high of 16% in early 2012.
 - The long-term unemployment rate also declined from 4.2% in Q3 2016 to 2.8% in Q3 2017.

Employment continues to **grow strongly**



Seasonally adjusted Source: CSO



Over **70%** of part-time workers are **women**

More than **3/4** people who work part-time do so **by choice**

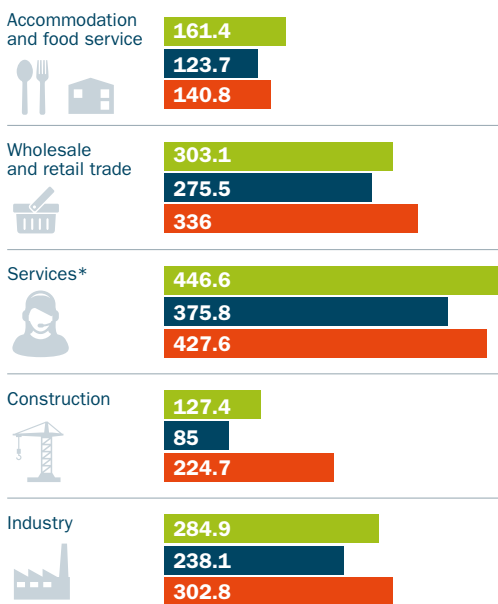
Source: CSO

In Q3 2017, almost **313,000** more at work since Q1 2012

Seasonally adjusted Source: CSO

Sectoral Employment Performance

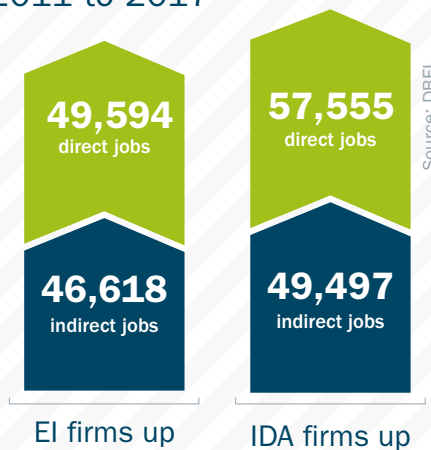
■ Q1 2008 ■ Q1 2012 ■ Q3 2017



Note * includes information and communication, financial, insurance and real estate, professional, scientific and technical, and administrative and support service activities

Seasonally adjusted Source: CSO

Employment in EI and IDA firms 2011 to 2017

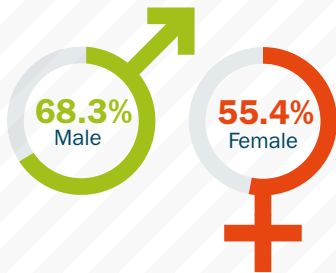


Source: DBEI

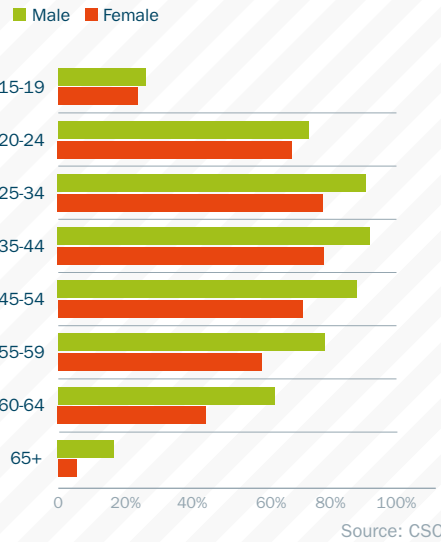
Participation rate – Q3 2017

61.8%

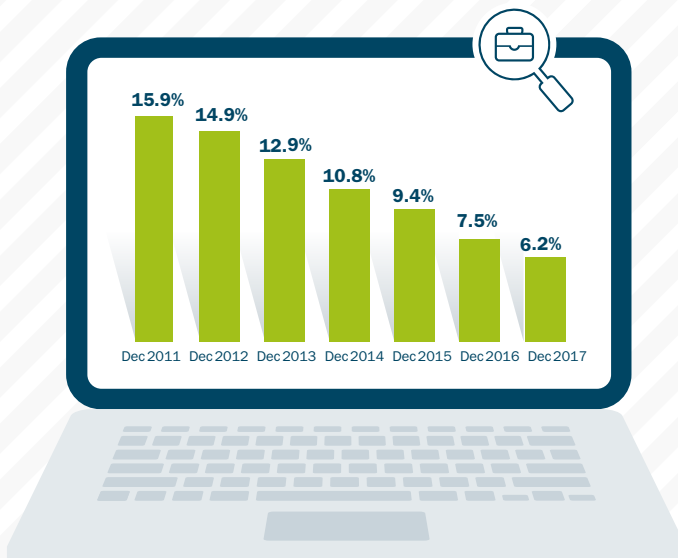
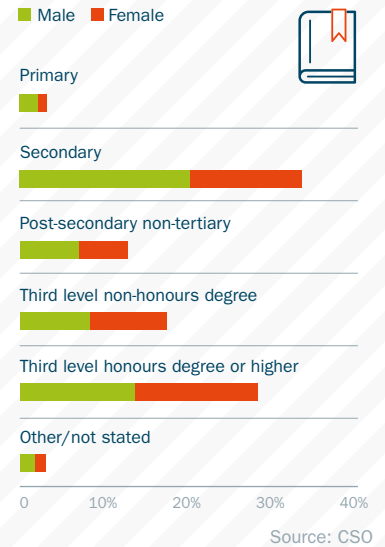
Seasonally adjusted
Source: CSO



Participation rate by age group and sex, Q3 2017



Breakdown of Labour Force by education level, Q3 2017



Unemployment rate continues to

FALL

Over

**50%
DECLINE**

in young unemployed people since 2012

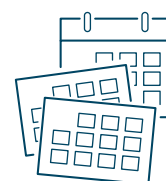


Source: CSO

Long term unemployment (Q3 2017) down to

65,500

From over **200,000** in Q1 2012



OVER 70%
DECLINE

Seasonally adjusted Source: CSO

REGIONS

OBJECTIVES:

- Deliver on the Programme for a Partnership Government target to increase the number at work by 135,000 outside of Dublin by 2020.
- Have a further 10% to 15% at work in each region by 2020.
- Ensure the unemployment rate of each region is within 1 percentage point of the State average by 2020.
- Achieve the IDA target to increase the number of investments by 30%-40% in each region outside Dublin over the period 2015 -2019.
- Deliver on the target to have 60% of new jobs created by EI clients outside Dublin in 2018

GOAL:

STRONG COMPETITIVE REGIONS

TO DRIVE REGIONAL
EMPLOYMENT

PROGRESS TO DATE:

- Employment has grown in all eight regions since Q1 2012.

- Over 80% of all new jobs created in the year to Q2 2017 were outside of Dublin.

- The unemployment rate fell in all regions in the year to Q2 2017

- In the year to Q2 2017, the fastest growing regions in terms of employment were the South West (up 6%), the Midlands (up 5.1%) and the Mid-West (up 4.2%). Employment grew by 3% outside of Dublin.

- The unemployment rate in Q3 2017 in each region was:

South-West – 6.4%
 Mid-East – 6.2%
 Mid-West – 8.4%
 Dublin – 6.3%
 West – 7.2%
 Border – 6.5%
 Midlands – 9.3%
 South East – 8%

8 Regional Action Plans for Jobs



50%

of IDA employment between 2015 and 2017 is outside Dublin

IDA target

30-40%

more investments in each region outside Dublin over the period 2015 -2019

2/3

of EI employment in 2017 is outside Dublin

EI target

Over 60%

of new jobs created by EI clients to be outside Dublin in 2018

31

Local Enterprise Offices



FIRST-STOP SHOP

for new and expanding enterprises



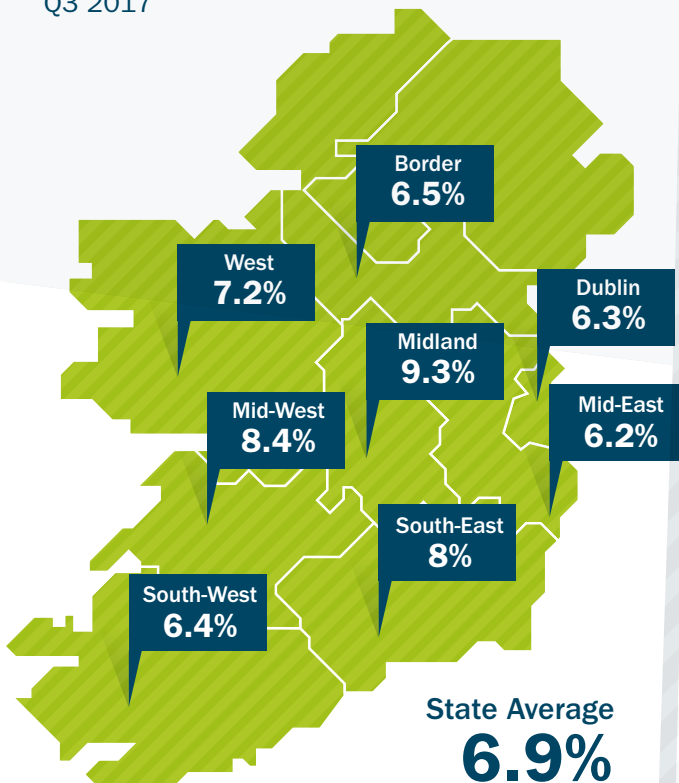
Supporting

42,000+
new jobs in 2017



Source: DBEI

Regional Unemployment Q3 2017



Source: CSO

9 Regional Skills Fora

fostering stronger links between employers and the education/training sector



Over **700** engagements

during 2017

Source:DES

EXPORTS

OBJECTIVES:

Under *Enterprise 2025*, our objectives are:

- > Continue to grow our share of total global trade
- > Increase exports by Enterprise Ireland firms to €26 billion by 2020
- > Increase exports to the Eurozone by 50% by 2020
- > Diversify export markets and support UK exports.

GOAL:

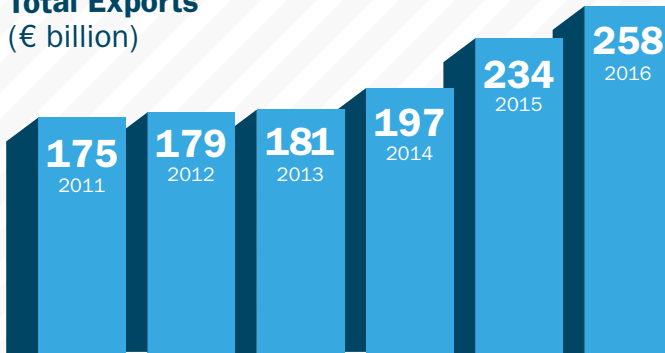
GROW TRADE

and investment in existing markets and diversify into new markets

PROGRESS TO DATE:

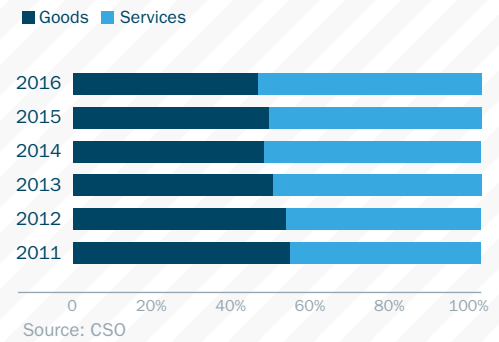
- > Driving export-led growth has been a core objective of the APJ since 2012. Ireland's share of global trade is now 3.04% for services exports in 2016 and 0.8% for merchandise exports.
- > Exports of goods and services have increased from €175 billion in 2011 to almost €260 billion in 2016.
- > Exports by Enterprise Ireland supported firms increased from €15.2 billion in 2011 to € 21.6 billion in 2016.
- > Indigenous exporters are on track to achieve €26 billion by 2020.
- > While exports have grown strongly in recent years, the composition and range of goods and services we export have become increasingly concentrated. Computer services accounted for almost half (47.2%) of total services exports in 2016. Goods exports are dominated by medical and pharma products (26.9%), organic chemicals (19.1%) and machinery and transport equipment (15%).

Total Exports (€ billion)



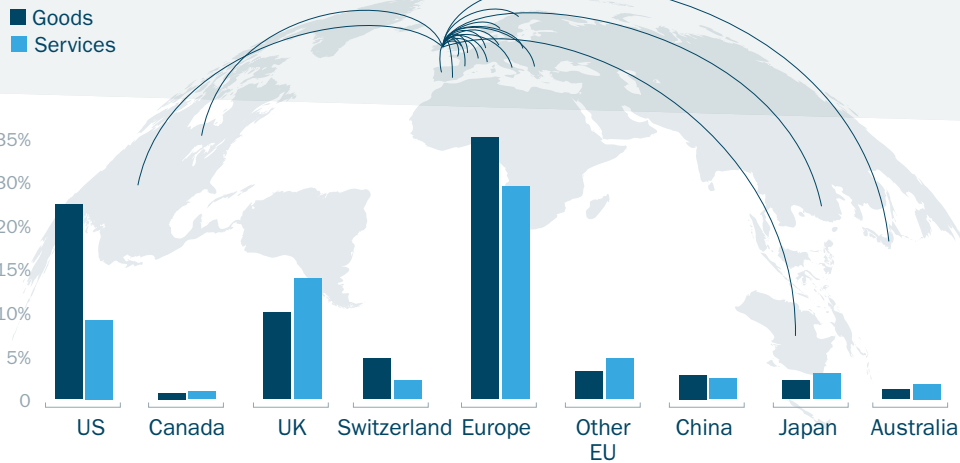
Source: CSO

Goods and Services (% of total exports)



Source: CSO

Goods and Services Exports Market Share 2016 (%)



Source: CSO

In 2017

9.9m
overseas
visitors

€6bn
spend
9.5%
increase

Source: DTTAS

Most popular exported goods and services



Medical and
Pharmaceutical



Organic
Chemicals



Electrical
Machinery



Computer
Services



Operational
Leasing



Financial
Services

Source: CSO

EU target

50%

increase in exports
to Eurozone by 2020

Record
exports
by EI supported firms
21.6bn
in 2016

Source: EI

INNOVATION

OBJECTIVES:

The Innovation objectives are set out in *Innovation 2020* which aims to make Ireland a global innovation leader by:

- Increasing Ireland's RDI intensity to 2.5% of GNP by 2020 from a current performance estimated at 1.44% in 2016.
- Increasing the number of significant R&D performers by 15% to 1,200 and the number of large performers to 200 by 2020.
- Securing €1.25 billion from Horizon 2020 funding between 2014 and 2020.

GOAL:

**BECOME A
GLOBAL
INNOVATION
LEADER**

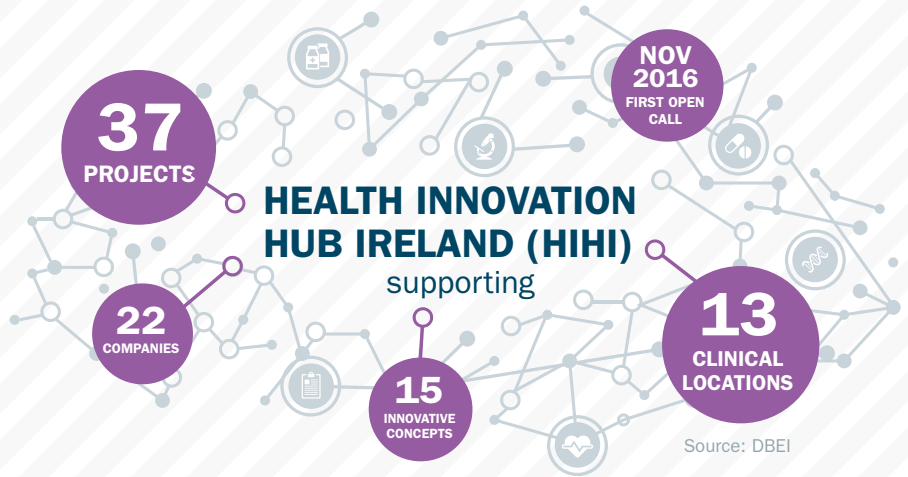
**to grow and diversify the
composition of our exports**

PROGRESS TO DATE:

- In the Global Innovation Index, Ireland is ranked in 10th place overall, a significant climb from 21st place just ten years ago. We are ranked 1st in terms of knowledge diffusion and 2nd for knowledge impact. In the European Innovation Scoreboard, Ireland is placed 10th and is considered a strong innovator.
- Both Irish and foreign owned R&D active agency client companies have demonstrated greater resilience in terms of sales, exports and employment, and employment in higher value jobs relative to non-R&D active enterprises since 2009.
- From the programme's launch in 2014 to September 2017, Ireland has won €475 million in Horizon 2020, the EU Framework Programme on Research and Innovation. Higher Education Institutes accounted for just under €255 million out of this funding. Industry won just over €160 million, of which €98.6 million was awarded to SMEs.
- Ireland's success rate in Horizon 2020 to date is 14.66%, just above the European Average of 14.39%.



Source: KTI



Source: DBEI

In 2017

90
HPSUs approved ✓

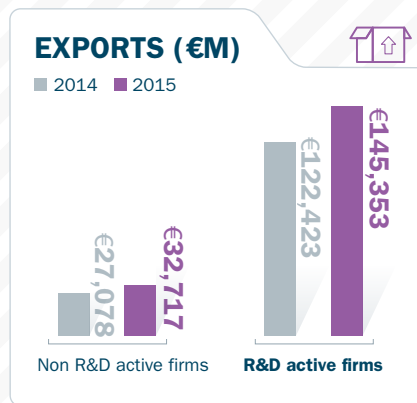
Source: EI

R&D active agency firms **more resilient**

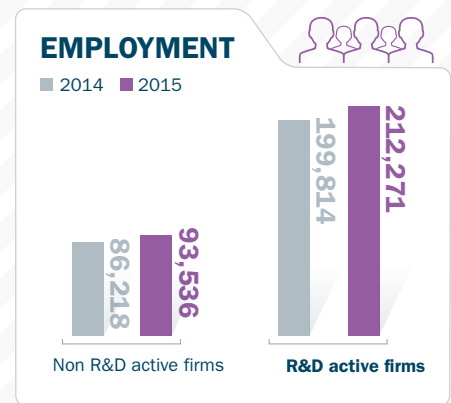
15 Innovative HPSUs from Research



Source: EI



Source: DBEI



Global Scientific Rankings
November 2017

Ireland is 11th



Source: Thomson Reuters

Horizon 2020
funding secured

€475m

in EU funding under Horizon 2020 2015-2017



Source: DBEI

€255m to Higher Education Institutes

€160m to Industry

60%+ to SMEs

Programme breakdown

€77.5m Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (support for researchers' placement or training)

€75.5m Information and Communication Technologies

€65.2m Health



TALENT

OBJECTIVES:

The objectives under this high-level goal have been updated based on the National Skills Strategy 2025 and the Action Plan for Education 2016-2019:

- Increase the share of 30-34 year olds that have completed tertiary education to 60% by 2020 from 52.2% in 2013.
- Strengthen the apprenticeship and traineeship system by achieving 50,000 registrations by 2020.
- Increase the number of students undertaking work placement or work based learning by 25% by 2021.
- Double investment in training and upskilling employees from €543 per employee by 2020.

GOAL:

DEVELOP, ATTRACT
AND RETAIN

**HIGH QUALITY
TALENT**

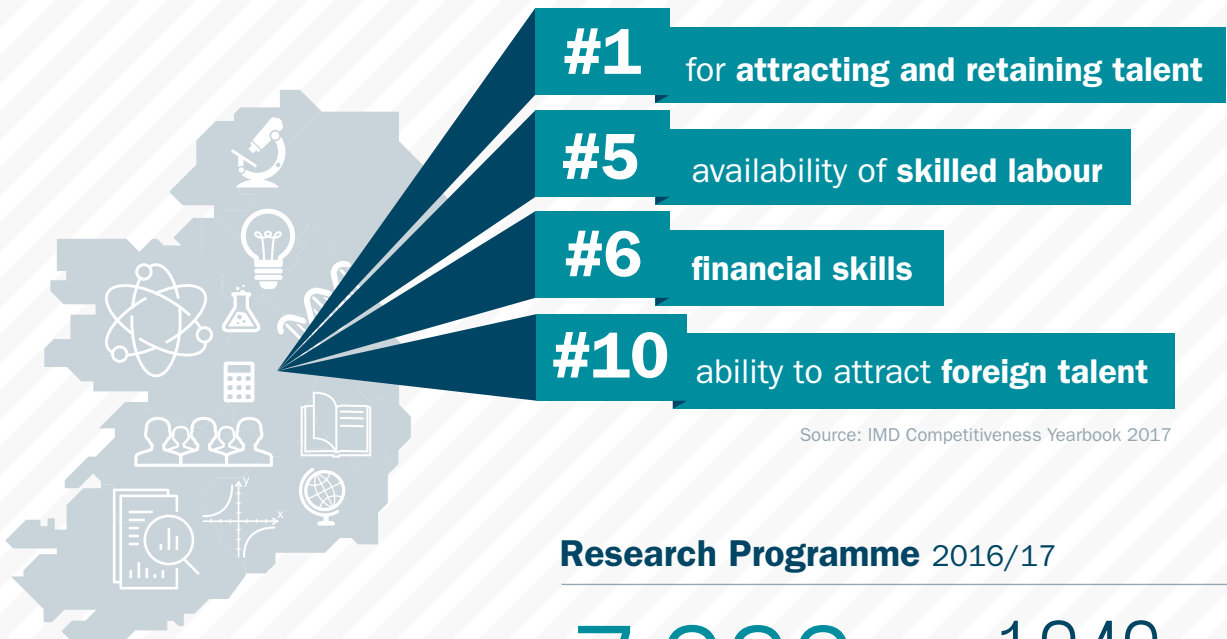
PROGRESS TO DATE:

The World Talent Report for 2017 provides a ranking for all 63 countries that are part of the IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook on a range of metrics across three major headings: Investment and Development, Appeal, and Readiness.

Ireland achieved:

- First for attracting and retaining talent being a priority in companies.
- Fifth for availability of skilled labour.
- Fifth for university education that meets the needs of the business economy. And, 26th (a jump of 22 places) in relation to apprenticeships being sufficiently implemented.

- Ireland is the best country in Europe for reading skills at primary level.
- The overall reading achievement score of Irish pupils has improved by 15 points since the last cycle of the study which was in 2011.
- The percentage of Irish pupils who have advanced reading skills rose from 16% in 2011 to 21% in 2016, which is much higher than the international average in PIRLS



Source: IMD Competitiveness Yearbook 2017

Research Programme 2016/17

7,962
Full-time students

1,840
part-time research students

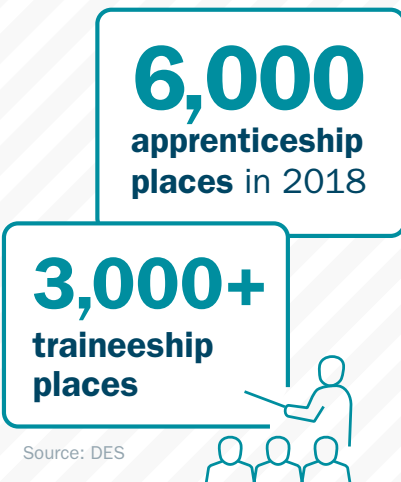
23% increase over the last five years

1,145
Full time Research Masters Programmes

6,806
Full time Doctorate programmes

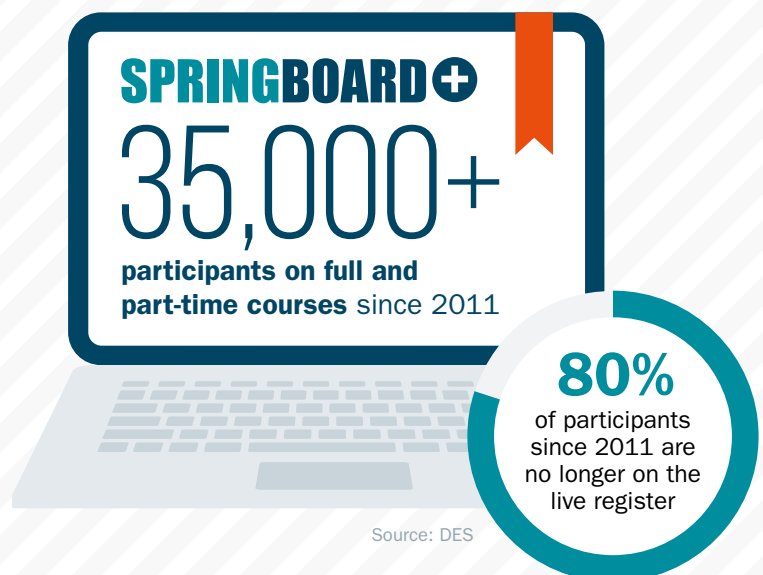
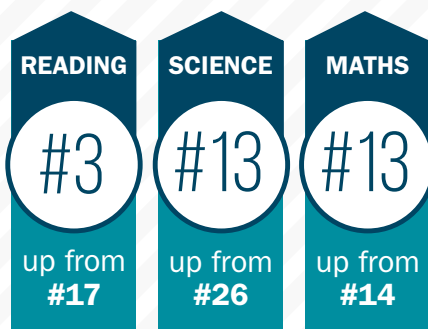
9 in 10
research students are studying in universities

Source: HEA



Source: DES

Ireland's Pisa Ranking 2009 v 2015 (out of OECD-34)



Source: DES

COMPETITIVENESS

OBJECTIVES:

- Achieve a top five competitiveness ranking based on the IMD Competitiveness Scorecard by 2020.

GOAL:

**ACHIEVE
TOP 5 GLOBAL
COMPETITIVENESS
RANKING**

PROGRESS TO DATE:

- Ireland's improved competitiveness over the period 2011-2017 has been central to the recovery in employment and economic growth.
-
- Ireland's ranking as measured by the IMD's World Competitiveness Yearbook has improved from 15th in 2011 to 6th in 2017.
-
- Recent improvements have been supported by favourable exchange rate movements, low oil prices and interest rates. However the National Competitiveness Council cautions that a range of emerging threats risk undermining Ireland's competitiveness, in particular uncertainty in key markets such as the UK and the US.
-
- The cost base for enterprise has improved in recent years, but Ireland remains a relatively high cost location, and the return to growth is already resulting in a series of upward cost pressures (e.g. commercial and residential property, insurance).



Source: IMD Competitiveness Yearbook 2017

Out of 190 countries, Ireland is:



Source: World Bank, Doing Business 2018

Online Trading Vouchers



businesses benefitted since 2014

21% increase in sales

84% jump in sales leads

60% are beginning to export for the first time

Source: DCCA



Source: IMD Competitiveness Yearbook 2017



Source: European Commission



Source: DBEI

PRODUCTIVITY

OBJECTIVES:

- › Increase productivity levels by between 2%-2.5% per annum on average over the period to 2020

GOAL:

DRIVE PRODUCTIVITY GROWTH

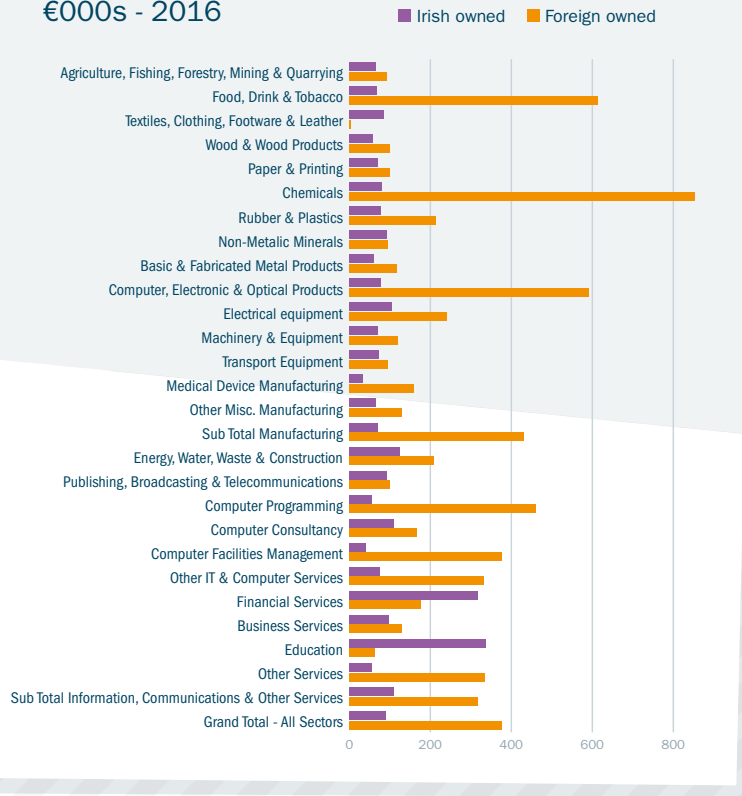
across all sectors
of the economy

PROGRESS TO DATE:

- › Irish productivity growth rates and levels have been above the rate of growth in other economies since the recession. In 2016 output per hour grew at 2.4% compared with growth of 0.6% in the EU and Euro area. However, Ireland's productivity performance is greatly affected by the influence of a few high value added firms and sectors (ICT and Manufacturing) on output.
- › Foreign owned firms tend to be more productive. The narrow base of enterprises in high value added sectors, and within sectors (particularly in Pharma and ICT) disguises the majority of underperforming firms where productivity growth is stagnant.
- › Ireland has significant potential to increase productivity. Supporting an uplift in productivity performance at firm level, particularly amongst Irish-owned firms represents a significant competitiveness challenge.
- › More than three out of four companies participating in Enterprise Ireland's Lean programme have reported improvements in productivity and/or capacity increases. Key to increasing productivity across all sectors are driving innovation, supporting enterprise and entrepreneurs, growing exports, enhancing management development skills and effective use of ICT.



Labour Productivity, Value Added Per Employee €000s - 2016



Source:DBEI

Productivity is strong



Business Efficiency



Source: Ireland's IMD Competitiveness Rankings 2017

Global Entrepreneurship Index 2018



up from #9 in 2017
#12 in 2016



Source: Global Entrepreneurship Development Institute

Irish Labour Productivity

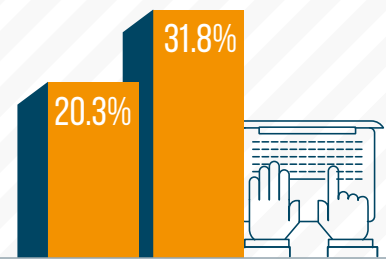
74%

above the EU 27 average



Source: IDA Ireland

Gross Capital Formation as a Share of GDP

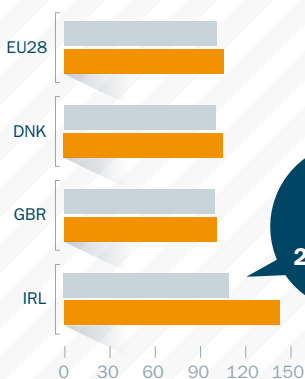


Eurostat, 2016

GDP per hour worked (USD)

Source: OECD

2011 2016

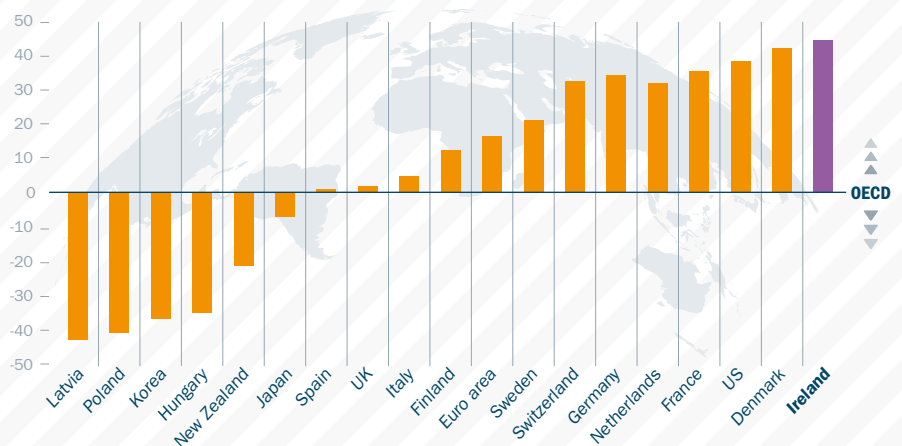


Strong progress from 2011-2016



Gross National Income per hour worked 2015 (Relative to OECD)

Source: OECD





2

Preparing
for Brexit

Brexit and Enterprise

The Government has been proactive and strategic in ensuring a coherent response to the UK's decision to leave the EU.

Our stated priorities in this regard are:

- Minimising impact on trade and the economy;
- Protecting the Northern Ireland Peace Process;
- Maintaining the Common Travel Area; and
- Influencing the future of the European Union.

The Government's response to Brexit is developed through a cross-Departmental coordination structure chaired by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, ensuring active channels for all relevant research, analysis, and overall policy input to the Government's response.

Contingency planning, at both a domestic and an EU level, is focused on three areas: preparing for a no-deal scenario or so-called "disorderly Brexit"; preparing for a transition period based on the "status quo"; and preparing for the future EU-UK relationship.

While the outcome of the December European Council and the progression to Phase 2 negotiations has potentially lessened the likelihood of a disorderly Brexit, very detailed work on a no-deal or worst-case-scenario is advancing intensively through the cross-Departmental coordination structures. Such planning provides a baseline scenario for the policies and sectors impacted, which ensures an adaptive approach can be taken as EU-UK negotiations continue to develop and evolve which will guide the Government's response and mitigation measures.

In terms of a transition period, the aim of the EU is to achieve a "status quo" transition period immediately following the UK's exit from the EU. Such a transition period will afford certainty to business while they prepare and plan for the future EU-UK relationship.

A key element of the Government's response is to stimulate the productive capacity of the economy and create an environment which supports job retention and creation, and the Action Plan for Jobs is central to this. This year's Plan will build on APJ2017 and *Budget 2018* measures, and the extensive Brexit response already underway such as the €300 million Brexit Loan Scheme for Business, the development of €25 million Brexit Response Loan Scheme for the agri-food sector, the additional capital expenditure allocation of €4.3 billion over four years to allow the State to progress major infrastructure projects, the €5,000 'Be Prepared' grant for firms, and the opening of six new diplomatic missions as part of Global Footprint 2025, to name just a few.

Additional resources have also been allocated across a number of Departments, including extra funding for staffing in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, and its agencies.

One of the immediate aims of APJ2018 is to ensure that Ireland's enterprise base can be successful amid the uncertainty created by Brexit, and so it sets out specific actions that will assist firms to address Brexit, as well as other global challenges.

Brexit undoubtedly poses a range of challenges for all firms, particularly those that are internationally trading, but also those focused on the domestic market. The enterprise agencies continue to work with companies, helping them to deal with Brexit – by becoming more competitive, diversifying market exposure, and up-skilling. The range of Government Brexit Business Supports continue to help businesses prepare for Brexit; key tools in this regard include the Enterprise Ireland Brexit Scorecard (which has now been completed by over 1,600 businesses), Bord Bia Brexit Barometer, and InterTrade Ireland's Brexit Advisory Service.

The Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation is working across Government to ensure we get the best outcome possible for business from Brexit negotiations, and is leading a range of Brexit research projects which will provide an extensive evidence base and valuable analysis to inform and guide Ireland's position within the EU-27.

In November 2017, DBEI published '*Building Stronger Business*' which sets out how the Department intends to minimise risks and maximise opportunities by ensuring the growth and resilience of Irish enterprise post-Brexit. This means helping firms compete, enabling firms to innovate, supporting firms to trade, and negotiating for the best possible outcome.

In this context, the actions to be taken under this APJ over the next year are described in the following sections:

- National Preparedness and Intensified Supports: increasing national, sectoral and firm preparedness to ensure that companies exposed to Brexit anticipate the need for change, and respond and adapt;
- Intensifying and Diversifying Trade: anticipating and responding to the structural shift in our trading relations; and
- Improving Access to Finance: facilitating companies' access to longer-term finance for sustainability and growth, and reducing the cost of finance.

National Preparedness and Intensified Supports

Preparedness is a priority, at all levels from Government, down to the firm level including firms directly or indirectly affected by Brexit. The Government will continue to progress adaptive contingency planning to prepare for a range of different outcomes from the negotiations. Negotiating for the best possible outcome remains a key priority in terms of our overall strategy to mitigate risks and maximise opportunities associated with Brexit.

In 2018, the Strategic Communications Unit in the Department of the Taoiseach will coordinate a national 'Brexit preparedness' public information and awareness campaign, to increase preparedness at firm level. Enterprise Ireland will intensify its supports to ensure that firms have the tools and the advice necessary to assess and execute the plans to protect themselves against the worst challenges of Brexit.

The Preparedness Campaign will centre on working with businesses in all sectors, with a strong regional dimension and a focus on the border counties. It will reiterate to business the need to be Brexit-ready, in terms of operational competitiveness, access to financial skills, knowledge of procedures (in terms of potential customs and excise arrangements), and change in supply chain management and sourcing strategies. The campaign is not only expected to develop awareness of the need to be prepared, but it is expected to trigger actions including engagement with the relevant enterprise support agencies.

In addition, Enterprise Ireland will engage companies throughout the country to support the implementation of measures to improve sustainability and capability, focusing on three specific areas- financial and currency management, strategic sourcing, and supply chain logistics.

1 Undertake Adaptive Contingency Planning

Steps Necessary for Delivery	Timeline	Responsible body
Departments and agencies to undertake extensive work and outreach (including with stakeholder organisations) in developing an adaptive whole-of-Government contingency plan	H1	DFAT, with relevant Departments and agencies
Taking account of developments in the EU-UK negotiations, Government will publish a new comprehensive paper on its approach to the next phase of the negotiations and its up-to-date assessment of the economic and sectoral challenges posed by Brexit and the responses to these challenges	H1	DFAT, with relevant Departments and agencies
Continue to work closely with the European Commission and other EU Member States in securing an orderly Brexit, with a transitional arrangement leading to the closest possible future relationship between the EU and the UK	H2	DFAT, with relevant Departments and agencies

2 Coordinate a national Brexit preparedness public information and awareness campaign

Steps Necessary for Delivery	Timeline	Responsible body
Coordinate a national Brexit preparedness public information and awareness campaign	H2	D/Taoiseach, DFAT, DBEI with relevant Departments and agencies

3 Engage directly with companies to increase response to Brexit challenges

Steps Necessary for Delivery	Timeline	Responsible body
Roll out new EI competitiveness offer to complement existing supports	H1	EI
Support the completion by companies of sustainability action plans to address the challenges of Brexit	H2	EI
Roll out a series of roadshows and other awareness-raising activities to maximise enterprise engagement at a regional level	H1	EI with LEOs and other relevant bodies

Intensifying and Diversifying Trade

For a small open economy like Ireland, trade and investment play a critical role in economic growth and improving standards of living but this can bring attendant risks. Mitigating these risks and managing the structural shift in our trading relations post-Brexit means intensifying existing trading relationships and diversifying trade. This diversification of trade should be in terms of destination and source, as well as in terms of the type of products and services traded to reduce product and sector concentration. At the same time, strategic specialisation in the right products and markets can be a positive growth strategy in certain circumstances.

The national response to these challenges incorporates both trade and foreign direct investment objectives, as set out in *'Ireland Connected: Trading and Investing in a Dynamic World'* - Ireland's national trade and investment strategy published in March 2017. The strategy has the ambition to:

- Increase our indigenous exports, including food, to reach €26 billion by 2020 – up by 26% from 2015;
- Generate 30,000 more jobs in tourism by 2020 and €5 billion in overseas tourism revenues by 2025;
- Secure 900 new foreign direct investments in the period 2015-2019;
- Increase our international student numbers by 27% to reach 176,500 by the academic year 2019/2020;
- Intensify and diversify 67% of indigenous export growth to 2020 to be outside of the UK market and maintain exports of at least €7.5 billion to the UK;
- Increase investment in developing innovative products, services and solutions by 50% in Irish owned enterprises to reach annual RD&I spend of €1.25 billion, in line with *Innovation 2020* targets;
- Increase the number of our Irish owned companies of scale by 30% seeing a greater number exceed turnover thresholds of €3 million, €20 million and €100 million; and
- Increase value to the economy with an uplift of 25% spend in the economy from Enterprise Ireland supported companies, and a 20% uplift from IDA Ireland supported entities.

It is clear that there is a new self-confidence in Ireland, as an island with a global outlook, and we must remain ambitious, visible, and active in promoting the interests of our nation on the international stage. We are already taking steps to realise our objectives. For example, the Taoiseach has announced the *Global Footprint 2025* initiative, with a statement of Government intent to double the impact of Ireland's overseas footprint over the period 2018-2024. Underpinning this objective is a detailed plan to significantly increase Ireland's ambition level across the full range of our international policy objectives.

Ireland will significantly increase the impact and effectiveness of our international presence. This means deepening our understanding and engagement with key international partners, bilaterally and multilaterally as well as building new relationships – diplomatic, commercial and people to people. By so doing, we can be even more ambitious in advancing our strategic international objectives, promoting our values, exerting our influence and defending our national interests.

4 Increase Ireland's international reach

Steps Necessary for Delivery	Timeline	Responsible body
Broaden the overseas network of diplomatic missions and agency offices in key and emerging markets as per the <i>Global Footprint 2025</i> Initiative	H2	DFAT with EI and IDA
Increase the number of Ministerial-led trade missions, with a focus on the Eurozone, in line with EI's Eurozone Strategy	H2	EI
Seek to facilitate increased competition and connectivity in air services in and out of Ireland, in particular on new routes serving key markets in Asia, in line with the National Aviation Policy goal of enhancing connectivity	H2	DTTAS

5 Launch new EI Market Discovery Fund, a combined suite of grant and in-market measures, to support enterprises in identifying and developing market diversification opportunities

Steps Necessary for Delivery	Timeline	Responsible body
Launch the Fund	H1	EI

6 Drive increase in exports to the Eurozone and key growth regions

Steps Necessary for Delivery	Timeline	Responsible body
Implement EI Eurozone strategy	Ongoing	EI
Roll out EI's #Irish Advantage export promotion campaign	Ongoing	EI

7 Assist agri-food and drinks companies exporting to the UK to expand alternative markets

Steps Necessary for Delivery	Timeline	Responsible body
Expand Bord Bia programme of market diversification initiatives aimed at helping the agri-food sector to address the market challenges arising from Brexit, including market prioritisation, more resources for promotion and support in UK and international markets, and strengthened strategic marketing processes	Ongoing	Bord Bia
Bord Bia to maintain support for Marketplace 2018 and broaden focus on emerging markets and to deliver 50% of buyers from non-EU markets	Ongoing	Bord Bia

Improving Access to Finance

The actions set out in APJ2018 differ from those implemented in the earlier years of the Plans. When the first APJ was published in 2012, Irish businesses were being most severely impacted by the financial crisis, with credit demand and supply negatively affected. Irish banks had become more risk averse, while businesses became averse to seeking credit where it was available to grow and develop.

In response, several Government initiatives were introduced, including:

- The Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI) established in 2014 to provide low cost, flexible finance to SMEs through both its bank and non-bank on-lending partners. To the end of June 2017, €855 million of SBCI funding has been provided to 21,132 Irish SMEs, supporting 106,728 jobs.
- The development of the Credit Guarantee Scheme (CGS) in 2012 and 2015 to encourage additional lending to commercially viable SMEs which, under normal lending criteria, are unable to obtain new or additional facilities from their bank. Under the new Credit Guarantee Scheme the SBCI, on behalf of the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation is rolling out new financial products and involving other financial providers (beyond the three main banks) for Irish SMEs. To end of 2017, approximately €84.4 million in credit guarantee scheme facilities were sanctioned for 530 SMEs, resulting in 2,104 new jobs created and 1,186 existing jobs sustained.
- Microfinance Ireland (MFI) established under the Microenterprise Loan Fund Act 2012 to provide small loans (€2,000-€25,000) to start-ups and established businesses. MFI has approved loans (up until the end of Q4 2017) totalling €22.6 million that have helped to create or sustain 3,952 jobs so far.

Today, a higher number of businesses have reported profit increases and a higher proportion of SMEs are pursuing a growth strategy. The economic recovery has led to an improvement in overall credit availability for Irish SMEs, and the Central Bank reported €2.4 billion of new lending by the banks to Irish resident SMEs in the first half of 2017. However, demand for credit by SMEs remains relatively subdued and in many instances, access to finance (and cost) remains a difficulty.

The primary focus for Government, therefore, is to support SMEs in accessing the finance needed to grow their businesses and address the challenges caused by Brexit. The actions set out here for 2018 reflect the Government's aim to support SMEs dealing with uncertainty caused by Brexit and other uncertainties in the system.

It will also continue to ensure that all viable SMEs have access to a suitable supply of credit from a range of bank and non-bank sources to assist new SMEs to grow, and help existing SMEs reach their full potential. In addition, an analysis of SMEs investment patterns will be undertaken by the Department of Finance and the ESRI, which will provide insights into the continued subdued demand for credit.

DBEI will continue to engage with the European Commission on potential financial supports to ensure that Ireland can assist companies affected by Brexit, while complying with European rules on State Aid.

8 Launch the €300 million Brexit Loan Scheme to address short-term working capital needs

Steps Necessary for Delivery	Timeline	Responsible body
Launch the €300 million Brexit Loan Scheme	H1	DBEI, DAFM and SBCI

9 Consider the development of potential Brexit response loan schemes for farmers, fishermen and for longer-term capital financing for food businesses; for which DAFM has secured €25 million of funding in 2018

Steps Necessary for Delivery	Timeline	Responsible body
Consider the development of potential Brexit response loan schemes for farmers, fishermen and for longer-term capital financing for food businesses	H2	DAFM and SBCI

10 Consider other sources of finance for SMEs impacted by Brexit

Steps Necessary for Delivery	Timeline	Responsible body
Examine policy proposals for a new longer-term Business Investment Loan Scheme to support businesses to invest strategically for a post-Brexit environment	H2	DBEI, DoF and SBCI
Engage with the European Commission on the approval process on all Brexit-related State Aid issues	Ongoing	DBEI

The Government will also build on recent developments in non-bank finance, especially for businesses classed as high risk which have difficulty securing credit from banks. Action will be taken in the areas of equity funding to business angels and other non-institutional investors to support innovative company investment directly and indirectly in seed and venture capital programmes ensuring adequate availability for start-ups, and to assist the EIB to become more visible in the Irish market and increase their corporate loan deals.

11 Explore alternative sources of finance

Steps Necessary for Delivery	Timeline	Responsible body
Examine options to extend the European Angel Fund in Ireland to provide equity funding to business angels and other non-institutional investors to support innovative companies	H2	EI
Develop proposals for new Seed and Venture Capital funding for early stage high growth companies and start-ups	H2	EI with DBEI
Assist EIB to become more visible in the Irish market and increase their corporate loan deals	H1	DBEI

Finally, it is recognised that it can be difficult for SMEs to navigate the broad suite of State supports, and find the correct one to suit their specific needs. Also, there can be a lack of awareness among those who provide advice to SMEs (e.g. accountants, law firms) of all the available State supports. To help address this issue, action will be taken in 2018 to provide more information on the types of finance available, including alternative types of finance and non-bank finance. A Business Finance Advisory Hub is being developed and launched. The Hub will primarily be an online offering, which will provide standardised information and tools to support financial planning and general financing needs of SMEs. It will also act as a signpost to appropriate Government supports and resources.

12 Develop and launch a Business Finance Advisory Hub to help firms (SMEs) strengthen their financial planning skills and make informed funding/investment decisions

Steps Necessary for Delivery	Timeline	Responsible body
Develop and launch a Business Finance Advisory Hub	H2	DBEI with DoF, SBCI



Prepare for Brexit

Early planning and preparation is a critical factor in a company's ability to respond to the business challenges that Brexit presents. The Enterprise Ireland Brexit SME Scorecard is a free planning tool for Irish exporters to the UK. It is designed to help companies accurately assess business readiness across six areas – Business Strategy, Operations, Sales and Marketing, Finance, Innovation, and People and Management.

While a lot of uncertainty exists around exactly what Brexit will mean for the European trading landscape, Irish companies need to examine their business strategy now and decide where adjustment is needed. Dreamtec Software was one of these companies.

A Dublin-based ICT company, Dreamtec Software specialises in Machine-to-Machine (M2M) services. Its product, the I-Meter, allows deliveries to be tracked online and in real-time. They have been providing this mobile service and others like it to international markets since 1994, and like many companies, its largest market is the UK.

When Britain voted to leave the EU, Dreamtec found themselves facing the unknown. Brexit and what it could mean for the free flow of trade between both countries prompted Dreamtec's financial director, Patrick Treacy, to consider his company's position as a major exporter to the UK. The team had long-term overseas expansion plans, but Brexit meant this distant eventuality could become an immediate necessity.

Amid uncertainty, the Enterprise Ireland Brexit SME Scorecard presented real data that empowered Dreamtec to take action and make substantiated business decisions to prepare the company for the potential impact of Brexit. Using the Scorecard meant they now had a clear evaluation of their preparedness for Brexit, and what they could do to strengthen their position.

Enterprise Ireland provided Dreamtec with expert guidance, encouraging them to expand their business offering through strategic partnerships in larger international markets such as the US and Canada. Although the UK is still the company's primary export market, the team at Dreamtec feel more confident in their position having access to Enterprise Ireland's support.

Dreamtec is now engaging further with the Enterprise Ireland Brexit Unit and the company's Development Adviser regarding the Be Prepared Grant of up to €5,000, and its business action plan to explore further export opportunities to the US. The future may be uncertain, but equipped with the support and expert advice of Enterprise Ireland, companies like Dreamtec can confidently move onward and upward.



3

Stimulating
Regional
Development
Further

It is critically important, both for sustained national economic growth and the sustainability of regional and rural communities throughout Ireland, that all regions are performing to their economic potential. Regional development and the revitalisation of rural Ireland continue to be key priorities for the Government, which aims to ensure that the rate of unemployment in each region will not exceed the State average by greater than one percentage point by 2020.

While the recovery of the jobs market is remarkable, there continues to be regional variation in job creation performance. While there are five regions that have unemployment rates within one percentage point of the average for the State, the latest CSO Labour Force Survey data shows that three regions are more than one percentage point in excess: Midlands, South-East, and Mid-West. Brexit can be expected to have a different impact across the regions, for example in Border areas where businesses are more dependent on the movement of people and trade across the border. In 2016, over 50% of the exports from Irish-owned firms in the Border, Midland, and West regions were destined for UK markets.

Since 2015, the Regional Action Plans for Jobs (RAPJs) have been driving collaborative initiatives from the ground up, aimed at building on regional economic strengths and addressing vulnerabilities. In addition, the *Action Plan for Rural Development* launched in January 2017 is driving a range of initiatives in a whole-of-Government approach to the development of rural Ireland.

The twenty-year *National Planning Framework* and the aligned ten-year *National Development Plan* will deliver key investments that are necessary to support enterprise growth countrywide. *Ireland 2040* sets out the national overarching vision, priorities and expectations around development and growth for Ireland's regions, cities, towns and rural areas that will guide investment decisions over the coming decades.

In setting out a long-term spatial development plan for Ireland, *Ireland 2040* integrates population and enterprise elements with environmental and infrastructure considerations, to offer the potential to create places of quality; places that businesses will want to invest in, and that people will want to live, work, play and learn in.

The *Ireland 2040* planning framework will be supported by three Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES) that are being prepared through the Regional Assemblies. Ireland's former Regional Authorities, which had a range of powers in relation to spatial planning and economic development, were streamlined into three Regional Assemblies in 2015 representing the Northern and Western, Eastern and Midlands, and the Southern Regions. The RSESs are new plans that will address the potential of towns and their surrounding regional catchments, including emerging economic corridors (e.g. Atlantic Economic Corridor), in conjunction with consideration of population growth targets.

Reflecting the Government's continued prioritisation of regional and rural development, APJ 2018 will maintain a focus on:

- Realising our regional enterprise potential;
- Strengthening the rural economy; and
- Investing in infrastructure for growth.

Realising our Regional Enterprise Potential

Over the past two years, the RAPJ process has brought together regional economic development partners from the public and private sectors to develop and implement focused initiatives aimed at supporting enterprise growth and job creation in their region, building on regional strengths and assets and exploiting new opportunities. The objective is to contribute to the Government's job target of achieving a 10 to 15 percent uplift in employment in each region (Midlands, Mid-West, North-East/North-West, Mid-East, South-West, South-East, West, and Dublin) by 2020.

The eight plans have gained strong momentum to date with objectives focused on the period 2015 to 2017/18. Public and private sector collaboration has been central to their delivery, which is driven and overseen by Regional Implementation Committees involving Local Authorities, LEOs, the enterprise agencies, as well as enterprise champions and other key stakeholders. The Committees also work closely with the Regional Skills Fora to deliver the skills required by employers in those regions.

The Retail Consultation Forum will continue its focus on ensuring a vibrant retail sector in villages, towns and cities throughout Ireland.

In 2018, the Government will continue to facilitate the RAPJ's bottom-up approach focused on taking collaborative action in the regions to support business growth and job creation. In addition, as envisaged under the NPF, the three Regional Assemblies will progress new medium- to long-term Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies.

13 Undertake a refresh and refocus of the existing Regional Action Plans for Jobs

Steps Necessary for Delivery	Timeline	Responsible body
Undertake a refresh and refocus of the existing Regional Action Plans for Jobs for the period to 2020	H2	Regional Implementation Committees with DBEI

14 Finalise the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies reflecting the economic competitiveness and enterprise development agenda for each of the three Regional Assembly areas

Steps Necessary for Delivery	Timeline	Responsible body
Prepare Draft Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies - Public consultation commenced	H2	DHPLG, Regional Assemblies, DBEI, DES
Finalise and publish Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies as complementary regional development frameworks to the Government's National Planning Framework	H2	DHPLG, Regional Assemblies, DBEI, DES

A competitive Regional Enterprise Development Fund (REDF) of up to €60 million was launched in May 2017 and will run until 2020 to support the ambition, goals and implementation of the Regional Action Plans for Jobs. With two competitive calls administered by Enterprise Ireland, it will support the development and implementation of collaborative and innovative projects to strengthen regional enterprise development potential and growth. The result of the first call under the REDF was announced in December 2017 with 21 projects approved for funding totalling €30.5 million. In 2018 the Government will continue to develop local enterprise ecosystems and optimise the delivery of enterprise support at regional level with a second call under the fund.

15 Launch and roll out the Second Call of the Regional Enterprise Development Fund

Steps Necessary for Delivery	Timeline	Responsible body
Monitor and support the implementation of the 21 projects approved through Call 1 of the Regional Enterprise Development Fund 2017	H1	EI
Launch and roll out Call 2 of the Regional Enterprise Development Fund	H1	EI



Regional Enterprise Development Fund

The €60 million Regional Enterprise Development Fund (REDF) is a key initiative in support of the Government's ambition to create an additional 200,000 jobs by 2020 and the Regional Action Plans for Jobs. The Fund is aimed at supporting collaborative and innovative initiatives that can make a significant impact on enterprise development in the regions and nationally. Twenty-one successful applicants under the first call were announced on 11 December 2017, collectively securing up to €30.5 million in grant support across all of the regions.

Under the first call, funding was awarded under four streams with varying investment levels:

- **Stream One** (grants of €2 million up to €5 million) – for major regional, multi-regional or national initiatives focussed on achieving defined enterprise development impacts. Seven projects were successful in this stream, including Irish Manufacturing Research (IMR) based in Mullingar which will develop technologies in the areas of collaborative robotics and virtual reality in partnership with key industry players; and a National Bioeconomy Innovation & Piloting facility at the former Lisheen mine in Tipperary.
- **Stream Two** (grants of €250k up to €2 million) – for significant county, regional or multi-regional sectoral and/or enterprise initiative projects with defined outputs and impacts. Seven projects were successful under this stream, including a 3D manufacturing product development and training facility in the South East; and the development of a network of three digital and innovation hubs in Leitrim, Cavan and Longford.
- **Stream Three** (grants of €50k up to €250k) – for local and community enterprise projects with defined metrics for enterprise development in the area. Three projects were successful under this stream; a regional food centre of excellence in Monaghan; Sneem Digital Hub and a community enterprise job creation initiative in Dingle with three strands: the Internet of Things, animation and film/music.
- **Stream Four** (grants of €50k up to €250k) – aimed at supporting significant industry clustering initiatives that maximise the benefits of collaborative opportunities for business. Four projects were funded under this stream. These were Emerald Aero Cluster, a developing Shannon-based cluster of 14 indigenous manufacturing companies aiming to increase Aerospace manufacturing activities regionally and nationally; IT@Cork, an ICT initiative in Cork/South West region; KerrySciTech, a cluster which aims to drive job creation in science and technology in Kerry; and a project to further the development of a Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) cluster in Ireland.

The balance of the €60 million fund will be made available in the second call which will open for applications in March 2018.

Strengthening the Rural Economy

Rural areas are particularly challenged by economic restructuring, which has generated a variety of scenarios that threaten the sustainability of rural communities, including depopulation and reduced employment opportunity. The focus on strengthening the development of the regions will have a key role to play in offsetting the effects of these challenges and supporting the diversification of rural economies.

Additional new local initiatives aimed at the revitalisation of rural Ireland through the *Action Plan for Rural Development* are also necessary, along with a specific focus on enhancing the capacity of agriculture, fisheries and tourism which will continue to be important drivers of the rural economy.

The *Action Plan for Rural Development*, launched in January 2017, acts as an overarching framework for a co-ordinated approach across Government to the economic and social development of rural communities.

The Plan contains over 270 commitments to be delivered by a range of Government Departments, state agencies and other bodies, over the period to 2020. The Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) coordinates the Plan, and is committed to developing a mechanism to measure its impact on rural communities and job creation.

DRCD will publish a National Policy on Social Enterprise and deliver a range of supporting measures for the sector to promote job creation, encourage entrepreneurship and deliver social and community benefits.

As part of the *Action Plan for Rural Development*, DRCD also delivers a suite of measures to support the sustainable development of rural areas, including the *Town and Village Renewal Scheme*, the *Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme*, LEADER, the CLÁR programme, the Local Improvement Scheme, and the *Walks Scheme*, all of which will be further developed throughout 2018.

16 Support future economic development and job creation in rural Ireland through the *Action Plan for Rural Development*.

Steps Necessary for Delivery	Timeline	Responsible body
Support future economic development through the <i>Action Plan for Rural Development</i>	Ongoing	DRCD

17 Publish a National Policy on Social Enterprise and deliver a range of supporting measures for the sector to promote job creation, encourage entrepreneurship and deliver social and community benefits.

Steps Necessary for Delivery	Timeline	Responsible body
Publish National Policy on Social Enterprise	H1	DRCD
Deliver measures to support Social Enterprise	Ongoing	DRCD, Pobal

18 Continue to develop and implement a range of programmes to support rural economic development including, amongst others: LEADER, *Town and Village Renewal Scheme*, *Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme*

Steps Necessary for Delivery	Timeline	Responsible body
Continue to develop and implement a range of programmes to support rural economic development	Ongoing	DRCD

Agri-Food

The agri-food sector is one of Ireland's largest and most important indigenous industries, with a turnover of €26 billion. It contributes around 8% of GDP providing a particularly significant role in employment in rural and coastal areas. The Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine (DAFM) is responsible for a number of funding schemes for Agriculture and Rural Development. These schemes support the implementation of *Food Wise 2025* (a strategy that aims to create 23,000 additional jobs directly or indirectly in the agri-food sector), and *Harnessing Our Ocean Wealth*.

Bord Bia supports producers, processors and food companies for market, quality and Origin Green initiatives. DAFM provided additional funding in 2017 for a market prioritisation exercise to support market diversification by food and drink producers and companies.

The *Rural Development Programme 2014-2020* (RDP) funded under Common Agricultural Policy allocates €4 billion to provide supports to enhance competitiveness of the agri-food sector, achieve more sustainable management of natural resources, and ensure a more balanced development of rural areas.

The range of initiatives in this area is very broad and includes Basic Payment scheme/ Greening Payments, the Green Low Carbon Agri-Environment scheme, to farm capital investment, and the Rural Innovation and Development Fund.

Supports to the seafood sector through DAFM/ BIM include a range of funding opportunities for the fishing fleet, aquaculture enterprises, seafood processing enterprises, and to coastal communities through Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGs).

To stimulate innovative projects in the rural economy, DAFM has a number of initiatives where it collaborates with agencies under its aegis (and others), and the food distributors to scale up for start-ups and to develop sustainable food production systems. Under APJ2018, further actions will be taken to support enterprises in the agri-food sector.

19 Support new business ventures in the agri-food sector

Steps Necessary for Delivery	Timeline	Responsible body
Support food start-ups through initiatives with retailers, including the Food Academy Advance with Musgraves Supervalu and Taste Buds programme with Tesco	Ongoing	DAFM
Undertake commercial projects proposals, with the participation of relevant Government agencies to deliver knowledge transfer on Ireland's Sustainable Food Systems Ireland (SFSI)	Ongoing	DAFM, SFSI

Tourism

The tourism sector supports over 230,000 jobs and contributes significantly to employment in rural and coastal areas. There was a record number of overseas visits to Ireland in 2017 at over 9.9 million and initiatives in tourism policy have proven to be catalysts for the promotion of tourism and new investment leading to job creation in regional locations and rural areas.

The retention of the 9% VAT rate helps the sector to stay competitive. Some €2 million has been allocated as part of *Budget 2018* for investment in digital infrastructure to underpin Tourism Ireland's efforts to reach more people through their online marketing campaigns.

Funding allocated to Fáilte Ireland will help to further develop the product offering, including a new brand for the Midlands, while the publication of a strategy for the future development of Greenways will set out a framework by which we can develop more of these wonderful attractions around the country. In 2018, the Government will continue to invest in new cultural and tourism initiatives.

20 Strengthen the resilience of the tourism sector in each region

Steps Necessary for Delivery	Timeline	Responsible body
Publish and begin implementing a new Tourism Action Plan for the period 2018 - 2020 in line with the Government's Tourism Policy Statement, including actions to review targets for overseas visitors and revenue out to 2025 as well as actions aimed at addressing challenges such as Brexit, seasonality and regionality	H1	DTTAS/Fáilte Ireland/Tourism Ireland
Publish a strategy to underpin the future development and funding of Greenways and announce a new funding call for Greenways proposals	H1	DTTAS
Launch a dedicated campaign to boost rural tourism on Ireland's Wild Atlantic Way by encouraging short breaks from Great Britain outside the peak holiday period. The proposed initiative will build on existing air access to Cork, Kerry, Ireland West Airport – Knock, and Donegal airports	H1	Fáilte Ireland/ Tourism Ireland
Develop and promote Blueways on the 420km of public canal network and develop the inland navigations' built heritage assets to increase recreational amenities for residents and attract tourists	H2	Waterways Ireland, CHG, LAs

Investing in Infrastructure for Growth

There is a strong interdependence between regional development, enterprise growth, and infrastructure investment. Infrastructure development in many forms is required to provide the broad place-making qualities that help regions and rural locations achieve their employment potential, including enterprise property solutions, broadband, and infrastructure to improve access and connectivity as set out in the State's new ten-year *National Development Plan 2018-2027*.

To boost foreign direct investment and support the Government objective in terms of job creation in the regions, IDA Ireland announced in 2015 a Regional Property Programme to develop €150 million in property solutions outside Dublin over five years.

As part of this programme advance buildings were completed in Athlone and Waterford, Sligo, Tralee and Castlebar. Buildings in Galway, Dundalk, Limerick, Athlone (2nd build), Carlow and Waterford will be completed over the next two years.

21 Develop property solutions - the IDA building programme for 2018/2019 includes commencing construction in 2018 on buildings in Galway, Dundalk, Limerick, Carlow, Waterford and Athlone (2nd build) which are all scheduled for completion in 2019

Steps Necessary for Delivery	Timeline	Responsible body
Commence construction in 2018 on buildings in Galway, Dundalk, Limerick, Carlow, Waterford and Athlone	H2	IDA

Broadband

The Government is committed to delivering the next generation of broadband to every household and every business in the country. This commitment will enable all enterprises and individuals and the public sector to harness the new wave of advanced digital technologies in terms of productivity growth, competitiveness, ability to export and innovate

Investment in broadband involves a combination of commercial investment by the telecommunications sector and State intervention in those areas where commercial providers acting alone will not provide this essential service.

The roll out of the infrastructure involves identifying and removing barriers in terms of access, planning, environmental, legislation, road openings, etc. Reflecting the complexity of the challenge, the Government has developed the National Broadband Plan (NBP) with the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (DCCA) leading on its implementation.

The procurement process to identify the company to roll out high speed broadband in the State intervention area is at an advanced stage. To accelerate the deployment of telecoms infrastructure once contracts are in place, the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) is engaging with all relevant stakeholders to identify and address any potential barriers which exist to network rollout in advance of the NBP rollout. The ongoing work of DRCD includes progressing the following key actions:

- Assisting all local authorities with the development of local digital strategies which will increase demand stimulation once the NBP is rolled out and ensure that businesses and communities are in a position to realise the full benefits of the new high-speed broadband network rolled out under the NBP.

- Provision of funding to each local authority to assist with the employment of a Broadband Officer to act as a single point of contact in relation to Broadband matters; and
- Progressing the recommendations of the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce. The Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce was established to examine solutions to address broadband/mobile phone coverage deficits and to identify tangible actions that can be taken to improve the quality of broadband and mobile voice services in advance of the roll out of the NBP.

Taken together, actions in 2018 will help significantly increase digital footprint via the National Broadband Plan.

22 Increase digital footprint via the National Broadband Plan to over 77% of premises by 2018		
Steps Necessary for Delivery	Timeline	Responsible body
Continue to monitor progress in the eir 300k rural rollout. Ensure that, in line with Commitment Agreement, all 300k premises are passed by the end of 2018	H2	DCCAIE
Intensively manage the NBP procurement process to engage the bidder to roll out the State intervention network	Ongoing	DCCAIE
Continue to work with local authorities to plan for, and facilitate early access to, high-speed broadband to rural communities by identifying and addressing barriers in advance of the rollout of the National Broadband Plan, and through the rollout of Strategic Community Access Hubs across Ireland	Ongoing	DRCD, LAs
Publish a progress review of the actions contained in the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce Report for 2017 and recommend further actions to be delivered in 2018	H1	DRCD, DCCAIE
Host an annual Stakeholder Forum for all stakeholders to discuss issues impacting on the rollout of telecoms infrastructure	H2	DRCD, DCCAIE



Geoscience Ireland:

The export-orientated cluster supporting job creation and economic growth in the Irish geoscience sector.

Geoscience is a highly technical sector, incorporating a number of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) disciplines. The Geoscience sector is important to Ireland, valued at having an overall economic impact of over €3 billion and employing 24,700 in 2016 in a recent independent study.

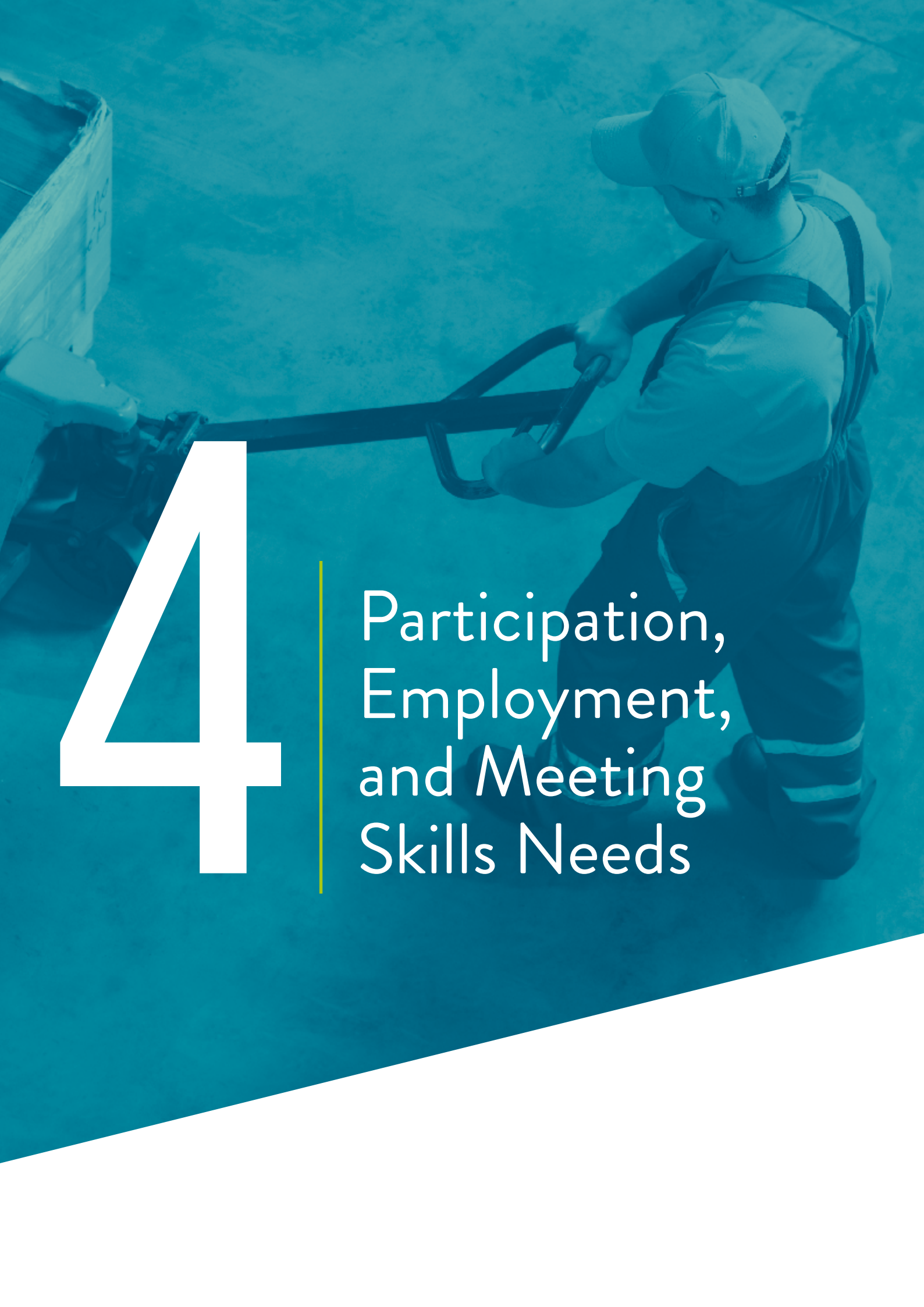
Geoscience Ireland is a cluster comprising over 30 Irish companies. It was created in 2012 as a response to the economic downturn where Geological Survey Ireland (GSI), part of Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment and Enterprise Ireland, along with five reference companies in the geoscience sector, agreed to target commercial projects in overseas markets in a collaborative manner, with the aim to protect and create jobs in the face of economic uncertainty. Since the inception of Geoscience Ireland, its member companies have created over 750 net new jobs in the sector, employing over 3,300 people (of which over 1,900 were created by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)) and generating over €800 million in turnover.

The Team Ireland approach to targeting international opportunities and developing linkages to overseas networks is critical to Geoscience Ireland in accessing and sustaining itself in international markets such as sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, North America, Eastern Europe, Scandinavia and the UK.

Maintaining close collaboration with Enterprise Ireland and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade is central to Geoscience Ireland achieving its goals. Enterprise Ireland's commercial experience and network of overseas office provides critical insights and leverages networks in such a way that Geoscience Ireland member companies can gain market knowledge quickly and efficiently. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's embassy and consular network provide support in terms of facilitating receptions and networking events as well as visa and related advice.

In addition to business development and support, Geoscience Ireland maintains strong linkages to research and training. This includes involvement with Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) and industry-backed Irish Centre for Research in Applied Geoscience (iCRAG), and working with GSI, IT Carlow and SOLAS to develop a new Geo Driller Apprenticeship Course.





4

Participation,
Employment,
and Meeting
Skills Needs

This Plan seeks to embed progress made and help ensure that Ireland is ready to take new opportunities as they arise. Since 2012, the Action Plans for Jobs, complemented by the *Pathways to Work* strategy, has increased both labour demand and labour supply. As the economy approaches full employment, the ability to fulfil its future potential growth will depend on our ability to address potential labour shortages, in terms of the quantity and quality of specific skills requirements. It also needs to respond to shifts brought about by the changing economic landscape of specific sectors and new technologies.

With an unemployment rate of 6.1% (January 2018) growth in employment can no longer primarily be delivered by reducing unemployment. The future labour needs of the economy will be met by an increase in the labour force, through a reduction in the number of people not currently in the labour force or through underlying population growth and inward migration, including the return of Irish nationals who emigrated during the recession.

Based on CSO population projections, assuming net in-migration of about 20,000 per annum, the population aged 20-64 is likely to rise from 2.83 million in 2017 to 2.89 million in 2020. The 200,000 additional jobs foreseen in this Plan would see an increase in the employment rate for this age-group from about 73% in 2017 to 78% in 2020. If unemployment remained at 6%, this would in turn require an increase in labour force participation in this age group from 78% in 2017 to 83% in 2020.

Action Plan for Jobs 2018 will address labour shortages with actions pursuing two objectives:

- Increasing the number of people able to participate in employment; and
- Ensuring that existing and future skills needs are met.

Through these measures, the Government intends to meet the aspirations of individuals who wish to return to employment and at the same time address the skills needs of employers.

Removing Barriers and Maximising Participation

Well-functioning labour markets facilitate unemployed people and those not currently participating, particularly where they have skills which are in high demand.

Three avenues are available to increase participation in the labour market:

- Removing barriers to participation in employment, typically but not exclusively by ensuring that work pays;
- Assisting access to work for those who wish to do so by ensuring they have opportunity to address real or perceived skills deficiencies, whether they are discouraged workers or people with disabilities; and
- Facilitating the inward migration of workers, typically skilled workers, including those who left during the recession.

Pathways to Work is the main Government initiative encouraging access to the labour market and ultimately participation in employment. It is complemented by the *Action Plan for Jobless Households*, the *National Disability Inclusion Strategy*, and the *Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities*.

The Government's current approach involves consolidating the recent reforms to the Public Employment and Welfare Services and optimising provision to maximise outcomes for its clients, and gradually expanding access to activation services, as resources allow, to other non-employed people of working-age with the capacity and desire to work.

The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection will ensure that the number of people out of work continues to fall as the economy recovers, that the labour market responds flexibly and efficiently to employment growth, and that the expansion and active promotion of services to currently inactive working age adults with a capacity and a desire to work, continues. This will include lone parents, qualified adults and persons with a disability.

Action to be taken in 2018 will increase awareness among employers of the range of services and supports available to maximise take up, and improve information flow on welfare-to-work schemes, targeting employers and inactive people.

23 Implement the *Pathways to Work* Strategy

Steps Necessary for Delivery	Timeline	Responsible body
Implement the Strategy	Ongoing	DEASP

24 Increase awareness among employers of the portfolio of labour activation services and supports in order to maximise take up

Steps Necessary for Delivery	Timeline	Responsible body
Develop and implement an Employer Relations Communication Strategy	H1	DEASP
Conduct a customer survey to gauge awareness of and satisfaction with services and support	H2	DEASP

25 Increase the focus of activation efforts on groups outside the labour force

Steps Necessary for Delivery	Timeline	Responsible body
Review the range of income supports (including in-work supports) for people with disabilities to ensure payments are aligned between schemes and, if appropriate, amend the payment structure to ensure that it supports a return to work for people who wish to do so	H1	DEASP
Expand the use of Intreo Centres as a gateway to engage with people with disabilities and increase the number of Intreo staff trained in the provision of employment supports to people with disability	Ongoing	DEASP
Increase earnings disregards on welfare payments for lone parents from €110 to €130 per week to further facilitate transition to work for this group	H1	DEASP
Develop online ready-reckoner tools for people on disability and lone parent payments to assess the net benefits of returning to work	H1	DEASP
Pilot whole-of-family engagement with jobseekers' payment claimants and their adult dependants	H1	DEASP

26 Introduce a new work experience programme targeted at young jobseekers who face barriers to entry into the labour market

Steps Necessary for Delivery	Timeline	Responsible body
Launch the Youth Employment Support Scheme	H1	DEASP

Facilitating Female Participation in Employment

Enhancing female participation in the labour market has the potential to address the growing need for skills and talent and to deliver significant social and gender equality benefits. To make greater female participation a reality, several barriers to entering/re-entering the labour market must be addressed. For example, there is a need to replace existing childcare subsidy schemes with a new income-based national scheme of financial support for parents towards the cost of childcare. Such a new scheme will complement the universal free pre-school programme.

In recent years, several initiatives have also been launched to facilitate the return of women to employment. For instance, the Department of Justice and Equality introduced in 2017 “Women Returning to the Workforce Initiative”. The supports range from confidence building, career guidance and support in completing applications, to training programmes and work placements.

Industry has also initiated such programmes e.g. “Women ReBOOT”, led by Technology Ireland Software and IBEC in collaboration with Skillnets seeks to connect high-skilled women returners to Ireland’s top technology companies.

Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) aims to play a strong role in addressing gender imbalance in science by committing to increase the representation of women among SFI award holders to 30% by 2020 and to improve the representation and progression of women in all aspects of STEM careers in Ireland.

Through its Starting Investigator Research Grant (SIRG) programme, SFI has piloted an initiative to encourage increased applications from female researchers. This has resulted in a significant increase in the number of SIRG applications from and SIRG awards to women.

APJ2018 reflects the need to develop a better understanding of obstacles to labour market participation for female as well as other cohorts with low participation.

27 Implement reforms to existing childcare subsidy schemes, and develop the Affordable Childcare Scheme

Steps Necessary for Delivery	Timeline	Responsible body
Continue implementation of September 2017 reforms to existing schemes	H2	DCYA
Progress development of the Affordable Childcare Scheme	H2	DCYA

28 Identify relevant policy issues for cohorts with low participation rates based on analysis of patterns of labour market participation

Steps Necessary for Delivery	Timeline	Responsible body
Analyse patterns and identify relevant policy issues	H2	DBEI, DES, DEASP, D/Taoiseach

Talent Pool for a Growing Economy

Access to a high quality, adaptable, innovative and flexible talent pool is critical for a modern, competitive and growing economy such as Ireland. Competition for talent has become global, and talent itself has become increasingly mobile. In this context, equipping the workforce with the skills required for the jobs of today and those of tomorrow is a strategic priority for the Government, as is the ability to develop, attract and retain talent. Investment in education and training is central to continued economic success, on both a national basis, and to effective regional development.

Since the beginning of 2016, significant reforms have been introduced to identify and address skills requirements in various sectors and to work towards providing a system for responding to existing and future skills needs. The *National Skills Strategy 2025*, *Regional Skills Fora*, *STEM Education Policy Statement 2017-2026*, and first *Action Plan for Education 2016-2019* will enhance the ability to respond to existing and future skills needs.

The central vision contained in the *Action Plan for Education* is to make the Irish education and training system the best in Europe over the next decade. Action will include expanding apprenticeship and traineeship, providing unemployed people with an opportunity to participate in a free third level course in areas where there are identified skills shortages (e.g. Springboard+), and actively supporting and working with businesses to address their current and future skills needs (Skillnets).

Crucially, planned capital investment will enhance the ability of the Higher Education sector to respond to new skill needs with:

- Capital Exchequer funding of €367 million for the Higher Education Sector between 2018 and 2021, which will support capacity expansion and align with new ways of teaching and learning. This represents a very substantial increase on the €110 million capital envelope before the mid-term capital review; and
- Eleven Institutes of Technology benefiting from a new €200 million capital investment under the Public Private Partnership model, which will provide at least 8,000 new student places, primarily in STEM subjects. They will have a strong regional mission to increase their engagement with local enterprises, particularly SMEs to support management upskilling, internationalisation of companies as well as innovation.

In addition, the Higher Education Authority has introduced a new Higher Education Systems Performance Framework 2018-2020 to encourage a process of strategic dialogue between individual higher education institutions and enterprise.

To facilitate the implementation and gauge the effectiveness of these reforms, the Department of Education and Skills will complete an independent review of the National Training Fund and establish the satisfaction levels of the enterprises engaged with the Regional Skills Fora.

29 Complete the independent review of the National Training Fund

Steps Necessary for Delivery	Timeline	Responsible body
Complete the Review	H1	DES

30 Carry out survey of enterprises that have engaged with the Regional Skills Fora to establish satisfaction levels

Steps Necessary for Delivery	Timeline	Responsible body
Carry out the Survey	H2	DES, Regional Skills Fora



Regional Skills Fora

In 2016 the Department of Education and Skills established a network of nine Regional Skills Fora (RSF) to foster stronger links between employers and the education and training sector. One of the key objectives in bringing together key stakeholders (employers, enterprises, education and training providers) at regional level was to develop swift responses to, and build better data around emerging skills needs countrywide.

The innovative structure of the RSF sees the work plan within each region being driven by key stakeholders in that region. Since the establishment of the RSF in 2016 there is already a greater focus on strengthening and establishing positive relationships between employers and the education and training system in the different regions.

The Fora are engaging with small, medium and large enterprises as well as representative organisations over a broad range of sectors. They link companies with higher education, further education and training institutions, encouraging collaborative solutions to skills needs. Courses are developed or modified to help companies achieve the right skills mix for their employees, already existing courses that can assist with business' skills needs are highlighted and companies are working together to identify specific sectoral needs.

For instance, one of the main priorities for Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) is to create a 'one stop shop' portal in 2018 to promote the food and beverages sector, informing people of career opportunities and the benefits of working in this industry. To make this idea a reality, DAFM have collaborated with the Mid East Regional Skills Fora, utilising their network of expertise to conduct an in-depth skills and role profiles analyses of the food and beverages sector.

Since the establishment of the RSF in 2016 there is already a greater focus on strengthening and establishing positive relationships between employers and the education and training system in the regions. During 2017, the RSF have engaged with over 700 individual companies and associations. Over 66% of this engagement was with SMEs, with an increasing level of engagement with micro enterprises. The RSF enable companies country-wide who may not have had the opportunity before, to be supported and to engage with the education and training system to respond to their skills needs.



Further information on the Regional Skills Fora is available on www.regionalskills.ie

Skills Needs for Enterprise

Enterprise needs in terms of skills are constantly evolving, and failure to properly identify and respond to those needs is likely to hinder enterprise performance. Consequently, a key development in 2018 will be the roll-out of *Skills for Growth*.

Central to *Skills for Growth* will be enhanced engagement between enterprise, education and training providers, and other relevant members of Regional Skills Fora nationally. In 2018 we will see an increase in the quality and quantity of data available on skills needs in individual enterprises, involving the Department of Education and Skills and Enterprise Ireland, in partnership with Regional Skills Fora Managers, SOLAS, All Island Research Observatory (AIRO), Midlands, East and North Dublin (MEND), and the Higher Education Authority (HEA).

In addition, *Skills for Growth* will include a package of supports for employers to help them understand and plan for their skill needs. This will include workshops to support companies to identify skills gaps and develop company skills plans, access to a new skills audit tool, and one-on-one assistance from a Regional Skills Forum Manager to use this tool and plan for the future.

31 Roll out *Skills for Growth*

Steps Necessary for Delivery	Timeline	Responsible body
Promote the use of a new skills audit tool by providing one on one assistance from a Regional Skills Forum Manager and assist the development of skills plans with a view to developing appropriate targeted responses by the Education and Training System	Ongoing	Regional Skills Fora/DES
Roll out of Spotlight on Skills workshops to support companies to identify skills gaps and develop company skills plans	H1	EI

32 Develop training initiatives to improve in-company capability

Steps Necessary for Delivery	Timeline	Responsible body
Implement the Finance Pillar of Enterprise Ireland's Client Engagement Model for assessing client's financial management capability and their need for appropriate short and long-term funding	H2	EI

33 Align skills supply with enterprise needs

Steps Necessary for Delivery	Timeline	Responsible body
Support up to 6,200 apprenticeship registrations and 3,900 traineeship enrolments	H2	SOLAS, Apprenticeship Council, DES, HEA, HEIs
Develop 10 new Apprenticeship programmes in sectors of the economy with identified skills needs	H2	SOLAS, Apprenticeship Council, DES, HEA, HEIs
Issue a competitive call to HEIs for proposals for Springboard+ courses, with a particular focus on priority areas identified by the National Skills Focus (H1) and roll out new Springboard+ 2018 courses (H2)	H2	HEA/DES
Engagement with SME owners and managers with the view to develop a new Management Development offering	H2	Skillnets/DES

APJ2018 also reflects the fact that the new and emerging technologies of the twenty-first century have developed at unprecedented pace. They are transforming the way that we live and work. For instance, digitalisation has caused major shifts of labour that bring with them more sophisticated skills demand. The acquisition of new skills is vital to keep pace with advances in technology and the availability of the right skills is a key enabler of enterprise performance and growth. It is essential that the workforce is equipped with the requisite skills to fully unlock the benefits of the digital economy.

34 Publish and implement successor to the ICT Skills Action Plan

Steps Necessary for Delivery	Timeline	Responsible body
Publish and implement successor to the ICT Skills Action Plan	H2	DES/DBEI with EGFSN

35 Conduct and publish a study on Skills for the Digital Economy

Steps Necessary for Delivery	Timeline	Responsible body
Conduct and publish study	H2	DBEI , EGFSN

Migration to Help Fill Ireland’s Skills Gaps

Inward migration is an important source of skills for Irish business. Our ongoing access to the international talent pool, of course, depends on sustaining Ireland’s effort to be the primary destination for mobile high-skilled individuals. But it also depends upon providing an employment permits system that continues to be responsive to a changing labour market. The general policy is to promote the sourcing of labour and skills needs from within the workforce of the European Union and other EEA states. However, where specific skills prove difficult to source from these locations, an employment permit may be sought.

The highly skilled eligible occupations List (HSEOL) and ineligible categories of employment list (ICEL) for an employment permit will continue to be reviewed to ensure that the regime is meeting labour market requirements.

36 Ensure the Employment Permits System remains aligned with Labour Market needs

Steps Necessary for Delivery	Timeline	Responsible body
Review the economic migration policies underpinning the employment permit regime to ensure that it is supportive of emerging labour market needs	H1	DBEI



Skillnets

Skillnets supports and works with businesses in Ireland to address their current and future skills needs, funding groups of companies across regions and sectors through 65 training networks, which see approximately 50,000 participants each year. Skillnets established their Future Skills Programme in 2011 to facilitate collaboration between enterprise, academic institutions and industry training providers to develop innovative programmes that address the future skills needs of businesses.

A major emerging challenge for Ireland is keeping up with the fast-paced development of technology. Today there is a relentless demand for new employees with the right ICT skills, cutting across every industry. This is a rapidly growing deficit; the European Commission estimates that Europe could face an 800,000-person ICT skills shortage by 2020. This is the kind of challenge Skillnets is supporting Ireland to meet.

As an example, the ICT Ireland Skillnet developed Ireland's first-ever Master's degree in DevOps in direct response to the shortage of DevOps-related skills. The DevOps approach to the software development lifecycle has impacted rapidly on the technology industry, meaning the shortage of people with relevant skills has become acute. The DevOps Master's programme was developed in collaboration with industry experts and the Institute of Technology Tallaght, providing a standard of practice for business and recognition to technologists already working in this field.

Another example of Skillnets industry collaboration is Women ReBOOT, a programme designed by the Technology Ireland Software Skillnet. Women ReBOOT is delivered through a mix of coaching, online learning, networking skills and work placements in leading tech companies, with the aim to address the gender imbalance in technology companies and ensure that women returners are retained and re-engaged. This is a vital part of the solution to address this skills challenge and is an important priority for the Irish tech sector.

The work doesn't stop here. In 2017, 24 Skillnet networks developed new programmes across a range of sectors including ICT, life sciences, retail, aviation, the green economy, international financial services, retail and agri-food. Through Future Skills Programme, Skillnets aims to ensure Irish industry can meet future skills challenges with confidence.



Companies can join one or more of the over 65 Skillnet networks operating nationally, and all network details are available on www.skillnets.ie





5

Boosting
Productivity,
Competitiveness
and Innovation

The APJ process is built on a recognition that increased living standards are ultimately dependent on higher levels of productivity, innovation, and competitiveness. Our national enterprise policy *Enterprise 2025* also reflects this, focusing on the need to support the continuous adaptation of Ireland's enterprise base to respond to a changing economic and technological world, and to continually step up enterprise performance. This Plan sets out the steps to be taken over the next year to boost our performance in these three key areas, at firm and sectoral level, to ensure continued success.

Increasing Productivity and Capturing Opportunities

As reported by the National Competitiveness Council, Ireland's labour productivity performance is strong in an international context. However, Ireland's performance has been greatly affected by shifts in the composition of employment and the influence of high value added sectors on output. On top of this, technological change presents both the potential for growth and the need for adaptation, to stay productive and competitive.

At firm level, management practices are essential to identify potential productivity gains and drive the necessary changes. To facilitate this process Enterprise Ireland and the Local Enterprise Offices network offer a customised support to equip enterprises with the tools and techniques to operate more effectively. At the same time, new or renewed strategies at sectoral level can enhance sectoral performance and identify new opportunities to respond to the changing business environment.

APJ2018 will contribute to the long-term resilience of Irish enterprises by stimulating productivity, seeking areas of opportunity and stimulating collaboration and clustering at firm and sectoral level. It will also focus on capturing the opportunities offered by digital technologies. This means ensuring that the business ecosystem, the range of supports and their delivery channels, support the long-term growth of SMEs; providing a convenient diagnostic tool to facilitate changes in work practices with employee engagement; and devising strategies to enhance sectoral performance.

The OECD's Review of the Irish Economy (forthcoming) is a biennial examination of economic trends and policies in Ireland along with a more in depth review of areas of particular interest. The process concludes with a published report which contains policy recommendations. The thematic section of this year's report is on productivity and includes a number of specific recommendations in relation to measures that could bring improvements in this area.

37 Review SME policy in Ireland to assess the SME business ecosystem, the range of supports offered to SMEs and their delivery channels

Steps Necessary for Delivery	Timeline	Responsible body
Prepare a diagnostic questionnaire to be completed by national authorities. The results will flow into a study mission by international experts who will meet with relevant stakeholders. A draft will be prepared for Government stakeholders and the Steering Group of the OECD. A revised report will be submitted for a peer review at a meeting of the OECD SME Working Group	H2	DBEI with OECD

38 Develop Sectoral Strategies for EI's client base

Steps Necessary for Delivery	Timeline	Responsible body
Develop an end market strategy for Timber Products, incorporating the full supply chain (as part of the implementation of the Timber Sector Action Plan 2017/2020)	H2	EI, DAFM
Develop Enterprise Ireland's strategy for the Construction Sector	H1	EI
Develop Enterprise Ireland's strategy for the ICT sector	H2	EI
Develop Enterprise Ireland's strategy for Lifesciences	H1	EI
Develop Enterprise Ireland's strategy for Aerospace	H2	EI

39 Roll out Workplace Innovation Toolkit

Steps Necessary for Delivery	Timeline	Responsible body
Roll out the Workplace Innovation toolkit (the toolkit provides an online questionnaire designed to facilitate self-evaluation of the organisation's capacity to be an innovative workplace; it also signposts resources and supports to enhance performance in terms of employee engagement, training, innovation, productivity)	H1	DBEI with WRC/EI/IDA/NSAI

40 Explore approaches to improving productivity in light of the recommendation in the forthcoming OECD Review of Ireland

Steps Necessary for Delivery	Timeline	Responsible body
Engage with Government Departments to progress agreed policy recommendations arising from the OECD Review	H2	DBEI/DoF, and other relevant Departments

The Digital agenda provides enormous opportunities, but also challenges, for not only the Irish economy and employment, but for many aspects of public policy. In Ireland and elsewhere, we are only beginning to understand the likely impacts on how people live and work, how goods and services are produced, how Government interacts with its citizens, and how it redefines the relationships at international level.

Ireland's enterprise policy recognises the potential of digital as a new source of growth, and that digital is transforming business sectors, productivity and competitiveness. 'Realising Digital Economy Opportunities' was a central theme of APJ2017 and notable actions included developing a strategy for eHubs for entrepreneurship, eWorking and business growth. Ireland has also taken a leading role nationally and at EU level on the potential benefits associated with the EU Digital Single Market, and on Data Protection issues. Other relevant initiatives include areas such as eGovernment, education, ICT in schools and the National Broadband Plan.

Recognising the transformative nature of digital technologies across economic and social life, as well as the many policy initiatives already in place or under development, it is proposed to develop a new National Digital Strategy during 2018 which will provide for an overarching long-term vision of the impacts of digital on Ireland. This will involve engagement across relevant Departments and with stakeholders.

While the National Digital Strategy will have broader scope than the Digital Economy, it will be an opportunity to take into account this continuous digitalisation of the economy and aim to ensure SMEs optimally embrace digital technology and ultimately enhance enterprise digital competitiveness. It can take account of the impact on business and employment of emerging trends such as; the Internet of Things, artificial intelligence, augmented reality, autonomous mobility, robotics, etc. as they have impacts on physical, economic and social aspects of Ireland.

41 Establish Ireland as a leader in the digital economy

Steps Necessary for Delivery	Timeline	Responsible body
Agree, in consultation with stakeholders, a framework for the development of a high level National Digital Strategy, to provide a coherent vision across sectoral policies to position Ireland to maximise economic and societal benefits from digitalisation	H1	D/Taoiseach/ DCCAE/DBEI, OGCIO and other relevant Departments
Develop an Industry 4.0 strategy that responds to the specific opportunities and challenges for the manufacturing sector based in Ireland arising from the impact of digital technologies	H2	DBEI
Expand the Trading Online Voucher Scheme and increase number of vouchers from the target of 1,000 in 2017 to 1,500 for 2018	H2	DCCAE with LEOs/EI
Engage with stakeholders to develop a Deep Tech (AI/ML, AR/VR, IoT, blockchain and cloud) roadmap that identifies specific opportunities and challenges for start-ups in this sector	H2	EI

Enhancing the Business Environment and Competitiveness

Since the first Action Plan for Jobs in 2012, sustaining and improving competitiveness has been considered essential to generate sustainable export-led growth and employment into the future. That is why we set an ambitious target to achieve a top five global competitiveness ranking by 2020 (based on the IMD Competitiveness Scorecard). Ireland ranked sixth in 2017, an improvement of ten since 2015. The return to sustained levels of growth is likely to result in upward cost pressures while Ireland is already a relatively expensive location in which to do business.

Good Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) practices can provide a business with competitive advantage; acting as a magnet and catalyst for talent and investment, increased market share, and resilience to external shocks. Implementation of Ireland's *National Plan on CSR 2017-2020* will continue during 2018.

In 2018 there will be a focus on increasing the competitiveness of the business environment by pursuing the reforms to tackle rising legal costs and insurance costs. These are critical issues for businesses, as they are costs that often cannot be avoided and have to be absorbed by a firm in order to maintain price competitiveness.

42 The National Competitiveness Council's priority issues for sustainable competitiveness over the short to medium term will be brought to Government. Individual Government departments will respond and bring forward proposals as appropriate to enhance competitiveness. This work will be overseen by the relevant Cabinet Committees.

Steps Necessary for Delivery	Timeline	Responsible body
Ensure prioritised NCC recommendations and actions to address them are advanced through the Cabinet Committee process	Ongoing	D/Taoiseach, DBEI, all Departments

43 Progress the reform of the Legal profession

Steps Necessary for Delivery	Timeline	Responsible body
Support the roll out of functions of the Legal Services Authority – the new independent Legal Services Regulatory Authority – with appropriate staffing and project management	H2	DJE, LSRA
Support the work of the Courts Service in making the extensive legal, procedural and technical preparations to complete the transition of the Office of the Taxing-Master to that of the Legal Costs Adjudicators	H2	DJE, Courts Service.

44 Implement the recommendations of the Cost of Insurance Working Group

Steps Necessary for Delivery	Timeline	Responsible body
Implement the recommendations of the Working Group, both on motor insurance and employer and public liability cover	Ongoing	DoF

45 Publish new legislation to modernise the collection of commercial rates to make the system more transparent and easily understood for ratepayers

Steps Necessary for Delivery	Timeline	Responsible body
Publish new legislation	H2	DHPLG

46 Roll-out of new initiatives to support SME engagement in public procurement

Steps Necessary for Delivery	Timeline	Responsible body
Develop and implement a communication strategy to build awareness, understanding and skills in public tendering	H2	OGP with DBEI EI, ITI and LEOs
Drive increased engagement with the Small Business Innovation Research programme and identify and develop a systematic approach to innovative public procurement	H2	EI with OGP and DBEI

Female Entrepreneurship

The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) Report for Ireland reports that more men than women are actively planning and starting new businesses in Ireland (2:1). This situation is similar across most of Europe but countries like the US, Australia, and Canada have higher rate of entrepreneurship among women. In recent years, a number of initiatives have been launched to stimulate female entrepreneurship:

- Enterprise Ireland, in collaboration with the LEOs, has been running female only feasibility and competitive funds since 2012. Enterprise Ireland also sponsors events such as Women's Executive Network, Ireland's Top 25 Women Awards, Image Business Woman of the Year Awards etc.
- The Local Enterprise Offices organise National Women's Enterprise Day each October and has seen strong female participation in its business and entrepreneurs programmes in recent years.

- The Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine, with ACORNS (Accelerating the Creation of Rural Nascent Start-Ups) has a six-month part-time programme for aspiring rural female entrepreneurs aimed to equip early stage entrepreneurs to develop sustainable business in rural areas.
- The Department of Justice and Equality with its recently launched Women's Entrepreneurship Initiative seeks to promote and develop female entrepreneurship capabilities across the country.

APJ2018 will intensify the efforts to reach out to the missing entrepreneur cohort.

47 Review the female entrepreneurship programme and develop responses to drive greater impact

Steps Necessary for Delivery	Timeline	Responsible body
Review the female entrepreneurship programme and develop responses	H2	EI with other relevant bodies

Research, Development, and Innovation for Smart Growth

The Irish economy's recent healthy pace of growth - generating employment and raising standards of living - has mirrored the achievements we have made in the fields of scientific research and innovation. The promotion of innovation and its diffusion are at the heart of Ireland's enterprise strategy. Over the last number of years, investment by the Government in research and innovation has been crucial in fostering and embedding a world class innovation system, underpinning enterprise development and growth, and building national competitive advantage across our economy.

Innovation 2020 sets out Ireland's cross Government strategy in this area and its delivery is central to facilitating an increase in enterprises engaging in RD&I activity; in securing, diversifying and growing Foreign Direct Investment; creating competitive advantage in intellectual property, products and services; creating new companies; and in the provision of a highly-educated workforce needed to grow the economy and contribute to society.

In 2017, Ireland achieved a ranking of eleventh in the world for the overall quality of its scientific research, a jump of 25 places in only 14 years. However, scientific and technological progress advance at rapid rates, and Ireland is competing in an ever-growing competitive global environment, not least for Foreign Direct Investment. Continued support for innovation will be crucial in light of Brexit, ensuring a resilient and competitive enterprise base with highly paid, high quality and rewarding jobs. Brexit also produces new opportunities for scientific research in Ireland.

In 2018, we will take advantage of these opportunities in three areas:

- Attracting outstanding global researchers to Ireland in partnership with the UK;
- Recruiting outstanding UK researchers to Ireland; and
- Joint PhD schemes with research-intensive UK universities.

48 Increase the quality of Irish scientific research and seize opportunities offered by Brexit

Steps Necessary for Delivery	Timeline	Responsible body
Attract outstanding global researchers to Ireland in partnership with the UK; recruit UK researchers to Ireland; or establish a number of joint PhD schemes with research-intensive UK higher education institutions	H2	SFI

In order to continue to foster innovation, research and development and enhance the provision of rewarding and high-value jobs, APJ2018 sets out a set of actions to enhance and promote our supports for innovation in companies to help build and strengthen their capacity to innovate, encourage deeper collaboration with industry through Research Centres and Technology Centres and a range of other targeted schemes, and enhance international linkages as part of our Brexit response.

Focus will be given to supporting advanced manufacturing technologies such as Robotics, Artificial Intelligence and Additive Manufacturing or 3D Printing to help support the transformation of Irish manufacturing.

Standards are a recognised driver of innovation. A key instrument of innovation in the standardisation process is the elaboration of the relevant scientific and technical data, better known as pre-normative research, which leads to the drafting of the standard.

Ensuring a close and timely interaction between research and development and standardisation is a key factor in helping innovative goods reach the market. NSAI will build further linkages with the pre-normative research community engaged in *Horizon 2020* and national research projects with standardisation.

Introduced in 2012, Research Prioritisation, aligns competitive public research funding with fourteen priority areas where Ireland is most likely to get optimum economic and societal returns from investment. *Innovation 2020* committed to review these priority areas to ensure that they remain valid and are aligned with large global markets in which Irish-based enterprises can compete.

Along with a market horizon scan, a future technologies exercise and an assessment of the current cycle of Research Prioritisation, extensive stakeholder consultation was undertaken to provide the evidence base for the review. The revised priority areas will be launched in 2018.

49 Drive industrial-academic research and development collaboration through a range of SFI, EI and other collaborative supports in Advanced Manufacturing technologies including Robotics; Artificial Intelligence and Additive Manufacturing or 3D Printing as well as new growth areas such as Fintech and Biotherapeutics

Steps Necessary for Delivery	Timeline	Responsible body
Continue to extend companies' innovation reach by driving engagement between Irish based industry and academia, in this way effectively employing this important national asset to deliver over 1,000 industrial innovation projects	H2	SFI/EI/Research Funders
SFI will secure €200 million in enterprise funding commitments, leveraging public funding, to renew the first seven SFI Research Centres	H2	SFI
Implement the next phase of the Technology Gateways Programme targeting over 400 projects in 2018 accessing specialist expertise in the Institutes of Technology	H2	EI

50 Commence implementation of the new cycle of Research Prioritisation for the period 2018-2023

Steps Necessary for Delivery	Timeline	Responsible body
Commence implementation of the new cycle	H1	DBEI

51 Meet the needs of industry in terms of research and innovation skills

Steps Necessary for Delivery	Timeline	Responsible body
Increase the number of enrolments of postgraduate researchers by more than 100 places through the introduction of a new targeted Postgraduate Scheme aligned to enterprise needs	H2	SFI
Through the Career-FIT programme, deliver 50 high quality international researchers into Technology Centres to work on company innovation	H2	EI
Develop and launch a new TechStart/GradStart programme for SMEs	H1	EI

52 Provide and promote enhanced supports for companies to engage in and increase Research Development and Innovation (RD&I)

Steps Necessary for Delivery	Timeline	Responsible body
Drive the increased take up of EI In-Company RD&I Toolkit which includes funding for Business Innovation, Design and Intellectual Property protection	H1	EI
Launch a national campaign to promote Enterprise Ireland's Agile Innovation offer	H1	EI
Work to secure €15 million of international RD&I funding for disruptive technology companies from Horizon 2020 SME Instrument	H2	EI
Drive access to new product opportunities through targeting €13 million in European Space Agency contracts	H2	EI
Provide and promote engagement in standardization of research communities involved in medtech, additive manufacturing, robotics and other emerging technology domains	H2	NSAI
Pilot a design for innovation programme to encourage collaboration between the design sector and small businesses	H2	LEOs

53 Deliver technology development, demonstration and training services for advanced manufacturing in Ireland building on existing research and technology centres through the creation of additional facilities

Steps Necessary for Delivery	Timeline	Responsible body
Deliver technology development services for advanced manufacturing in Ireland	H2	DBEI, IDA, EI, SFI

54 Launch new "Industry Connectors" (research and technology domain experts) as part of Knowledge Transfer Ireland's Strategy 2018 -2021, brokering quality engagement and collaboration between business and the Higher Education sector

Steps Necessary for Delivery	Timeline	Responsible body
Launch new "Industry Connectors" as part of Knowledge Transfer Ireland's Strategy 2018 -2021	H2	KTI/EI

55 Promote and facilitate access for companies to economically valuable satellite data via the EI supported national satellite data archive - enabled through ESA and EU Copernicus Programme

Steps Necessary for Delivery	Timeline	Responsible body
Promote and facilitate access	H1	EI

To Boldly Go...

InnaLabs is an Irish company that was established in 2011. They design and manufacture inertial sensors. InnaLabs high-performance inertial sensors calculate the location of an object without the need of external reference point, offering market-leading solutions for the Space, Aerospace, Land, Marine and Oil & Gas sectors. Because of their ability to research and develop high-quality innovative products, InnaLabs has fostered significant relationships in the Space sector throughout Europe.

InnaLabs had a vision to globally challenge existing technologies. They would develop a Coriolis Vibratory Gyroscope (CVG), a new sensor using force and vibration to measure orientation. As a client company of Enterprise Ireland since 2014, InnaLabs received the Research and Development (R&D) supports necessary to realise this vision.

With Enterprise Ireland's R&D support, InnaLabs assembled a team of Gyroscope experts and experienced industrialists who developed a local supply chain. Together they achieved outstanding results. With their high R&D capabilities, InnaLabs could develop CVG products with long life-expectancy, low power consumption, low noise ratio and the ability to withstand extremely harsh conditions- all with an improved price point.

"Speaking as an Irish person we are all very proud of the achievements created here in InnaLabs. I would like to thank all those involved in our growth to date, especially Enterprise Ireland". (John O'Leary, CEO, InnaLabs)

Success followed success. With Enterprise Ireland support, InnaLabs won its first contract with the European Space Agency (ESA) in 2016 to develop a Gyroscope for the global commercial space market. This high achievement not only validated the technical expertise of InnaLabs, but opened opportunities to further develop innovative products of high-demand with both Space and commercial applications.

The future is bright for InnaLabs, with 2018 promising a full contract with ESA and an increase from 48 to 60 high-level engineering positions.

Great ideas can become an exciting reality with the right supports. With the help of Enterprise Ireland, InnaLabs will continue to boldly go where no one has gone before.



ENTERPRISE, INVESTMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Tax Measures Summary

Entrepreneurship



SELF-EMPLOYED

Earned Income Tax Credit increased from €950 to €1,150.



KEY EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT PLAN

New KEEP Share Option Scheme for SME employees.



CAPITAL GAINS TAX ENTREPRENEUR RELIEF

Reduced rate 10% (full rate is 33%) Limit €1 million lifetime chargeable gains



START-UP REFUND FOR ENTREPRENEURS

Refund of tax to individuals previously in PAYE employment, or recently unemployed, where they invest funds into a new company set up by them.



PRE-LETTING EXPENSES

New pre-letting expenses deduction to bring vacant property into use.



KNOWLEDGE DEVELOPMENT BOX

KDB (Certificate of Inventions) Act 2017 will enhance standard of Irish Patents and ensure small companies can avail of the KDB.



START-UPS CORPORATION TAX RELIEF

3 YEARS - €40k corporation tax relief p.a.



HOME RENOVATION INCENTIVE

An income tax relief for repairs, renovations and improvements to a home or rental property.



LIVING CITY INITIATIVE

Tax relief for money spent on refurbishment and/or conversion of residential property either as income tax relief (for owner-occupied residential) or capital allowance (for rented residential).



EMPLOYMENT AND INVESTMENT INCENTIVE

An income tax relief for risk capital investments in SMEs.



START YOUR OWN BUSINESS RELIEF

Relief from income tax for long-term unemployed people who start a new business up to a max income of €40,000 per annum for 2 years Extended until end 2018



REDUCED VAT RATE

9% Tourism Services

Investment & Innovation



CAPITAL ALLOWANCES FOR INTANGIBLE ASSETS

80% cap on capital allowances for intangible assets for offset against relevant income in an accounting period. This does not affect the overall amount of relief for capital allowances.



ACCELERATED CAPITAL ALLOWANCES FOR ENERGY EFFICIENT EQUIPMENT

This scheme was extended to 31 December 2020 in Budget 2018.



R&D TAX CREDIT

25% Corporation Tax Credit Qualifying R&D expenditure including buildings & key employee provision



AGRI-TAX RELIEFS

A range of tax measures to address the unique features of the farming sector.



FILM RELIEF

Relief is available on investment of up to €70 million



ACCELERATED CAPITAL ALLOWANCES FOR CRÈCHE AND GYM FACILITIES

Scheme for accelerated capital allowances for crèches and gym facilities will be commenced once EU State Aid approval has been received.



CORPORATION TAX RATE

12.5% Standard Rate
Corporation tax on trading activities



COMMERCIAL MOTOR TAX

Capped at €900

Skills & Talent



MARGINAL TAX RATES

Post Budget 2018
€34,550-€70,044: 48.75% (-0.25%)
Two USC rates reduced from 2.5% and 5% to 2% and 4.75% respectively. Ceiling for the second USC rate of 2% increased by €600 to €19,372.
Income Tax standard rate cut off points increased by €750 for all earners:
from €33,800 to €34,550 for single individuals and from €42,800 to €43,550 for married one earner couples.
Income Tax Rates: 20% and 40%
An increase in the Home Carer Tax Credit from €1,100 to €1,200



FOREIGN EARNINGS DEDUCTION

€35,000 income deductible for employees travelling abroad to explore potential trading opportunities for Irish goods/services. Extended until end 2020.



SPECIAL ASSIGNEE RELIEF PROGRAMME (SARP)

30% relief on income greater than €75,000 for key assignees appointed from abroad. Extended until end 2020.

APPENDIX

The Role of Agencies and Offices

When identifying new actions to support our enterprise base, the APJ2018 is cognisant of the existing supports provided by a variety of State bodies with mandates dealing with enterprise growth and performance, as well as the business environment in which firms operate and provide employment. Direct supports for enterprise growth and performance are delivered by Enterprise Ireland, the Local Enterprise Offices, IDA Ireland, Bord Bia, Fáilte Ireland/Tourism Ireland, Bord Iascaigh Mhara, Údaras Na Gaeltacht, InterTrade Ireland and Science Foundation Ireland. The National Standards Authority of Ireland and the Health and Safety Authority also contribute to enterprise growth and performance by creating a business environment that supports enterprise and quality employment.



Enterprise Ireland

Enterprise Ireland (EI) is the agency responsible for the development and growth of Irish owned enterprises engaged in Manufacturing and Internationally Traded Services in world markets. EI's mission is to deliver a major improvement in the international strength of Irish enterprise across all regions by transforming the innovation and competitive capabilities of Irish companies with 10 employees or more. EI works in partnership with Irish enterprises to help them build scale and expand reach through winning export sales in global markets. In this way, it supports sustainable economic growth, regional development and employment creation.

The suite of supports offered by EI is broad, spanning leadership, management development and training, internationalisation, productivity, RD&I, capital investment and access to finance. EI supports aid start-up businesses by providing financial incentives, incubator space, and mentoring. The agency also plays a key role in strengthening Ireland's Venture Capital environment.

The remit of EI extends to commercialisation of state-funded research and to stimulating RD&I collaboration between companies, both foreign and Irish-owned, and with research institutes.

The client base of EI also comprises of Irish based food and natural resource companies that are overseas owned or controlled.

EI has set strategic ambitions to increase client exports by €5 billion to €26 billion by 2020 and to support clients in the creation of 60,000 new jobs, as well as sustaining existing jobs. In 2017, EI client companies achieved record employment numbers of 209,338, with employment growth recorded in every county and region countrywide. EI will achieve these ambitious objectives by:

- Increasing the levels of diversification of EI client companies into new export markets, with two thirds going beyond the UK;

- Improving the competitiveness of EI client companies through a range of measures including LEAN programmes;
- Driving the innovation in Irish enterprise through new supports to reach a target of €1.25 billion in R&D expenditure per annum by 2020;
- Inspiring more companies to have Global ambition.

To support these ambitions, EI has been provided with additional funding to recruit additional staff, with 39 designated posts to support companies to tackle the challenges posed by Brexit, and a further 18 staff to be recruited in 2018 to expand the EI footprint overseas. Given the profile of their client base, EI has been particularly active in supporting firms in responding to Brexit. In the immediate aftermath of the Brexit referendum result, EI was in contact with each of its client companies that export to the UK, resulting in a detailed knowledge by them of the level of their clients' exposure to Brexit associated risks.

Through its Eurozone strategy, EI has targeted an increase of client exports into the Eurozone by 50% between 2017 and 2020. It is increasing staffing resources, and delivering a targeted programme of trade missions, to deepen and broaden its overseas presence.

EI has also introduced a 'Be Prepared Grant' which offers up to €5,000 in funding to support exporting client companies develop a Brexit Action Plan. A condition for accessing this funding is to have used the "Brexit Scorecard" diagnostic tool. It is designed for SMEs who would benefit from further research and the use of external expertise in developing this plan.

In addition, EI has developed the Irish Advantage export promotion campaign which is a targeted sectoral digital campaign to promote Irish innovation and capability to international buyers.

IDA Ireland

IDA Ireland is Ireland's statutory inward investment promotion agency and attracts and supports Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into Ireland through a wide range of services. IDA Ireland partners with potential and existing investors to help them establish or expand their operations in Ireland, leading to significant job creation and expenditure in the economy. IDA Ireland supports investment throughout all regions of Ireland, including through the provision of strategic property solutions.

FDI remains hugely important to Ireland, which is home to over 1,350 overseas company operations that directly employ well over 210,000 people. This means that roughly one-in-five private sector jobs in our country results from direct or indirect foreign direct investment. Our success when it comes to FDI is partly reflected by the number of the world's leading companies who have established operations in the jurisdiction (9 of the 10 top global companies in each of the software, pharma, and ICT sectors).

The Government works hard to maintain Ireland's attractiveness to FDI in the face of ever-increasing global competition. Nurturing the talented workforce has been especially important in this context. We now rank first in the world for the flexibility and adaptability of our workers and also score highly in international rankings for the availability of skilled labour and productivity. Our education system has been key to this – ranked amongst the top ten in the world with one of the highest percentages of population who have completed third level education. Positive demographics have been important too, with Ireland boasting the youngest population in the EU as 40% are under the age of 30.

Arguably, the other main factor in sustaining high FDI in the country is the policy enterprise environment. Over many years, Governments have taken steps to foster a pro-enterprise economy that rewards innovation and entrepreneurship.

The jurisdiction has gained a reputation as one of the easiest in the world to do business, with attendant positive effects on job creation. A transparent legal system, and largely cooperative labour relations, have also assisted in this. Our low corporation tax rate of 12.5% has also been undeniably important and remains a cornerstone of the Irish economy continuing to attract investors looking for the most competitive jurisdiction in which to operate.

As part of its 2015-2019 strategy IDA Ireland aims to create 80,000 new jobs and 900 new investments. The 2017 results show that only three years into their five-year strategy – IDA has reached its total job creation target for that period. This significant achievement helps to demonstrate how strong Ireland's FDI offering continues to be.

In 2017, IDA Ireland clients created over 19,000 new jobs on the ground, with the net number of new jobs, (total amount of positions created after allowing for job losses in other FDI firms), was approximately 10,500. In 2018 the Agency is targeting the creation of 7,000 net new jobs and will work to win another 185 new FDI projects.



As Ireland continues to benefit from FDI, there is a growing focus on ensuring its advantages are spread more evenly across the country. IDA Ireland and the Government have placed a particular emphasis on growing investment in the regions with the Agency targeting a 30% - 40% increase in investment in each region by 2019. This entails new regional investment targets and also building clusters of investment in parts of Ireland that help to sustain and attract more overseas companies from particular industries. Since the strategy began in 2015 half of all new jobs have been created outside Dublin. This shows that real progress is being made towards increasing the regional spread of FDI countrywide.

The Government is conscious that ambitious regional targets must be properly resourced, therefore IDA Ireland will be furnished with a total of €150 million over five years to invest in property solutions outside Dublin, €90 million of which has been received to date. This programme includes the construction of nine new advance facilities across the country which will help draw more multinational companies to regional areas.

IDA has successfully secured tenants for the first buildings completed under its Regional Property Investment Programme in Waterford, Athlone and Sligo. Two new buildings in Castlebar and Tralee are now complete and being marketed extensively. Construction is also underway in Galway. IDA continues to roll out its building programme across the country with new buildings planned in Dundalk, Galway, Limerick, Carlow, Waterford and Athlone over the next two years.

In 2017, the staffing level in IDA was increased by almost 20% to 322, which included making 35 *Winning Abroad* staff permanent; resuming the Agency's graduate programme; and funding 10 additional Brexit related posts.

IDA Ireland has undertaken a rigorous recruitment process across a wide variety of channels to ensure that the best candidates are identified for the extra roles. The Agency has been allocated an additional €700,000 for 2018 which will further reinforce its staffing levels.

The Local Enterprise Offices

The Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) are the first-stop-shop for anyone seeking guidance and support on starting or growing a business in Ireland. The LEOs promote entrepreneurship, foster business start-ups and develop existing micro and small businesses, especially those with export potential. Financial supports are provided to new start-ups and businesses that have up to 10 employees and involved in manufacturing or internationally trading services.

A range of interventions including start-your-own business, business training and mentor services are more widely available. LEOs provide access to a range of supports to small businesses (employing fewer than 50) either directly or by way of signposting to relevant providers. Such supports include innovation vouchers, trading online vouchers, lean start and management development training.

The additional €4 million in capital funding secured in Budget 2017 and 2018, has resulted in a suite of Brexit supports available from the LEOs to micro and small businesses through the LEO network. Supports aimed at strengthening the capacity of micro and small businesses to better cope with the changing external environment, especially Brexit, include:

- Access to the 'Brexit SME Scorecard' online tool where micro and smaller businesses can self-diagnose their readiness for Brexit;

- A 'Technical Assistance for Micro-enterprises' grant designed to support qualifying businesses to diversify into new markets, enabling companies to explore and develop new market opportunities;
- A 'LEAN for Micro' programme available nationwide to help small businesses become more efficient and competitive;
- A 'LEO Innovation and Investment Fund' pilot programme to support innovation in micro-enterprises and to help them become investor ready so that they can scale their businesses;
- Tailored mentoring to address Brexit-related business challenges;
- Targeted training on specific Brexit challenges, including financial aspects and capability building in innovation, competitiveness and opportunity diagnosis;

The LEOS continue to strengthen and deepen their relationship with Intertrade Ireland in relation to Brexit, with shared seminars, information sessions and access to Intertrade funding support for Brexit challenges.

The LEOs also continue to implement the Trading Online Voucher Scheme. Since this scheme was initiated in mid-2014, the LEOs have approved almost 4,000 vouchers to micro-enterprises looking to develop or enhance their ability to trade online. The LEOs continue to work in partnership with Micro Finance Ireland (MFI) in assisting micro-enterprises to make MFI loan applications.



Science Foundation Ireland

Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) is the national foundation for investment in scientific and engineering research. SFI has supported the establishment of a number of National Research Centres, aligned with the research priority areas set out in Ireland's research prioritisation exercise and smart specialisation strategy. SFI invests in academic researchers and research teams who are most likely to generate new knowledge, leading edge technologies and competitive enterprises in the fields of science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM).

The Agency also promotes and supports the study of, education in, and engagement with STEM and promotes an awareness and understanding of the value of STEM to society and, in particular, to the growth of the economy. SFI awards grants based upon the merit review of distinguished scientists.

SFI also advances co-operative efforts among education, government, and industry that support its fields of emphasis and promotes Ireland's ensuing achievements around the world.

In response to the Brexit challenge, SFI aims to:

- Strengthen research funding collaborations with the UK and Northern Ireland with the aim of supporting current collaborations and ensuring that we are well-positioned for the post-Brexit scenario;
- Target globally-renowned UK-based researchers to relocate their research operations to Irish universities;
- Support Irish researchers to diversify their alliances with other EU based researchers;
- Scope medium and long-term post-Brexit opportunities for Ireland, with emphasis on identifying H2020 industry/academic consortia in which UK researchers are prominent and Irish researchers could be promoted as replacements and identifying EU research infrastructures based in the UK, which could potentially be relocated to Ireland.



The National Standards Authority of Ireland

As the primary Irish authority for standardisation, certification and measurement services, the mission of the National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI) is to contribute to an optimal business environment for trade and innovation through excellence and expertise in the provision of the highest quality services.

NSAI provides services to industry and the public through its Certification, Standards and Agrément (building products and processes) functions. It is responsible for both Legal and National Metrology functions, which ensures the accuracy of all measurements and measuring instruments used for trade and other purposes.

In preparation for Brexit, NSAI is working in partnership with DBEI and the enterprise agencies to mitigate the impact where possible and exploit any opportunities that arise within its remit. NSAI will continue to work with clients, including indigenous enterprise, across the regions and sectors to provide Ireland with the components necessary for an effective trading infrastructure for products and services to be developed, traded, and relied on nationally and around the world.



InterTrade Ireland

InterTrade Ireland (ITI) is a cross-border trade and business development body funded by DBEI in Ireland and the Department for the Economy in Northern Ireland. ITI helps small businesses explore new cross-border markets (Northern Ireland and rest of UK), develop new products, processes and services and become investor ready. It also provides practical cross-border business funding, business intelligence and meaningful contacts to SMEs across the island, North and South, looking to grow their businesses.

Given its role in promoting and supporting North/South commerce, ITI is especially well-positioned to help businesses both prepare for and address challenges that Brexit may present for cross-border trade. In May 2017 InterTrade Ireland utilised this funding to launch a new dedicated 'Brexit Advisory Service' which is aimed at SME's who trade cross-border. This Service offers supports to business, including vouchers (valued at €1,000 allowing them to fund specialist advice), technical and commercial advice, information on currency hedging and an interactive information tool explaining the technical language related to Brexit.



Bord Bia

Bord Bia 's mission is "to drive through market insight and, in partnership with the industry, the commercial success of a world-class Irish food, drink and horticulture industry". Bord Bia supports the delivery of the *Food Wise 2025* strategy for the agri-food sector through five strategic pillars:

- Informed by consumer insight, including the establishment of 'The Thinking House' to strengthen understanding of consumer priorities and preferences in Ireland as well as in distant markets;
- Enabled by valued people, talent and infrastructure;
- Underpinned by Origin Green, a unique and independently verified national sustainability programme for Ireland's food and drink industry;

- Realised by effective routes to market and business conversion;
- Supported by strong brand communications in the digital age.

Bord Bia offers a range of supports for food and drink companies of all sizes, particularly in the context of understanding Brexit impact and readiness. As a response to the unprecedented challenges potentially presented by Brexit and currency volatility, Bord Bia's funding was increased in 2016 and 2017.

Food companies can avail of the Bord Bia's 'Brexit Barometer' which is an assessment toolkit for the food industry that assists participating companies to assess their impact and readiness and provides valuable information on the overall impact of Brexit on the food and drinks sector.

Fáilte Ireland

Fáilte Ireland (FI) is the National Tourism Development Authority. Its role is to support the tourism industry and work to sustain Ireland as a high-quality and competitive tourism destination. It provides a range of practical business supports to help tourism businesses better manage and market their products and services.

FI also works with other state agencies and representative bodies, at local and national levels, to implement and champion positive and practical strategies that will benefit Irish tourism and the Irish economy.

In response to the immediate impact of Brexit on tourism in Ireland – visits from Britain were down 5% in 2017, largely as a result of currency fluctuations – Fáilte Ireland launched a programme entitled *Get Brexit Ready* in September 2016. This is a suite of industry supports designed to help businesses at risk or already struggling with the loss of trade created by Brexit. The programme allows individual businesses to self-assess their exposures and risks and provides a range of interventions to match their needs.

Get Brexit Ready is based on four key pillars, positioning tourism businesses to be:

- **Brexit ready** – working with businesses to assess their exposure to market uncertainty and their current competitiveness (including the Brexit Readiness Check as well as revenue and sales channel management);
- **Battling for Britain** – assisting businesses to target best prospects in the UK and identify new opportunities there (including tactical pricing initiatives and bundled offerings, the identification of best prospects and aligning with Tourism Ireland’s marketing and promotions in the British market);
- **Spreading the risk** – working with businesses which are over-exposed to the British market to diversify their trade and win business in Europe, North America and new and growing markets like China;
- **Fighting fit** – providing the training and skills supports for tourism professionals to succeed in a Brexit environment (including a dedicated international sales development programme, a series of Brexit focussed executive management programmes, training for service excellence and the ongoing sharing of the necessary research, trends and insights to inform business plans).



Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM)

A UK withdrawal from the Common Fisheries Policy has the potential to significantly alter both the regulatory and commercial environment within the Irish sector, the impact of which will be felt across the Irish supply chain from fishing to processing and retail.

In the absence of specifics, the Irish seafood sector must prepare for the worst-case scenario, whilst planning for possible new market opportunities which may arise as a result of Brexit.

It is only through robust planning that Ireland can properly analyse the significant threats and potential opportunities of Brexit for the Irish Seafood industry, and identify possible mitigation actions that could be taken. BIM has applied this research and analysis across six key areas:

1. Economic Analysis

In-depth economic analysis of the potential impacts on Irish seafood businesses who are importing, exporting and transiting seafood through the UK, under a range of hard and soft Brexit scenarios.

2. Access and Opportunities

Assisting DAFM to evaluate potential impacts on the catching sector under different access arrangements.

3. Competitor Analysis

Exploring competitor trade flows, dynamics and market drivers for seafood businesses and the impacts on exports and imports which may arise as a result of Brexit.

4. The Opportunities

Assisting client seafood companies to supply opportunities that might arise from Brexit.

5. Industry Survey

BIM has further examined the wider impacts which Brexit may have on the Irish aquaculture, fishing and seafood processing industries. The findings of this survey support previous research by BIM in this regard, with key areas of concern by companies including additional time delays and costs, impacts on product quality, staffing issues, and impacts on customer service & future market development.

6. Logistics / Seafood Hub Feasibility

BIM is presently undertaking a feasibility study to identify logistic solutions and consolidation opportunities to mitigate against the land bridge for European exports.

BIM has provided its economic analysis of potential Brexit impacts on the Irish fishing fleet and ports, and also on the potential impacts on seafood trade.



Údarás na Gaeltachta

Údarás na Gaeltachta is the regional authority responsible for the economic, social and cultural development of the Gaeltacht. The overall objective of Údarás na Gaeltachta is to ensure that Irish remains the main communal language of the Gaeltacht and is passed on to future generations. The authority also funds and fosters a wide range of enterprise development and job creation initiatives.

Údarás encourages investment in the Gaeltacht through a range of financial and non-financial incentives for new and existing enterprises in the Gaeltacht. The organisation supports businesses in developing new markets, technologies, products and strategic alliances through research and development. Údarás assists a range of sectors, some of them unique to the agency, and which are crucial to the Gaeltacht economy.

The 2017 End of Year review showed that there has been a steady increase on the employment base in the Gaeltacht for five consecutive years as Gaeltacht companies become increasingly stable. At the end of 2017 Údarás na Gaeltachta client companies

- employ 7,503 people in full-time jobs in Gaeltacht companies and achieve sales of over €844 million;
- contribute €502 million in sales as a result of export activity, which accounts for 60% of total output; and
- companies spend €425 million directly in the Irish economy.

Údarás na Gaeltachta's strategy for the 2018-2020 period is based on two main principles: maintenance and development of the Irish language and the fostering of innovation and employment to enable Irish speakers to live in the Gaeltacht. These principles are at the core of the organisation's strategy. As a result, a strong focus is placed on attracting ordinary people, entrepreneurs and visitors to live and work in the Gaeltacht. The strategy sets out objectives and targets including:

- The approval of 1,500 new jobs over the lifetime of the strategy;
- Supporting 8,000 full-time jobs created and stabilised in client companies;
- Increasing the number of client companies engaged in exports by 10%;
- Increasing client company exports and sales by 20%; and
- Increasing client company Research & Development expenditure by 15%.



Tourism Ireland

Tourism Ireland (TI) is responsible for marketing the island of Ireland overseas as a holiday and business tourism destination and, as such, has a strong positive influence on the business environment for tourism enterprises. It delivers world class marketing programmes in 23 markets across the world and reaches a global audience up to 600 million each year. Tourism Ireland has identified a number of strategic areas to underpin its promotional activity in 2018. These include:

- **Brexit:** As our nearest neighbour and one of our top four markets for overseas tourism, Britain will remain a priority for Tourism Ireland. It will continue to work with its industry partners to highlight the ease of getting to the island of Ireland.
- **Focusing resources:** Tourism Ireland will focus its investment on the basis of market potential and will continue to implement its market diversification strategy.
- **New global ad campaign:** TI will develop an inspiring new global advertising campaign, to refresh and reinvigorate the presentation of the island of Ireland overseas, for roll-out in 2019 and beyond.
- **Digital and social media:** In 2018, Tourism Ireland will continue to leverage its strength in digital and social media and make a step-change in its digital marketing capability by undertaking a significant 'refresh' of its international website, Ireland.com, to increase the site's appeal to prospective visitors and to drive over 4 million referrals to partner websites; and by implementing a new data-management platform to enable more targeted and personalised digital communications.
- **Target audiences:** TI will intensify focus on the key 'culturally curious' audience who have the strongest propensity to visit the island of Ireland. It will reach the 'social energiser' audience (younger travellers, seeking to enjoy a fun time with friends in places that are new, unique and vibrant) in markets where significant potential exists, including North American, Britain, France and Spain.
- **Key promotional themes:** Tourism Ireland will promote our iconic holiday experiences – Ireland's Ancient East, Dublin and the Wild Atlantic Way.
- **Collaboration:** Tourism Ireland will collaborate with key partners, including air and sea carriers and the international travel trade, to deliver sustained connectivity and sales growth.
- **International publicity:** Tourism Ireland will also ramp up its publicity programme around the world – placing increased focus on digital channels and working more closely with online media, including bloggers. In 2017, Tourism Ireland's publicity activities generated thousands of articles and broadcasts, worth an estimated €327 million.
- **Tourism Ireland's Global Greening 2018:** 2018 will mark the ninth year of Tourism Ireland's Global Greening initiative – when hundreds of iconic landmarks and sites around the world will be illuminated in green to celebrate our national day.

Glossary of Terms

AIRO	All Ireland Research Observatory	DSM	Digital Single Market
APJ	Action Plan for Jobs	D/Taoiseach	Department of Taoiseach
BIM	Bord Iascaigh Mhara	DTTAS	Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport
BTWFD	Back to Work Family Dividend	ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
CCSP	Community Childcare Subvention Plus	EGFSN	Expert Group on Future Skills Needs
CEDRA	Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas	EI	Enterprise Ireland
daa	Dublin Airport Authority	EIB	European Investment Bank
DAFM	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine	ERC	European Research Council
DBEI	Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation	ETB	Education and Training Board
DCCAIE	Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment	EU	European Union
DCCoI	Design and Craft Council of Ireland	FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
DCHG	Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht	FET	Further Education and Training
DCYA	Department of Children and Youth Affairs	FLAGS	Fisheries Local Action Groups
DEASP	Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection	GNP	Gross National Product
DES	Department of Education and Skills	H	Half Year
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade	HAP	Housing Assistance Payment
DoF	Department of Finance	HEA	Higher Education Authority
DHPLG	Department of Housing, Planning, and Local Government	HEI	Higher Education Institution
DJE	Department of Justice and Equality	HIHI	Health Innovation Hub Ireland
DoD	Department of Defence	HPSU	High Potential Start-Ups
DPER	Department of Public Expenditure and Reform	HSA	Health and Safety Authority
DRCD	Department of Rural and Community Development	ICT	Information and Communications Technology
		IDA	IDA Ireland
		IFS	International Financial Services
		IP	Intellectual Property
		ITI	InterTradeIreland
		KDB	Knowledge Development Box
		KTI	Knowledge Transfer Ireland

LA s	Local Authorities	SBIR	Small Business Innovation Research
LCDC	Local Community Development Committee	SCO	Strategic Communications Office
LEADER	Liaisons entre actions de developpement de l'économie rurale	SFI	Science Foundation Ireland
LSRA	Legal Services Regulatory Authority	SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
LEO/s	Local Enterprise Office/s	SOLAS	An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna
Mbps	Megabytes per second	STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics
MEND	Midlands, East and North Dublin	ÚnaG	Údarás na Gaeltachta
MFI	Micro Finance Ireland	VAT	Valued Added Tax
NBP	National Broadband Plan	WRC	Workplace Relations Commission
NCC	National Competitiveness Council		
NPF	National Planning Framework		
NSAI	National Standards Authority of Ireland		
NSC	National Skills Council		
NSS	National Skills Strategy		
NTF	National Training Fund		
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development		
OGCIO	Office of the Government Chief Information Officer		
OGP	Office of Government Procurement		
PPP	Public Private Partnership		
RAGs	Regional Action Groups		
RAPJ	Regional Action Plan for Jobs		
R&D	Research and Development		
RDI	Research, development and innovation		
RSF	Regional Skills Fora		
SBCI	Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland		

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Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland