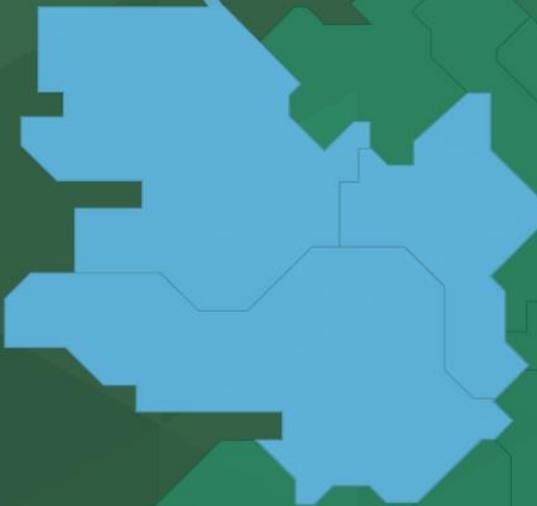


**WEST
REGION**

**ACTION
PLAN
FOR JOBS
2015-2017**





Action Plan for Jobs: West Region 2015-2017

Contents

Foreword by An Taoiseach, Enda Kenny, T.D.	1
Foreword: Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation.....	3
Key Objectives for the West region	5
Executive Summary.....	6
Context	6
Employment trends.....	6
Strengths and Opportunities	7
Key Themes	8
Chapter 1: Introduction	12
Chapter 2: Profile of the West Region	14
2.1 Population and regional characteristics.....	14
2.2 Connectivity.....	15
2.3 Quality of Life	16
Recreation and Leisure	16
Arts and Culture.....	17
Education.....	17
Galway Economic Baseline Study.....	18
Chapter 3: Economic Performance	19
3.1 Employment and Unemployment	19
Overview.....	19
Sectoral trends	20
Employment in the Services Sector	21
Employment in Industry/Manufacturing.....	22
Employment in companies supported by State agencies	23
Employment by Occupation	25
3.2 Education and Skills attainment.....	26
3.3 Gross Value Added (GVA).....	27
3.4 Business Demographics in the region	27
Scale of companies	28
Chapter 4: Enterprise Assets.....	29
4.1 Enterprise Agencies in the West Region	29
Enterprise Ireland	29
IDA Ireland	30
Údarás na Gaeltachta	31
InterTradelreland	32
4.2 Local Authorities.....	33

Local Enterprise Offices	33
4.3 Education & Training providers	34
National University of Ireland, Galway (NUI Galway)	34
Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology	35
SOLAS.....	36
Education and Training Boards (ETBs).....	36
Skillnets.....	37
4.4 Other bodies supporting enterprise development	38
Local Development Companies	38
Western Development Commission.....	38
Failte Ireland.....	39
Bord Iascaigh Mhara.....	39
WestBIC	40
Waterways Ireland	40
Teagasc	41
Marine Institute.....	41
Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI)	42
Intreo (Employment Services)	42
Coillte.....	42
ConnectIreland	43
4.5 Business Networks.....	43
4.6 Community Enterprise Centres (CECs)	45
4.7 Research Centres and Test Beds	46
NUI Galway	46
GMIT	48
Testbeds	48
4.10 Infrastructure developments which enhance the region’s potential.....	48
High Speed Broadband	48
Water infrastructure.....	49
Transport	49
Ports and Airports.....	50
Chapter 5: Introduction to the Actions.....	51
Chapter 6: Driving Entrepreneurship.....	52
Chapter 7: Growing and Scaling Enterprises.....	61
Chapter 8: Fostering Innovation	65
Chapter 9: Attracting and embedding Foreign Direct Investment	69
Chapter 10: Building Sectoral Opportunities	72
10.1 MedTech, Lifesciences and ICT.....	72
10.2 Tourism.....	74
10.3 Food, Beverages and Fisheries	81

10.4 Sustainable Energy	85
10.5 Creative Industries.....	87
Chapter 11: Skills enhancement and labour market activation	90
Chapter 12: Strengthening Business Networks	95
Chapter 13: Marketing and strengthening the region.....	98
13.1 Marketing the Region	98
13.2 Strengthening the region.....	99
Chapter 14: Potential strategic areas for further job creation	102
Transatlantic Fibre Optic Cable	102
Wild Atlantic Way	102
Galway to Dublin Cycleway	103
European Capital of Culture 2020	103
Upper Shannon Erne Future Economy Initiative.....	104
Development of lands at former Galway Airport Site	104
Chapter 15: Monitoring Progress	105

WEST REGION



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



Thanks to the Irish people our country is now the fastest growing economy in the EU. The next phase of the Irish recovery is to make sure that it is felt behind the door of every home across Ireland. This Action Plan for Jobs West is a key element to creating local jobs and spreading the benefits of a rising economy.

While our national unemployment rate is down to 9.3%, from a previous high of 15.2%, it is still far too high with too many families not feeling the benefit of recovery.

Between 2007 and 2011, 19,000 jobs in the construction industry alone were lost in the West. This Fine Gael & Labour Government has worked hard with the people of the region to reverse the job losses and jobs are now growing here in the West and in every region of Ireland.

Our recovery plan has seen a substantial improvement in the West region with over 5,000 jobs created since 2011 in EI and IDA supported companies (a 20% increase), compared to 3,300 job losses in EI and IDA companies in the period 2008 - 2010 (an 11% decline). However, this Government is intent that every region will achieve its economic potential and that we maximise each region's job creation potential.

It's not the responsibility of a single agency to help create jobs or bring jobs to the region. That lack of joined up thinking is the path to stagnation. It is the job of all agencies – the Local Enterprise Offices, the tourism bodies, the agri-food bodies, the local authorities, and the national enterprise agencies, to work together with local stakeholders to provide the best supports possible to help enterprise invest in the region.

This is what this Action Plan West seeks to achieve. It has been developed through extensive consultation with local people who live and work in the region, and who know its strengths and the areas of potential and opportunity. And it will require the continued commitment, hard work, and enthusiasm of those local people to be successful as it is implemented.

The Plan contains over 100, very tangible and concrete time-lined Actions in total. It includes a range of actions such as a focus on supporting entrepreneurship through increasing the number of Start-Ups as well as helping existing companies to grow and create jobs.

All of these Actions will be monitored closely, and, as with our national Action Plan process, we will publish regular Progress Reports to ensure strong and transparent implementation of all of the Actions in the Plan.

The national Action Plan for Jobs process has worked, and continues to work. However, strong successful Government policies at national level mean nothing if they are not reflected at a regional and local level.

The Regional Action Plans for Jobs will help to achieve vibrant and competitive regions, and the Action Plan West will play an important role.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of the first name 'Enda' and the last name 'Kenny' written in a cursive style.

Enda Kenny, T.D.
Taoiseach
November 2015

Foreword: Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation



When the Government came into office in 2011, tackling unemployment and creating a supportive environment to facilitate job creation were amongst its top priorities. Over 300,000 jobs had been lost in the economy over the period 2008 to 2011 and a new strategy was needed that would help create sustainable jobs based on entrepreneurship, innovation and export growth. The Action Plan for Jobs was the Government's response to transforming the business environment and building a sustainable base for enterprise growth and job creation.

Since the Action Plan for Jobs process commenced in 2012, over 130,000 jobs have been created in the economy as a whole. However, not all regions are yet fully experiencing the benefits of economic recovery. The pace of progress in the regions – and especially those with the highest unemployment levels - needs to be accelerated through targeted supports for enterprise growth and job creation. Growing the jobs capacity of the regions is important, not just from an economic perspective, but also from a societal perspective if we are to enable families to continue to live and work in their local communities. I firmly believe that all of Ireland's regions have a role to play in contributing to the Government's objective of achieving full employment by 2018.

The Government has therefore built on the success of the national Action Plan for Jobs process and has launched a series of Action Plans for Jobs at regional level, setting out specific actions that will be taken to build on the unique strengths and opportunities of each region.

This Action Plan for Jobs for the West region covers the counties of Galway, Mayo and Roscommon. The Plan contains almost 200 actions for delivery by public bodies and the enterprise sector which will support enterprise growth and job creation in the region. Many of them are innovative and creative and draw on the excellent collaboration, energy and enthusiasm that exists in the West region. The cumulative effect of all of the actions will make a real and lasting impact on the jobs potential of the region.

The Action Plan covers the period to the end of 2017. It will, however, be a living document which will be updated on an on-going basis to allow further actions to be added as new initiatives and commitments emerge from the region. The Plan will be overseen by a Regional Implementation Committee which will include representation from all of the key stakeholders in the West region, including the enterprise sector.

In addition, the Government will provide up to €250 million over the next five years, through IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland, to further support enterprise growth and job creation in the regions. IDA Ireland will have a budget of up to €150 million over five years to support a regional property programme, while Enterprise Ireland will administer up to €100 million for innovative and collaborative proposals to support job creation across the regions.

While my Department has facilitated the compilation of this Action Plan for the West based on engagements with stakeholders in the region, the Plan is designed to be bottom-up and to build new collaborations within the region. The extent to which the Plan fulfils its potential will depend critically on the continuing committed involvement of all those in the region.

I look forward to seeing the measures under this Action Plan being implemented to the benefit of all the people of the region over the coming months.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Bruton". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Richard Bruton, TD
Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation

Key Objectives for the West region



Increase employment in the region by 10%-15% over the period to 2020. This will see the creation of in the order of 25,000 new jobs in the region compared to 2014, including 540 jobs in the Gaeltacht areas.



Achieve an increase of at least 25% in the number of start-ups in the region, and a 25% improvement in the survival rate of new businesses.



Increase jobs in export-led sectors by 20% across the region by 2020.



Increase the number of IDA investments in the region by 30-40% up to 2019. This will result in a minimum of 92 additional projects for the West region by 2019.



Build on the existing clusters in Medtech, ICT and Pharma in the West, including through the establishment of a Galway regional office by the NSAI to provide a strong presence for local access to technical and clinical experts servicing medical device certification.



Target the increased participation of women in entrepreneurship, including through the Local Enterprise Offices and a Galway Chamber Female Entrepreneurship Programme focusing on growing and scaling enterprise.



Capitalise on the Tourism assets of the region to contribute to the targets in the Government's new Tourism Policy Statement to increase overseas tourist numbers by 32% to 10 million by 2025, increase revenue from overseas tourists by 51% to €5 billion, and grow employment in the sector by 25% to 50,000 by 2025.



Add value in the food sector, and particularly in seafood which plays a key role in the sustainable development of the economic and social fabric of many coastal communities in the region.



Develop the potential of the Creative Industries which are particularly strong in the region and provide Seed and Venture capital and a Micro Loan Fund to small businesses in the sector.



Utilise the cultural heritage and tradition of the region, and particularly in the Gaeltacht areas, to create jobs.



Maximise the potential of the ocean for marine Research and Testbedding, including in relation to ocean energy.

Executive Summary

Context

Since the Government's Action Plan for Jobs process commenced in 2012, over 120,000 jobs have been created across the economy as a whole. There is still some way to go to recover the full extent of the jobs which were lost during the recession. However, building on the success of the Action Plan for Jobs process to date, the Government has set an objective of achieving full employment by 2018.

Creating vibrant and competitive regions will be central to realising that ambition, and the Government has committed to developing individual Action Plans for each of Ireland's regions. The *Action Plan for Jobs: Regional* initiative will lay the foundations for building on the strengths of each region and developing their full potential for enterprise growth and job creation.

This Action Plan for Jobs for the West region covers the counties of Galway, Mayo and Roscommon. The primary objective of the Plan is to have a further 10-15% employment in the region by 2020 and to ensure that the unemployment rate is within 1% of the State average. The West region has the strengths and assets to achieve this goal. However, these strengths, and the opportunities they present, need to be tapped through a new level of collaboration among key players in the region working to achieve common goals.

Increased collaboration will be facilitated through a number of policy reforms that have been put in place by the Government, including:

- the growing impact of the Local Enterprise Office (LEO) network, developed through the close cooperation between Enterprise Ireland and the Local Authorities;
- the fresh mandate of the new Education and Training Boards, who like the Higher Education Institutes are now focused on developing stronger links with their local enterprise base;
- the strengthening of the Regional Offices of IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland with a new focus in their respective national strategies on regional jobs growth;
- the reform of Local Government, with a greater emphasis on the economic development role of the local authorities; and
- the emergence of stronger policy frameworks to underpin sectoral opportunities with a strong profile at regional level.

Employment trends

From a peak of 207,400 in Q2 2008, employment fell by 30,000 back to 177,100 in Q1 2012. The Construction sector accounted for the majority of the job losses, with 19,400 Construction jobs lost in the West region over the period 2007 to 2012 – a 65% reduction.

Recent figures published by the Central Statistics Office show that employment in the West region increased by 5,000 year-on-year in the second Quarter of 2015 to 183,300, while the Unemployment

Rate for the region has fallen to 10.5% from a high of 17.2% in 2012. The aim of this Action Plan is to build on recent increase in employment numbers and create a sustainable path for further jobs growth.

A key target of this Plan will be to grow the number of exporting enterprises in the region and work with existing companies to improve their performance and expand their employment.

At the end 2014, there were 34,802 people employed in almost 1,200 client companies of IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland and Údarás na Gaeltachta in the West region. Since 2010, the agencies have added over 5,100 jobs in the West region (an increase of over 17%), with 1,000 extra jobs added in Enterprise Ireland companies (+10%) and 4,000 in IDA companies (+28%). This demonstrates significant export-led progress in the region, notwithstanding continuing difficulties for some sectors in the domestically-trading economy. In addition, the three Local Enterprise Offices in the region (one in each county) supported 562 enterprises in 2014, with a total employment of 2,583 people.

Employment in agency-supported companies now represents approximately 20% of overall employment in the region. Key exporting sectors include Manufacturing (employing 24,752), with 40% (10,016) of those employed in Medical Technologies and almost 5,000 employed in the ICT sector.

Strengths and Opportunities

The key strengths of the West region are:

- A strong ecosystem of both indigenous and multinational companies operating across a diverse range of sectors, with particular strengths in the MedDevice/BioMed and ICT sectors. The West is the hub of a globally recognised MedTech cluster, employing the highest per capita of Medical Technology personnel in Europe.
- A growing cluster of Lifesciences/Pharmaceutical companies, especially in Mayo and Roscommon, while Galway is becoming a major technology hub, particularly around internet and collaborative working technologies.
- A spirit of innovation and collaboration, coupled with a high level of self-employment and entrepreneurship, including in the Creative Industries.
- Good physical and digital infrastructure and a business environment that is competitive and fit for purpose.
- Strong educational and research institutions, notably through NUI Galway and Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT), with a large, well-educated young talent pool available to companies.

- Excellent collaboration between public bodies in the region (e.g. Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland, LEOs, local authorities, NUI Galway, GMIT, Fáilte Ireland, Údáras na Gaeltachta, Western Development Commission, InterTradelreland, WestBIC, etc.) that can be built upon to support job creation.
- Leading-edge knowledge and test-bed facilities for marine technology and ocean energy research.
- Significant tourism and cultural assets, which includes a large section of the Wild Atlantic Way as well as the Shannon River and Lakelands.
- An attractive location for quality of life, with an abundance of natural amenities.

The key objectives of the Action Plan for Jobs for the region, as set out at the start of this Plan, build on these strengths and areas of opportunity.

Key Themes

Key actions and objectives to be delivered by a range of stakeholders in the region, acting together in many cases, include:

- Increase the flow of new start ups
- Increase the flow of funds to start ups
- Develop the range and use of Incentives Schemes to support enterprises in the region
- Increase the impact of research capabilities in the region's enterprises
- Increase participation by enterprises in the region in scaling programmes
- Expand incubation space and the throughput of new enterprises
- Develop a Plan to increase the flow of critical skills to the region's enterprises

Local Authorities, the Enterprise Agencies, and Educational Institutions will work collaboratively with leaders in the Enterprise Sector to deliver these ambitions.

Specific Actions to Create Jobs in the West Region

Enhance the West as a world class cluster for Medical Devices and Lifesciences, cultivating start ups and innovation

IDA has set its target to win 92 additional IDA projects for the region, build Advanced Technology Buildings in Castlebar and Galway, and will work with other stakeholders in the region, including ConnectIreland, to maximise the promotion of the region for FDI

Implement an ambitious operational programme to deliver the opportunities offered by the Wild Atlantic Way and build out the individual tourism offerings from this cultural theme

A Regional Skills Forum will be established to develop a plan to increase the flow of critical skills to the Region's enterprise base

Local Authorities will work with Teagasc and other stakeholders to create a dedicated food innovation hub and a dedicated food incubation centre in the region, and help food companies with high potential to scale

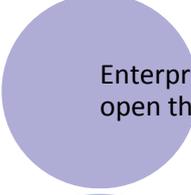
The Creative Industries in the West will be supported through a new €2 million INTERREG project. The Western Development Commission will also disburse a targeted Micro-Loan fund for the Creative Industries in the Western Region, while the local authorities, in consultation with the Irish Film Board, will develop and implement an Action Plan to support the Film industry in Galway and the West region and explore the potential for a Regional Film Fund



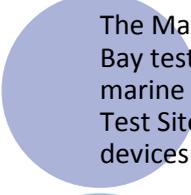
Deliver new Traineeships in TV & Film; Logistics & Transport, Hospitality and Engineering Sectors



Develop a landmark Galway City Innovation District comprising a cluster of entrepreneurs, start-ups, accelerators and incubators, to become the anchor point of a wider Western Innovation Network which will operate via links throughout the region



Enterprise Ireland will work in partnership with Westport Multi-agency Enterprise Ltd to open the new enterprise centre in Westport



The Marine Institute and SEAI will continue to develop and promote the national Smart Bay test and demonstration facility in Galway Bay, with ongoing testing of advanced marine technologies and systems. The SEAI will also develop the Atlantic Marine Energy Test Site in Belmullet as a grid-connected national deep water test facility for wave devices and components at the final stage of test and demonstration



540 new jobs will be created by Udarás supported companies across a range of key sectors, such as Lifesciences, Mariculture and Food and Drink



WestBic will source international fast tracking opportunities for early stage enterprises



InterTradeIreland initiatives will include the delivery of Public Tendering Workshops for SMEs

Chapter 1: Introduction

The aim of the Action Plan for Jobs is to support enterprise growth and job creation in every region of the country¹. All regions have experienced increased jobs numbers since the Government's Action Plan for Jobs process was introduced in 2012. However, the pace of progress across the regions is uneven. More needs to be done to accelerate employment growth through targeted supports for enterprise and job creation, especially in those regions with higher than average unemployment levels.

Building on the national Action Plan for Jobs process, the Government has committed to developing Action Plans for each of the regions at NUTS III level. This Action Plan, for the West region, covers the counties of Galway, Mayo and Roscommon.

The objective of this Action Plan is to establish a cohesive approach to enterprise support and job creation in the region on the part of the Enterprise Development Agencies (Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland and Údáras na Gaeltachta), other public bodies (e.g. local authorities and their Local Enterprise Offices, Education & Training institutions, Fáilte Ireland, Western Development Commission, Department of Social Protection/Intreo), local business leaders, and community-based enterprises. While there is already a lot of practical and strategic cooperation taking place at local and regional levels, this Action Plan provides a framework in which cooperation and collaboration can be further enhanced between both public and private sector stakeholders.

The first part of the Plan provides an overview and analysis of the West region and identifies its strengths, assets and opportunities for growth. This section of the Plan has been developed on the basis of desk research and a series of engagements with regional stakeholders, culminating in a Regional Stakeholder Forum on 23rd March 2015 which was attended by over 150 participants. The stakeholder engagements have played an important part in helping to identify the opportunities in the region to support enterprise growth and job creation.

The second part of the Plan contains a series of actions to support job creation in the region, grouped on a thematic basis and reflecting the areas which have been identified through the consultation process as being particularly important for the West. Each action has identified body/bodies responsible for its delivery, within a given timeframe. Progress in the implementation of each of these actions will be overseen by a Regional Implementation Committee (see Chapter 15), which will involve the key stakeholders in the region and which will meet twice each year.

The Plan covers the period 2015-2017, but through the monitoring process new actions can be added during that period, making the Plan a dynamic and living basis for progressing the jobs agenda in the region.

¹ The term "region" is used in this document to refer to the NUTS III area (i.e. the area of the former West Regional Authority) which is now a component of the statutory Northern and Western Region as constituted by the Regional Assemblies Establishment Order 2014. Under that Order, the NUTS III areas are designated as Strategic Planning Areas for the purpose of functions in relation to Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies.

Synergies with Local Government Reform

This Action Plan will complement and contribute to the Local Economic and Community Plans being developed by the four local authorities in the region, as well as contributing to the Regional Spatial Economic Strategy (RSES) to be developed by the new Northern and Western Regional Assembly which has a broader geographical remit. The RSES will support implementation of national spatial policies and the economic policies and objectives of the Government by enhancing co-ordination of the planning and economic development functions of relevant Government Departments and agencies and the Local Government sector.

Chapter 2: Profile of the West Region

2.1 Population and regional characteristics

The West Region encompasses the counties of Galway, Mayo and Roscommon and is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean to the West and the River Shannon to the East. The region covers an area of around 13,801 square kilometres and accounts for 20% of the total area of the State.

West region - population by county

Galway	250,653
Mayo	130,638
Roscommon	64,065
Total:	445,356

The West has a combined population of 445,356² (10% of State total), making it the third smallest of the 8 administrative regions in the country in terms of population. The population of the region increased by 31,079 between 2006 and 2011 – a 7.5% increase compared to the national average of 8.2%. Within the individual counties, the population of Roscommon increased by 9%, Galway by 8.2% and Mayo by 5.5%.

The major urban centres in the region are Galway City (pop. 75,529), Castlebar (pop. 12,318) and Ballina (pop. 11,056). Co. Roscommon has the second lowest population density in Ireland after Leitrim. However, Roscommon town is an important focal point for that county, with a population of 5,693.

The West neighbours the Border, Mid-West and Midland regions and has close collaborations with those regions. For example, Athlone town straddles the counties of Roscommon in the West region, and Westmeath in the Midland region. The enterprise and labour market base of the Athlone hinterland therefore overlaps the two regions, and is equally important to the economy of both regions.

The West region has a number of unique characteristics, such as the rugged landscape of Connemara, the coastal islands including the Aran Islands, Achill Island and Clare Island, Gaeltacht areas in Galway and Mayo, and the Shannon River and Lough Key, Lough Ree and Lough Derg to the Eastern side of the region.

An Gaeltacht

The term 'Gaeltacht' denotes those areas in Ireland where the Irish language is, or was until the recent past, the main spoken language of a substantial number of the local population. There are two Gaeltacht areas in the West region – the Galway Gaeltacht and the Mayo Gaeltacht.

The Galway Gaeltacht covers extensive parts of County Galway mainly in the west of the county, and is the single largest and most populous Gaeltacht area in Ireland. It has a population of 48,907 and represents 48.5% of total Gaeltacht population. About 15,300 of this population reside within the expanding suburbs of Galway City.

² CSO Census of Population, 2011

The Mayo Gaeltacht is located mainly in the western part of the county and comprises three separate areas of Tourmakeady, parts of Achill Island, and the Erris Peninsula. It has a total population of 10,886 (Census 2011) and represents 10.8% of the total Gaeltacht population.

In addition to receiving focused supports for enterprise development, the Gaeltacht has developed employment opportunities around Irish language schools that run throughout the summer months.

2.2 Connectivity

Transport links to and within the West region have improved considerably over recent years, although some intra-regional linkages remain weak. The region is well served by air through Ireland West Airport, Knock which offers daily domestic flights to the UK and charter services to holiday destinations in Europe, and by Shannon Airport as an intercontinental gateway, in the neighbouring Mid-West region. Local connectivity by air and sea to the offshore Aran Islands is also important both for residents of the islands and for tourists.

The Government's recently published National Aviation Policy notes that the regional airports have an important role to play, but Exchequer support to these airports must comply with the 2014 EU Guidelines on State Aid to airports and airlines.

The West region is also served by Galway Port - a designated Port of Regional Significance under National Ports Policy - which provides shipping links to the UK and Europe and is an important strategic regional hub for petroleum importation, storage and distribution.

The West enjoys good interconnectivity on the improved national road and rail corridors, with most of the main economic centres of the region being within 2 to 3 hours of Dublin by road or rail. There are regular train services between Galway and Dublin, and between Westport, Castlebar, Ballina, Roscommon and Dublin. The train service between Galway and Dublin serves also commuter towns of Oranmore, Athenry, and Ballinasloe. Direct train services also operate between Galway and Limerick.

The Atlantic Corridor roadway is a significant road upgrade project which will eventually link Letterkenny in the North West with Waterford in the South East of the country via Galway, Limerick and Cork. It will link the main urban and economic areas in the West region. The N17/N18 section of the route running from Gort to Tuam is currently being upgraded to motorway status and will reduce bottlenecks and journey times along that route. It will connect to the M6 Galway-Dublin motorway to the east of Galway city. It is expected that the 57 Km of new road will be completed in 2018.

2.3 Quality of Life

“Quality of Life” is a complex and subjective matter, but is an increasingly important factor in attracting and retaining skilled people - particularly internationally mobile skilled workers - and in attracting mobile foreign direct investment.

The West region provides a diverse and distinctive environment that includes rural, coastal and urban dimensions that provide lifestyle options for those living in the region, while at the same time proving attractive for enterprise investment and development. Each of the counties which make up the region has its own particular characteristics and attractions as a place in which to live and work.

County Galway offers a range of lifestyle choices for people wishing to live and work in the West, with a mix of rural areas, the Aran islands and other islands off the coast, and large towns such as Tuam, Loughrea and Ballinasloe, Oranmore and Athenry.

Galway City is a growing, young and vibrant city. According to Census 2011, the city’s population of 20 to 24 year olds is more than twice the national average, many of whom attend the National University of Galway (NUI Galway) and Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT). The city has an international reputation for culture and the arts. It is a major urban hub in the region and has attracted significant FDI investment in the Medtech and Lifesciences sectors. In 2014 Galway City was named the European Micro City by fDi Intelligence, a division of the Financial Times, and it also holds the Urbanism Great Town³ award.

Mayo has a number of large towns, such as Castlebar, Westport and Ballina, which are within easy reach of areas of outstanding natural beauty such as Clew Bay, Achill Island and Ballycroy National Park. Pristine sandy beaches dot the coastline and mountain ranges lie to the south and north of the county. Westport is designated one of Ireland’s Heritage Towns (as are Athenry in Co. Galway and Strokestown in Co. Roscommon), and has been winner of numerous tourism awards and Tidy Town awards as well as the Purple Flag award⁴ along with Galway City.

Roscommon is well connected to other counties in the region and to other regions of the country because of its centrality, with easy access to the cities of Dublin and Galway. Roscommon Town, Boyle, Castlerea, and the Monksland area of Athlone are key urban areas in the county. Roscommon boasts the longest section of the Shannon River of any county on its route, while the lakes of Lough Key and Lough Ree offer water-based amenities. Significant national heritage sites include Rathcroghan (archaeology sites) and historic houses such as Strokestown House. Lough Key Forest Park covers more than 800 acres of parkland and forest.

Recreation and Leisure

The West region’s dramatic and varied landscapes offers much scope for outdoor activities, including sea sports such as surfing and windsurfing, while the inland waterways and lakes offer opportunities

³ See: <http://www.academyofurbanism.org.uk/galway/>

⁴ The Purple Flag is a designation that is given to a town that reaches a certain standard of service and security in the realm of evening and night time activities.

for canoeing, kayaking and fishing. There are many Blue Flag and Green Coast beaches along the extensive coastline, and the rugged landscape of Connemara is an attraction for hillwalkers and artists.

The West has strong sporting and recreational amenities. The region possesses strong GAA links, with most towns and villages having hurling and/or football teams. There are also many golf courses throughout the region.



The dramatic landscape of Connemara has attracted many people to come and live in the West

Arts and Culture

The West is renowned for its cultural aspects on many fronts. The tradition of the Irish language, culture and music are embedded in the Gaeltacht and are reflected in the arts and drama of the region. There are a number of theatres in Galway, including the Druid Theatre and An Taibhdhearc (the national Irish language theatre), while Castlebar, Ballina, Kiltimagh and Roscommon also have theatre facilities.

Many festivals and cultural events take place throughout the region each year these include an annual festivals programme that has become a part of Galway City's fabric, Achill Seafood festival (Féile na Mara), Foxford Walking Festival, and horse fairs at Ballinasloe, Westport, and Clifden. Galway City was recently designated Galway UNESCO City of Film - one of only five such cities in the world.

Education

The West region has a plentiful selection of primary and post-primary schools throughout the region. The National University of Ireland, Galway and Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology are the two main providers of Third Level education in the West. NUI Galway caters for approximately 17,000 students, while GMIT has approximately 7,000 students. GMIT has campuses at five locations in the

West of Ireland - two in Galway city, two in County Galway (Letterfrack and Mountbellew) and one in Castlebar, County Mayo.

Other nearby Third Level facilities outside the region include Athlone IT, IT Sligo, St. Angela's College Sligo (which has a strategic partnership with NUI Galway), University of Limerick, Mary Immaculate College Limerick and Limerick IT.

Galway Economic Baseline Study

In July 2015, Galway City Council and Galway County Council launched an Economic Baseline Study. The Economic Baseline Study was carried out by The Whitaker Institute in NUI Galway, on behalf of the two Galway local authorities. The study collates all available information relating to socio-economic indicators in Galway and provides a comprehensive snapshot of the city and county in relation its demographic base. Two high-level summaries, one for Galway City and one for Galway County, have been produced. An accompanying website www.galwaydashboard.ie has been developed.

Chapter 3: Economic Performance

3.1 Employment and Unemployment

Overview

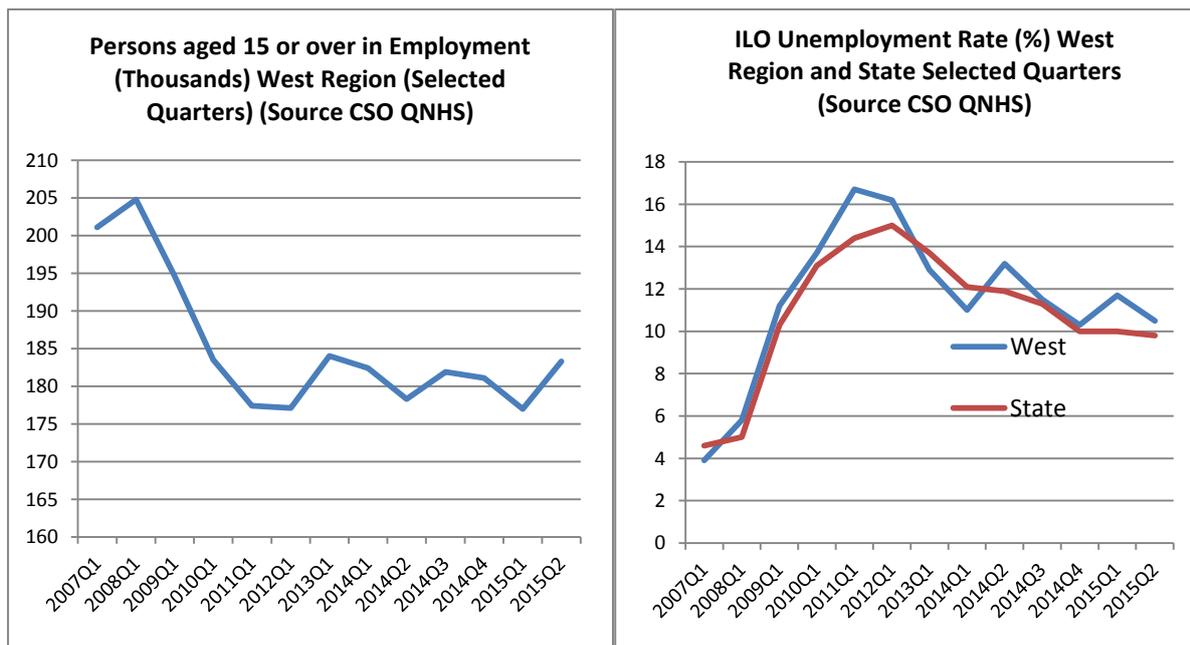
As was the case with all regions, employment in the West was substantially impacted by the economic recession which commenced in 2008.

In the first quarter of 2007, the West region had 202,100 people in employment, with an unemployment rate of 3.9%, which was below the national average (4.6%) at that time. The region appeared to show some resilience at the start of the recession, with employment numbers increasing to as high as 207,400 in Q2 2008, before falling back to 177,100 in Q1 2012. This represented a fall of 30,300, or 15%, in the numbers employed on a seasonally unadjusted basis.

West region: Key labour market data, Q2 2015	
Nos. in employment:	183,300
Unemployed:	21,300
In Labour Force:	204,600
Unemployment Rate:	10.5%

In spite of the recovery in employment numbers nationally in the last two years, the West region has yet to see a sustained increase in the numbers at work, as reflected in the graphs at Figure 1 below. Nonetheless, the latest available labour market data from the CSO shows that there were 183,300 people in employment in Q2 2015 – an increase of 5,000 people at work compared to Q2 2014. The Unemployment Rate fell to 10.5% in Q2 2015, compared to a high of 17% in 2012. While the Unemployment Rate is above the national average of 9.5%, the figures are converging towards that national average.

Figure 1 - Numbers Employed and ILO Unemployment Rate (%) West Region and State



For consistency with other regional Action Plans, and to enable benchmarking with key points in the recent economic cycle, the more detailed analysis of employment trends in the West region which follows uses Q1 2015 as a reference point. There were 177,000 people in employment in the region in Q1 2015.

Sectoral trends

As Table 1 below shows, the Services sectors accounts for two-thirds of employment in the West region, with 118,000 people working in Services at the end of Q1 2015. While employment in the sector held up well during the worst years of the recession, and even increased by some 5,000 workers between 2007 and 2013, employment in the sector has fallen by over 10,000 since then⁵. A more detailed analysis of the Services sector later in this chapter shows that the hospitality sector (Accommodation and Food Services) has accounted for the largest share (4,000) of the job losses.

Table 1 –West region: Employment by sector, 2007-2014 (selected Quarters)

Persons aged 15 years and over in Employment (Thousand) NACE Rev 2 Economic Sector (Selected Quarters)									
West Region						Change Between Q1 2007 and Q1 2012		Change Between Q1 2012 and Q1 2015	
	2007 Q1	2012 Q1	2013 Q1	2014 Q1	2015 Q1	(,000)	%	(,000)	%
All NACE economic sectors	201.1	177.1	184.0	182.4	177.0	-24.0	-11.9	-0.1	-0.1
Agriculture, forestry, fishing (A)	17.9	12.7	14.5	17.9	15.6	-5.2	-29.1	2.9	22.8
Industry (B to E)	29.8	29.1	31.1	28.0	29.4	-0.7	-2.3	0.3	1.0
Construction (F)	29.6	10.2	9.6	10.2	13.4	-19.4	-65.5	3.2	31.4
Services (G to U)	123.7	124.9	128.6	126.3	118.0	1.2	1.0	-6.9	-5.5

Source: CSO StatBank/Quarterly National Household Survey Main Results / QNQ40

Employment growth in Construction in the West region was greater than the national average up to 2007. In 2007, the Construction sector accounted for over 29,600 jobs, or 14% of total employment in the West region. This compared to the national average of 12.8% of workers in Construction. The economic downturn and its impact on Construction had a significant effect on employment in the West region. Of the 24,000 net jobs lost in the West region between 2007 and 2012, over 19,000 (81%) were in the Construction sector. While Construction employment has shown signs of improvement with 3,200 more people in employment in the sector in the West since 2012, the sector is unlikely to reach the levels of employment attained in 2007, either nationally or regionally. For this reason, greater diversification of jobs across other sectors is important for the region to improve its employment situation.

Employment in the Industry/Manufacturing Sector held up reasonably well during the recession in the West region, albeit with some increases and dips. The numbers employed in this sector at the start of 2015 were more or less on a par with 2007 and stood at 29,400. Manufacturing in the

⁵ It should be noted that there was a recovery in the numbers employed in Services to 120,300 in Q2 2015.

region has a larger share of employment, at 16.6%, than the national average (12.6%). Approximately one-third of all Manufacturing employment is in Medical Devices and Supplies.

Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing, with 15,600 workers, accounts for approximately 9% of all employment in the West Region. This is significantly higher than the national average share of 5.5%. Employment in this sector in the West region fell by 5,200, or 29%, between 2007 and 2012, but increased by 2,900 in the period to Q1 2015. Nonetheless, employment in Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing remains below pre-recession levels.

Employment in the Services Sector

A closer analysis of the Services sector is provided on Table 2 below. This table shows that employment in the area of Human Health/Social Work is particularly strong in the West, with 27,300 people working in that sector. This represents 23% of all Services employment in the region. The number of people employed in the sector has increased by 3,100 since 2012.

Table 2 – Employment in Services sector

Persons aged 15 years and over in Employment (Thousand) by Region, NACE Rev 2 Economic Sector and Quarter			
West Region	2007 Q1	2012 Q1	2015 Q1
Services (G to U)	123.7	124.9	118.0
Wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles (G)	28.2	25.2	23.2
Transportation and storage (H)	5.0	5.8	5.6
Accommodation and food service activities (I)	13.4	12.3	8.3
Information and communication (J)	3.2	5.5	5.5
Financial, insurance and real estate activities (K,L)	4.8	6.1	4.9
Professional, scientific and technical activities (M)	7.6	7.7	6.6
Administrative and support service activities (N)	3.9	4.3	4.1
Public administration and defence, compulsory social security (O)	9.6	9.4	7.5
Education (P)	16.1	15.7	17.0
Human health and social work activities (Q)	24.7	24.2	27.3
Other NACE activities (R to U)	7.2	8.7	8.0
Not stated
Source: CSO StatBank / Quarterly National Household Survey Main Results / QNQ40 (accessed 25 May 2015)			

Employment in the Education sector has increased by 1,300 since 2012. 17,000 people are now employed in the Education sector in the West, reflecting the strong presence of Third Level Institutions in the region, in addition to primary and second level schools.

While the Wholesale and Retail sector accounts for 20%, or one in every five services jobs in the region, this sector has been badly affected by the recession both national and regionally. The sector

has seen the loss of 5,000 jobs in the West region since 2007, with 2,000 of those job losses since 2012. However, Wholesale and Retail remains a significant sector of employment in the region, with 23,200 people in employment.

The table above shows that employment in the Accommodation and Food Services sector (Tourism) fell sharply between 2012 and 2015, with a loss of 4,000 jobs in the region. A deeper analysis of CSO background data shows that the largest fall in year-on-year employment in Tourism occurred between Q1 2014 and Q1 2015. There was some recovery in employment in the sector in Q2 2015, with an increase of almost 2,000 in the numbers at work in the Quarter. The strong marketing of the Wild Atlantic Way and other visitor attractions which is being conducted by Fáilte Ireland offers potential for job creation opportunities in this sector in the West region in the medium to long-term.

Employment in Industry/Manufacturing

As previously referenced, employment in the Industry/Manufacturing Sector held up well during the recession in the West region compared to other regions. The numbers employed in the sector increased by 1,400 between Q1 2014 and Q1 2015, to stand at 29,400; this compares to 29,800 in 2007.

While CSO data is not available at regional level by industry sub-sector, figures from the enterprise development agencies show that 40% of manufacturing employment – or 10,016 jobs - in companies supported by Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland and Údarás na Gaeltachta in the West region was in the Medical Devices and Supplies area (see Table 3 below), underscoring the strength of this sector in the region. Employment in this sector in agency client companies has grown by over 800 (9.5%) since 2011.

Table 3 - CSO Industrial Employment and Employment in Enterprise agency supported Manufacturing companies

CSO Industrial Employment and Enterprise Agency Manufacturing Employment (Selected Periods)			
West Region	2007 Q1	2012 Q1	2015 Q1
CSO Industrial Employment	29,800	29,100	29,400
Manufacturing Employment in Enterprise Agency Supported companies	End 2006	End 2011	End 2014
All Agency Manufacturing Employment	25,426	22,778	24,752
Food, Drink and Tobacco	3,645	3,434	3,661
Medical and Dental Instruments and Supplies	9,184	9,150	10,016
Chemicals and Chemical Products	2,009	2,129	2,512
Computer, Electronic, Optical Products and Elec	2,896	2,523	2,458
Machinery and Equipment	1,577	1,292	1,481
Basic and Fabricated Metal Products	1,813	1,061	1,055
Transport Equipment	384	575	935
All Other Manufacturing	3,918	2,614	2,634
Source: CSO QNHS Data and DJEI 2014 Annual Agency Employment Survey			

Other sectors which have shown signs of growth over the past few years include Chemicals & Chemical Products (Pharmaceuticals) and Transport Equipment.

The Food manufacturing sector accounted for the employment of 3,661 people in the West region in 2014 (15% of total agency-supported employment in the region) and is on par with pre-recession levels.

Employment in companies supported by State agencies

At the end 2014, there were 34,802 people employed in client companies of IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland and Údarás na Gaeltachta, across all sectors in the West region. Of these, approximately 30,270 were in permanent full time employment. Since 2010, the agencies have added over 5,100 jobs in the West region (an increase of over 17%), most of which were in Manufacturing. This suggests significant export-led progress in the region, notwithstanding continuing difficulties for some sectors in the domestically-trading economy, such as Construction and Wholesale/Retail.

Employment in agency-supported companies represents approximately 20% of overall employment in the region. 71% of those employed in agency-supported companies (24,752) at the end of 2014 were working in the Manufacturing sector, with 20% (6,842) working in International Services as shown on Table 4 below.

Table 4 – Employment in Enterprise Development Agency supported companies

Employment in Enterprise Agency Supported Companies (Selected Years)							
West Region				Change between 2006 and 2011		Change between 2011 and 2014	
	end 2006	end 2011	end 2014	(,000)	(%)	(,000)	(%)
All Sectors	34,728	31,872	34,802	-2,856	-8.2	2,930	9.2
Manufacturing	25,426	22,778	24,752	-2,648	-10.4	1,974	8.7
International Services	4,785	5,873	6,842	1,088	22.7	969	16.5
Other Sectors	4,517	3,251	3,208	-1,266	-28.0	-43	-1.3

Source: DJEI 2014 Annual Agency Employment Survey

Table 4 highlights the contrast in the employment situation in companies supported by the enterprise development agencies over the period 2006 to 2014. In the period 2006 to 2011, employment fell by almost 2,900, whereas in the period 2011 to 2014, employment increased by just over 2,900 – a net swing of almost 6,000 jobs.

Enterprise Ireland, the State agency responsible for the development of indigenous Irish companies, supported approximately 480 client companies in the West region in 2014, employing 12,148 people (10,637 on a permanent full-time basis). Major client companies of Enterprise Ireland in the region include Creganna, Chanelle Pharma and Green Isle Foods (Galway); Dawn Meats, Western Brand Chickens and McHale Engineering (Mayo); Kepak, Oliver Carty Ltd and Athlone Pharmaceuticals (Roscommon).

IDA Ireland has 89 FDI client companies in the region, employing 18,652 people (16,113 permanent full-time) in a range of sectors including Lifesciences, Technology & Engineering. A sample of IDA clients in the region include Medtronic, Boston Scientific, Baxter & Hollister (Medical Technologies); Allergan Pharmaceuticals, Ballina Beverages, & Alkermes (Life Sciences); Hewlett Packard, SAP, Avaya & EA Games (Technology); Valeo Vision Systems, Ingersoll Rand and APC Schneider Electric (Industrial); and Fidelity Investments and DeCare (International Financial Services). 71 IDA investment projects were approved in the West over the period 2011-2014.

Údarás na Gaeltachta, the regional authority with responsibility for the economic development of the Gaeltacht region, supported 609 client companies in the West region, employing 4,002 people (3,511 full time). Examples of companies supported by Údarás include Mylan (BioPharmaceuticals), HID Global Ireland Ltd (Security technology), Bioshell Teo (Lifescience), Telegael Teo (Media), Bio-Medical Research (Medical Devices), Oileán Mara Teo (Seafood), CLS Teo (MedPharma), Innealóireacht Cathal Shevlin Teo (Engineering), Cambus Teo (Medical Devices) and Selc Éireann Teo (Lighting) .

In addition, the three Local Enterprise Offices in the region (one in each county) supported 562 companies in 2014, with a total employment of 2,583 people in 2014.

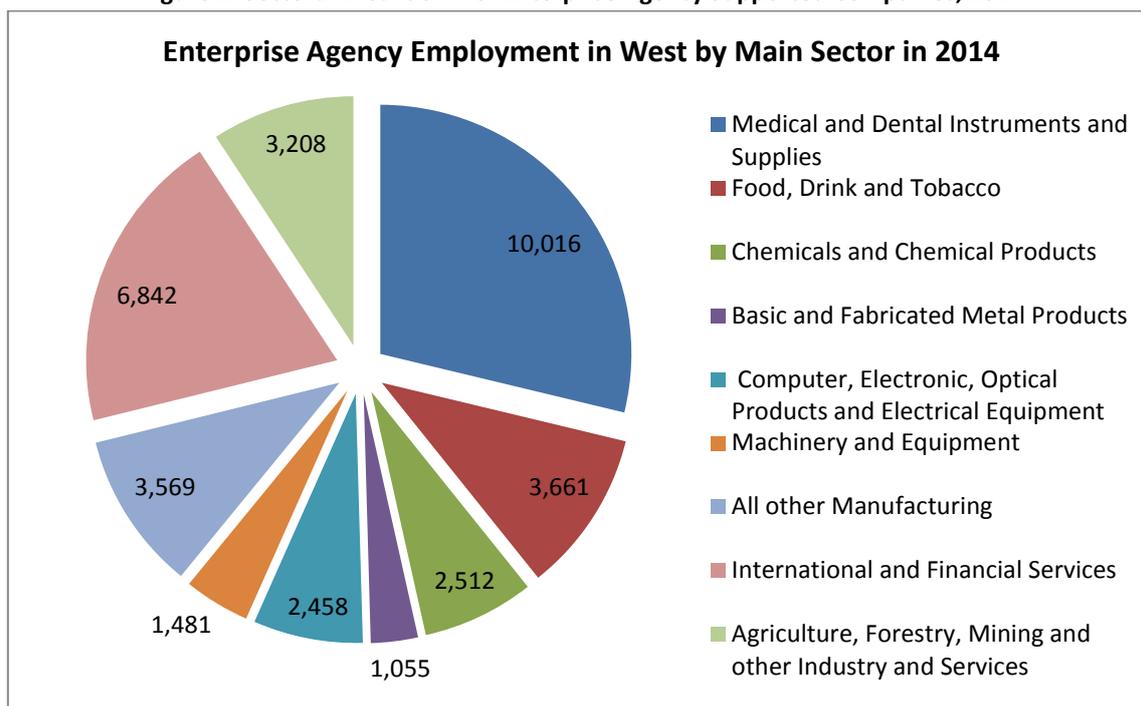
Company employment by sector

The Manufacturing sector, employing over 24,700 people, accounts for most of the enterprise agency-supported employment in the West region, with 40% (10,016) of these employed in the manufacture of Medical and Dental Instruments and Supplies (Medical Technologies). Over the past three years, the numbers employed by enterprise-agency clients in Medical Supplies/Medical Technologies has increased by 9.5% and a strong cohort of companies in this sector has clustered in the region. While the numbers employed in Manufacturing in the West overall are still below 2007 levels, almost 2,000 extra jobs were created in the sector by agency client companies between 2011 and 2014 – an increase of 8.7%.

Over 3,600 people are employed in the Food, Drink and Tobacco sector in agency-support companies (including a very small number in drink and tobacco) and approximately 2,500 are employed in manufacturing Chemicals and Chemical Products (Pharmaceuticals).

While the Services sector in the West has seen an overall decrease in employment since 2007 (see Table 1 above), employment in Internationally Traded Services companies supported by the enterprise development agencies increased by over 2,000 in the same period – a 43% increase. There were 6,842 people employed in International and Financial Services in the West region in 2014, of which 4,977 were employed in the ICT sector. Figure 2 below provides a diagrammatical representation of employment in agency-supported companies by sector.

Figure 2: Sectoral Breakdown of Enterprise Agency Supported Companies, 2014



The above analysis shows the strong performance of companies with a focus on export markets supported by the enterprise development agencies. Over the last five years, employment in Enterprise Ireland supported companies overall has grown from 11,088 in 2010 to 12,148 in 2014, an increase of 6.4%, with the majority of those jobs created in Manufacturing. Employment in IDA Ireland supported companies increased from 14,587 to 18,652 in the same period, representing an increase of almost 28%. Again, the largest increase has been in the Manufacturing sector.

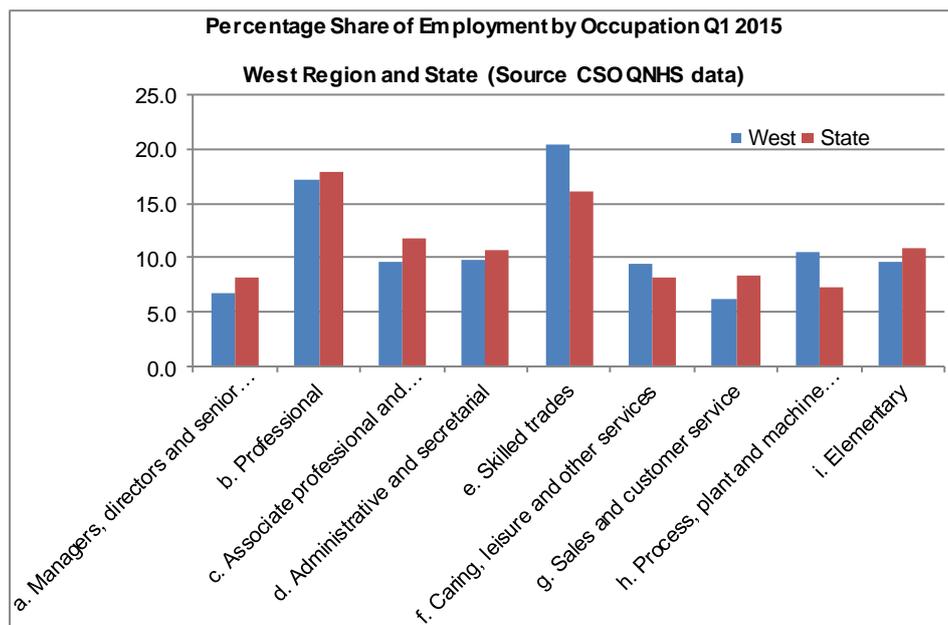
Employment in Údarás supported companies increased from 3,975 to 4,002 between 2010 and 2014.

Employment by Occupation

Figure 3 below shows a breakdown of employment by occupation across the region as at Quarter 1 2015. The highest proportion of the workforce in the region - 20.5% compared to the national average of 16.2% - is engaged in the Skilled Trades category, reflecting the strength of Manufacturing in the West (see previous commentary).

Two other categories where the percentage of the workforce in the West exceeds the national average are in Caring, Leisure & Other services (9.4% in the West compared to 8.2% nationally), again reflecting the relatively high levels of employment in this sector identified previously, and Process Plant and Machine Operatives (accounting for 10.5% of employment compared to a national average of 7.4%). The combined figure for the ABC classifications (Managers and professionals) in the West, at 33.7% of the workforce, is four percentage points lower than the national average of 37.7%.

Figure 3 – Employment by occupation: West compared to State average, Q1 2015



Source: CSO Persons aged 15 years and over in employment (ILO) classified by UK SOC2010 – 1 digit and NUTS3 Region Q1 2015

3.2 Education and Skills attainment

Table 5 below shows the highest level of education completed by the population in the West region, based on the 2011 Census of Population. The average for the State is provided for comparative purposes.

While there will, of course, be variations from the national average in all regions, the most significant variation for the West is in relation to the percentage of those with Primary or No Formal education. This cohort represents 17% of the population of the West region, compared to 15.2% nationally. Only the Border region has a higher percentage of people in this category. In relation to all other categories of educational attainment, the West region is within 1% of the national average. The strong percentage with a Third Level qualification or higher is, perhaps, reflective of the high-end manufacturing companies in the region, along with the presence of a University, an Institute of Technology and a strong research base.

Table 5 - Highest Level of Education completed: West region and national average, 2011

Level of Education	West	State
Primary or No Formal	17.0%	15.2%
Lower secondary	15.7%	16.6%
Upper secondary	34.8%	34.4%
3rd Level +	28.5%	29.1%
Not stated	4.0%	4.7%
Persons (,000)	293.8	3,003.5

Source: Derived from CSO Census of Population 2011

3.3 Gross Value Added (GVA)

Gross value added (GVA) is a measure of the value of goods and services produced in an area, industry or sector of an economy. In 2012, the latest year for which such data is available, the West Region accounted for 8% of the total Gross Value Added within the State. The Services sector in the region contributed €7.37 billion to national GVA in 2012, with Industry contributing €5.115 billion and Agriculture €239 million respectively.

GVA per capita in the West Region was €28,308, compared to the national average of €34,308. However, it should be noted that GVA per capita for the Dublin and South West regions are significantly higher than the national average and the West has the third highest GVA per capita after those two regions.

West region – GVA 2012 Data

West region GVA 2012: €12.589 bn (8% of State Total)

Composition of GVA (rounded):

Services - €7.37 bn (58%)
 Industry - €5.115 bn (40%)
 Agriculture - €239 m (2%)

GVA per Capita 2012: €28,256 compared to the State average of €34,308

3.4 Business Demographics in the region

An examination of the number of enterprises active in the West region indicates that there were 16,381 active enterprises operating in the region in 2012, the most recent period for which data on Business Demographics is available from the Central Statistics Office. This figure represents a reduction of over 4,500 (21.6%) in the number of enterprises active in the region in 2007.

Table 6 below provides a breakdown of the active enterprises for selected sectors for 2007 and 2012. The figures exclude the Agriculture sector, as well as the activities of Holding companies, but they nonetheless provide an indication of the impact of the recession on businesses in the region over the period 2007 to 2012.

Table 6 - Number of Active Enterprises West Region 2007 and 2012

Number of Active Enterprises West Region 2007 and 2012			
Selected Sectors	2007	2012	Change in period
Total Business Economy excluding activities of holding companies	20,904	16,381	-21.6%
Manufacturing	1,240	1,065	-14.1%
Construction	7,253	3,758	-48.2%
Wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	4,394	3,942	-10.3%
Accommodation and food service activities	1,953	1,887	-3.4%
Education	595	894	50.3%
Professional, scientific and technical activities	2,050	1,934	-5.7%

Number of Active Enterprises West Region 2007 and 2012			
Selected Sectors	2007	2012	Change in period
Administrative and support service activities	1,103	891	-19.2%
ICT total	512	547	6.8%
Information and communication	618	675	9.2%
Transportation and storage	925	770	-16.8%
Financial and insurance activities excluding activities of holding companies	266	231	-13.2%
<i>Source: CSO Database BRA18: Business Demography NACE Rev 2 by Activity, County, Year and Statistic</i>			

The table highlights the impact of the recession on the Construction sector, with the number of active enterprises in the sector being almost halved over the period 2007 to 2012. Construction accounted for the loss of 3,495 businesses over the period in question (77% of all enterprises losses in the region).

Other sectors which showed a sizable reduction in enterprise activity were Administrative and Support Services (-19.2%), Transportation and Storage (-16.8%), Manufacturing (-14.1%) and Financial and Insurance activities (-13.2%), albeit from a relatively low base.

There was a 50% increase in the number of enterprises engaged in the Education sector between 2007 and 2012, from 595 to 894 businesses. There was also a modest increase in the number of companies in the ICT sector over the period in question.

The time period for the above data precedes the recent upturn in the economy. Earlier analysis in this Chapter shows that, in Q1 2015, employment in Manufacturing in the West region had recovered to close to 2007 levels and this sector accounts for most of the enterprise agency-supported employment in the region, with a strong focus on Medtech.

Scale of companies

Of 16,381 companies active in 2012, approximately:

- 14,900 (91.2% of total number) employed less than 10 people
- 800 (4.9%) employed between 10 and 20 people
- 400 (2.4%) employed between 20 and 49 staff
- 200 (1.2%) employed between 50 and 249 employees.
- a relatively small number of large companies in the region employed more than 250 employees.

These statistics show that the enterprise base in the West is dominated by small indigenous companies, with a relatively small number of FDI companies accounting for over 18,000 employees. However, this is a profile shared with many other regions.

Chapter 4: Enterprise Assets

4.1 Enterprise Agencies in the West Region

Enterprise Ireland

Enterprise Ireland is the national agency with responsibility for the development of Irish enterprise, deepening Ireland's footprint in world markets, and supporting employment creation in the economy.



Enterprise Ireland provides supports to enterprise across all stages of business development. Its mission is focused on increasing the number of companies starting-up, succeeding, expanding, exporting and ultimately creating jobs in Ireland. Regional enterprise development is a key element of Enterprise Ireland's corporate strategy which focuses on driving entrepreneurship, fostering innovation, developing international scale and building future competitive advantage. The West Region is served via Enterprise Ireland's office in Galway.

Enterprise Ireland supports approximately 480 companies in the West region, employing 12,148 people (10,637 in full-time employment). The agency provides financial and non-financial support to start-up and established companies in the region. In 2014, Enterprise Ireland approved €18.6 million in financial support to companies in the West.

Enterprise Ireland's focus in the West region is on:

Enterprise Ireland: Overview of impact in the West region

- ✓ Approximately 480 client companies in the region
- ✓ 12,148 people in employment in client companies
- ✓ Approximately €18.6m approved in 2014 to companies in the region
- ✓ 15 entrepreneurs supported on New Frontiers programme in 2014
- ✓ 12 High Potential Start-Up companies supported in the period 2013-2014
- ✓ Co-funded the establishment of 17 Community Enterprise Centres and three incubation centres in NUI Galway and GMIT in Galway and Castlebar

Entrepreneurship & New Companies: Developing the pipe-line of entrepreneurs and start-up companies with the potential to trade internationally in the future. Supports to start-ups include, for example, Enterprise Start workshops, the New Frontiers Development Programme, Competitive Feasibility Funds and Competitive Start Funds. Since the establishment of the Local Enterprise Offices within the local authorities, which are funded by Enterprise Ireland, the agency plays a critical role in driving and nurturing entrepreneurship all the way from an originating idea at local level, to taking-on global markets. Enterprise Ireland works closely with the Local Enterprise Office in each county and collaborates with other regional enterprise partners such as IDA Ireland, Údáras na Gaeltachta, the Western Development Commission, WestBIC, local authorities, Education and Training Boards, NUI Galway and GMIT to support job creation and enterprise development.

Working with non-exporting Established Companies: Through its Potential Exporters Division, Enterprise Ireland works with indigenous companies in the region with the potential to export.

Regionally-based seminars, workshops, on-line diagnostic tools, and market research resources are all provided to companies seeking new opportunities and preparing to enter new markets.

Scaling Established (exporting) Companies: Enterprise Ireland engages with established companies based in the West in developing their capability to consolidate and deepen their footprint in existing export markets. Supports range from LEAN, R&D, and Management Development, to funding and access to 32 overseas offices – all as part of a comprehensive growth strategy.

IDA Ireland

IDA Ireland is the national agency responsible for attracting foreign direct investment into Ireland. IDA Ireland's West regional office is located in Galway. In 2014, IDA Ireland supported 89 companies in the West, employing 18,652 people (16,113 of whom are full-time).



IDA Ireland's regional strategy implementation is focussed on:

- Working with public bodies and the private sector on the Regional Action Plans for Jobs.
- Working closely with existing clients to retain and strengthen their presence through continued company transformation.
- Increasing Global Business Services, High Tech Manufacturing, Research & Development, and company transformation investments.
- Aligning IDA Ireland business sectors with the region and their corresponding strengths to develop sectoral ecosystems.
- Working more closely with Enterprise Ireland and its indigenous base of companies to identify synergies, enhance clusters, participate in site visits and maximise benefits for the region.
- Pursuing new areas of opportunity for clients companies.
- Developing appropriate property solutions through the provision of infrastructure and sites in designated locations.
- Increasing IDA Ireland's regional footprint to adequately support its regional strategy.

In February 2015, IDA Ireland launched a new five-year corporate strategy which places a renewed emphasis on FDI in the regions. IDA Ireland is targeting a minimum increase in investment of 30% to 40% in each region outside Dublin over the period 2015-2019 compared to the agency's 2010-2014 strategy. IDA Ireland secured 71 projects in the West Region from 2010-2014. A 30% to 40% uplift in projects as targeted in its new 5

Impact of IDA Ireland in the West region

- ✓ 89 client companies
- ✓ 18,650 jobs in supported companies
- ✓ 10 Industrial & Technology Parks
- ✓ 71 investment projects approved 2010-2014
- ✓ 92+ additional investments targeted for 2015-2019

year strategy would result in a minimum of 92 additional projects for the West Region by 2019.

However, the new IDA Ireland strategy recognises that, ultimately, the decision on where companies locate is a matter for the companies themselves. Moreover, not all counties in the country – or a particular region – will be able to compete at the same level due to a combination of constraints. For example, the need to locate close to Third Level colleges and ensure a supply of relevant talent and skills is a key criterion for potential clients which not all counties may be able to meet. Regions will need a stronger focus to develop “pull” factors to compete with international competition to attract companies to visit, locate and be retained in regions.

IDA Ireland property

IDA Ireland is committed to ensuring that a good supply of suitable property solutions is available for clients of IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland in regional locations. Where the private sector is not delivering property solutions, IDA Ireland will take a lead role in the construction of new facilities.

The IDA has built and developed a number of industrial parks in the West which offer strategic facilities for companies which may be interested in locating or expanding in the West. IDA Ireland will continue to invest in its Parks to cater for FDI needs throughout the region. IDA has committed to building an Advanced Technology Building in Castlebar in 2016 and in Parkmore East in Galway which will be completed by 2017.

Údarás na Gaeltachta

Údarás na Gaeltachta was established in 1980 as 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 endeavours to achieve that objective by funding and fostering a wide range of enterprise development and job creation initiatives and by supporting strategic language, cultural and community based activities.

Údarás supports businesses in developing new markets, technologies, products and strategic alliances through research and development. Gaeltacht companies span a range of commercial sectors, including life sciences, ICT, tourism, fish processing and aquaculture, renewable energy, food, niche manufacturing, audio visual and digital media, arts and crafts.

Over 4,000 people are currently employed full time in Údarás na Gaeltachta client companies in the West, including FDI enterprises such as Mylan, HID Global Ireland Ltd., Fintrax and Proxy Biomedical, as well as indigenous companies such as Selc Éireann Teo., Innealtóireacht Cathal Shevlin Teo. and Bioshell Teo in Mayo and BioMedical Research in Galway.

Údarás na Gaeltachta has a diverse property portfolio dispersed throughout the Gaeltacht areas and includes:

- Industrial sites
- Business parks
- Enterprise units

- Office accommodation
- Business incubation units for start ups
- Development sites
- Craft centres.

InterTradelreland

InterTradelreland is a Cross-Border trade and business development body funded by the Department of Jobs Enterprise and Innovation and the Northern Ireland



Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, which has been given responsibility to boost North/South economic co-operation to the mutual benefit of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

InterTradelreland supports businesses throughout the island of Ireland to take advantage of cross-border opportunities to improve capability and drive competitiveness, growth and jobs. Since its establishment, over 25,000 small businesses have been supported by InterTradelreland to identify and develop all-island trade and innovation opportunities; 6,000 have participated directly on programmes, with over €980m worth of trade and business development value and over 3,000 jobs created.

InterTradelreland helps small businesses through a strong mix of funding support, business intelligence and meaningful contacts. It supports companies not only with funding, but also with specialist expertise and vital introductions. InterTradelreland also helps early stage companies become more 'investor ready' with a range of Equity and Venture Capital Advisory Services and links to key Business Angel networks on the island. For more established businesses looking to grow, InterTradelreland's Funding for Growth Advisory Services and expertise can help guide them to the most appropriate form of finance for their business stage.

InterTradelreland also provides access to a strong knowledge base through Graduates, Universities, company collaboration and specialist advisors to support innovation and product development. Its extensive networks and partnerships, formal and informal, are central to its purpose to grow business in Ireland and Northern Ireland. A series of business events, including conferences, seminars, workshops and masterclasses on various topics and themes (most of which are free to attend) offer companies the opportunity to make important connections across the island.

InterTradelreland supports SMEs to prepare for public procurement opportunities through workshops, Meet the Buyer events and tender alerts. The body also helps SMEs to gain access to cross-Border sales through programmes such as Acumen and Elevate, and to identify sources of finance. The annual Seedcorn Competition, run by InterTradelreland, is aimed at early and new start companies that have a new equity funding requirement; it has a total cash prize fund of €280,000. The Seedcorn competition is run on a regional basis across four regions – Munster, Connacht & Leinster (incorporating the West region), Dublin and Northern Ireland.

InterTradelreland will deliver its programmes in the West region in support of this Action Plan for Jobs.

4.2 Local Authorities

There are four local authorities in the West region – Galway City Council, Galway County Council, Mayo County Council and Roscommon County Council. The local authorities provide an extensive range of services for the residents of the West region, covering areas such as economic development, tourism and planning, the environment, community development, housing and physical infrastructure. The authorities play an active role in the development of industry, business, social, arts, heritage and cultural affairs.



Supports provided to assist in the creation of new enterprises include, but are not limited to:

- information, advice, training, mentoring, seminars and selective financial support;
- the *Made in Galway* initiative which aims to promote the range of quality food and craft products that are to be found in Galway;
- retail concession space in different locations;
- online business directory (available in Roscommon);
- active engagement with Connect Ireland to promote job opportunities;
- active engagement with the Diaspora to promote job opportunities in the region.

The economic development role of local authorities has been significantly enhanced under the Local Government reform programme as set out in the Government's *Action Programme for Effective Local Government* (October 2013) and given statutory effect by the Local Government Reform Act, 2014. In addition to their enterprise support functions, based particularly on the operation of the Local Enterprise Offices, this involves not only an increased focus on economic development in local authority functions generally, such as planning, infrastructure, amenity and environment, but also pursuing economic development as a core local authority function in its own right.

Key strategic objectives of the local authority economic development role will be to implement actions to capitalise fully on the economic potential of local strengths and assets, and also to collaborate with relevant agencies to maximise the economic impact of major growth centres in accordance with regional economic priorities which, in future, will be agreed in the context of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies.

Local Enterprise Offices

Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs), which are an office of the local authorities, act as a "First Stop Shop" for anyone seeking information and support on starting or growing a business in Ireland. Their role is to drive the development of local enterprise, putting local micro and small business at the heart of job creation. They support business start-ups and work to increase the job potential of new and existing micro and small businesses. Support is provided in the form of information, advice, training, mentoring, seminars and selective financial support.



Local Enterprise Offices are located in Galway, Castlebar and Roscommon Town. They play a key role in supporting entrepreneurship and enterprise development in the West region.

The LEOs provide a range of services in the areas of:

- Business Information and Advisory Services
- Enterprise Support and Development Services
- Entrepreneurship Support Services
- Local Economic Development Services.

In 2014, the three West LEOs had 562 clients with a combined total of 2,583 jobs in supported companies. 164 new jobs were created by LEO clients in the West in 2014. For 2015 and subsequent years, each LEO will publish a Local Enterprise Development Plan, setting out targets for enterprise support.

4.3 Education & Training providers

The National University of Ireland, Galway (NUI Galway) and Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT) are the two main providers of Third Level education in the West region. Of 16,218 full time enrolments in West region colleges in undergraduate programmes in the academic year 2013/2014, approximately 56% were from the West region. These Third Level Institutions therefore attract almost half of their students from outside the West region (including students from overseas).

Other nearby Third Level facilities outside the region include Athlone IT, IT Sligo, St. Angela's College Sligo, University of Limerick, Mary Immaculate College Limerick and Limerick IT. According to HEA statistics, there were approximately 17,300 full time students from the West attending HEA Funded Institutions throughout the Republic of Ireland in 2013/14. Of these, approximately 9,700 were enrolled in Universities and 6,660 in various Institutes of Technology across the State.

National University of Ireland, Galway (NUI Galway)

The National University of Ireland, Galway caters for approximately 17,000 students (including part-time students) and offers a wide range of undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. It has 2,400 staff. The University has five Colleges: College of Engineering and Informatics; College of Science; College of Business, Public Policy and Law; College of Arts, Social Sciences and Celtic Studies; and the College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences.

NUI Galway is a renowned research-led University and collaborates extensively with industry in areas of strategic importance, both nationally and regionally. Enterprise Ireland has supported the appointment of 3 high-calibre commercial technology specialists who are based in NUI Galway to develop strong commercial links between universities and business. The University is Ireland's leading university for knowledge transfer, with more spin out companies, licences and patents created in the last few years than any other Irish University.



*Graduation Day at
NUI Galway*

Five thematic research priorities have been identified at NUI Galway: Biomedical Science & Engineering; Informatics, Physical & Computational; Environment, Marine & Energy; Social Science & Public Policy; and Humanities in Context. Many of these research areas, such as in Biomedical Science and Informatics, have a particular relevance to sectors which have strengths in the West region. The University's Innovation Centre, which includes 17 office units and 6 wet-lab units, has been developed in co-operation with Enterprise Ireland.

Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology

Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT) caters for approximately 7,000 students offering a range of undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. GMIT has campuses at five locations in the West of Ireland - two in Galway city, two in County Galway (Letterfrack and Mountbellew) and one in Castlebar, County Mayo. The Institute has seven Schools/Colleges – College of Tourism and Arts; Centre for Creative Arts and Media; School of Business; School of Engineering; School of Science; GMIT Letterfrack (National Centre of Excellence for Furniture Design and Wood Technology); and GMIT Mayo (Department of Business, Humanities and Technology and Department of Nursing and Social Care).

GMIT's programmes are strongly focused on regional needs and over 65% of graduates entering the workplace begin their working careers with regionally based companies. The Institute has a strong record in supporting student entrepreneurship and innovation through its education programmes and other tailored initiatives such as awards and competitions. Work placement is a strong feature in a range of GMIT's undergraduate programmes and it currently places approximately 1,200 students annually.

Research, Development and Innovation has been selected as one of the Institute's five strategic pillars. The prioritisation of GMIT's research aligns its competencies with the external environment and regional aspirations. As a result, the Institute has two well established research centres which are focussed on applied research and industry engagement in two important regional sectors. These are the Marine and Freshwater Research Centre (MFRC), which is strongly networked with the

marine and freshwater sectors, and the Galway Medical Technology Centre (GMedTech) which is embedded in the medical technology cluster, particularly in the Galway region. Other emerging research groups in the Institute are focused on engineering, product design and verification, information technology and food.

GMIT has two Innovation Hubs – or Innovation in Business Centres (iIBCs) - in Galway and Mayo which Enterprise Ireland has supported, and these are a pivotal component of the Institute's entrepreneurial strategy. The centres assist entrepreneurs in the growth of their projects and companies from the idea stage right through to commercialisation. In approximately ten years of operation the iHubs have supported the creation of over 400 new jobs by its clients, 24 high potential start-ups (HPSUs), and €68 million of investment funding being raised.

The national 'New Frontiers' Entrepreneur Development Programme, which is funded by Enterprise Ireland, is delivered by GMIT for the West Region. This is a 12 month programme across three phases providing incubation space and business development support to over a dozen entrepreneurs each year through the provision of free facilities, specialist mentoring and coordinated business supports and advice. The programme is a good example of collaboration between GMIT and NUI Galway.

GMIT actively encourages entrepreneurship and the commercialisation of projects generated by staff and students where a promising opportunity has been identified. In particular, student innovation is strongly encouraged through student innovation awards and the Institute's own Graduate Entrepreneurship Programme. The Institute is also active in promoting entrepreneurship through the national Springboard programme.

SOLAS

SOLAS is the new Further Education and Training Authority in Ireland. It is responsible for funding, planning and co-ordinating training and further education programmes and has a mandate to ensure the provision of 21st century high-quality programmes to jobseekers and other learners.

SOLAS works closely with a wide range of stakeholders including learners, employers, Education & Training Boards, Government Departments, State bodies, Quality and Qualifications Ireland, the Higher Education Authority, Institutes of Technology and representative organisations. The aim is to build a clear, integrated pathway to work for learners through Further Education and Training.

Education and Training Boards (ETBs)

The ETBs are statutory education authorities which have responsibility for the provision of further education and training programmes, youth work and a range of other statutory functions. ETBs manage and operate some second-level schools, further education colleges, pilot community national schools and a range of adult and Further Education and Training centres (including former FAS Training Centres in Galway and Ballina) delivering education and training programmes to support learners in the region.

There are two ETBs located in the West region:

- *Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board*, with offices in Galway City and County and Roscommon;
- *Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim Education and Training Board*, with offices in Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim.

Skillnets

Skillnets actively supports and works with businesses in Ireland to help them address their current and future skills needs through an enterprise-led approach. Skillnets funds groups of companies with similar training needs, through training networks that deliver subsidised training to Irish businesses and their employees, as well as free training to job-seekers. Skillnets has 63 training networks nationwide. Through its ManagementWorks programme, which offers structured learning and one to one mentoring support, Skillnets works with SMEs to build their management and financial capability.

Skillnets training networks based in the West region are:

- Galway Executive Skillnet
- ITAG Skillnet (Information Technology Association Galway)
- Greasán na Méan Skillnet (Media industries)
- HPSU Skillnet (High Potential Start Up)
- Role Skillnet

Other national sectoral Skillnets that deliver training to companies in the West region include:

- National Organic Training Skillnet
- Rural Enterprise Skillnet
- Farm Business Skillnet
- Macra na Feirme Young Farmers Skillnet
- CPA Ireland Skillnet (Certified Public Accountants)
- XL Vets Skillnet
- ACIST Skillnet (Mid-West Regional Network)

Over 1,300 companies in the West region were members of a Skillnets funded training network in 2014 and almost 4,900 employees benefited from training. The main sectors supported by Skillnets in the West region are Services, Agriculture, Retail, ICT, Food & Drink, Manufacturing, Health, Tourism & Travel, Life Science, Media & Audiovisual, and Construction.

4.4 Other bodies supporting enterprise development

Local Development Companies

There are seven Local Development Companies in the West region:

- Comhar na nOileán Teo (with responsibility for the offshore islands of Ireland)
- FORUM Connemara
- Galway City Partnership
- Galway Rural Development
- Mayo North East LEADER Partnership
- South West Mayo Development Company
- Roscommon LEADER Partnership

They provide a range of services to clients, including services to support the development of enterprise throughout the region.

The activities of Local Development Companies fall into two broad categories – Rural Development and Social Inclusion.

Rural Development – LEADER Programme

Local Development Companies operate the LEADER programme throughout the region (with the exception of Galway City) providing grant assistance to micro-enterprises for both start up and existing enterprises. Grant aid is provided for research, feasibility studies, business planning, capital equipment & buildings, marketing and training. Inter-territorial and cross border and transnational networking focused on innovation and shared learning is an integral part of the programme.

Social Inclusion - Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP)

SICAP targets the areas of greatest need in the country, to provide an area-based response to long-term unemployment and to promote social inclusion across three measures: Services for the Unemployed, Community Development, and Community Based Youth Initiatives. SICAP includes an Economic Development strand and support is also provided to clients under the Back To Work Enterprise Allowance Scheme which is funded by the Department of Social Protection.

Local Development Companies are currently engaged in the process of greater alignment with the local authority structures in each administrative area.

Western Development Commission

The Western Development Commission (WDC) was established under statute in 1998 to help tackle the massive population decline in the Western Region of Ireland. The WDC's remit covers seven counties in the broad Western region. In addition to counties Roscommon, Mayo, and Galway which are covered in this Action Plan, the WDC also has a remit in respect of Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, and Clare. The WDC works to ensure that economic and social policy and practice meet the development needs of the Western Region effectively. It works in a collaborative way with public, private and voluntary partners to achieve its outcomes.

The WDC's activities include conducting research on regional and rural issues, promoting specific initiatives including sectoral opportunities, and managing and administering the WDC Investment Fund (WIF). This dedicated fund provides risk capital on a commercial basis to projects and businesses through equity and loans and fills a funding gap identified by businesses and community groups in the Western region.

Included within the Government's new Capital Plan 2016-2021 is an allocation of €1 million each year in 2016 and 2017 to establish a Strategic Regional Development Office in the Western Region under the Western Development Commission (WDC). This will co-ordinate the implementation of recommendations of the Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas (CEDRA) in the region.

Failte Ireland

Fáilte Ireland 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. Fáilte Ireland provides a range of practical business supports to help tourism businesses better manage and market their products and services, such as:

- research and insights into the tourism industry and visitor experience
- advice on how to start and grow a tourism business
- latest tourism industry news
- quality assurance schemes
- management development programmes
- online and offline marketing training and support
- best practice and case studies
- access to funding.

Fáilte Ireland is actively promoting and marketing the tourist potential of the West region, including the Wild Atlantic Way which covers counties Galway and Mayo, and the Shannon Waterways which include Co. Roscommon and Co. Galway.

Bord Iascaigh Mhara

Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM) is the state agency with primary responsibility for developing the Irish sea-fishing and aquaculture industries. BIM's mission is to lead the sustainable development of a competitive, market-led, innovative and quality-driven Irish seafood industry, maximising the returns to industry stakeholders and the socio-economic contribution to communities in coastal regions in



particular. BIM is focused on expanding the volume, quality and value of output from the Irish seafood industry. It provides a range of advisory, financial, technical and training services to all sectors of the Irish seafood industry. BIM Strategy 2013-2017 is an action plan to deliver 1,200 jobs and €1 billion seafood sales by building scale and enhancing competitiveness in the Irish seafood sector.

Approximately 11,000 people are employed in the sector, mostly in coastal communities, of which approximately 2,000 are employed in the West region. Because the seafood industry is widely dispersed around the coastline, it plays a key role in the sustainable development of the economic and social fabric of many coastal communities.

BIM is focused on expanding the quality and value of output from the Irish seafood industry

Key objectives for BIM in the West region include developing effective measures to attract additional landings into ports in the West and continuing to invest significantly in necessary infrastructure at the Fishery Harbour Centres in the region. In line with the new 2025 agri-food strategy, BIM will also develop a national strategic plan with practical and implementable actions to significantly increase the quantity of seafood added value across all main species groups.

WestBIC

WestBIC is the Quality Accredited EU Business & Innovation Centre (BIC) and a specialist provider in the portfolio of supports to innovative start-ups and early-stage SMEs. WestBIC generally serves the Northern and Western Region based on its available resources and in line with regional structures. It is an active Member of the European Business and Innovation Centre Network (EBN), comprising c.250 regionally and locally based BIC organisations involved in the identification, selection and provision of specialist support for new and existing enterprises. BICs typically operate as versatile private/public partnerships, combining both Government funding and private cash or in-kind contributions. It is part funded by the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation through Enterprise Ireland.

Working closely with Enterprise Ireland and other agencies, WestBIC focuses on supporting new innovative enterprises which have high growth potential and can contribute to economic development and jobs in the region, providing tailored support through the initial stages, from concept to commercialisation. Assisted companies enjoy a survival rate in excess of 75%. Over the last four years, across the West and North West, WestBIC supported in excess of 300 Start ups and early-stage innovative SMEs, with a yearly average of 15 candidates being supported for Enterprise Ireland funding and supports.

WestBIC also manages the Business Angel Programme in the region - a joint initiative between Enterprise Ireland, InterTradeIreland and the Irish BICs (the others being in Dublin, Cork and the South East). The Business Angels Programme actively works to increase the number of Angel Investors supporting early stage companies by both assisting the investor readiness of pre-screened Start-ups and matching them with suitable Angels who bring a combination of expertise and much needed capital to facilitate business growth and jobs.

Waterways Ireland

Waterways Ireland is one of six North-South Implementation Bodies established under the British-Irish Agreement in 1999. It has responsibility for the management, maintenance, development, promotion and restoration of inland navigable waterways, principally for recreational purposes.

The waterways under the remit of the Body are the Shannon-erne Waterway, the Shannon, the Erne Navigation, the Barrow Navigation, the Grand Canal, the Lower Bann, and the Royal Canal. The

Shannon river and Lough Ree are important features in Roscommon's landscape and provide jobs in the tourism and recreational sectors. Waterways Ireland's role in maintaining these waterways supports job creation and retention in the West region.

Teagasc

Teagasc – the Agriculture and Food Development Authority – is the national body providing integrated research, advisory and training services to the agriculture and food industry and rural communities. Its mission is to support science-based innovation in the agri-food sector and the broader bioeconomy that will underpin profitability, competitiveness and sustainability.

Given the importance of agri-food to the Irish economy, Teagasc has an important contribution to make to supporting the jobs potential in the West region. The Authority also has a direct presence in the region. The Teagasc Animal Science Research Centre at Athenry supports the agriculture sector through its research in sheep production, animal reproduction and organic milk & beef production. Its Rural Economy Research Centre, also at Athenry, produces social science research and policy advice aimed at improving the competitiveness and sustainability of Irish agriculture.

While the priority on many farms is to improve the technical performance of the existing farm enterprises, on others there may be opportunities to add value to the farm output or to diversify into other activities. Teagasc's 'Options' Programme can help farm families to take a look at the viability of the farm and farm household and provide them with information on a variety of diversification ideas. The programme is implemented mainly through a series of 'Farm Options' workshops. In 2012 over 500 people attended 13 of these courses nationwide and received advice from a range of specialists and entrepreneurs in basic farm finance, idea generation, rural tourism, organic farming, forestry, artisan food production, direct selling, applying for LEADER grant aid, farm social supports, basic business planning and more.

Marine Institute

The Marine Institute was established to undertake, coordinate, promote and assist in marine research and development and to provide services related to research and development that will promote economic development and create employment and protect the marine environment.

The Institute is based in Oranmore, County Galway and conducts a broad range of marine based research with commercial, as well as academic, value. It provides a range of services to ensure the aquaculture industry operates to international best practice standards and in accordance with national and European legislation.

It also carries out a range of seafood safety programmes to ensure that Irish seafood products supplied to national and international markets are of the highest quality regarding food safety standards. Other services provided by the Institute include marine environmental monitoring services, oceanography and seabed mapping.

Given the importance to the West of sea-based activities such as aquaculture and fishing, the Marine Institute has an important contribution to make to supporting research and development and the jobs potential in the region.

Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI)

The role of the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) is to play a leading role in transforming Ireland into a society based on sustainable energy structures, technologies and practices. SEAI provides a range of programmes and services to homes, businesses, schools and communities. It is a key actor in providing research and advice to Government on sustainable energy policy, including renewables and energy efficiency.

While it is a national body, SEAI has a strong presence in the West region, particularly in the context of developing the possibilities of ocean energy given the natural wave energy resources available in the region. SEAI and the Marine Institute established an Ocean Energy Test Site for ¼-scale prototypes of wave energy devices in Galway Bay in 2006. This ¼ scale test site facilitates the open sea deployment of scaled prototypes of Wave Energy Converters and components during the early stages of the development of their concept. The test site facility which is currently managed by Smart Bay Ireland also includes the trial and validation of novel marine sensors, prototype equipment and the collection and dissemination of marine data to national and international users of the facility.

SEAI is also developing the Atlantic Marine Energy Test Site (AMETS) in Belmullet as a grid-connected national deep water test facility for wave devices and components at the final stage of test and demonstration. The purpose of the site is to test the performance of pre-commercial devices in extreme open conditions.

Intreo (Employment Services)

In January 2012, FÁS Employment Services and Programmes transferred to the Department of Social Protection. October 2012 saw the launch of Intreo, a new service managed by the Department of Social Protection. Intreo Offices act as a single point of contact for all employment services and supports for both jobseekers and employers. The Offices provide support regarding benefits entitlements, advice on training options and assistance in securing employment/employees. In the West region, Intreo centres in the West region are located in Clifden, Loughrea, Achill, Ballina, Belmullet, Castlebar and Westport. A new Intreo centre is to open in Galway City in Autumn 2015. The Department of Social Protection also has Branch Offices in Ballinasloe, Galway city, Gort, Tuam, Ballinrobe, Claremorris, Swinford, Boyle, Roscommon town and Castlerea.

Coillte

Coillte is a commercial State owned company with operations in forestry, wood panel product manufacture, renewable energy and land. The company employs approximately 950 people in Ireland, the UK and Netherlands and manages an estate of over 440,000 hectares or close to 1 million acres.

Coillte is Ireland's largest land owner, managing 7% of the national territory and aims to deliver land solutions which are sustainable from an economic, social and environmental perspective across the regions. Coillte manages its estate for commercial forestry, recreation and biodiversity as well as providing land for a range of uses from renewable energy and other infrastructure developments, to recreational use as well as commercial development.

Coillte can also support Government policy in relation to jobs and inward investment, in its capacity as a land owner. For example, in the West region, Apple plans to build a €850m Data Centre in Athenry, Co. Galway, on land sold by Coillte to IDA Ireland.

ConnectIreland

Succeed in Ireland is a Government-supported initiative to create new jobs by harnessing the power of the global Diaspora to attract into Ireland foreign companies that are expanding internationally. The initiative provides financial rewards to those that help attract new, sustainable jobs into the country. *Succeed in Ireland* complements the work of IDA Ireland and is delivered under contract by ConnectIreland. Two investments in the West region, with the potential to create 35 jobs, have been approved under the *Succeed in Ireland* initiative by IDA Ireland in the West region since the initiative commenced in 2012.

In 2014, ConnectIreland began running a more regional and community focused campaign and introduced their Community Action Plan initiative. The overall objective of the campaign is to create visibility and awareness jointly with the 31 City and County Councils of the key role that communities can play in job creation through the use of the ConnectIreland mechanism. Each county is encouraged to appoint a local ambassador who will champion the campaign in their area. The Community Action Plan is an ongoing campaign that has already yielded company introductions in several counties.

ConnectIreland's *Connectivation* competition asks members of Third Level institutions to submit engagement models to assist in increasing the audience of the ConnectIreland message and ultimately raise further awareness of the advantages of 'doing business' in the region and the importance of the link between diaspora relations and increasing FDI. The competition will be looking for an understanding of both the areas of diaspora engagement and FDI by competitors.

4.5 Business Networks

There are a number of Chambers of Commerce and business networks in the West region, including:

- Action Tuam
- Ballina Chamber of Commerce
- Ballinasloe Area Community Development
- Ballinasloe Chamber of Commerce
- Ballyhaunis Chamber of Commerce
- BNI Networks

- Boyle Town & More
- Boyle Chamber of Commerce
- Burrenlowlands Group
- Castlebar Chamber of Commerce
- Charlestown & Bellaghy Chamber of Commerce
- CIPD Western Region
- Claremorris Chamber of Commerce
- Clifden Chamber of Commerce
- Erris Chamber of Commerce
- Galway City Business Association
- Galway Chamber of Commerce
- Inc60 Castlebar
- iTAG
- Junior Chamber International Galway
- Junior Chamber International Mayo
- MeetWest Network
- Network Mayo
- Network Galway
- Online Marketing in Galway
- Portumna Chamber of Commerce
- Roscommon Town Chamber of Commerce
- SCCUL Enterprises Ltd
- Start-up Galway
- Tuam Chamber of Commerce
- Westport Chamber of Commerce
- Athlone Chamber of Commerce (also active in the Midland region)

These networks have a varying level of resources available to support their activities. Galway and Westport Chambers are affiliated to Chambers Ireland.

Online Marketing in Galway (OMiG) is a network group open to all businesses and professionals in the West of Ireland. It provides a platform to share best practices, exchange knowledge and allow small businesses to make the most out of online tools and online marketing strategies.

INC60 is a Mayo-based network that brings entrepreneurs together and provides free supports to help sustain and grow business, ideas, and opportunities and overcome common problems and challenges. The network has a close association with GMIT's Innovation Hub in Castlebar.

iTAG (Information Technology Association Galway) was established by a group of forward-looking IT professionals representing both multinational and indigenous IT companies. iTAG's mission is to promote, strengthen and grow the information technology industry in the region and to promote the desirability of Galway as a place for IT industry and infrastructure enterprises to start, locate, grow and prosper.

Ibec's regional activity is driven through regional offices, including its office in Galway. It is involved in regular sectoral activities such as working groups, conferences, member forums, training, networking and briefing events.

Mentoring is an important part of business-to-business engagement. In addition to mentoring services provided by Enterprise Ireland, the Local Enterprise Offices and the integrated Local Development Companies, SCCUL Mentors is a mentoring programme for small business owners and start-ups and emerging businesses in Galway City and county. Set up by SCCUL Enterprises and based in Ballybane Enterprise Centre, the programme provides access to business expertise on a pro bono basis to small businesses and start-ups that may otherwise have difficulty in accessing such expertise.

4.6 Community Enterprise Centres (CECs)

Community Enterprise Centres (CECs) provide a supportive environment for budding entrepreneurs and support the development of local entrepreneurship in urban and rural locations. Since the Community Enterprise Centres scheme was established by Enterprise Ireland in 1989, €61.4 million has been approved and over 100 CECs have been set up across the country.

There are seventeen CECs part-funded by Enterprise Ireland located in the West region which collectively represent an investment of €5.3m by Enterprise Ireland. Table 7 presents information on each of the 17 CECs in the West region. Many of the Community Enterprise Centres offer 'hot desk' facilities with associated supporting infrastructure, including broadband and access to meeting rooms.

Table 7: Overview of the CECs in the West region (2013)

Community Enterprise Centre	Occupation Rate %	Square Footage of CEC
Arigna Enterprise Centre	n/a	1,510
Ballaghaderreen Enterprise Centre	65%	4,500
Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre	96%	32,000
Ballybane Enterprise Centre	95%	19,000
Ballyhaunis Enterprise Centre	55%	20,440
Beechtree Enterprise Centre	10%	18,480
Boyle Enterprise Centre	55%	3,344
Claremorris Enterprise Centre	80%	5,500
Clonberne Enterprise Centre	95%	5,100
Connemara West Enterprise Centre	100%	3,200

Community Enterprise Centre	Occupation Rate %	Square Footage of CEC
Crossmolina Enterprise Centre	75%	5,000
Galway Technology Centre	90%	50,000
Greenhills Enterprise Centre	75%	80,098
Kiltimagh Enterprise Centre and The Cairn International Trade Centre	55%	72,000
Roscommon Enterprise Centre	75%	8,300
The Joe Gilmore Enterprise Centre	10%	4,000
Westside Enterprise Centre	85%	14,000

This table represents a snapshot of the CECs from a survey undertaken by Enterprise Ireland in 2013. There may be scope for increasing throughput of new business through these centres and for expansion in some areas. Several CECs from the West region are active participants in the National Association of Community Enterprise Centres, facilitated by Enterprise Ireland.

There are a range of other centres in the West providing dedicated enterprise space, either privately owned or funded through the local authorities.

4.7 Research Centres and Test Beds

Ireland has invested significantly in research, through the enterprise development agencies and the Higher Education Authority, to build research capacity in strategic areas allied to economic development and industry needs. Research Centres and Test Beds are an asset to enterprise growth and product development and can help to attract enterprise investment into a region through the collaboration between industry and academia which these centres offer.

NUI Galway

NUI Galway hosts four large scale Research Centres, funded by Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland and/or Science Foundation Ireland, which focus on identifying new sources of industrial growth and job creation and achieving competitive advantage for industry in Ireland by leveraging the innovative capacity of the Irish research community. These are:

- **CÚRAM** – Centre for Research in Medical Devices, which will design and create implantable ‘smart’ medical devices through strong clinical collaborations and with industry partners and hospital groups.
- The **Regenerative Medicine Institute (REMEDI)**, a world-class biomedical research centre focusing on gene therapy and stem cell research.

- **INSIGHT**, which combines the skills of leading researchers with cutting-edge technologies from diverse research areas working closely with industry partners to develop next-generation data acquisition and analytics solutions.
- The **Irish Centre for High-End Computing (ICHEC)** which aims to provide High-Performance Computing resources principally for researchers in Third-Level institutions.

In addition, NUI Galway has a number of research institutes which are particularly relevant to industry, including:

- The **Ryan Institute** which is a hub for Environmental, Marine and Energy research activities.
- The **Energy Research Centre** within the Ryan Institute, which engages in research, education and outreach in the fields of Energy and Environment.
- The **National Centre for Biomedical Engineering Science** which is focused on innovative therapeutic solutions to current medical challenges.
- **Network of Excellence for Functional Biomaterials (NFB)**. The overall objective of the NFB is to develop the next generation of biomaterials.
- The **Centre for Cell Manufacturing Ireland (CCMI)**. This facility in Galway positions Ireland as a global player in the regenerative medicine field and is a significant development for the Medtech sector as a whole.
- **LightHOUSE** - the Centre for Applied Photonics which conducts research and technology development in the areas of Laser microfabrication, Photonics-based Nanotechnology, Smart Optics Imaging and Optical characterisation.
- The **National Centre for Laser Applications** which was established as a Centre of Excellence in laser technology.
- The **Applied Optics Group** whose research covers a wide variety of topics in applied optics and imaging science, including smart optics, adaptive optics, optical scattering and propagation, and engineering optics.
- The **Whitaker Institute for Innovation and Societal Change** which applies a multi-perspective research approach to business and social issues.
- The **Power Electronics Research Centre** which has over €500,000 worth of state-of-the-art test and measurement equipment and is involved in a number of new areas of research activities including automotive electronics, sensor technology, battery management, and power harvesting.

GMIT

GMIT has a diverse research community across its Schools and campuses:

Galway Medical Technologies Centre (GMedTech) offers a broad range of engineering design/development support services to the developers of medical device products. It has a unique expertise in the development of in-vitro simulation test systems that closely mimic human anatomical systems to serve the needs of medical device companies and medical practitioner communities.

The **Marine and Freshwater Research Centre** comprises a team of approximately 30 researchers working together to enhance the management of marine and freshwater ecosystems worldwide. The broad research themes of the Centre are enabling sustainability, conserving biodiversity and improving productivity in industry. The Centre has very strong links with other Higher Education Institutions in Ireland and abroad, and with the Marine Institute and industry in the marine sector.

Emerging Groups

Emerging research groups in GMIT are focussed on general engineering and design services, information technology, food development and tourism. The common theme across these areas is to link research capability in the Institute with industry needs.

Testbeds

The summary of Research Centres and Research Institutes above shows a convergence of effort on the medical sciences, ICT, marine and sustainable energy areas, all of which reflect the enterprise strengths and opportunities of the region. The waters off Galway and Mayo have become established as key test bed sites for marine research and for the development of innovative products and services for the global maritime sector, including ocean energy.

SEAI and the Marine Institute established an Ocean Energy Test Site for ¼-scale prototypes of wave energy devices in Galway Bay, while SEAI has also been developing a full scale test site at Belmullet.

The SmartBay project, run by the Marine Institute in Galway Bay, is a national research infrastructure project for oceanographic monitoring. Galway Bay Ocean Observatory was installed in August 2015 and following a commissioning period is expected to be operational in 2015.

4.10 Infrastructure developments which enhance the region's potential

The availability of competitively priced world class infrastructure (energy, broadband telecoms, transport, waste and water) and related services is critical to support economic growth and job creation.

High Speed Broadband

The ability to access high speed broadband services by businesses and households in the West region is significantly impacted by the relatively low density of population and dispersed nature of

county townlands across this characteristically rugged region. The National Broadband Plan aims to ensure that every citizen and business has access to a high quality, high speed broadband service, regardless of location. This will be achieved through a combination of commercial investments and a State led intervention in those areas where services will not be provided on a commercial basis. The West region will benefit significantly from the roll out of the Plan due to the fact that much of this region falls within the intervention area.

The Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources funded the installation of a telecommunications duct alongside the Galway Mayo Gas Pipeline, and it is intended to install fibre optic cable in the duct to support high speed broadband infrastructure in the West of Ireland. The duct runs from Ballymoneen in Co. Galway to Bellenaboy in Co. Mayo. The infrastructure will facilitate the provision of much-needed fibre broadband in the Mayo area which has been identified as having a major fibre deficit. The fibre will allow telecommunication service providers to offer broadband services along the route of the pipeline.

Water infrastructure

The availability of plentiful clean water is essential to meeting the needs of industry, households and the tourism industry and securing future growth and economic development in the West region. Problems with the supply of safe drinking water in the West region have been highlighted in recent years.

Irish Water is investing in a national programme to address the deficiencies in Ireland's water and wastewater infrastructure. In 2014, Irish Water invested €340m in improving water and waste water services and will invest over €410 million in improving water services during 2015. This spend will increase over subsequent years as the need for sustained capital investment is required to address the acknowledged deficiencies in the country's water infrastructure.

There are a number of significant water projects underway in the West region, including planned upgrades to Ballinasloe's water and wastewater services and as well as projects in Williamstown, Claregalway, Milltown and Clifden. Major projects completed in the West region 2015 in Boyle and Castlerea led to the lifting of extensive boil water notices in Roscommon.

Transport

The upgrading of the M17/M18 route, which forms part of the Atlantic Corridor motorway, commenced in 2015. This motorway project between Gort, to the south of Galway city, and Tuam, to the north of the city, will reduce journey times and significantly improve access in the region. The finished motorway will remove several major bottlenecks, boost competitiveness, promote regional development, and generate jobs. The new four lane motorway will reduce end-to-end journey times by around 20 minutes.

A further major road project for the region is the proposal to construct a new by-pass around Galway city. The City has suffered from traffic congestion for many years, resulting in unreliable journey times and delays, which impact on connectivity from the west of Galway, to the east of Galway and to the rest of Ireland. The project was at route selection stage in mid-2015.

Ports and Airports

As outlined earlier, the West region is well served by international airports both in the region (Knock) and adjacent in the Mid-West (Shannon). Galway Harbour Company⁶, trading as the Port of Galway, has developed a proposal for a €126 million extension of Galway port which it projects would create up to 800 jobs and open up new trade and tourism opportunities. Approval for the development rests with An Bord Pleanála and a decision is expected in the near future.

⁶ As recommended in National Ports Policy control of the company will be vested in a local authority led governance structure and legislation to provide the legal basis for that vesting is currently before the Oireachtas.

Chapter 5: Introduction to the Actions

In preparing this Action Plan, consultation was carried out with key stakeholders in the region to identify key strengths and opportunities which could be optimised to support enterprise growth and job creation in the West. This consultation included a major Stakeholder Forum event in Galway in March 2015. Follow-up discussion took place with a number of the key stakeholders (particularly public sector bodies) to consider the proposals which were suggested at the Stakeholder Forum.

Arising from this process, specific actions to capitalise on the strengths and opportunities which have been identified for the West region are set out in the following Chapters of this Action Plan. The actions are grouped under thematic headings which complement the preceding analysis which has been set out in the Plan, and cover areas such as:

- Driving Entrepreneurship
- Growing and Scaling Enterprises
- Fostering Innovation
- Attracting and Embedding FDI
- Building sectoral opportunities
- Skills enhancement and Labour Market activation
- Strengthening Business Networks
- Marketing and Strengthening the region

The actions will be implemented over the period 2015-2017. The timeframe for delivery and the implementing bodies are set out against each action.

Progress on the actions will be monitored on a six-monthly basis by a Regional Implementation Committee and Progress Reports will be published twice yearly. Further information on the monitoring arrangements is set out in Chapter 15.

Chapter 6: Driving Entrepreneurship

A key part of the Government's plan for growth and job-creation is focused on building a powerful engine of indigenous enterprise, from start-ups to internationally trading companies. The importance of start-ups to the economy is demonstrated by the fact that two-thirds of all new jobs are created by companies in the first five years following their establishment. The Government's *National Policy Statement on Entrepreneurship in Ireland* has set an objective of increasing the number of start-ups by 25% over the next five years, and increasing the scaling and survival of start-ups by 25% in the same time period. Achieving these targets in the West region will be a key objective of this Action Plan, building on the creativity, innovation and entrepreneurial spirit which are core strengths of the region.

Key priority areas for action will be to:

- Support start-ups and entrepreneurs through targeted programmes and measures.
- Improve access to finance for SMEs.
- Hold specific events to provide advice and raise awareness of supports available to entrepreneurs.
- Support entrepreneurs through other collaborative initiatives.

These action areas reflect the priorities which emerged through stakeholder engagement in the West region.

Entrepreneurship and Microenterprises in the West

Entrepreneurship and microenterprises are the lifeblood of job creation and economic growth in the West region and over 90% of enterprises in the region employ less than 10 people. The potential for entrepreneurs and small businesses to take the lead in job creation, particularly in rural areas, emerged as a strong theme at the Stakeholder Forum in the West region.

There are a number of bodies in the region providing supports to microenterprises, start-ups and early-stage SMEs. Together, they offer a suite of supports that address the needs of stakeholders which can be further enhanced through increased collaboration.

Enterprise Ireland

Fostering entrepreneurship is a key pillar of Enterprise Ireland's corporate strategy. Enterprise Ireland, including its Regional Office in the West, will work closely with entrepreneurs, local development agencies and local representative bodies to develop a pipeline of entrepreneurs and start-up companies. It will help those entrepreneurs and start-ups to achieve stronger progression through a range of Enterprise Ireland supports, including, for example, the New Frontiers Programme, Competitive Feasibility Funds, Competitive Start Fund and the Innovative High Potential Start Up Programme. A Competitive Feasibility Fund for the West was launched by Enterprise Ireland in September 2015. Enterprise Ireland will run also Enterprise Start events, Export Awareness events and workshops targeting start-ups. It will provide business mentors and run Financing for Growth seminars regionally to support entrepreneurs and start-ups.

Údarás na Gaeltachta

In 2014, there were 3,511 people employed full-time in companies supported by Údarás na Gaeltachta in the West region across a range of sectors including manufacturing, seafood, tourism, audio visual and digital media, life sciences and medical devices, energy and green tech.

Údarás will develop an annual Enterprise Development Plan for the Gaeltacht regions to support entrepreneurship and job creation and will target the creation of 540 new jobs in the region over the lifetime of the Action Plan. These will be a key contributor to the realisation of the 25% increase in start-up target for the region. The agency will implement a range of measures to support early stage businesses in a variety of sectors.

Local enterprise focus

Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs), which are Offices of the Local Authorities, aim to drive the development of local enterprise, putting local microenterprise and small business at the heart of job creation. The LEOs supported 562 client companies in 2014, with a combined total of over 2,500 in employment. The LEOs have already embraced new innovative programmes such as the Microenterprise Loan Fund (with 66 loans to the value of €1.061 million approved by Microfinance Ireland in the West up to August 2015), and Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur programme. They will seize new opportunities for further innovative measures presented by Enterprise Ireland's competitive funding calls in the regions.

The LEOs are an important element in the economic development role of local authorities which has been significantly enhanced under the Government's *Action Programme for Effective Local Government* (October 2013) and the Local Government Reform Act 2014.

The local authorities provide essential supports to enterprises in the region, including microenterprises, and these will be articulated through their Local Economic and Community Plans and their Service Level Agreements with Enterprise Ireland for service delivery via the LEOs. Local Community Development Committees (LCDC) are established in each local authority area for the purposes of developing, co-ordinating and implementing a coherent and integrated approach to local and community development. The principal remits of the LCDC are to develop, adopt and implement the community elements of the Local Economic and Community Plan.

Building on the success of the Galway Chambers Female Entrepreneurs Start-up programme 2011-2013, Galway Chamber will develop and implement a further programme for Female Entrepreneurs, focusing on Growing and Scaling enterprises in 2016. The LEOs will also target the participation of over 400 women on their core training programmes in 2015.

The Local Development Companies in Roscommon, Mayo and Galway and the Islands provide supports to start-ups, established microenterprises and social enterprises as part of their remit to support social and economic development in the region. Local Development Strategies are currently being developed for the period 2015-2020 which will include clear targets for enterprise support and job creation.

WestBIC also supports start-ups and early-stage SMEs in the region and is the official EU Business and Innovation Centre for Ireland's Border, Midlands and Western Region.

Other regional bodies involved in delivering actions under this part of the Action Plan include NUI Galway, and GMIT. The Plan will seek to develop better collaboration across the start-up network to realise the goal of more start-ups and stronger jobs impact. For example, GMIT will work with the LEOs and Enterprise Ireland to design and develop a new programme targeted at start-up entrepreneurs.

Enterprise and Incubation space

Incubation space is an important requirement to support start-up companies. The West region is well served by seventeen Community Enterprise Centres supported by Enterprise Ireland, as well as Incubators at each of the Third Level Colleges which supported over 1,000 jobs in 2013.

The *Community Enterprise Initiatives* competitive call for proposals launched by Enterprise Ireland in May 2015 provides an opportunity for a step-up in new and innovative approaches to providing incubation space, supporting hubs, and encouraging entrepreneurship. In addition, Enterprise Ireland is working with Westport Multi-agency Enterprise Limited to open a new enterprise centre in the town.

Access to Finance

Access to credit has been a particular difficulty for start-ups and other SMEs since the recession. The Government has introduced a number of initiatives to improve access to finance for SMEs, including the Microenterprise Loan Fund, the Credit Guarantee Scheme and the provision of funds through the new Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland. There is scope for greater take-up and promotion of these schemes. Enterprise Ireland and the Local Enterprise Offices will continue to promote and provide information on these and other schemes which are available nationally to clients, and will aim for increased take-up over the lifetime of this Action Plan.

Through the WDC Investment Fund, the Western Development Commission will provide seed and venture capital and loans to small businesses in the region, with a particular focus on the creative industries.

InterTradeIreland is also active in this area and will take a series of actions to promote access to finance for start-ups through to those seeking new export opportunities in Northern Ireland. These activities include workshops under the "Funding for Growth" initiative, equity awareness events, equity advisory clinics and the annual Seedcorn Competition which is run on a regional basis. In addition, through its Trade Accelerator Voucher scheme, InterTradeIreland will help companies to identify and break down barriers to trade, leading to new export opportunities in Northern Ireland.

Other collaborative initiatives

There is a range of supports available nationally to support entrepreneurs and start-ups. However, stakeholder engagement suggests there are gaps in knowledge of the full range of supports

available. A number of focused events will be held in the West region which will help to increase awareness of supports to business, and provide advice.

Regional events such as *Meet West*, the largest business networking event in the West of Ireland, now in its fifth year, demonstrate the high degree of collaboration that exists amongst the agencies in the region. Other important regional initiatives that support entrepreneurship and start-ups include the ICT focussed *Start-up Galway* and *Mayo Ideas Week*. This year, under the national Startup Gathering initiative, an event for the West took place in Galway earlier this year.

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
Programmes and Measures to support start-ups and early stage enterprises			
1	Enterprise Ireland will increase enterprise formation in the West through initiatives such as Enterprise Start workshops, the New Frontiers Entrepreneurial Development Programme, Competitive Feasibility Fund and Competitive Start Fund.	Ongoing	Enterprise Ireland
2	Údarás na Gaeltachta will implement measures to support early stage business with a particular focus on regional competitive advantage in specific sectors, including cultural tourism, audio-visual and digital technology, marine resources, niche manufacturing, food beverages and creative language-based services.	2015-2017	Údarás na Gaeltachta
3	Each of the Local Enterprise Offices in the West region will develop an annual Local Enterprise Development Plan, setting out targets and objectives to support start-ups and enterprises in their region. Key aggregate targets for the West LEOs for 2015 are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - €1.3 million will be available in grant assistance and enterprise development supports. - 19 Start Your Own Business courses will be run, for over 184 participants. - Over 560 clients will be assigned Start-up mentors. - Over 520 clients will be assigned Business Development mentors. - Over 400 women will participate on core LEO training programmes (Start Your Own Business, Accelerate, Hi Start, Export 	2015-2017 (Annually)	LEOs/West Local Authorities, Enterprise Ireland

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
	Awareness, Lean, Mentoring). - 46 schools will participate in Student Enterprise programme.		
4	Údarás na Gaeltachta will develop annual enterprise development plans for each of the Gaeltacht areas in the region setting out targets to support entrepreneurship, enterprise growth and job creation. Údarás will target the creation of 540 new jobs in the West region over the period of this Action Plan across a range of key sectors such as Life Sciences, Mariculture and Food & Drink.	2015-2017 (Annually)	Údarás na Gaeltachta
5	Enterprise Ireland will assist new start-up companies/entrepreneurs in the region, using a €200,000 Competitive Feasibility Fund for the West Region launched in September 2015.	2015	Enterprise Ireland
6	Galway Chamber will develop and implement a further programme for Female Entrepreneurs focusing on Growing and Scaling enterprises, building on the success of the Galway Chambers Female Entrepreneurs Start-up programme in 2011-2013.	2016	Galway Chamber
7	Run a national pilot entrepreneurial development programme to target up to 50 women based in rural locations.	2015	Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine
8	Enterprise Ireland will support and monitor successful applicants under the €5 million Community Enterprise Initiative Scheme launched in 2015.	2015-2016	Enterprise Ireland
9	The local authorities in the West region will each develop and publish a Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) to support economic development and local community development in their administrative regions.	2015	West Local Authorities
10	The West Local Authorities will develop Business Incentive Schemes (e.g. Rates Incentive Scheme, Development Levies Scheme) to support enterprise.	Ongoing	West Local Authorities

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
11	Local Development Strategies for the delivery of the LEADER programme will be developed covering the period 2015-2020.	2015	Local Development Companies, Local Community Development Committees
12	An Economic Forum will be established by each local authority, comprising representatives from all support providers in the region connected to the support and service of start-ups and SMEs, with the purpose of maximising collaboration and cooperation across the region.	2015-2017	West Local Authorities and other relevant public bodies
13	Galway, Mayo and Roscommon LEOs will collectively run a bootcamp for Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur entrants from the region.	2015	LEOs/West Local Authorities, Enterprise Ireland
14	Galway, Mayo and Roscommon LEOs will provide access to dedicated business networks at a regional, national and European level in collaboration with other bodies and agencies.	Ongoing	LEOs/West Local Authorities, Enterprise Ireland
15	Enterprise Ireland in partnership with GMIT and NUI Galway will deliver the New Frontiers Entrepreneurial Development Programme in the West region. 14 Entrepreneurs will participate on Phase 2 of the programme in the second half of 2015.	2015-2016	GMIT, Enterprise Ireland, NUI Galway
16	In addition to delivering the New Frontiers programme, GMIT will work with Enterprise Ireland and the LEOs to design and develop a new start-up programme targeted at entrepreneurs.	2015-2016	GMIT, Enterprise Ireland, LEOs/West Local Authorities
17	GMIT will pilot a programme to develop the existing Graduate Entrepreneurship Culture foundation to lead to increased start-up opportunities for graduates in the region	2016-2017	GMIT
18	Enterprise Ireland will agree and implement a Service Level Agreement with WestBIC, to ensure their interaction with start-ups in the West region is deepened and the value maximised.	Ongoing	Enterprise Ireland, WestBIC

Access to Finance for Start-ups and Early-Stage Enterprises

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
19	Provide risk capital to micro, small and medium sized and social enterprises in their start-up and expansion phases through the WDC Investment Fund.	Ongoing	Western Development Commission
20	As part of its regionally delivered Finance for Growth workshop series, Enterprise Ireland will run a workshop on Export Finance in Galway in the second half of 2015.	2015	Enterprise Ireland
21	Promote national supports available to provide access to finance to start-ups and existing companies.	Ongoing	Enterprise Ireland, LEOs/West Local Authorities, Údarás na Gaeltachta
22	Further strengthen the roll out of the Angels Programme (HBAN) in the West and North West to increase the flow of Private Equity and Smart Capital to match and increase the multiplier effect of State funds into innovative Start-ups.	2015-2016	WestBIC, Intertrade Ireland and other relevant bodies
23	Enterprise Ireland will support early stage client entrepreneurs to raise investment by holding two Investor Ready Mentor Panel Pitch meetings in the region annually.	2015-2017	Enterprise Ireland
24	InterTradeIreland will run its annual Seedcorn Competition on a regional basis, giving companies the opportunity to improve their investor readiness and greatly increase their chances of raising equity.	2015-2016	InterTradeIreland
25	InterTradeIreland will host 10 workshops under its “Funding for Growth” initiative in the region to promote all traditional and non-traditional sources of finance to local businesses. Intertrade Ireland will also deliver a series of equity awareness events, including in the West Region, where companies can meet with an equity expert, participate in business planning workshops and learn from venture capital case studies.	2015-2016	InterTradeIreland
26	Operate the Community Loan Fund for community and not-for-profit enterprise in the Western region.	Ongoing	Western Development Commission
Regional Events			

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
27	Deliver the annual Meet West business networking event.	2015-2017	West Local Authorities/LEOs, Enterprise Ireland, Údarás na Gaeltachta, Western Development Commission
28	Galway will participate in the Global Startup Weekend which brings together ICT designers, developers and business development people for a weekend to pitch ideas and learn about launching businesses in the sector.	2015	NUI Galway, Industry and other relevant bodies
29	Enterprise Ireland will run one "Project Assessment & Development Day" in 2015 for Start-ups in the West Region in conjunction with WestBIC, LEOs and Údarás na Gaeltachta to assess early stage start-up projects with high potential for growth. Two further such events are scheduled for 2016.	2015-2016	Enterprise Ireland, LEOs, West BIC, Údarás na Gaeltachta
30	Mayo County Council will continue to support Mayo Ideas Week, established in 2010 as an annual event comprising a series of idea generation, entrepreneurship and business events hosted by development and enterprise support agencies and other organisations across Mayo.	2015-2017	Mayo County Council and other relevant bodies
31	As part of Mayo Ideas week, the GMIT Innovation in Business Centre (IiBC) in Castlebar, in association with Inc60 and other relevant bodies, will hold the Spirit of Entrepreneurship Event annually. The event brings together experienced entrepreneurs and new innovative start-ups.	2015	GMIT IiBC Castlebar, Inc60 and other relevant bodies
Other collaborative initiatives			
32	The Local Development Companies in the region will provide an area-based response to long-term unemployment and deliver a range of programmes to support entrepreneurship and social enterprise. The Development Companies will work with the LEOs and Údarás na Gaeltachta, with a view to progressing clients to the LEO services.	Ongoing	Local Development Companies, West Local Authorities/ LEOs, Údarás na Gaeltachta

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
33	The Local Enterprise Offices and Údarás na Gaeltachta will maximise collaboration with the Community Enterprise Centres to assist start-ups and existing businesses to grow and develop.	Ongoing	LEOs/West Local Authorities, Údarás na Gaeltachta, CECs
34	Enterprise Ireland will work in partnership with Westport Multi-agency Enterprise Ltd to open the new enterprise centre in Westport.	Ongoing	Enterprise Ireland, Westport Multi-agency Enterprise Limited, Mayo Co. Council, Westport Chamber
35	Compile a comprehensive report on incubation/co-working space across the region with a view to assessing the region's needs in this regard.	2016	West Local Authorities in collaboration with relevant bodies.
36	Examine the scope for conducting a business needs survey across the region, building on the insights gained from the 2014 Mayo '4 minute survey' which contacted over 4,000 businesses to help benchmark businesses in Mayo and assess their support needs.	2015	West Local Authorities, LEOs, Údarás na Gaeltachta and other relevant bodies

Chapter 7: Growing and Scaling Enterprises

Building indigenous companies of scale is one of the challenges that need to be addressed to grow sustainable employment numbers. Growing a business from being small and domestically-focused, to a larger export-oriented firm requires new skills in managing and scaling the company. The actions under this section of the Action Plan are focused on:

- Building the capability of companies to grow and export into new markets; and
- Increasing collaboration between indigenous and FDI companies in the region.

A central part of Enterprise Ireland's strategy is to achieve scaling at all stages of growth. The agency provides a suite of supports to enterprises aspiring to grow their business and enhance their export capabilities. Enterprise Ireland will deliver a range of programmes and supports to assist companies in the West to grow by building capability, capturing opportunities for new markets and ideas, and accessing resources and finance. Enterprise Ireland will work closely with the relevant public bodies in this regard, including the IDA Ireland, the Local Enterprise Offices, Údaras na Gaeltachta, the local authorities and Higher Education Institutions.

Enterprise Ireland will also launch a competitive call in Quarter 4 2015 to support significant projects or initiatives to improve or leverage identified enterprise capability in regions across the country. This call will provide an opportunity for sectoral clusters in the West, such as Medical Devices, ICT, Food and others, to make submissions to further enhance enterprise capability in their sectors.

Northern Ireland often serves as a first point of export for Irish SMEs and InterTradelreland provides supports to help companies pursue export opportunities to Northern Ireland. InterTradelreland will target companies in the West region to increase their potential in this regard through its Acumen, Elevate and Trade Accelerator Voucher programmes and initiatives. Under Elevate, consultants offer specific expertise to identify and capitalise on the significant cross-border sales opportunities that exist.

Through its EU networks, WestBIC pilots and mainstreams various support interventions to fast-track the development and growth of innovative enterprise, aimed at offering client companies direct low-cost access to international market validation, research, technology, investment and joint-venture contacts.

Procurement and Supply Chain opportunities

In developing the Action Plan for Jobs, stakeholders in the region highlighted the opportunity to leverage the strong FDI presence in the West to create new supply chain opportunities for indigenous enterprise, as well as the importance of better access to public procurement opportunities. The presence of four local authorities, along with Government Departments and agencies and commercial State bodies in the region, represents a significant purchasing base for companies that can supply relevant products and services. While public procurement cannot be confined to regional suppliers, opportunities exist for local businesses that may be able to provide supplies or services that meet the requirements of public bodies in the region. Enterprise Ireland,

the LEOs and InterTradeIreland will work with SMEs in the West region to support them in preparing for public procurement. As part of its approach, InterTradeIreland will hold a regional public sector *Meet the Buyer* event in the region in collaboration with the Office of Government Procurement in 2016, bringing together public Contracting Authorities and potential local suppliers.

IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland will work closely on a number of initiatives which aim to strengthen the cooperation between indigenous and multinational companies in the West. One example of this is the Global Sourcing Strategy which aims to increase global sourcing sales by Enterprise Ireland client companies. A joint Enterprise Ireland/IDA Ireland Global Sourcing Team has met with more than 100 multinationals across Ireland since 2013 to discuss their procurement strategies with the primary aim of identifying import substitution opportunities. In addition, a Trade and Investment mission to the West region, organised by Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland, took place in October 2015 as part of this initiative. The agencies will build on this work in the West region over the course of this Action Plan, with a view to increasing linkages between larger companies and potential Irish SME suppliers.

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
37	<p>Enterprise Ireland will work with client companies from the region, including high potential start-ups (HPSUs), to accelerate the capacity of HPSUs to scale up and succeed in international markets, and to increase client engagement with the comprehensive suite of supports that Enterprise Ireland offers, including management capability, innovation vouchers and export readiness programmes/market penetration.</p> <p>Enterprise Ireland will provide an annual update on company participation on key programmes to the Regional Implementation Committee.</p>	Ongoing	Enterprise Ireland
38	Enterprise Ireland will launch a competitive call to support significant projects or initiatives to improve or leverage identified enterprise capability in regions across the country.	2016	Enterprise Ireland
39	As part of their Global Sourcing initiative, Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland will work together to increase collaboration - including the sourcing of goods - between Multinational and indigenous companies. The agencies will ensure that their clients in the region, where appropriate, are engaged in this initiative.	Ongoing	Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
40	Enterprise Ireland, Údarás na Gaeltachta and IDA Ireland will work together to introduce indigenous enterprise clients to potential FDI investors to highlight possible collaborations for those investors thinking of locating in Ireland.	Ongoing	Enterprise Ireland, Údarás na Gaeltachta, IDA Ireland
41	Enterprise Ireland will encourage enterprises to enter export markets through its Potential Exporters Division, and will run two “Get Export Ready” workshops in the West Region in 2015-2016.	Ongoing	Enterprise Ireland, Údarás na Gaeltachta
42	WestBIC will source international fast-tracking opportunities for early stage innovative enterprise through its European networks, including partnering, technology transfer and low-cost access to wider markets and international connectivity.	2015-2016	WestBIC
43	InterTradeIreland will host a “Going North” Seminar in the region to promote North/South trade opportunities for local companies.	2015-2016	InterTradeIreland
44	InterTradeIreland will promote its Acumen and Elevate programmes in the region. ITI will target 9 Acumen approvals in the West, providing financial assistance to local companies to investigate and pursue export opportunities in Northern Ireland.	2015-2016	InterTradeIreland
45	Galway, Mayo and Roscommon LEOs will deliver procurement seminars and workshops to assist business people tendering for larger contracts.	2015	West Local Authorities/Enterprise Ireland/LEOs
46	InterTradeIreland will deliver 3 Public Tendering workshops for SMEs over the period 2015-2016 and provide relevant training for local small businesses (target of 75 participants). It will promote public tendering opportunities, including cross border public sector opportunities, and consortia building for larger contracts and below threshold contracts.	2015-2016	InterTradeIreland

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
47	In addition to its procurement workshops, InterTradeIreland will hold a regional public sector Meet the Buyer event in the West region in 2016 in collaboration with the Office of Government Procurement (OGP).	2016	InterTradeIreland, OGP
48	Through its Trade Accelerator Voucher scheme, InterTradeIreland will help companies to identify and break down barriers to trade, leading to new export opportunities in Northern Ireland.	2015-2016	InterTradeIreland

Chapter 8: Fostering Innovation

Increasing the innovative capability and capacity of the West region is a key objective of this Action Plan as a key to driving enterprise development. Innovation includes the invention and diffusion of new technologies, the development of new and improved products, processes and services, and innovations in organisational models. It is one of the major factors driving global economic growth⁷.

Central to the objective of increasing innovation in the West region is the fostering of an innovative culture that will underpin future economic development in the region. Initiatives include further developing networks around key clusters such as ICT, MedTech and Life Sciences, developing innovative new products and services that build on regional strengths, and increasing innovation incubation space.

As set out in Chapter 4, there are significant research hubs in the West region in NUI Galway, GMIT, the Teagasc Rural Economy Research Centre in Athenry, and the Marine Institute catchment research facility in Newport.

BioInnovate Ireland is a national medical technology innovation training programme that aims to act as a neutral territory in which academia, clinicians and industry can collaborate to develop novel medical technologies. The programme is an active partnership between multiple universities (NUI Galway, University of Limerick and University College Cork). It engages with hospitals all over the country and is supported by Enterprise Ireland, Irish Medical Devices Association (IMDA) and multiple industry sponsors.

Like NUI Galway, GMIT's strategy in relation to research, development and innovation is also focussed on areas of critical importance to industry and the region, such as Medical Device technologies. GMIT has two Innovation Centres (liBCs) in Galway and Mayo.

Other key initiatives in the region in relation to innovation include the Galway City Innovation District which will comprise a cluster of Galway City's entrepreneurs, startups, accelerators and incubators. The district will be close to public transportation, wired for high-speed internet, support mixed-use development, and nurture collaboration and knowledge sharing. The objective is for the District to become the anchor point of a wider Western Innovation Network which will operate through links throughout the region.

The Portershed (www.portershed.com) is a new innovation hub which is part of the larger Innovation District initiative and is an exemplar of the potential for collaboration between industry, Chambers and Third Level institutions. The initial focus for The Portershed is on the ICT sector, but project leaders are also actively exploring collaboration with the Medtech industry.

⁷ A new Government policy on Science, Technology and Innovation is being developed to articulate a vision for science policy across all disciplines. It will incorporate policy around research to support the broader knowledge base and address key challenges and research to support the development of policy in key sectors of relevance to the economy and society (e.g. health, agriculture, marine, energy, environment, communications).

Roscommon County Council recently published a 2015-2020 strategy for the county - *Measuring and Promoting Innovation in Local Regions*. The Council will develop proposals for Innovation and Technology centres for the county and will drive a project to develop linked technology hubs in the fibre-enabled locations of Roscommon Town and Monksland, Athlone.

The Marine Institute will continue to promote Galway Bay as the national test and demonstration facility for the testing of advanced marine technologies and systems and oceanographic monitoring.

InterTradeIreland, through its programmes, is also active in the West region, supporting collaboration between SMEs and Third Level institutions in the area of innovation.

Teagasc will support farmers in the region on an ongoing basis, through a series of programmes, to develop new products that add value to farm produce beyond primary processing, including in areas such as renewable energy and innovation. While the priority on many farms is to improve the technical performance of the existing farm enterprises, there may be opportunities for some farmers to add value to the farm output or to diversify into other activities through innovation.

Technology Gateways are Business Development resources in Institutes of Technology which go into their local communities and find companies that can benefit from the research base in their parent Institutes. While there is currently no Gateway in the West region, the Gateways are networked to ensure that regardless of the core competencies of any given Institute or Gateway, companies will be provided with assistance to source solutions to meet their innovation needs. Enterprise Ireland has issued a national competitive call for Technology Gateway Network Funding with the objective of increasing the regional profile of the network.

Key actions which will be taken to foster innovation in the West are set out below.

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
49	<p>Increase the number of companies in the region who actively participate in research, training and innovation activities by building on two regional Innovation Forums held in the West region in 2014/2015.</p> <p>The objective is to encourage more peer-to-peer interactions, maximise SME-HEI linkages, and promote and showcase innovation in areas such as people, resources, training and research.</p>	2015-2017	Enterprise Ireland, NUI Galway, GMIT
50	Enterprise Ireland will promote Innovation supports which are available to companies across the region on an on-going basis.	Ongoing	Enterprise Ireland

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
51	GMIT Innovation in Business Centres (IiBCs) in Galway and Castlebar and the Business Innovation Centre in NUI Galway will support high potential start-ups to grow and develop through the provision of supports such as incubation space, mentoring and business development training.	Ongoing	GMIT, NUI Galway, Enterprise Ireland
52	Develop 'The PorterShed' innovation hub in Galway city centre to provide collaborative co-working spaces for early-stage tech enterprises in ICT, Digital and Gaming sectors as the hub of an Innovation District.	2015-2017	Galway Chamber, Industry, NUI Galway, GMIT, Galway City Council
53	Develop an Accelerator Programme for high potential enterprises in the Galway City Innovation District.	2016	Galway Chamber, Galway City Council, NUI Galway, GMIT
54	Seek to expand the Innovation District through initiatives such as attracting an anchor tenant of scale to new commercial space in the District.	2016-2017	Galway Chamber, Galway City Council, Galway County Council, NUI Galway, GMIT
55	Create a Western Innovation District (WIN) by developing linkages across the region and inter regionally to identify suitable space and demand for local hubs which could be connected virtually to the Galway City Innovation District.	2015-2016	Galway Chamber, Local Chambers, NUI Galway, GMIT, Industry and local communities
56	Develop proposals for Innovation and Technology centres for County Roscommon such as an IT Knowledge Centre to foster knowledge based enterprise and retain graduates in the region.	2015-2016	Roscommon County Council, WestBIC
57	Roscommon County Council will drive a project to develop linked technology hubs in the fibre-enabled locations of Roscommon Town and Monksland, Athlone.	2015-2017	Roscommon County Council, Chambers of Commerce
58	NUI Galway will partner with University of Limerick (UL) and UCC on the BioInnovate Ireland medical technology innovation training programme, with support from Enterprise Ireland through the provision of funds to support the Fellowship aspects of the Programme.	2015-2016	NUI Galway, UL, UCC, with Enterprise Ireland and other sponsors

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
59	Support farmers, through a series of programmes, to develop new products that add value to farm produce beyond primary processing, including in areas such as renewable energy and innovation.	2015	Teagasc
60	Promote Galway Bay as the national Smart Bay test and demonstration facility with ongoing testing of advanced marine technologies and systems.	Ongoing	Marine Institute, SEAI, Smart Bay Ltd
61	InterTradelreland will promote the Fusion programme in the region and will set a target of at least 5 approvals. The Fusion Programme is a technology transfer programme facilitating partnerships between companies, academic institutions and graduates.	2015-2016	InterTradelreland
62	InterTradelreland will provide access to its Challenge programme, giving SMEs the opportunity to learn how to develop a culture of innovation through the use of a sustainable and repeatable innovation process.	2015-2016	InterTradelreland

Chapter 9: Attracting and embedding Foreign Direct Investment

A key objective of the *Action Plan for Jobs: Regional* strategy is to win new Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) for the regions, and support existing enterprises located in Ireland to win new mandates from their parent companies. This can be done by using and developing the region's competitive strengths to offer a supportive environment for the growth of those enterprises.

IDA Ireland's remit is to attract FDI to Ireland and thereafter to work with the existing base of client companies to encourage them to sustain, grow and expand their business presence here. In doing so, IDA Ireland client companies generate valuable employment throughout the country.

Under IDA Ireland's new strategy, FDI investment targets for the regions have been developed on a whole-of-region basis, with targets for each region largely based on a number of key factors important to attracting and retaining mobile foreign direct investments. In the face of increasing international competition for investments, greater co-operation, collaboration and integration by all local and national stakeholders will have to be quickly addressed to rectify regional impediments to winning investments.

IDA Ireland is committed to playing its part in the collaborative effort to win investments and jobs from new companies, from existing companies and from new areas of opportunity in FDI in locations that can demonstrate the capability to deliver on companies' needs. IDA Ireland secured 71 projects in the West Region from 2010-2014. A 30% to 40% uplift in projects as targeted in IDA Ireland's new 5 year "Winning" FDI Strategy would result in a minimum of 92 additional projects for the West Region by 2019.

The IDA Ireland strategy recognises that, ultimately, the decision on where companies locate is a matter for the companies themselves. The achievement of the IDA Ireland's targets will crucially depend on the support and collaboration of local stakeholders to demonstrate that the West region is an attractive proposition for potential FDI companies.

Currently, IDA Ireland positions the West in the market place as an investment location with a strong ecosystem of both indigenous and multinational companies operating across a diverse range of sectors, but predominantly in the MedDevice/BioMed and Technology sectors. Complimentary to and supporting this footprint of export-orientated enterprise is the large educated talent pool available to companies, a good physical, educational and digital infrastructure, and a business environment that is competitive and fit for purpose.

There is a strong manufacturing capability in the region, especially in the LifeSciences and Engineering space across Multi-National and indigenous companies, and it is important that IDA Ireland builds a next generation competency around this capability. IDA Ireland will work with existing clients in the region through its Transformation Programme, to further improve the efficiency and competitiveness of these firms.

The agency is committed to ensuring that a good supply of suitable property solutions is available for FDI in designated regional locations. Where the private sector is not delivering property solutions, IDA Ireland will take a lead role in the construction of new facilities. In this context, IDA Ireland will complete construction of new Advanced Technology Buildings in Castlebar and Galway over the lifetime of this Plan.

Údarás na Gaeltachta will also continue a building and refurbishment programme to help support the attraction/expansion of Foreign Direct and Indigenous Investment in areas under its remit in the West Region.

Complementing IDA Ireland’s strategy to attract FDI to the regions, ConnectIreland will operate its *Succeed in Ireland* initiative to attract into Ireland, through the diaspora, foreign companies that are expanding internationally. ConnectIreland will develop a Regional ConnectIreland Plan in collaboration with local authorities, and initiate and run the Connectivation competition inviting Third Level students to share their ideas for the future development of the *Succeed in Ireland* initiative.

Key actions which will be taken to embed FDI in the West are set out below.

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
63	IDA Ireland will deliver a minimum of 92 additional projects for the West Region up to 2019.	2015-2019	IDA Ireland
64	IDA Ireland will commence construction of a new Advanced Technology Building in Castlebar, Co. Mayo, with a view to completion in 2016.	2016	IDA Ireland
65	IDA Ireland will construct a new Advanced Technology Building in Galway which will be completed by 2017.	2017	IDA Ireland
66	IDA Ireland will continue to market its property solutions throughout the region for FDI investment.	Ongoing	IDA Ireland
67	IDA Ireland will proactively update its online marketing to include “Invest in the West”.	Ongoing	IDA Ireland
68	Familiarisation visits will be made by relevant overseas IDA Ireland Executives to the West region and to relevant companies in the region to enhance their knowledge of the West in order to market it to potential investors.	Ongoing	IDA Ireland

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
69	IDA Ireland will drive its Transformation and R&D programmes with its established base of client companies in the West Region.	Ongoing	IDA Ireland
70	Building on the successful strategy of providing property solutions, Údarás na Gaeltachta will continue a building and refurbishment programme to help support the attraction/expansion of Foreign Direct Investment and Indigenous Investment in the Gaeltacht areas in the West Region.	2015-2017	Údarás na Gaeltachta
71	Connect Ireland will develop a Regional Connect Ireland Plan that is integrated with the local authorities' enterprise development and job-creation activities and seek a nominated officer from each county in the region for the roll-out of the Plan.	2015	Connect Ireland
72	Connect Ireland will announce and run the Connectivation competition, inviting Third Level students to share their ideas for the future development of the Succeed in Ireland initiative.	2016	Connect Ireland, GMIT, NUI Galway
73	Local Authorities will promote investment in key towns across the region, working with IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland and other agencies as appropriate.	2015-2017	West Local Authorities, IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, other relevant agencies

Chapter 10: Building Sectoral Opportunities

10.1 MedTech, Lifesciences and ICT

An objective of this Action Plan for Jobs is to build on the existing strengths of the West region in the MedTech, Lifesciences and ICT sectors and generate additional jobs – directly and indirectly – through these sectors. The aim is to deepen and strengthen the existing clusters in terms of job creation, more research, development & innovation being conducted in Ireland by enterprises in the clusters, and increased collaboration between enterprises and the Higher Education Institutions on skills and research.

Ireland boasts a leading global cluster of MedTech industries and has the highest per capita of Medical Technology personnel in Europe. The West region, and Galway City in particular, is home to a number of world class MedTech companies and is the hub of this globally recognised MedTech cluster. 40% of Manufacturing jobs supported by Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland and Údarás na Gaeltachta in the region are engaged in the manufacture of medical devices and supplies (including dental). Overall, MedTech companies located in the region, such as Medtronic, Boston Scientific, Covidien, Hollister, Baxter and Harmac, employ over 10,000 people and the sector saw a 9.5% growth in employment between 2011 and 2014. Building on this success, Enterprise Ireland and Údarás na Gaeltachta will target MedTech (and Internationally Traded Services) companies in the West region to help them to scale, innovate and develop international markets.

Certified standards are hugely important in the Medical Devices sector and to support the sector in the West region, the National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI) will establish a Galway regional office to provide a strong presence for local access to technical and clinical experts servicing medical device certification.

The West region offers the MedTech sector centres of excellence, a young, mobile, flexible, and well-educated workforce, and a large number of local companies that offer a comprehensive range of related service and sub-supply activities. A significant number of IDA Ireland MedTech client companies also have R&D activities based in the region. IDA Ireland will work to enhance the value proposition for Galway and the West Region as a world class MedTech Hub, with support from other public bodies in the region.

GMIT, NUI Galway and the Northern and Western Regional Assembly (NWRA) are founding members of MetricIreland (Medical Technologies Research and Innovation Consortium) which acts as a single contact point for MedTech enterprises and is funded by the Regional Assembly and five HEIs, including University of Limerick, IT Sligo and Athlone IT.

The Irish Medical Devices Association (IMDA) - the business association within Ibec representing the medical devices and diagnostics sector - is currently drafting its Statement of Strategy 2016-2020 which will address how the health technology cluster in Ireland can further develop and stay strategically relevant globally. This will be important for the MedTech cluster in the West.

The Lifesciences/Pharmaceutical sector also represents a growing cluster in the West region, especially in Mayo and Roscommon, with companies such as Allergan, Ballina Beverages (Coca Cola), and Alkermes in situ, and recent announcements by Jazz Pharmaceuticals and Alexion in the Monksland area of Roscommon, close to Athlone. Leveraging off this existing Lifesciences cluster, IDA Ireland will promote the region as a location for Bio-Pharma development and investment, including the Monksland area of County Roscommon and the existing utility-intensive Strategic Sites in Oranmore and Athenry in County Galway.

Galway is also becoming a major technology hub, particularly around internet and collaborative working technologies with the presence of IDA Ireland supported companies such as Fidelity, Avaya, SAP, EA Games, Valeo, Synchronoss, Aspect Software, Cisco and HP amongst others. Building on the hub, IDA Ireland and the local authorities will also create a value proposition for the region for Data Centre developments.

There are many synergies between the MedTech, Lifesciences, and ICT sectors and Ibec will run a series of cross-sectoral workshops in the West to explore best practice across these sectors.

The full suite of actions to support jobs growth in the West in the MedTech, Lifesciences, and ICT sectors are set out below.

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
74	Enterprise Ireland - and Údarás na Gaeltachta in the Gaeltacht areas - will target Manufacturing (including MedTech) and Internationally Traded Services companies in the West region with supports to scale, innovate and develop international markets.	Ongoing	Enterprise Ireland, Údarás na Gaeltachta
75	Enhance Galway and the West region as a world class Medical Device Hub.	2015	IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, Higher Education Institutions, other relevant bodies
76	Run a series of cross sectoral workshops in the region to bring together a number of other sectors with the MedTech sector to explore best practice.	2015-2017	Ibec – Irish Medical Devices Association (IMDA)
77	NSAI will establish a Galway regional office to provide a strong presence for local access to technical and clinical experts servicing medical device certification for the MedTech cluster in the West.	2015-2016	NSAI
78	IDA Ireland will promote the West as a location for Bio-Pharma development and investment, leveraging off the existing Life Sciences cluster including the Monksland area of County Roscommon and the existing utility-intensive	2015-2017	IDA Ireland, West Local Authorities

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
	Strategic Sites in Oranmore and Athenry in County Galway.		
79	Building on the critical mass of existing enterprise, Roscommon County Council will drive a project to develop the industrial zone of Monksland as a Biopharma/Medtech Hub including the development of a 7-unit incubator hub.	2015-2017	Roscommon County, Council and other relevant bodies
80	Promote and develop a Value Proposition for the West region as an attractive location for HomeWorking/EWorking.	2015	IDA Ireland, West Local Authorities

10.2 Tourism

Tourism is a significant driver of economic activity in the West Region. In 2013, the region attracted over 1.2 million visitors generating revenue in the order of €380 million. This represented a 2% increase in visitor numbers and a 12% increase in revenue compared to 2012. An important objective of this Action Plan is to build employment and enterprise opportunities in the Tourism sector, given its significance to the economy of the West region.

Indirectly, tourism supports key service sectors including retail, transport and food producers. It is also a sector that delivers substantial social and community benefits, particularly given the fact that many tourism businesses are micro-enterprises that are embedded in local communities.

The Government's new Tourism Policy Statement, *People, Place and Policy – Growing Tourism to 2025*, sets out the Government's long term vision for the Tourism sector. The Government's ambition is that, by 2025, overseas tourism revenue will reach €5 billion in real terms (a 51% increase on 2014), and that employment in the sector will increase by 50,000 to reach 250,000 (a 25% increase). This will be underpinned by 10 million overseas visits per year by 2025, compared to 7.6 million in 2014 (a 32% increase). The actions taken under the Action Plan for Jobs for the West region will contribute to the achievement of these overall targets.

Actions to support Tourism under this section of the Action Plan will focus on:

- Promoting the tourism offering in the region and building business capacity in the sector
- Developing Greenway and Blueway trails
- Recreational tourism
- Growing the potential of Cultural tourism.

Promoting the sector and building capacity

The breadth and depth of the tourism offering in the West Region is extensive. Lakes, mountains, rivers, coastline, sandy beaches and islands all offer outstanding scenery and activities for visitors. The West, Connemara, Wild Mayo, Galway Arts and Culture, the Lakelands, the River Shannon, and the Aran Islands are each iconic tourism attractions. Other popular visitor attractions in the West region include Strokestown House and Park (National Irish Famine museum) and Arigna mine in Co. Roscommon, the Ceide Fields, Croagh Patrick and Clew Bay in Co. Mayo, and Kylemore Abbey and the Aran Islands in Co. Galway.

The counties of the West region showcase a regular and ever-popular stream of festivals, events and conferences making use of its theatres, museums and arts facilities. Heritage attractions and historic houses and national parks managed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service in the Office of Public Works add to the wealth of tourism assets in the region.

While tourism figures have increased nationally, it is a continuous challenge for the regions outside of the larger urban centres such as Galway to attract tourists, domestic and international, to range further from the cities and stay longer. The uniqueness of the tourism product must be both conserved and the offering enhanced in order to give the visitor more reasons to stay and explore.

The tourism offering has been strengthened through the ambitious cross regional project, the Wild Atlantic Way. The Wild Atlantic Way encompasses the coastline and hinterland of the nine coastal counties of the West of Ireland, including Mayo and Galway. Stretching 2,500km from the Inishowen Peninsula in County Donegal to Kinsale in West Cork, the Wild Atlantic Way is the longest defined coastal touring route in the world. A number of urban centres have been identified as gateways to the Wild Atlantic Way, including Galway and Westport. Small and micro businesses - guesthouses, bed and breakfasts, individual self-catering properties - dominate the accommodation sector along the Way, reflective of the primarily rural nature of the route.

From 2016 onwards, Fáilte Ireland will develop and promote “loops and spurs” from the spine of the Wild Atlantic Way to encourage international visitors to spend more time in a particular geography and to give accommodation providers the opportunity to develop hub-based packages. The development and promotion of these “loops & spurs” will provide incremental opportunities for businesses located inland from the spine of the Wild Atlantic Way to attract more international visitors and therefore sustain and create more jobs.

A number of actions will be taken by Fáilte Ireland, the local authorities and others to promote the tourism offering in the region and to build the capacity of local enterprises to grow their businesses in line with the increased promotion. A key opportunity for creating jobs and growth in the future will be mining synergies with other key elements of the economy of the West Region to further enhance the attractiveness of the region as a place to spend time.

For example, Fáilte Ireland and Bord Iascaigh Mhara have developed a pilot programme called “Taste the Atlantic – a Seafood Journey”. This is being rolled out in the ‘Bay Coast’ zone of the Wild Atlantic Way (Ballycroy, Co. Mayo to Kinvara, Galway) with a focus on linking fisheries and

aquaculture producers, restaurants and tourists, with locally farmed or caught seafood. The objective is to enable restaurants to market their local seafood and for the farmers and fishermen to develop tourism based opportunities.

Trail development and outdoor pursuits

Outdoor pursuits and trail development are an increasing feature of Ireland's tourism offering and will be built upon under this Action Plan for Jobs. Attractions such as Mayo's Great Western Greenway and tourism activity hubs such as Lough Key Forest and Activity Park in County Roscommon continue to see increases in visitor numbers. Hiking, cycling and watersports are growing tourism segments and the West region is home to a large number of high quality Greenways and National Way Marked Walking Trails.



Tourism activities at Lough Key Forest Park (left) and the Great Western Greenway (right)

The Mayo Greenway has proven to be very successful with visitors and in supporting job creation along the 42 Km cycle route between Westport and Achill. The success of the Greenway is inspiring similar projects in Galway, from Galway to Clifden (the Connemara Greenway), and in Roscommon, from Boyle to Lough Key. Further Greenway and Blueway developments in this region, such as the Shannon Blueway and Galway to Dublin Cycleway, will make a strong contribution to strengthening the tourism product. Lough Key Forest and Activity Park in Co. Roscommon is a hub for a range of recreational tourism activities and the region has the potential to house further significant developments to support the adventure tourism sector.

Roscommon has the longest shoreline along the River Shannon, which passes through 10 counties along the central plain of Ireland. Waterways Ireland in collaboration with Roscommon County Council, neighbouring County Councils and other relevant agencies and stakeholders, are exploring the development and promotion of a Flagship Shannon Corridor Tourism Initiative based around outdoor activities, pursuits, culture, accommodation and hospitality. This has the potential to open up the Shannon River to new tourism and recreation enterprise opportunities in a similar manner to the Wild Atlantic Way.

A Study of Outdoor Recreation in the West 2014 was commissioned by the Northern and Western Regional Assembly in co-operation with the Local Authorities of Galway City, Galway County, Mayo and Roscommon. Recognising that the West has an abundance of existing outdoor recreation

facilities, the Study examined how best to optimise the use of existing amenities and proposed a series of targeted actions to sustainably develop outdoor recreation in the region.

Cultural tourism

The West region has a rich culture and heritage, to be found in its music, history and language. Two of the largest Gaeltacht regions in the country - in Galway and Mayo - are located in the West region. In addition to the Irish language Summer Colleges which serve second level students, there is an increased interest amongst adults in the Irish Language. These factors offer unique opportunities to support jobs based on the culture of the region. Galway City, supported by the other local authorities in the region, will bid to become the European Capital of Culture in 2020, reflecting also the wider cultural attributes of the region.

Actions to support jobs growth in the West in the Tourism sector are set out below.

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
Promoting tourism and building capacity			
81	<p>Implement the Wild Atlantic Way Operational Programme to deliver on the four high-level goals of the Wild Atlantic Way as outlined in the Operational Programme 2015-2019, viz:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure that the Wild Atlantic Way is compelling to the target market segments and that the Wild Atlantic Way itself becomes a world-class visitor experience. To ensure that the Wild Atlantic Way delivers balanced and sustainable revenue and jobs growth with greater geographic and seasonal spread. To ensure that the Wild Atlantic Way delivers benefits to local communities in the west of Ireland and contributes to a better place to live for everyone. To ensure that the implementation of the Wild Atlantic Way Operational Programme facilitates the protection and enhancement of the environment of the west of Ireland – as the fundamental asset that is the basis of the Wild Atlantic Way – in association with other key stakeholders. 	2015-2017	Failte Ireland
82	Market the Wild Atlantic Way internationally and domestically as a world class tourism	Ongoing	Failte Ireland, Tourism Ireland

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
	experience.		
83	Promote a new Discover Ireland home holiday campaign for the Lakelands which includes the West region.	2015	Failte Ireland
84	Provide a suite of business supports and toolkits both off and online, including www.failteireland.ie, to help tourism businesses build capability in the areas of Visitor Experience Development, Sales, and Digital marketing with a view to increasing distribution channels and sales.	Ongoing	Failte Ireland
85	Develop a range of new tourism products and food offerings to link aquaculture and fisheries producers with tourism interests and food businesses in the region.	2016-2017	Failte Ireland, BIM, Údarás na Gaeltachta DAFM
86	Develop and implement a Growth Programme for Tourism and Retail sectors including initiatives such as mentoring services, trade fair supports and business development training.	2015-2016	Galway Chamber
87	Údarás na Gaeltachta will support pilot projects in the West region to build capacity in tourism related enterprises under its remit.	2015-2017	Údarás na Gaeltachta
88	Run the Community Tourism Diaspora Initiative to provide support to local and community event organisers and activities/projects that will harness diaspora links for the benefit of local and community tourism.	2015	West Local Authorities
89	Harness the LEADER programme to invest in local tourism products throughout the region.	2015-2020	Local Community Development Committees, Local Development Companies
Trail Development			
90	Carry out the necessary planning and environmental assessments to develop a 23Km trail from Boyle around Lough Key.	Ongoing	Roscommon County Council
91	Carry out the necessary planning and environmental assessments to expand the Mayo Greenway.	Ongoing	Mayo County Council

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
92	Secure funding and agreement to progress construction of the Clifden to Oughterard section of the Connemara Greenway.	2015-2017	Galway County Council
93	Secure the necessary planning consent for the Oughterard-Galway section of the Connemara Greenway.	2015-2017	Galway County Council
94	Assist Westmeath County Council in progressing the Dublin–Galway Greenway route selection and planning consent for the project.	2015-2017	Galway County Council, Roscommon County Council
95	Develop and promote the Shannon Blueway in Roscommon, Westmeath, and Offaly.	2015-2017	Waterways Ireland, Roscommon County Council and neighbouring County Councils and other relevant bodies
96	Develop and promote the Shannon and Shannon Erne Blueway (Multi Activity Trail) in Roscommon, Cavan, Leitrim, and Offaly.	2015-2017	Waterways Ireland, Roscommon County Council and neighbouring County Councils and other relevant bodies
Recreation			
97	Implement the actions in the Study of Outdoor Recreation in the West 2014, prepared by the Northern and Western Regional Assembly for the local authorities in the West Region.	2015 and Ongoing	West Local Authorities and other relevant bodies
98	Develop Marina Facilities at Portumna to cater for Recreational Vehicles and increase the attractiveness of Lough Derg as a destination.	2015	Waterways Ireland, Galway County Council, Failte Ireland
99	Develop a Kayak Trail on Lough Derg.	2016	Waterways Ireland, Galway County Council, Tipperary County Council, Clare County Council, Failte Ireland
100	Prepare a roadmap for the development of an ECO Park at Portumna as proposed in the Lough Derg Roadmap for Experience Development and Destination Marketing 2014-2017.	2015	Galway County Council

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
101	Develop proposals to apply for GEOPARK designation for the Joyce Country area of Galway and Mayo.	2015-2017	Galway County Council, Mayo County Council, Local Development Companies , Údarás na Gaeltachta, Failte Ireland, Coillte
102	Roscommon County Council, neighbouring County Councils and other relevant agencies and stakeholders will explore the development and promotion of a Flagship Shannon Corridor Tourism based around outdoor activities, pursuits, culture, accommodation and hospitality.	2015-2017	Roscommon County Council and neighbouring County Councils and other relevant bodies
103	Develop a marine activities programme as part of a coastal and islands network in the South Connemara Gaeltacht based on a South Connemara Coastal “Blueway” through a Coastal and Islands network.	2016	Comhar na nOileán and other relevant bodies
Cultural Tourism			
104	Galway City and County will bid to become the European Capital of Culture in 2020, supported by Mayo and Roscommon Local Authorities.	2015	Galway City & County Councils and other West Local Authorities
105	Develop Pearse’s Cottage Interpretation facilities in Connemara.	2015-2016	Údarás na Gaeltachta
106	Build on the development of Pearse’s Cottage to generate spin-off jobs and economic activity through local and social enterprise developments, particularly in the area of Irish language and cultural tourism.	2016	Galway County Council and other relevant public bodies
107	Further develop the potential for Irish language tourism to generate employment in the region.	2015-2017	West Local Authorities and other relevant public bodies
108	Implement the initiatives/activities of the Decade of Commemorations scheduled for the West Region.	2013-2023	West Local Authorities

10.3 Food, Beverages and Fisheries

Food is a key sector in the West region with potential for growth. More than 3,600 people are currently employed in the sector in enterprise agency companies alone. It has been a relatively stable employer in the region over the past decade and is a sector that contributes substantially to the economy in terms of third party services and materials. Actions to support the Food, Fisheries and Beverages sector under this Action Plan will focus on:

- Supporting companies to expand and grow their markets
- Further developing the seafood industry in particular, given its importance to the region
- Providing incubation space and kitchen facilities for companies.

A new agri-food strategy, *Food Wise 2025*, has recently been developed for the coming decade. This sets out a cohesive, strategic plan for the development of agri-food sector to 2025 with a strong focus on maximising the development of the industry in all sectors and geographic areas. Its vision of 'Local Roots Global Reach' is based on the knowledge that this sector is embedded in local rural communities and that the continued efficient production of environmentally-friendly product will drive direct and indirect employment in local areas as well as achieving export growth on global markets. *Food Wise 2025* envisages a growth projection of 23,000 direct jobs in the agri-food sector nationally all along the supply chain if the actions identified in the Report are implemented.

Supports for food & drinks companies

Bord Bia plays a key role in promoting sales of Irish food and horticulture both abroad and in Ireland. It acts as a link between Irish producers and their customers worldwide. Bord Bia works for both small and large producers by promoting and certifying farmers markets for small producers, and offering a range of international marketing services for larger producers. The agency will be involved in delivering a number of actions to support food companies and producers in the West region under this Action Plan, in collaboration with other public bodies.

The food industry is strong in the Gaeltacht and includes both small and large enterprises in areas such as fish and shellfish processing, snack foods, bakery, conserves, preserves and confectionary production. Údarás na Gaeltachta recognises the potential for growth in the food industry and will provide support for high potential food and drinks companies in the Gaeltacht areas to expand their operations. Enterprise Ireland will provide similar supports throughout the wider region.

Údarás na Gaeltachta will also provide capital to develop units in the Galway Gaeltacht to accommodate start-ups and scaling projects in the food sector. A scoping document for Páirc Mara Cill Chiaráin, Co. Galway, will be prepared with a focus on developing an innovation hub for the mariculture sector.

The *Food Academy* Programme is a collaboration between Bord Bia, Local Enterprise Offices and Supervalu. It offers a 2-month training programme for those looking to develop and grow a small-scale food or drink production business. The programme provides integrated support and training to

food companies as they progress on their journey of growth from start-up to national distribution and export. The West LEOs will seek to increase the number of participants on this programme.

At a further level, the *Food Works* programme is operated by Bord Bia, Teagasc and Enterprise Ireland to identify and support food producers with export potential and provide them with the skills, knowledge and expertise to validate their business for scalable and export potential. Enterprise Ireland will run pre-Food Works clinics in the Midland region in 2015 and again in 2016.

The Tesco *Taste Bud* programme is an annual seven month programme that supports participants to develop the necessary skills required to secure, grow and maintain a listing with Tesco in Ireland and overseas. Some well-known Irish brands have participated in this programme and now export to Tesco UK stores. Bord Bia and the West Local Authorities/LEOs will work with food and drink companies in the region with a view to their inclusion in this programme.

Teagasc will administer the Craft Reach project funded by the EU Northern Periphery and Arctic (NPA) programme. This is an innovative model of enterprise support which helps artisan producers diversify their businesses into the cultural tourism market by providing them with a 6 step template to help them structure the visitor experience.

Seafood industry

The West is well positioned to take advantage of the future growth in the food sector and in seafood in particular, given the region's coastal topography. The Irish seafood sector is an indigenous industry that makes a significant contribution to the West region in terms of output, employment and exports. Approximately 2,000 people are employed in the sector in the West, mostly in coastal communities.

BIM, the State agency with primary responsibility for developing the Irish sea-fishing and aquaculture industries, is focused on expanding the volume, quality and value of output from the Irish seafood industry. BIM will provide a range of advisory, financial, technical and training services to all sectors of the Irish seafood industry and will take measures to improve the environmental sustainability of the sector in the West region. Amongst its other actions in this Plan, it will work to ensure that 100% of all seafood exports are verified with the Origin Green mark by 2016.

Incubation space and facilities

Incubation space and kitchen facilities are important to help start-up and expanding companies in the food sector. The local authorities and Údarás are active in supporting companies in this regard, and have a number of firm plans to improve facilities in their respective areas, as outlined in the actions below.

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
Supports for companies			

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
109	Enterprise Ireland and Údarás na Gaeltachta will provide support for high potential food and drinks companies in the region to scale, innovative and develop international markets	2015-2017	Enterprise Ireland, Údarás na Gaeltachta
110	Implement a project to engage and support traditional and artisan food producing SMEs across the region.	2015-2017	Bord Bia, St. Angelas College Sligo
111	Work with Bord Bia and BIM on their co-competition programmes which aim to reduce costs for small business through shared facilities, overheads and management services.	Ongoing	West Local Authorities, Enterprise Ireland/LEOs Údarás na Gaeltachta, Bord Bia, BIM,
112	Showcase regional food producers, from artisan to large companies, through various food festivals such as Galway Food Festival, Connemara Mussel Festival, Feile na Mara (Achill), Westport Food Festival, and Roscommon Lamb Festival.	Ongoing	Bord Bia, Local Authorities, Teagasc, BIM
113	Target an increase in the number of participants on the Food Academy Programme.	2015-2016	LEOs/West Local Authorities, Bord Bia, Super Valu
114	To ensure a good pipeline of food entrepreneurs, run a pre Food Works clinic in the region in 2015 and in 2016.	2015-2016	Bord Bia, Enterprise Ireland, Teagasc
115	Promote the call for Innovation Vouchers specifically targeting small food companies.	Ongoing	Enterprise Ireland, Dept of Agriuculture, Food and the Marine
116	Work with retailers to increase shelf space for local produce.	Ongoing	Bord Bia
117	Bord Bia will work with the LEOs to assist food and drink companies in the West to be included in the Tesco Taste Buds programme.	2015	Bord Bia, LEOs/West Local Authorities
118	Support the Made in Galway initiative which supports micro food and craft businesses to access online marketing platforms and other new retail opportunities both in Ireland and overseas.	2015-2017	Galway County Council, Galway City Council
119	Deliver the EU Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme-funded Craft Reach project.	2015-2017	Teagasc, Galway County and City Council, GMIT, Failte Ireland, Bord Bia, Design and Craft Council of Ireland

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
120	Support the development of local markets in the West Region.	2015-2017	West Local Authorities
Further developing the seafood industry			
121	Provide supports for the seafood sector, including financial and technical training and mentoring programmes for companies. This will involve collaboration between relevant State agencies to deliver scale in the key seafood sectors, including food ingredients, and upskilling personnel across the sector in the key areas.	Ongoing	BIM, Údarás na Gaeltachta, Teagasc, West Local Authorities/LEOs, Enterprise Ireland
122	Improve the environmental sustainability of the seafood sector in the West region, including through improved gear selectivity and replenishment of depleted inshore stocks by the use of aquaculture techniques.	2016	BIM, Industry
123	Work to ensure that to the greatest extent possible, 100% of all seafood exports in the West region will be verified Origin Green by 2016.	2016	BIM, Industry
124	Develop effective measures to attract additional landings into ports in the West region.	2016	BIM, Industry
125	Explore the potential for Tourism and Marine businesses including aquaculture, fisheries, seaweed and other speciality producers, to collaborate to support further job creation.	2015-2016	BIM, Failte Ireland, LEOs, Údarás na Gaeltachta
Incubation space and facilities			
126	Create a dedicated food innovation hub near Roscommon Town.	2016	Roscommon County Council, Industry and other relevant bodies
127	Develop a dedicated food incubator centre in the Teagasc Centre in Athenry and explore other locations in the county, including Loughrea, for further incubators.	2016-2017	Galway County Council, Teagasc, Galway Rural Development and other relevant bodies
128	Údarás na Gaeltachta will provide capital to develop units to food standard in the Galway Gaeltacht to provide accommodation for start-ups and scaling projects in the food sector.	2015-2017	Údarás na Gaeltachta

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
129	Údarás na Gaeltachta will prepare a scoping document for Páirc Mara Cill Chiaráin with a focus on developing an innovation hub for the mariculture sector.	2015-2016	Údarás na Gaeltachta
130	Údarás na Gaeltachta will scope the business case for a test kitchen in the Gaeltacht.	2015-2017	Údarás na Gaeltachta

10.4 Sustainable Energy

Given the region's natural resources, the West has the potential to significantly harness opportunities in renewable energy, including ocean energy.

SEAI and the Marine Institute established an Ocean Energy Test Site for ¼-scale prototypes of wave energy devices in Galway Bay in 2006. The test site facilitates the open sea deployment of scaled prototypes of Wave Energy Converters during the early stages of development. Both SEAI and the Marine Institute will continue to develop the Galway Bay marine energy and technology site infrastructure and provide a platform for testing new marine technologies and systems.

SEAI has also been developing a full scale test site at Belmullet to assess the performance of wave energy machines which are under development in generating electricity and their survivability in open ocean conditions. There have only been a handful of full scale wave energy devices tested in the world. The development of a test site in Belmullet has the potential to be a major international success for Ireland in terms of leading the way in testing of ocean energy devices. The proposed test site will operate for up to 15 years and will provide two separate test locations with different water depth options depending on the specific devices being tested (50m depth and 100m depth). Belmullet was selected as the most suitable site along the West coast principally due to deep water with sandy seabed close to shore, the quality of the wave climate, suitable grid for electrical connection, and good shore infrastructure, e.g. piers, roads, services.

SEAI also runs a range of programmes and schemes to assist businesses, public sector bodies, homeowners and communities to achieve energy savings. As energy is a significant cost for businesses and homeowners alike, improving energy efficiency will improve the competitiveness of businesses and support job creation. The SEAI will work with the local authorities within the region to deliver sustainable energy projects under schemes such as the Sustainable Energy Communities.

The local authorities will also examine the potential for regional Renewable Energy Strategies and will support flagship projects in the Green Economy sector. In common with similar initiatives in some other regions, Roscommon Co. Council plans to establish an Energy Agency, covering counties Roscommon, Leitrim and Sligo, which will involve a collaboration between Local Authorities to embed energy management into the Local Authorities and to achieve ongoing and sustained reductions in the amount of energy used.

The Western Development Commission (WDC) is actively involved in a number of European funded projects in relation to bioenergy - BioPAD and ROKWOOD. The WDC will work with SEAI to complete a regional renewable energy analysis on the use of biomass as a local contribution to the national renewable heat target and will develop a range of actions to support the development of renewable energy in the region.

Údarás na Gaeltachta is also involved in a European funded project in relation to renewable energy. The GREAT project is funded under the INTERREG IVB NEW Programme. It aims to accelerate the deployment of Smart Grids, Renewable Energy and Distributive Generation in North West Europe. The project stimulates enterprises and develops innovations by encouraging structured collaborative opportunities for SMEs, research institutes and/or technology developers. The project is also researching the best practice in policy and regulatory frameworks to enable the deployment of Smart Grids and increase knowledge of the Smart Grid via its Dissemination Centres in Ireland, the UK, Belgium and Netherlands.

Actions to support jobs growth in the West in this sector are set out below.

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
131	Continue to develop the Galway Bay marine energy and technology site infrastructure and provide a platform for testing new marine technologies and systems.	Ongoing	SEAI, Marine Institute
132	Develop the Atlantic Marine Energy Test Site (AMETS) in Belmullet as the national deep water test site for ocean energy. This will provide the opportunity to test the performance of pre-commercial wave energy devices and components as well as other marine technologies in extreme open ocean conditions.	Ongoing	SEAI, Mayo County Council
133	Each local authority will adopt the principles of the guidelines for Local Authority Renewable Energy Strategies (LARES) when reviewing their County Development Plans and collectively examine the potential for Regional Renewable Energy strategies.	Ongoing	West Local Authorities, SEAI
134	Complete a regional renewable energy analysis on the use of biomass as a local contribution to the national renewable heat target and develop a range of actions to support the development of renewable energy in the region.	Ongoing	Western Development Commission, SEAI

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
135	Promote and assist the delivery of cost savings through energy efficiency programmes and training for businesses and public sector organisations in the region.	Ongoing	SEAI, West Local Authorities
136	Develop and promote the Sustainable Energy Communities (SEC) model in the region and identify willing early adopter communities to act as exemplars and Regional SEC Champions.	Ongoing	SEAI, West Local Authorities, Údarás na Gaeltachta, Western Development Commission
137	Support the development of flagship projects in the green business sector aimed at fast-tracking the development of this growth sector in the region.	2016	West Local Authorities and relevant bodies
138	Develop an Energy Agency covering counties Roscommon, Leitrim and Sligo.	2016	Roscommon County Council and other relevant bodies
139	Údarás na Gaeltachta and its international partners from the GREAT project will seek to provide developmental and internationalisation opportunities to companies developing technologies in the Renewable Energy, Distributed Generation and Smart Grid sectors by 2017.	2015-2017	Údarás na Gaeltachta

10.5 Creative Industries

Creativity is a distinctive strength of the West region. The region enjoys a rich and varied creative legacy. This has been manifested in many forms from art, music and literature, through to film, design and digital media. The region is also home to one of the top arts festivals in the country – the Galway International Arts Festival.

The region's quality of life and inspiration from the landscape and culture are among the strongest motivators for attracting creative people to live and work in the West. Architecture, design, publishing and software enterprises operate successfully across the region. The West region is also home to a cluster of audio-visual companies producing innovative, award-winning programming which is shown around the world. Ros na Rún, the longest running Irish TV "soap opera" after Fair City is produced in Galway and the city has two film studios, Stiúideo Telegael and a 'Stop-Motion' studio – the only facility for this animation production process in Ireland.

Both the national Action Plan for Jobs and the Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas (CEDRA) have identified the creative sector as one of the key sectoral opportunities for economic growth and job creation in Ireland. The Western Development Commission (WDC)

disburses a range of supports for the sector in the West region. The WDC will implement a new €2 million transnational project called Creative Momentum. This project will further develop new routes to export markets for creative enterprises, as well as providing international networking opportunities with creative enterprises from Northern Ireland, Iceland, Sweden and Finland, and provide support for business skills development and innovation. The WDC will also operate a Micro-Loan Fund for the Creative Industries in the West region.

The WDC has developed the MyCreativeEdge.eu website which provides an online showcase for creative enterprises which is advertised to the diaspora in the US and UK. To further promote growth and exports by the sector, for the past three years the WDC has partnered with the Design & Crafts Council of Ireland on their International Fair Fund to support craft makers from the region to attend overseas Trade Fairs.

The local authorities in the region will support the Creative sector through initiatives such as developing an Action Plan to support the Film industry and exploring the potential for a Regional Film Fund. The local authorities will also support the Creative Industries through initiatives such as *Made in Galway*, while Roscommon Co. Council will implement a development programme for the sector.

Actions to support jobs growth in the West in this sector are set out below.

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
140	Implement a new €2 million EU INTERREG funded project to support the Creative Industries in the Western Region (with Northern Ireland, Finland, Sweden & Iceland) called 'Creative Momentum'.	2015-2018	Western Development Commission, NUI Galway
141	Disburse the targeted Micro-Loan fund for the Creative Industries in the West Region.	2015-2017	Western Development Commission
142	Continue to operate the MyCreativeEdge.eu export platform to showcase creative enterprises based in the Western Region.	Ongoing	Western Development Commission
143	Implement a Memorandum of Understanding with the Design & Crafts Council of Ireland to drive growth, including supporting trade fair participation.	2015	Western Development Commission, Design & Crafts Council of Ireland
144	Develop and implement an Action Plan to support the Film industry in Galway and the West region and explore the potential for a Regional Film Fund.	2015-2017	West Local Authorities, Irish Film Board, other public bodies and industry.
145	Implement a development programme for the craft sector in County Roscommon including support for networking, training collective marketing, equipment and	2016-2017	Roscommon County Council and other relevant bodies

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
	premises.		
146	Expand Local Authorities role in developing the craft and creative sector through initiatives such as Made In Galway.	2015-2017	Local Authorities

Chapter 11: Skills enhancement and labour market activation

An important objective of the *Action Plan for Jobs: Regional* strategy is to ensure that the labour force possesses the necessary skills to capture the opportunities identified for the region. The availability of the appropriate skills and knowledge in the region is a prerequisite for enterprise development and further job creation.

Actions to support skills in the West are set out below and cover:

- Actions to address specific skills needs
- Graduate placement
- Measures to support labour market activation.

The West region has strong record of delivering the right skills sets for industry. At the Stakeholder Forum held in Galway in March 2015, there was a sense of the need to build on the success of delivering highly qualified graduates with the skills needed for industry in the region in areas such as in ICT and Engineering, as well as in a range of other sectors such as Agriculture, Tourism and the Creative Industries. Building on the success of the West in this area will involve greater engagement at Second Level on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths) subjects and on entrepreneurship. It will also need continuous collaboration with industry to ensure highly skilled and qualified graduates and workers are retained in the region.

Regional Skills Forum

Closer engagement between enterprise and the education and training sector is a core objective of the wide ranging reforms to the Further and Higher Education sectors which are underway. National education and skills policies are seeking to connect skills with job creation, productivity and innovation for national prosperity.

With the support of the Department of Education and Skills, a process is already under way to establish a Skills Forum in each region to strengthen collaboration between the Further and Higher Education institutions and enterprise in identifying and addressing the particular skills needs of each region. A Steering Group, comprising all public education and training providers in the region, together with employers and other public bodies with an enterprise remit, will lead the process to establish the Forum in the West. The Skills Forum will provide a platform for on-going engagement between employers and the education/training sector on skills issues in the West. Local Learning Networks will also be used to identify and address skills needs and new approaches to learning.

Meanwhile, Skillnets will continue to support groups of companies with similar training needs through training networks that deliver subsidised training to Irish businesses and their employees, as well as free training to job-seekers. Ibec aim to increase collaboration and mentoring through existing training networks and develop communications on the current training supports available in manufacturing.

Education and Training Boards

The two Education and Training Boards (ETBs) in the West – Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board (GRETB) and Mayo Sligo Leitrim Education and Training Board (MSLETB) - will play an important role in the provision of Further Education and Training for employment locally. GRETB has focused on a number of key priorities from course design to continuous professional development to ensure that skills are delivered to the learner using the most up to date practices and methodologies while creating strong links with key industries in the region.

GRETB will roll out various sectoral traineeship programmes in 2016, including in Logistics & Transport and TV & Film. MSLETB will roll out two National Career Traineeships pilots for the Hospitality and Engineering sectors. Programmes in Entrepreneur Skills will help to support new start-ups in the region.

Higher Education Institutes

The Third Level education providers in the region, National University of Ireland, Galway (NUI Galway) and Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT) will play an important role in addressing the skills needs of the region in collaboration with industry and the Education and Training Boards as appropriate. As part of their combined efforts in the region, the education and training providers will encourage increased take-up of STEM subjects and provide skills for entrepreneurship.

Graduate Placement

To promote growth in the indigenous enterprise sector, it is essential for companies to attract graduates to work for them in order to compete internationally, and to deliver an employment base that has the sophistication to develop new products, processes, supply chain movement, market and management capability. In May 2015, Enterprise Ireland launched a new Graduate Business Growth Initiative. This initiative is targeted at Enterprise Ireland's SME client companies and assists them to hire up to two graduates per annum, with support of up to 50% of the graduate's first year salary to a maximum of €15,000.

The Connacht-Ulster Alliance

The Connacht-Ulster Alliance (CUA) is a strategic partnership of GMIT, Letterkenny IT and IT Sligo. In March 2015 the Alliance submitted a formal Expression of Interest to the Higher Education Authority for re-designation as a Technological University, the first of four stages in achieving their objective to become the Technological University for the West/North-West region of Ireland. The CUA partners believe that the proposed Technological University will stimulate economic growth across the geographically dispersed region by offering a greater choice of Higher Education programmes, providing flexible delivery of education and growing local enterprises and communities through collaborative research, development and innovation activities.

Labour Market Activation

Employment in the West fell by over 24,000 between 2007 and 2012. However, data from the CSO for Q2 2015 shows that almost 4,000 jobs were created in the region since 2012. The Unemployment Rate has fallen from 17% in 2012, to 10.5% in Q2 2015. Nevertheless, there is still a long way to go.

Supporting the re-integration into the workforce of those people who remain unemployed is a key priority of the Government. The Department of Social Protection (DSP), through its INTREO offices in the region and in cooperation with other regional bodies such as the Education and Training Boards, will provide support services to those seeking employment. The Department of Social Protection will promote schemes such as JobsPlus, Back to Work Enterprise Allowance and the Short Term Enterprise Allowance scheme that are valuable in supporting enterprise in the region. IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland will promote the recruitment of people from the Live Register amongst their client companies.

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
Addressing Skills needs in the region			
147	Establish a Skills Forum in the West region to foster better engagement between education providers, employers and other regional stakeholders to increase the flow of critical skills to the regions' enterprises.	2015 and Ongoing	Regional Education and Training providers, Industry, relevant public bodies
148	Collaborate with stakeholders in the region to identify and address skills needs and new approaches to learning.	Ongoing	GRETB, GMIT, NUI Galway, DSP, Industry and communities
149	Support the ongoing development of the Apprenticeship training programme to develop skill levels via ETBs, with progression to higher skills levels via Higher Education Institutions across all sectors and disciplines.	2015 and Ongoing	DSP/Solas, ETBs, GMIT, NUI Galway, Industry
150	Increase collaboration and mentoring through existing training networks and develop communications on the current training supports available in manufacturing.	2015-2017	Ibec
151	Undertake an audit of the West population to match skill levels to the National Framework of Qualifications and update the database of skill gaps on an ongoing basis.	Ongoing	GRETB, Intreo/DSP
152	Address skills need identified for the tourism, aquaculture and rural economy sectors.	Ongoing	GRETB, BIM, Failte Ireland, Teagasc
153	Roll out a Traineeship programme in TV and Film at Level 5 to support this growing sector.	2016	GRETB

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
154	Roll out a new Traineeship programme in Logistics and Transport to address skills and knowledge of supply chain and logistics.	2016	GRETB
155	Roll out two National Career Traineeships pilots for the Hospitality and Engineering sectors.	2015	MSLETB, SOLAS, Irish Hotels Federation, Fáilte Ireland
156	Roll out a suite of hospitality, ICT and language courses in line with industry requirements and identified skills needs.	2016	GRETB
157	Skillnets will continue to fund groups of companies with similar training needs, through training networks that deliver subsidised training to Irish businesses and their employees, as well as free training to job-seekers.	Ongoing	Skillnets
158	Encourage engineering at 2nd level using the Coderdojo model and promote uptake of STEM subjects.	2015 and Ongoing	GMIT, NUI Galway, ETBs, Industry, 2 nd Level education providers
159	Continue to highlight the enterprise and employment opportunities for Young People and Graduates from STEM subjects through the Galway Science and Technology Festival.	2015-2017	GMIT, NUI Galway, Enterprise Ireland, Galway
160	GMIT, NUI Galway, ETBs and Industry to work with 2 nd level education providers to create awareness among students of future career opportunities across all sectors within the region and at all levels from low to high skills.	2015 and Ongoing	GMIT, NUI Galway, ETBs, Industry, 2 nd Level education providers
161	Provide Entrepreneur Skills Development programmes - including partnerships between HEIs and successful entrepreneurs, GRETB and Local Chambers of Commerce - to provide Level 5 and 6 awards based on local training needs.	2015 and Ongoing	NUI Galway, GMIT, ETBs, Industry
162	Continue to develop proposal for a Technological University for the West/North-West.	Ongoing	GMIT, Letterkenny IT, Sligo IT
Graduate Placements and Work ready Graduates			

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
163	Education providers in the West will continue to play an active role in ensuring that graduates are aware of the employment opportunities within the Western Region, e.g. by engaging industry in the selection of final year projects; two-way portal between graduates and employers.	2015 and Ongoing	GMIT, NUI Galway, Industry
164	Develop tailored programmes to ensure that graduates are ready to enter the workforce and are more attractive to industry, through collaboration between Third Level and Industry.	2015 and Ongoing	GMIT, NUI Galway, ETBs, Industry, Chambers
165	Promote the Graduate Business Growth Initiative through Enterprise Ireland's regional office in the West. The programme supports the placement of graduates with SME companies.	2015	Enterprise Ireland
166	Attract Diaspora Talent by creating awareness among the diaspora of opportunities in region.	Ongoing	West Local Authorities, Industry, Connect Ireland.
Activation			
167	Deliver the labour market activation strand of the SICAP programme to ensure the skills needs of the long term unemployed and those not in education or training are developed in line with the skills needs in the region.	2015-2017	Local Development Companies
168	IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland will each work with the Dept. of Social Protection to promote the recruitment of people from the Live Register amongst their client companies.	Ongoing	Intreo/DSP, Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland

Chapter 12: Strengthening Business Networks

Active and engaged business networks are vitally important to entrepreneurs and small business owners. A 2006 InterTradeIreland report, *Business Networks on the Island of Ireland*, highlights the importance of business networks in achieving critical mass and economies of scale in order to compete in larger, more diverse and competitive markets. Networks allow firms to share costs and risks which have become too high for firms working individually. They facilitate knowledge transfer, help to disseminate market knowledge, foster innovation, inform the research agenda and identify infrastructure needs specific to local economic development. Business networks also open up supply chain opportunities as well as opportunities for collaboration on tenders or projects where the shared expertise creates a much stronger value proposition.

Other benefits that can flow from improved business networking include:

- Connecting small businesses with large businesses with a specific focus on mentoring
- Connecting with, and utilising the region’s diaspora to assist with regional enterprise development.
- Connecting young entrepreneurs.

Chapter 4 includes details of the wide range of business networks that are in place across the West region. These networks will continue to support their members and seek to deepen their activities through a series of actions over the lifetime of this Action Plan, as set out below. The local authorities and enterprise development agencies will also facilitate enterprise-led networks through seminars, conferences and other supports.

Ibec will also host a series of briefings, seminars, training and other events for members, and will explore areas for collaboration and mentoring through existing networks.

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
169	Continue to provide supports to entrepreneurs and SMEs through business networks in the region, including Chambers of Commerce, Ibec, Inc60, iTAG and Online Marketing in Galway.	Ongoing	Chambers, Inc60, iTAG Online Marketing in Galway, Ibec and others
170	Strengthen existing Ibec networks across the West region by developing additional Ibec development and best practice networks in the region together with Leadership Forums.	Ongoing	Ibec
171	Continue to operate Ibec sector-specific regional networks including in Pharma and Medtech, and explore the potential for the ICT sector.	Ongoing	Ibec
172	The local authorities and LEOs in the region	Ongoing	West Local

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
	will facilitate industry-led networks and clusters to grow and deliver their jobs potential through seminars, conferences, information and other appropriate supports.		Authorities/LEOs
173	Galway, Mayo and Roscommon LEOs will continue to provide access to dedicated business networks at a regional, national and European level in collaboration with other bodies and agencies.	Ongoing	LEOs/West Local Authorities
174	IDA Ireland will develop and implement an information/networking event across the region for clients. Enterprise Ireland clients will also be invited to this event.	2015	IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland
175	Údarás na Gaeltachta will develop and host 6 educational seminars (2 per annum) for business people, along with networking events in the region.	2015-2017	Údarás na Gaeltachta
176	Hold a Regional Business Roadshow on topics of relevance to business. Ibec will also host a Regional Business Summit for Ibec members.	2016	Ibec
177	Continue to host HR forums through Ibec's regional offices for Ibec members	Ongoing	Ibec
178	Host business briefings, award programmes, member business evenings and networking events at a regional level.	Ongoing	Ibec and Trade Associations including IMDA, Pharmaceutical Ireland, Irish Software Association, Meat Industry Ireland and Irish Dairy Association
179	In the context of the Ibec Manufacturing survey, host a series of regional seminars in association with AIB, including one in the West/Mid-West.	2015-2017	Ibec, AIB
180	Explore areas of collaboration and mentoring through existing networks, and the development of communications of current training supports available in manufacturing.	Ongoing	Ibec Training, Skillnets and Ibec Apprenticeships
181	Hold extensive training programmes covering a range of sectors through Skillnets and Springboard.	Ongoing	Ibec Training, Skillnets and Ibec Apprenticeships

Chapter 13: Marketing and strengthening the region

13.1 Marketing the Region

More than any region perhaps, the West has a strong advantage in that it evokes a distinct sense of place. It is an attractive place in which to live, study and work, offering a range of experiences and activities, from the vibrancy of Galway city, to the tranquillity of more rural areas across the region. There is scope to further market the attractiveness of the West region and to build on its distinct cultural assets, its sectoral strengths and its employment opportunities.

LookWest.ie, an initiative of the Western Development Commission, provides information for individuals setting up a business or looking to relocate to the West. The portal provides information on living in the West and on a wide array of supports and grants for business as well as on office space, incubators, accelerator space and networks throughout the region. This portal will be further developed on an on-going basis. The local authorities in the West will also promote and highlight specific initiatives that are unique selling points for the region.

A further asset in the West region is the cultural strength of the Gaeltacht. In addition to its economic development role, Údarás na Gaeltachta is responsible for the social and cultural development of the Gaeltacht to ensure that Irish remains the main communal language of the Gaeltacht and is passed on to future generations. Údarás will provide support and resourcing to community cooperatives to implement a programme for economic, social, linguistic and cultural development in the region.

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
182	The Western Development Commission will continue to develop the LookWest.ie online guide to business, work and life in the West of Ireland, and the LookWest.ie campaign to promote the unique regional brand.	2015 and ongoing	Western Development Commission
183	While maintaining a whole-of-region approach to enterprise support and job creation, the local authorities will continue to develop branding initiatives that promote their unique selling points such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Portershed in Galway City - Galway City as Medtech City - Mayo.ie - Made in Galway - Invest Roscommon 	2015-2017	West Local Authorities, Údarás na Gaeltachta, Chambers

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
184	The Western Development Commission will continue to conduct regional analysis to identify regional policy issues and infrastructure priorities and design solutions to these issues/priorities.	Ongoing	Western Development Commission
185	Údarás na Gaeltachta will provide support and resourcing to community cooperatives to implement a programme for economic, social, linguistic and cultural development in the region.	2015-2017	Údarás na Gaeltachta

13.2 Strengthening the region

The Northern and Western Regional Assembly (NWRA) and the local authorities have an important and wide ranging remit in relation to enhancing the business environment in the region. The NWRA, in conjunction with the local authorities and public bodies across the region, is responsible for implementing regional investment programmes which will further enhance the attractiveness of the region, including the attractiveness of towns and cities. In addition, the NWRA continues to manage EU ERDF funding for key strategic projects in the region as well as leveraging new sources for projects of importance such as in relation to regional airports.

A series of actions as set out below will be taken by the Regional Assembly, the local authorities and Údarás na Gaeltachta to attract new investment and jobs to the West.

Energy infrastructure is critical to the economic development of the region. Continued investment by providers in electricity and gas networks in the West will support long-term enterprise growth in the region. In March 2015, EirGrid published a draft strategy for the views of stakeholders for developing Ireland's national grid. Central to the draft strategy is the provision of a strong and reliable electricity supply to the regions. This will ensure that West and the other regions are equipped for investments by both energy intensive indigenous and multinational companies seeking to locate or expand in the region. The draft strategy reflects a changed economic context and opportunities offered by advanced transmission technologies. Eirgrid will ensure that the electricity transmission grid in the West is strengthened to enable maximum investment by industries.

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
Enhancing the Business Environment			
186	Secure resources through LEADER/REDZ/FLAG/Public Enhancement Schemes to invest in Towns and Villages to make them attractive retail and commercial destinations	2015-2020	West Local Authorities, Department of Environment, Community and Local Government, Programme

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
			Management Bodies
187	The Northern and Western Regional Assembly will engage in the process of establishing Regional Economic Fora for the West Region.	2015 and ongoing	Northern and Western Regional Assembly, West Local Authorities and other relevant bodies
188	The Northern and Western Regional Assembly will develop a Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy which will have a co-ordinated focus on identifying and driving sectors that can deliver new investment and employment opportunities in the West region.	Ongoing	Northern and Western Regional Assembly and other relevant bodies
189	Working with the Regional Airports, the Northern and Western Regional Assembly will undertake work across a range of areas to enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of these airports funded by the EU's SPARA2020 Project (Smart Peripheral and Remote Airports).	2015 - 2018	Northern and Western Regional Assembly, Ireland West Knock Airport, Donegal Airport
190	Údarás na Gaeltachta will upgrade the broadband infrastructure to its business parks by investing in fibre optic.	2015-2017	Údarás na Gaeltachta
191	Ensure that the electricity transmission grid in the West is strengthened to enable maximum investment by industries that rely on large energy consumption.	Ongoing	Eirgrid
Funding for Regional Projects			
192	<p>The Northern and Western Regional Assembly will continue to explore possibilities for EU funding for relevant projects in the region.</p> <p>The Assembly also act as the national contact point for three EU Interreg Programmes for the 2014-20120 period i.e. Northern Periphery and Artic (€56 m), Atlantic Area (€140m) and Interreg Europe (€359 m – jointly with the Southern Assembly).</p>	Ongoing	Northern and Western Regional Assembly

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
193	The Northern and Western Regional Assembly will continue to manage the ERDF Designated Urban Centres Grant Scheme which can provide potential investment in the economic, social and cultural infrastructure of Galway City.	2015-2016	Northern and Western Regional Assembly, West Local Authorities, relevant State Agencies and Government Departments
194	The Northern and Western Regional Assembly will continue to lead the implementation of the €320 million Border, Midland and Western Regional Operational Programme 2014-2020 in collaboration with relevant public bodies.	Ongoing	Northern and Western Regional Assembly

Chapter 14: Potential strategic areas for further job creation

At the time of finalisation of this Action Plan, there were a number of emerging projects with potential for job creation and enterprise opportunity for the West region in the future. These projects require further development by the promoters and are medium-term in timescale. Progress on these projects will be kept under review over the lifetime of the Action Plan.

Transatlantic Fibre Optic Cable

A transatlantic fibre-optic cable with the capacity to handle up to one third of the world's telephone calls will run directly from Ross Strand in Killala to Long Island, New York. The fibre optic cable is owned and operated by Irish company Aqua Comms. The cable is a strategically significant project at a global level. The system will enable 53.8 millisecond transfer speeds across the Atlantic when it goes live in early 2016. The new digital infrastructure will be a boost for leading technology companies based in Ireland and has the potential to attract further jobs and business opportunities to the West.

Wild Atlantic Way

The Wild Atlantic Way is still at an early stage of development, having only been launched in 2014. A significant portion of the route travels through counties Mayo and Galway and offers potential for further enterprise and job opportunities as the Wild Atlantic Way becomes more popular with tourists.



A key objective of the Wild Atlantic Way is to encourage a greater spread of visitors out from the traditional tourism centres to more remote parts of the coast and to encourage season extension outside of the core high season of July and August.

Significant investment will be made by the State to develop the route and the signature Discovery Points. To date, €10 million has been invested in the project and significant additional investment is expected over the coming years to 2020. Evidence has shown that investment by the State in tourism capital provides the catalyst for new business start-ups and expansion and/or diversification of existing tourism businesses, as demonstrated in the case of the Great Western Greenway in Co Mayo.

From 2016 onwards, Fáilte Ireland will develop and promote “loops and spurs” from the spine of the Wild Atlantic Way. The development and promotion of these “loops & spurs” will provide incremental opportunities for businesses located inland from the spine of the Wild Atlantic Way to attract more international visitors and therefore sustain and create more jobs.

Galway to Dublin Cycleway

The proposed national Galway to Dublin Cycleway will be Ireland's first ever dedicated inter-city route for cyclists and walkers. Stretching 276km across the country, the Cycleway will be a world class amenity for families, communities and tourists to enjoy. The route will travel along canals, rivers, disused railway lines and on purpose-built cycle paths, offering a safe, scenic and traffic-free environment.

Galway City Council, Galway County Council, Roscommon Co. Council, along with the National Roads Authority and the local authorities in Westmeath, Meath, Kildare and Dublin, are involved in developing the cycle route. Sections of the route are at varying stages of development.

The Cycleway has the potential to attract increased overseas and home-based tourists and will offer a variety of economic, employment and social benefits. It is anticipated that existing service offerings will grow in cities, towns and villages along the proposed route as visitor numbers increase.

Galway to Dublin Cycleway route



European Capital of Culture 2020

Galway City and County Councils are bidding to become the European Capital of Culture in 2020, supported by Mayo and Roscommon Local Authorities. The bid represents an opportunity for the region to build on its rich cultural heritage and capitalise on its strengths in the creative sector. Winning the bid will help to attract more visitors to Galway and its environs, helping to support job creation in the Tourism and related sectors.



The title of European Capital of Culture is held by two countries annually, and Croatia will share it with Ireland in 2020. The final selection of cities takes place in late 2015. Galway City Council is the lead authority in driving the bid to be European Capital of Culture. A team based in NUI Galway was

appointed by public tender to lead the Galway bid and the engagement of the Enterprise and Innovation sectors from small business to multi-nationals has been significant in this process.

Upper Shannon Erne Future Economy Initiative

The Upper Shannon Erne Future Economy Initiative (USEFE) Project, which began in 2013, is a business-led initiative covering counties Leitrim, Roscommon, Longford and Cavan that is supported by the four local authorities, Bord na Mona and ESB. The initiative launched Phase II in June 2015, which is expected to run over the next two years, and has identified a number of objectives to grow the economy of the region focussing on key sectors such as Food, Creative Sector, Manufacturing, Services, Forestry and Energy, and Tourism. This cross-regional initiative will have benefits and advantages for Co. Roscommon in the West region.

Development of lands at former Galway Airport Site

In 2014 Galway City and County Council purchased the 115 acre site of the former Galway Airport. The objective is to realise the economic potential of the large strategic tract of land. In Summer 2015, the Councils launched a tender for a scoping study to consider options for the land's future use. Options include manufacturing activity, Research & Development, Aviation activity, renewable energy activity, food production, logistics, and providing a site for the film industry. The scoping study will also examine the short, medium and long-term potential of the site in recognition of the current capital investment limitations within the Irish economy.

Chapter 15: Monitoring Progress

The Action Plan for Jobs for the West region has been developed following wide local stakeholder engagement, using a “bottom-up” approach, with actions coming from regional stakeholders including the private sector.

The Action Plan covers a three-year timeframe, 2015-2017, to allow for the process to take hold and develop, and to capture a medium-term ambition for the regions. The Plan will be flexible and dynamic to allow additional actions and ideas to be added as they emerge over the period of the Plan.

Progress on the actions will be monitored on a 6 monthly basis by a Regional Implementation Committee, and Progress Reports on the implementation of the Plan will be published twice each year. The Progress Reports will also identify areas for further action in a rolling framework.

Key regional stakeholders who have actions for delivery in the Action Plan will be involved on the Implementation Committee, and will be asked to provide updates on the delivery of actions.

Strong business representation is also required to drive the enterprise and jobs focus of the Plan. To this end, the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation will invite locally-based enterprise champions to participate on the Implementation Committee and to work with the public bodies on the delivery of the Plan.

The Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation will also appoint the Chair of the Implementation Committee. The Chair will have recognised strengths in promoting a strong enterprise agenda across the region. The initial period of appointment will be for 18 months.

Notwithstanding the importance of devolving ownership of the actions to the regions, the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and innovation will continue to oversee the Plan at a national level and will facilitate updates to the Plan through membership of the Implementation Committee.

Processes put in place to monitor the regional Action Plan will complement monitoring arrangements in the Local Government sphere.

Notes



An Roinn Post, Fiontar agus Nuálaíochta
Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation

The Action Plan for Jobs is an initiative of the
Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation