ACTION PLAN FOR JOBS

2013

First Progress Report

Table of Contents

Commentary

This is the first report of 2013 from the Monitoring Committee established by Government to monitor and drive implementation of the measures contained in the *Action Plan for Jobs 2013*. It outlines progress made on measures due for completion in the first quarter of 2013. The Monitoring Committee comprises representatives of the Department of the Taoiseach, the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, Forfás, and the Office of the Tánaiste.

The Government published the second in its multi-annual *Action Plan for Jobs* series in February this year. This Plan, which contains 333 actions to be implemented in 2013 by all Government Departments and 46 agencies, will build on the progress made in 2012 and continue to improve supports for job-creating businesses and remove the barriers to employment-creation across the economy. These actions are additional to the 249 actions already implemented under *Action Plan for Jobs 2012*, and reported on by the Monitoring Committee in its previous four quarterly reports (see www.djei.ie). In a departure from the 2012 plan, *Action Plan for Jobs 2013* contains seven headline "Disruptive Reform" measures – high-impact measures with highly ambitious deadlines, implemented in partnership with senior industry partners and selected because of their potential to have a significant effect on job-creation.

In the first quarter of 2013, Departments and agencies were to deliver 150 measures relating to 105 of the Action Plan's 333 actions. All but six of the measures due in Quarter 1 of 2013 have been delivered on schedule, giving a completion rate of 96%. In delivering 144 first quarter measures under the Plan, the Government has, for example:

- As part of Disruptive Reform 1 – "Big Data"

  o Funded the Irish Centre for High-End Computing (ICHEC) to sustain it over the next three years to 2015. ICHEC provides high-end computing resources, support, education and training for researchers as well as the provision of key high performance computing supports to Irish based industry.

- As part of Disruptive Reform 2 – ICT Skills Availability

  o Provided for a total of 2,000 additional ICT graduate-level places in the coming year through the education system and the employment permits system.

  o Increased by 50%, or 700, the number of employment permits granted over the coming year in the ICT sector. International research has shown that for every high-tech job created, a further 4 to 5 jobs are created elsewhere in the economy.

  o Reduced by 33% the processing time for employment permits.

  o Improved the appeals process and reduced the number of appeals.

- o   Broadened the highly-skilled eligible occupations list.

- o   Provided for 700 additional graduates from ICT skills conversion programmes, and 600 additional graduates from Springboard ICT courses.

▪   As part of Disruptive Reform 6 – Energy Efficiency

- o   Approved the creation of an Energy Efficiency Fund to support innovative energy efficiency in the public and commercial sectors.

And more broadly:

▪   Continued to roll out the *Pathways to Work* initiative including the integrated Intreo service, and published quarterly targets by which to measure progress. (Action 52)

▪   Implemented the 10 Point Tax Plan for the Small and Medium Enterprise Sector as announced in Budget 2013.

   This Plan introduces a number of tax measures to assist the small business sector in a number of ways; including helping their cash flow position, helping them access funding and reducing the costs associated with the administrative burden of tax compliance. It also includes measures such as reforming the three-year corporation tax relief for start-up companies, increasing the cash receipts basis threshold for VAT, amending the Close Company Surcharge to improve cash flow for SMEs and extending the Foreign Earnings Deduction for work-related travel to certain additional countries. (Action 53)

▪   Monitored the lending targets for the two pillar banks, with the Credit Review Office reporting that both banks have achieved their €3.5 billion SME loan sanction targets, with over €8 billion sanctioned in 2012, of which €2.5 billion (27%) was new lending. (Action 59)

▪   Provided support for, via the National Pensions Reserve Fund, the delivery of a range of Funds aimed at assisting economic growth and employment in Ireland. In January 2013 the NPRF announced that it will invest up to €500 million in three new SME funds which will make up to €850 million available for SMEs through the provision of equity, credit and restructuring/recovery investment. (Action 66)

▪   Transposed the Late Payments Directive, modernising the relevant laws and making them consistent across Europe. The revised legislation will act as a deterrent to late payment and become a driver for payment on time. It will establish a clear expectation that payment will be made according to agreed terms and that creditors will not be penalised. (Action 75)

▪   Encouraged and reported on restraint exercised in setting commercial rates for 2013 by Local Authorities. 87 out of the 88 rating authorities have either reduced their ARV or kept it the same as in 2012. The average nationwide decrease is 0.34%. This follows similar decreases of 0.31% in 2012, 0.64% in 2011 and 0.62% in 2010. (Action 124)

- Undertaken a schedule of international visits and events targeting trade and investment for Ireland. Trade missions and events in Quarter 1 included a trade visit to Germany in February and to Texas in March. As part of the St. Patrick's Day 'Promote Ireland' programme, the Taoiseach, Tánaiste and Government Ministers, travelled to 21 countries across North America, Europe, the Middle East and Asia for a series of trade, investment and tourism-focused programmes. (Action 199)

- Provided for the granting of visas free of charge and on an accelerated basis to visa-required nationals attending 29 authorised events during the Gathering. (Action 308)

As stated above, six of the measures outlined in the Plan have not been delivered on schedule:

1. Regarding the Copyright Review Committee, complete evaluation and analysis following extensive consultation work undertaken and prepare final report for Government (Action 90): Extensive evaluation and analysis has been undertaken and the report by the Members of the Copyright Review Committee is in its final stages of preparation. However, due to the level of other commitments (including the EU Presidency), it has not been possible to complete the Report of the Copyright Review Committee by the end of Quarter 1. The Report is expected to be brought to Government early in Quarter 2.

2. Complete the licensing process to enable development of the Atlantic Marine Energy Test Site at Belmullet (Action 103): A Natura Impact Statement on this is now required due to a recent decision to propose the designation of the 'West Connacht Coast' site as a Special Area of Conservation in respect of the Bottlenose Dolphin. A significant amount of relevant information has already been provided by the applicant in the original Environmental Impact Statement and it is understood that submission of the Natura Impact Statement can be made by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland within a matter of weeks. While the designation has yet to be confirmed, the site enjoys protection from the date of its proposed designation and accordingly, the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, is required to complete an Appropriate Assessment of the proposal. It is anticipated that the Minister's assessment of the proposal can be concluded within Quarter 2.

3. Publish the general scheme of a Bill to integrate the foreshore consent process under the Foreshores Act 1933 with the existing on-land planning system (Action 104): The draft General Scheme of a Bill has been referred to the Office of the Attorney General following a Government decision. Once the observations of the Office of the Attorney General are received, the Bill will be circulated to Departments prior to publication. Subject to the response from the Office of the Attorney General, it is anticipated that the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government will be in a position to publish the Bill within Quarter 2.

4. In relation to the launch of the Local Enterprise Offices, publish a model Service Level Agreement between Enterprise Ireland and Local Authorities (Action 173): Significant progress was made on this measure over Quarter 1 and a detailed and robust Framework Service Level Agreement (SLA) has been agreed and finalised between Enterprise Ireland and the Local Authorities. However, the arrangements for publication of the Framework SLA are subject to Ministerial diary commitments and it will not be published until May.

5. Regarding the launch of the Local Enterprise Offices (LEO), finalise and launch of the LEO brand and logo (Action 173): Following a tendering process, a company was appointed to design a new logo and associated branding. The new brand and logo have been finalised and will be launched at the same time as the publication of the Framework Service Level Agreement (see above).

6. Promote Ireland as a centre of excellence in Information Security (Action 333): The Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation has invited the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources and the Department of Justice and Equality to a meeting to commence the process of exploring the possible role and functions of an Expert Group on Security and Privacy. Due to competing priorities, this meeting has not yet taken place.

Progress on these items will be monitored by the Committee across Quarter 2 and an update provided in its *Second Progress Report*.

The 2013 Plan, the second instalment in an ambitious multi-year process, aims to create the environment where the number of people at work will increase by 100,000 by 2016, and reach 2 million people by 2020. While unemployment remains high, there are signs of progress in the labour market. For example in 2012, IDA Ireland companies created the highest number of new jobs in a decade with 6,570 net new jobs recorded, whilst Enterprise Ireland client companies had their best performance since 2006 with the creation of more than 3,000 net new jobs. Overall, the latest data show that the number of persons employed in Ireland increased over the year to Quarter 4 2012, the first annual increase in employment recorded since the second quarter of 2008. In addition, CSO Live Register figures for March 2013 represent an annual decrease of -8,966 (-2.1%) in the number of people of people on the Live Register compared to the same month last year.

Disruptive Reforms

Disruptive Reform 1: Build on our existing enterprise strengths to make Ireland a leading country in Europe on "Big Data"

Action 5: Through the Department of Jobs, Enterprise & Innovation we will further develop a critical mass of research activity and scale in the area of "Data Analytics, Management, Security and Privacy" in line with Government's priority areas for R&D.

Q1 Measure: Establish and fund a major resource of scale, excellence and direct relevance to industry (DJEI, Enterprise Agencies)

Update: Complete

There were two significant developments over the first quarter of 2013 on this action.

▪ As part of the Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) Centres Awards announcements in February 2013, a major new Big Data/Data Analytics Centre called INSIGHT was announced. INSIGHT will see the amalgamation of 4 existing SFI supported research centres, namely CLARITY, DERI, CLIQUE and 4C, into an internationally visible centre of Big Data/Data Analytics excellence.

INSIGHT has a cohort of 250 top-class researchers collaborating with 45 industry partners so far, which includes the likes of AOL, Adidas, Cisco, EMC, HP, IBM, Microsoft, SAP Research, RTE, the Irish Times, Storm Technology and Under Armour. INSIGHT is an €80 million plus research project over the next 6 years and industry is providing a 30% contribution. INSIGHT researchers will span University College Dublin, NUI Galway and Dublin City University.

▪ Additionally, in March 2013, Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, Richard Bruton, announced details of the €1 million initial research programme in the EI/IDA supported Technology Centre for Applied Data Analytics Research (CeADAR). The CeADAR project is directly relevant to Ireland's 'Big Data' ambitions and leverages the research clusters and technologies created by prior SFI investments.

Q1 Measure: Continue to fund research excellence in underpinning platform technologies and sciences of relevance to Data Analytics, Management, Security and Privacy through open competitive calls (SFI, EI, other research funders as appropriate)

Update: Complete

The SFI Investigators Programme 2013 was launched in Quarter 1 2013. The purpose of the programme is to fund scientific research projects of excellence with impact in focused areas including Data Analytics as one of the 14 National Research Prioritisation areas and also

encompassing the 6 underpinning platform science and technology areas. Preliminary applications were received at the end of March 2013.

The SFI/EI Technology Innovation Development Award Feasibility Study 2013 was also launched in Quarter 1 2013. This programme is designed to enable researchers to focus on the first steps of an applied research project which may have a commercial benefit if further developed. Proposals in the area of data analytics are eligible under the call. Applications will be submitted at the end of May 2013.

Science Foundation Ireland continues to run a number of competitive open calls to meet the needs of different sections of the research community on an on-going basis including, for example, SFI PIYRA and SFI Research Professorship. Further programmes are also under development for launch later in 2013.

Q1 Measure: Incorporate the Data Analytics, Management, Security & Privacy areas into careers promotions/awareness initiatives such as Smart Futures (SFI)

Update: Complete

Specific actions in this regard that have been agreed and confirmed in Quarter 1 2013 are listed below. These will be progressed during Quarter 2 as part of the rollout of the Smart Futures campaign:

- The Smart Futures STEM Careers Week will take place online on www.SmartFutures.ie from 29th April – 3rd May 2013. This will feature live online events where students and guidance counsellors will interact with people working in STEM Industries, such as ICT, to answer their career questions.

- In support of the STEM Careers Week, a series of four videos will be launched on the website profiling people working in science, technology, engineering and maths. One of these videos will have an ICT focus and will include the areas of data analytics and cyber-security.

- A schools competition open to all primary, junior cycle and senior cycle students will also be launched during the STEM Careers Week. This will be a technology competition in association with the Coder Dojo network, which will encourage students to use their summer holidays to work on technology projects such as websites, games and apps.

- Industry representative bodies such as ICT Ireland, the Irish Software Association, Irish Medical Devices Association and Engineers Ireland will continue to support the Smart Futures programme. These groups will provide sector-specific data on skills requirements, and access to people working in the various STEM areas to take part in online events.

Action 6: Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland will establish an industry-led Technology Centre in Data Analytics, facilitating linkages between enterprise and academic research; identifying and addressing barriers to collaboration.

Q1 Measure: Launch of initial research phase (EI, IDA)

Update: Complete

The initial research phase of the Data Analytics Technology Centre (CeADAR) was launched by the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, Richard Bruton on March 15th 2013.

Three core research themes have been identified as the basis for the CeADAR technology centre. The projects being undertaken across each of these themes in the first research phase of CeADAR are listed below.

- Intelligent Analytic Interfaces

  o Ease of interaction

  o Changing user behaviour based on analytics

  o Research Theme: Passive analytics

- Data Management for Analytics

  o Reduce data management effort for analytics

  o Data validation

- Advanced Analytics

  o Social trending and contextualisation challenge

  o Continuous analytics

Action 7: Take action to put in place an integrated national High Performance Computing (HPC) facility that will support Big Data/Data Analytics.

Q1 Measure: Jointly provide necessary support to sustain the Irish Centre for High-End Computing in 2013 via the Higher Education Authority (DJEI and DES)

Update: Complete

The Departments of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation and of Education and Skills have agreed to jointly fund the Irish Centre for High-End Computing (ICHEC) to sustain it over the next three years to 2015.

ICHEC provides high-end computing resources, support, education and training for researchers. The Centre also provides key high performance computing supports to Irish

based industry. For example, ICHEC has partnered with Tullow Oil and Met Éireann in providing key computational scientific capacity for their business needs for the past several years. ICHEC services are increasingly in demand from many of the major ICT companies involved in various aspects of big data, cloud computing, etc. New industry partners are expected to be announced by ICHEC during 2013 following the strong commitment from Government to support 'Big Data' (as demonstrated in Action 5 above).

Action 9: Provide funding for the platform science and technology areas underpinning data analytics.

Q1 Measure: Continue or extend funding of current research activity of excellence to meet needs or run a new thematic call for new areas of need (identified through 7 above) (SFI, EI, other research funders as appropriate)

Update: Complete

In addition to ongoing research and infrastructure funding (including the Irish Software Engineering Research Centre (Lero) and ICHEC) and new calls launching, plans are underway to build on recent investments (e.g. the INSIGHT Research Centre) through the development of the SFI Research Centres Spokes Programme, planned for launch near the end of 2013.

Q1 Measure: Continue to fund research excellence in underpinning platform technologies and sciences of relevance to Data Analytics, Management, Security and Privacy through open competitive calls (SFI, EI, other research funders as appropriate)

Update: Complete

The SFI Investigators Programme 2013 was launched in Quarter 1 2013. The purpose of the programme is to fund scientific research projects of excellence with impact in focused areas including Data Analytics as one of the 14 National Research Prioritisation areas and also encompassing the 6 underpinning platform science and technology areas. Preliminary applications were received at the end of March 2013.

The SFI/EI Technology Innovation Development Award (TIDA) Feasibility Study 2013 was also launched in Quarter 1 2013. This programme is designed to enable researchers to focus on the first steps of an applied research project which may have a commercial benefit if further developed. Proposals in the area of data analytics are eligible under the call. Applications will be submitted at the end of May 2013.

SFI continues to run a number of competitive open calls to meet the needs of different sections of the research community on an ongoing basis including, for example, the SFI PIYRA and the SFI Research Professorship. Further programmes are also under development for launch later in 2013.

Action 12: Pending completion of the assessment of demand, address existing enterprise needs for ICT-related data analytical skills in the context of Call for Conversion Programmes for ICT and Software Development Skills

Q1 Measure: Ensure that ICT-related data analytical skills are incorporated in the 2013 ICT conversion skills programme and the Springboard 2013 call for proposals (DES, HEA)

Update: Complete

In February 2013, more than 760 places were made available on ICT graduate skills conversion courses in higher education institutions around the country. Of the fifteen programmes selected for funding, two are in the area of data analytics.

The Higher Education Authority issued a call for proposals for courses to be run under Springboard 2013 at the end of February. Data analytics is one of the areas identified by Forfás in the guidance document that accompanied the call. Course proposals from potential Springboard colleges are due to be submitted by April 9th 2013 and recommendations on approved courses are expected by mid-May.

Disruptive Reform 2: Make Ireland the most attractive location in the world for ICT Skills availability ensuring continued success of the ICT sector

Improving domestic pipeline

Action 13: Continue delivery of all aspects of the current ICT Action Plan and development of new responses, actions and timelines in line with emerging needs.

Q1 Measure: Ensure ICT Skills needs are incorporated into the Springboard 2013 call for proposals (DES, HEA)

Update: Complete

The Higher Education Authority issued a call for proposals for courses to be run under Springboard 2013 at the end of February. ICT is one of the areas of skills needs identified in the guidance document that accompanied the call.

Course proposals from potential Springboard colleges are due to be submitted by April 9th 2013 and recommendations on approved courses are expected by mid-May.

Q1 Measure: Launch second phase of ICT graduate conversion programmes (DES, HEA)

Update: Complete

The roll out of more than 760 new places under the second phase of the graduate skills conversion programmes was announced at the start of February 2013. The places are

available on 15 programmes in higher education institutions around the country. Further information is available at www.ictskills.ie.

Action 15: Expand conversion opportunities at graduate and post graduate level in 2013 through the ICT Graduate Skills and Springboard programmes.

Q1 Measure: Launch second phase of the ICT skills conversion programmes with the roll out of more than 750 additional places on graduate conversion programmes (DES, HEA)

Update: Complete

The roll out of more than 760 new places under the second phase of the graduate skills conversion programmes was announced at the start of February 2013. The places are available on 14 individual programmes in higher education institutions around the country. Further information is available at www.ictskills.ie.

Q1 Measure: Ensure that ICT skills needs are incorporated in the Springboard 2013 call for proposals (DES, HEA)

Update: Complete

A call for proposals for courses to be run under Springboard 2013 was issued by the Higher Education Authority at the end of February 2013. ICT is one of the areas of skills needs identified by Forfás in the guidance document that accompanied the call. Course proposals from potential Springboard colleges are due to be submitted by April 9th 2013 and recommendations on approved courses are expected by mid-May.

Action 16: Strengthen links with industry and enterprise development agencies in development and delivery of ICT and Springboard programmes, including involvement of a wider range of companies, especially SMEs in work placements provided as part of programmes (e.g. link with selection of intake, content and recruitment)

Q1 Measure: Disseminate information to companies on upcoming calls for the ICT Skills conversion and Springboard programmes (DES, HEA, EI, IDA)

Update: Complete

The Higher Education Authority (HEA) disseminated information on the Springboard initiative and the call for proposals under Springboard 2013 to industry contacts and enterprise agencies. As part of this communication, the HEA advised that companies could make contact with local higher education providers to discuss any skills needs that might be addressed through a Springboard programme.

Q1 Measure: Ensure that all ICT skills conversion courses have a named industry partner (DES, HEA)

Update: Complete

All the courses approved under the 2013 ICT skills conversion programme have named industry partners. In excess of 200 companies, ranging from SMEs to major multinationals are affiliated to the programme.

Q1 Measure: Ensure the importance of links with industry is highlighted in the selection criteria for Springboard and ICT skills programmes (DES, HEA)

Update: Complete

The importance of links with industry is a key feature highlighted in the selection criteria for Springboard and ICT skills programmes. All courses approved under the 2013 ICT skills conversion programme were required to have a named industry partner and half of the marks available in the scoring of proposals for Springboard 2013 are for links with the labour market, including focused input from enterprise (locally and regionally) on course design, on work placements and on hiring of graduates.

Action 17: Improve awareness of the conversion course initiatives amongst companies and jobseekers.

Q1 Measure: Ensure that the launch of new conversion course initiatives are highlighted in the national media (DES, HEA)

Update: Complete

The Department of Education and Skills issued a press release to announce the launch of the ICT skills conversion programmes and a campaign of radio advertisements to promote the programme was initiated by the Higher Education Authority in February 2013.

Q1 Measure: Disseminate information on calls and launches of programmes to enterprise agencies and representative bodies (DES, HEA, DJEI)

Update: Complete

Information on the ICT skills courses was provided to enterprise agencies and representative bodies in order to assist with the promotion of the programmes among member companies.

The Higher Education Authority disseminated information on the Springboard initiative and the call for proposals under Springboard 2013 to industry contacts and the enterprise

agencies advising that companies and industry bodies could make contact with local higher education providers to discuss any skills needs that could be addressed through a Springboard programme.

Q1 Measure: Disseminate information on calls and launches to the Department of Social Protection (DES, HEA, DSP)

Update: Complete

The Department of Education and Skills and the Department of Social Protection (DSP) worked closely to clarify income support arrangements for jobseekers in advance of the launch of the 2013 ICT skills programme. Information on the courses and the income support available to DSP clients has been disseminated to local DSP offices.

A call for proposals for courses to be run under Springboard 2013 was issued in February 2013 and the two Departments are continuing to work closely regarding income support arrangements for jobseekers who participate on the 2013 programmes. The Department of Social Protection, in conjunction with the Higher Education Authority, are considering the possibility of organising briefing sessions for relevant staff in local offices and employment services on the arrangements for the 2013 Springboard programme so that DSP clients can be informed on the various upskilling options available.

Attracting necessary skills from abroad

Action 23: Update the application criteria for employment permits to reduce processing time by 33%.

Q1 Measures:

1. Review application criteria and processing procedures (DJEI)

2. Announce and roll out the changes (DJEI)

Update: Complete

The Review of application criteria and processing procedures examined circa 200 criteria and proposed changes to approximately 90 of these with a view to streamlining the process for applicants and increasing turnaround times for employment permits. It is expected to result in processing times being reduced by at least 10 days on current processing times (which currently range from 2 – 5 weeks depending on the employment permit type).

The changes were announced by the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation in early April and are now commencing roll-out.

Action 24: Expand the economic sectors for employment permit applications to allow for ICT professionals in all sectors of the economy.

Q1 Measures:

1. Review the EGFSN Annual National Skills Bulletin 2012 and other relevant publications (DJEI)

2. Consult with stakeholders i.e. industry, Forfás, FAS, DSP, enterprise agencies, industry, and make an informed decision (DJEI)

3. Announce and roll out the change (DJEI)

Update: Complete

Consultations with the various stakeholders have been undertaken. Significant additions have been made to 'Highly Skilled Eligible Occupations' list (eligible occupations for Green Card and other employment permit types) in line with reports by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs as well as stakeholder feedback.

The 'Highly Skilled Eligible Occupations' list will also now apply to all sectors, as shortages in key skills areas (e.g. ICT skills) are arising in all sectors.

The changes were announced by the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation in early April and are now commencing roll-out.

Action 25: Reduce the wage threshold limit, where appropriate, for work permits in key skills areas (e.g. ICT graduates and technical sales with non-EEA language skills).

Q1 Measures:

1. Consult with stakeholders i.e. industry, Forfás, FAS, DSP, enterprise agencies, industry representatives and make an informed decision (DJEI)

2. Announce and roll out changes (DJEI)

Update: Complete

Consultations with the various stakeholders have been undertaken. In line with findings by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs and industry feedback, thresholds will be reduced moderately to €27,000 per annum for certain occupations experiencing a severe skills shortage and where the average salary is less than €30,000 per annum, namely:

▪ IT graduates

▪ Specialist language support & technical or sales support with fluency in a non-European Economic Area language in respect of those companies that have formal support from the enterprise development agencies.

Furthermore, all employment permits applications will be assessed using 'remuneration' rather than 'salary' as a criterion to cater for contemporary reward practices. The changes were announced by the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation in early April and are now commencing roll-out.

Action 26: Simplify the labour market needs test.

Q1 Measures:

1. Consult with stakeholders i.e. industry, Forfás, FAS, DSP, enterprise agencies, industry representatives, and make an informed decision (DJEI)

2. Announce and roll out the changes (DJEI)

Update: Complete

Consultations with the various stakeholders have been undertaken and agreement has been reached with the Department of Social Protection (DSP) regarding implementation.

Cognisance has been given to the 'whole of life' duration of a vacancy from an employer's perspective and to the need for speedy filling of vacancies to protect enterprise viability, while ensuring opportunities are presented to local and European labour markets for the filling of vacancies.

Employer-led applications for employment permits currently require the employer to advertise on DSP (previously FAS) and EURES* job sites for 8 weeks and in both national and local newspapers for 6 days. The new requirement will be 2 weeks on DSP/EURES job sites and 3 days in a national and local newspaper/job website.

The changes were announced by the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation in early April and are now being rolled-out.

* EURES, or European Employment Services, is a cooperation network between the European Commission, the Public Employment Services of the European Economic Area (EEA) Member States and other partner organisations.

Action 27: Assess the case for the expansion of the eligibility of residency permissions under the employment permit schemes.

Q1 Measure: Consult and agree the proposed expansion of the eligibility of residency permissions under the employment permit schemes. Announce and roll out changes (DJEI and DJE)

Update: Complete

Consultations have been completed and agreement reached regarding implementation.

The Department of Justice and Equality has agreed a policy change to permit the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation to consider applicants already resident within Ireland, i.e. if they have a valid legal status (Garda National Immigration Bureau card) and are applying for employment permits in relation to the 'Highly Skilled Eligible Occupations' list.

The changes were announced by the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation in early April.

Action 29: Review outcome of improvements to the employment permits application system.

Q1 Measure: Prepare criteria for the evaluation of the employment permits application system (DJEI)

Update: Complete

Metrics have been developed to monitor the impact of changes, e.g. percentage increase in IT related employment permit applications, percentage decrease in processing times, qualitative feedback from stakeholders, percentage reduction on incomplete applications etc. A review of impact will take place as soon as 1,000 additional applications or 12 months of the new regime has been reached.

Disruptive Reform 6: Transform Ireland into one of the most energy efficient economics in Europe by 2020

Action 43: Develop and introduce an innovative National Energy Performance Contracting Policy Framework (EPC) which will assist public sector and commercial bodies to develop energy efficiency proposals with Energy Services companies.

Q1 Measure: Establish public/private sector working group (DCENR)

Update: Complete

The National Energy Performance Contracting Policy Framework advisory group was established in order to provide the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources with guidance and assistance in respect of the development of the Framework. Work is substantively advanced on a broad range of issues, which has been made possible through the close interaction of public and private sector actors. It is intended that the Department will be in a position to bring forward a draft Framework for relevant approvals early in Quarter 2.

Action 44: Establish an Energy Efficiency Fund to support innovative energy efficiency in the public and commercial sectors.

Q1 Measure: Government approval for outline design (DCENR)

Update: Complete

Government approved the creation of an Energy Efficiency Fund in February 2013. Work is ongoing with relevant actors to identify the modalities of the Fund's establishment and it is anticipated that the Fund will be established later in 2013.

Action 45: Identify, and support through the Energy Efficiency Fund, up to 20 demonstration projects, drawn from the public and private sectors, which will act as exemplars with regard to:

▪ The operation of the new EPC Framework, and

▪ The type of practical and innovative measures that can be replicated elsewhere to significantly improve energy efficiency in the public and commercial sectors.

Q1 Measure: Identify, evaluate and select exemplar projects (SEAI, DCENR)

Update: Complete

A call for exemplar projects was launched on February 28th by the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources and the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI). The call is open-ended with applicants to be evaluated on a first-come, first-served basis. Supporting materials, including a questionnaire and FAQs, have been published on the SEAI website.

The call for Exemplar Projects has received a high level of interest with 32 expressions of interest received to date, with more expected in the coming weeks. The SEAI will work over the coming weeks to move these to formal offers of technical assistance.

Disruptive Reform 7: Establish a world renowned National Health Innovation Hub

Cork Demonstrator Project

Action 47: Support Cork Demonstrator Project for the Health Innovation Hub during 2013.

Q1 Measure: Secure Government approval to support the operation of the Cork Demonstrator Project during 2013 (DJEI, D/Health)

Update: Complete

In March 2013, the Government agreed to support the operation in 2013 of the Demonstrator (Pilot) Project for the Health Innovation Hub through:

- Financial support, to be met this year from within the existing Vote allocation of the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation; and

- In-kind support from the health system in 2013.

The support is subject to full evaluation of the Demonstrator project, to be completed by the end of 2013, to inform the development of proposals to Government for the establishment of a National level Health Innovation Hub.

Q1 Measure: Identify key performance indicators which will allow for evaluation of the Cork Demonstrator Project (EI, Cork Steering Group, National Project Team)

Update: Complete

Key performance indicators for the Cork Demonstrator Project were finalised and agreed by the National Steering committee on March 27th. These indicators include, amongst others:

- Number of companies/projects supported by the Demonstrator;

- Identification of potential markets for new products/services/technologies; and

- Number and nature of products/services developed for commercialisation.

The Health Innovation Hub Demonstrator Project brings together the health system, enterprise and academia in an environment where new ideas can be developed and grown. The aim of the Demonstrator Project, which is based on international models including the North Carolina Research Triangle, is twofold:

- Firstly, to allow healthcare companies to more quickly and more successfully deliver commercial products and services which can create jobs, by giving them access to the health service to test products in a real life environment and refine their products to ensure they can ultimately offer the solutions which the healthcare system needs, and

- Secondly, to allow the health service to find efficiencies and improvements by facilitating the Health Services Executive and hospitals to engage and participate with innovative companies creating solutions to problems they face.

Pathways to Work

Action 52: The Government will continue to roll out the Pathways to Work initiative including the integrated Intreo service during 2013 and will publish quarterly targets by which to measure progress. The targets for 2013 will be published by the end of Q1 and will be reported on quarterly thereafter, starting with the publication of Q1 performance in Q2 2013.

Q1 Measure: Publish targets for 2013 (DSP)

Update: Complete

Published in 2012, *Pathways to Work*, the Government policy statement on labour market activation, provides for a new way of working with people who are unemployed to ensure that they can avail of appropriate supports and training, so that they can take up job opportunities when they arise.

The Department of Social Protection has published quarterly performance targets for the achievement of the objectives set out in *Pathways to Work*, which are available on the Department's website.

The published targets relate to areas such as the provision of training supports and delivery of the integrated Intreo service. A quarterly report against these targets will be published from Quarter 2 onwards.

Access to Finance for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises

Governance and Policy

Action 53: Implement and monitor the 10 Point Tax Plan for the Small and Medium Enterprise Sector as announced in Budget 2013.

Q1 Measure: Publish the Corporation Tax and Incentives measures in the 10 point tax plan for SMEs contained in the 2013 Finance Bill (D/Finance, Revenue)

Update: Complete

This Plan introduces a number of modest tax measures to assist the small business sector in a number of ways; including helping their cash flow position, helping them access funding and reducing the costs associated with the administrative burden of tax compliance.

This plan includes measures such as reforming the three-year corporation tax relief for start-up companies, increasing the cash receipts basis threshold for VAT, amending the Close Company Surcharge to improve cash flow for SMEs and extending the Foreign Earnings Deduction for work-related travel to certain additional countries.

The measures announced are included in the Finance Act 2013.

Q1 Measure: Reform the 3 Year Corporation Tax Relief for Start Up Companies as contained in the Finance Bill 2013 (D/Finance)

Update: Complete

The purpose of this measure is to encourage start-ups, help create jobs and to improve cash flow. This measure is included in the Finance Act 2013.

Q1 Measure: Amend the Close Company Surcharge as contained in the Finance Bill 2013 (D/Finance)

Update: Complete

The purpose of this measure is to reduce the administrative burden and assist cash flow. This measure is included in the Finance Act 2013.

Q1 Measure: Increase the amount of expenditure eligible for the R&D tax credit as contained in the Finance Bill 2013 (D/Finance)

Update: Complete

The purpose of this measure is to encourage innovation and help cash flow. This measure is included in the Finance Act 2013.

Q1 Measure: Increase the VAT cash receipts basis as contained in the Finance Bill 2013 (D/Finance)

Update: Complete

The annual cash receipts basis threshold for small to medium businesses is being increased from €1 million to €1.25 million with effect from May 1st 2013. This change is part of the Ten Point Tax Reform Plan for small businesses announced in the Budget and will assist such businesses in the critical area of cash-flow and will reduce administrative burden.

Q1 Measure: Extend the Foreign Earnings Deduction as contained in the Finance Bill 2013 (D/Finance)

Update: Complete

The purpose of this measure is to encourage the development of export markets by Irish based enterprises. The relief has been extended to include certain African countries identified as growth areas in the agri-food sector. This measure is included in the Finance Act 2013.

Q1 Measure: Introduce a Capital Gains Tax relief as contained in the Finance Bill 2013 (D/Finance)

Update: Complete

The purpose of the measure is to encourage farm restructuring by way of a Capital Gains Tax relief. This was included in the Finance Act 2013.

Q1 Measure: Review the "carried interest" provision in the tax code as contained in the Finance Bill 2013 (D/Finance)

Update: Complete

The review was undertaken with a view to reforming the provision to ensure that it operates as intended. The purpose of the measure is to help companies access funding through the availability of venture capital fund investment. The outcome of the review was to suggest changes to the provision to ensure it operates as intended. These changes were included in the Finance Act 2013.

Action 54: The SME State Bodies Group (SBG) will develop and carry out a detailed work programme for 2013, including a rigorous scrutiny of the credit environment for SMEs.

Q1 Measure: Develop Work Programme (State Bodies Group)

Update: Complete

The key components of the SME State Bodies Group's work programme for 2013 are:

- Rigorous scrutiny of the credit environment;

- Oversight of agency efforts to drive businesses towards optimal utilisation of funds;

- Coordination, monitoring and implementation of the access to finance actions contained in the *Action Plan for Jobs 2013*;

- Ensuring cohesion in policy making on access to finance issues for SMEs across Government;

- Review of the effectiveness of activities carried out in 2012; and

- Examination of alternative and innovative sources of financing, such as peer-to-peer lending, crowd funding, business angel investment, and supply chain financing.

Action 58: Monitor Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) uptake.

Q1 Measure: Publish REITs legislation in Finance Bill 2013 (D/Finance)

Update: Complete

The overarching objective of these provisions is to remove a tax bias - caused by a double layer of taxation - which typically discourages collective investment in property through a company.

As Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) are an internationally recognised standard for investment in rental property assets, it is hoped that their introduction in Ireland will facilitate the attraction of new sources of capital to the Irish property market. REITs also have significant benefits for small retail investors, such as low entry cost, risk diversification, liquidity, and access to returns from investment grade commercial property. This measure was included in the Finance Act 2013.

Information and Skills

Action 59: Monitor the lending targets for the two pillar banks to €4 billion in 2013.

Q1 Measure: CRO Quarterly Reports (Credit Review Office)

Update: Complete

The Credit Review Office (CRO) quarterly report for Quarter 4 2012 was published on February 11th 2013. The main points in the CRO report are:

- Both banks met their €3.5 million loan sanction targets in 2012 with over €8 billion sanctioned;

- 27% of the €8 billion (€2.5 billion) was new lending drawn down;

- SMEs continue to deleverage and credit demand remains subdued at around 40%;

- Banks are lending to low/medium risk SMEs. However, the CRO has concerns about risk appetite for more challenging SMEs;

- The CRO is critical of the banks' methods of dealing with customers, listing in what they call the "order taking approach" by inexperienced staff, a binary 'Yes/No' decision by a remote central credit scoring system, and the lack of detail in menu driven credit refusal letters;

- Numbers remain low with only 323 applications for review received to date (61 in the quarter); and

- The CRO has upheld appeals in 55.9% of cases with €13 million of credit being made available and 1,102 jobs protected.

Q1 Measure: Meet with pillar banks (D/Finance, Credit Review Office)

Update: Complete

The Department of Finance and the Credit Review Office hold regular scheduled meetings with the pillar banks. The purpose of this measure is to ensure that the pillar banks are complying with their obligations to sanction an aggregate €8 billion credit to SMEs in 2013.

Action 60: Detailed data from the pillar banks will be collated and examined, ensuring a more informed understanding of the SME bank lending environment.

Q1 Measure: Report on monthly returns from the pillar banks (Credit Review Office, D/Finance)

Update: Complete

The pillar banks have submitted their monthly lending returns to date, which have been analysed by the Department of Finance and the Credit Review Office to ensure that the banks are on course to achieve their lending targets.

The banks also meet with the Department of Finance and the Credit Review Office on a quarterly basis to discuss progress. The monthly management meetings with the pillar banks also provide a forum for the issue of SME lending to be raised by the Department.

Access to Funding Measures

Action 63: Promote awareness and understanding of the full range of Government supported funding programmes and incentives in place to meet the financing needs of the SME sector, including through online resources, a credit and lending newsletter and a publicity campaign for the Microenterprise Loan Fund.

Q1 Measure: Draft Microfinance Ireland Publicity Strategy (Microfinance Ireland)

Update: Complete

Microfinance Ireland has drafted a publicity strategy for the year 2013 that provides the basis for efficient roll-out of information on the Microenterprise Loan Fund to micro businesses nationally.

The availability of the Fund has been advertised through press and radio coverage throughout the first quarter of 2013.

Action 65: Implement, as appropriate, the recommendations arising out of the Credit Review Office assessment process.

Q1 Measure: Consider the recommendations contained in the 2012 assessment for implementation (D/Finance)

Update: Complete

A policy paper on the Credit Review Office assessment process carried out by Grant Thornton was circulated to the State Bodies Group and its recommendations are being considered and work will continue on these. The Minister for Finance has already sanctioned the appointment of six additional reviewers and is keen to ensure that all possible steps are taken to encourage more applications for review.

Action 66: The National Pensions Reserve Fund will support the delivery of a range of Funds aimed at assisting economic growth and employment in Ireland. In January 2013 the NPRF announced that it will invest up to €500m in three new SME funds which will make up to €850m available for SMEs through the provision of equity, credit and restructuring/recovery investment. The NPRF will continue to work on supporting the delivery of additional Funds to complement those already announced and provide financing for SMEs. D/Finance will work to enact legislation to create a strategic investment fund with an Ireland-focused mandate, facilitating the redeployment of NPRF resources.

Q1 Measure: SME Equity Fund operational (NPRF)

Update: Complete

The Equity fund will have a total fund size from €300 to €350 million. The National Pensions Reserve Fund (NPRF) has committed €125 million to the fund.

The Equity Fund will focus on investing in healthy businesses seeking to grow, including those with overleveraged balance sheets. The fund, which has received commitments from other third party investors, is operational and is managed by Carlyle Cardinal Ireland in Dublin.

Q1 Measure: SME Turn-Around Fund operational (NPRF)

Update: Complete

The SME Turnaround Fund has a total effective fund size of €100 million. The NPRF has committed €50 million to the fund.

The SME Turnaround Fund will invest in underperforming businesses, which are at or close to the point of insolvency but have the potential for financial and operational restructuring. Typically, 40% of the capital invested by the fund will be used to buy the business and 60% will be used to finance the turnaround in order to place it on a sustainable long-term footing.

The fund is operational immediately and is managed by Better Capital. The London Stock Exchange listed investment fund, BECAP12 Fund, which is managed by Better Capital, will co-invest not less than 51% of the investment into each transaction with the NPRF providing the remainder. Better Capital will establish a Dublin office from which to source deal flow.

Action 68: In association with the EIB/EIF, identify and develop sustainable mechanisms to facilitate the provision of financing to SMEs.

Q1 Measure: Establish and maintain sustainable contacts with the EIB and EIF (D/Finance)

Update: Complete

Engagement between Ireland and the European Investment Bank (EIB) on the SME issue is being ramped up at present.

A meeting took place in January 2013 between Irish officials and the EIB/European Investment Fund (EIF) on the issue of further strengthening EIB/EIF support to SMEs. As part of that meeting, a range of options were discussed and these were reported to the EIB/Ireland High Level Working Group at the end of March for action. The EIB and Irish Authorities will continue work on innovative solutions to provide financing to Irish SMEs. This will include

- Increased financing via traditional bank channels;

- New structures that may involve non-bank financing such as the funds being developed by the National Pension Reserve Fund (NPRF); and

- Exploring the possibilities to support areas such as export and trade finance.

Mr. Werner Hoyer, President of the EIB, visited Ireland in July 2012, and since this visit there has been a stepping up of engagement between Ireland and the EIB with two subsequent visits; the first by EIB Vice President Tanasescu in November 2012, and the second by EIB Vice President Taylor in February 2013.

Q1 Measure: Identify SME issues regarding EIB/EIF funding: blockages, opportunities and innovations (DJEI)

Update: Complete

A meeting took place in January between the EIB/EIF and officials from the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, the Department of Finance and Enterprise Ireland regarding EIB/EIF funding for SMEs.

Within this process, the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation has identified certain blockages, opportunities and innovations regarding SME funding. Further work on these issues will continue in collaboration with the Department of Finance and the EIB/EIF. In this context, a further meeting is planned to take place shortly.

Q1 Measure: Ensure robust and ongoing reporting arrangements with the EIB and EIF on SME issues (D/Finance)

Update: Complete

The EIB Management Committee and other senior officials of the Bank will visit on April 29th and 30th. A number of high level events and meetings are scheduled as part of the visit:

- It is proposed that the Management Committee will be addressed by the Minister for Finance and the Minister for Public Expenditure. The Ministers will welcome the recent interim progress report from the EIB/Ireland High Level Working Group (HLWG) and will highlight some key points in the report. The purpose of the HLWG reports is to identify concrete and flexible mechanisms to enhance the Bank's support for Ireland's growth agenda including support for SMEs.

- There will be a signature ceremony with the Bank in relation to SME funding.

- The visit will be concluded with a meeting between the Taoiseach and the EIB President, Mr. Werner Hoyer, EIB Vice President, Mr. Jonathan Taylor, and the Secretary General of the EIB, Mr. Alfonso Querejeta.

As well as this, there is close ongoing contact between the International Institutions Section in the Department of Finance and the EIB, on a weekly basis.

Q1 Measure: Ensure coordination of work on SMEs with overall EIB engagement (D/Finance)

Update: Complete

- The SME State Bodies Group (SBG) meets on a bi-weekly basis. A sub-group of the SBG has been established to focus on the area of engagement with the EIB with the objective of identifying and developing sustainable mechanisms to facilitate the provision of financing for SMEs.

- The sub-group ensures coordination of work on SMEs with overall EIB engagement and feeds into the SBG on a regular basis.

- The Group comprises the International Institutions Section in the Department of Finance which is the primary contact with the EIB, the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, Enterprise Ireland, and the National Pension Reserves Fund.

- The EIB subgroup met to agree a work programme in terms of the objectives set out in the SBG Programme overview. The objectives have in the main already been completed for Quarter 1.

Q1 Measure: Report regularly on progress to Inter-departmental SME Group (DJEI and D/Finance)

Update: Complete

A coordinated approach has been adopted. The International Institutions Section of the Department of Finance is the main contact with the EIB and facilitates EIB meetings with other stakeholders including the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, the NPRF, and the National Treasury Management Agency.

The International Institutions Section was the primary contact point and organiser of the visit by EIB Vice President Jonathan Taylor in February 2013, and is coordinating the upcoming visit by the EIB Management Committee in April.

Q1 Measure: Report regularly on progress to EIB/Ireland High Level Working Group (DJEI and D/Finance)

Update: Complete

Two meetings of the EIB/Ireland High Level Working Group have been held to date with updates provided. The most recent meeting was held at the end of March.

Action 75: Transpose EU Late Payments Directive into Irish legislation.

Q1 Measure: Transpose EU Late Payments Directive into Irish legislation (DJEI)

Update: Complete

The new revised Late Payment in Commercial Transactions legislation (Statutory Instrument No. 580 of 2012) came into effect from March 16th 2013. This new legislation transposes EU Directive 2011/7/EU on Combating Late Payment in Commercial Transaction and repeals and modernises old rules.

Building Competitive Advantage

Research and Innovation to Drive Job Creation

Action 77: Drive implementation of the recommendations of the Research Prioritisation Steering Group and associated metrics and targets in order to re-align the majority of competitive public research funding around the priority areas of research over the next five years by adopting the action plans for each of the 14 priority areas and monitoring their implementation.

Q1 Measure: Finalise action plans for the 14 priority areas (Prioritisation Action Group, DJEI, Forfás)

Update: Complete

Eight thematic Working Groups with members drawn from the relevant research funding agencies were convened under the auspices of the Prioritisation Action Group during 2012.

The Working Groups, supported by the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation and Forfás, developed an Action Plan for each of the 14 Priority Areas.

The draft Plans were subjected to a validation exercise in 6 stakeholder engagement events with representatives from enterprise and academia during November and December 2012. The Plans were fine-tuned based on the feedback from these events in January 2013. The plans were formally approved by the Prioritisation Action Group on January 17th.

The chair of the Prioritisation Action Group, Minister of State for Research and Innovation, Seán Sherlock, has written to the research funding agencies requesting them to incorporate the Action Plans into their Work Programmes for 2013.

Action 83: Maximise the number of spin-outs from SFI-funded research through joint SFI-EI initiative(s).

Q1 Measure: Launch SFI-EI Technology Innovation Development Awards (TIDA) (SFI, EI)

Update: Complete

The Joint SFI/EI Technology Innovation Development Award Programme (TIDA) Feasibility Study 2013 was launched on March 4th 2013. Science Foundation Ireland (SFI), in collaboration with Enterprise Ireland, is seeking to fund innovative feasibility studies which will demonstrate the commercial potential of a technique or technology.

The TIDA 2013 Feasibility Study call is open to SFI award holders and non-SFI award holders who have demonstrated their competitiveness through securing alternative sources of funding. The call is also open to team members working in SFI funded labs. The deadline for submission of proposals is May 31st 2013.

Action 85: Through SFI, provide support to at least five new Research Centres of major scale. This will involve Government investment of over €150 million and will leverage an industry contribution in excess of 30%. This will bring the total new centres investment to in excess of €200 million.

Q1 Measure: Evaluate and award funding to SFI new hub & spoke model of engagement between SFI Centres and companies (SFI)

Update: Complete

In late February 2013, Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) announced the results of a year-long process to evaluate applications to the SFI Research Centres Call 2012. €200 million of Irish Exchequer funding will be invested in seven world class research centres of scale.

The new funding will be delivered through the SFI Research Centres Programme, coupled with over €100 million in cash and in-kind contributions from industry partners, making it the largest ever State/industry co-funding announcement in the research field in Ireland. The funding will be provided over the next six years and will include a mid-term review.

More than 150 industry partners are connected to the centres, spanning multinationals and SMEs.

Action 90: Complete the report of the Copyright Review Committee on barriers to innovation.

Q1 Measure: Complete evaluation and analysis following extensive consultation work undertaken and prepare final report for Government (Members of the Copyright Review Committee)

Update: Delayed

Extensive evaluation and analysis has been undertaken and the report by the Members of the Copyright Review Committee is in its final stages of preparation. However, due to the level of other commitments (including the EU Presidency), it has not been possible to complete the Report of the Copyright Review Committee by the end of Quarter 1. The Report is expected to be brought to Government early in Quarter 2.

Q1 Measure: Provide support/resources to facilitate the committee in completing the task of delivering its report (DJEI)

Update: Complete

The Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation have assigned additional resources to the Copyright Review Committee to assist them in bringing the report to finality. As noted

above, due to the level of other commitments (including the EU Presidency), it was not possible to complete the Report by the end of Quarter 1. The Report is expected to be brought to Government early in Quarter 2 and the Department will continue to provide support to the Committee in this regard.

Action 97: Deliver Discover Sensors programme to 30 secondary schools, 200 teachers and approx. 3,000 pupils.

Q1 Measures:

1. Final development of Discover Sensors (DS) Continuous Professional Development content (SFI)

2. Up-skilling of Discover Sensors Facilitators for Continuous Professional Development delivery (SFI)

Update: Complete

The final development of the Discover Sensors Continuous Professional Development (CPD) content is complete and facilitators have been trained.

The delivery of the CPD sessions, which is not due for completion until Quarter 2, has already begun and will be complete by end May 2013.

Action 103: Complete the consenting process to enable development of the Atlantic Marine Energy Test Site (AMETS) at Belmullet.

Q1 Measure: Complete licensing process (DECLG)

Update: Delayed

A Natura Impact Statement is now required due to a recent decision to propose the designation of the 'West Connacht Coast' site as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) in respect of the Bottlenose Dolphin.

A significant amount of relevant information has already been provided by the applicant in the original Environmental Impact Statement and it is understood that submission of the Natura Impact Statement can be made by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland within a matter of weeks.

While the designation has yet to be confirmed, the site enjoys protection from the date of its proposed designation and accordingly the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government is required to complete an Appropriate Assessment of the proposal.

It is anticipated that the Minister's assessment of the proposal can be concluded within Quarter 2.

Action 104: Integrate the foreshore consent process under the Foreshores Act 1933 with the existing on-land planning system.

Q1 Measure: Publication of the general scheme of a Bill (DECLG)

Update: Delayed

The draft General Scheme of a Bill has been referred to the Office of the Attorney General following a Cabinet decision.

Once the observations of the Office of the Attorney General are received, the Bill will be circulated to Departments in the normal course prior to publication.

Subject to the response from the Office of the Attorney General, it is anticipated that the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government will be in a position to publish the Bill within Quarter 2.

Action 105: Complete an inventory and gap analysis of existing test bed infrastructure to enable the development of a full national requirements specification and to enable the efficient early development and trialling of smart grid/ smart cities technology concepts by the research and industry community.

Q1 Measure: Convene a steering group of key stakeholders (DCENR, Eirgrid, ESB Networks, Enterprise Ireland, IDA, SFI, etc) to establish Ireland's priorities regarding smart grid and smart city. The group will identify the primary areas and technologies necessary for achieving these priorities and the implementation of smart grid and smart cities in Ireland. (SEAI)

Update: Complete

A steering group, to oversee the development of a full national requirements specification for smart grid/smart city test bed infrastructure, has been established. Participating organisations include policy makers (the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources), grid system operators (EirGrid, ESB Networks), funding agencies (Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland, Science Foundation Ireland) and industry representatives (SmartGridIreland). The inaugural steering group meeting has taken place and subsequent meetings will be held on a bimonthly basis.

Action 108: Launch a joint SFI/Teagasc research project call involving scientists from both the traditional agriculture and food disciplines and scientists from other scientific and engineering disciplines (e.g. ICT and data analytics, sensors etc).

Q1 Measure: Launch a thematic joint SFI/Teagasc research call (SFI, Teagasc)

Update: Complete

The SFI Investigators Programme 2013 was launched on January 25th 2013. The purpose of the programme is to fund scientific research projects of excellence with impact in focused areas. One of the themes under the current call is Future Agri-Food and successful applications will be co-funded by Teagasc. Preliminary applications were received at the end of March 2013.

Action 111: Following on from FIRM pre-commercialisation funding, initiate a new research programme to increase the value of meat processing by-product and waste streams.

Q1 Measure: Initiate ReValueProtein project (Teagasc)

Update: Complete

A large multidisciplinary project, ReValueProtein, funded through the Food Institutional Research Measure (FIRM) has commenced. This multi-disciplinary project will explore Irish meat processing streams for recovery of high value protein based ingredients for food and non-food uses.

This area represents a significant opportunity to enhance the economic performance and to improve the environmental impact of the Irish meat industry. The overarching objective of ReValueProtein is to develop and optimise processing conditions for the generation of valuable protein rich functional co-product from low, or negative, value meat processing streams and, in so doing, to assist in waste processing. As there is no Irish based strategic initiative to support this exploitation, there is a pressing requirement for a nationally funded effort to support the meat industry in capitalising on this opportunity.

This FIRM funded project is led by Teagasc in collaboration with University College Cork, University College Dublin, NUI Galway and the Institute of Technology in Tallaght.

Q1 Measure: Facilitate demonstration of enzyme hydrolysis process with potential for recovery of value from meat processing streams (Teagasc, EI)

Update: Complete

In February 2013, Teagasc facilitated a demonstration for industry of the enzyme hydrolysis* process with its potential for recovery of value from meat processing streams. This initial trial could contribute to adding value to meat processing by-products and waste streams by producing a range of high value components such as bioactive peptides, fatty acids and carbohydrates.

Six Irish industry representatives (Kepak, Slaney Meats/Proteins, Carton Brothers, Irish Dog Foods, Western Proteins, College Proteins and Linergy) attended the demonstration and

follow up discussions are underway with industry players regarding processing and subsequent analysis of products.

*Enzyme hydrolysis of meat products and by products of waste streams involves the application of one or more specific enzyme(s) which breaks down protein, lipids and carbohydrates into smaller components such as peptides, fatty acids and sugars.

Action 112: Support industrial clients to develop a new ingredient process, building on their existing use of the Teagasc dairy dehydration pilot plant facility.

Q1 Measure: Develop new strategy for separation of dairy proteins and/or process re-engineering (Teagasc)

Update: Complete

Protocols have been developed for separation of dairy proteins at laboratory scale. Pilot-scale utilities have been upgraded to facilitate scale-up from laboratory trials and pilot-scale trials have been performed. Confidential trials have been run with an industrial partner and the powder is currently being tested in a number of different applications.

The process should result in the development of a milk based powder with new and/or improved functionality for the dairy processor. The rationale is to provide new opportunities for utilisation of milk.

Improving Cost Competitiveness

Action 119: Complete a review of the Rent Review Arbitration Code to consider the effectiveness of the code in resolving disputes over rent reviews, and the degree to which stakeholders are making use of the code.

Q1 Measure: Launch review of Rent Review Arbitration Code (D/Justice)

Update: Complete

The review of the Rent Review Arbitration Code was launched in March 2013. The Department of Justice and Equality is now seeking information from interested stakeholders on their experience with the use and operation of the Code. Information received as a result of the review process will be considered during Quarter 2. The review will be completed by the end of July.

Action 124: Encourage Local Authorities to continue to exercise restraint in setting commercial rates in 2013 (a reserved function of elected members) and, where possible, to reduce rates.

Q1 Measure: Report on the extent to which restraint was exercised in setting commercial rates for 2013 by Local Authorities (DECLG)

Update: Complete

Local Authorities have responded well to the request to continue to exercise restraint in setting commercial rates for 2013; 87 out of the 88 rating authorities have either reduced their Annual Rate of Valuation (ARV) or kept it the same as in 2012*. The average nationwide decrease is 0.34%. This follows similar decreases of 0.31% in 2012, 0.64% in 2011 and 0.62% in 2010.

*One local authority has increased its ARV and will continue to increase it until 2015, but this is a technical adjustment and legal requirement following the extension of a town boundary.

Action 125: Introduce revised Development Contribution Schemes in line with revised statutory guidelines. These guidelines will help Local Authorities to achieve the right balance between generating the revenues required to provide the necessary infrastructure associated with new development and creating the right conditions to support sustainable development patterns, economic activity and renewal.

Q1 Measure: Introduce revised Development Contribution Schemes in line with revised statutory guidelines (DECLG)

Update: Complete

Statutory guidelines for planning authorities on Development Contributions were issued in January 2013. As planning authorities revise their development contribution schemes they will be required to incorporate the content of the guidelines including, *inter alia*, requirements to provide waivers or exemptions for certain types of development (including development supported by IDA Ireland/Enterprise Ireland), certain types of change of use etc.

Aligning Skills with Enterprise Needs

Aligning our education and training system with labour market needs is critical to the creation of job opportunities in Ireland

Action 128: Progress a review of the Apprenticeship Training Model through consultation with key stakeholders on options for change.

Q1 Measure: Confirm arrangements for consultative phase of review (DES)

Update: Complete

Given the complexity of the issues involved in this review it is proposed that the second phase of this review will require the input of three groups: a Steering Group, a Reference/Advisory Group and a Secretariat.

Nominees for the chairmanship and membership of these bodies have been sought and are being finalised.

Action 129: Provide 6,500 education and training places for the long-term unemployed under the Momentum programme; monitor implementation of programme to ensure achievement of objectives.

Q1 Measure: Provide up to 6,500 education and training places for the long-term unemployed through the Momentum programme (FAS)

Update: Complete

A tendering process for the Momentum programme was advertised by FÁS last year. There was a very high level of interest in this programme with FÁS receiving over 200 applications for funding. FÁS has entered into contracts with a number of selected providers to provide relevant education and training interventions for up to 6,500 individuals who are long-term unemployed. This recruitment phase is currently underway.

Action 131: Promote and support the adoption of structured upskilling and development systems for existing staff within a Human Resource management system in particular Excellence Through People (ETP).

Q1 Measure: Develop promotional material and inform client base on benefits of ETP (NSAI)

Update: Complete

A sustained programme for the promotion of the Excellence Through People (ETP) Scheme is being implemented. During Quarter 1, the ETP client-base was contacted with the

following results:

- 25 companies have registered with NSAI for the revised Excellence Through People Standard (ETP1000:2012)

- 11 companies are at application stage

- 42 companies have been quoted for certification

- A case study has been identified for a planned radio campaign

Skills necessary to drive enterprise trade and export sales

Action 135: Ensure that the need for graduates with international sales and language skills is included in the call for proposals for courses to be run under Springboard 2013.

Q1 Measure: As per headline action (DES, HEA)

Update: Complete

A call for proposals for courses to be run under Springboard 2013 was issued by the Higher Education Authority at the end of February. Skills for international sales and languages are one of the areas of skills needs identified by Forfás in the guidance document that accompanied the call. Course proposals from potential Springboard colleges are due to be submitted by April 9th 2013 and recommendations on approved courses are expected by mid-May.

Skills required for the manufacturing sector

Action 136: Assess the potential for increasing the supply of polymer technicians, including pooling resources for the associated equipment requirements.

Q1 Measure: Develop an action plan for this measure with named parties, and submit to DES (Skillnets)

Update: Complete

Following consultation with the named parties which included industry bodies, training networks in this space and the Institutes of Technology in Athlone and Sligo, a draft action plan was submitted to the Department of Education and Skills in March.

Action 137: Target the development of an Engineering Skillnet training network which can address demand for in-company training and upskilling for machinists.

Q1 Measure: Explore the feasibility of this measure with the Manufacturing Development Forum, in the context of the current Skillnets Call for Proposals 2013 and the existing provision within currently funded Skillnet networks (Skillnets)

Update: Complete

Skillnets has met with the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation acting on behalf of the Manufacturing Development Forum on this issue. Skillnets are seeking formal engagement with the full Forum as soon as is possible.

In addition, Skillnets is working with existing networks to identify initiatives that could contribute to the objective of action. Similarly, as part of Skillnet's Call for Proposals 2013 process they are identifying potential new networks that might contribute to this measure.

Action 138: Ensure that the skills needs of the manufacturing sector are incorporated in targeted upskilling programmes for unemployed people through, for example, Springboard and the Momentum Programmes.

Q1 Measure: Ensure that the skills needs of the manufacturing sector are reflected in the call for proposals for courses to be run under Springboard 2013 (DES, HEA)

Update: Complete

A call for proposals for courses to be run under Springboard 2013 was issued by the Higher Education Authority at the end of February. The manufacturing sector is one of the key areas of skills needs identified by Forfás in the guidance document that accompanied the call. Course proposals from potential Springboard colleges are due to be submitted by April 9th 2013 and recommendations on approved courses are expected by mid-May.

Revise employment permit schemes to provide for better support of the economy's evolving skills needs

Action 146: Evaluate and reform the processes for the application and grant of employment permits.

Q1 Measures:

1. Review existing rules and criteria applying to employment permit schemes and identify areas for improvement (DJEI)

2. Agree and test revised rules and criteria applying (DJEI)

3. Announce and roll out revised rules and criteria (DJEI)

Update: Complete

A comprehensive review of the rules and criteria applying to employment permit schemes was undertaken and a number of areas for improvement have been identified. As part of this exercise, and informed by stakeholder consultation and feedback, new policy objectives, new streamlined processes, performance metrics, and a longer term strategy for the employment permits regime have been developed.

Based on the review and consultations, amended/new rules have been developed and agreed among the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (DJEI), the Department of Justice and Equality (DJE) and the Department of Social Protection. Further improvements are being finalised between DJEI and DJE.

The changes were announced by the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation in early April and have been rolled-out. (see updates provided under actions 23 to 29)

Action 147: Improve information on DJEI website to better explain the employment permits system and the supporting policies and procedures.

Q1 Measures:

1. Revise guidelines, information and application forms on DJEI website for users (DJEI)

2. Explore expansion of the call centre's availability (DJEI)

Update: Complete

Information regarding the employment permits system on the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation's website has been revised and made more user friendly (including through greater cross referencing with the relevant information from the Department of Justice and Equality website etc.). New employment permit forms have been

developed and are available on the website. This information will migrate to the Department's new website platform (www.enterprise.gov.ie) over Quarters 2 and 3. In addition, plans to extend call-centre hours are advanced.

Infrastructure Investment to Underpin Employment Growth

Broadband

Action 151: Progress a national mapping exercise, which will determine where State intervention is required, progress a State Aids application in respect of that intervention, and commence work on the requisite procurement process to deliver the State intervention.

Q1 Measure: Issue tender for technical, financial and economic advice relating to overall delivery (DCENR)

Update: Complete

The request for tender for advisory services was issued on February 1st 2013 and a selection process is currently underway. It is expected that the successful tenderer will be appointed in April 2013.

Action 152: Complete Phase 2 of the national rollout of 100 Mbps broadband services to second level schools.

Q1 Measures:

1.   Announce Schools to be covered in Phase 2 (DCENR, DES, HEAnet)

2.   Launch framework tender (DCENR, DES, HEAnet)

3.   Issue tender (DCENR, DES, HEAnet)

Update:

A formal announcement on the location of the schools to be connected in 2013 was made by the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources and the Minister for Education and Skills in March 2013. The tender for the contract to enable the rollout of the broadband connections has now been issued.

Water Services

Action 156: Enact legislation to establish Irish Water as a statutory body.

Q1 Measure: Enact Water Services Bill 2013 (DECLG)

Update: Complete

The Water Services Act 2013 was enacted in March. The Act provides for the establishment of Irish Water/Uisce Éireann as a subsidiary of Bord Gáis Éireann.

Irish Water will be responsible for the installation of water meters for domestic households connected to a public water supply. The Act also provides the Commission for Energy Regulation with a function to advise the Government on the development of a regulatory framework for water services.

Transport

Action 158: Complete the review of ports policy and ensure that it incentivises timely investment in port facilities to meet future enterprise needs and promotes competition.

Q1 Measure: Publish new ports policy (DTTAS)

Update: Complete

The new Ports Policy was published and launched by the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, Leo Varadkar, on March 26th.

The core objectives of National Ports Policy are to facilitate a competitive and effective market for maritime transport services and to ensure that the State gets best value from these crucial facilities.

The policy will encourage greater private investment in our ports and will also see a move from a 'one size fits all' policy to one that recognises that different ports have different roles to play, now and in the future.

Action 160: Ensure the new aviation policy to be developed during 2013 delivers competitive international access in terms of locations served, frequency of service and cost both in the short and longer term.

Q1 Measure: Issue consultation paper on the development of a new aviation policy (DTTAS)

Update: Complete

The consultation paper on the development of a new civil aviation policy was published by

the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport on March 1st.

The consultation paper covers the range of considerations that will feed into the development of a new national aviation policy including, *inter alia*, airports, air services and regulation and governance.

It is expected that following submissions, a draft National Aviation Policy Statement will be issued for further consultation in the second half of 2013.

Reduce costs through sensible regulation

Action 165: Prepare a new Government Policy Statement on economic regulation.

Q1 Measure: Prepare a draft new policy statement (D/Taoiseach)

Update: Complete

A consultation document on the draft Government Policy Statement on Economic Regulation has been presented to Government with a view to publication for a 4 week public consultation phase commencing on April 19th.

Action 169: Examine the case for allowing companies to avail of audit exemption when two of the three criteria (thresholds on the number of employees/balance sheet total/annual turnover) are met rather than requiring companies to meet all three criteria.

Q1 Measures:

1. Consult with Stakeholders (DJEI)

2. Refer to Company Law Review Group (DJEI)

Update: Complete

The Company Law Review Group has been requested to examine the appropriateness of amending the Companies Acts in this area. Stakeholders have been contacted by the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation regarding the consultation, in addition to which details have been put on the Department's website.

Driving Entrepreneurship and Start-Up Companies

Building on the focused actions put in place during 2012, we will continue to develop Ireland as the place to start a business

Action 173: Launch the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) that will provide support to micro-enterprises through Local Authorities and establish a Centre of Excellence for Micro-enterprise and Small Business within Enterprise Ireland that will be a key integrating resource for the LEO network.

Q1 Measure: Publish model Service Level Agreement between Enterprise Ireland and Local Authorities (DJEI, EI, CEBs, DECLG, Local Authorities)

Update: Delayed

Significant progress was made during Quarter 1 and a detailed and robust Framework Service Level Agreement (SLA) has been agreed and finalised between Enterprise Ireland and the Local Authorities. However, the arrangements for publication of the Framework SLA are subject to Ministerial diary commitments and it will not be published until May.

Q1 Measure: Finalise and launch LEO brand and logo (DJEI, EI, CEBs, DECLG, Local Authorities)

Update: Delayed

Following a tendering process, a company was appointed to design a new logo and associated branding. The new brand and logo have been finalised and will be launched at the same time as the publication of the Framework Service Level Agreement (see above).

Q1 Measure: Seek agreement from other Bodies e.g. Revenue Commissioners, Credit Review Office, Micro Finance Ireland to enter into protocols with the LEOs in order to assist the small and micro sector in accessing State services (DJEI)

Update: Complete

Contact was made with the above bodies seeking their agreement to provide 'turnkey user friendly packages' of State supports available to assist those wishing to start-up or expand their business. A number of initiatives have been commenced by the bodies listed, with a view to improving knowledge and raising awareness of complementary enterprise supports that they provide. This includes the development of customer friendly information and business guides and the identification of dedicated contact points.

Action 177: Establish the Insolvency Service of Ireland.

Q1 Measure: Information launch of Insolvency Service of Ireland (D/Justice)

Update: Complete

The Insolvency Service of Ireland was formally established on March 1st 2013 and the information campaign was launched on April 18th 2013, involving, *inter alia*:

- The publishing of guides to the three new arrangements; Debt Relief Notices, Debt Settlement Arrangements and Personal Insolvency Arrangements

- Launch of the Insolvency Service of Ireland website which will contain various scenarios showing how the new arrangements may work in practice

- Putting in place an information line for the public

- The publishing of Guidelines on Reasonable Standard of Living and Reasonable Living Expenses for debtors

- The publishing of information on the forthcoming Regulations for the authorisation and licensing of Personal Insolvency Practitioners

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Action 180: Expand the Competitive Feasibility Fund piloted in three regions during 2013.

Q1 Measure: Roll out Competitive Regional Feasibility funds to the North East (EI)

Update: Complete

The Competitive Regional Feasibility Fund for the North East was launched in February and successful applicants will be announced in early Quarter 2.

The objective of the Fund is to assist a new start-up company or individual entrepreneur to investigate the viability of a new growth orientated business proposition, which has the potential to become a High Potential Start-Up*, to be located in the North East region

The Fund will provide financial assistance to enable the promoter (and Enterprise Ireland) to reach firm conclusions regarding the project's viability and set out investor ready plans and financials associated with developing and commercialising the innovative product or service on international markets.

The Fund is open to applications from the ICT, industrial, and food sectors including the following sub-sectors: Internet, games, software as a service (SaaS), cloud computing, enterprise software, telecoms, life sciences, cleantech, and industrial products.

* High Potential Start-Ups (HPSUs) are start-¬up businesses with the potential to develop an innovative product or service for sale on international markets and the potential to create a minimum of 10 jobs and €1 million in sales within 3 to 4 years of starting up.

Action 183: EI and IDA will work together via a range of specific events and initiatives to attract Inward Start-Ups and Emerging Businesses to Ireland.

Q1 Measures: Promote Ireland as a location for overseas entrepreneurs and emerging businesses at:

1. Europa AS Berlin (EI, IDA)

2. Mobile World Congress Barcelona (EI, IDA)

3. London Web Summit (EI, IDA)

4. South by South West Event in Austin, Texas, USA (EI, IDA)

Update: Complete

In order to promote Ireland as a location for investment, IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland jointly co-operated on this goal in participating in Europa AS (Berlin), the Mobile World Congress (Barcelona), the London Web Summit and the South West Event (Texas, USA).

In addition to the events mentioned above, Enterprise Ireland also promoted Ireland as a location for overseas entrepreneurs and emerging businesses at HealthBox Demo Day (London); HealthXL Selection Day (London); NY Start (New York); Med Device Conference (California); Entrepreneur Country (London) and StartUp Grind (San Francisco).

Action 184: Implement a range of Female Entrepreneurship Initiatives during 2013 following on from the launch of a new programme in 2012.

Q1 Measure: Sponsor a series of workshops for female entrepreneurs to be held in the first quarter of 2013 (EI)

Update: Complete

Enterprise Ireland sponsored a series of workshops for female entrepreneurs over Quarter 1. These were held in Dublin City University's Ryan Academy and 22 female entrepreneurs participated in the workshops.

Action 186: Hold a second call for proposals for the Community Enterprise Centre (CEC) Management Development Scheme to support a further 10 managers during 2013.

Q1 Measure: A call for proposals to be launched during March (EI)

Update: Complete

Phase 2 of the Community Enterprise Centre Management Development Scheme was launched in February 2013 with a closing date for applications of April 10th. The successful candidates will be announced during Quarter 2.

This is the second of two calls under the €2 million programme which is aimed at protecting and growing businesses in the community. This scheme is focused on supporting Community Enterprise Centres' management infrastructure through the appointment of Business Development Managers.

Under phase one of this scheme, the national Community Enterprise Centre network, which is managed by Enterprise Ireland, received €1.6 million of funding in June 2012 to support the appointment of 37 Business Development Managers.

Assisting Indigenous Business to Grow

Enhancing Indigenous Performance

Supporting Irish companies to build scale, to grow and internationalise remains central to our plans for recovery, growth and jobs in 2013

Action 189: Develop joint sectoral approaches for the support of selected growth sectors in Ireland. These will commence with Business Process Outsourcing, followed by Medical Technologies.

Q1 Measure: Commence development of strategies for Business Process Outsourcing and Medical Technologies (IDA, EI)

Update: Complete

IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland are working jointly on the Business Process Outsourcing strategy and background research. Initial work on the strategy has commenced.

The managers of the Life Sciences Departments in IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland met in February last for initial discussions on the scope of the joint Medical Technologies strategy. Both teams have initiated planning for joint marketing/client engagement at the Irish Medical Devices Association's CEO forum and the Med In Ireland events in the third quarter of 2013. A series of follow up meetings will take place between IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland with a view to finalising the joint strategy by the end of Quarter 3 2013.

Action 193: Promote the greater utilisation of standards, emerging standards, and the standardisation process by companies through information events, a programme of standardisation initiatives for SMEs, and the greater use of the Your Standards, Your Say information portal.

Q1 Measure: Hold at least one standards/certification information event per quarter with a focus on SMEs (NSAI)

Update: Complete

110 industry representatives attended a standards event which was held in Dublin in February in conjunction with a joint meeting of the Presidents of EU and USA standards organisations.

Further standards and certification events/road shows are planned to take place throughout the year.

The March issue of the National Standards Authority of Ireland quarterly Ezine was themed on promoting standardisation and was distributed to 11,731 recipients.

Action 194: Complete the programme of evaluations of agency programmes to determine their appropriateness, efficiency and effectiveness, and draw out lessons for tailoring interventions. The evaluations to be undertaken in 2013 will focus on capability-building and business development programmes operated by Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland.

Q1 Measure: Develop project plan for undertaking evaluation of circa 40 agency programmes, to define scope, timelines, resource management and priorities (Forfás)

Update: Complete

A comprehensive listing of all relevant business development programmes delivered by Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland was reviewed to determine the most efficient and appropriate scheduling of programme evaluations over 2013.

These programmes include the thematic areas of job creation, productivity, export growth/new markets and mentoring. The focus of the evaluations will be on the input period of 2005-2010, and on programmes that involve the circa 90% of total annualised expenditures on business development programmes.

In a number of instances, programmes have been bundled where appropriate (e.g. those that have evolved over time and/or have been 'rebranded'). A detailed project plan has been finalised that will see the delivery of 10 evaluations covering circa 40 programmes (including bundled items) by the end of 2013.

Assisting Indigenous Businesses to Trade

Trading is central to the growth of indigenous firms and we will continue to help and support companies to navigate the challenges inherent in entering new markets

Action 195: Design and implement a pilot Internationalisation Expansion Initiative to support the acceleration of company traction in overseas markets. The initiative will have the goal of enabling qualifying companies to research, evaluate and plan the development of market entry strategies in new geographic markets.

Q1 Measure: Develop a pilot initiative (EI)

Update: Complete

A new Market Validation Grant has been developed and was approved by Enterprise Ireland's Executive Committee during Quarter 1. This grant will form the central element of the Internationalisation Expansion Initiative and will, as scheduled, be piloted in Quarter 2.

Action 198: Continue to develop a co-ordinated approach to reputation-building efforts across Government, including regularly updating key messages on Ireland's economic recovery and their dissemination via Ireland's Embassy Network overseas. Utilise Ireland's EU Presidency to get across positive messages on Ireland to an international audience, including via the www.eu2013.ie website.

Q1 Measure: Little Book of Irish Science update and reprint for distribution at Irish Presidency events and to embassies, etc. (SFI)

Update: Complete

Science Foundation Ireland updated and printed 7,000 copies of the Little Book of Irish Science for distribution at Irish Presidency events. Copies of the publication have been provided to the Irish Presidency Press Centre in Dublin Castle and distributed to organisers hosting events during the Presidency – this includes the Irish Blood Board, the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation as well as the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade for Ireland's Embassy network.

Q1 Measure: Use the EU Presidency period to communicate positive messages on Ireland to international and domestic audiences (All Government Departments)

Update: Complete

The presentation of economic messaging on Ireland for international and domestic audiences was further enhanced in Quarter 1 with the relevant output being regularly updated and real-time question and answer material provided on emerging issues. This messaging continues to be available throughout the Embassy network and relevant agencies for daily use in a variety of contexts.

Specific key economic and promotional messages were developed in cooperation with relevant state agencies ahead of St. Patrick's Day promotional opportunities, particularly those directly linked to the Ministerial travel programme. Promotional DVDs and other material were also distributed to the Embassy network for use at St. Patrick's Day events worldwide.

Promotional messaging visuals were developed for use in Presidency meetings in Dublin and overseas. The Embassy network was very active in leveraging the EU Presidency to promote key economic messages to media and influential audiences, hosting Presidency launch press conferences and conducting an extensive programme of TV, radio and newspaper interviews. An op-ed by the Tánaiste on the Irish economy was placed in quality newspapers in 15 countries with a combined print circulation of almost 3 million. Substantial visits of Brussels-based and London-based media linked to our Presidency were organised with the assistance of the Embassy network resulting in considerable positive international media coverage of Ireland. A gift to mark our EU Presidency and for St Patrick's Day of A *History of Ireland in 100 Objects* has been downloaded by 20,000 plus people globally (at time of writing).

Action 199: Roll out a schedule of Trade Missions and events focused on the priority markets identified in the Government Trade Strategy and targeting sectors of particular relevance to Irish companies. At least 15 of these Missions will be led at Ministerial level.

Q1 Measure: Prepare schedule of Missions (DJEI, DFAT, EI and relevant departments and agencies)

Update: Complete

Minister Bruton along with the Tánaiste launched the 2013 programme of Ministerial events targeting trade and investment for Ireland on March 13th.

Trade Missions and events undertaken in Quarter 1 included a Trade visit to Germany by the Minister of State for Research and Innovation, Seán Sherlock, in February and a Trade Mission to Texas by the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, Richard Bruton, in March.

As part of the St. Patrick's Day 'Promote Ireland' programme, the Taoiseach, Tánaiste and Government Ministers, travelled to 21 countries across North America, Europe, the Middle East and Asia for a series of trade, investment and tourism-focused programmes.

Action 200: Develop and implement local, country-specific market plans in priority markets as provided for in the Government Trade Strategy under the auspices of the Export Trade Council, with a particular focus on high-growth markets.

Q1 Measure: Present 27 local market plans for 2013 to Export Trade Council (DFAT)

Update: Complete

Under the Government Trade, Tourism and Investment Strategy, 27 priority markets have been identified for the integrated promotion of trade, tourism and investment.

In each market, Ireland's Ambassador chairs the local market team, which consists of Embassy staff and representatives of the relevant state agencies present in the market. These integrated market teams submit detailed annual local market plans outlining how they will grow trade, investment and tourism between Ireland and the market in question to the Export Trade Council.

Local market plans for 2013 for all 27 priority markets were received and presented to the Export Trade Council in February 2013.

Supporting Employment at the Community and Local Level

Supporting Employment at the Community and Local Level

Action 223: Prepare a report on the medium-term economic development of rural areas for the period to 2025 based on a national consultation of rural stakeholders including employers, unions, farm bodies, community organisation and the public sector.

Q1 Measure: Commence consultation (DECLG)

Update: Complete

The consultation phase is well underway; 35 meetings have taken place all over Ireland involving 27 stakeholder meetings and 8 public meetings. A conference to report interim findings will be organised for June and preparation for this is event is at an advanced stage.

Q1 Measure: Commence research and analysis economic factors affecting rural areas (DECLG)

Update: Complete

The research phase has commenced and Teagasc is currently engaging with the relevant sectors to assess the current issues and challenges with regard to economic development in rural areas.

Action 226: Review activity in the report published in 2012 by the County and City Managers' Association (CCMA) which identified actions/projects/activities undertaken by Local Authorities which can be seen to contribute to local development, enterprise support and economic growth.

Q1 Measure: CCMA to publish update report (DECLG)

Update: Complete

The update report provides an overview of the scale and scope of activities undertaken across all 34 County/City Councils to support local development, enterprise and economic growth.

The update report was launched by the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, Phil Hogan, on April 18th. The report will be published on the Local Government Management Agency's website and each County/City Council will also publish the report and/or a more localised version.

In developing this report, the County and City Managers Association (CCMA) received details on more than 2,700 separate activities ongoing across the 34 County/City Councils. The process of gathering, centralising and disseminating this information, in itself, generated a number of beneficial outputs and outcomes which can be leveraged by Local Authorities and relevant stakeholders, including:

- An individual template for each County/City Council outlining a 'snapshot' of positive actions taken in support of enterprise and economic development; and

- A composite and searchable database of all relevant actions which can be used to :

  - Inform promotional and briefing material for stakeholders and businesses locally, regionally and nationally

  - Disseminate best practice and identify areas where activities can be replicated etc.

- At the strategic level, the tool can be used to inform policymakers about the essential and growing role played by local authorities as an 'engine for growth' at the local level in helping to foster enterprise, innovation and employment.

Action 227: Through the Local and Community Development Programme (LCDP), continue to work towards:

- Increasing access to formal and informal educational, recreational and cultural activities and resources; and

- Increasing people's work readiness and employment prospects and support for enterprise start-ups

through a particular focus on work readiness and employment prospects and through careful analysis of the Programme outputs and impacts.

Current validity of the LCDP objectives and/or outcomes and their compatibility with the Programme for Government will be examined.

Q1 Measure: Carry out a Mid Term Review of the Local and Community Development Programme. (DECLG, Pobal, Local Development Companies)

Update: Complete

The final draft of the Mid Term Review has been submitted to the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government and its findings are being reviewed. The findings from the Mid Term Review and the Department's consideration of same will assist in informing the shape of the successor Programme to the current Local and Community Development Programme.

Action 235: Provide over 6,000 after school child-care places targeted at primary school children whose parents have taken up employment opportunities.

Q1 Measure: Design Childcare Scheme (DCYA, DSP, DES)

Update: Complete

The Departments of Social Protection and of Children and Family Affairs have completed the preparatory arrangements for the new school-age childcare scheme. The scheme is expected to be introduced on a pilot basis in the coming weeks in seven Local Office areas with a view to being launched on a national basis in September 2013.

Sectoral Opportunities

Manufacturing

Action 241: Bring the recently completed Forfás/DJEI Strategy for the manufacturing sector to Government for consideration and launch the report.

Q1 Measure: Submit report on Manufacturing to Government and publish report (DJEI)

Update: Complete

The Forfás/Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation Strategy for the Manufacturing sector was completed at the end of 2012 and has been submitted to and noted by Government. The report, *Making it in Ireland - Manufacturing 2020,* was formally launched in tandem with the Forfás/EGFSN report, *Future Skills Requirements of the Manufacturing Sector to 2020,* by the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, Richard Bruton, and the Minister for Education and Skills, Ruairi Quinn, in April.

The Strategy is a very significant, in-depth analysis of the sector and sets out the policy actions needed to support a sustainable and competitive manufacturing sector to 2020. It contains a series of recommendations and actions to support the development of manufacturing and to retain and expand its employment potential.

A range of key recommended actions from the Strategy have been incorporated into the Action Plan for Jobs 2013. These actions include the:

▪ Launching of a National Step Change Initiative to strengthen Ireland's manufacturing base, focused on capability building and enabling companies to take one step up to drive enhanced productivity and competitiveness, to internationalise, to deepen engagement in innovation and to collaborate to compete;

▪ A review and enhancement of existing support programmes, including management development programmes and Excellence Through People;

▪ A concerted effort by the enterprise development agencies to encourage more manufacturing companies to engage in research, development and innovation; and

▪ The establishment of a cohort of manufacturing champions in Ireland to promote careers in manufacturing.

Agriculture, Food and Marine

Action 253: Attract graduate talent into the sector through the Bord Bia Marketing Fellowship which will employ 25 new graduates on over 100 business development projects in 2013.

Q1 Measure: Applications for the 2013/2014 received (Bord Bia)

Update: Complete

460 applications for the 2013/2014 Marketing Fellowship have been received and it is planned that 25 offers for that cohort will be made in Quarter 2.

Action 256: Work to secure adequate funding for the agri-food sector through a reformed CAP policy framework that contributes to the twin goals of competitiveness and sustainability.

Q1 Measure:

- Undertake intensive consultations and contacts with other Member States, Commission and European Parliament on CAP reform;

- Irish presidency to design and table realistic and acceptable CAP compromises; and

- Achieve a Council General approach and mandate to enter trilogies on CAP reform

(DAFM)

Update: Complete

Intensive consultations have been undertaken and contacts made with the Commission, the European Parliament and other Member States in relation to CAP reform. Over Quarter 1 formal bilateral meetings have taken place with Poland, Hungary, Germany, France, Netherlands, Italy, Romania, Spain, Portugal, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania and the UK.

Agreement on a Council General approach* on CAP reform was achieved in March 2013, following the tabling of a series of compromises by the Irish Presidency.

* A Council General approach is an EU procedural mechanism to help achieve broad agreement between the 27 Member States.

Action 257: Roll out a schedule of food related Ministerial Trade and Investment Missions and continue with technical and diplomatic efforts to improve trade and access for agri-food products.

Q1 Measure: Assess assignment of resources to key markets to assist trade and market access issues (DAFM)

Update: Complete

A review of agriculture attaché posts has been undertaken and two new agriculture attachés will be assigned to Moscow (from August 2013) and to Beijing (from January 2014) reflecting the importance which Ireland and the Irish agri-food sector attaches to increased trade with, and exports, to China and Russia.

Action 258: Using externally-funded research contracts, fill up to 15 new research posts in the Marine Institute (in the areas of fisheries management, environment & food safety, oceanography, and mapping & modelling).

Q1 Measure: Implement the Protocol for Externally Funded Contract Posts in DAFM Non-Commercial State Agencies (Marine Institute)

Update: Complete

The Protocol for recruiting externally funded posts has been identified by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and has been circulated for implementation by the Marine Institute.

Internal processes are being finalised to support implementing the protocol and the Marine Institute is in the process of agreeing priorities of posts to be recruited during 2013. It is anticipated that 5 posts will be recruited in the areas of oceanographic services, modelling and fisheries in Quarter 3. The business cases for these appointments are being prepared in line with the relevant protocols in the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

Action 261: Progress the SmartBay marine technology test and demonstration facilities in Galway Bay by preparing for the installation of a fibre optic cable from An Spidéal to an underwater hub that links to the unique ¼ scale ocean energy test facility to develop research and commercial opportunities in the technology and energy sectors.

Q1 Measure: Submit cable Foreshore License application (Marine Institute)

Update: Complete

Following an extensive pre-application process, the required foreshore licence for the installation of a fibre optic cable, for use in a scaled underwater research hub, has been lodged.

Action 265: Teagasc and industry partner to develop a new dairy ingredient/process.

Q1 Measure: Transfer new technologies from research programme within Teagasc (Teagasc)

Update: Complete

Protocols have been developed for the separation of dairy proteins at laboratory scale. Pilot-scale utilities have been upgraded to facilitate scale-up from laboratory trials and pilot-scale trials have been performed. Confidential trials have been run with an industrial partner and the powder is currently being tested in a number of different applications.

The process should result in the development of a milk based powder with new and/or improved functionality for the dairy processor. The rationale is to provide new opportunities for utilisation of milk.

Action 266: Work with meat industry to progress 13 projects under the Beef-Sheepmeat Fund.

Q1 Measure: Hold project review meetings with companies responsible for the delivery of all 13 projects (EI)

Update: Complete

Enterprise Ireland has had discussions with all recipient companies and further reviews will take place during the year.

Launched in December 2008, the Beef and Sheepmeat Investment Fund is administered by Enterprise Ireland on behalf of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. The purpose of the fund is to support capital investments that seek to better utilise the overall industry capacity through increased scale in primary processing, increased added value in further processing and improved efficiencies to allow Irish companies compete internationally.

Action 267: Achieve an annualised sales target of €25 million from Marketplace 2012 and foster new buyer relationships

Q1 Measure: Final measure of impact of Marketplace 2012 (Bord Bia)

Update: Complete

176 Irish food and drink companies participated in Marketplace 2012 which was held in February 2012 and involved more than 4,500 structured meetings with 500 buyers from 28 countries.

Of the 176 participants, 91 wrote business, and/or secured sales listings, with the buyers at

the event. The majority of this came from British customers, followed by Irish, French, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese, German and Asian. Total business written has reached €31.8 million over the 12 months since the event was held.

Action 268: Increase new product development (NPD) and sales volume from innovation initiatives such as BIM Seafood Centre, Teagasc Food Technology Centre and foresight4food.

Q1 Measure: Nine individual and nine syndicated foresight4food projects initiated; one Inspiration Expedition undertaken (Bord Bia)

Update: Complete

14 individual and 11 syndicated *foresight4food* projects have been initiated over Quarter 1 2013, encompassing the areas of dairy, meat, horticulture, prepared consumer foods, confectionary and beverages.

An *Inspiration Expedition* to South Africa took place in January. Organised by Bord Bia, *Inspiration Expeditions* are group trips involving multiple companies to key destinations that offer exceptional stimuli for new food product ideas. South Africa is such a destination as its diverse cultural influences have produced a cuisine and food culture that is particularly noted by food writers for its meat and fish dishes. Indeed, this cuisine is increasingly evident in the fast-growing channel of 'on-street' consumption around the world.

Action 269: Work to achieve the target of 75% of food and drink exports being supplied by companies participating in the 'Origin Green' sustainability charter by the end of 2014.

Q1 Measure: Complete workshops for 150 participating companies (Bord Bia)

Update: Complete

Origin Green is a sustainability programme launched by An Taoiseach in June 2012. Under this programme, companies are required to develop a plan setting out their individual targets in a specified set of areas such as energy, waste, and emission reductions. Plans are independently approved and monitored by the internationally-renowned SGS to provide assurance to existing and prospective customers of the company's sustainability credentials.

Bord Bia is holding a series of workshops for food and drink companies to raise awareness of the programme and to provide information on the process for participating in the 'Origin Green' sustainability charter. The workshops are demand-led and as of the end of March 130 companies attended workshops from a total of 200 invited.

The workshops will continue to be run as Bord Bia continues to work towards the overall objective of 75% of exports being supplied by participating companies. The achievement of that objective is dependent more on which companies participate rather than a predetermined number attending each session.

Action 270: Initiate a new application phase of the FoodWorks programme in 2013 to support a further cohort of new food entrepreneurs.

Q1 Measure: Stage 1 (Plan Your Path) - Programme launch (Bord Bia, EI, Teagasc)

Update: Complete

A second *FoodWorks* programme was launched on March 26th. Prior advertising took place at the National Business Expo in the RDS in March with national advertising and stakeholder briefings held in Cork, Galway, Waterford and Dublin. A briefing session for entrepreneurs will take place in April. The final date for receipt of applications to Food Works 2 programme is April 29th.

Action 271: Advance 10 further food industry co-opetition projects.

Q1 Measure: Two projects introduced or progressed (Bord Bia)

Update: Complete

Three new projects in this area have been proposed since July of 2012 relating to various aspects of horticulture and marketing.

Action 274: Progress new industry-led Dairy Processing Technology Centre with a clear commercialisation agenda and launch Phase 2 of Food for Health Ireland (FHI).

Q1 Measure: Obtain Approval for Food for Health 2 Proposal (EI)

Update: Complete

Funding for Phase 2 of Food for Health Ireland (2013-2018) was approved by the Board of Enterprise Ireland at its meeting in February 2013. The programme will focus on commercialisation of the outputs from the first term of Food for Health Ireland.

Food for Health Ireland brings world-class science and dairy industry know-how together in one research centre aimed at developing, manufacturing, marketing and selling nutritional ingredients and functional food products to improve people's health and wellness.

Action 275: Encourage a high level of adoption of the internationally recognised Food Safety System Certification (FSSC) by Irish food producers, suppliers, and exporters.

Q1 Measure: Develop promotional material and inform client base on benefits of FSSC (NSAI)

Update: Complete

- A detailed Guide on Food and Drink Certification (FSSC) has been developed and distributed and is available on the National Standards Authority of Ireland's website

- A dedicated mail shot detailing the FSSC, and including the Guide referred to above, has been issued to:

  - 156 milk and meat food producers in Ireland

  - 220 clients with food related activities

Green Economy

Action 276: Establish and convene meetings of a Consultative Committee on Jobs in the Green Economy to identify opportunities for further job creation in the sector.

Q1 Measures:

1. Agree terms of reference and core Membership of Consultative Committee (DJEI)

2. Establish Consultative Committee (DJEI)

Update: Complete

As part of the *Action Plan for Jobs 2012*, the Government published a Policy Statement on growth and employment in the green economy, *Delivering Our Green Potential*. The Policy Statement envisaged the establishment of a Consultative Committee on Jobs in the Green Economy, to be chaired by the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, to identify emerging employment opportunities for Ireland in this area.

The Terms of Reference and core membership of the Committee have been agreed by the Minister. The Committee will comprise five representatives each from industry and from relevant public sector bodies. Other industry practitioners and stakeholders will also be invited to attend meetings of the Committee to discuss thematic areas of opportunity as appropriate.

It is anticipated that the Committee will examine the jobs potential of the following sub-sectors of the green economy in 2013: green products and services, energy and resource efficiency, renewable energy, and sustainable food and forestry. It is proposed that the first meeting will take place in May or June 2013, in line with the Quarter 2 commitment in the *Action Plan for Jobs 2013*.

Action 278: Conduct research to commence benchmarking employment numbers in the Green Economy.

Q1 Measures:

1. Meet with CSO to consider potential involvement in project (DJEI)

2. Consult with relevant Departments, Agencies and Stakeholders to gather data (DJEI)

Update: Complete

A number of publications to date have provided a range of estimates of employment in the green economy in Ireland. The purpose of this action is to develop an understanding of, and benchmark more clearly, employment in the green economy sector in Ireland.

Officials from the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation have met with the Central Statistics Office (CSO) in relation to this project and are working, in parallel, on collecting information regarding benchmarking employment in the green economy.

In conjunction with the CSO, the Department has consulted with relevant stakeholders such as Enterprise Ireland, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Forfás, and the Green IFSC. A desk review of previous studies on green economy employment in Ireland, and other countries, is also underway.

Action 281: Implement the Green Public Procurement Action Plan to promote the development of a market for green products and services.

Q1 Measure: Undertake research and analysis of economic benefit and best practice examples of GPP (DECLG)

Update: Complete

Set within the overall context of *Our Sustainable Future, A Framework for Sustainable Development for Ireland*, *Green Tenders – An Action Plan for Green Public Procurement* aims to assist public authorities in successfully planning and implementing green public procurement (GPP) policies and practices.

The action plan initially prioritised eight sectors – construction, energy, transport, food and catering services, cleaning products and services, paper, uniforms and other textiles and ICT.

A Green Tenders Implementation Group (GTIG), co-chaired by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, is directly tasked with overseeing the implementation of the action plan.

Members of the Group, each of which is responsible for the implementation of actions in their own area, have been asked to report on progress, including timelines for the delivery

of key actions, in advance of each meeting. An updated progress report on all GPP actions identified in the action plan will be presented to the GTIG at each meeting.

To support Departments and agencies in making progress in their respective areas, a sub-group has been established to examine a range of issues around the implementation of actions including cost effectiveness, and in particular to identify 'quick wins' for the implementation. A large number of complete actions have already been identified in all sectors. The sub-group has also undertaken research and analysis of the economic benefits and best practice of GPP at home, and internationally. This report, which will support and facilitate the implementation of the action plan, will be presented to the subgroup and GTIG at their next meeting in Quarter 2 2013.

Action 284: Continue to review and upgrade the energy performance standards of buildings in keeping with the standards of the most advanced EU Member States in order to ensure progress towards low energy, low carbon economy and promote innovation and deployment of energy efficient building components and systems.

Q1 Measure: Commencement of mandatory advertising of Building Energy Ratings (BERs) for buildings offered for sale or rent (DECLG)

Update: Complete

The EU (Energy Performance of Buildings) Regulations 2012 (S.I. No. 243 of 2012), introducing the mandatory requirement to reference Building Energy Ratings in advertisements relating to the sale or letting of properties, came into effect on and from January 9th 2013. Guidelines produced by Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland to assist persons meeting their statutory obligations in relation to this advertising are currently being finalised following consultation with industry.

Q1 Measure: Identify cost optimal positions for energy efficiency measures to inform Building Regulations (DECLG)

Update: Complete

A report on the cost optimal positions for the energy performance of new and existing buildings in Ireland was filed with the EU Commission on March 21st. The report will inform future regulation on energy efficiency of buildings, including Ireland's definition of nearly zero energy buildings to be achieved by or before 2020.

Action 285: Promote the adoption of the ISO 14001 Environmental Management System standard and/or the ISO 50001 Energy Management System standard by Irish based companies.

Q1 Measure: Develop promotional material and inform client base on benefits of ISO 14001 & ISO 50001 (NSAI)

Update: Complete

- A detailed Guide on the Energy Management System (ISO 5001) has been developed and distributed and is available on the National Standards Authority of Ireland's website.

- A detailed Guide on the Environmental Management System (ISO 14001) has been developed and distributed and is available on the National Standards Authority of Ireland's website.

- A dedicated mail shot, detailing both systems and including the above Guides was issued to circa 2,500 clients in Quarter 1.

Action 286: Develop an Irish Standard on Energy Efficiency Design Methodology to support the development of the Green Economy and better improve industry energy consumption efficiencies.

Q1 Measure: Identification of key stakeholders (NSAI, SEAI)

Update: Complete

A Standards Consultative Committee has been established to progress this initiative. Key stakeholders have been identified and nominations for membership have been sought from these stakeholders.

Construction and Property

Action 292: Bring the draft Forfás strategy and outlook for the construction sector to Government for consideration and agree actions to be undertaken to meet the Government's objectives for the sector on foot of the report's recommendations.

Q1 Measure: Submit draft Strategy to Government for consideration (DJEI)

Update: Complete

The Forfás report on the Construction sector, *Ireland's Construction Sector: Outlook and Strategic Plan to 2015*, was completed at the end of 2012. The report has been submitted to, and noted by, Government.

The Government has agreed that the Cabinet Committee structures should be used to progress the relevant recommendations in the report.

Tourism

Action 308: Put in place a facility for visas to be provided free of charge for visitors attending events taking place under the auspices of The Gathering.

Q1 Measures:

1. Conclude agreement between Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service and The Gathering organisers on remit, format and issuing of free of charge visas for major events (INIS, D/Justice)

2. Put in place practical arrangements for implementation of agreement (INIS, D/Justice)

Update: Complete

The agreement between the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) and the Gathering provides for the granting of visas free of charge and on an accelerated basis to visa-required nationals attending 29 authorised events during the Gathering.

The Gathering organisers have told INIS that the arrangement "… is hugely appreciated by the Gathering and is of great benefit to the event organisers. They think it is a really fantastic benefit when selling their event and Ireland as a destination to their overseas delegates."

Creative Services

Action 314: Provide support for Built Heritage projects through the Structures at Risk Fund.

Q1 Measure: Draw up terms and conditions for Structures at Risk Fund 2013 and issue to Local Authorities (DAHG)

Update: Complete

The aim of the Structures at Risk Fund is to assist in reducing the risk of deterioration of Ireland's architectural heritage whilst continuing to support employment in the conservation and construction industries. Small but targeted heritage grants incentivise job-rich investment in existing assets and protect the value of those assets. Built heritage conservation work is labour intensive, uses high-end craft and professional skills with much of the materials required for the work sourced locally.

The terms and conditions of the Structures at Risk Fund 2013 have been developed and have been circulated to Local Authorities.

Action 318: Continue to increase the profile of the Craft Sector in Ireland through the involvement of the Crafts Council of Ireland in a number of key initiatives.

Q1 Measure: Host Showcase 2013 (Crafts Council of Ireland)

Update: Complete

Showcase 2013, Ireland's Creative Expo was held from January 20th to the 23rd. The event is the country's largest international trade fair with 435 of Ireland's leading designers, manufacturers and craftspeople exhibiting their products. 4,975 buyers attended from 17 countries including Ireland, the UK, USA, Europe and Japan, with forecasted sales orders of €18 million arising from the event. While the domestic consumer market remains challenging, the export markets expressed more optimism and a strong call for 'made in Ireland' was expressed by all buyers, with Irish made crafted products ordered by the majority.

Showcase is a collaboration between the Crafts Council of Ireland, which organises and hosts the showcase, and Enterprise Ireland which markets the show overseas. It is also supported by the County and City Enterprise Boards and Leader Partnerships which work to bring new and start-up companies to the event.

Q1 Measure: Participate in Inhorgenta (German Exhibition) (Crafts Council of Ireland)

Update: Complete

The Crafts Council of Ireland, with support from Culture Ireland as part of the EU Culture Connects programme, presented the work of 21 jewellery makers together on a group stand at Inhorgenta which was held in Munich from February 22nd to 25th 2013.

Inhorghenta is Germany's largest jewellery fair and one of the leading trade shows worldwide for jewellery and timepieces. A total of 1,237 exhibitors – an increase of 9% over 2012 – presented their latest collections at the show. Around 30,000 trade visitors came from 85 countries.

The goal of Ireland's participation in the trade fair and exhibition was to highlight the diversity, quality and creativity of work being produced in Ireland at present and to position it strongly in the eyes of the buyers, gallery-owners and influencers who attend the show.

Ireland was one of 6 nation stands and feedback from the show organisers was that the Irish presentation of work was considered to be extremely strong. There was a very positive reaction from visitors, show organisers and other exhibitors and a number of the exhibiting jewellers had strong orders as well as retail and media interest.

Aviation Services

Action 321: Support the development of an International Aviation Services Centre (IASC) in Shannon.

Q1 Measure: Re-establish Board in SAA pending establishment of IASC (DTTAS)

Update: Complete

The Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport made a number of appointments to the Board of the Shannon Airport Authority in Quarter 1. There are now seven members of the Board.

Cloud Computing

Action 328: Provide forums for the purpose of promoting the cloud computing standard, SWiFT 10, and discussing cloud computing and issues related to standards.

Q1 Measure: Host an open seminar as part of an EU-USA standards summit covering data analytics and management, security and privacy related to information (NSAI)

Update: Complete

A Seminar on the 'Role of Standards in Research, Development and Innovation' was held on February 13th in the Royal College of Surgeons, Dublin and was attended by 110 delegates. Two of the papers specifically addressed cloud computing and data analytics issues.

Action 333: Promote Ireland as a centre of excellence in Information Security.

Q1 Measure: The Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (DJEI) will explore with the Departments of Justice and Equality (DJE) and Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (DCENR) the role and functions of a dedicated Expert Group on Security and Privacy as recommended by the Cloud Computing Implementation Group (DJEI, D/Justice, DCENR)

Update: Delayed

The Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation has invited the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources and the Department of Justice and Equality to a meeting to commence the process of exploring the possible role and functions of the Expert Group. Due to competing priorities, this meeting has not yet taken place.