# ACTION PLAN FOR JOBS

## 2014

First Progress Report

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# Commentary

This is the first report of 2014 from the Monitoring Committee established by Government to monitor and drive implementation of the measures contained in the Action Plan for Jobs 2014. It outlines progress made on measures due for completion in the first quarter of 2014. 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 high-level goal of the Action Plan for Jobs, first introduced in 2012, is to create the environment where the number of people at work will have increased by 100,000 by 2016, and will have reached 2.1 million people by 2020.

The Government published the third in its multi-annual *Action Plan for Jobs* series in February this year. This Plan, which contains 385 actions to be implemented in 2014 by all 16 Government Departments and by 46 agencies, will build on the progress made in 2012 and 2013 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 over 500 actions already implemented under *Action Plan for Jobs 2012 and 2013 cumulatively*, and reported on by the Monitoring Committee in its previous eight quarterly reports (see www.djei.ie).

Six of the seven Disruptive Reforms introduced in 2013 will be progressed further in 2014 as these are multi-annual initiatives (Big Data/Analytics; ICT Skills; Integrated Licensing Application Service; Trading Online; Energy Efficiency; and National Health Innovation Hub). The Jobs Plus initiative, launched in 2013, has already been mainstreamed and has proven particularly impactful. Three new Disruptive Reforms have been introduced in 2014: Entrepreneurship; Winning Abroad; and Manufacturing: National Step Change. In total, there are nine Disruptive Reforms to be advanced in 2014.

## Action Plan for Jobs: Supporting economic growth and job creation

While unemployment remains high, there are continuing signs of progress in the labour market and the economy generally. The latest data from the CSO QNHS shows that there was an increase in employment of 3.3% or 61,000 in 2013 with 89% of this increased employment in full-time roles. Total employment in Quarter 4, 2013 was 1,909,800, or 62,100 more people at work than when the Action Plan for Jobs process began in 2012.

The continuing scale of the employment challenge is evident with 253,200 persons unemployed at the end of 2013. However, this represented a decrease of 41,400 or 14.1% in the number of people unemployed in the year. It is worth noting that this fall in unemployment over the year took place in the context of an overall increase in the labour force which grew from 2,143,500 in Q4 2012 to 2,163,100 in Q4 2013. The rate of

unemployment peaked at 15.1% in Feb 2012 and reduced to 11.7 per cent in April 2014 with CSO reporting a fall in unemployment for 22 months in a row.

Employment increased in ten of the fourteen economic sectors reported by CSO during 2013 and fell in four. The largest rates of increase were recorded in the "Agriculture, forestry and fishing", the "Accommodation and food service activities" and the "Professional, scientific and technical activities" sectors. In terms of the export-oriented sectors of the economy, client companies of Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland created 5,442 and 6,570 new net jobs respectively; this represents the highest levels of net new job creation by agency client companies in over a decade.

## Actions due in Quarter 1

In the first quarter of 2014, Departments and agencies were to deliver 103 measures under the Action Plan. Six of the measures due in Quarter 1 of 2014 have not been delivered on schedule, giving a completion rate of 94 per cent. In delivering 97 first quarter measures under the Plan, the Government has, for example:

- As part of Disruptive Reform 1 – Entrepreneurship

  o *Formally launched the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) network, a world class enterprise support facility to provide a 'first stop shop' service for local start-ups and small businesses.*

  o *Launched a Customer Charter to ensure a consistent standard of service available to all clients of the LEOs to respond to all business ideas.*

  o *Launched a new website providing information on all national and local enterprise supports as well as guidance and advice on various aspects of starting a business.*

  o *Launched the first of a number of regionally targeted Competitive Feasibility Funds (in Cork region) providing funding of up to €25,000 towards the cost of investigating and validating a business idea. Additional funds will be launched in  South East, North East and Mid West regions in 2014.*

- As part of Disruptive Reform 2 – Winning Abroad

  o *Finalised and published the review of the Government's Trade, Tourism and Investment Strategy, to encourage a more flexible and focussed approach in Ireland's efforts to promote trade, tourism and investment overseas.*

  o *Developed and agreed the work programme to deliver the Year of Irish Design 2015.*

- As part of Disruptive Reform 3 – Manufacturing: National Step Change

  o *Established a National Excellence Award through NSAI to promote and recognise the use of formal business management systems within the manufacturing sector.*

- As part of Disruptive Reform 5 – ICT Skills

    o *Published a revised ICT Skills Action Plan that addresses ICT skills needs to 2018 and sets out a range of measures with the overarching goal of increasing the domestic supply of ICT graduate output from 63 per cent of demand in 2014 to 74 per cent of demand in 2018 including the provision of an additional 1,250 undergraduate ICT places per year in higher education institutions.*

- As part of Disruptive Reform 7 – Trading Online

    o *Completed the second trial of the Trading Online initiative in Dublin and commenced work on national roll out of the scheme.*

- As part of Disruptive Reform 8 – Energy Efficiency

    o *Established the Energy Efficiency Fund under Action 81, to address the issue of availability of sufficient, properly structured finance to support energy efficiency projects in Ireland. The Government has committed up to €35 million to generate a fund of over €70 million when matched with investment from the private sector.*

- As part of Disruptive Reform 9 – National Health Innovation Hub

    o *Assessed and selected the participants for the next round of projects for the Cork Demonstrator based on call for proposals. Under this call, 13 projects involving 16 companies will be supported. The Cork Demonstrator provides for testing of the innovation hub concept and will inform a proposal on the establishment of a National Health Innovation Hub.*

And more broadly, in Quarter 1, the Government has, for example:

- Under Actions 89 and 90, established new structures and mechanisms through the Cabinet Committee on Economic Recovery and Jobs and other Cabinet Committees for ongoing monitoring and reporting on key competitiveness issues for Ireland and the initiatives required to make it easier to do business in Ireland. The Government will consider a report every quarter on key competitiveness issues identified through this process.

- Under Action 98, progressed completion of Committee stage of the Legal Services Regulation Bill to deliver more efficient, transparent and competitive legal services in Ireland and reduce costs for the enterprise sector.

- Under Action 107, launched the Energy Policy Green Paper for Ireland which identifies a range of issues that need to be addressed to meet existing and future challenges, and which will feed into the development and publication of a new Energy Policy White Paper.

- Under Action 113, established a Working Group to investigate the potential for a unified employment permit and visa applications system that will streamline processes for companies and individuals.

- Under Action 115, commenced preparation of a new national planning framework which will inform new regional spatial and economic strategies.

- Under Action 122, progressed actions through the Government's Research Prioritisation Action Group (PAG) to prioritise funding for Innovation in Services and Business Processes.

- Under Action 141, established the National Support Structure in Enterprise Ireland for the €79 billion EU Horizon 2020 research programme, put in place a range of measures through Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) to incentivise participation by SFI-funded researchers in Horizon 2020 and provided support for the National Marie Sklodowska-Curie Office in partnership with the Irish Universities Association.

- Under Action 146, launched the 2014 Enterprise Partnership Scheme through the Irish Research Council to cultivate enterprise focused researchers in the formative years of their research careers.

- Under Action 170, developed for the first time through Solas an overall annual Further Education and Training (FET) Plan, providing integrated information on a common basis of the full range of FET provision across the 16 Education and Training Boards. Future annual service plans will be shaped in accordance with the objectives of the FET Strategy.

- Under Action 194, commenced implementation of Ireland's national plan the Youth Guarantee which provides for targeted labour market activation measures addressing youth unemployment.

- Under Action 210, commenced a consultation exercise through Enterprise Ireland to inform the sectoral and development stage focus of future calls under the Seed and Venture Capital Scheme 2013-2018.

- Under Action 221, designed and commenced implementation of a communications strategy aimed at SMEs which will address in particular the issue of access to finance and the range of Government-supported schemes and supports available to SMEs addressing financing needs.

- Under Action 222, commenced delivery through Skillnets of a programme to build financial capability in SMEs targeting 1,000 participants.

- Under Action 241, established a working group comprised of SME stakeholders to examine ways to improve SME access to public procurement opportunities and provide input to new public procurement guidelines.

- Under Action 252, identified a pilot project through Enterprise Ireland for a Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) type programme in Ireland. SBIR-type programmes provide opportunities for SMEs to develop and demonstrate innovative solutions, supported by a Government entity which acts as a key reference customer.

- Under Action 282, completed a public consultation process in respect of the 2014-2020 Rural Development Programme which includes measures supporting farm sustainability.

- Under Action 292, published the Offshore Energy Renewable Development Plan (OERDP) which sets out how Ireland can harness the opportunities presented by offshore renewable energy to contribute to economic recovery, growth and jobs.

- Under Action 305, published 'Construction 2020 – A Strategy for a Renewed Construction Sector' setting out 75 specific actions to help restore a competitive, innovative construction sector, operating at sustainable levels of activity.

- Under Action 348, progressed the introduction of a National Postcode System, with a view to rolling out the system in the first half of 2015, by signing a contract with the Postcode Management Licence Holder.

However, as stated above, 6 of the measures outlined in the Plan for Q1 have not been delivered on schedule.  These are:

- *Develop a National Action Plan in consultation with civil society and Departments in respect of Ireland's membership of the Open Government Partnership (OGP), focusing in particular on the progression of Open Data initiatives* – Action 70.  The deadline set internationally for submitting National Action Plans under this initiative has been changed to June 2014. DPER is now working towards the revised international deadline.

- *Seek Government approval for revision of the legislation underpinning the Credit Guarantee Scheme to enhance the take-up and impact of the scheme* – Action 208. The Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation has identified changes required to the Credit Guarantee Scheme. These changes will require an amendment to the Credit Guarantee Act 2012, a new Credit Guarantee Scheme and some other non-legislative changes. The Minister will now bring a Memorandum for Government on the changes which will include permission to draft Heads of Bill for the various amendments to the Credit Guarantee Act 2012, a general Scheme for an amendment Bill and a Regulatory Impact Analysis.

- *Publish detailed analysis of supply chain opportunities in the context of the investment required to meet Ireland's 2020 renewable energy and energy efficiency targets* – Action 294. The final report on these supply chain opportunities is being prepared by SEAI and enterprise agencies and will be produced in Q2 2014.

- *Launch an implementation group to oversee delivery of the Construction Sector Strategy* – Action 305. 'Construction 2020 – A Strategy for a Renewed Construction Sector' was

published on May 14th 2014. The first meeting of the group to support its implementation will take place in the coming weeks.

- *Identify planning related measures, including updating the planning legislative framework through the upcoming Planning Bill and making necessary targeted revisions to the planning system, to support sustainable development and economic recovery –* Action 309.  This action will be progressed in the context of the recently published Construction Sector Strategy.

- *Establish the board and governance framework for eHealth Ireland to drive implementation of the Government's eHealth Strategy –* Action 379. Work on developing the governance structure for eHealth Ireland and the appointment of a Board is on-going and it is anticipated it will be finalised over the coming weeks. Approval for the post of Chief Information Officer (incorporating the role of Chief Officer of eHealth Ireland) issued to the Health Service Executive on April 14th 2014.

# Quarter 1 Measures

# 2. Disruptive Reforms in 2014

## 2.1 Entrepreneurship

**Action 7:** Formally establish the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs), a world class enterprise support facility to provide a 'first stop shop' service for local start-ups and small businesses.

**Q1 Measure:** Legislation passed all stages and signed into law. (DJEI)

**Update:** Complete

The legislation has passed all stages of the Houses of the Oireachtas and was signed by the President on March 12th 2014. The dissolution of the County Enterprise Boards and the establishment of the LEOs occurred on April 15th.

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**Action 8:** Launch a Customer Charter to ensure a consistent standard of service available to all clients to respond to all business ideas.

**Q1 Measure:** Finalise consultation process on draft Customer Charter. (EI, CEBs, DJEI)

**Update:** Complete

This action, which is related to the establishment of the LEO network has now been completed. The consultation process has been undertaken; this involved meeting with clients, Enterprise Ireland personnel and County Enterprise Boards. The Customer Charter outlines best practice as to how the customer is best served and what level of service they can expect from the LEO network.

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**Action 9:** Launch a new website providing information on all national and local enterprise supports as well as guidance and advice on various aspects of starting a business.

**Q1 Measure:** Finalise training and content migration. (EI, CEBs, DJEI)

**Update:** Complete

Two training days took place, one in Dublin and the second in Athlone. The content migration has been completed by the IT team and the new website is now live: https://www.localenterprise.ie/

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**Action 14:** Build on the success of the Competitive Feasibility Funds and launch regionally targeted Funds in 2014 (Cork region, South East, North East and Mid West regions) and roll out Competitive Regional Feasibility funds to companies that produce products and services

directed for sale to the wider Agricultural Sector.

**Q1 Measure:** Roll out Competitive Regional Feasibility funds to the Cork region. (EI)

**Update:** Complete

A new €200,000 Competitive Feasibility Fund was launched on March 26th to assist entrepreneurs in the Cork region to further develop their business ideas. The fund is structured so that entrepreneurs can get up to €25,000 towards the cost of a feasibility study to validate their business idea.  It will remain open to applicants until April 25th.

## 2.2   Winning Abroad

**Action 39:** Finalise and publish the review of the Government's Trade, Tourism and Investment Strategy, to encourage a more flexible and focussed approach in Ireland's efforts to promote trade, tourism and investment overseas.

**Q1 Measure:** As per headline action. (DFAT, DJEI with relevant Departments and agencies)

**Update:** Complete

The review of the Government Trade, Tourism and Investment Strategy was launched on February 24th 2014 - a copy of the document is at the following link: Review of Government Trade, Tourism and Investment Strategy .

The review is the product of a comprehensive process of consultation with local market teams and the Embassy network, with Departments and State agencies at home and with the private sector. It is designed to ensure that the resources of the State – both the Embassy network and State agencies – are positioned to take full advantage of new opportunities in key emerging markets and to keep delivering in our established markets. The implementation of the Strategy and the modifications encompassed by this review will continue to be overseen by the Export Trade Council, which provides an effective framework for coordination and consultation.

**Action 42:** Develop and implement a work programme to deliver the Year of Irish Design 2015.

**Q1 Measure:** Agree outline work programme and funding requirements. (DJEI, DFAT, DCCoI, EI)

**Update:** Complete

The Design and Craft Council of Ireland (DCCoI) has agreed an outline work programme and submitted a funding requirement. The goals of the Year of Irish Design 2015 (YOID) are to

raise awareness of the importance of design across all aspects of life with a particular focus on the positive economic impact of design on business and job creation. The aim is to promote design as integral to Ireland's creative economy and to showcase Ireland internationally as a creative people and economy.

On that basis it is proposed that a national and international programme will lead off with a Global Design Summit in Ireland, followed by a strong programme of events aimed at both international and home audiences. Irish design will also be showcased at suitable international programmes, for example EXPO and other trade fairs and missions, in partnership with the Embassy network and Enterprise Ireland. A website to celebrate Irish design will be developed along with other appropriate media material.

A Programme Advisory Group, with representatives of the various design disciplines has been set up and is currently advising on the detail of the proposed programme. The detailed submission and funding requirement is being examined by the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation for submission to Government in early Q2, followed in early Q3 by finalisation and agreement on the programme and budget for 2015.

## 2.3   Manufacturing: National Step Change

**Action 53:** Promote take up of business management systems through establishment of a national award scheme for best-in-class businesses.

**Q1 Measure:** Evaluate which business management systems would be suitable for scoring and confirm award title. (NSAI)

**Update:** Complete

Following an evaluation of the certification schemes operated by the National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI) the scheme aimed at human resource management "Excellence Through People" was selected as the most appropriate for an award this year. Available to all organisations regardless of size, the scheme focuses on how organisations have the ability through management and development of their people to improve business and build competitive advantage.

The award, to be held in Q4, is titled the "National Excellence Award in Human Resource Management." It will be presented under a number of categories to organisations who have utilised the "Excellence Through People" process to demonstrate a step improvement in their organisations.

# 3. Progressing the Disruptive Reforms from Action Plan for Jobs 2013

## 3.1 Big Data and Data Analytics

**Action 70:** Launch an Open Data initiative, which will include the establishment of an Open Data portal to act as the primary source of public sector datasets, in the context of Ireland's membership of the Open Government Partnership.

**Q1 Measure:** Develop a National Action Plan in consultation with civil society and Departments in respect of Ireland's membership of the Open Government Partnership, focusing in particular on the progression of Open Data initiatives. (DPER)

**Update:** Delayed

The coordinating international organisation — the OGP Support Unit — changed the deadline for submitting National Action Plans (NAPs) to June 15th 2014 for all 4th cohort countries, of which Ireland is one. Accordingly, DPER is now working towards the revised international deadline. The draft NAP has been submitted to Minister Howlin. Following his consideration of the document it will be presented to Government. When the NAP is approved by Government a public consultation process will be initiated.

## 3.2 ICT Skills

**Action 74:** Publish a revised ICT Skills Action Plan informed by the recent Forfás/ EGFSN study forecasting high levels of ICT skills needs to 2018, that would further progress increases made in the domestic supply of ICT graduate output and move from 63 per cent of demand in 2014 to 74 per cent of demand in 2018.

**Q1 Measure:** As per headline action. (DES, DJEI)

**Update:** Complete

The ICT Skills Action Plan 2014 – 2018 was published on March 14th 2014, and can be accessed at ICT Skills Action Plan 2014 - Report PDF

Under the Plan, it is aimed to meet 74% of industry demands domestically for ICT professionals by 2018 – up from 45% in 2011 and 60% now.  In order to meet this target, the Minister for Education & Skills announced the following series of reforms aimed at dramatically increasing the availability of graduates:

- Provide an additional 1,250 undergraduate ICT places per year in higher education institutions;
- Increase the retention rate of students on ICT related courses;

- Launch a further round of ICT Skills Conversion courses;
- Promote careers in ICT to primary and second level students with industry support;
- Roll-out courses in Digital media literacy, programming and coding in the new Junior Cycle Student Awards;
- Promote STEM and ICT careers through SFI Discover Smart Futures and training of 450+ volunteers to give career talks in schools;
- Develop a web portal to attract international talent with in demand skills to Ireland;
- Organise career fairs abroad with the participation of companies who have vacancies;
- Facilitate the issuing of up to 2,000 employment permits per year to experienced ICT professionals with skills in high demand; and
- Increase efficiency in the employment permits process and introduce new legislation to enhance the application process.

## 3.4 Trading Online

**Action 76:** Complete the second trial of Trading Online initiative in Dublin.

**Q1 Measure:** As per headline action. (DCENR, DCEB)

**Update:** Complete

A pilot scheme has been successfully completed which targeted small businesses in the Dublin area. The pilot consisted of two 'trials'; one was completed at the end of 2013 and the second in Q1 2014. Both trials involved the allocation of 25 trading online vouchers in a competitive process.

The pilot was oversubscribed. 50 businesses were successful in receiving a trading online voucher. Applicant businesses were selected based on their project plan which included their expected growth in jobs and exports. The pilot scheme attracted businesses across a wide spectrum of activity including: retail, wholesale, product and service providers.

The scheme is now being scaled in preparation for the national rollout. DCENR is working closely with the new Local Enterprise Offices and with Enterprise Ireland on the rollout plan. The plan to scale up the scheme will see 250 vouchers being made available initially in: Dublin city and county, Cork city and county, Waterford city and county, Kerry and Louth in May and then nationally during the summer.

## 3.5    Energy Efficiency

**Action 81:** Establish the Energy Efficiency Fund.

**Q1 Measure:** As per headline action. (DCENR)

**Update:** Complete

The Energy Efficiency Fund was established to address the issue of availability of sufficient, properly structured finance, which has been identified as a key barrier to the increased rollout of energy efficiency projects in Ireland. To demonstrate intent, the Government has committed up to €35 million as a cornerstone investor, for investment in the Energy Efficiency Fund, with a view to establishing a fund of over €70 million when matched with investment from the private sector. Such a fund will enhance the level of finance available in the market to support the clear opportunity that exists in the public and commercial sectors.

## 3.6    National Health Innovation Hub

**Action 84:** Assess and select participants for the next round of projects for the Cork Demonstrator based on call for proposals.

**Q1 Measure:** As per headline action. (Cork Demonstrator Steering Group)

**Update:** Complete

The Cork Demonstrator launched a call for proposals which included an 'Open Call' for applications from companies whose innovative projects and ideas have the potential to significantly address any area of the broad spectrum of healthcare sector needs, and a 'Focussed Call' in Infection Control and Hygiene Management.

In February 2014, a panel which comprised some members of the Health Innovation Hub National Project Team and the Cork Steering Committee along with subject matter experts from the HSE carried out an evaluation of the proposals received. 13 projects involving 16 companies (4 companies are collaborating on 1 project) were selected for participation.

# 4.   Competitiveness

## 4.1   Institutionalising the Drive for Competitiveness

**Action 89:** The Cabinet Committee on Economic Recovery and Jobs, and other Cabinet Committees as appropriate, will monitor progress on competitiveness issues identified by the National Competitiveness Council and others and consider further actions to improve Ireland's international competitiveness and consider initiatives to make it easier to do business in Ireland. The Cabinet Committee(s) will be supported by the relevant Senior Officials Group and the APJ Monitoring Committee in this work.

**Q1 Measure:** The Cabinet Committee on Economic Recovery and Jobs, and other Cabinet Committees as appropriate, will monitor progress on competitiveness issues. (D/Taoiseach, DJEI/Forfás, All Departments)

**Update:** Complete

At its meeting in March 2014, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Recovery and Jobs (CCERJ) agreed a broad outline for considering issues of competitiveness.  The Cabinet Committee agreed three broad areas under which specific issues will be addressed:

- Structural areas of competitiveness (e.g. costs, education and training provision, access to finance, research and innovation, provision of economic infrastructure, regulation);

- Factors which impact on our international competitiveness ranking; and

- Improved efficiencies in the way public bodies interact with business.

Specific issues indentified by the National Competitiveness Council (NCC) and through other mechanisms will be systematically addressed over the course of the year by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Recovery and Jobs (and by other Cabinet Committees where appropriate) and by their supporting Senior Officials Groups.

Issues identified by the NCC in its Costs of Doing Business in Ireland 2014 report (see Action 90 and 94 below) will be amongst the initial areas of focus for CCERJ and other Cabinet Committees.

**Action 90:** Government will, on a quarterly basis, consider a report on competitiveness prepared via the Cabinet Committee on Economic Recovery and Jobs.

**Q1 Measure:** As per headline action. (DJEI, Cabinet Committee, Government)

**Update:** Complete

At its March meeting, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Recovery and Jobs considered a report on competitiveness issues, including the key findings of the National Competitiveness

Council's (NCC) Costs of Doing Business in Ireland 2014 report. The NCC report finds that despite improvements in competitiveness in recent years, Ireland is still a high cost location for a number of key business inputs. The Council points to the economy being at a turning point in terms of cost competitiveness, with overall relative cost competitiveness disimproving and a series of upward cost pressures emerging.

A summary of the Cabinet Committee's considerations, and the Costs of Doing Business report, were subsequently submitted to a full meeting of the Government for information.

The Costs of Doing Business Report is available on the NCC's website, www.competitiveness.ie.

## 4.2 Improving Cost Competitiveness

**Action 94:** Benchmark key business costs and publish a report highlighting areas where Irish enterprise costs are out of line with key competitors

**Q1 Measure:** Benchmark key business costs and publish a report highlighting areas where Irish enterprise costs are out of line with key competitors. (NCC)

**Update:** Complete

The National Competitiveness Council's report entitled, the Costs of Doing Business 2014, was published on April 1st. The report analyses a range of indicators which measure Ireland's enterprise cost performance vis-à-vis our key competitors. The analysis concentrates on costs that are largely domestically determined such as labour, property, energy, water, waste, communications and business services.

The report finds that Ireland's cost base has improved across a range of metrics over the last number of years making Irish firms more competitive internationally and making Ireland a more attractive location for firms to base their operations in. It also finds, however, that despite these improvements Ireland is still a high cost location for a number of key business inputs. The report is available at: http://www.competitiveness.ie/publications/2014/title,12039,en.php

**Action 95:** Encourage local authorities to continue to exercise restraint in setting commercial rates in 2014 (a reserved function of elected members) and, where possible, reduce rates in advance of a harmonised approach to the setting of commercial rates on a county-wide basis as a result of the new local authority structural arrangements becoming effective post the local elections in 2014

**Q1 Measure:** Report on the extent to which restraint was exercised in setting commercial

rates for 2014 by Local Authorities. (DECLG, Local Authorities)

**Update:** Complete

Local Authorities have responded well to the request to continue to exercise restraint in setting commercial rates for 2014; 82 out of the 88 rating authorities have either reduced their Annual Rate of Valuation (ARV) or kept it the same as in 2013. The average nationwide decrease is 0.56%. This follows similar decreases of 0.34% in 2013, 0.31% in 2012, 0.64% in 2011 and 0.62% in 2010. *

Four local authorities underwent revaluations in the last year so those 2014 ARVs are not comparable with their respective 2013 ARVs. The purpose of a revaluation is a rebalancing of the valuation base within a local authority area to bring it up to date with current market conditions; it is not to increase rates income. Rate Limitation Orders made by the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government in accordance with section 56 of the Valuation Act 2001, in respect of each of the local authorities revalued, ensured that the rates income demanded by each of those local authorities in 2014 did not exceed that in 2013.

*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.

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**Action 98:** Enact the Legal Services Bill to deliver a more efficient, transparent and competitive legal services in Ireland and reduce costs for the enterprise sector.

**Q1 Measure:** Progress completion of Committee stage of the Legal Services Regulation Bill. (D/Justice and Equality)

**Update:** Complete

The Bill completed Committee Stage in February and detailed preparations are ongoing with a view to completion of Report Stage and the establishment of the new Legal Services Regulatory Authority by year end.

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## 4.3   Infrastructure Investment to Underpin Employment Growth

**Action 100:** Enact legislation to allow ESB to enter the telecommunications market

**Q1 Measure:** Enact ESB legislation. (DCENR)

**Update:** Complete

The ESB (Electronic Communications Networks) Act (ACT No. 5 of 2014) was signed by the President on March 18th 2014.

**Action 106:** Develop a National Intelligent Transport Systems Strategy

**Q1 Measure:** Prepare Scoping Paper and establish group and resources. (DTTAS)

**Update:** Complete

The development of the National Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) Strategy is on track. An ITS Working Group comprising a wide range of stakeholders is set up. A scoping paper has been agreed with stakeholders and the need for outside assistance has been established. A process to procure this assistance will begin shortly.

## 4.4　Reduced Costs through Smart Regulation

**Action 107:** Implement Actions as outlined in the Government Policy Statement on Economic Regulation - published July 2013

**Q1 Measure:** Publish Green Paper on Energy to include a regulatory mandate review. (DCENR)

**Update:** Complete

The Minister for Communications, Energy & Natural Resources formally launched the Energy Policy Green Paper for Ireland on May 12th 2014. The Energy Policy Green Paper identifies a range of issues that need to be addressed to meet existing and future challenges. A full public and targeted stakeholder consultation process has now commenced. All submissions received will be considered and policy options developed with a view to the publication of a new Energy Policy White Paper.

**Action 113:** Investigate the potential for introducing a unified employment permit and visa applications system

**Q1 Measure:** Establish a Working Group to examine options for a unified system. (D/Justice and Equality, DJEI)

**Update:** Complete

The working group met during March to agree a methodology and time line for producing a report to examine the options available for producing a unified employment permit and visa application.

## 4.5 Supporting Competitive Regions

**Action 115:** Bring proposals to Government on the development of a successor to the national spatial strategy for the purposes of providing an updated national planning framework to inform the new Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSESs) provided for under the Local Government Act, 2014.

**Q1 Measure:** Commence preparation of a new national planning framework which will inform regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSESs). (DECLG)

**Update:** Complete

The Scoping Group, which was established in August 2013 and charged with the development of proposals, has submitted a report to the Minister for the Environment, Community & Local Government. This will inform the development of proposals that will be brought to Government. It is envisaged that a new national planning framework will be in place by the second half of 2015.

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**Action 118:** Publish final report of Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas (CEDRA) on the medium-term economic development of rural areas for the period to 2025.

**Q1 Measure:** As per headline action. (DECLG)

**Update:** Complete

CEDRA's Report, 'Energising Ireland's Rural Economy'. was launched on April 14th 2014, and is available at: http://www.agresearch.teagasc.ie/rerc/CEDRA/CEDRA_Report.pdf

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**Action 119:** Develop LEADER elements of the 2014-2020 Rural Development Programme to address Priority 6 of the Union priorities for rural development i.e. promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas.

**Q1 Measure:** Hold stakeholder and public consultation sessions on the priorities of the LEADER elements of the 2014-2020 Programme referencing the research and findings of the CEDRA report. (DECLG)

**Update:** Complete

Stakeholder and public consultation sessions were held in February.

Preparatory work for the development of the 2014 – 2020 Rural Development Programme, including the stakeholder/public consultation sessions, the needs analysis processes and the research conducted by the Commission on Economic Development of Rural Areas, highlight

similar areas of need within rural Ireland that could be supported through RDP interventions. These include economic development/job creation, rural tourism, enhanced national communication initiatives to improve broadband and social inclusion through building community capacity, training and animation.

The new Programme is currently being prepared by Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine and DECLG for submission to the European Commission in the coming months.

**Q1 Measure:** Draft eligible actions for inclusion in the 2014-2020 Programme including economic development. (DECLG)

**Update:** Complete

The actions are drafted and are subject to internal and external consultation. The actions will not be finalised until August when DAFM submit the Programme to the Commission.

**Q1 Measure:** Agree funding allocation for the Programme. (DECLG, DPER)

**Update:** Complete

Funding allocation for the LEADER element of the 2014-2020 Rural Development Programme has been agreed.

## 4.6   Research and Innovation to Drive Job Creation

**Action 122:** Take steps to progress the vision for the Innovation in Services and Business Processes research priority area through the introduction of suitable public research, development and innovation supports.

**Q1 Measure:** Adopt the findings, recommendations and roadmap contained in the assessment of RDI supports for Innovation in Services and Business Processes report. (DJEI/Forfás, Prioritisation Action Group)

**Update:** Complete

The report on Innovation in Services and Business Processes was adopted by Prioritisation Action Group (PAG) on 27 March.

Innovation in Services and Business (ISBP) processes has been identified as a key priority for Research, Development and Innovation (RD&I) in Ireland.  It is one of fourteen such national priorities. The report recommends new initiatives in support of this area grounded in the experience of other best-practice initiatives internationally and a sound understanding of the needs of industry here in Ireland.

The report identifies the following six key challenges (and associated recommendations) to be addressed:

1. Providing a supportive environment for innovation in services and business processes

2. Promoting awareness and understanding of innovation in services and business processes

3. Strengthening the research base relevant for innovation in services and business processes.

4. Supporting ISBP in enterprise by adopting a strong focus on the end-user in innovation in ISBP initiatives.

5. Encouraging multidisciplinary approaches to establish ISBP projects of scale

6. Establishing a supportive evaluation mechanism by setting an appropriate mix of traditional and less traditional metrics

A detailed roadmap and associated actions have been developed and PAG is overseeing the implementation of the report's recommendations.

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**Action 123:** Address gaps in research capacity identified through the National Prioritisation Exercise Report and build capacity in areas of economic importance to Ireland.

**Q1 Measure:** Launch of the 2014 SFI Investigators Programme as a thematic call. (SFI)

**Update:** Complete

The SFI Investigators Programme 2014 was launched on 21st Feb 2014 in collaboration with the Department for Employment and Learning Northern Ireland (DELNI). The Investigators Programme will address crucial research questions, expand educational and career opportunities in Ireland in science and engineering, and prepare the research community to lead and win in Horizon 2020 and other non-exchequer funding programmes. The call will operate on a themed basis in order to align this major investment to areas of increasing national and international importance. Themes were selected in areas of national priority and in areas aligned with Horizon 2020. Themes selected for this call include Cyber Security and Digital Forensics, Connected Health and Independent Living, Production of Biological Therapeutics, Manufacturing Competitiveness, Processing technologies and Advanced Materials, Novel Products from the Marine Environment, Parallel Computing and Energy and Environmental Sustainability. The deadline for full proposal submission is the 27th June 2014.

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**Action 141:** Support enterprises and researchers to engage with the €79 billion EU Horizon 2020 research programme to ensure that the opportunities presented by the programme are maximised.

**Q1 Measure:** Launch new H2020 support network backed up by knowledgeable staff and financial supports in order to ensure that Irish industry and academics are best placed to secure H2020 funding. (EI and all research funders through National Support Structure for Horizon 2020)

**Update:** Complete

A new H2020 support network has been established, coordinated by Enterprise Ireland and comprising National Contact Points and National Delegates for all H2020 areas from each research funding organisation in Ireland. The network has met on a monthly basis during Q1 2014 to complete training and networking activities and its members have engaged fully with Ireland's applicants to the first H2020 calls.

**Q1 Measure:** Provide support to the SFI Research Centres to assist them in meeting the ambitious targets set. (SFI)

**Update:** Complete

SFI recognises the key role that the SFI Research Centres and their Spokes will play in leading and winning major international funding initiatives.  Each of the Research Centres (AMBER, APC, INFANT, INSIGHT, iPIC, MaREI and SSPC) funded through the 2012 SFI Research Centres programme have agreed with SFI their strategy for engaging with Horizon 2020 and have provided SFI with a set of ambitious but realistic targets. In order to facilitate the Research Centres engagement in Horizon 2020, SFI has provided each Centre with a supplement award for a special EU Grant Coordinator.

SFI and the IUA are in the final stages of developing a partnership to recruit a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) Programme Officer whose primary role will be coordination of the SFI Research Centres to apply for significant funding opportunities in the MSCA work programmes.

In addition, the SFI ERC Development Programme supports researchers who have submitted a proposal to the ERC Starting, Consolidator, and Advanced Grant programmes, and who have been deemed fundable, but were ultimately not funded by the ERC due to a lack of available programme budget. The programme aims to support or improve a resubmission to an ERC funding scheme thereby increasing Irish success in the ERC calls and is available to researchers including those who work within the SFI Research Centres. An additional SFI ERC-related programme: the SFI ERC Support award assists Irish host institutions in providing the appropriate support to successful ERC awardees.  SFI has created preferential eligibility criteria to enable successful ERC award holders in Ireland to apply to a number of SFI programmes.

An information webinar (web-based seminar) on the Horizon 2020 Research Infrastructures Programme was held on the 11th February 2014 and was attended by all of the SFI Research Centres. In addition, the National Contact Point for European Research Infrastructures has been meeting with all seven SFI Research Centre managers and EU programme officers in

relation to Horizon 2020 Research Infrastructures.

**Q1 Measure:** To enable enterprise, HEIs and national funding agencies engage with co fund opportunities, fund the National Marie Sklodowska-Curie Office in partnership with the IUA. (IRC)

**Update:** Complete

A new Memorandum of Understanding has been agreed between the Irish Research Council and the Irish Universities Association, and funding supports for the office are in place.

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**Action 142:** Develop strategic partnerships with major stakeholders in Northern Ireland.

**Q1 Measure:** SFI to develop a partnership with the Department for Employment and Learning Northern Ireland (DELNI). (SFI)

**Update:** Complete

A new North/South Research Partnership was announced in January 2014. A collaboration agreement was signed between the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation and Dr. Stephen Farry, Minister of the Department for Employment and Learning Northern Ireland (DELNI), which will allow Queen's University and University of Ulster to participate as full academic partners in SFI's well-established and highly prestigious "Investigators Programme." The new "SFI/DEL Investigators Programme Partnership" will support collaborative projects involving universities from both jurisdictions, to undertake internationally peer reviewed, leading edge, discovery and fundamental research. The priority for both jurisdictions is the improvement of the research and development infrastructure and helping Ireland to maximise its potential funding opportunities under Horizon 2020 by enabling Ireland's scientific community to work together on an all-Ireland basis.

The SFI Investigators Programme 2014 was launched on 21st Feb 2014 in collaboration with the Department for Employment and Learning Northern Ireland (DELNI). The Investigators Programme will address crucial research questions, expand educational and career opportunities in Ireland in science and engineering, and prepare the research community to lead and win in Horizon 2020 and other non-exchequer funding programmes. The call will operate on a themed basis in order to align this major investment to areas of increasing national and international importance. Details about the Themes are outlined in Action 123.

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**Action 146:** Enhance the participation of SMEs and micro-businesses in the IRC Enterprise Partnership Scheme (EPS) and thus cultivate enterprise focused researchers in the formative years of their research careers.

**Q1 Measure:** Launch the 2014 EPS and continue to support individual students and postdoctorate researchers. (IRC)

**Update:** Complete

The Enterprise Partnership Scheme call was launched, with assessments of the applications in progress and awards to be made by late Q2/early Q3.

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**Action 147:** Broaden career opportunities for young graduates and trainees in Ireland by:

a) Expanding the SFI Industry Fellowship to ensure the broadening of the pool of researchers strongly positioned to take up employment in industry in Ireland.

b) Supporting and developing early-career researchers with the greatest potential to become excellent, fully independent research leaders (Starting Investigator Research Grant, Career Development Award, President of Ireland Young Researcher Award) who can attract, retain and develop industry in Ireland.

c) Launching the SFI Advance Fellowship Programme to address the representation and career progression of women in Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) thus stimulating economic growth by enabling a highly trained cohort of researchers to return to the workforce and providing them with opportunities to connect with future industry employers.

**Q1 Measure:** The 2014 SFI Advanced Fellowship Programme launched. (SFI)

**Update:** Complete

The 2014 SFI Advance Award Programme was launched on the 18th February 2014. This award seeks to fund female researchers returning to, or wishing to remain in, high quality research, to undertake industry-facing research projects in Irish third-level institutions. Advance awards are intended to allow a flexible time commitment by the researcher, and thus can be carried out on a full-time or part-time basis. The award is suitable for women wishing to return to research after a break owing to family commitments, although this is not a mandatory criterion. The expectation is that the Advance researcher will collaborate closely with at least one of the academic mentor's industry facing partners and following completion of the award will be in a position to secure STEM employment in industry or the public sector. The deadline for submission of Expressions of Interest is 28/03/2014. The deadline for submission of full proposals (by invitation) is 23/05/2014.

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**Action 149:** Deliver Smart Futures as a national collaborative government, industry and education framework to raise the awareness of STEM career opportunities for post-primary students in line with the agreed strategy with support and input from the newly established

advisory group comprising industrial, professional and academic partners

**Q1 Measure:** 'Perceptions of STEM careers survey' to be carried out with post primary students at BT Young Scientist & Technology Exhibition. (SFI)

**Update:** Complete

SFI took part in the BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition in January, interacting with thousands of post-primary students. Approximately 2,000 'Perceptions of STEM' career surveys were completed by post-primary students over the three days of the exhibition. These surveys are currently being processed and analysed.

## 4.7 Aligning Skills with Enterprise Needs

**Action 160:** Promote the call for ICT graduate skills conversion and Springboard programmes to enterprise through Business Representative Groups and through enterprise agencies.

**Q1 Measure:** As per headline action. (HEA, enterprise agencies, industry groups)

**Update:** Complete

A Call for Springboard and ICT graduate skills conversion was launched in February 2014, and enterprise agencies were invited to attend a briefing session for programme providers. The HEA also promoted the call through Chambers Ireland, the American Chamber of Commerce, the British Irish Chamber of Commerce, ISME and IBEC.

**Action 161:** The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs will identify the areas of emerging skills needs so that the appropriate sectors and levels are included in the calls for proposals for targeted funding initiatives.

**Q1 Measure:** As per headline action. (EGFSN, SOLAS)

**Update:** Complete

(DJEI) The Government allocated funding for the 4th round of Springboard which provides places at 3rd level to cohorts of the unemployed, on courses designed to meet the current and future skills needs of employers. The call was made jointly with the call for the ICT Conversion Programme.

The EGFSN published a guidance document for Higher Education providers outlining the skills needs of enterprise based on the data in the EGFSN's published reports. The Report provided guidance for both Springboard and ICT conversion.

The Guidance document was published on 4th Feb with the HEA competitive Call for programmes designed to meet the areas of current and future skills needs. A briefing session for potential tenderers was held on 6th Feb in Department of Education and Skills (DES). Forfás made a presentation summarising the main issues in the Guidance Document.

A further presentation was made on March 6th to the expert panel which judges which tenderers are successful.

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**Action 163:** Develop and commence delivery of a new national manufacturing supervisory development programme leading to a major award at Level 6 on the NFQ to meet manufacturers' requirements for upskilling operatives for those supervisory roles in the sector.

**Q1 Measure:** Publish a consultation document on the proposed "Supervisory Management for Manufacturing" award. (Skillnets)

**Update:** Complete

The consultation document was published by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) on 25 February and is open for contributions from interested parties until 7 April 2014.

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**Action 170:** Develop for the first time in 2014 an overall annual Further Education and Training (FET) Plan, providing integrated information on a common basis of the full range of FET provision across the 16 ETB areas. Future annual service plans will be shaped in accordance with the objectives of the FET Strategy.

**Q1 Measure:** FET strategy to be submitted to the Minister for Education and Skills by end March 2014. (SOLAS, DES)

**Update:** Complete

The proposal for the Strategy was submitted to the Minister for Education and Skills before 31 March 2014 in line with the above commitment. The draft was considered by both the Senior Officials Group on Labour Market Issues and the Cabinet sub-Committee on Pathways to Work in March, and was subsequently discussed at Cabinet on April 8th. The Strategy has now been formally approved by the Minister for Education and Skills and arrangements are being considered for its publication by SOLAS.

**Action 172:** Engagement between HEIs and enterprise in the areas of skills and research will form part of the Strategic Dialogue process conducted by the HEA with HEIs to develop funding compacts for 2014.

**Q1 Measure:** As per headline action. (HEA)

**Update:** Complete

Development of Human Capital and Research excellence are key system objectives in the System Performance Framework and are featured in all institutional compacts. Performance compacts and the System Performance Framework are currently being finalised with a view to completion in May 2014.

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**Action 175:** Progress Enactment of Technological University Bill.

**Q1 Measure:** Publish Heads of Bill. (DES)

**Update:** Complete

The General Scheme of Technological Universities Bill was published on 22 January 2014. The Scheme is now undergoing pre-legislative scrutiny by the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education and Social Protection.

## 4.8 Supporting Competitiveness through Corporate Social Responsibility

**Action 189:** Conduct a survey to establish an indicative baseline of CSR activity in Ireland.

**Q1 Measure:** Develop and agree survey questionnaire. (NSAI, DJEI, Business in the Community Ireland, WIT)

**Update:** Complete

The National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI), with input from the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (DJEI), Business in the Community Ireland and Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT), developed a questionnaire with a view to conducting a survey to establish an indicative baseline of Corporate Social Responsibility activity in Ireland.

**Q1 Measure:** Conduct survey on CSR activity and I.S. ISO 26000 CSR Standard across a range of business sectors. (NSAI)

**Update:** Complete

In the context of a review of the International Standard, I.S. ISO 26000 - Guidance on Social

Responsibility, a survey to establish a baseline for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activity by business in Ireland was conducted during February 2014. The National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI), with input from the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (DJEI), Business in the Community Ireland, and Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT), developed relevant survey questions for the Irish business environment. The survey was circulated electronically to more than 10,000 businesses on the NSAI listing, through Business in the Community Ireland, DJEI and WIT contacts, and included in the Irish business representative group IBEC's monthly newsletter.

Respondent results are presently being collated with final analysis and findings to be completed as per Q2 commitment.

# 5.  Pathways to Work and Related Initiatives

**Action 194:** Commence implementation of the Youth Guarantee

**Q1 Measure:** Commence implementation of national plan for a Youth Guarantee, the Plan will contain timelines for specific actions. (DSP)

**Update:** Complete

The Youth Guarantee Plan was formally launched on 24 January 2014 and that plan is available on www.welfare.ie. Work has commenced on its implementation.

Legislation has been drafted to provide for differential treatment of young people on labour market programmes, particularly in relation to JobsPlus and JobBridge. It is expected this will be passed by the end of Q2, and design work on the related programme reforms is proceeding so these can be implemented as soon as possible after the legislation is passed.

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**Action 201:** Advance the introduction of a new Housing Assistance Payment which will allow recipients to remain in the scheme in the early stages of returning to employment.

**Q1 Measure:** Initial HAP pilot to begin in Limerick Local Authorities (lead test authority). (Limerick Local Authorities (lead test authority), DECLG, DSP)

**Update:** Complete

In line with Implementation Strategy commitments Limerick City and County Council, in partnership with the Department of Social Protection in Limerick, has initiated an early pilot on an administrative basis.

**Q1 Measure:** HAP Service Delivery Business Case Finalisation. (Limerick Local Authorities (lead test authority), DECLG, DSP)

**Update:** Complete

The Business Case has undergone Peer Review and submission to D/PER. The Business Case was submitted to the HAP Oversight Group on 28th March 2014 and was subsequently approved to go to the next step in the Implementation Process.

**Action 202:** 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; increasing people's work readiness and employment prospects; and supporting enterprise start-ups.

**Q1 Measure:** Confirm the LCDP funding allocations and planning logistics to the Local Development Companies. (DECLG, Pobal)

**Update:** Complete

This measure has been completed; in December 2013 the Department/Pobal issued the LCDP funding allocations to the groups contracted to deliver the Programme in 2014. In addition, the logistics relating to the planning and assessment process for 2014 were also issued to the contracted groups. These actions have ensured that contracted groups have full clarity on the arrangements for the delivery of the Programme in 2014.

**Q1 Measure:** Confirm the transitional arrangements for programme delivery in 2014. (DECLG)

**Update:** Complete

This measure has been completed; in October 2013 the arrangements for the delivery of the LCDP during 2014 were communicated to the contracted groups. In addition, by way of further clarification to the groups, the Department also corresponded with them in February and March 2014 of this year. These actions have ensured that contracted groups have full clarity on the arrangements for the delivery of the Programme in 2014.

# 6. Access to Finance for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises

## 6.1 Increase New Lending from Banks to SMEs

**Action 205:** Detailed data from the pillar banks will be collated and examined, on a monthly basis, ensuring a more informed understanding of the SME bank lending environment, with a particular focus on new lending.

**Q1 Measure:** Report on data received from the pillar banks. (D/Finance, Credit Review Office)

**Update:** Complete

The Department of Finance and Credit Review Office held quarterly meetings with AIB and Bank of Ireland in Q1. The banks continue to provide the Department of Finance and Credit Review Office with granular monthly lending data, including data on new lending.

## 6.2 Increase Participation in Access to Finance Initiatives for SMEs

**Action 208:** Enhance the take-up and impact of the Credit Guarantee Scheme on foot of the 2013 review of the Scheme by implementing the appropriate recommendations.

**Q1 Measure:** Seek Government approval for revision of legislation. (DJEI)

**Update:** Delayed

The Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation outlined the various changes to be made to the Credit Guarantee Scheme to the Cabinet Committee on Mortgage Arrears and Credit Availability on 31 March 2014. These changes will require an amendment to the Credit Guarantee Act 2012, a new Credit Guarantee Scheme and some other non-legislative changes. The Minister will now bring a Memorandum for Government on the changes which will include permission to draft Heads of Bill for the various amendments to the Credit Guarantee Act 2012, a general Scheme for an amendment Bill and a Regulatory Impact Analysis.

**Action 210:** Enterprise Ireland will issue a consultation exercise to inform the sectoral and development stage focus of future calls for expressions of interest under the Seed and Venture Capital Scheme 2013-2018.

**Q1 Measure:** As per headline action. (EI)

> **Update:** Complete
>
> The public consultation was issued to an extensive list of stakeholders on April 2<sup>nd</sup> and will also be communicated across social media platforms. The consultation involved dialogue with various sector experts, Enterprise Ireland client companies and investors to get their feedback on the funding requirements for companies.

## 6.3    Develop New Sources of Finance for SMEs

> **Action 212:** Work with KfW and the German Ministry of Finance to develop an initiative that will improve funding mechanisms for SMEs.
>
> **Q1 Measure:** Establish project Group to progress this initiative. (D/Finance, NPRF)
>
> **Update:** Complete
>
> The Project team for the Strategic Investment Bank project was established in November 2013. It is led at Assistant Secretary level and comprises various teams from within the Department of Finance and key personnel from the NPRF.
>
> The project will achieve a second tier lender to channel funding through commercial banks and other relevant financial intermediaries to SMEs and seeks to achieve new lending to SMEs in the billions of euro over its opening years.

## 6.4    Raising awareness amongst SMEs and entrepreneurs of supports

> **Action 221:** Implement the Communications Strategy developed by the SME State Bodies Group.
>
> **Q1 Measure:** Deliver a cross-governmental campaign to launch the SME Access to Finance online tool. (D/Finance, DJEI, D/Taoiseach, EI)
>
> **Update:** Complete
>
> Through the SME State Bodies Group, a specific communication sub-group has been established. With the communications plan now agreed, a new online tool has been already developed and is set to be launched in the coming weeks. This online guide is to help SMEs navigate the over 80 Government business supports available; via this guide, upon answering 8 simple questions, small businesses receive a list of potential supports for them and relevant contact information to follow this up.
>
> This guide has been piloted with small businesses in Limerick, Cork and Galway at the

Government's "Taking Care of Business" events. Campaign members attended a training session focusing on utilisation of the SME State Supports online tool and customer service.

## 6.5   Enhance the Financial Capacity of SMEs

**Action 222:** Deliver the Building Financial Capability in SMEs programme by Skillnets and undertake an evaluation of this initiative.

**Q1 Measure:** Finalise provider procurement in January 2014 and commence delivery of the programme in February 2014 with a target of 1,000 participants. (DES, DJEI)

**Update:** Complete

The procurement was completed on time in January and approved by the Skillnets Board on 6 February 2014. Delivery of the programme commenced in February. Work continues to promote the programme and to ramp up delivery to achieve the target of 1,000 participants on the pilot programme.

# 7. Growing Irish Enterprise

## 7.1 Capability Building in Irish Enterprise

**Action 229:** Roll out client management development offerings to a larger cohort of companies including the use of new delivery mechanisms (e.g. online platforms and peer learning).

**Q1 Measure:** Investigate the potential for delivery of client management development programmes through a variety of delivery mechanisms. (EI)

**Update:** Complete

EI has been undertaking comprehensive research with current programme partners and the wider executive education sector, to identify new delivery mechanisms which are deemed appropriate for the delivery of leadership and management development programmes such as Leadership 4 Growth and Management 4 Growth. The objective is to maintain the hallmarks of these customised programmes, with the ultimate aim of making these offerings more accessible to reach a wider base of companies. The outcome of this research will inform the Cascading Implementation Plan which will be presented to stakeholders (programme partners and the education sector) in Q2. The cascading learning approach involves a blended offering to participants between the instructor-led and peer to peer approach as well as an online offering.

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**Action 239:** Develop further joint agency strategies during 2014 in key sectors of opportunity, including a joint agency strategy for the Renewable Energy/Wind Energy sector.

**Q1 Measure:** Finalise agreed list of joint agency strategies to be progressed during 2014. (EI, IDA)

**Update:** Complete

The joint EI-IDA senior management team agreed a joint sector study in respect of the renewable/cleantech sector during 2014. The joint project team meets regularly and has undertaken a study visit to Germany to understand the supply chain and opportunities that may arise. The joint sector study will be completed later in 2014.

The Senior Management team also agreed to keep other areas of joint sectoral collaboration under consideration for the year. There is strong cooperation on opportunities in the payments/financial services area, while the corporate entrepreneurship agenda is another area of joint focus involving sectoral teams.

## 7.2   Maximising Procurement Opportunities

**Action 240:** In consultation with the Chief State Solicitors Office, maintain and update the standard suite of tender and contract documentation for goods and services and encourage their wider use across the public service. This will bring about a more consistent approach to procurement which will assist SMEs in accessing procurement opportunities by reducing legal and administrative costs.

**Q1 Measure:** Analyse current processes and engage with the Chief State Solicitor's Office. (OGP)

**Update:** Complete

Analysis of current processes and engagement with the CSSO has taken place. This measure is on-going and under constant review by the OGP and CSSO in order to streamline the tender and contract documentation.

**Action 241:** Establish a working group comprised of SME stakeholders that will examine ways to improve SME access to public procurement opportunities.

**Q1 Measure:** As per headline action. (OGP)

**Update:** Complete

This working group was established on January 31st 2014. The Working Group was consulted on new public procurement guidelines that issued on April 17th 2014, aimed at making it easier for small businesses to bid for work across the entire public sector (DPE Circular 10/14 refers).  These new guidelines promote the setting of relevant and proportionate financial capacity, turnover and insurance levels for tendering firms and the sub-dividing of larger contracts into lots, where possible, to enable SMEs to bid for these opportunities. The guidelines also encourage SMEs to form consortia where they are not of sufficient scale to tender in their own right and to register on www.etenders.gov.ie to ensure maximum exposure to tendering opportunities.

**Action 242:** Commence work on the transposition of the new EU Procurement Directives to take advantage of the revised procedures designed to encourage SME access (transposition will be completed in 2015).

**Q1 Measure:** Assess policy options for SME access in the new EU Public Procurement Directives in consultation with SME stakeholders, AG's Office and EU Commission and other Member States. (OGP)

**Update:** Complete

Assessment of policy options has been completed.  DPER Circular 10/14 accelerates, where possible, the introduction of SME measures in the new Directives aimed at improving their access to public procurement including limiting turnover requirements to two times the estimated contract value, except in justified cases, and the acceptance of self-declarations by tenderers until the award stage when assessing the capacity and capability of  a tenderer.

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**Action 245:** As part of the OGP's programme to improve general statistical information, establish a Business Intelligence Unit that will, as part of its remit, gather strategic data on the businesses that are participating in public procurement processes.

**Q1 Measure:** As per headline action. (OGP)

**Update:** Complete

The Business Intelligence Unit has been established, a manager has been appointed, a number of staff is in place and they have begun their work.

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**Action 252:** Introduce, on a pilot basis, a Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) programme which will provide opportunities for innovative solutions to be developed to meet the needs of public bodies.

**Q1 Measure:** Identify a suitable project in the public sector. (EI)

**Update:** Complete

The purpose of the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) programme is to offer an opportunity for businesses, particularly early-stage companies, to develop and demonstrate technology, supported by a Government entity which acts as a key reference customer. Following engagement between EI and other public sector bodies, a suitable project has been identified to pilot this initiative. EI, in partnership with the procuring authority, will engage with an SBIR consultant to review the identified project and develop a road map for implementation.

# 8. Developing and Deepening the Impact of Foreign Direct Investment

**Action 259:** Explore the potential of the "Internet of Things" by establishing a representative group which will agree priorities for action and present proposals to Government.

**Q1 Measure:** Form a representative group drawn from industry and research communities with a common interest in the emerging area of the "Internet of Things". (IDA)

**Update:** Complete

Today around 10 billion computers, phones and machines are connected to the internet. By 2020, it is expected that between 50 and 200 billion devices will be connected to the Internet including many currently 'dumb' devices like household appliances, sensors, utility meters, industrial machines etc. The Internet of Things is an attempt to describe the point at which more 'things' are connected to the Internet than people.

A first full meeting was held at IDA offices on March 3$^{rd}$ 2014 with 70 industry and other representatives with a common interest in the 'Internet of Things'. The working group is established and two sub-groups have been formed from a cross-section of relevant industry and research organisations. The first meetings of the sub-groups to establish priorities will take place during April 2014.

# 9.   Sectoral Opportunities

## 9.1   Agriculture, Food and Marine

**Action 265:** Maintain the number of farmers participating in DAFM's farm technology adoption programmes and increase by 150 the number of those using collaborative farming initiatives.

**Q1 Measure:** Host a collaborative farming conference. (Teagasc)

**Update:** Complete

Teagasc hosted the 2014 National Collaborative Farming Conference on April 17<sup>th</sup> in Tipperary. The conference was rescheduled to facilitate ministerial attendance.

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**Action 268:** Support over 100 food SMEs through Teagasc Food SME Technology Support Programme and BIM Seafood Centre.

**Q1 Measure:** Work with a new seafood company to develop a line of convenience products based on whitefish for the UK retail market. (BIM)

**Update:** Complete

A whitefish processing company secured a €1.3m deal with a UK retailer to supply two frozen seafood products to the multiple's UK outlets. Following on from this deal, the company is working with the Seafood Development Centre on improving the product shelf life, taste and packaging.  The products are steam-cooked in their natural juices ideal for the health conscious consumer and the company is the first Irish seafood processor to invest in a skin-pack technology facilitating shelf-life extension and cooking in-pack.

The company now supplies 10 – 15 outlets and currently employs 44 at its facility in the south west. 4 new jobs were created to fulfill the multiple's orders and it is expected that this number will grow as more outlets are serviced.

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**Action 271:** Launch and implement a project to market, on a commercial basis, Ireland's expertise in the provision of public agri-food support services.

**Q1 Measure:** Establishment of Project Steering Committee. (DAFM)

**Update:** Complete

The Project Steering Committee was established in January. It is chaired by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and comprises members from the private sector, the main Irish agri-food state agencies (Bord Bia, Teagasc, Food Safety Authority of Ireland),

Enterprise Ireland and a representative from the Irish University sector.

**Action 278:** Launch and implement an industry developed whiskey strategy.

**Q1 Measure:** Present draft whiskey strategy to FH 2020 Implementation Committee. (IBEC, DAFM, EI)

**Update:** Complete

The newly established Irish Whiskey Association presented its draft strategy to the FH2020 Committee on March 26th. An inter-agency-industry working group is being established to work on its suggested actions and recommendations.

**Action 282:** Launch the 2014-2020 Rural Development Programme with measures supporting farm sustainability.

**Q1 Measure:** Complete the public consultation process including stakeholder consultation meetings. (DAFM)

**Update:** Complete

In response to the recent open call for written submissions on the proposed measures, over 120 written submissions were received by the deadline of February 19th. Following examination of these submissions, an ex-ante evaluation incorporating a Strategic Environmental Analysis and an Appropriate Assessment is being carried out on the proposed RDP measures by independent, external evaluators. This process will involve a further stage of stakeholder consultation.

**Action 284:** Launch a sustainability and quality programme for the dairy sector and incorporate into Origin Green.

**Q1 Measure:** Commence audits of dairy farms. (Bord Bia)

**Update:** Complete

The Sustainability Dairy Assurance audits commenced in the last week in January with 162 completed to end of March. This number is expected to significantly increase over the coming weeks.

**Action 285:** Appoint 10 Origin Green Ambassadors and assign to global food and drinks companies.

**Q1 Measure:** Achieve "Best Practice" Placements with ten global food and drink customers. (Bord Bia)

**Update:** Complete

As part the Bord Bia Origin Green Programme, 10 Origin Green Ambassadors will play an important role in building awareness for the Irish Food and Drink's industry's sustainability credentials. The Origin Green Ambassador Programme, was developed in partnership with the Irish food and drink industry, to engage the world's leading food and drink companies in dialogue around Ireland's unique sustainability development programme.

All 10 Origin Green Ambassadors have been placed in 'blue chip' international food and drink customers and companies, listed below:

| Company | Location |
|---|---|
| 1. Tesco plc | UK |
| 2. McDonalds Restaurants | UK |
| 3. PepsiCo | UK |
| 4. Abbott Nutrition | Colombus, Ohio, USA |
| 5. Marks & Spencer | UK |
| 6. Metro DE | Dusseldorf, Germany |
| 7. Subway | To decided |
| 8. Wal-Mart | Bentonville, Arkansas, USA |
| 9. Coca Cola | Atlanta, USA |
| 10. Fair Oaks Farms | Indiana & Chicago, Illinois, USA |
| 11. World Wildlife Fund | Washington, USA |

The Origin Green blog is available at: http://blog.origingreen.ie/2013/10/01/origin-green-ambassadors/

## 9.2    Green Economy

**Action 292:** Publish the Offshore Energy Renewable Development Plan (OERDP) which will set out how Ireland can harness the opportunities presented by offshore renewable energy to contribute to economic recovery, growth and jobs.

**Q1 Measures:**

- Bring Memorandum to Government on draft OERDP. (DCENR)

- Finalise and publish OERDP. (DCENR)

**Update:** Complete

Following Cabinet approval, the Plan was launched on February 7th 2014 and is currently being implemented. The OREDP identifies opportunities for the sustainable development of Ireland's abundant offshore renewable energy resources, to increase indigenous production of renewable electricity. This will contribute to reducing our greenhouse gas emissions, improving the security of our energy supply, and creating jobs in the green economy. The OERDP sets out key principles, policy actions and enablers for delivery of Ireland's significant potential in this area. In this way, it will provide a framework for the sustainable development of Ireland's offshore renewable energy resources.

**Action 294:** Examine the potential for job creation through expansion of domestic supply chains linked to the investment required to meet Ireland's 2020 renewable energy and energy efficiency targets.

**Q1 Measure:** Publish detailed analysis of supply chain opportunities. (SEAI, DJEI/Forfás, EI, IDA)

**Update:** Delayed

Final report is under development and will be produced in Q2 2014.

**Action 297:** Develop an Irish Standard on Energy Efficiency Design (EED) Methodology to support the development of the Green Economy and further improve industry energy consumption efficiencies.

**Q1 Measure:** Complete and publish for public consultation an Irish Standard for Energy Efficient Design Methodology. (NSAI)

**Update:** Complete

The National Standards Authority of Ireland, (NSAI), completed and published for public

consultation the draft Irish Standard I.S. 399 Energy Efficient Design Management – Requirements with Guidance for Use. The draft was available for comment on the NSAI website portal "Your Standards, Your Say" from March 3rd to April 2nd 2014. Information about the consultation was disseminated though public notices in Irish and English in national newspapers (Irish Times and Irish Independent weekly supplement Seachtain), NSAI and Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) websites, NSAI electronic newsletter and social media sites Twitter and LinkedIn.

**Action 298:** Publish a new comprehensive Code of Practice for retrofitting of homes to drive growth in the sector by raising quality and standards

**Q1 Measure:** Complete and publish a new Code of Practice for energy retrofit of homes. (NSAI)

**Update:** Complete

The National Standards Authority of Ireland, (NSAI), completed and published the standard recommendation titled "S.R. 54:2014 Code of practice for the energy efficient retrofit of dwellings" on March 7th 2014. The standard can be downloaded free of charge from the NSAI website www.standards.ie/cgi-bin/news/ie/NEW276

NSAI facilitated development of the standard recommendation by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources; Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland, in conjunction with the Building Research Establishment, Irl.

**Action 299:** Promote Ireland as a test bed in the areas of renewable energy and grid development, and work with industry and researchers to develop opportunities for test-bedding Smart Grid technologies.

**Q1 Measure:** Promotion of SFI Industry facing schemes with relevant agencies and industry. (SFI)

**Update:** Complete

A brochure entitled "Ireland - Your Partner in Science" was published by SFI in January 2014. The brochure provides an overview of the multiple opportunities provided by SFI for industry to engage with the academic sector in Ireland. The brochure also provides an overview of the current SFI Research Centres, the current engagement of industry with the SFI research community and commentary on the quality and impact of these engagements provided by leading figures in Pfizer, Fujitsu and INTEL. Prof Mark Ferguson, the SFI Director General, presented the SFI Industry facing scheme at the IDA (Industry Development Agency) Ireland National Conference in January 2014, thus ensuring significant global

dissemination of the multiple opportunities that exist in Ireland for industry to develop their R&D capacities, and highlighting the opportunities for industry to test-bed novel technologies such as Smart-Grid in Ireland.

**Action 301:** Publish a guidance document to assist the public sector to implement and maintain procedures for green public procurement practices, including a standard 'green clause' which could be used in relevant public sector tender documents.

**Q1 Measure:** Convene stakeholder workshops of suppliers and public buyers. (EPA)

**Update:** Complete

In order to inform the development of guidance on green procurement for the public sector, the project team carried out three stakeholder workshops with fifteen public representatives during January 2014. One supplier workshop was held with representatives of business organisations and central government personnel involved in policy development. Two subsequent public buyer workshops were represented by procurement personnel, environmental managers and central government personnel involved in policy development. The workshop discussions focussed on the eight priority sectors as identified in the Green Tenders Action Plan.

**Action 303:** Review the potential for job creation through the greater use of waste as a resource in Ireland including through the preparing for reuse, recycling/reprocessing and recovery of waste and explore what additional actions are required to stimulate the further development of indigenous recycling and recovery infrastructure

**Q1 Measure:** Consultation on household waste collection which includes discussion on measures which will support the development of recycling and recovery infrastructure. (DECLG)

**Update:** Complete

The initial consultation period closed on January 31st. Submissions from industry and other stakeholders are being evaluated with a view to introducing a new regulatory regime for household waste collection, with a focus on supporting development of viable indigenous waste treatment industry in the second half of 2014. Workshops with industry and other stakeholders taking place in Q2 will further inform final regulatory package.

## 9.3   Construction and Property

**Action 305:** Publish and implement Construction Sector Strategy.

**Q1 Measure:** Building on work already achieved through the Action Plan for Jobs 2013, the policy statement on construction the Government published in July 2013 and the targeted measures introduced in Budget 2014, publish a Construction Sector Strategy, to include an overall strategic approach to issues including housing supply, planning, and financing. (D/Taoiseach and relevant Government Departments)

**Update:** Complete

'Construction 2020 – A Strategy for a Renewed Construction Sector' identifies 75 specific actions to help restore a competitive, innovative construction sector, operating at sustainable levels of activity. The strategy was launched by the Taoiseach and Tánaiste on May 14th 2014 and is available at http://www.merrionstreet.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Construction-Strategy-14-May-20141.pdf.

**Q1 Measure:** Launch an implementation group to oversee delivery of the strategy. (D/Taoiseach)

**Update:** Delayed

'Construction 2020 – A Strategy for a Renewed Construction Sector' was published on May 14th 2014. The first meeting of the group to support its implementation will take place in the coming weeks.

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**Action 308:** Initiate public consultation on measures to improve and streamline the development management process to inform a review of the development management guidelines and regulatory frameworks.

**Q1 Measure:** As per headline action. (DECLG)

**Update:** Complete

A preliminary public consultation on measures to improve and streamline the development management process to inform a review of the development management guidelines and regulatory frameworks was initiated in January 2014. Approximately 60 submissions were received, and are being considered. It is intended to bring Regulations to the Oireachtas before the summer recess, exempting further development from the requirement to obtain planning permission.

Any further proposed amendments decided upon make will be included in the General Scheme of the Planning Bill, which will be prepared this year, and in amendments to the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as appropriate

**Action 309:** Identify planning related measures, including updating the planning legislative framework through the upcoming Planning Bill and making necessary targeted revisions to the planning system, to support sustainable development and economic recovery.

**Q1 Measure:** As per headline action. (DECLG)

**Update:** Delayed

Planning-related measures to support economic recovery, including the updating of the planning legislative framework, have already been identified by the Department of the Environment, Community & Local Government (DECLG). Following the recent publication of the Construction Sector Strategy, DECLG will implement the identified planning-related measures as quickly as possible. Some of the measures can be speedily implemented via circular letters to planning authorities, revised planning guidelines etc. Others require legislative underpinning and will be incorporated in the forthcoming Planning Bill.

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**Action 322:** Facilitate the development of a robust voluntary register of Builders, Contractors and Construction Trades to be available to registrants from 1 March 2014 and further developed in consultation with relevant statutory agencies.

**Q1 Measure:** Facilitate the development of a robust voluntary register of Builders, Contractors and Construction Trades to be available to registrants from 1 March 2014 and further developed in consultation with relevant statutory agencies. (DECLG)

**Update:** Complete

The introduction of the Construction Industry Register Ireland (CIRI) on a voluntary basis this year and the move to a statutory register by 2015 are seen by Government as critically important steps towards restoring public confidence in the construction industry.

The register will enable consumers to ensure they hire competent builders and contractors, while simultaneously ensuring that all statutory, regulatory and legal requirements are complied with in a verifiable and transparent manner.   As such, it will play a vital role in the continuing clampdown on activity in the shadow economy.

The Construction Industry Federation (CIF), which initiated the scheme, has, with the Minister's consent, appointed Mr. Hank Fogarty as the Chairman of the board of the CIRI. In addition, five ordinary board members have been appointed by the CIF/industry, namely:

- Mr. Brendan Duffy
- Mr. Paul Forde
- Mr. Brian McKeon
- Mr. Mel O'Reilly

- Mr. Kevin Sheridan

A further five ordinary board members have been appointed by the CIF having been nominated by Ministers in charge of Departments and Agencies whose remit is particularly relevant to construction, namely:
- Mr. Cormac Allen (nominated by the Minister for Education and Skills)
- Ms. Deirdre Fox (nominated by the Minister for Environment, Community and Local Government)
- Mr. Martin Vaughan (nominated by the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government)
- Mr. Liam Egan (nominated by the Minister of State with responsibility for the OPW)
- Mr. Brian Higgisson (nominated by the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation)

The register was opened for application from registrants on March 1st 2014. Details of the Construction Industry Register Ireland (CIRI) are currently available on the website, www.ciri.ie

The CIRI board has now established its working procedures and is actively processing and approving applications for registration.  It is expected that a critical mass of 200 applications will have been approved no later than mid-May 2014, at which stage the register will be made publicly available to consumers.  This approach ensures fair competition, nationwide coverage and consumer choice. The Government has signalled its commitment to placing the register on a statutory footing in 2015.  Legislative proposals will be brought to Government in this regard by end-2014.

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**Action 324:** Implement a new Building Control Management System hosted by the Local Government Management Agency to provide a common nationwide platform for the administration of building control activity in line with SI No. 9 of 2014.

**Q1 Measure:** As per headline action. (DECLG)

**Update:** Complete

The new Building Control Management System (BCMS) is an online system that facilitates the electronic administration of building control functions. As such, it greatly benefits building control authorities, building owners, builders and construction professionals in discharging their separate and distinct responsibilities under the Building Control Act 1990 and the regulations made thereunder.

The BCMS, developed by the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA) with the assistance of external consultants, came into operation on March 1st 2014 in line with the commencement of the new Building Control (Amendment) Regulations 2014, which support its deployment as the preferred means of administration on building control matters. The

system provides a common platform for clear and consistent administration of building control matters across the local authority sector. In addition, it will facilitate the risk analysis of all projects for which commencement notices are received, which will inform each building control authority's own inspection arrangements, thus ensuring that available inspection resources are used to optimum effect.

The initial phase of development concentrated on facilitating the receipt and lodgement of commencement notices, statutory certificates and compliance documentation in line with the Regulations and went live on March 1st 2014. Development will continue in order to enhance the capability to address, among other things, inspection and enforcement activities, risk analysis of construction projects, and management reporting requirements. This work is on schedule to be delivered by September 2014.

**Action 327:** Ensure effective implementation of Building Control (Amendment) Regulations 2013 from 1 March 2014, and introduce a wider package of building control reforms to accompany the new regulations to ensure stronger consumer protection.

**Q1 Measure:** As per headline action. (DECLG)

**Update:** Complete

Over 250 commencement notices under SI No. 9 of 2014 were lodged during March, 2014. Indications suggest that the monthly return for April, 2014 will be higher. These figures represent an early indication that the market place is successfully making the transition to the new regulatory arrangements and that fears of widespread disruption in the marketplace would appear to have been unfounded.

The wider package of reforms to support the regulations refers to the following actions, in addition to the CIRI and BCMS projects detailed above, currently in progress:

- Ensuring the move to meaningful, risk-based inspections by building control authorities by September 2014;
- Ensuring a collaborative approach to the development of an agreed set of common protocols for the exercise of the Building Control function by September 2014;
- Preparing a consolidated set of building control regulations;
- Progressing arrangements for registration of practically-trained and suitably qualified persons on statutory registers; and
- Exploring potential for latent defects insurance or a suitable alternative as ultimate recourse for consumers.

**Action 328:** Finalise work and commence Construction Contracts Act legislation.

**Q1 Measure:** Code of practice agreed. (DPER)

**Update:** Complete

A Code of Practice governing the conduct of adjudication of payment disputes has been agreed, and a final draft has been circulated to stakeholders. Before the Act can be commenced, a panel of Adjudicators (and a Chair) must be appointed by the Minister. A Secretariat to provide administrative support to the process must also be established. These matters are currently being considered.

**Action 329:** Publicise the Home Renovation Incentive (HRI) Scheme, to assist with encouraging take up of the scheme, providing stimulus for the construction sector.

**Q1 Measure:** As per headline action. (D/Finance, Revenue)

**Update:** Complete

A publicity campaign for the Home Renovation Incentive (HRI) Scheme is ongoing.

An extensive information campaign has been underway since the Incentive was announced in Budget 2014 in October 2013. The campaign was launched through information on the Revenue website, which included detailed Frequently Asked Questions for both Homeowners and Contractors. This was highlighted through direct engagement with Contractor representative bodies and the national press. The website material was followed by an electronic and hard copy of a Home Renovation Incentive Guide for Homeowners. Copies of the Guide were distributed to Revenue's national network of public offices, as well as the various Citizens' Information Centres around the country. In addition, the Commissioners have responded to requests, presenting information to both homeowners and contractors at seminars and shows, and have been proactive in contacting larger businesses and relevant representative bodies to assist with information for websites, as well as the promotion and management of the Incentive.

On April 10th 2014, Revenue announced the launch of the new electronic system to administer the Home Renovation Incentive. HRI online is now available to both contractors and homeowners at: http://www.revenue.ie/en/press/2014/pr-100414-hri.html

HRI online is simple to use and allows tax compliant contractors to enter details of qualifying works and payments through the Home Renovation Incentive link on the Revenue On-Line Service (ROS). The homeowner can look up qualifying works and payment details through the HRI online link. By viewing the qualifying works and payments online, the homeowner can see that the contractor is a qualifying contractor and does not need to look for tax clearance certificates or any other proof of tax compliance.

The Revenue Commissioners will continue to monitor awareness of the Incentive amongst the trade and the public, and will continue to look at opportunities to maximise the publicity around the relief. They have committed to hosting information stands at upcoming high profile national trade shows, where their staff will provide detailed information to attendees from the general public.

**Action 330:** Submit an application seeking EU State Aid approval for the Living City Initiative for residential properties constructed prior to 1915 in Ireland's six cities namely Limerick, Waterford, Cork, Galway, Kilkenny and Dublin, to facilitate a Commencement Order being made by the end of the year.

**Q1 Measure:** As per headline action. (D/Finance)

**Update:** Complete

The application for EU State Aid approval has now been submitted. Discussions are ongoing with local authorities for the six cities, and the project is on course for a Commencement Order being made by the end of the year, subject to receipt of State Aid approval.

**Action 331:** Oversee implementation by Local Authorities of a programme of works to improve the quality and enhance the energy efficiency of the existing Local Authorities housing stock.

**Q1 Measure:** Issue documentation (procurement package for e- tender and specifications) to LAs to facilitate the establishment of dedicated energy retrofitting Framework Agreements in each LA. (DECLG)

**Update:** Complete

A revised National Framework for energy retrofitting works was published on 11 April.

**Q1 Measure:** Publication by NSAI of a new national code of practice for energy efficiency retrofitting of existing dwellings. (DECLG, NSAI, SEAI, DCENR)

**Update:** Complete

Code of Practice now published by NSAI.

**Q1 Measure:** Issue Circular on Phase 2 of the DECLG Energy efficiency Fabric Upgrade Programme. (DECLG, SEAI)

**Update:** Complete

Circular letter and capital allocations (Tranche 1) issued Feb 2014.

**Q1 Measure:** Evaluate the Pilot Programme in the 4 Dublin Local Authorities on the IHER BER Database Tool (from the EU-funded EPISCOPE project) which collects and uses the data stored in the BER xml files to provide a suite of reports, tables, query functions and data analysis specifically focussed on the Local Authority Energy Retrofitting Programme. (DECLG, Dublin City Council,Fingal County Council, South Dublin County Council, Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council, IHER Energy Services Ltd.)

**Update:** Complete

Evaluation project has commenced in Q1 as planned and is on schedule for completion in Q3, in accordance with the Q3 commitment.

**Q1 Measure:** Evaluate the "LASHUMS" Pilot Programme in Cork City (Local Authority Social Housing Upgrade Management System) which was designed to be used by local authorities as a tool to make the upgrade of housing stock an efficient process, while maximising quality and numbers of houses completed under the Fabric Upgrade Programme. (DECLG, Cork City Council, Tipperary Energy Agency)

**Update:** Complete

Evaluation complete and pilot implementation underway.

## 9.4   Tourism

**Action 334:** Establish if there is a suitable project and partner available to develop a National Diaspora Centre.

**Q1 Measure:** Prepare and submit Memorandum for the Information of the Government. (DTTAS)

**Update:** Complete

A Memorandum for the Information of the Government was noted by the Government on 19 February 2014.

**Q1 Measure:** Issue Call for Expressions of Interest to establish if there is a suitable project and partner available to develop a Diaspora centre. (DTTAS, Fáilte Ireland)

**Update:** Complete

The Call for Expressions of Interest was placed on the Fáilte Ireland website on Thursday 10th April; http://www.failteireland.ie/News-Features/News-Library/National-Diaspora-Centre.aspx

**Action 335:** As announced in Budget 2014, continue the 9% VAT rate on tourism related services and goods to support the tourism sector.

**Q1 Measure:** As per headline action. (D/Finance)

**Update:** Complete

The 9% VAT rate on tourism related services was due to expire on December 31$^{st}$ 2013. However, Finance (No. 2) Act 2013 made provision for the rate to be retained indefinitely. It is anticipated that the continuation of the 9% VAT rate will secure and expand on the gains made in terms of numbers employed in the tourism sector.

## 9.5   Retail Sector

**Action 346:** Remind Local Authorities of the necessity to include, in their development contribution schemes, reduced rates of development contributions or waivers for development in town centres to support town centre development, in line with the statutory guidelines for planning authorities on Development Contributions which were issued in January 2013.

**Q1 Measure:** Revised Development Contribution Guidelines issued in January 2013 but reminder will issue on reduced contributions or waivers for certain town centre developments. (DECLG, Local Authorities)

**Update:** Complete

Reminders issued to all local authorities. Revised Development Contribution Schemes were not expected before Quarter 2 as some Local Authorities are preparing for sub-county transition as per the provisions of the Local Government Reform Act 2014

**Action 348:** Progress the introduction of a National Postcode System in 2014, with a view to rolling out the system in the first half of 2015.  The National Postcode System will improve logistics efficiencies for retailers, particularly facilitating on-line trading and reducing the risk of purchasing fraud.

**Q1 Measure:** Sign contract for the Postcode Management Licence Holder. (DCENR)

**Update:** Complete

The contract for the Postcode Management Licence Holder (PMLH) was signed with Capita Ireland on January 27$^{th}$ 2014.

## 9.6    Creative Services

**Action 358:** Advance the 1916 Commemoration and Decade of Centenaries programmes, including capital projects at the GPO, which will directly and indirectly support job creation, as well as cultural tourism. The national programme marking Brian Ború and the Battle of Clontarf will also be supported.

**Q1 Measure:** Progress pre-planning and regulatory considerations. (DAHG, An Post, other relevant bodies)

**Update:** Complete

Full planning permission has been secured for the GPO projects. Multi criteria analysis (MCA) has been completed, and tenders for design and fit-out are under active consideration by the relevant sub-committee. Regular ongoing meetings of the Steering Committee are being held.

**Action 362:** Promote an initiative to drive heritage tourism initiatives across DAHG, including a programme of trailway development in National Parks and Nature Reserves, in partnership with key stakeholders.

**Q1 Measure:** Appoint designated officers to drive the initiative. (DAHG, NPWS, National Trails Office, Fáilte Ireland)

**Update:** Complete

The designated Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht officers have been appointed.

## 9.9    eHealth

**Action 379:** Establish eHealth Ireland and appoint a Chief Information Officer (CIO) for the Irish healthcare system to drive implementation of eHealth Strategy

**Q1 Measure:** Establish a Board and governance framework for eHealth Ireland. (D/Health)

**Update:** Delayed

Approval for the post of Chief Information Officer (incorporating the role of Chief Officer of eHealth Ireland) issued to the Health Service Executive on April 14th 2014. Work on developing the Governance structure for eHealth Ireland is on-going and it is anticipated it will be finalised over the coming weeks in line with the Government decision on eHealth.

## 9.10  Smart Ageing

**Action 382:** Establish an inter-departmental Steering Group to agree the approach to be taken in relation to Smart Ageing in Ireland.

**Q1 Measure:** As per headline action. (D/Taoiseach, relevant Government Departments and agencies)

**Update:** Complete

A Steering Group has been established and has met. The Group comprises representatives from a number of Government Departments and State Agencies, to oversee the specific actions in respect of Smart Ageing, as set out in the Action Plan for Jobs 2014.

## 9.11  Social Enterprise

**Action 385:** Develop the Social Enterprise sector by undertaking a programme of actions on foot of the Forfás Report on Social Enterprise in Ireland

**Q1 Measure:** Interdepartmental Group on Social Enterprise to engage with the Social Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Task Force on approaches to developing the Sector. (DECLG, DSP, DAFM, D/Health, DAHG, DJEI, other relevant Departments and Agencies)

**Update:** Complete

The Inter-Departmental Group (IDG) was established in October 2013 and is chaired by Minister of State for Research and Innovation, Sean Sherlock T.D. with secretariat support provided by the DECLG. The IDG met with the Social Entrepreneurship and Enterprise Task Force (SEETF) in December 2013 and twice in Q1 2014 to discuss the implementation of recommendations of the Forfás report. Immediate actions required were identified. Agreement was reached on the appropriate members/sub-groups to implement these actions.

**Q1 Measure:** Establish a line of communication between the Inter-Departmental Group and Social Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Task Force. (DECLG, DSP, DAFM, D/Health, DAHG, DJEI, other relevant Departments and Agencies)

**Update:** Complete

As above, The IDG met with SEETF in December 2013 and twice in Q1 2014. The IDG and SEETF will meet again in Q2 to discuss progress and identify further actions.