Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

CSR Check 2020

Towards Responsible Business Ireland's National Plan
on Corporate Social Responsibility 2017-2020
3rd and Final Progress Report

**Prepared by the Department of
Enterprise, Trade and Employment**

Minister's Foreword

Placing responsible business practices and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) at the core of what we do every day is not only good for business, but is essential to underpin our recovery post COVID-19 and Brexit, helping to safeguard Ireland against future shocks and assist us in building the kind of society we want to live in.

The Irish Government recognises the key role that CSR can play in the promotion of growth, quality jobs and inclusiveness. The contribution that business, both small and large, makes to build a more inclusive Ireland, shows that Ireland is a good place to do business and this is fundamental to building a sustainable economy and society.

Towards Responsible Business Ireland's National Plan on Corporate Social Responsibility 2017-2020 sought to have Ireland recognised:

'as a centre of excellence for responsible and sustainable business through the adoption and implementation of best practice in CSR in enterprises and organisations'.

The CSR Stakeholder Forum drove the implementation of the second National Plan on CSR 2017-2020, which provided a platform to showcase Ireland's CSR activities and highlight the positive impact business is having on the environment, its community, its workplace and the marketplace.

The activities of the CSR Stakeholder Forum, under the second National Plan on CSR 2017-2020, demonstrated to businesses that by embedding CSR at the heart of their business they can improve competitiveness, strengthen sustainability, attract and retain talent, while also fostering social cohesion and protecting the environment. CSR delivers a win-win – the business benefits, and so do its employees, customers and suppliers, the wider community and the environment.

Through CSR activities, businesses can elect to play a very powerful and positive role in addressing key societal challenges. All businesses, regardless of their size, do or can engage in CSR activities, from the corner shop to the large multinational, creating a positive impact. I know, over three years of the National Plan on CSR, the CSR Stakeholder Forum has had a particular focus on highlighting the benefits of CSR to small and micro businesses, through the increase in SME focused case studies, additional SME members of the CSR Stakeholder Forum, along with SME participation at CSR Stakeholder Forum meetings. I am hopeful that Government and businesses, in particular SMEs, will continue to collaborate to reinforce the *'beyond compliance'* CSR message and inspire more SMEs to strive for higher standards under the four dimensions of CSR.

CSR now has a global focus underpinned by the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs, which consist of 169 targets across 17 goals, define our global priorities for 2030. The Actions in the second National Plan on CSR 2017-2020 were aligned to the SDGs. The CSR Stakeholder Forum recognised the importance of the SDGs throughout its second term by ensuring that the SDGs were included on the agenda for each meeting and in its Annual Work Programme. We all have an important role to play in delivering these goals, and their delivery will contribute to our objective of Ireland being recognised as a Centre of Excellence for responsible and sustainable practices.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the CSR Stakeholder Forum members for giving their time and their organisation's time, on a voluntary basis, to assist the Department's CSR initiative. It is quite evident that your contribution, over the past three years, has underpinned the delivery of the actions set out in the second National Plan on CSR 2017-2020. I would also like to thank the Chairperson of the CSR Stakeholder Forum Catherine Heaney (Director and Chair, DHR Communications), for her strong leadership and giving so graciously of her wealth of experience in CSR.

Significant challenges lie ahead for the country – both for business and for Government but by working together and having a culture of responsible business practices that go beyond compliance, we can collectively enable Ireland to strive towards a more sustainable and equitable society.

Damien English TD
Minister of State for Business, Employment and Retail

Message from the Chairperson

As the pandemic continues to be a challenge for communities across the globe, our vision of how the workplace will look and how the global economy will operate is not as clear cut as we might like. This uncertainty has been exacerbated by other economic shifts and societal imperatives.

For two years, everyone has been living life according to a set of short-term rules. Rules about where we can travel; the distance we maintain apart from other people; and the circumstances in which we can attend the workplace.

As these rules fluctuate and are altered to support public health, we look for leadership and guidance about how we live our lives. While *Towards Responsible Business Ireland's National Plan on Corporate Social Responsibility 2017-2020* has concluded, its stated aims – centring on helping businesses in Ireland to create sustainable jobs; embedding responsible practices in the marketplace; embracing diversity and promoting responsible workplaces; and encouraging enterprises to consider their businesses' impacts on the environment – are, possibly, more important now than they were back in 2017.

Businesses and organisations which already contribute to their national objectives, through their responsible business practices, are already one step ahead. New legal obligations to help reverse climate change are opportunities for growth and development for those businesses who have already prioritised climate action. Adjusting to a hybrid workplace is already the norm for business and organisations who promote responsible workplaces.

Using Corporate Social Responsibility as the frame for business and organisational strategy improves resilience, especially when sudden change and shock disrupt what we consider the norm.

The CSR Stakeholder Forum had significant plans in 2020: we started the year with a workshop that will feed into Ireland's next CSR plan. Critically, the membership of the Forum continues to demonstrate commitment and leadership to CSR.

Throughout the pandemic, members of the CSR Stakeholder Forum have shared their innovations and approaches in helping employees, their communities.

This, the final CSR Check to emerge from the second National Plan on CSR, documents some of the good practice that has emerged during the pandemic. These case studies provide leadership and guidance to others who may still be grappling with change.

Since I took on the job of chairing the CSR Stakeholder Forum in 2017, I have had the privilege of working with the Forum members, all of whom demonstrate a shared commitment to responsible and sustainable business practices. I have learned so much from the people in the room and have been challenged to think of how I work and vision for the future.

In driving acceptance of CSR practice, political leadership is a critical component of achieving success. Former Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation, Frances Fitzgerald TD, and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation, Heather Humphreys TD, were not only engaged in the topic but became pivotal ambassadors for strong CSR practice. The next phase of Ireland's CSR journey will be led by Minister of State, Damien English TD, who has a deep, personal interest in this topic. His vigour will be an asset in making Ireland a strong, global CSR citizen.

For me, far and above these privileges associated with chairing the CSR Stakeholder Forum was that of working alongside a small team of committed civil servants in the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. Led by Céline McHugh, they have truly been a pleasure to work with and, on behalf of the CSR Stakeholder Forum, I extend our deep gratitude for all the work done to ensure that Ireland works to become a centre of excellence for CSR practice.

Catherine Heaney
Director and Chair
DHR Communications

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The Four Dimensions of Corporate Social Responsibility

The Workplace

This is about how you support and engage your employees

The Environment

This is about how you reduce, reuse or recycle resources to minimise negative environmental impacts
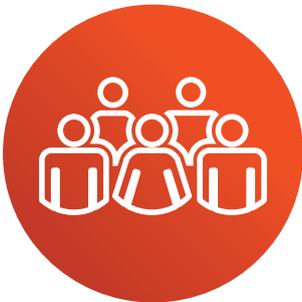
The Community

This is about how you interact with your local community partners and organisations

The Marketplace

This is about how your company makes responsible commercial decisions in dealing with suppliers and customers

Introduction

CSR Check 2020 is the 3rd and Final Progress Report published by the CSR Stakeholder Forum, in association with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE), under *Towards Responsible Business Ireland's National Plan on Corporate Social Responsibility 2017-2020.*[1]

CSR Check 2020 sets out the achievements of the CSR Stakeholder Forum over the three years of the National Plan on CSR from June 2017-June 2020.

The vision of Ireland's second National Plan on CSR, which was published in June 2017, was that *'Ireland will be recognised as a Centre of Excellence for responsible and sustainable business practice through the adoption and implementation of best practice CSR in enterprises and organisations'.*[2]

The aim of the Plan was to continue to build on the awareness created under the first National Plan on CSR *Good for Business, Good for Community Ireland's National Plan on Corporate Social Responsibility.* The second National Plan on CSR 2017-2020 set out seventeen actions (see Appendix 1) across four goals: (i) awareness, (ii) access, (iii) support, and (iv) policy alignment under four key dimensions: The Workplace, The Environment, The Community, and The Marketplace.

The CSR Stakeholder Forum, a business led voluntary Body, chaired by Catherine Heaney, Director and Chair, DHR Communications, was tasked with driving the implementation of the seventeen actions in the National Plan on CSR. Over the period 2017-2020 the CSR Stakeholder Forum developed a work programme each year which focused on themes that were aligned with the actions in the National Plan on CSR.

Members of the CSR Stakeholder Forum were invited to participate in or lead Working Groups/Project Teams (see Appendix 3) to implement the work programme of that year. In addition, the CSR Network was established in 2019 by the CSR Stakeholder Forum to provide businesses and organisations who were not on the Forum, an opportunity to connect with activities of the CSR Stakeholder Forum.

The CSR Stakeholder Forum's achievements under each Action in the National Plan on CSR are set out in Chapter 1 and an overview of the CSR Stakeholder Forum is available in Chapter 2.

Forum meetings including the two CEO/Leaders' Breakfasts in 2018 and 2019, provided an opportunity for the Forum to raise awareness of best practice CSR initiatives (see Appendix 4 for the full list of CSR Stakeholder Forum meetings). These meetings provided a platform for organisations to share their CSR story to a wider audience and foster peer to peer learning (see Appendix 2 for the list of presentations made at Forum meetings).

Reaching out to SMEs was also a key focus of the National Plan on CSR, and to that end the Forum held a number of outreach events with local SMEs joining expert panel discussions with leaders in the CSR field representing the private and public sector.

Over the period 2017-2020 significant effort was made by the CSR Stakeholder Forum to increase the number of case studies from CSR Stakeholder Forum members and the wider business and public sector. Five case studies are presented in Chapter 3 and include one reflecting the role of CSR during the pandemic. The full list of case studies can be found at Appendix 8 and also on csrhub.ie/csr-case-studies

The Department is pleased to include an article from Tomás Sercovich, CEO, Business in the Community Ireland (BITCI) (Chapter 4). Also included are Chapters on Public Policy and CSR (Chapter 5), European Policy and CSR (Chapter 6) and Promoting CSR in Ireland (Chapter 7).

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1. CSR Check 2020 was due to be published in June 2020 but was deferred due to impact COVID-19 on resources.
2. csrhub.ie/ireland-s-national-plan-on-csr/

Some of the key achievements by the CSR Stakeholder Forum over the period of the second National Plan on CSR 2017-2020 include:

- Establishing the flagship CSR Annual CEO/Leaders' Breakfast which took place in 2018 and 2019 (The 2020 CEO/Leaders' Breakfast was deferred in line with public health guidance).

- Presentation to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Business, Enterprise and Innovation in 2019 to raise awareness of CSR.

- Public Sector CSR workshop 2019 – assisted by Business in the Community Ireland (BITCI).

- Collation of almost 100 best practice case studies from the private and public sectors.

- Further development of the website csrhub.ie as a dedicated national CSR resource, underpinned by an active social media presence to highlight good CSR practice.

- Growing a panel of active CSR Ambassadors within the business community.

- Promoting CSR peer learning amongst businesses through SME outreach events (proposed 2020 SME outreach event in Cork was deferred in line with COVID-19 public health guidance).

- Establishment of a Public Sector CSR Network.

- Establishment of an informal CSR Network for businesses and organisations interested in CSR and the Forum's work.

- Highlighting opportunities for the private and public sector to partner on impactful initiatives that align with public policy.

- CSR Stakeholder Forum facilitated policy discussion and implementation under the broad thematic areas of CSR.

- The Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (DBEI) (now DETE) contributed to key policy areas including the National *LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy,* the National Forum on Business and Human Rights, the *National Volunteering Strategy,* and the *Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) National Implementation Plan 2018-2020.*

Looking ahead, CSR will continue to have a key relevance for the work of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. Chapter 8 sets out the future role and operation of the CSR Stakeholder Forum.
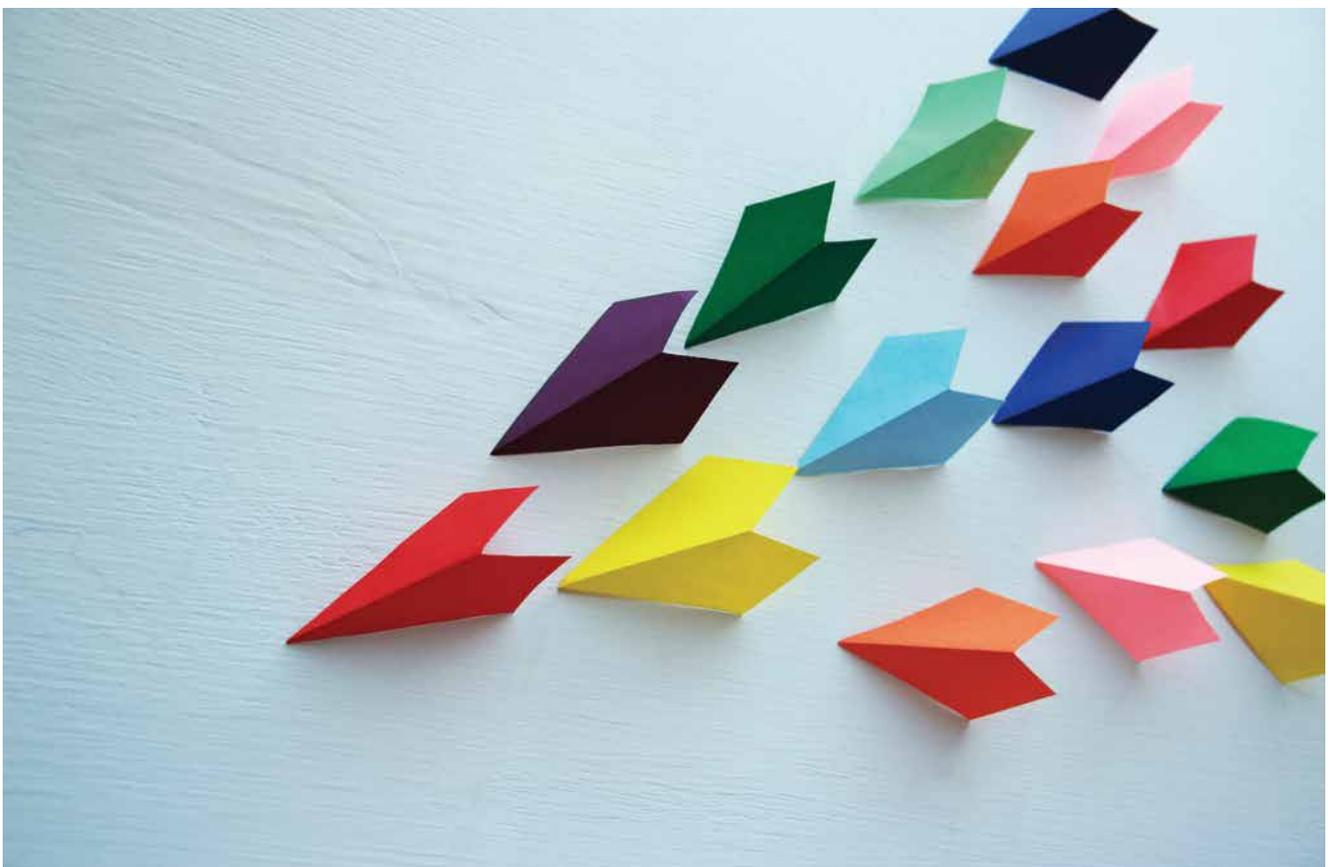
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Chapter 1
Progress on National Plan on CSR Actions

The work of the CSR Stakeholder Forum was guided by the 17 Actions (Appendix 1) in *Towards Responsible Business Ireland's National Plan on Corporate Social Responsibility* 2017-2020 which are underpinned by the four broad strategic goals in the Plan:

- **Awareness:** *Help employers and employees better understand the benefits of embedding CSR and responsible business practices into the day to date activities of businesses operating in Ireland*

- **Access:** *Support the development of effective CSR practices in business through accessible and appropriate information resources*

- **Support:** *Support organisations by promoting and highlighting best practice CSR, CSR news and events*

- **Policy Alignment:** *Advocate and support relevant policy priorities across Government Departments and their agencies, specifically those which complement CSR, including implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, Business and Human Rights, Health Workplace Framework, etc.*[3]

This Chapter covers the activities of the CSR Stakeholder Forum to implement the actions in the National Plan on CSR 2017-2020.

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3. Ireland's National Plan on CSR – CSR Hub

Actions 1 and 2

The European Commission defines Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as 'the responsibility of enterprises for their impact on society'.[4] **CSR is about business and organisations taking responsibility for: the people they employ and work with, the community they operate in, the customers they engage with, and the environment they impact.**

CSR can have an important place in policy implementation. CSR is not a replacement for public policy, but rather presents an opportunity for business, civil society and policymakers to come together to explore and create partnerships to implement CSR initiatives where there is strong alignment with strategic policy objectives. Indeed, such partnerships can serve to enhance the impact of mainstream policies.

From 2017-2020, the CSR Stakeholder Forum provided a platform for assisting and promoting Government policy as set out in Actions 1 and 2 of the second National Plan on CSR 2017-2020.

Action 1: Support and promote Government Policy in areas which enrich responsible business practices.

Across Government there are a number of initiatives where business, Government and civil society are working together to achieve and deliver win-win opportunities, including: The *Woodland Environmental Fund*, *Healthy Ireland*, and *The Prompt Payment Code.* Implementation of the National Plan on CSR actively encouraged business engagement with key Government policy initiatives such as the *Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) National Implementation Plan 2018-2020*.

The Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (DBEI) (now DETE), on behalf of the CSR Stakeholder Forum, has participated in a number of working groups across Government Departments and has contributed to a number of public policy reports and strategies relating to CSR including:

- Climate Action Plan 2019
- Migrant Integration Strategy
- National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy 2019-2021
- National Volunteering Strategy 2020-2025

Public Sector bodies were invited to present at CSR Stakeholder Forum meetings to highlight Government Policy relating to CSR including:

- Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine – *Woodland Innovation Fund* (CSR Stakeholder Forum meeting 27 November 2018, Dublin)
- DBEI (now DETE) – *OECD Guidelines and National Contact Point* (CSR Stakeholder Forum Meeting 5 March 2019, Dublin)
- Department of Public Expenditure and Reform – *Public and Civil Service Reform Programmes* (CSR Stakeholder Forum Meeting 27 November 2018, Dublin)
- Department of Health and Healthy Ireland – *Healthy Ireland Initiative* (CSR Stakeholder Forum outreach event 28 November 2017, Clare) and *Healthy Workplace Framework* (CSR Stakeholder Forum Meeting 26 November 2019, Dublin)

The full list of presentations given at CSR Stakeholder Forum meetings is available at Appendix 2.

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4. A renewed EU strategy 2011-14 for Corporate Social Responsibility EUR-Lex (europa.eu)

Action 2: Collaborate with DFAT (now DFA) through the CSR Stakeholder Forum to communicate the National Plan on Business and Human Rights.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's (now Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA)) *National Plan on Business and Human Rights 2017-2020* was launched on 15 November 2017. The Plan's Mission Statement was to:

'To promote responsible business practices at home and overseas by all Irish business enterprises in line with Ireland's commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights globally and to being one of the best countries in the world in which to do business'[5]

The actions in the *National Plan on Business and Human Rights 2017-2020* were structured into two categories and under the first category, Key commitments to ensure policy coherence across Government, the CSR Stakeholder Forum was assigned the following action:

'Ensure coherence between the National Plan on Corporate Social Responsibility and the National Plan on Business and Human Rights, including by promoting cooperation between the Business and Human Rights implementation Working Group and the Corporate Social Responsibility Stakeholder Forum'[6]

From 2017-2020 the CSR Stakeholder Forum and DBEI (now DETE) collaborated with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (now DFA) as follows:

- DBEI (now DETE) and CSR Stakeholder Forum contributed to *National Plan on Business and Human Rights 2017-2020*.
- DBEI (now DETE) is represented on the Business and Human Rights Implementation Group and on its subgroups and provided CSR updates.
- The CSR secretariat facilitated the sharing of best practice examples of business and human rights though the CSR social media platforms – csrhub.ie and @CSRHubIrl
- DFAT (now DFA) provided an update on the Business and Human Rights Implementation Group at the CSR Stakeholder Forum meeting in March 2019.

CSR DIMENSION   🌿 🏢 👥 📊

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT G⚙ALS

GOALS: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17

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5.   dfa.ie/our-role-policies/international-priorities/human-rights/business-and-human-rights/nationalplanonbusinessandhumanrights2017-2020/
6.   dfa.ie/our-role-policies/international-priorities/human-rights/business-and-human-rights/nationalplanonbusinessandhumanrights2017-2020/

Actions 3, 4, 5 and 6

The second National Plan on CSR 2017-2020 highlighted the potential of CSR in improving the competitiveness of enterprises and building their reputation, while at the same time bringing benefits to the wider community through various social, economic and environmental initiatives.

Sustainable growth resulting in deeper stakeholder engagement, attracting and retaining the right talent and a competitive advantage is critical to the success of any organisation. Many businesses in Ireland are adapting and responding to the ever-changing business environment through increased use of responsible business practices.

The following actions were aimed at ensuring the National Plan on CSR was relevant to the changing business environment and driving further engagement in CSR.

Action 3: Monitor best practice and evolving trends in CSR and benchmark activity through relevant tools and studies.

The CSR Stakeholder Forum played a key role in providing a platform to high performing organisations to share their CSR story to a wider audience both at meetings and through the sharing of case studies. The Forum also fosters peer learning and drives engagement in CSR between the various groups, including academic bodies.

An example of evolving trends highlighted by the CSR Stakeholder Forum to businesses and organisations was ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance). ESG is about how businesses and organisations are engaging with core business and societal challenges and how they are mitigating risk in areas such as diversity and inclusion, environmental sustainability and human rights. ESG is now an important focus for investors as they increasingly want to see how businesses are mitigating risks, either financial or environmental, and managing social cohesion.

The CSR Stakeholder Forum raised awareness of ESG by:

- Including it as a work programme theme in 2018/2019 and 2019/2020.
- Dedicating a session at a Forum meeting on 5 March 2019 to ESG which was led by Business in the Community Ireland (BITCI) who provided an overview of ESG. The Forum meeting also included a presentation from Sustainability Works on 'Why do Investors care about ESG?'
- Inviting Dr Rory Sullivan, visiting professor, London School of Economic and Political Science (LSE) and Chronos Sustainability to present at the CSR CEO/Leaders Breakfast in June 2019 who spoke about 'Environmental, Social and Governance Factors and their relevance to investment decision making'.
- Inviting Dr Sullivan and BITCI to contribute articles to CSR Check 2019.
- Promoting ESG through the Forum's online platforms.

The Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) online tool for SMEs was launched in 2016. The tool, which was an initiative of the CSR Stakeholder Forum in conjunction with the Department, was set up to drive objectives of both National Plans on CSR. The CSR Stakeholder Forum decided at its meeting on the 17 September 2018 that the tool had reached its conclusion.

Action 4: Continue to increase awareness of CSR, its value to businesses and to society as a whole.

CSR Ambassadors

From issues relating to sustainability, ethics and respect for business and human rights, to diversity and inclusiveness in the workplace, it has never been more important for businesses to recognise the impacts that they have on both their environment and the society in which they operate. In 2018, Forum members were invited to become CSR Ambassadors to communicate the value and importance of CSR to business and society. DHR communications provided a session on messaging for CSR Ambassadors in 2018, which covered topics including developing and delivering effective messaging. Each CSR Stakeholder Forum member received a CSR ambassador information pack. The full list of speaking engagements can be viewed at Appendix 5.

As a CSR Ambassador, the former Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation, Heather Humphreys TD, contacted the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (now Department of Foreign Affairs), Enterprise Ireland, IDA and Science Foundation Ireland about the CSR initiative and to seek their assistance in raising awareness.

CSR in the Public Sector

All public bodies exist to provide a service to the public and/or communities and are responsible to different sets of stakeholders. The very nature of public service reflects many principles of social responsibility – accountability, transparency, respect for differing stakeholder's interests. A core function of Government is to regulate to ensure the safe, effective and efficient operation of society – for citizens and enterprises alike.

CSR in the Public Sector has been a key theme over the three years of the second National Plan on CSR 2017-2020 and in 2018 a CSR Public Sector Network was established to bring organisations together from across the public sector to share experiences and knowledge. To explore practical ways in which the public sector could grow their CSR activity a workshop, which was organised by DBEI (now DETE), hosted by the Central Bank of Ireland and facilitated by Business in the Community Ireland (BITCI), took place on the 10 September 2019. The audience heard from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform on 'Our Public Service 2020', from DETE on *Towards Responsible Business Ireland's National Plan on Corporate Social Responsibility 2017-2020* and the development of DETE's CSR strategy *dbeinnovation*, and Enterprise Ireland shared their experience of the benefit of the CSR Public Sector Network and provided an overview of Enterprise Ireland's CSR Strategy.

CSR at the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Business, Enterprise and Innovation

The CSR Stakeholder Forum's journey to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Business, Enterprise and Innovation began in April 2018 and culminated in a delegation attending the Committee on the 15 October 2019. At the meeting the Chairperson of the CSR Stakeholder Forum highlighted the benefits of CSR to business and the work of the CSR Stakeholder Forum. Following the Chairperson's statement, members of the Committee posed questions about CSR to the delegation including DETE officials from the CSR Stakeholder Forum. A copy of the Chairperson's Statement can be found on oireachtas.ie

csrhub.ie

The CSRhub, which is hosted and managed by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment with contributions from the CSR Stakeholder Forum, is Ireland's dedicated online CSR resource. The Hub holds a wealth of resources that seek to inform and inspire businesses to embark on their own CSR journey. From practical tips on how to get started, to detailed case studies of how other businesses have benefitted from adopting CSR into their own businesses of any size, the hub holds value for all stakeholders. Significant work was undertaken over the period of the second National Plan on CSR to collate more CSR case studies. During 2020 a number of COVID-19 specific CSR case studies were submitted. Case studies are available on csrhub.ie/csr-case-studies/

CSR Newsletter

The quarterly CSR newsletter gave businesses and organisations an opportunity to engage with CSR through peer learning and also provided an opportunity to share case studies or articles. The newsletter also featured information on CSR related policy issues, Global CSR trends and a calendar of CSR events in Ireland and abroad. The newsletter was paused during COVID-19. Further information is available on csrhub.ie/the-csr-newsletter/

Action 5: Develop a CSR Award – Bronze, Silver, Gold, Platinum.

The CSR Stakeholder Forum agreed not to develop a CSR award but to promote Chambers Ireland's *Sustainable Business Impact Awards* as it considered that these awards make a strong contribution to highlighting and providing recognition to excellence in CSR in Ireland.

Action 6: Develop a Work Programme to Implement the actions contained throughout the Plan.

The work of the CSR Stakeholder Forum was guided by the Actions in the National Plan on CSR under the four dimensions. As part of its work programme the Forum focused on a number of topical themes, including evolving and emerging international trends in the area of sustainability and responsible practice that aligned with the actions in the National Plan on CSR 2017-2020. The list of themes can be seen below and CSR Stakeholder Forum members were invited to participate in or lead Working Groups/Project Teams to reflect the key themes.

2017/2018   CSR Ambassadors and Communications, Supporting National Policy and other Programmes, Practical Tools and Supports, Environment and Community Dimension and the UNs Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

2018/2019   Circular Economy, CSR in the Public Sector, Diversity and Inclusion, Environment, ESG (Environment, Social and Governance Factors), CSR and SMEs and SDGs.

2019/2020   CSR in the Public Sector, Diversity and Inclusion, ESG, SDGs and Sustainability.

CSR DIMENSION

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

GOALS: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17

Actions 7 and 8

Embracing CSR for businesses large and small enables them to reap the benefits of their positive impact through increased market share, attraction and retention of talent, and improved productivity. Responsible environmental and social policies that go above and beyond legal requirements are already an integral part of business strategies of many enterprises today.

Mainstreaming responsible business practices into business strategies can help a business become more resilient. The following two actions encouraged awareness of knowledge of CSR at the C-Suite level within organisations.

Action 7: Arrange a CSR Leaders Breakfast Forum.

Two CSR CEO/Leaders' Breakfasts were organised by Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (DBEI) (now Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment [DETE]) in 2018 and 2019 as part of the awareness raising and peer learning function of the National CSR Stakeholder Forum. The final CSR CEO/Leaders' Breakfast in June 2020 under the second National Plan on CSR 2017-2020 was deferred due to public health restrictions.

Corporate Social Responsibility CEO/Leaders' Breakfast, Iveagh House, 28 June 2018

The inaugural CSR CEO/Leaders' Breakfast was held on the 28 June 2018 to mark the first anniversary of the launch of Ireland's second National Plan on CSR 2017 – 2020. Over 100 leaders from across Government, the private and public sectors attended the event hosted by the CSR Stakeholder Forum. David Donoghue, former Irish Ambassador to the UN and keynote speaker at the event highlighted the importance of business engagement with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This was the first time Mr Donoghue spoke to the business community in Ireland on the SDGs. The panel of speakers included IBM, IDA Ireland, The Soar Foundation, Earth's Edge, 3fe and Lidl Ireland. The CSR Check 2018 Progress Report was launched at the event.

Corporate Social Responsibility CEO/Leaders' Breakfast, Smock Alley, 27 June 2019

The theme for the 2019 CEO/Leaders' Breakfast was *CSR in Ireland Today* with a focus on CSR from the business/organisation perspective and the impact of CSR in society. To reflect this there were two keynote speakers and two panels. The first keynote speaker was Dr Rory Sullivan, London School of Economics and Political Science and Chronos Sustainability who spoke about Environmental, Social and Governance Factors (ESG). The second keynote speaker was Tomás Sercovich, CEO, Business in the Community Ireland (BITCI) who spoke about the challenges ahead for business and all organisations in responding to climate change and wider societal issues.

From the first panel discussion, the audience had the opportunity to hear about Dublin Bus Workplace Gender Transition Policy, Diageo's Open Doors Initiative, Java Republic's Carbon Neutral plant and the Central Bank of Ireland's CSR Programme. A Q&A session which was opened to the floor, covered current topics in CSR including staff recruitment and retention, energy savings, SDGs and other CSR initiatives. The second panel spoke about the impact of CSR on Society. Each of the speakers spoke about the importance of CSR and how they have been able to progress very impactful initiatives through their engagement with the business community. The audience heard about St Joseph's library built by A&L Goodbody, the rights and equality of trans people and their families by Transgender Equality Network Ireland (TENI), the volunteers from Deloitte who participated in Age Action's over-55 computer literacy programme, and the reduction of food waste by Food Cloud.

Dr Orlaigh Quinn, Secretary General, DBEI (now DETE) addressed the audience about the 'workforce of the future' that will promote equality, diversity and inclusion, reflect society, is innovative and engaged and underpinned by strong leadership, culture and values.

Action 8: Collaborate with Chambers Ireland and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (now Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage) to emphasise the increased need to expand the categories in the annual Chambers CSR Awards.

The Chambers Ireland CSR Awards, now called the Sustainable Business Impact Awards, made a strong contribution to highlighting and providing recognition to excellence in CSR in Ireland.

Over the period of the National Plan on CSR these awards were promoted on csrhub.ie, @CSRHubIrl and at various CSR Stakeholder Forum meetings. In addition, the CSR Stakeholder Forum secretariat assisted the awards by participating on its judging panel.

After 16 years of the Chambers Ireland Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Awards, Chambers Ireland took the decision to rebrand these accolades in line with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. Further information on the awards can be found in Chapter 7 and on chambers.ie.

CSR DIMENSION

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

GOALS: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17

Action 9

The term Corporate Social Responsibility can seem complicated to a lot of smaller businesses, as it is often seen as something that only large corporates engage in. However, many SMEs may already be implementing CSR practices and have a CSR ethos without being aware of it.

By identifying and communicating their CSR strategies, businesses can demonstrate their commitment to acting responsibly, helping their employees, protecting the environment, suppliers and customers, and integrating with their local community. This would help to build reputation, customer loyalty, attract and retain talent and save money while protecting our planet.

A key aim of the CSR Stakeholder Forum was to increase the level of awareness amongst SMEs and to demonstrate that CSR is a win-win no matter what size a business is.

Action 9: Encourage more micro, small and medium-sized enterprises to raise their competitiveness through improved CSR engagement.

Sharing good practice is a way to highlight the value of CSR and motivate other companies, particularly SMEs into adopting a CSR strategy for their business. This culture of sharing seeks to transform how business operates in Ireland and in return – the workplace, the marketplace, the community and the environment.

The collection of case studies on csrhub.ie/csr-case-studies/sme-csr-case-studies/ from SMEs continues to grow. The case studies provide insights and knowledge on how to get started or how to develop your CSR journey for your business. The CSR Stakeholder Forum endorses this model of peer learning.

In addition to increasing the number of SME case studies on csrhub.ie/csr-case-studies/sme-csr-case-studies/, the CSR Stakeholder Forum also focused on increasing its outreach to SMEs. The Forum held four meetings annually with one meeting outside Dublin which was extended to include a networking event for local SMEs. Local SMEs were given an opportunity to meet with CSR Stakeholder Forum members to discuss CSR and its value to SMEs.

In 2017 the CSR Stakeholder Forum meeting was held in Doolin, Co. Clare and hosted by Hotel Doolin (members of the CSR Stakeholder Forum). An outreach event for local SMEs was held after the meeting. The panel of speakers at the event included Healthy Ireland, Hotel Doolin, Dawn Meats, Moyhill Community Garden and Catherine Heaney, Chairperson, CSR Stakeholder Forum.

In 2018, the SME outreach event was held in Cavan and hosted by Abbott Nutrition Ireland (members of the CSR Stakeholder Forum). The event, attended by local SMEs and CSR Stakeholder Forum members, focused on the Environment dimension of CSR, with Circular Economy as one of its main themes. The audience heard from local businesses such as Lacpatrick and Áine Hand Made Chocolate, and from Green Business (EPA) and The Rediscovery Centre, Dublin, who spoke about the importance of the Circular Economy and how the Rediscovery Centre is the National Centre for the Circular Economy.

The SME outreach event for 2019/2020, due to be held in March 2020 in Nano Nagle Place, Cork in association with Cork Chamber of Commerce, was deferred due to public health restrictions relating to COVID-19.

Corporate Social Responsibility for SMEs

Prepared by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, March 2020.

To coincide with the outreach event in Cork, the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (now Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment) developed a Corporate Social Responsibility leaflet for SMEs to offer SMEs an overview of CSR and provide information and guidance on how to activate CSR initiatives. The leaflet is available on csrhub.ie/csr-for-smes/.

The CSR Stakeholder Forum is keen to encourage more research, particularly on CSR and SMEs. Forum member Dr Briga Hynes, Kemmy Business School, University of Limerick contributed an article for CSR Check 2019 *Unpacking the Dimensions of CSR in Irish SMEs – building the evidence base* which is available on page 22 in CSR Check 2019 csrhub.ie/Ireland-s-national-plan-on-csr/progress-reports-csr-check-2019-and-csr-check-2018/

Increasing SME representation on the CSR Forum was also a focus of Forum members over the term of the Plan. In 2019 the *CSR Project Team on CSR and SMEs* invited two new SME members to the CSR Stakeholder Forum. The CSR Stakeholder Forum membership is available on csrhub.ie/csr-stakeholder-forum/csr-stakeholder-forum-members/

CSR DIMENSION

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT G⚫ALS

GOALS: 5, 8, 12

Action 10

For larger companies, CSR has become a critical part of how they do business and is embedded as a core mechanism by which they can ensure their business is sustainable. It can act as a risk management tool, and aids transparency, in particular, through non-financial reporting.

Sustainability reporting has become more and more commonplace for larger companies and places an obligation on certain large companies to report on non-financial information. Further information on the recently adopted Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive can be found in Chapter 6.

Many large companies have dedicated CSR or Sustainability Managers and have a programme of CSR activities and have the capacity to drive CSR with their own organisation and also through their supply chain.

> **Action 10: Work to increase recognition among large businesses of the value of sustainable business practices and corporate social responsibility in boosting employment, attracting and retaining talent and their impact on wider society.**

To encourage businesses to report their CSR activity in their Annual Reports, publications, business media and websites, the CSR Stakeholder Forum included Environmental, Social and Governance Factors (ESG) as a project theme as part of its 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 work programmes.

There is a growing demand for information on ESG issues and considerations. Internationally, sustainability and integrated reporting is increasing due to market driver and investor expectations rather than through regulatory requirements.

Responsible businesses know that building and keeping trust with its many stakeholders (employees, customers, suppliers, Government, local communities) is a necessary condition for business success. Trust is fostered through openness and transparency by the business, and reporting is a component of this trust process between business and its stakeholders.

As part of its 2018/2019 work programme the CSR Stakeholder Forum established a *CSR Project Team on ESG* and sought to raise awareness of ESG by:

- Programming a dedicated session on Environmental, Social and Governance Factors (ESG) at the CSR Stakeholder Forum Meeting on 5 March 2019 which included presentations by Bank of Ireland, Business in the Community Ireland, Sustainability Works and the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (now Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment) who spoke about the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and the Department's role as the OECD National Contact Point for Ireland. All presentations are available on csrhub.ie/csr-stakeholder-forum/presentations-made-at-csr-forum-meetings/.

- Information on the European Union (Disclosure of Non-Financial and Diversity Information by certain large undertakings and groups) Regulations 2017[7] (amended 2018) was circulated to members of the CSR Stakeholder Forum and the CSR Network.

CSR DIMENSION

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

GOALS: 8, 12

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7. S.I. No. 360/2017, irishstatutebook.ie

Action 11

Today's employees are more conscious than ever of the environmental, ethical and social aspects of companies, and their products and services. Employees want to work for organisations that share their values and contribute positively to local and global communities.

Businesses that move beyond compliance and set high standards in areas such as diversity and inclusion, sustainable supply chain management and climate action are future proofing their operations and growing their competitiveness. Key to the success of a business is investing in and valuing the people working within it.

Workplace is one of the four dimensions of CSR and covers a wide range of best practice initiatives including flexible working arrangements, staff consultation and active management of equality and diversity measures.

Under this action the CSR Stakeholder Forum worked with relevant Government Departments, agencies and businesses to help and promote the integration of workplace CSR best practice.

Action 11: Identify and examine ways in which workplace related Government policies outlined in Action 2 can be supported and promoted through business.

Over its term the CSR Stakeholder Forum focused on and promoted a number of workplace related Government Policies including:

Climate Action Plan

Climate Action Plan 2019 – To Tackle Climate Breakdown was launched in June 2019 and outlined the current state of play across key sectors including Electricity, Transport, Build Environment, Industry and Agriculture and charted the course towards ambitious decarbonisation targets.[8]

Healthy Ireland

Healthy Ireland presented at a CSR Stakeholder Forum meeting on 26 November 2019 on the development of the Healthy Workplace Framework and presented on the benefits of the Healthy Ireland initiative at the SME outreach event in Doolin, Co Clare on 28 November 2017.

National Volunteering Strategy 2021-2025

The Department of Rural and Community Development presented at the CSR Stakeholder Forum meeting on 26 November 2016 and gave an update on the development of Ireland's National Volunteering Strategy. The Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (now Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment) were involved in the preparation of the National Volunteering Strategy as a member of the National Advisory Group.

Migrant Integration Strategy

The *Migrant Integration Strategy* is the central policy framework adopted by Government to promote the integration of all migrants who are legally residing in the State. In 2019 at a CSR Stakeholder Forum meeting the then Department of Justice and Equality (now Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth) made a presentation on the *National Migrant Integration Strategy 2017-2020* and highlighted the preactivation and employability programmes funded by the Department such as Business in the Community Ireland's EPIC initiative.

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8. See also Climate Action Plan 2021 – Securing Our Future

National Plan on Business and Human Rights 2017-2020:

Ireland's *National Plan on Business and Human Rights 2017-2020* seeks to give effect to aspects of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) – 31 principles set out under three pillars. The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment are represented on the implementation group and also its subgroups. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (now Department of Foreign Affairs) updated the CSR Stakeholder Forum on 5 March 2019 about the National Plan on Business and Human Rights and the implementation Group.

Further information on these and other Government Policy initiatives is available in Chapter 5.

In addition, Diversity and Inclusion was a key theme identified by the CSR Stakeholder Forum as part of its 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 work programme and the Forum established a *CSR Project Team on Diversity and Inclusion*.

A key output of the Project Team's work in 2018/2019 was a dedicated session on Diversity and Inclusion at the CSR Stakeholder Forum's meeting in November 2018. The meeting was open to non-Forum members and over sixty people attended from Government, business and civil society. Three presenters were invited to speak on the topic:

- Dr Maria Quinlan, UCD, who spoke about Photovoice – a photography methodology used by Deloitte to highlight diversity to promote positive social change at (see case study on csrhub.ie/csr-case-studies/
- Deirdre Lynch, Not So Different, who talked about her company Not So Different – a social enterprise which supports neurodiverse individuals with unique abilities (including those with Autism) to realise their full potential through education and employment[9].
- Tom Tully, Bord Bia, who discussed Diversity and Inclusion in the Food and Drink Industry from a Bord Bia perspective.

The Team also focused on the identification and the sharing of Diversity and Inclusion case studies on csrhub.ie/csr-case-studies/

CSR DIMENSION

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

GOALS: 5, 8, 10

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9. notsodifferent.ie/about-us/

Actions 12, 13 and 14

Marketplace CSR is how an organisation interacts with its customers, suppliers, and other stakeholders. Creating and selling products that meet your customers' expectations, engaging in responsible procurement and paying your suppliers on time will build and maintain customer loyalty and promote your brand in the realm of business.

Corporate Social Responsibility matters to a business's bottom line. Operating responsibly, while taking care of business and successfully managing risks, distinguishes a business from its competitors.

Through the following actions, the CSR Stakeholder Forum wanted to show businesses how to build their reputation and gain trusting relationships with their stakeholders.

Action 12: Support and promote Government policy in areas which enrich responsible business practices in the Marketplace.

One of the key Government initiatives promoted by the CSR Stakeholder Forum under the Marketplace Dimension was the Prompt Payment Code. The Prompt Payment Code is an initiative developed by business for business, with the aim of improving cashflow between business and moving towards a culture of providing 'payment certainty'[10].

The Code is supported by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment with their partners, the Irish Small and Medium Enterprises Association (ISME), the Small Firms Association (SFA), the Irish Business and Employers Confederation (Ibec), Chambers Ireland and The Banking & Payments Federation Ireland (BPFI).

The CSR Stakeholder Forum invited the Department to submit a case study on the Prompt Payment Code and is available on csrhub.ie/csr-case-studies/public-sector-csr-case-studies. Further information on the Prompt Payment Code is available on enterprise.gov.ie/en/What-We-Do/Supports-for-SMEs/Prompt-Payment-Code/.

In addition, the Code has also been promoted on @CSRHubIrl and in the CSR newsletter.

Action 13: Implement National CSR Voluntary Mentorship Programme

The CSR Stakeholder Forum, through its meetings and platform, raised awareness of the benefit of voluntary mentorship to the business sector and to especially the SME sector.

One successful programme which was highlighted over the three-year period of the National Plan on CSR was the Microsoft Business Mentoring Programme.

The Microsoft Business Mentoring Programme was established between Senior Executives from Microsoft Ireland, Enterprise Ireland and Local Enterprise Office client companies. The Microsoft mentors had considerable senior level expertise in international expertise in business operations (e.g. supply chain, project management), software engineering (e.g. applications and services, cloud PaaS/IaaS, online properties and apps), and strategic business planning and finance (tax, business planning/strategy, leadership, import/export trade finance, software asset management, licensing compliance) and voluntarily shared their advice and guidance with the client companies.

To date the programme has been a huge success for both Microsoft and the businesses who engaged in it. A case study on this programme is available on csrhub.ie/csr-case-studies/microsoft-business-mentoring-programme

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10. enterprise.gov.ie/en/What-We-Do/Supports-for-SMEs/Prompt-Payment-Code/

The role of volunteering in business was highlighted by the CSR Stakeholder Forum through the participation of DBEI on the Volunteering Strategy Steering Committee. The CSR Stakeholder Forum has been identified as a responsible body under two actions in the *National Volunteering Strategy 2021-2025* as follows:

- **Action 12** – Undertake a pilot project for professional mentoring as a support to volunteers and smaller Volunteer Involving Organisations.
- **Action 16** – Ensure that the importance of volunteering is represented in the next iteration of the National Plan on CSR in line with EU and international best practice on CSR policy.[11]

Action 14: Encourage businesses to report CSR activity in their Annual Reports and other publications to communicate these initiatives to their stakeholders thereby building reputation and gaining trust in the marketplace.

Businesses, in particular small businesses, may not always recognise their own best practices as CSR, and the business benefits, such as customer and supplier loyalty, may also be under appreciated. This may result in some businesses not reporting on their CSR activity.

The CSR Stakeholder Forum, through Forum meetings, outreach events, case studies, csrhub.ie, Twitter, CSR Newsletter and other platforms highlighted the benefits of building stakeholder trust to all business in all sectors, of all sizes.

As seen in previous chapters one of the key themes for the CSR Stakeholder Forum was raising awareness of ESG and non-financial reporting.

CSR DIMENSION

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

GOALS: 8, 9, 12

11. gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/100239/8e18fb45-6e72-47f9-a1fb-7dcd59105c1a.pdf#page=null

Action 15

The integration of environmentally sustainable business practices across all sectors is integral for economic growth. In a world of finite resources, it has never been more important for businesses to evolve to ensure they become competitive in a sustainable manner. Many companies now employ environmental specialists to achieve their environmental management practices, whilst others have 'Green Teams' that work with key departments such as facilities management to bring about change.

Some SMEs may feel that beyond meeting regulatory compliance, they do not have sufficient resources to consider the broader environmental impact of their business or to assign additional resources to manage it. There may also be a perception that adopting environmental management principles into their business would be costly and that the business benefits are not clear.

Action 15: Work to increase recognition of the impact of business operations on the environment and to encourage businesses to mitigate their negative impacts.

Over the period of the National Plan on CSR 2017-2020, The Environment, as one of the four key dimensions of CSR under the National Plan, was integrated into every aspect of the work of the CSR Stakeholder Forum and its subgroups. An example of this was seen at the CSR networking event held after the CSR Stakeholder Forum meeting on 17 September 2018 in Cavan. The networking event was for local businesses to drive awareness of CSR for SMEs with a special focus on environmental sustainability. [12]

The CSR Stakeholder Forum understood that 'Circular Economy' was becoming an area of significance for businesses and included it as part of its 2018/2019 Work Programme.

In 2015, The European Commission adopted its first circular economy action plan to *'help stimulate Europe's transition towards a circular economy, boost global competitiveness, foster sustainable economic growth and generate new jobs'.[13]* The European Commission adopted the new Circular Economy Action Plan (CEAP) in March 2020 and it is one of the main building blocks of the European Green Deal, Europe's new agenda for sustainable growth.[14] The Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (now Department of Environment, Climate and Communications) has responsibility for Circular Economy policy.

The CSR Stakeholder Forum placed considerable effort in promoting the benefits of 'Circular Economy' for businesses. The *CSR Project Team on Circular Economy* highlighted the need for businesses to consider moving from the current linear model of make, use and dispose to a circular economy model. The CSR Project Team championed MODOS, a joint initiative of Dublin City Council and the Waste Management Plan Lead Authority (WMPLA) for micro, small and medium sized enterprises, which provides companies with the entrepreneurial skills, knowledge and toolkits on the circular economy, sustainability and resource efficiency, so that they can apply and replicate it in their own business. The Network of Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) representative from Dublin City Council updated members on the scheme. Further information on MODOS is available on modos.ie

CSR DIMENSION 🍃

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT G🔵ALS

GOALS: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16

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12. See also Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021
13. ec.europa.eu/environment/topics/circular-economy/first-circular-economy-action-plan_en
14. ec.europa.eu/environment/strategy/circular-economy-action-plan_en

Action 16

Business activities in the community play an important role in local development and can often create job opportunities.

This mutually beneficial relationship between enterprises in Ireland and their local communities illustrates CSR at work: businesses can give back to their local communities and in turn the communities will help the business as loyal customers, employees and stakeholders with a vested interest in underpinning its growth and success.

Through this action the CSR Stakeholder Forum sought to highlight the benefits of developing partnerships in the Community, whether with other businesses, charities, clubs or groups.

Action 16: Encourage businesses to build their CSR Capacity in the Community.

Over its three year term the CSR Stakeholder Forum aimed to increase awareness of the benefits of businesses collaborating with their local community through CSR Case studies, participation at CSR Stakeholder Forum meetings and through the DETE contribution to the *National Volunteering Strategy 2021–2025*.

Sharing good CSR practice encourages businesses to go further and do more as they can see the win-win that an effective CSR strategy can achieve. The collection of case studies on csrhub.ie involving businesses and the community grew over the three-year period 2017-2020. Some examples are:

- Open Doors Initiative
- Dundalk Credit Union 'Community Engagement Programme'
- Youth Work Ireland 'Work Experience Programme for Young People Facing Educational and Work Readiness Challenges'

The full list of CSR Case studies is available at Appendix 8 and on csrhub.ie/csr-case-studies

Further peer to peer learning was provided through the CSR Stakeholder Forum meetings. The theme for the CEO/Leaders' Breakfast in 2019 was 'CSR in Ireland today' with a focus on CSR from the business/organisation perspective and the impact of CSR in society. Attendees heard from businesses about their various CSR programmes including Diageo's Open Doors Initiative. The audience also heard from organisations who benefitted from CSR activities including Age Action on its partnership with Deloitte on a computer literacy programme.

Rethink Ireland (formerly the Social Innovation Fund), who are members of the CSR Network, presented at a CSR Stakeholder Forum meeting on 28 November 2018 and provided an overview of the Social Innovation Fund and how the fund supports initiatives such as Not So Different who also presented at the same meeting.

A key action of the *National Volunteering Strategy 2021–2025* is to develop the potential for further volunteering partnerships between the corporate sector and community organisations and the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (now Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment) represented the business sector on its advisory group.

Further Information about the Volunteering Strategy is included in Chapter 5.

CSR DIMENSION

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

GOALS: 3, 8, 11

Action 17

As part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted by unanimous vote by every country represented at the United Nations.

The SDGs call to action was embraced by the CSR Stakeholder Forum and the actions in the second National Plan on CSR 2017-2020 were aligned to the SDGs. In addition, *The Sustainable Development Goals National Implementation Plan 2018-2020* included an action aligned to *Towards Responsible Business Ireland's National Plan on Corporate Social Responsibility 2017-2020* as follows: *12.6 Encourage companies, especially large and transnational companies, to adopt sustainable practices and to integrate sustainability information into their reporting cycle*[15].

Action 17: Encourage Businesses to align their CSR strategy and activity to the Sustainable Development Goals.

Over the three-year period of the National Plan on CSR the CSR Stakeholder Forum placed considerable effort in promoting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and aligning their efforts with the SDG National Stakeholder Forum (established by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment [now Department of Environment, Climate and Communications]). The SDGs were included as a theme in the CSR Stakeholder Forum Work Programme from 2017-2020 and remained a standing agenda item at each forum meeting. In addition, the CSR Stakeholder Forum continued to promote the SDGs to businesses on its various communications platforms. Through the Forum's Working Groups during 2017/2018, a cursory analysis of how Forum member businesses were incorporating the SDGs into their business practices was undertaken and this provided insights into the practices and priorities of businesses together with identifying case studies. The analysis pointed to a range of further actions to enhance the understanding and awareness on the role and impact of business on the SDGs. The SDG Project Team, established by the CSR Stakeholder Forum and led by a representative from the ESB, sought to continue to deepen business awareness of the SDGs by:

- Representing the CSR Stakeholder Forum and strengthening the business voice at the SDG National Stakeholder Forum meetings in October 2018 and in January and March 2019. The Project lead gave feedback from each SDG meeting to the CSR Stakeholder Forum members at the subsequent CSR Stakeholder Forum meeting.

- Presenting at a SDG National Stakeholder Forum meeting by:
  - Dawn Meats on how the company aligns its objectives to the SDGs as part of the company's sustainability reporting process.
  - The Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (now Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment) on the National Plan on CSR.
  - Chambers Ireland on the work of Chambers Ireland, their CSR Council and links to Chambers Europe.

- Increasing the number of case studies about how businesses have aligned their strategies to the SDGs. Through the gathering of CSR case studies (csrhub.ie/csr-case-studies/), the CSR Stakeholder Forum actively encouraged businesses and organisations to consider how their CSR strategy and activities align with the SDGs.

The SDGs were also a key theme at the inaugural CSR CEO/Leaders' Breakfast (June 2018) which saw David Donoghue, former Irish Ambassador to the UN and keynote speaker at the event highlighting the importance of business engagement with the Sustainable Development Goals. More information on the SDGs and the National SDG Stakeholder Forum is available on gov.ie/SDG/.

CSR DIMENSION

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT G○ALS

GOALS: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17

15. assets.gov.ie/19344/

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Chapter 2
CSR Stakeholder Forum

In 2011 the European Commission, as part of its *Renewed EU strategy 2011-2014 for Corporate Social Responsibility,* invited Member States to develop or update their own plans or national lists of priority actions to promote CSR as part of the Europe 2020 Strategy. In its 2013 Action Plan for Jobs, the Government undertook to develop and publish a National Plan on Corporate Social Responsibility.

The first National Plan Good for Business, *Good for the Community Ireland's National Plan on Corporate Social Responsibility 2014-2016* was published in 2014. One of the priority actions in that Plan was to *'establish a CSR Stakeholder Forum, to inform further development of the CSR policy framework in Ireland and ensure that this Plan remains relevant to evolving international best practice and thinking'.* It was proposed that the CSR Stakeholder Forum would comprise of representatives of the business sector, key Government Departments and the community sector.

The Forum was established in 2014 and Brendan Jennings, CEO, Deloitte Ireland was the first Chairperson of the Forum. Catherine Heaney, Director and Chair, DHR Communications was the second Chairperson under the second National Plan on CSR 2017-2020.

The CSR Stakeholder Forum is a business led body with representatives from business, civil society and Government. Membership is on a voluntary basis with each member committed to realising the vision for the National Plan on CSR through their individual and organisation participation. The Forum met four times per year pre COVID-19. The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment provides secretariat to the Forum. The list of Forum Members can be found at the end of this chapter and in Appendix 6. The list is also available on csrhub.ie/CSR Stakeholder Forum Members.

The work of the CSR Stakeholder Forum from 2017-2020 was guided by the 17 Actions in the National Plan on CSR under the four dimensions of CSR: Workplace, Environment, Community and Marketplace. Over the period of the second National Plan on CSR, the Forum developed and agreed an annual work programme and members were invited to participate in or lead Working Groups or Project Teams that reflected the work programme of that year. Each group or team was responsible for delivering activities under a particular theme, which were underpinned by the four broad strategic Goals in the Plan: Awareness, Access, Support and Policy Alignment.

To highlight the progress of the Forum in implementing the second National Plan on CSR, an annual progress report was published each year – entitled 'CSR Check'. To date the Department has published CSR Checks in June 2018 and June 2019. CSR Check 2020 was deferred due to COVID-19 prioritisation within the Department.

Some of the key achievements by the CSR Stakeholder Forum over the period of the second National Plan on CSR 2017-2020 include:

- Establishing the flagship CSR Annual CEO/Leaders' Breakfast which took place in 2018 and 2019 (The 2020 CEO/Leaders' Breakfast was deferred in line with public health guidance).

- Presentation to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Business, Enterprise and Innovation in 2019 to raise awareness of CSR.

- Public Sector CSR workshop 2019 – assisted by Business in the Community Ireland (BITCI).

- Collation of almost 100 best practice case studies from the private and public sectors.

- Further development of the website csrhub.ie as a dedicated national CSR resource, underpinned by an active social media presence to highlight good CSR practice.

- Growing a panel of active CSR Ambassadors within the business community.

- Promoting CSR peer learning amongst businesses through SME outreach events (proposed 2020 SME outreach event in Cork was deferred in line with COVID-19 public health guidance).

- Establishment of a Public Sector CSR Network.

- Establishment of an informal CSR Network for businesses and organisations interested in CSR and the Forum's work.

- Highlighting opportunities for the private and public sector to partner on impactful initiatives that align with public policy.

- CSR Stakeholder Forum facilitated policy discussion and implementation under the broad thematic areas of CSR.

- The Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (DBEI) (now DETE) contributed to key policy areas including the National *LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy*, the National Forum on Business and Human Rights, the *National Volunteering Strategy*, and the *Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) National Implementation Plan 2018-2020*.

CSR Network

The CSR Network is an informal network that provides an opportunity for businesses and organisations active in CSR to stay in touch with activities of the CSR Stakeholder Forum. Network members received regular updates, invitations to outreach events, CSR Stakeholder Forum events and the annual CEO/Leaders Breakfast. CSR Network members were invited to submit a CSR Case study and were asked to subscribe to the CSR newsletter and follow @CSRHubIrl. The list of CSR Network Members is available in Appendix 7. Further information about the Network is available on csrhub.ie/CSR Network.

Members of the CSR Stakeholder Forum

Abbott

Deloitte.

afanite.com

DHR COMMUNICATIONS

Bank of Ireland

ENTERPRISE IRELAND

BUSINESS IN THE COMMUNITY IRELAND

epa
Environmental Protection Agency
An Ghníomhaireacht um Chaomhnú Comhshaoil

Business to Arts
Developing Creative Partnerships

EY
Building a better working world

Chambers Ireland
Advancing business together

ESB Energy for generations

CLEAN TECHNOLOGY CENTRE CTC

Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

CONTINUUM GROUP

Grant Thornton

DANONE
ONE PLANET. ONE HEALTH

Hotel DOOLIN

DCU Dublin City University
Educational Trust

Members of the CSR Stakeholder Forum

3

Chapter 3
CSR Case Studies

One of the main objectives of the National Plans on CSR was to increase awareness and promote best practices on CSR. This culture of sharing best practice seeks to transform how businesses operate in the workplace, the marketplace, the community and the environment.

A significant effort was made to identify and gather best practice CSR case studies from CSR Stakeholder Forum members and the wider business and public sectors. The full list of CSR Case Studies is referenced in Appendix 8 and can be viewed on csrhub.ie/csr-case-studies/. A synopsis of five CSR Case studies is presented here.

Danone Dairy Ireland: BCorp Accreditation

In 2019, Danone Dairy Ireland became the first Irish food company to be certified as a BCorp by B Lab. BCorp is a mark of trust that recognizes a company's ambition to act beyond financial profit and put purpose at the heart of its business strategy. To obtain the BCorp Certification, Danone Dairy Ireland completed a B Impact Assessment with the aim to continuously improve every three years. The BCorp accreditation looks at specific areas of how Danone worked with their suppliers, customers, staff and its local community and they specifically:

- Have a mission statement to 'bring health through food to as many people as possible',

- Initiated a centralised distribution model to reduce the impact of our supply chain on the environment.

- Commitment to making all of its product packaging recyclable, reusable or compostable by 2025,

- Incentivised staff to volunteer for charitable causes, and

- Ran a programme to give access to shares to all employees.

KPMG – Bold Girls Initiative

KPMG in Ireland is a provider of professional services, offering a range of audit, tax and advisory services to a broad range of domestic and international clients across all sectors of business and the economy. KPMG operates on an all-Ireland basis and has 102 partners and 3,200 people in offices in Dublin, Belfast, Cork and Galway.

To celebrate the centenary of women's suffrage in Ireland, Children's Books Ireland (CBI) planned to print a reading guide in 2018, containing books about, written and illustrated by women. At KPMG they recognised that this presented a unique opportunity to create a bespoke volunteering programme for staff based on the idea of these 'BOLD GIRLS.' They approached CBI with the idea of creating a skill-based volunteering programme to compliment the planned booklet. Volunteers from KPMG delivered workshops about inspiring women from history/art/every day to primary-school classes around the country. Between the launch event and the delivery of the four-week workshops to 56 classes, KPMG had over 60 volunteers engaged with the programme benefitting over 1,400 students. Each participating class also received a donation of books to the school library and over 2,000 books have been donated.

In 2020, KPMG adapted the programme to tie in with the 20x20, women in sports campaign. KPMG and Children's Books Ireland identified a number of books for children that highlight women in sport and rolled out a new classroom initiative, BOLD GIRLS meets 20x20. Each participating class received a bundle of 25 selected books along with a specially commissioned exclusive video from Jacqui Hurley, sports broadcaster and author *'Girls Play Too'*.

Lidl Ireland – Inclusion Strategy

Lidl Ireland have 211 stores, 4 distribution centres and over 6,000 employees throughout the island of Ireland. Lidl Ireland's *'Inclusion Strategy'* involved an assessment of their recruitment and retention processes, working with partners to support diverse candidates, helping to foster a more hospitable environment where employees are empowered to reach their full potential.

Since launching their partnership with the Princes Trust, they have had a 56% retention rate with 64 participants offered full time employment contracts. In addition to this programme, they provide around 30 internships a year. In association with Business in the Community Ireland and the COPE Foundation, they provide for 12 placements annually in Lidl stores and warehouses in the Republic of Ireland. As part of the #WeAreLidl ethos Lidl provides Safety Forums and an Employee Assistance Programme for Well-being Outreach to provide one-on-one information and support.

CSR Actions at Tesco Ireland in response to the impact of COVID-19

Tesco is one of the largest private sector employers in Ireland, with more than 13,000 staff working in its 151 stores, head office and distribution centres. Sourcing from over 490 Irish food and drink suppliers and supporting almost 14,000 farm families nationwide, community is central to their business ethos.

Their sustainability and CSR strategy – *Little Helps Plan* – sets out how they will make a positive difference to colleagues, customers, communities, suppliers, shareholders and the environment by addressing the most pressing social and environmental issues of our time.

During COVID-19, they demonstrated their commitment to their colleagues, customers and communities nationwide under the four dimensions of CSR in a number of ways including:

Workplace: Maintaining the safety of colleagues and customers, and supporting colleagues with their physical, mental and financial health.

Marketplace: To assist with cashflow requirements for smaller businesses during COVID-19 they processed payments within five days, rather than the usual 14-day period.

Community: Through the Tesco Community Fund, Tesco supported national charities ALONE, AgeAction and Family Carers Ireland, along with hundreds of community organisations nationwide, helping these groups during COVID-19.

Environment: The Tesco Surplus Food Donations Programme supported local causes and provided upweighted food donations to FoodCloud during COVID-19.

Tico Mail Works Ltd: Renewable Electricity Electric Car to Work Scheme

Tico Mail Works Ltd is a manufacturing company in Dublin with 38 employees. Their Renewable Electric Car to Work Scheme provides an enabling mechanism to all staff, who wish to do so, to purchase an electric vehicle and use renewable energy to drive it.

The initiative involves the staff member identifying the car, Tico buys and owns the car, Tico charges the staff member for the costs associated with the car i.e. insurance and road tax equal to a reduction of the staff member's gross salary including USC and PRSI, Tico provides the electricity to charge the car at the Tico premises. This energy is annually certified by the energy regulator as being 100% renewable, which certification Tico receives each year from our electricity supplier. Should the staff member wish to purchase the car at any time they may do so at no profit to Tico.

The effects of the scheme are to reduce the carbon footprint of the company, help achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals and reduce the cost of the electric car to the staff member.

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Chapter 4
Responsible and sustainable business is the only way forward

Article by Tomás Sercovich, CEO, Business in the Community Ireland

If there is one thing that the pandemic has taught us, is the need to ensure business models can adapt to change, be resilient to external shocks and have a model that is future-fit.

As our economy and our society rebound from the pandemic, greater challenges become more apparent: the climate crisis and the undeniable evidence of irreversible damage to our environment; an even greater nature breakdown and growing inequality in our society.

If we thought that managing through the pandemic was one of the greatest challenges for business in recent times, we must understand that, **if business fail to change their models to more sustainable and inclusive approaches, they will not be viable in the long-term.**

As with the pandemic, business will need to deploy their best skills of resilience, adaptation and long-term thinking to ensure the sustainability of their companies.

Let's focus on what needs to be prioritised in Boardrooms and C-suites in the short-term:

1. **A compelling vision** for a net zero, nature positive and inclusive future: Successful businesses need to be able to articulate how they will contribute to society through their products and services, and how these will enable people to live sustainably. A vision for the future of any business must be connected to the challenges we face. The sustainability transformation that is required cannot be limited to a box-ticking exercise; it has to be embedded throughout everything the business does.

2. **Sustainability leadership:** The major transformations in business were led by enlightened leaders that can articulate the compelling vision of sustainability to investors, employees, customers and society. In practical terms, companies need to equip their Boards and decision-making structures with expertise in climate change, nature-based solutions, inequality and inclusion, human rights, transparency and disclosure, among others. Boards need to assess their skills and ensure they have the right knowledge fort he challenges ahead. Sustainability cannot be the responsibility of one person or team; it has to be embedded across the organisation. This requires that sustainability skills and competencies be fostered among all staff.

3. **An inclusive culture:** As business engages in reinventing work and the workplace after the pandemic, it is a suitable time to assess whether company culture is inclusive and aligned with sustainability principles. Culture is a cornerstone of any business; it enables innovation, productivity and competitiveness. If a company is serious about its alignment with sustainability, its culture must reflect this ambition.

4. **Radical transparency:** Sustainability is a journey and businesses need to track their evolution. Data will be fundamental to assess progress, especially when consumers feel most statements on sustainability are greenwashing. A combination of voluntary and mandatory initiatives will be needed to help business to demonstrate how their business models are reducing greenhouse gas emissions, increasing inclusion or managing risks across their supply chains. It is enthusing to see the take up in Ireland of the TCFD- the Taskforce on Climate-related Financial Disclosure guidelines and we expect to see a similar push for disclosure from the recently created TNFD- the Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosure. There is huge need for data and transparency. Technologies such as block chain will be essential for this radical transparency.

5. **A transformation beyond the walls of the company:** The scale of the challenge we face demands systemic transformation. A single company or even a group of enlightened progressive companies changing their practices to be more sustainable will not be sufficient. We need a change across economic systems, supply chains, education, policy making and regulation. Business has a role to play in facilitating and influencing this systemic change. The key to systemic change is collaboration and alliances. We have much to learn from the example of the chemical industry and its systemic approach to making health & safety in the workplace a top priority. This spilled over to other industries and sectors. The starting point in this regard for any business is their sector peers and their supply chains. It is good to see companies committing to helping their suppliers to accelerate their sustainability transformations, in some cases even providing financial assistance.

6. **A genuine conversation:** The activist Greta Thunberg referred to the promises of business to be net zero as empty, or just 'blah, blah, blah'[16]. She is correct. The conversation on business sustainability requires coherence, evidence, a scientific approach to target setting, measuring and reporting as well as a language that is inclusive and honest. We need companies to avoid greenwashing, to stop declaring they have reached carbon neutrality when it does not include their indirect emissions or to stop saying they are an inclusive company when there is no visible diversity in their leadership.

Sustainability is a transformation that will inevitably happen. Not all companies are ready for this change. We need to start the radical change now.

Business in the Community Ireland is a not-for-profit organisation based in Dublin. They work with companies on their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Their vision is to make all companies in Ireland responsible and sustainable. BITCI is a member of the CSR Stakeholder Forum.17

Additional articles are available in CSR Check 2018 and CSR Check 2019 and on csrhub.ie/articles.

16. rte.ie/news/world/2021/0928/1249474-greta-thunberg/
17. bitc.ie

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Chapter 5
Public Policy and CSR

There are a number of examples across Government of where public policy and CSR align, these include: *Climate Action Plan 2021, Migrant Integration Strategy, National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021, National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy 2019-2021, National Plan on Business and Human Rights 2017-2020, National Volunteering Strategy 2020-2025,* and the *Sustainable Development Goals National Implementation Plan 2018-2020,* Balance for Better Business, Healthy Ireland, Origin Green, Prompt Payment Code, and Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI).

Climate Action Plan 2021 – Securing Our Future

Climate Action Plan 2021 – Securing Our Future identifies and sets out the far-reaching policy changes across every sector to bring about the significant changes needed to transform our society and to meet our climate ambition for 2030 and beyond. The new Plan sets out actions that must be taken in every Government Department and Body in order to ensure we deliver on the statutory commitments in the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, including making sure we achieve our 2030 targets, prepare for climate neutrality by 2050 at the latest, and make Ireland a leader in responding to climate change.

Like the 2019 Plan, the new Plan has a strong focus on implementation, including actions with specific timelines and steps needed to achieve each action, assigning clear lines of responsibility for delivery. It also involved extensive and ongoing collaboration with Departments and Bodies right across the Government system and consultation with the public; these are key elements of the overall approach to development of the Plan.

Further information can be found on gov.ie/en/publication/6223e-climate-action-plan-2021/

The Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment have developed a Climate Toolkit 4 Business to help SMEs decarbonise. Further information can be found on climatetoolkit4business.gov.ie/about/.

Migrant Integration Strategy

Since 2017, the *Migrant Integration Strategy (MIS)* – A Blueprint for the Future has been the central policy framework adopted by Government to promote the integration of all migrants who are legally residing in the State. It envisages a whole-of-government approach to enhance diversity, inclusion and equity for migrants across all aspects of Irish society through increased focus on social inclusion measures, improved access to public services and targeted action to address racism and xenophobia. Further information can be found on integration.ie/en/isec/pages/migrant_integration_strategy
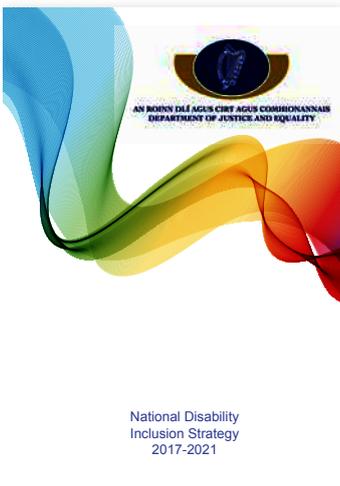
National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021

The *National Disability Inclusion Strategy* (NDIS) is a key framework for policy and action to address the needs of persons with disabilities in Ireland and support effective progress in delivering on the obligations set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Through over a hundred actions the NDIS provides a whole-of-government platform for policymakers to address challenges in 8 specific themes:

- Equality and choice
- Joined up policies and public services
- Education
- Employment
- Health and wellbeing
- Person centered disability services
- Living in the community and
- Transport and access to places

The NDIS Steering Group is chaired by the Anne Rabbitte TD, Minister of State with responsibility for Disability, and includes representatives of several Government departments and the Disability Stakeholder Group (DSG). The DSG is appointed by the Minister of State. Membership includes both members of disability organisations and individuals with a lived experience of disability. It has an independent Chair. The DSG plays an important role in the review and implementation of the NDIS. Further information can be found on gov.ie/en/publication/8072c0-national-disability-inclusion-strategy-2017-2021/

National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy 2019-2021

Ireland's first *National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy 2019-2021* was published on 28 November 2019. It contains over 100 actions that are aimed at promoting inclusion, protecting rights and improving the quality of life and wellbeing of LGBTI+ people. The overall vision informing the Strategy is of a safe, fair and inclusive Ireland where people are supported to flourish and to live inclusive, healthy and fulfilling lives, whatever their sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or sex characteristics. It pursues objectives under four thematic pillars namely:

- Visible and included
- Treated equally
- Healthy
- Safe and supported

As a living document, provision has been made for modification of the Strategy as needs arise during its lifetime. The Strategy has been extended to 2022, to allow for the implementation of the high-level objectives that have been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Further information can be found on justice.ie/National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy 2019-2021
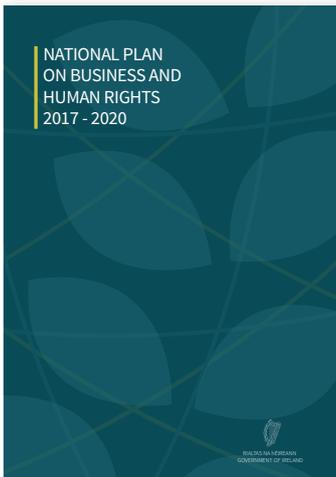
National Plan on Business and Human Rights 2017-2020

Ireland's inaugural *National Plan on Business and Human Rights 2017-2020* seeks to give effect to aspects of the *United Nations Guiding Principles (UNGPs) on Business and Human Rights* – 31 principles set out under three pillars:

- the duty of the State to protect
- the corporate responsibility to respect human rights, and
- access to remedy.

Since 2011, the UNGPs have been the global standard for corporate responsibility to respect human rights and a key component of many responsible business standards and legislation. Focusing on human rights is different to the traditional concept of corporate social responsibility; it requires that businesses examine the ways that their business model (core activities, partnerships and business relationships) may impact negatively on people and their human rights. Businesses are then expected to take the appropriate steps to prevent those impacts from occurring, and to mitigate the impacts when they do occur.

In 2021, *Guidance for Businesses operating in Ireland* was published, under the National Plan on Business and Human Rights. The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment is represented on the multi-stakeholder *Implementation Group for the National Plan*, while the Department of Foreign Affairs (now Department of Foreign Affairs) is represented on the CSR Stakeholder Forum. A review of implementation of the National Plan took place in 2021. Further information can be found on dfa.ie/our-role-policies/nationalplanonbusinessandhumanrights2017-2020/.
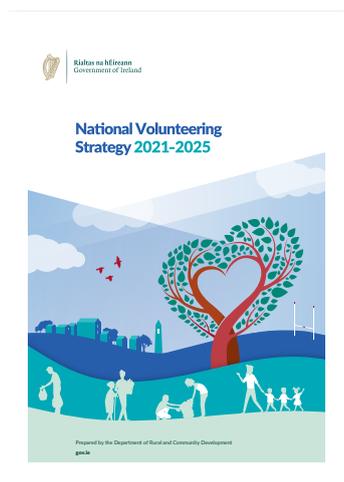
National Volunteering Strategy 2021-2025

The Department of Rural and Community Development launched the first *National Volunteering Strategy* in December 2020. The purpose of the strategy is to recognise, support and promote the unique value and contributions volunteers make to Irish society. The strategy was produced in collaboration with the community and voluntary and business sectors and provides a vision and road map for both volunteers and those organisations and businesses who benefit from the work of volunteers.

The strategy contains 56 actions to be implemented over the next five years, with Government working in partnership with volunteers, volunteering bodies, the community and voluntary sector and the business and corporate community to deliver its objectives.

A key action in the strategy is to *Develop the potential for further volunteering partnerships between the corporate sector and community organisations*. This action will be delivered in collaboration with a number of stakeholders including the CSR Stakeholder Forum and the Corporate Sector. Further information can be found on gov.ie/en/publication/national-volunteering-strategy/
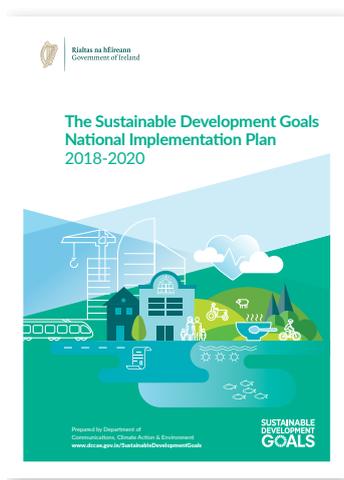
The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) National Implementation Plan 2018-2020

The *UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)* is a significant and ambitious policy agenda that concerns all Government Departments. The Government's vision is for Ireland to fully implement the *Sustainable Development Goals* at home, and to contribute to their achievement internationally through our role as a responsible global citizen.

The first *Sustainable Development Goals National Implementation Plan 2018-2020* was developed to oversee and facilitate coherent implementation of the SDGs across Government, and to promote awareness of the SDGs. Each Minister was given specific responsibility for implementing individual SDG targets related to their Ministerial functions. The next *National Implementation Plan* currently being developed will focus on ensuring and improving policy coherence across the Goals and increasing engagement with the SDGs across sectors and society. One of the key objectives of the next *SDG National Implementation Plan* is to ensure that more businesses embed SDGs into their business strategy.

Existing initiatives, which were put on hold due to the Coronavirus Pandemic, will be relaunched shortly. These include:

- the National SDG Stakeholder Forum which brings together policy makers, civil society, business and other interested parties to share experiences and information on SDG related activities taking part at a national and international level, and

- the SDG Champions, which is an initiative to illustrate practical ways in which organisations and individuals can contribute to achieving the SDGs, using Champion organisations' practices as examples

Further information on Ireland's *National Implementation of the SDGs* is available on gov.ie/en/publication/the-sustainable-development-goals-national-implementation-plan-2018-2020/

Balance for Better Business

Balance for Better Business is an independent business-led Review Group established by the Government to improve gender balance in senior leadership in Ireland. The Review Group is examining the gender mix within the governance and senior management of companies in Ireland and the issues which arise in connection with the appointment of company directors and senior management. The Review Group is calling for a reform of the current system to ensure more women play a role at board level and in senior leadership teams of companies in Ireland. The Review Group has set progressive targets to 2023 for the achievement of improved gender balance on the boards and senior management of these companies. The Review Group monitor and publish progress against the targets on an annual basis. Further information can be found on betterbalance.ie

Healthy Ireland

The *Healthy Ireland Framework 2021-2025* supports Government's response to Ireland's changing health and wellbeing profile. A healthy population is a major asset for society and improving the health and wellbeing of the nation is a priority for Government. The vision of Healthy Ireland is one where everyone can enjoy physical and mental health and wellbeing to their full potential, and this is incorporated as a central theme within the *Sláintecare Implementation Strategy 2021-2023*.

The *Strategic Action Plan* for the next phase of Healthy Ireland, 2021-2025 was developed following an extensive research phase which included both desktop research and stakeholder engagement to identify the emerging priority areas for the next phase. The plan is supported by the whole of Government and is underpinned by a cross-sectoral approach, stakeholder engagement, and partnership working.

This Plan has an increased emphasis on health inequalities targeting communities in areas of deprivation through the *Healthy Communities Project* over the next five years as well as focusing on other settings where people live, work, learn and play.

The commitment to launching the *Healthy Workplace Framework* is a key deliverable for 2021 with the development of a website a priority to support workplaces implementing health and wellbeing in their organisations. The framework recognises the impact of COVID-19 on workplaces and the changing landscape for employers and employees with remote working becoming an integral part of the world of work.

The *Strategic Action Plan for the Healthy Ireland Framework* seeks to deliver on, and improve the outcomes set out in the *Healthy Ireland Outcomes Framework*. Thirteen additional indicators have been included, such as housing and homelessness, these factors can have a significant impact on mortality and morbidity. Further wider environmental indicators on noise pollution, fuel poverty and the incidence of skin cancer have also been included. Further information can be found on gov.ie/en/publication/441c8-healthy-ireland-strategic-action-plan-2021-2025/

Origin Green

Led by Bord Bia, Origin Green is Ireland's pioneering food and drink sustainability programme, operating on a national scale, uniting Government, the private sector and the full supply chain from farmers to food producers and right through to the foodservice and retail sectors. The programme is the worlds' only national food and drink sustainability programme and enables the industry to set and achieve measurable sustainability targets that respect the environment and serve local communities more effectively.

Further information can be found on origingreen.ie

Prompt Payment Code

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment introduced a voluntary *Prompt Payment Code* (PPC) in 2013 to help improve cash flow for businesses and ultimately achieve change in Ireland's payment culture. The PPC has been developed by business for business and it is therefore vital that it is supported by business. Organisations can play their part by signing up to the Code. Government is leading by example and has ensured that all Government Departments, their Agencies and Public-Sector Bodies sign up to the Code.

Signatories to the Code undertake to

- Pay suppliers on time within the terms agreed at the outset of the contract, or in accordance with legislation.
- Give clear guidance to suppliers by providing them with clear and easily accessible guidance on payment procedures.
- Ensure there is a system in place for dealing with complaints and disputes which is communicated to suppliers.
- Advise suppliers promptly if there is any reason why an invoice will not be paid to the agreed terms.
- Encourage good practice by requesting that lead suppliers encourage adoption of the Code through their own supply chains.

Further information is available at enterprise.gov.ie/en/What-We-Do/Supports-for-SMEs/Prompt-Payment-Code/

Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI)

SMEs play a vital role in the Irish economy, providing over 90 percent of national employment and contributing significantly to GDP and export income. Collectively SMEs account for a significant portion of national energy demand. Saving energy contributes to a better, cleaner environment for our future. Saving energy also cuts energy costs and makes business sense. These savings can be invested in more productive activities, making more resilient and competitive businesses.

SEAI offers supports including:

- Financial supports e.g. Support Scheme for Energy Audits helping SMEs understand their energy use and EXEED grant which is designed for organisations who are planning an energy investment project and provides grant support of up to €500,000 per year.
- Free energy efficiency e-learning courses for employees through the SEAI Energy Academy.
- Business events, webinars, and supports.

SEAI's Four Steps to Energy Efficiency

1. **Understand Your Energy Use**
   Join the SEAI Energy Academy and discover where your business is using energy and how it's connected to climate change.

2. **Create an Energy Action Plan**
   Attend SEAI's Introduction to Energy Management Training and create an energy action plan specific to your business, identifying energy opportunities and goals.

3. **Complete an Energy Audit**
   If your business spends over €10,000 annually on energy complete an energy audit with an Energy Auditor who will visit your business and give bespoke advice on energy. SEAI's Support Scheme for Energy Audits offers vouchers towards the cost.

4. **Invest in Energy Efficiency Upgrades and Renewables**
   Once you have good energy management practices in place and you've started saving energy, you can think about investing in energy efficiency upgrades and renewable sources of energy.

Further information is available on seai.ie

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Chapter 6
European Policy and CSR

There are a number of EU and International guidelines
and developments driving CSR globally and these are listed below.

European Commission

Ireland's National Plan on CSR has its origins in the European Commission's *A renewed EU strategy 2011-2014 for Corporate Social responsibility* which included a call for all Member States to develop or update National Plans to promote Corporate Social Responsibility. In March 2019, following up on its strategy, the European Commission published a staff working document (SWD (2019) 143): *Corporate Social Responsibility, Responsible Business Conduct, and Business & Human Rights: Overview of Progress.* This document provides an overview of progress made by the Commission and European External Action Service (EEAS) on the renewed EU strategy for Corporate Social Responsibility. It covers social, environmental, ethical, customer and human rights as defined in the strategy and their international dimension.

In its January 2019 reflection paper *Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030* the European Commission highlighted the relevance of CSR and new business models on sustainable development and the need to 'identify a number of appropriate measures and tangible ways in which more sustainable business conduct can be promoted bring further results and reinforce the EU companies' competitive edge in this area'.[18] Further information is available on ec.europa.eu

18. Register of Commission Documents (europa.eu)

Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive

On 21 April 2021, the European Commission adopted a proposal for a Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD), which would amend the existing reporting requirements of the Non-Financial Reporting Directive. The proposal:

- extends the scope to all large companies with more than 250 employees and all companies listed on regulated markets (except listed micro-enterprises)
- requires the audit (assurance) of reported information
- introduces more detailed reporting requirements, and a requirement to report according to mandatory EU sustainability reporting standards
- requires companies to digitally 'tag' the reported information, so it is machine readable and feeds into the European single access point envisaged in the Capital Markets Union Action Plan.

Further information on the EU Commission proposal can be found on ec.europa.eu

© EU Agency for Fundamental Rights

European Union (EU) and Human Rights

In 2000, the European Parliament, the European Commission and the European Council proclaimed the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

The document enshrines in European Union law a range of personal, civil, political, economic and social rights of EU citizens and residents.

With the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon in 2009, the rights, freedoms and principles detailed in the charter became legally binding on the EU and on member states when implementing EU law.

The Treaty of Lisbon sets out the obligation

- to respect fundamental rights within the European Union
- to advance and consolidate human rights in EU external action

Every year since 2010, the European Commission publishes an annual report that monitors progress on the application of the charter.

The European Council ensures that fundamental rights are taken into account when developing EU legislation and action. It also works on the promotion of human rights in relation to non-EU countries and international institutions, as well as in the negotiation of international agreements. Recent updates include

- In July 2020, the Council adopted the EU priorities for the 75th session of the UN General Assembly, including several points on human rights.
- In December 2020, the Council adopted a decision and a regulation establishing a global human rights sanctions regime.

Further information can be found on consilium.europa.eu/en/

OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises (MNEs)

The OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises (MNEs) are recommendations addressed by Governments to multinational enterprises operating in or from adhering countries, including Ireland.

They provide non-binding principles and standards for responsible business conduct (RBC) in a global context consistent with applicable laws and internationally recognised standards. The Guidelines are the only multilaterally agreed and comprehensive code of RBC that Governments have committed to promoting.

Under the Guidelines, adhering countries are required to set up a National Contact Point (NCP) to promote the Guidelines, handle enquiries, and provide a grievance mechanism to resolve complaints relating to non-observance of the recommendations of the Guidelines. The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment is the OECD National Contact Point for Ireland and represents Ireland at the OECD on the Implementation of the Guidelines. Further information can be found on enterprise.gov.ie

Chapter 7
Promoting CSR in Ireland

Below are some of the many non-Governmental organisations who promote CSR in Ireland today.

Business in the Community Ireland (BITCI)

Business in the Community Ireland is a movement for sustainable change in business. Their purpose is to inspire and enable businesses to bring about a sustainable, low carbon economy and a more inclusive society where everyone thrives. BITCI act as trusted advisers in sustainability and corporate social responsibility to over 110 of the largest companies in Ireland. BITCI provide access to best practice and support businesses with practical management and monitoring systems. BITCI also facilitate forums for reflection and action, ensuring that businesses anticipate and are ready to meet the current, pressing challenges of climate change, the pipeline of talent as well as the issues of social inclusion, diversity and accountability. BITCI run the Low Carbon Pledge and the Elevate-Inclusive Workplaces Pledge. Further information is available on bitc.ie

Business to Arts

Business to Arts is a membership-based, charitable organisation that brokers, enables and supports creative partnerships between businesses, individuals and the arts. Business to Arts works to connect their business members with arts organisations and artists to develop solutions in areas such as sponsorship, CSR programmes, commissioning, staff engagement, training, leadership development, and events. Business to Arts also work with artists and arts organisations providing a range of training opportunities and coaching to help diversify income streams, grow audiences and improve efficiencies. Further information is available on businesstoarts.ie

Chambers Ireland Sustainable Business Impact Awards

Chambers Ireland is Ireland's largest business organisation with a network of Chambers of Commerce in every major town and region in the country. As Ireland's largest business network, Chambers Ireland continuously strives to support the development of a sustainable network of Chambers of Commerce nationwide, equipped to attract and retain members through meaningful contributions to create the right environment for those business to reach their potential.

The *Sustainable Business Impact Awards* showcase best practice in sustainable development and social responsibility undertaken by companies of all sizes across Ireland. The UN Sustainable Development Goals are at the heart of these Awards, celebrating sustainable business practices and championing Chambers Ireland's alignment with the Goals. The awards take place annually in September with categories covering social enterprise, environment, community, charity, workplace and volunteering initiatives.

The *Chambers Ireland Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)* Toolkit for Business encourages employers of every size to advance their sustainability journey by integrating the goals into their day-to-day activities. The SDG Toolkit for Business will equip business with the knowledge to take leading action across a range of issues and signal the direction to achieve a sustainable society in Ireland. Chambers Ireland encourage SMEs and larger companies to engage with the SDG Toolkit and their local chamber in support of their collective work to secure a better, greener and fairer planet in the years ahead. Further information is available on chambers.ie

Rethink Ireland

Rethink Ireland (previously Social Innovation Fund Ireland) supports the most innovative non-profit organisations working in communities across the country. They believe that a team effort is more effective than working alone. So, joining forces with the Government, companies, families, individuals and foundations, who understand as they do that lasting change demands new thinking, is how they do business. Together they create funds to help innovations rise to the challenges of Ireland's most pressing social and environmental issues. Rethink Ireland provide cash grants and business supports to enable social innovations to develop and maximise impact. This is their venture philanthropy model. The groups they support and the donors who support them don't just think differently. They act decisively on their ideas to build a more equal, just and sustainable Ireland. Since 2016 Rethink Ireland have created a €72 million fund, supporting 246 social innovations, reaching over 400,000 people, creating over 500 jobs in the social innovation sector and supporting almost 1,000 people into employment. Further information is available on rethinkireland.ie

Social Enterprise Republic of Ireland (SERI)

Social Enterprise Republic of Ireland was established in 2020. It was born from the passion and knowledge within the Social Enterprise sector, a response to a universally recognised need for a united voice, and the publication of the first national policy on social enterprise. Formed by some of Ireland's leading social enterprise practitioners and supporters, SERI seeks to champion for the sector and members, representing and promoting its collective voice, both nationally and internationally. SERI works with all stakeholders including corporates via CSR initiatives and by social campaigns to grow mutually beneficial partnerships and achieve social impact. Further information is available on socialenterprise.ie

The Wheel

The Wheel is the national association of charities, community and voluntary organisations and social enterprises. It provides leadership and a strong voice for the sector as well as a wide range of practical supports – including advice, training, information, networking – for non-profits of all sizes and in every part of Ireland. With over 2,000 members, their mission is to strengthen the capacity and capability of non-profits to be their best and to play their part in changing Ireland for the better. The Wheel welcomes support from companies to help them and their members change Ireland for the better. Partners benefit from aligning their brand with The Wheel to make a meaningful impact across a whole sector while playing a part in the work carried out by thousands of community groups, charities and social enterprises. Further information is available on wheel.ie

Volunteer Ireland

Volunteer Ireland is the national volunteer development organisation and a support body for all 29 local Volunteer Centres in Ireland. Volunteer Ireland work to support, promote and celebrate volunteering by providing a national database of volunteer opportunities, national volunteer awards, a national volunteering week, a national conference on best practice in volunteer management along with managing the Government's *Community Volunteers Programme* launched in 2021.

Volunteer Ireland's Corporate Volunteering Programme supports businesses to make a positive impact on their communities through employee volunteering. They also provide networking, sharing and learning opportunities in the Employee Volunteer Engagement space. Further information is available on volunteer.ie

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Chapter 8
The Future Role and Operation of the CSR Stakeholder Forum

The Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Stakeholder Forum was established in 2014, as a result of an action in *Good for Business, Good for the Community Ireland's National Plan on Corporate Social Responsibility 2014-2016,* to inform further development of the CSR policy framework and ensure the Plan remained relevant to evolving international best practice and thinking.

In 2017 the CSR Stakeholder Forum was renewed and tasked with the implementation of the actions as set out in *Towards Responsible Business Ireland National Plan on Corporate Social Responsibility 2017-2020.* The role of the CSR Stakeholder Forum was strengthened under the second National Plan on CSR by the inclusion of a Work Programme to be updated over the course of the Plan to ensure the Plan remained relevant.

CSR Evolution

CSR within businesses continues to evolve and change as it is influenced by national and global challenges. With the completion of the second National Plan on CSR, it is now time to consider the future role of the CSR Stakeholder Forum, how it is structured and where it might focus.

The vision for CSR since 2014 was setting out a framework for good CSR Practice in Ireland to ensure that Ireland be recognised as a Centre of Excellence for responsible and sustainable business practices.

Over the past seven years, the CSR Stakeholder Forum has, on a voluntary basis, helped that ambition through a collaborative approach with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and other Forum members.

An impressive amount of work has taken place over the period of the two National Plans on CSR including a significant increase in CSR Case studies, successful attendance at the Joint Oireachtas Committee and the establishment of CSR CEO/Leaders' Breakfast.

The CSR Stakeholder Forum meeting in February 2020 focused on the CSR Consultation Process to develop the national CSR initiative for 2021 and beyond.

The session was held in roundtable workshop format and focused on 5 key questions (Achievement and Impact, Role of Business, Role of the State, CSR and Policy and Post 2020) each facilitated by a Forum member.

In advance, of the meeting Forum members were asked to reflect, not just on the journey of the Forum over the past three years (2017-2020) but also on their own business or organisational CSR journey over the course of their membership.

The February meeting was intended to be the first step in the process and with members invited to consider what their vision was for a new national CSR initiative. However, the work of the Forum was paused during COVID 19 in order to prioritise the work being done by the Department to assist business during the pandemic.

CSR Forum Member Survey

In preparing this Check we asked CSR Forum members to complete a short survey to get a snapshot of their views on the CSR Stakeholder Forum, its benefits to them and its potential future. We also looked at the main CSR Dimensions they focused on, the time they allocated to CSR, the impact of COVID on this as well as suggestions as to how the CSR Stakeholder Forum could assist their CSR engagement.

Some of the interesting findings in the survey were, when asked what was the key achievement of the CSR Stakeholder Forum the returns ranged from raising the profile of CSR to networking and information sharing to highlighting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

When asked about the impact of being a member of the Forum, responses included information sharing and networking and one member added that it was a 'Credible group to be a member of and had an opportunity to learn from other organisations and sectors'. It was also considered that the CSR Stakeholder Forum helped some members with their own CSR activities.

When asked about the future of the Forum responses included the need to continue to align with Sustainable Development Goals, the need to provide more structured but informal networking opportunities, the need to broaden membership, the need to prepare for future requirements, evolving from CSR to ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) and the importance of reaching SMEs.

There is now more than ever increasing requirements on business to behave in a sustainable and responsible way and with more coming down the road.

Priorities Going Forward

The Department's main priority going forward will be to continue to focus driving and recognising responsible business in SMEs under core strategic goals:

- Awareness of the benefits of responsible business
- Access to information and resources
- Increase the visibility of best practice
- Policy Alignment – enabling complementary policies across Government

As part of the awareness raising and peer learning function of the National CSR Stakeholder Forum, it is proposed to develop a Responsible Business Week modelled on the LEO Enterprise Week in conjunction with relevant stakeholders. This week will culminate in a CSR CEO/Leaders' Breakfast which was an important annual event in the CSR calendar as it brought together Leaders from across business, Government and civil society.

We understand the competitive demands currently on businesses and as such we are moving the CSR Stakeholder Forum to a new and broader 'Responsible Business Network'. Responsible Business Network members will be invited to participate in the Responsible Business Week.

We will reinvigorate our engagement with stakeholders on our co-created CSR/Responsible Business strategy and provide a link between the Network and the wider Government and agency system, prioritising our focus on increasing adoption and participation in responsible business initiatives by SMEs. We will work with leading SME exemplars and with large business and public sector early adopters to act as role models, mentors and potential drivers of responsible business initiatives for SMEs, particularly, for example, with respect to Ireland's recently published *Climate Action Plan 2021*.

The Department will commence work on these more detailed future plans for the Responsible Business Network in early 2022.

Appendices

Appendix 1
Table of Actions

17 Actions in *Towards Responsible Business, Ireland's National Plan on Corporate Social Responsibility 2017-2020*

ACTION	
1	Support and promote Government policy in areas which enrich responsible business practices.
2	Collaborate with DFAT (now DFA – Department of Foreign Affairs) through the CSR Stakeholder Forum to communicate the National Plan on Business and Human Rights.
3	Monitor best practice and evolving trends in CSR and benchmark activity through relevant tools and studies.
4	Continue to increase awareness of CSR, its value to businesses and to society as a whole.
5	Develop a CSR Award – Bronze, Silver, Gold, Platinum.
6	Develop a Work Programme to implement the actions contained throughout the Plan.
7	Arrange a CSR Leaders Breakfast Forum.
8	Collaborate with Chambers Ireland and the Department of Housing, Planning, and Local Government (Now Department of Housing, Local Government and Housing) to emphasise the increased need to expand the categories in the annual Chambers CSR Awards.
9	Encourage more micro, small and medium-sized enterprises to raise their competitiveness through improved CSR engagement.
10	Work to increase recognition among large businesses of the value of sustainable business practices and corporate social responsibility in boosting employment, attracting and retaining talent and their impact on wider society.
11	Identify and examine ways in which workplace related Government policies outlined in Action 1 can be supported and promoted through business.
12	Support and promote Government policy in areas which enrich responsible business practices in the Marketplace.
13	Implement National CSR Voluntary Mentorship Programme.
14	Encourage businesses to report CSR activity in their Annual Reports and other publications to communicate these initiatives to their stakeholders thereby building reputation and gaining trust in the marketplace.
15	Work to increase the recognition of the impact of business operations on the environment and encourage businesses to mitigate their negative impacts.
16	Encourage businesses to build their CSR capacity in the Community.
17	Encourage businesses to align their CSR strategy and activity to the Sustainable Development Goals.

Appendix 2
Presentations to the CSR Stakeholder Forum

Over the period 2017-2020, the CSR Stakeholder Forum invited speakers to present on various themes at Forum meetings. The following sets out a list of presentations at each Forum meeting.

June 2020

The CEO/Leaders' Breakfast due to take place in June 2020 was deferred due to COVID-19 public health restrictions.

February 2020

This meeting focused on the development of the National CSR Initiative for 2021 and beyond as part of the consultative process. There were a number of contributions from Forum members on the outputs and achievement of the Forum from 2017 to 2020 and on the future direction of the CSR initiative including the Chairperson of the CSR Stakeholder Forum, Chambers Ireland, IBM, Business in the Community Ireland, Irish Congress of Trade Unions, and Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (now Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment).

November 2019

The theme of the meeting was Workplace CSR initiatives.

- Department of Health updated the Forum on the Healthy Ireland Framework
- Workhuman spoke about CSR initiatives in Workhuman
- Department of Rural and Community Development presented on the draft National Volunteering Strategy
- Laya Healthcare spoke about their work with Microsoft Ireland

September 2019

The theme of the meeting was Environment and Sustainability

- Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland spoke about Energy Efficiency Supports for Business
- Transdev Ireland, spoke the Importance of Sustainability for Business
- Chambers Ireland talked about how Chambers Ireland is addressing sustainability

June 2019 (CEO Leaders' Breakfast)

The meeting consisted of two keynote speakers and two panels. The theme of Panel 1 was CSR from a business/organisation perspective and the theme for Panel 2 was the impact of CSR in Society.

- **Keynote Speaker** – Dr Rory Sullivan, London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) and Chronos Sustainability who spoke about the importance of Environmental, Social and Governance Factors (ESG) to business.

- **Panel 1 – business/organisation perspective of CSR**
  - Dublin Bus – updated on their Workplace Gender Transition Policy
  - Diageo – spoke about the Open Doors Initiative
  - Java Republic – talked about Sustainability in Java Republic
  - Central Bank of Ireland spoke about Responsible Working in the Central Bank of Ireland

- **Keynote Speaker** – Tomás Sercovich, Chief Executive Officer, Business in the Community Ireland who spoke about 'progressing towards meaningful CSR'

- **Panel 2 – Impact of CSR in Society**
  - Food Cloud – gave an overview of the impact of food donations
  - Suas – explained the impact of CSR on children's literacy in Ireland and abroad
  - Age Action – demonstrated the positive effect of CSR on its computer training programmes for over 55s
  - St Joseph's Co-ed Primary School, East Wall – recalled the positive affect of literacy programmes in his school
  - Transgender Equality Network Ireland – highlighted the work of the Network in Ireland

March 2019

The meeting themes were European Policy and CSR (Business and Human Rights and OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises) and Environmental, Social and Governance Factors (ESG)

- Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (now Department of Foreign Affairs) updated the Forum about the implementation of the Business and Human Rights Plan 2017-2020

- Business in the Community Ireland gave an overview of Environmental, Social and Governance factors (ESG)

- Sustainable Nation Ireland spoke about ESG from an investor and markets perspective

- Bank of Ireland spoke about ESG from a business perspective

- Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (now Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment) updated the Forum about the OECD Guidelines and the National Contact Point

November 2018

The meeting themes were Diversity and Inclusion and CSR in the Public Sector

- Deloitte's Photovoice Initiative

- Not So Different, spoke about the inclusion of people with Autism Spectrum Disorder in employment

- Bord Bia presented on their Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

- Department of Justice and Equality (now Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth) updated the forum on the Migrant Integration Strategy

- Social Innovation Fund Ireland gave an overview of the work of the Social Innovation Fund

- Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine spoke about the Woodland Environmental Fund

- Department of Public Expenditure and Reform presented on the Public and Civil Service Reform Programmes

September 2018

This meeting was primarily about the Forum's Work Programme for 2018/2019 and included updates on the SDGs and sustainability.

- Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (DCCAE) (now Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC)) updated the Forum on the SDG Stakeholder Forum meetings

- Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (now Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment) presented on the CSR Stakeholder Forum's Work Programme 2018/2019

June 2018 (CSR CEO/Leaders' Breakfast)

This theme of the breakfast was twofold – an overview of Agenda 2030 and highlighting various CSR initiatives in both business and social enterprises

- **Keynote Speaker** – David Donoghue, former Irish Ambassador to the UN – Development of Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals

- **Panel – Each Panellist spoke about their CSR initiative(s)**
  - Lidl Ireland
  - SOAR
  - IDA Ireland
  - Earth's Edge
  - 3fe
  - IBM

March 2018

This meeting focused on the role of CSR Ambassadors with an emphasis on SMES

- University of Limerick presented on CSR and SMEs

- DHR Communications led an interactive session on messaging for CSR Ambassadors

November 2017

This meeting focused on the Forum's Work Programme 2017/2018 and Diversity and Inclusion

- University of Sanctuary Committee, University of Limerick presented on Unlocking the talent of the Refugee & Asylum Seeker Community

September 2017

This meeting focused on the *Indicative Baseline Study on Corporate Social Responsibility in Ireland* and Sustainability

- Research Matters Ltd presented on the *Indicative Baseline Study on Corporate Social Responsibility in Ireland*

- Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (now Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment) spoke about Electric Vehicles Grant for Business

Appendix 3
CSR Stakeholder Forum Project Teams

2017–2018: CSR Stakeholder Forum Working Groups

Working Group 1: CSR Ambassadors and Communications

- Accenture
- American Chamber of Commerce Ireland
- Bank of Ireland (Chair)
- Business in the Community Ireland (BITCI)
- Business to Arts
- Chambers Ireland
- Danone
- Deloitte
- DHR Communications
- EY
- ESB
- Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC)
- Kemmy Business School, University of Limerick
- KPMG
- Lidl Ireland
- Musgrave
- Small Firms Association (SFA)

Working Group 2: Supporting National Policy and other Programmes

- BITCI
- Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (DBEI) (now Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE) (Chair)
- Department of Communication, Climate Action and Environment (DCCAE) (now Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC),
- Department of Education and Skills (DES) (now Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS))
- Department of Employment Affairs & Social Protection (DEASP) (now Department of Social Protection (DSP))
- Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) (now Department of Foreign Affairs DFA)
- Department of Health, Healthy Ireland
- Department of Justice and Equality (DJE) (now Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY))
- Department of the Taoiseach (DOT)
- Dublin City University (DCU)
- Enterprise Ireland
- IDA Ireland
- Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU)
- Kemmy Business School, University of Limerick
- Marks & Spencer
- Origin Green (Bord Bia Irish Food Board)

Working Group 3:
Practical Tools and Supports

- Abbott Ireland
- Afanite (Chair)
- Dawn Meats
- DCU
- Enterprise Ireland
- Grant Thornton
- Green Business (EPA)
- IBM
- ISME (Irish SME Association)
- Kemmy Business School, University of Limerick
- NSAI (National Standards Authority of Ireland)
- Technological University Dublin Tallaght
- Vodafone Ireland Foundation

Working Group 4: Environment and Community Dimension and the SDG's

- Accenture
- Bank of Ireland
- BITCI (Chair)
- Dawn Meats
- DCCAE (now DECC)
- DCU
- Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD)
- ESB
- Green Business (EPA)
- Hotel Doolin
- IBEC
- Kemmy Business School, University of Limerick
- Lidl Ireland
- Musgrave
- Northside Partnership
- Origin Green (Bord Bia Irish Food Board)
- The Wheel
- Transdev Ireland
- UCD Michael Smurfit Graduate Business School
- Volunteer Ireland

2018-2019: CSR Stakeholder Forum Project Teams

Project Team 1: Circular Economy

- Dawn Meats (Project Lead)
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- Network of Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs)
- Vodafone Ireland Foundation

Project Team 2: CSR and SMEs

- Afanite (Project Lead)
- Chambers Ireland
- DHR Communications
- Enterprise Ireland
- IBEC
- ISME
- Kemmy Business School, University of Limerick
- The Little Milk Company

Project Team 3: CSR in the Public Sector

- Clean Technology Centre
- DBEI (now DETE)
- DEASP (now DSP)
- DES (now DFHERIS)
- Department of Health, Healthy Ireland
- DJE (now DCEDIY)
- DRCD
- DCCAE (now DECC)
- DFAT (now DFA)
- Enterprise Ireland (Project Lead)
- IDA Ireland
- Origin Green (Bord Bia Irish Food Board)
- Science Foundation Ireland (SFI)

Project Team 4: Diversity and Inclusion

- Dawn Meats
- Deloitte (Project Lead)
- DHR Communications
- Grant Thornton
- IBM
- KPMG
- Lidl Ireland
- Northside Partnership

Project Team 5: Environment

- Abbott Ireland
- Chambers Ireland
- Clean Technology Centre
- Origin Green (Bord Bia Irish Food Board)
- Transdev Ireland (Project Lead)

Project Team 6: Environmental, Social and Governance Factors

- Bank of Ireland
- BITCI (Project Lead)
- Danone

Project Team 7: Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

- Dawn Meats
- DCCAE (now DECC)
- ESB (Project Lead)
- EY
- ICTU
- Transdev Ireland

2019-2020: CSR Stakeholder Forum Project Teams

Project Team 1: CSR in the Public Sector

- Clean Technology Centre
- DBEI (now DETE)
- DEASP (now DSP)
- Department of Health, Healthy Ireland
- DCCAE (now DECC)
- DFAT (now DFA)
- DJE (now DCEDIY)
- DOT
- DRCD
- Enterprise Ireland
- EPA
- IDA
- Network of Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs)
- NSAI
- Origin Green (Bord Bia Irish Food Board)
- SFI
- Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI)

Project Team 2: Diversity and Inclusion

- Afanite
- Deloitte (Project Lead)
- DCU
- Grant Thornton
- IBM
- ISME
- KPMG
- Lidl Ireland
- Northside Partnership

Project Team 3: Environmental, Social and Governance Factors

- Abbott Ireland
- Bank of Ireland (Project Lead)
- BITCI
- Danone
- DBEI (now DETE)
- Transdev Ireland

Project Team 4: Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

- Chambers Ireland
- DCCAE (Now DECC)
- ESB (Project Lead)
- EY
- ICTU
- Transdev Ireland

Project Team 5: Sustainability

- Clean Technology Centre
- Origin Green (Bord Bia Irish Food Board)
- SEAI
- Transdev Ireland

Appendix 4
CSR Stakeholder Forum Meetings

Following the launch of the second National Plan on CSR in June 2017, the CSR Stakeholder Forum, chaired by Catherine Heaney, held, on average, four meetings per year from 2017-2020. In addition to the Forum meetings, a number of Working Group/Project Team meetings took place over this period.

Due to the public health restrictions relating to the COVID-19 pandemic, there was no CSR CEO/Leaders' Breakfast in June 2020.

The following is a list of CSR Stakeholder Forum Meetings 2017-2020.

DATE	VENUE	MEETING THEME
June 2020	CSR CEO/Leaders' Breakfast	Due to COVID-19 public health restrictions no meeting took place
February 2020	Museum of Literature Ireland, Dublin 2	Development of the CSR Initiative 2021 and beyond
November 2019	Abbey Theatre, Dublin 1	Workplace CSR Initiatives
September 2019	Deloitte Ireland, Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin 2	Environment and Sustainability
June 2019	CSR CEO/Leaders' Breakfast, Smock Alley Theatre, Temple Bar, Dublin 8	CSR from a business/ organisation perspective and the impact of CSR in Society
March 2019	Bank of Ireland (House of Lords), College Green, Dublin 2	European Policy and CSR and ESG
November 2018	National Museum of Ireland, Kildare Street, Dublin 2	Diversity and Inclusion and CSR in the Public Sector
September 2018	Errigal County House Hotel, Cootehill, Cavan	Forum's Work Programme for 2018/2019 and updates on SDGs and sustainability
June 2018	CSR CEO/Leaders' Breakfast, Iveagh House, Dublin 2	An overview of UN Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and highlighting various CSR initiatives in both business and social enterprises
March 2018	Iveagh House, Dublin 2	The role of CSR Ambassadors with an emphasis on SMEs
November 2017	Hotel Doolin, Doolin, Co Clare	Forum's Work Programme for 2017/2018, Diversity and Inclusion
September 2017	Bank of Ireland, Mespil Road, Dublin 4	*Indicative Baseline Study on Corporate Social Responsibility in Ireland* and Sustainability

Appendix 5
CSR Ambassador Events

In 2018, Forum members were invited to become CSR Ambassadors to communicate the value and importance of CSR for business and society. The table below out the full list of CSR Ambassador speaking engagements during 2018/2020.

Date/Organisation	CSR Ambassador (Forum Members
September 2019	
Public Sector CSR Workshop	Business in the Community Ireland
	Department of Business Enterprise and Innovation (DBEI) (now Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE))
April 2019	
Agri-Food Diversity & Inclusion Forum (AgDIf) Masterclass Series (Bord Bia and Aon, in association with The 30% Club)	Dawn Meats
Open Doors Interdepartmental Seminar	DBEI (now DETE)
March 2019	
Technological University Dublin, Tallaght Campus and British Academy of Management (BAM) joint seminar on CSR	DBEI (now DETE)
	Transdev Ireland
Launch of Business Impact Map by Business in the Community Ireland	Dawn Meats
February 2019	
The National Biodiversity Conference	Dawn Meats
December 2018	
DBEI Lunch and Learn Session	Chambers Ireland
	DBEI (now DETE)
November 2018	
CSR and National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA)	DBEI (now DETE)
	KPMG
	IDA Ireland
Network of Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) meeting	DBEI (now DETE)
Future in Food Ireland	Dawn Meats
October 2018	
Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Stakeholder Forum Meeting	DBEI (now DETE)
	Dawn Meats
	Chambers Ireland
September 2018	
DBEI (now DETE) New Ways of Working Steering Group	DBEI (now DETE)
CSR Stakeholder Forum SME Networking Event	Green Business (EPA)
Youth Work Ireland – Co-Op Seminar	DBEI (now DETE)

Appendix 6
CSR Stakeholder Forum Members

	CSR Stakeholder Forum Members 2020		
1	Abbott Ireland	21	IBM
2	Afanite	22	Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU)
3	Bank of Ireland	23	IDA Ireland
4	Business in the Community Ireland	24	ISME (Irish SME Association)
5	Business to Arts	25	Kemmy Business School, University of Limerick
6	Chambers Ireland	26	KPMG
7	Clean Technology Centre	27	Network of Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs)
8	Continuum Group	28	Lidl Ireland
9	Danone	29	Marks & Spencer
10	DCU Educational Trust	30	Musgrave
11	Deloitte	31	Northside Partnership
12	DHR Communications	32	NSAI (National Standards Authority of Ireland)
13	Enterprise Ireland	33	Pramerica
14	Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	34	Origin Green (Bord Bia Irish Food Board)
15	EY	35	Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI)
16	ESB	36	Science Foundation Ireland (SFI)
17	Government of Ireland	37	The Little Milk Company
18	Grant Thornton	38	Vodafone Ireland Foundation
19	Hotel Doolin	39	Volunteer Ireland
20	IBEC		

	Former Members 2019
1	Dawn Meats
2	Transdev Ireland
3	Ulster Bank

	Former Members 2018
1	Accenture
2	American Chamber of Commerce Ireland

	Former Members 2017
1	Etsy
2	UCD Michael Smurfit Graduate Business School

Appendix 7
CSR Network Members

	CSR Network Members		
1.	Accenture	17.	National Paediatric Hospital Development Board
2.	Age Action	18.	National Women's Council of Ireland
3.	American Chamber of Commerce Ireland	19.	Novartis
4.	Arthur Cox	20.	Open Doors
5.	Brown Thomas Arnotts	21.	Rethink Ireland
6.	Community Reuse Network Ireland (CRNI)	22.	St Joseph's Co-Ed Primary School
7.	Crosscare	23.	Tesco Ireland
8.	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine	24.	Tetrarch Capital Limited
9.	Diageo	25.	The Probation Service
10.	Empower	26.	Transgender Equality Network Ireland (TENI)
11.	Fáilte Ireland	27.	UCD Michael Smurfit Graduate Business School
12.	Institute of Public Administration	28.	Valeo Foods
13.	Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission	29.	Value Retail Management Ireland – Kildare Village
14.	Irish Prison Service	30.	Young Social Innovators
15.	Keane McDonald	31.	Youth Work Ireland
16.	Medical Council		

Appendix 8
CSR Case Studies

The CSR Stakeholder Forum continues to identify and gather best practice case studies from Forum members and the wider business and public sectors. CSR Case Studies are available to view at csrhub.ie/csr-case-studies.

	ORGANISATION	TITLE OF CASE STUDY
1.	3fe Coffee Ltd	Engaging with the Circular Economy (2018)
2.	Afanite	CSR Programme (2019)
3.	A & L Goodbody	Writer in Residence Programme (2018)
4.	Accenture	Corporate Citizenship Report (2019)
5.	Achill Island Sea Salt	Sustainable Products (2018)
6.	AIM2Flourish	Transforming Old Peat Harvesting Site for People and Community (2017)
7.	Arthur Cox	Human Rights Legislation around Immigration (2018)
8.	ARUP	Community Engagement Programme (2016)
9.	B H Consulting	CSR Programme (2018)
10.	Bank of Ireland	Workbench Initiative – Supporting Start-Ups (2017)
11.	Bord Na Móna	Back to School with the Eco Rangers Programme (2017)
12.	Cisco Galway	Partnership with Age Action (2017)
13.	Chambers Ireland	Chambers Ireland CSR Awards 2018 – SMEs (2018)
14.	Danone Dairy Ireland	B Corp Accreditation (2019)
15.	Dawn Meats	CSR and Sustainability Strategy (2019)
16.	Deloitte	Volunteering Programme (2018)
17.	Deloitte	Exploring Cultural Diversity in Partnership with Photovoice (2019)
18.	Deloitte	CSR Actions at Deloitte Ireland in response to the impact of COVID-19 (2020)
19.	Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (now Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment)	Prompt Payment Code (2019)
20.	Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (now Department of Social Protection)	Employment and Youth Activation Charter (2019)
21.	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (now Department of foreign Affairs)	Diversity and Equality Working Group (2018)
22.	Department of Health	Healthy Ireland Framework (2017)
23.	Department of Public Expenditure and Reform	Learning & Development Strategy (2017)
24.	DHR Communications	CSR Commitment (2019)
25.	Diageo Ireland	CSR Programme (2017)
26.	Diageo Ireland	Learning for Life Programme (2019)

27.	Dublin Bus	Workplace Gender Transition Policy (2019)
28.	Dundalk Credit Union	Community Engagement Programme (2019)
29.	Dropbox	Dropbox for Good Dublin Programme (2017)
30.	Enterprise Ireland	Developing Enterprise Ireland's CSR Statement (2019)
31.	Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	National Green Teams Programme (2018)
32.	ESB	ElectricAid Initiative (2019)
33.	ESB	Supporting and Promoting Education Programmes (2019)
34.	Freightspeed	Collaboration with HSE for Sustainable Transport (2017)
35.	Gas Networks Ireland	Primary school STEM Education Programmes (2019)
36.	Green Business (EPA)	Online Resource Efficiency Tool can save €Thousands for SMEs (2017)
37.	GIY & SAP Landscapes	Donation of 500 Trees for 1916 Centenary (2016)
38.	Hotel Doolin	Green Team (2019)
39.	IBM	Addressing the SDGs through Skills Based Volunteering (2018)
40.	IBM	Be Equal (2019)
41.	IDA Ireland	Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan (2019)
42.	Intel Ireland	Volunteer Matching Program (2019)
43.	Irish Life	In partnership with the GAA to Promote the Healthy Club Project (2016)
44.	John Craddock Limited	CSR Programme (2017)
45.	Keystone Procurement	CSR Programme (2018)
46.	Kilbarrack Fire Station	World's First Carbon Neutral Fire Station (2018)
47.	KPMG	Bold Girl's Initiative (2019)
48.	KPMG	Corporate Citizenship (2018)
49.	Libraries Nationwide	Healthy Ireland at your local Library (2018)
50.	Lidl Ireland	Sustainability Strategy *A Better Tomorrow* (2019)
51.	Lidl Ireland	Autism Awareness Initiative (2019)
52.	Lidl Ireland	Inclusion Strategy (2019)
53.	Marks & Spencer	Marks & Spencer's *Plan A because there is no Plan B*
54.	Mason Hayes & Curran	Supporting Art and Education (2017)
55.	Mayo County Library (Mayo County Council)	In Partnership with BITCI 'Time to Read' CSR Literacy Programme (2019)
56.	Mental Health Reform	Steps into Work (2018)
57.	Microsoft Ireland	Microsoft Business Mentoring Programme (2018)
58.	Midlands Science	In Partnership with Bord na Móna (2018)
59.	Midlands Science	In Partnership with Integra LifeSciences (2018)
60.	Musgrave	CSR Programme (2016)
61.	Musgrave	Supervalu and Aslam Bridge Back to School Educational Resource (2021)

62.	Musgrave	Supervalu, Centra and GAA: Club Together Initiative (2021)
63.	Novartis	CSR Actions at Novartis in response to the impact of COVID-19 (2020)
64.	Open Doors Initiative	Open Doors Initiative (2020)
65.	Pramerica Systems Ireland Ltd	CSR Actions at Pramerica Systems Ireland Ltd in response to the impact of COVID-19 (2020)
66.	Presentation College Bray	Energy Bandits (2018)
67.	RTÉ	Elimination of Single Use Plastic from Donnybrook Site (2018)
68.	SAP	In Partnership with BITCI Skills @ Work Initiative (2018)
69.	Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI)	Electric Vehicles for Business (2017)
70.	Speedpak	CSR Making an Impact on Individuals (2019)
71.	Tesco Ireland	CSR Actions at Tesco Ireland in response to the impact of COVID-19 (2020-updated 2021)
72.	Tesco Ireland	Little Helps Plan (2021)
73.	The Community Reuse Network Ireland (CRNI)	Reduce, Reuse, Recycle (2017)
74.	The Little Milk Company	Building Healthy and Sustainable Communities (2019)
75.	The Q Café Company	CSR Programme (2018)
76.	Tico Mail Works Ltd	Supporting Work/Life Balance (2017)
77.	Tico Mail Works Ltd	Renewable Electricity Electric Car to Work Scheme (2021)
78.	Transdev Ireland	CSR Strategy (2018)
79.	Transparency International Ireland	Integrity at Work – Changing Attitudes towards Whistleblowing (2017)
80.	Technically Write IT	In Partnership with Cork Simon and Pieta House (2019)
81.	Trinity College Dublin	Trinity Access 21 Initiative (2017)
82.	Ulster Bank	Do Good, Feel Good in June (2017)
83.	Ulster Bank	Sustainability in Ulster Bank (2017)
84.	University of Limerick	First National Plan to improve the Resource & Energy Efficiency of IT Equipment across Each Stage of the Product Life Cycle (2019)
85.	VivaGreen	Innovation in Sustainable Products (2019)
86.	Vodafone Ireland Foundation	ISPCC Childline and Vodafone Ireland Foundation (2016)
87.	Voxpro	'Voxgro' Garden Initiative (2018)
88.	Youth Work Ireland	'Work to Learn' Work Experience Programme for Young People Facing Educational and Work Readiness Challenges (2019)
89.	William Fry	Incognito Initiative as part of Making a Difference in the Community Activities (2018)

CSR Check 2020

A copy of this report is available on csrhub.ie

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