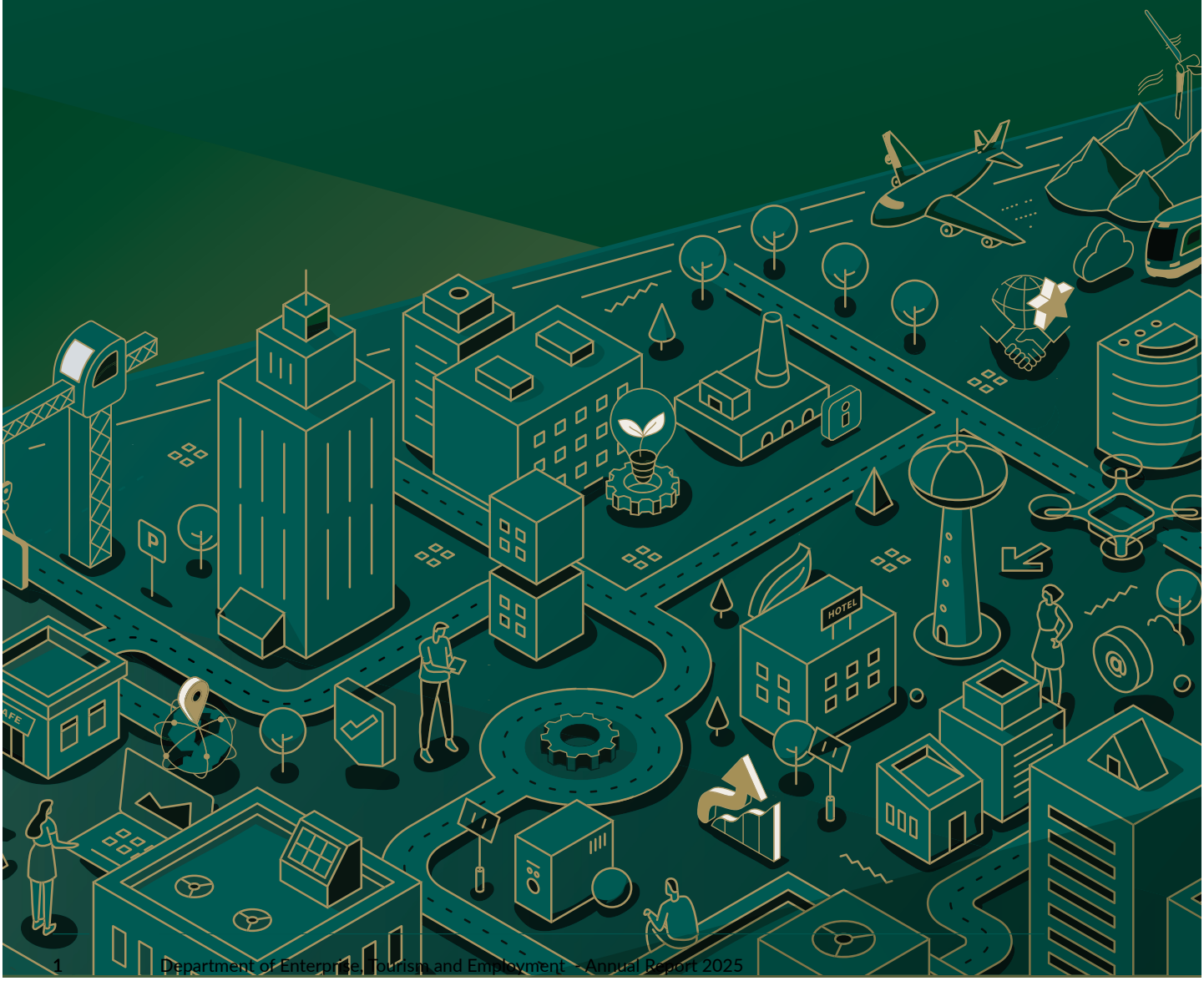
An Roinn Fiontar,
Turasóireachta agus Fostaíochta
Department of Enterprise,
Tourism and Employment

Annual Report
2025



Contents

Minister's Foreword 2

Secretary General's Introduction 3

2025 in Review 4

Statement of Strategy 2025 – 2028 5

Operating Environment 6

Management Board and Divisional Structure 7

Offices, Agencies and North/South Bodies 8

Goal 1. Drive competitiveness, sustainability and innovation, building the resilience of the economy. 9

Goal 2. Drive prosperity and high standards of living through creating and maintaining high quality jobs and increased productivity. 18

Goal 3. Strengthen tourism and support Irish-based enterprise to start, scale and compete internationally. 23

Goal 4. Provide the most competitive environment for the attraction and retention of inward investment at the cutting edge of innovation. 31

Goal 5. Provide measured, certain and innovation-friendly regulation for business, workers and consumers. 35

Goal 6. Advocate Ireland's values and strengthen our relationship and influence with the EU and international partners. 45

Corporate Services Strategy: Building an innovative, inclusive and agile Department with a strong public service ethos driving effective and responsible policy implementation. 51

Appendix 1: Bills enacted in 2025 57

Appendix 2: Statutory Instruments made in 2025 57

Appendix 3: Public Sector Duty 59

Appendix 4: Green Public Procurement Reporting 61

Appendix 5: Sustainable Development Goals 62

Minister's Foreword

In 2025 Ireland's economy remained strong, with employment reaching record levels and enterprises continuing to demonstrate growth and resilience in a challenging and uncertain global environment.



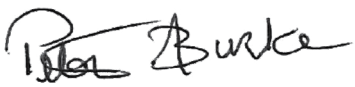
A key focus in 2025 was driving the implementation of the Programme for Government. Our *Statement of Strategy 2025–2028* sets out an ambitious vision — to make Ireland the leading location to work, do business and visit. This vision is underpinned by a strong emphasis on sustainability, digital transformation, productivity and balanced regional development.

Throughout 2025 we made significant progress in enhancing competitiveness through our Competitiveness Action Plan and supporting Irish businesses to scale and compete globally though our Market Diversification Strategy. Through targeted investment, access to finance, and enhanced supports for SMEs, we are ensuring that enterprises of all sizes can adapt to technological change, innovate, and grow their markets. At the same time, we continued to strengthen Ireland's attractiveness as a destination for foreign direct investment, with strong results achieved by IDA Ireland and publication of our new *Silicon Island Strategy*.

The integration of tourism into the Department in 2025 marked a new chapter for this vital sector. The launch of the policy statement, *'A New Era for Irish Tourism'* provides a clear and ambitious roadmap for sustainable growth, with a focus on regional development, climate action and digital transformation.

Throughout the year, we also prioritised workers and workplaces — advancing employment rights, supporting fair and safe working conditions, and modernising our labour market framework to meet the needs of a changing economy. In the run up to our Presidency of the EU we played an active role at EU level, shaping policy across digital regulation, industrial policy and competitiveness. At home, we strengthened our approach to consumer protection and fair competition, ensuring that both businesses and consumers can thrive in an increasingly digital economy.

Looking ahead, we remain focused on building a competitive, resilient and sustainable economy that delivers for businesses, workers and communities across all regions. None of this is possible without the commitment of our staff and colleagues in the offices and agencies under the aegis of the Department. I would also like to thank the Ministers of State, Niamh Smyth and Alan Dillon, for their continued support and leadership.



Peter Burke TD
Minister for Enterprise, Tourism and Employment

Secretary General's Introduction

This Annual Report for 2025 outlines a year of substantial delivery on the Programme for Government and across a broad and evolving mandate for our Department.



In 2025, the Department progressed our core strategic objectives under our *Statements of Strategy 2024-2025* and 2025-2028 aligning with the new Programme for Government and delivered across our six priority goals. These included sustaining full employment, advancing digital and climate transitions, deepening global engagement, improving the business regulatory environment, promoting quality employment and building organisational capability.

Supporting enterprise in Ireland remained at the heart of our work. We delivered a wide range of policies and programmes to help businesses start, scale and invest to compete internationally. Strong performance across both Irish and foreign-owned sectors reflects the impact of these policies and cross-Government support for enterprise. We also progressed Ireland's transition to a low-carbon and digital economy. This included significant investment in innovation and supports to enable businesses to reduce emissions and adopt new technologies. The Department also played a central role in shaping national and EU policy in areas such as artificial intelligence, digital regulation, sectoral industrial policy and company law.

We continued to strengthen Ireland's labour market framework, safeguarding employment rights and safe workplaces while ensuring that our employment permits system remains responsive to the evolving needs of the economy. Our work continued to promote fair and competitive markets responsive to the needs of businesses and consumers alike. Our *Statement of Strategy 2025–2028* and new *Corporate Services Strategy* provided a clear internal framework for delivering on our expanded mandate. Investment in people, systems and governance structures continues to enhance our capacity to deliver high-quality, evidence-based policy.

The achievements set out in this report reflect the expertise and professionalism of our staff, as well as strong partnerships with our offices, agencies and stakeholders across Government, enterprise and society. As we look to 2026 and beyond, the Department is well positioned to build on this progress — supporting a competitive, sustainable and inclusive economy that delivers for all regions and communities.

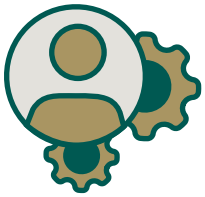


Declan Hughes
Secretary General,
Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment

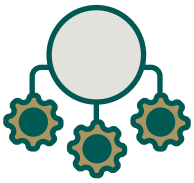
2025 in Review

Throughout 2025, the Department delivered an extensive programme of policy development, enterprise support, regulation, international engagement and organisational renewal. As Ireland continued to operate at full employment, with strong enterprise performance and increasing global uncertainty, the Department played a central role in strengthening competitiveness, supporting businesses, advancing digital and green transitions, enhancing employment rights and workplace safety, expanding global market diversification, and preparing for Ireland's EU Presidency in 2026.

Throughout 2025, the Department pursued the goals in our Statement of Strategy, embedding decarbonisation and digitalisation while safeguarding workers and consumers.



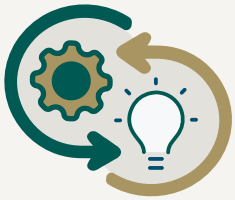
2.83 million
Total Employment



544,893
Employment in Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland Clients



€39 billion
Exports by Enterprise Ireland Clients



€159 million
Disruptive Technology funding across 27 innovative projects



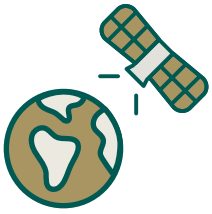
31,000
Employment Permits Issued



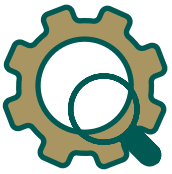
€175 million
Sustainability Investments approved by Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland in 2025



50
Statutory Instruments completed



59
European Space Agency Contracts



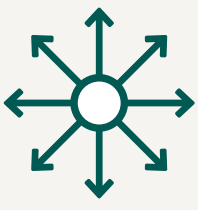
5,596
Workplace inspection visits by the WRC



64,648
Callers helped by WRC Information and Customer Service staff



41.8% female
Representation on boards of ISEQ2 Listed Companies



868
Export Licences issued with a value of €3.73 billion

Statement of Strategy 2025 – 2028

Our *Statement of Strategy 2025-2028*, formulated in the context of the new Programme for Government, sets out a vision to make Ireland the world's leading location to work, do business, and visit. At its heart is a commitment to deliver opportunity and prosperity for all by driving a competitive, resilient and sustainable economy that supports enterprise, tourism and employment across all of Ireland's regions. It sets out six ambitious goals:

1. Drive competitiveness, sustainability and innovation, building the resilience of the economy.
2. Drive prosperity and high standards of living through creating and maintaining high quality jobs and increased productivity.
3. Strengthen tourism and support Irish-based enterprise to start, scale and compete internationally.
4. Provide the most competitive environment for the attraction and retention of inward investment at the cutting edge of innovation.
5. Provide measured, certain and innovation-friendly regulation for business, workers and consumers.
6. Advocate Ireland's values and strengthen our relationship and influence with the EU and international partners.

The ambitions of the Programme for Government are integral to this strategy, with an objective to ensure that Ireland continues to build on its strengths as an open economy with strong tourism, trade and foreign direct investment, a vibrant innovation ecosystem, and a resilient labour market. We will report annually through our Annual Report on how we are performing in delivering opportunity and prosperity for all by driving a competitive, resilient and sustainable economy that supports enterprise, tourism and employment across all of Ireland's regions. This report sets out the Department's activities and progress in delivering the six strategic goals of this Strategy in 2025.

The Department's vision is ambitious and outward-facing — make Ireland the world's leading location to work, do business, and visit. Our Corporate Services division supports this vision by developing leaders, driving change and transformation, and shaping culture across our Department. Achievements in this area are set out in the chapter on building an innovative, inclusive and agile Department with a strong public service ethos driving effective and responsible policy implementation.

Operating Environment

The Department leads on developing and implementing Government policies that strengthen Ireland's economic capacity, support enterprise growth and competitiveness, promote high-quality employment, and ensure a well-regulated business environment.

In 2025, the Department operated in a challenging and evolving global environment, characterised by geopolitical uncertainty, cost pressures and rapid technological change. Ireland's position within the European Union continues to shape policy development, particularly in areas such as competitiveness, digital regulation and industrial policy. At the same time, accelerating digitalisation and the growth of artificial intelligence are transforming enterprise and labour markets, reinforcing the need for an adaptive and forward-looking policy approach. Maintaining Ireland's competitiveness in an increasingly complex global environment remains a central priority for the Department.

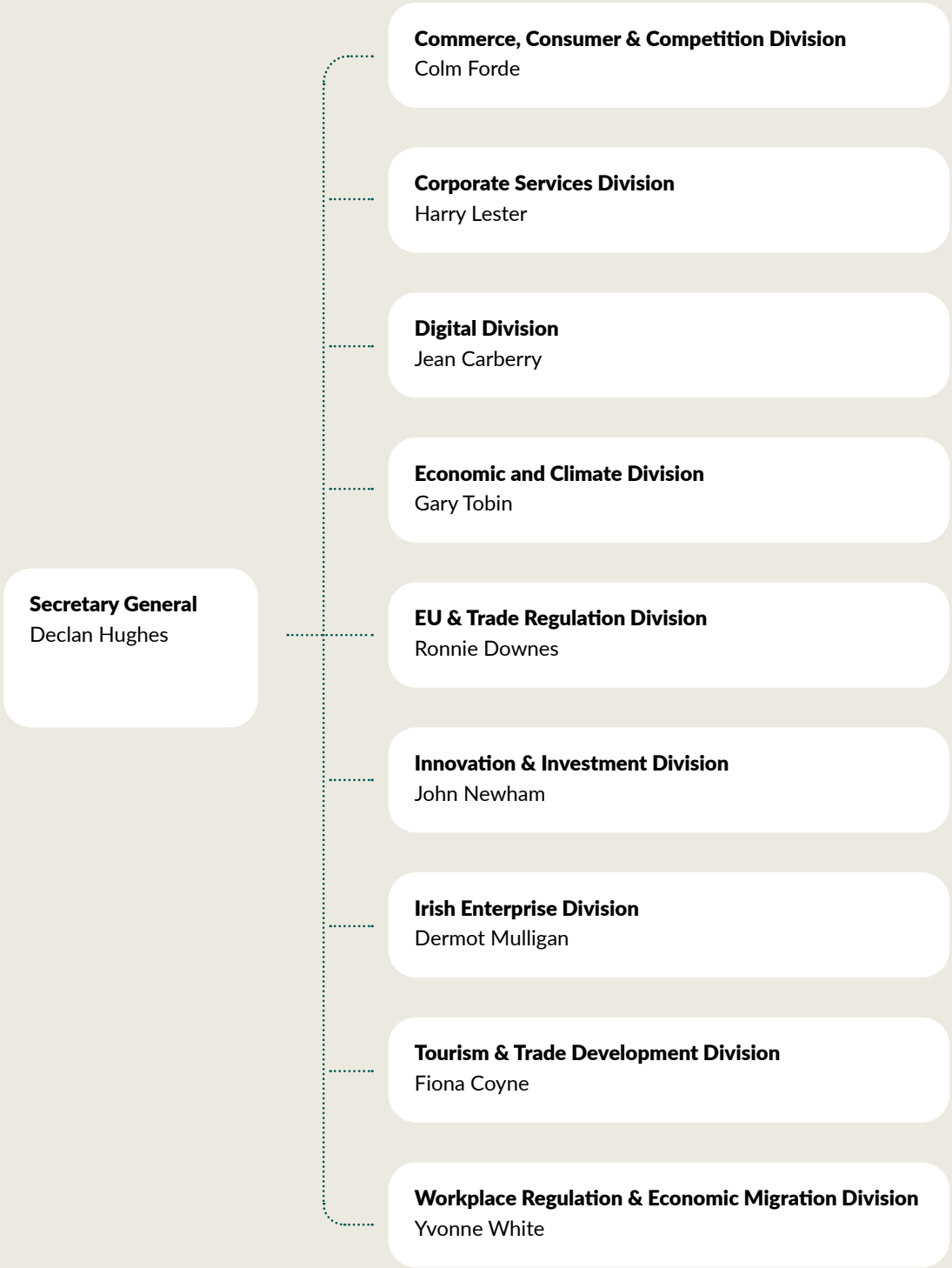
In January 2025, Mr Peter Burke TD was appointed as a member of the Government and reappointed as Minister for Enterprise, Tourism and Employment. Ms Niamh Smyth TD was appointed as Minister of State with special responsibility for Trade Promotion, Artificial Intelligence and Digital Transformation and Mr Alan Dillon TD was appointed as Minister of State with special responsibility in this Department for Small Businesses, Retail and Employment.

In announcing the new Programme for Government, Securing Ireland's Future, the Taoiseach also announced a number of changes to the responsibilities and functions of Government Departments, including the transfer of tourism functions into this Department and the transfer of lead responsibility for trade policy and negotiations to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Responsibility for trade development and trade promotion remained with this Department. The Department's name officially changed from Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment to the Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment in July 2025.

Following a wide-ranging consultation process, in October, the Department published its Statement of Strategy 2025–2028 setting out a cross-cutting agenda on competitiveness, sustainability, digitisation and balanced regional development.

Management Board and Divisional Structure

The Department delivers its broad mandate through nine divisions and is supported by a network of specialist offices, agencies and North/South bodies.



Offices, Agencies and North/South Bodies

Offices

Companies Registration Office

Labour Court

Register of Beneficial Ownership

Register of Friendly Societies

Workplace Relations Commission

Intellectual Property Office of Ireland

Agencies

Corporate Enforcement Authority

Competition & Consumer Protection Commission

Enterprise Ireland

Fáilte Ireland

Health & Safety Authority

Irish Auditing & Accounting Supervisory Authority

IDA Ireland

Injuries Resolution Board

National Standards Authority of Ireland

North/South Bodies

InterTradeIreland

Tourism Ireland

Goal 1.
Drive competitiveness, sustainability and innovation, building the resilience of the economy.



White Paper on Enterprise

The Government's *White Paper on Enterprise 2022 – 2030* set out the priorities for Irish enterprise policy to 2030, providing a vision for Irish-based enterprise to succeed through competitive advantage founded on sustainability, innovation and productivity.

The fourth and final Update Report on the White Paper on Enterprise Implementation Plan was published in June 2025 and outlined the substantial progress made across Government in delivering the commitments set out. It showed 90% of the cross-Government activities are completed or on track. The report highlights strong performance against key metrics, noting continued full employment, increased export activity, higher levels of digital adoption among SMEs, and a more regionally balanced pattern of investment and job creation.

Enterprise 2035

Building on the achievements of the White Paper's implementation phase, in 2025 preparatory work on the development of Enterprise 2035 began. This is a new enterprise strategy aimed at supporting sustainable enterprise growth and job creation over the coming decade. This successor strategy will build on Ireland's strengths as an open, innovation-driven economy while preparing enterprises to adapt to emerging challenges and opportunities.

Action Plan on Competitiveness and Productivity

In September 2025, the *Action Plan on Competitiveness and Productivity* was published. This whole-of-Government plan is a strategic response to the challenges that Ireland is facing in a rapidly evolving global landscape. The Plan contains 85 actions and focuses on the economic areas that fall within our domestic sphere of influence. Actions are set out across six themes:

1. **Embracing research, innovation and skills;**
2. **Boosting FDI and exports and influencing at EU level;**
3. **Creating and scaling more SMEs;**
4. **Regulating for growth and controlling costs;**
5. **Increasing the state's capacity to deliver infrastructure; and,**
6. **Growing sustainable Irish businesses and boosting regional development.**

Each action is assigned to a Government department or agency which will have responsibility for its delivery within a specified time-period. Implementation of the Action Plan will be overseen by a senior officials group chaired by the Department of the Taoiseach. The delivery of the Action Plan will be supported by the funding allocations agreed in the National Development Plan Review 2025.

National Development Plan

In July 2025, €3.68 billion in capital funding under the National Development Plan was allocated to support transformative enterprise, innovation and tourism programmes to 2030. This will be supplemented with an estimated additional €1 billion which Enterprise Agencies earn themselves, bringing the total capital spend on enterprise to €4.7 billion to 2030. The enhanced capital allocation is designed to support Irish enterprises to start up, grow and scale internationally. It will also drive the competitiveness and productivity of businesses across every region of the country and provide for the delivery of supports to attract inward investment. The Plan also supports access to finance and will help to position Ireland as a destination of choice for tourism through product development and overseas marketing. As part of the Government's National Development Plan, the Department published the *Sectoral Capital Plan 2026-2030* in January 2026. The plan sets out how the Department will spend €4.7 billion in capital investment over the next five years to strengthen Ireland's enterprise and employment base, attract foreign direct investment, promote innovation and support tourism development across all regions. This is the largest ever investment in Ireland's enterprise and innovation ecosystem, committing to job creation, competitiveness and commercial resilience.

Competitiveness Summit

The second annual Competitiveness Summit was held in July 2025 to consider the competitiveness challenges facing the Irish economy, focussing on those areas within Ireland's control at a time of heightened international uncertainty. The Taoiseach, Tánaiste, and Ministers considered the draft *Action Plan on Competitiveness and Productivity*, and the summit was briefed by NCPC Chair, Professor Frances Ruane, on the NCPC's Competitiveness Challenge report.

National Competitiveness and Productivity Council

The National Competitiveness and Productivity Council (NCPC) published its *Challenge 2025 Report* in July, setting out a range of key challenges facing Ireland's economy, particularly over the medium to long-term. The key challenges identified include addressing the high and rising cost of doing business – particularly those costs where Government has a role to play – in addition to prioritising investment in competitiveness and productivity-enhancing reforms, taking immediate action to address infrastructural deficits, and preparing the workforce of the future by fostering a stronger culture of continuous learning. The Report makes nineteen targeted and actionable recommendations to Government across broad, medium and long-term strategic challenges.

Expert Group on Future Skills Needs

The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) advises the Government on the future skills requirements and associated labour market issues that impact on the national potential for enterprise and employment growth. Over the course of the year, the EGFSN started two new projects examining digital skills and semiconductor skills needs. The Group also continued its implementation work in biopharma, international financial services and modern methods of construction. The EGFSN also launched a new Insights series in 2025 which are shorter pieces of work on topical matters. The Insights notes covered cross sectoral synergies and transversal skills, the impact of AI on the labour market and a note on recent initiatives on skills policy in Ireland and the EU.

Low Carbon Transition

The low carbon and digital transitions are key enablers of competitiveness, sustainability and resilience across the enterprise base. The Department's *Statement of Strategy 2024–2025* committed to advancing the low carbon and digital transitions by supporting industrial decarbonisation, offshore wind, digital adoption, semiconductors and artificial intelligence.

Sectoral emissions plans

Ireland has set an ambition to reduce on-site emissions in the manufacturing sector by 35% by 2030, requiring significant progress across the country's largest industrial emitters. These sectors include cement, alumina, food and beverage, pharmaceuticals, and chemicals, many of which are supported by Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland. Both agencies continue to work closely with these companies to advance impactful decarbonisation strategies. Industrial emissions account for approximately 10% of Ireland's total emissions. The Department is implementing its *Roadmap for the Decarbonisation of Industrial Heat*, and targeted engagement on cement sector emissions. Emissions from industry have reduced by more than 18% since 2018, with significant commercial investments in electrification, biomass and energy efficiency supported through Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland.

Large emitters and LEAP

During 2025, the Department continued its work to ensure that Ireland's digital and energy infrastructure supports sustainable economic growth, high-quality employment, and the effective delivery of public services. The Department worked closely with colleagues across Government to support a balanced and sustainable approach to future data centre growth with Government endorsing a strategic medium-term approach for Large Energy Users (LEUs), including data centres.

The Large Energy Users Action Plan (LEAP) establishes a plan-led framework for the development of energy-intensive industry, ensuring that future growth can contribute to economic opportunity beyond 2030 while remaining firmly aligned with Ireland's green energy transition and broader industrial strategy. A central element of the plan is the creation of green energy parks, enabling the co-location of major industrial energy demand with renewable energy supply and other enabling infrastructure. Implementation of LEAP will be advanced through seventeen key enabling actions across planning, regulation and infrastructure coordination. Data centres remain a critical infrastructure for Ireland's digital economy, underpinning the online services relied upon daily by citizens and businesses from financial transactions and e-commerce to digital public services, health platforms and media streaming. To further strengthen the evidence base underpinning policy development in this area, the Department commissioned an independent study examining the economic value associated with Ireland's data centre ecosystem. This study has been completed and will inform future policy in this area.

Decarbonising the Commercial Built Environment

The Minister for Enterprise, Tourism and Employment has responsibility to reduce emissions from the commercial built environment (comprising commercial and public built environment) by 45% by 2030 (relative to 2018 levels). To achieve the national objective of net zero emissions by 2050 almost all buildings will need to switch to electric heat pumps, efficient district heating and other renewable sources. Throughout 2025 the Department worked through the Commercial Buildings Decarbonisation Working Group on progressing a range of measures to support the decarbonisation of the commercial built environment.

Decarbonising Construction Materials

The Department develops policy to support the decarbonisation of the industrial base within Ireland. Cement production in Ireland forms a significant part of this industrial base emissions. The cement sector constitutes 41% of industrial emissions in Ireland and therefore about 5% of total national emissions. The Department continues to chair the cross-departmental Cement and Construction Sector Decarbonisation Working Group set up in 2022. The current focus for the Department includes supporting the National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI), in commissioning research to inform their approach to allow for the inclusion of innovative and low carbon binders and cementitious materials.

Powering Prosperity – Ireland's Offshore Wind Industrial Strategy

The first progress report on *Powering Prosperity – Ireland's Offshore Wind Industrial Strategy* was published in April 2025. The Strategy aims to develop a strong and competitive offshore wind industry in Ireland, ensuring that the sector creates economic value across the country and supports the Government's offshore wind targets for 2030, 2040 and 2050. Of the forty actions, 38 were completed or underway. The report highlighted advances in building supply-chain capability, promoting research and innovation, supporting regional economic opportunities, and exploring new industrial uses for green energy. Key achievements during 2025 included:

- Improved coordination between EirGrid, Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland to support industry development;
- Significant progress on PROPEL Ireland, the national Offshore Wind Centre of Excellence;
- Ongoing engagement with Regional Enterprise Plan Offshore Wind Working Groups to ensure regional readiness and economic benefit; and,
- Completion of an evaluation of green energy park concepts, supporting future investment decisions.

Work also progressed on the development of a successor green growth industrial strategy, to be published in 2026. This strategy will focus on enterprise opportunities arising from the green transition, including new green technologies, strengthened supply chains, and increased support for innovation and in-company R&D.

Net Zero Industry Act

The Net-Zero Industry Act (NZIA) establishes a framework of measures to strengthen Europe's net-zero technology manufacturing ecosystem and aims to simplify the regulatory framework for manufacturers of net zero technologies to scale up production of technologies, and their critical components. The Act came into force in June 2024. There are nineteen technologies in scope, and ten priority technologies for Ireland. During 2025, the Department progressed implementation and prepared to designate the Minister for Enterprise, Tourism and Employment as the Single Point of Contact (SPC) to facilitate and co-ordinate the permit-granting process for projects under the EU Net Zero Industry Act (NZIA). The SPC will be responsible for facilitating and coordinating the permit-granting process for net-zero technology manufacturing projects and for providing information on streamlining administrative processes to meet the targeted decision-making timelines set out in the Regulation.

Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation

In 2025, the Department continued to support Ireland's move towards a more circular and resource efficient economy. A key focus was the European Union's Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation (ESPR). The Regulation came into effect in July 2024, and in 2025 the European Commission introduced the ESPR Working Plan for 2025–2030. This plan represents an important step in reducing waste and improving how products are designed across the EU.

The ESPR expands the scope of EU ecodesign legislation beyond energy-using products, establishing a broader framework of sustainability requirements applicable across a wide range of products. These measures support the EU's wider environmental goals, including the aim to double the circular use of materials to 24% by 2030. Throughout 2025, Enterprise Ireland continued to support businesses as they prepare for the phased introduction of ESPR requirements. This included awareness raising, structured engagement with stakeholders, and access to funding supports. Enterprise Ireland supports played an important role by helping companies invest in eco-friendly innovation and align their operations with new EU sustainability standards.

Climate Toolkit 4 Business

The Climate Toolkit 4 Business is a free and simple online support to help businesses cut carbon emissions and energy costs. The Toolkit was managed by the Department and the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment during 2025. During 2025 the Toolkit underwent a redevelopment to provide an improved service to its users. The Toolkit provides a path to sustainability in minutes where businesses can log on to the self-assessment carbon calculator to estimate and understand their carbon footprint. Based on their inputs they get a tailored Action Plan of practical steps that they can take and guidance to the full suite of Government supports that are available to help them take climate action.

Environmental Aid Fund

While emissions are projected to decline annually to 2030, the current rate of reduction remains insufficient to meet national targets. The €300 million Environmental Aid Scheme is designed to accelerate progress by supporting companies to invest in measures that reduce their carbon footprint. The Scheme aims to:

- Improve energy efficiency in industrial operations;
- Increase the adoption of renewable energy sources; and,
- Support environmental studies that guide future decarbonisation actions.

Throughout 2025, supported by the Department's Capital Plan, Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland approved €168 million in grant support to incentivise forty decarbonisation investments by large industry in the coming years. Enterprise Ireland also provided support to a further seven projects through other schemes with a further €6.9 million of grant support approved. These investments are enabling large manufacturing firms to embark on transformative projects that will play a critical role in achieving Ireland's 2030 emissions reduction targets.

Industrial Development (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2025

The General Scheme of the Industrial Development (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill was published in February 2025. Its primary purpose was to amend the Industrial Development Acts to strengthen IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland's provision of environmental protection aid grants, including supports for decarbonisation projects and consultancy grants to assist enterprises in the green and digital transitions.

Enterprise Ireland Supports

The Department through Enterprise Ireland provides financial and advisory supports to help firms reduce emissions and build sustainability capability and by supporting digital transformation initiatives including automation, data capabilities, and emerging technologies.

- Enterprise Irelands Climate Action Voucher offers up to €1,800 to fund two days of independent consultancy to help companies to identify and act on energy-saving opportunities. 223 vouchers were approved in 2025 to support businesses looking to become more sustainable.
- The GreenStart programme offers up to 80% support to maximum grant of €5,000 towards consultancy aimed at improving companies' environmental performance through greater resource efficiency, driving competitive advantage and reducing costs. 460 grants were approved in 2025 to a value of €2.2 million.
- Enterprise Ireland clients can also avail of the Green Plus programme which can support training to build environmental management capabilities, the implementation of environmental best practice within the company, hiring an external environmental service provider and will even cover part of the salary cost for up to ten staff members working as part of the green team. Up to €50,000 is available in grant aid. In 2025, 261 grants were approved to a value of €9.5 million.
- Companies seeking to cut their costs and become more competitive can avail of a grant from Enterprise Ireland towards the purchase of Energy Monitoring and Tracking Systems (EM&T). The scheme provides up to €50,000 to cover 50% of eligible costs (maximum of €100,000). In 2025, 65 grants were approved to a value of €1.55 million.

LEO climate supports

During 2025, the Department, through the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) provided a suite of tailored advisory, training and financial supports aimed at helping businesses improve resource efficiency, lower energy costs, and embed sustainable practices. This included continued rollout of the LEO Green for Business programme, designed to help small businesses develop practical sustainability Action Plans, and the Energy Efficiency Grant, supporting investment in energy saving technologies and equipment. In 2025, 1,094 businesses were approved for the Green for Business Scheme with a value of €2.3 million. The Energy Efficiency Grant (EEG) offers 75% of project costs up to a maximum amount of €10,000 and is open to all small businesses with up to fifty employees. During 2025, 751 small businesses were approved for the EEG, with an estimated value of €6.1 million. LEOs also delivered workshops, one-to-one mentoring and sector-specific guidance. These initiatives supported enterprises in areas such as carbon footprint measurement, waste reduction, circular economy opportunities and renewable energy adoption.

Digital Transition

Ireland in the Digital Decade

The Digital Decade Policy Programme is the EU's digital transformation compass. It sets out ambitious objectives and targets to be achieved by 2030 across the four points of a digital compass - Government, Business, Skills and Infrastructure. The Department represents Ireland on the Digital Decade Board and leads Ireland's cross-Government approach to the delivery of the Digital Decade Targets. The European Commission's 2025 Annual Report on the State of the Digital Decade, which includes the DESI (Digital Economy and Society Index), was published in June 2025. It shows:

- Ireland continues to perform well, remaining one of the EU's best performers in Digital Skills, showing strong workforce readiness;
- Ireland scores above 90% in four of eight Key Performance Indicators measuring the digitalisation of public services: e-Government users, digital public services for businesses, mobile friendliness and availability of online feedback mechanisms;
- Ireland's performance on digitalisation of business also compares well with other Member States - especially on the percentage of SMEs selling online and on SMEs e-commerce turnover. Ireland also remains within the EU average on the adoption of AI in SMEs; and,
- Ireland ranks 5th among Member States for the number of unicorn companies, (private startups valued at over $1 billion) with thirteen Irish unicorns recorded in the most recent report, highlighting the strength and dynamism of our digital and innovation-oriented economy.

Digital Ireland – Ireland's National Digital Strategy

Digital Ireland - Connecting Our People, Securing Our Future, Ireland's National Digital Strategy, is closely aligned with the Digital Decade framework, providing a whole-of-Government strategic vision to digital transformation to 2030. Significant work was done in 2025 to develop the Digital Ireland Strategy to be published in 2026. The Strategy sets out the Government's ambition and vision to 2030 to ensure Ireland remains a digital leader in an increasingly competitive global environment, building on Ireland's strong digital foundation: our well-established reputation as a digital hub, our exceptional talent base and our vibrant innovation ecosystem.

Grow Digital Portal

During 2025, the Grow Digital Portal continued to assist businesses at all stages of their digital journey, showcasing success stories from non-tech businesses embracing digital transformation. Support is provided to enterprises to embrace basic digital tools for driving efficiencies and productivity, and for marketing and selling online where appropriate for their business. Since its launch in July 2024, the site has had approximately 24,000 visits.

Digital Transition Fund

As part of Ireland's National Recovery and Resilience Plan, the Digital Transition Fund (DTF) is driving transformative digitalisation of enterprise in Ireland, particularly amongst SMEs. Since the DTF was established in 2022, approximately €22.6 million in funds has been released to over 430 companies through to the end of 2025 to support digitalisation. The programme will help companies at all stages of their digitalisation journey.

Enterprise Digital Advisory Forum

The Enterprise Digital Advisory Forum (EDAF) was established to support the Government in driving the digitalisation of enterprise across Ireland. The EDAF is a key stakeholder group which brings together representatives of indigenous enterprise of all sizes, multi-national enterprises, and experts in digital technologies and their adoption by enterprise. The Forum is chaired by Minister Smyth and provides a focused body for Government to hear the views and perspectives of enterprise and experts. The EDAF met three times in 2025.

National Digital and Artificial Intelligence Policy Developments

AI Advisory Council

The AI Advisory Council was established in January 2024. It is comprised of experts from academia, industry and civil society and provides expert advice to Government on AI policy with the secretariat function provided by the Department. In February 2025 the Council submitted the report *"Ireland's AI Advisory Council Recommendations – Helping to Shape Ireland's AI Future"* to Government. The report sets out key strategic recommendations to support AI adoption while safeguarding Ireland's economy, competitiveness, workforce and society. The Council provided input to AI related matters across a number of policy domains. Members of the Council also engaged with the Oireachtas and its Committees and participated in a significant number of public engagements and international events.

EU Artificial Intelligence Act

The EU Artificial Intelligence Act entered into force in August 2024 introducing rules for certain AI systems placed on the market or deployed in the EU, to mitigate the risks to people's health, safety and fundamental rights. In 2025, major progress was made towards Ireland's implementation of the Act. In this regard Government has decided to:

- Adopt a distributed model of implementation of the Act whereby existing sectoral regulators will take on responsibilities for regulating AI;
- Establish a national single point of contact to streamline coordination between Irish competent authorities, the European Commission and stakeholders;
- Designate fifteen National Competent Authorities responsible for enforcing the Act. The National Competent Authorities are represented on the National AI Act Implementation Committee which formally met for the first time in September 2025; and,
- Identify nine public authorities tasked with protecting fundamental rights under the Act including the right to non-discrimination, in relation to certain high-risk uses of AI systems, specified in the Act.

Work progressed on the General Scheme of the Regulation of Artificial Intelligence Bill which will establish the AI Office of Ireland on a statutory basis and empower the competent authorities to supervise and enforce the AI Act. The Office will serve as the central coordinating authority for the implementation and enforcement of the EU Artificial Intelligence Act in Ireland, ensuring a consistent and effective regulatory approach across all relevant sectors.

Other advances in the digital sphere included:

- **Charter for Digital Inclusion:** In May, Minister Smyth launched the Charter for Digital Inclusion, to encourage public and private organisations to join efforts in ensuring equitable access to digital technologies, services and opportunities for everyone. It emphasises the important role of larger businesses in supporting SMEs to adopt and benefit from digital technologies.
- **G20 Digital Economy Ministers Meeting:** In September, Minister Smyth represented Ireland at the G20 Meeting and also on the Taskforce on AI, Data Governance and Innovation for Sustainable Developments Ministers meeting. This two-day event brought together digital ministers from G20 members, guest countries and international organisations and was the culmination of many months of preparatory engagement by the Department at the G20 working groups.
- **Digital 9+ (DP+) Ministerial Meeting:** In October, Minister Smyth represented Ireland at the meeting in Lisbon, Portugal. The Lisbon D9+ came at a pivotal moment for Europe's digital and economic future. Building on the momentum of the Draghi and Letta reports, D9+ Ministers are calling for ambitious digital simplification, pro-innovation regulation, strengthening investments in digital skills and supporting AI as a driver to strengthen Europe's competitiveness. Minister Smyth signed the D9+ Lisbon Declaration calling for the advance of regulatory simplification and the elimination of bureaucracy.
- **Priorities on EU Digital Simplification:** In October, Minister Smyth published Ireland's priorities on EU digital simplification, sharing concrete proposals to reduce regulatory complexity, improve coherence across legislation and support innovation and competitiveness in the EU Single Market. The proposals were developed through targeted consultation with business and industry representatives, National Regulatory Authorities (NRAs), and Government officials. Ireland advocates for a dynamic, evidence-based approach to simplification, stronger coordination across Member States, and practical tools to reduce administrative burdens, particularly for SMEs.
- **Declaration for European Digital Sovereignty** was signed in November by Minster Smyth on behalf of Ireland at a ministerial summit in Berlin. In so doing Ireland joined other European Union Member States in a commitment to strengthen Europe's ability to act independently and competitively in the digital sphere while maintaining openness to global collaboration.

Goal 2.

Drive prosperity and high standards of living through creating and maintaining high quality jobs and increased productivity.



Employment Performance

CSO data for Q4 2025 showed the Irish labour market remained strong and resilient in 2025, with employment reaching 2.83 million in the fourth quarter, an increase of 56,700 or 2% year on year. This growth was broadly based across the workforce, with increases for both males and females, reflecting sustained economic activity and job creation. The employment rate for those aged 15–64 rose to 74.5%, continuing an upward trend in participation. Employment outside Dublin rose by 37,400, or 1.9% in the year to Q4 2025, indicating continued progress towards more balanced regional development. While Dublin remains a central hub of economic activity, the data points to an increasingly broad-based expansion of employment across all regions of the country, supported by sustained job creation.

2025 end-of-year results showed Enterprise Ireland client companies' employing a record 232,425 people, Local Enterprise Office supported jobs reached 40,285 and direct employment in IDA client companies in Ireland reached 312,468.

Enterprise Agencies and Bodies

IDA Ireland

In February 2025, IDA Ireland published its new five-year strategy *'Adapt Intelligently: A Strategy for Sustainable Growth and Innovation, 2025-29*'. The strategy sets out IDA Ireland's ambition for continued growth through four strategic objectives: strengthen long term investment; scale cutting-edge innovation; drive sustainable change and maximise regional opportunities.

2025 saw the continued strong economic impact of IDA clients in Ireland, with expenditure in the Irish economy of €40.7 billion and capital expenditure €12.8 billion. The Department and its Ministers continue to work closely with IDA Ireland to ensure Ireland's FDI performance remains world class and meets the challenges of an increasingly competitive global environment for highly mobile foreign direct investment. In the first year of the new strategy, direct employment in the 1,884 IDA client companies in Ireland reached 312,468, up 1.5% on 2024, accounting for 11.1% of total employment of 2.83 million in Ireland. 54% of total IDA client employment in 2025 (169,967 jobs) was in regional locations. IDA Ireland secured a record total of 323 investments in 2025, up 38% on 2024, and is expected to generate over 15,300 new jobs in the coming years, across the country. These included 78 first time investments, and 68 expansion projects from existing client companies.

Research and Development (R&D) investment by IDA Ireland client companies, valued at €2.5 billion across eighty projects, was supported during 2025. There were fifty sustainability focused projects, including 31 Green Capital investments with a combined capital commitment of €1 billion, contributing to expected Scope 1 CO2 abatement of 44,035 tn. There were 66 investments by IDA clients in training and upskilling of their workforce supported by IDA Ireland in 2025.

Regional delivery remained a core priority, with 57% of all new investments in 2025 going to regional locations. The 2025–2029 strategy aims to secure 550 investment projects, from a total of 1,000 outside Dublin. Regional investment is assisted through IDA Ireland's Regional Property Programme

which ensures the supply of land, buildings and infrastructure in regional locations as required by current and prospective clients of IDA Ireland, as well as for Enterprise Ireland and Local Enterprise Offices' clients. Under the Adapt Intelligently strategy, IDA Ireland is progressing the delivery of 23 projects across 21 locations in eight regions, primarily manufacturing buildings.

In 2025, IDA Ireland completed the construction of Advance Building Solutions in Cavan, Galway and Sligo and commenced construction of buildings in Letterkenny and Mullingar. IDA also secured planning permission for an Advance Building Solution in Drogheda and working in partnership with local authorities, secured planning permission for buildings in Carrick-on-Shannon and Clonmel.

Enterprise Ireland

In March 2025, Enterprise Ireland published its new five-year strategy *'Delivering for Ireland, Leading Globally (2025-2029)'* outlining its ambition to support Irish exporting companies to make an even greater contribution to the Irish economy through international growth and nationwide employment, with the long-term ambition that exporting Irish companies become the primary driver of the Irish economy.

Enterprise Ireland's 2025 end-of-year results showed client companies employing a record 232,425 people. This includes a net increase of 2,938 jobs, with 69% of roles located outside of Dublin, with all nine regions showing growth. In terms of investment activity Enterprise Ireland invested just under €50 million in direct equity in 2025, leveraging a total of €440 million to support company expansion.

The Department funds the Enterprise Ireland Research, Development and Innovation (RD&I) Programme which provides RD&I supports for indigenous companies as well as the commercialisation of State funded research, and enables industry-academic applied research collaboration, involving both Irish and foreign owned enterprises. In 2025, the programme was allocated capital funding of over €151 million to deliver supports such as direct company grants under the RD&I Fund, collaborative research support in our Technological Universities and Dundalk IT through the Technology Gateways, and grants to commercialise research forming spinouts from our Third-Level Sector under the Commercialisation Fund.

Local Enterprise Offices

2025 marked the 12th consecutive year of jobs growth since the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) were established and underlines the importance of a strong, locally based pipeline feeding into higher growth Enterprise Ireland supports. In 2025, companies supported by 31 LEOs created 7,261 new jobs with a net employment gain of 2,479. For the first time, LEO supported jobs reached 40,285 with 82% of new jobs created in 2025 outside Dublin.

Total Measure 1 grant payments - comprising technical assistance, priming, market explorer grants, feasibility and business expansion - amounted to over €16.4 million. The Trading Online Voucher saw €3.2 million worth of payments across 1,601 projects in 2025. The Digital for Business program saw 1,134 businesses approved to a value of €2.97 million while the Grow Digital voucher approved 318 businesses to a value of over €1 million.

LEOs provide consultancy and grants in the areas of Green, Digital and Lean. The Energy Efficiency Grant approved a total of over €6.1 million to 715 businesses, and the Green for Business approved 1,101 projects to a value of over €2.3 million. The Lean for Business scheme approved 490 projects valued at over €1.67 million.

LEO training programs saw 44,209 participants (29,832 female and 14,377 male) partake in 2,426 programs. A total of 1,157 Mentors made 22,045 visits to 16,628 participants as part of the LEO

Mentor program. There were 8,219 female and 8,409 male participants representing a near 50/50 split. The LEOs continue to promote inclusion and accessibility in entrepreneurship, in particular among under-represented groups, including people with disabilities. Training was provided to LEO staff to strengthen neuroinclusive practices across the LEOs. The programme introduced clear, practical approaches for creating more accessible, flexible and sensory-aware training environments.

Advancing Regional Development

Regional Enterprise Plans

The Regional Enterprise Plans (REPs) 2022-2025 were developed and led by regional stakeholders and focused on collaborative initiatives to strengthen the enterprise ecosystem in each region and helped drive economic growth and sustain better standards of living throughout Ireland. Each plan was underpinned by an understanding of the unique local strengths and assets in that region. Since 2017, the Department has allocated over €150 million to regional enterprise development through a range of schemes administered by Enterprise Ireland, some of which have funded key REP projects. During 2025, recruitment campaigns were initiated by the host Local Authority in each region to establish permanent REP Programme Manager roles under a new Service Level Agreement between Enterprise Ireland and Local Authorities.

In 2025, the Department commissioned an independent review of the latest REP initiative which was presented to the Regional Enterprise Plans National Oversight Group at their meeting in June, co-chaired by Minister Burke, Minister Dillon and Minister Smyth. The REPs concluded in December 2025, with Final Progress Reports to be delivered in 2026. These reports, alongside the review's findings of the independent review, will inform policy decisions on the future approach to regional enterprise development.

Smart Regions Enterprise Innovation Scheme

In December 2025, an €18 million investment in forty projects across Ireland under the Smart Regions Enterprise Innovation Scheme was announced. This scheme is designed to strengthen regional enterprise, drive innovation and support sustainable economic growth. Aligned with the regional priorities set out in the National Smart Specialisation Strategy for Innovation and the nine Regional Enterprise Plans, Smart Regions drives high-impact projects in priority sectors such as artificial intelligence (AI), agritech and food, sustainability, insurance technology, and advanced manufacturing.

Emergency Humanitarian Flooding Scheme

The Emergency Humanitarian Flooding Scheme was activated twice in 2025. Firstly, in response to flooding in Bantry in Co. Cork at the start of November, and secondly, in response to flooding in Co. Wexford due to Storm Claudia in mid-November. Over €80,000 in funding was distributed through both schemes, to assist affected small businesses to recover from flood damage to their premises.

Economic Migration

Employment Permits

Economic migration is a vital aspect of addressing skills gaps and shortages in the labour market. Where specific skills cannot easily be filled within the EEA, the employment permits system offers a path into the Irish labour market for non-EEA nationals who possess those in-demand skills.

With full employment and demand for skills at an all-time high, our Employment Permits operations issued 31,000 employment permits in 2025. Employment Permits Online launched in April 2025. This portal-based system has made the application process easier, more secure, and more intuitive, resulting in a more streamlined processing experience for applicants. The system is managed through the Critical Skills and Ineligible Occupations Lists, through which skills shortages and surpluses in Ireland and the EEA can be tracked. The Ineligible Occupations List includes occupations for which there is an adequate supply of labour and skills with Ireland and the EEA, and for which an employment permit will not be issued, and the Critical Skills Occupations List includes occupations in short supply in Ireland and across the EEA. In July, Ministers Dillon and Burke opened the consultation on the status of occupations on the employment permits occupations lists. Submissions are shared with lead Departments for observations on changes sought and an outcome report is to be published in 2026. A legislative review of the "50:50 rule" was also commenced at the end of the year which includes cross-Government engagement.

New Permits and Quotas

In March, Minister Burke announced changes to the employment permits system to address skills shortages in Ireland's planning and home care sectors. The Minister added Town Planning Officers to the Critical Skills Occupations Lists and approved an extension of 1,000 General Employment Permits for the role of care workers and carers in the home. Extending this quota will help to alleviate labour shortages in this sector and ensure people can access the services they need, where and when they need them. In April, Minister Burke signed regulations making changes to the employment permits system to address skills shortages in Ireland's transport sector by extending quotas for car, bus and HGV mechanics and vehicle body builder trades roles.

Supports were also provided to rural economies. Following significant engagement with the sector and other stakeholders, Minister Burke and Minister Dillon announced the release of new General Employment Permit quotas for the roles of meat processing operative and dairy farm assistant to address constraints in the meat and dairy sectors. These quotas recognise the constraints in the agri-food labour market and its importance to the rural economy.

Minimum Annual Remuneration

Minimum annual remuneration is the minimum annual salary required to hire a non-EEA worker under an employment permit. In December, Ministers Burke and Dillon announced the publication of a new Roadmap for Minimum Annual Remuneration (MAR) Salary Thresholds, the first increase taking effect in March 2026. The Roadmap outlines a gradual approach to increasing salary thresholds across all employment permit types, while removing very low thresholds on a phased basis for certain roles in the agri-food and healthcare sectors.

Seasonal Permit Schemes

The Seasonal Employment Permit Pilot Scheme was launched in March 2025 as a targeted initiative to test the feasibility of a regulated seasonal migration model in Ireland's horticulture sector. A total of 23 workers were recruited under the pilot to work with a limited pool of growers. Employment

activity ceased with the close of the season in November 2025. A policy paper reviewing the scheme will be finalised in 2026.

Forced Labour Regulation

The Department is leading preparations for the implementation of Regulation (EU) 2024/3015, which prohibits the placing and making available of products made with forced labour on the EU market, as well as their export from the EU. The Regulation entered into force in December 2024 and will fully apply from December 2027. In December, Minister Burke signed regulations which designated the Workplace Relations Commission and relevant Market Surveillance Authorities as competent authorities under the regulation. The Workplace Relations Commission will have primary responsibility for investigating suspected cases of products made with forced labour in Ireland, while the relevant Market Surveillance Authority will have responsibility for enforcing any prohibition order or decision issued against products confirmed as having been made with forced labour in Ireland. The Workplace Relations Commission and the Department are also providing Ireland's representation on the EU's Union Network against Forced Labour Products, composed of Member State competent authorities and the European Commission, which met for the first time in late 2025 to prepare for the regulation's full implementation.

Disability Strategy

The Department is a co-lead of the Employment Pillar of the National Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People 2025 to 2030, along with the Department of Social Protection, and was actively engaged in the development of the strategy prior to its publication in September 2025. Work on the implementation of the Department's commitments has begun. The aim of the Employment Pillar is to bridge the employment gap between disabled people and others who are in employment and to enhance the opportunities for disabled people who can earn a living, to do so.

Construction Contracts Adjudication Service

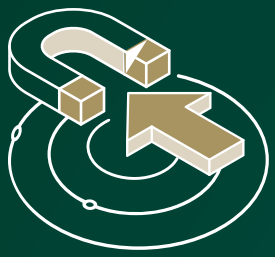
The Construction Contracts Act, 2013 applies to construction contracts that have been entered into since July 2016. During 2025 there were 87 applications made to the Chairperson of the Construction Contracts Adjudication Panel, Mr. Bernard Gogarty, for the appointment of an Adjudicator under section 6(4) of the Construction Contracts Act, 2013. In November 2025, the Chairperson submitted the ninth *Annual Report on the implementation of the Construction Contracts Act, 2013* to Minister Dillon.

Balance for Better Business

Balance for Better Business (B4BB), sets voluntary, non-binding targets to achieve 40%+ female representation on company boards and senior leadership teams, with progress reported annually. As set out in the *Balance for Better Business Eighth Annual Report 2025*, a major milestone was achieved in 2025, with women now accounting for 41.8% of board members across ISEQ 20 companies. Ireland now ranks 5th in the EU-27 for female board representation and 9th for women in leadership, performing well above the EU average.

Building on this progress, B4BB has increasingly focused on under-represented and emerging sectors through a programme of sectoral roundtables, identifying key challenges and opportunities for action. In 2025, the Department hosted two B4BB industry roundtables: Retail chaired by Minister Dillon, and Fintech chaired by Minister Smyth.

Goal 3.
Strengthen tourism and support Irish-based enterprise to start, scale and compete internationally



Tourism Policy

In 2025, the Department's mandate expanded to include responsibility for national tourism policy, reflecting the strategic repositioning of tourism within the enterprise, tourism and employment agenda. This recognises tourism as one of Ireland's key indigenous economic sectors, with a significant contribution to employment, regional development and economic resilience. Integrating tourism within the Department strengthens policy coherence and ensures that tourism policy is developed and implemented in alignment with wider enterprise, competitiveness, skills and regional development objectives. With tourism policy fully embedded in the Department's remit, the Department is better positioned to support a resilient, competitive and sustainable tourism sector that delivers tangible economic and social benefits for communities nationwide. The Tourism and Trade Development Division was established with the twin goals of:

- Supporting the sustainable growth of a competitive tourism sector with a particular emphasis on economic development in communities throughout the country, conserving/safeguarding our environment and natural resources; and,
- Promoting North-South co-operation, within the context of the Good Friday Agreement and the Government's Shared Island Initiative, particularly in the context of the work of Tourism Ireland.

National Tourism Policy: A new Era for Irish Tourism

Ireland's new National Tourism Policy, *"A New Era for Irish Tourism*," was launched in December 2025 outlining a forward-looking strategy for the tourism sector to 2030. It sets ambitious targets to grow visitor numbers, revenue, and employment while promoting regional prosperity and sustainability. The policy aims to increase international tourism revenue by 6% per year and domestic revenue by 7% per year, with a target of 250,000 jobs in the sector. It prioritises support for tourism SMEs, recognising their contribution to employment and balanced regional development. It also aligns tourism with our broader national objectives: climate action, digital transformation, competitiveness, and inclusive growth.

Key Strategic Priorities in the Policy include:

- **Support for Tourism SMEs:** The policy prioritises small and medium-sized enterprises, aiming for 90% of tourism SMEs to adopt advanced digital tools to enhance competitiveness and regional development;
- **Culinary Tourism:** the policy places a strong focus on food-related tourism, integrating culinary experiences into Destination Experience Development Plans and promoting Ireland's food culture internationally;
- **Balanced Regional Investment:** The strategy ensures that all regions benefit from tourism growth, including off-peak season development from October to May, supporting rural and remote communities;
- **Integration with National Objectives:** Tourism is aligned with climate action, digital transformation, competitiveness, and inclusive growth, ensuring sustainable and evidence-based development; and,

- **Enhanced Oversight and Data:** The Policy Statement includes 71 policy proposals with Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland central to delivering on objectives. A Tourism Policy Oversight Group will monitor implementation, supported by improved data collection and collaboration across Government and industry. It will ensure that tourism policy remains responsive, evidence-based and aligned with broader national priorities.

Tourism Marketing

Tourism Ireland will support attainment of the objectives set out in the Policy with a comprehensive tourism marketing plan for 2026 with a target to boost overseas visitor spending island wide to €10.25 billion annually by 2031. Fáilte Ireland is responsible for domestic holiday marketing across four regional experience brands: Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland's Ancient East, Ireland's Hidden Heartlands and Dublin.

Tourism Ireland's overseas missions

Tourism Ireland is responsible for marketing the island of Ireland overseas as a leading holiday destination. They deliver world-class marketing programmes in fourteen markets across Great Britain, North America, Mainland Europe and Australia. Tourism missions in 2025 included:

USA

In February 2025, Minister Burke led Tourism Ireland's West Coast US sales mission, marking his first tourism sales mission since tourism moved into the newly established Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment. The mission provided an opportunity to connect directly with West Coast based travel agents, showcasing and sharing inspiration around Ireland's distinctive visitor offering. Hundreds of commercial meetings took place during the week, aimed at strengthening partnerships and driving tourism growth over the years ahead.

Germany

In May 2025, Minister Burke led Tourism Ireland in Germany to promote the island of Ireland as a destination for both business and leisure travel. While at IMEX Frankfurt, one of the world's leading exhibitions for the global business events industry, Minister Burke launched Ireland's new Business Events 2030 strategy to an international audience. The strategy, which was launched domestically at the end of April, recognises that the business events sector contributes more than €1 billion annually to the Irish economy. It sets an ambitious target of achieving average annual revenue growth of 8% through to 2030, helping to position Ireland as a global leader in business events by attracting high-value international business that delivers long-term economic and community benefits.

Canada

The Trade Mission to Canada in November 2025, led by Minister Burke, focused on the expansion of several Irish tourism companies in Canada, underlining their strong commitment to the market and their ambition to significantly grow business to the island of Ireland from Canada.

United Kingdom

In November 2025, Minister Burke led Tourism Ireland in London to promote the island of Ireland at World Travel Market (WTM), the world's largest travel fair. Tourism Ireland had a strong presence at WTM, alongside approximately 75 tourism companies from across the island of Ireland. WTM is the largest B2B event in the global travel and tourism calendar and signalled the start of Tourism Ireland's international promotional drive for 2026. The WTM provides a valuable platform to engage with tour operators and travel trade partners from around the world, including emerging markets such as China, India and the Middle East, as well as key markets including Great Britain, mainland Europe and North America.

Tourism Sectoral Adaptation Plan 2025 – 2030

In line with the Programme for Government's commitment to supporting communities, ecosystems, and businesses in the face of rising climate risks, the Department published a *Tourism Sectoral Adaptation Plan 2025-2030*. This marks Ireland's first Sectoral Adaptation Plan dedicated to the Tourism Sector. It identifies both the challenges and opportunities presented by a changing climate, with the aim of maintaining Ireland's appeal to holidaymakers and supporting resilient communities through employment and economic growth. Implementation of the Plan prioritises reducing the consequences for the sector of the climate-related hazards identified by the National Climate Change Risk Assessment. It also contains a number of actions to achieve the goals which will be overseen by the Department and the tourism agencies.

North/South

Minister Burke chaired the twentieth North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) Tourism) Sectoral meeting at the NSMC Joint Secretariat Offices in Armagh in April 2025, attended by Caoimhe Archibald MLA, Minister for the Economy, and Gordon Lyons MLA, Minister for Communities. The meeting brought together ministers from the Government of Ireland and the Northern Ireland Executive to advance all-island cooperation in the tourism sector.

Shared Island Development

Shared Island Fund allocations are made by the Government to take forward investment projects and cooperation programmes that implement Programme for Government and National Development Plan objectives on Shared Island. Focus areas included women's entrepreneurship, business clustering and sustainable enterprise transformation.

Shared Destinations Programme

In February, Minister Burke announced a €23 million allocation in Shared Island Tourism Development Funding Programme for 2025-2030 for the Shared Destinations Programme. Fáilte Ireland, Tourism Northern Ireland and Tourism Ireland will work in partnership with local authorities to develop sustainable tourism amenities across the border region. This investment reinforces the Government's commitment to balanced regional development and deepening all-island cooperation, ensuring that shared natural and cultural assets continue to drive sustainable economic benefit for border communities.

Brand Collaboration Project

In 2025, work continued on the Shared Island Brand Collaboration, supported by an investment of €7.6 million under the Government's Shared Island Initiative and led by Fáilte Ireland, Tourism Ireland and Tourism Northern Ireland.

The objective of the collaboration is to enhance the visitor journey by integrating the Wild Atlantic Way and the Causeway Coastal Route to deliver internationally distinctive tourism products and visitor experiences on an all-island basis. As part of this programme, the Coast-to-Coast Capital Investment Scheme application process continued throughout 2025. Following a competitive open call, a total of €2.7 million was allocated under the Scheme to support the development and enhancement of existing visitor attractions across counties Donegal, Sligo and parts of Leitrim on the Wild Atlantic Way, as well as counties Derry and Antrim along the Causeway Coastal Route.

Business Events 2030 Strategy

Business travel has long been recognised as a key driver for economic growth. As one of the highest-yielding tourism segments, it contributes more than €1 billion to the economy annually, €290 million to the Exchequer, and supports 22,000 jobs.

In April, Minister Burke launched the Business Events 2030 Strategy, an ambitious strategy the purpose of which is to promote the development of Ireland's world-class business events sector and realise the full economic benefits of business events for Ireland. The strategy sets out a clear roadmap to drive an average annual revenue growth rate of 8% to 2030, benefitting the tourism ecosystem, our SMEs and local economies across the country. The strategy is a product of collaboration between the Department, Fáilte Ireland, Tourism Ireland, industry leaders from the tourism sector, and public bodies including IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, Universities of Ireland and the Institute of Public Health.

G20 Tourism Ministers' meeting

Minister Burke attended the G20 Tourism Ministers' meeting in Kruger National Park, South Africa in September. The G20 ministerial declaration released at the conclusion of the meeting underscored the importance of upholding multilateralism, with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals at the centre. The declaration underlined and reinforced the key role of the G20 in developing tourism globally as a powerful driver for delivering sustainable development, enhancing economic resilience, expanding employment and reducing poverty and inequalities.

Short-Term Letting and Tourism Bill

During 2025, Government approved the publication of the General Scheme of the new Short-Term Letting and Tourism Bill. The Bill aims to regulate the short-term letting sector in Ireland, ensuring that properties used for tourism are properly registered and comply with planning, building, and safety standards, while also addressing housing supply concerns in urban areas. It will give effect to EU Regulation 2024/1028 on data collection and sharing for short-term accommodation and amends the Tourist Traffic Acts 1939–2016. Fáilte Ireland is designated as the National Competent Authority to implement and manage the register.

Tourism Product Development

Capital Investment

Significant investment has been made in developing and maintaining the tourism offering by way of substantial exchequer funding across the country in programmes operated by Failte Ireland. Fáilte Ireland uses this funding to deliver innovative projects that will transform visitor experiences for Ireland's target markets while supporting jobs in the industry. Examples of projects completed during 2025 include "Platforms for Growth 2", a Fáilte Ireland National Capital Investment Scheme which aims to deliver best in class permanent water sports facilities in up to nineteen sites across Ireland, opening between 2025-2028. The first of these facilities was opened by Minister Burke in County Wexford. The Little Museum of Dublin was officially reopened in June 2025 following a €4.3 million redevelopment and restoration project. The project represents a major investment in Dublin's cultural infrastructure and was part funded by Fáilte Ireland. Fáilte Ireland, in partnership with Dublin City Council, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council, Fingal County Council, and Iarnród Éireann, also announced the extension of the Dublin Coastal Trail in 2025.

Festivals

Festivals offer an opportunity to showcase internationally Ireland's unique and rich cultural heritage in a fun and engaging way, while providing a significant economic boost to the relevant local communities. During 2025, the following initiatives were launched:

- Minister Burke announced funding under Fáilte Ireland's new "Home of Halloween" Pilot Destination Development Scheme. A total of €2.1 million will be invested over a three-year period to seven destinations, as part of the 'Ireland, Home of Halloween Strategy', which aims to establish Ireland as the authentic global home of Halloween;
- Fáilte Ireland awarded funding over three years to festivals under their "Strategic Tourism Festival Investment Scheme", with the aim of supporting nationally significant festivals with strong tourism impact; and,
- Funding was also awarded by Fáilte Ireland to 31 local authorities under the "2025 Regional Festivals Fund";

Digitisation

Fáilte Ireland continues to support digital development in tourism businesses, helping them improve customer engagement, operations and online performance. The Digital that Delivers programme provides structured support, funding and guidance to help enterprises adopt digital tools effectively. The programme has also sought to support participating businesses in improving web accessibility, helping to make information available in an appropriate manner. More than 600 businesses across visitor experiences, festivals and golf strengthened their digital capabilities through the programme since its inception.

Supporting Irish-based enterprise to start, scale and compete internationally

Small Business Unit

In 2025, the Small Business Unit was established in the Department fulfilling a key commitment in the Programme for Government. The Small Business Unit was established to:

- Strengthen the application of the SME Test, to ensure that perspectives of small businesses are considered across Government before new legislation or regulation is introduced;
- Oversee simplification and streamlining of information and access to grants and supports for businesses through the National Enterprise Hub; and,
- Ensure that the Local Enterprise Offices are properly resourced to help small businesses. The Small Business Unit and Enterprise Ireland have completed a comprehensive review of application requirements for each LEO grant, resulting in a significant reduction in the number of questions across multiple grant schemes.

National Enterprise Hub

Throughout 2025, access to grants and support programmes was significantly simplified through the utilisation of the National Enterprise Hub (NEH), hosted and operated by Enterprise Ireland. The NEH provides a single, centralised entry point to more than 250 business supports offered across 32 Government Departments and agencies. In 2025, over 12,000 SMEs engaged with the NEH. Since launch, more than 310,000 page views recorded, and year-on-year growth exceeding 125%. In 2025, user satisfaction remained high, with a Net Promoter Score of approximately 75% and partner satisfaction at 84%. This was supported by the rollout of key service enhancements, including a mobile-first platform, live chat, and an Irish-language version.

Enterprise Forum

Co-chaired by Minister Burke and the Secretary General, the Enterprise Forum met twice in 2025, and discussed topics such as the Programme for Government, trade agreements and tariffs, Ireland's Sustainable Development Goals and the Horizontal Single Market Strategy. As part of the Department's commitments under the new National Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People 2025-2030, a new subgroup of the Enterprise Forum will be established in 2026 on the employment of people with disabilities.

Cost of Business Advisory Forum

Complementary to the publication of the *Action Plan on Competitiveness and Productivity*, the Cost of Business Advisory Forum was first convened in June 2025 in fulfilment of a commitment in the Programme for Government. The Forum brings together various representative bodies spanning multiple sectors as well as SMEs. The purpose is to jointly consider those issues that can lead to higher costs for businesses in Ireland, any associated regulatory or infrastructural issues that merit a changed approach, and those steps that could be taken to mitigate these issues.

In 2025, the Advisory Forum completed the following thematic meetings:

- July: Public Utilities: Energy Costs and Security of Supply
- August: Professional Services: Insurance Costs
- September: Regulatory Burden: Infrastructural Delivery and Planning
- November: Public Utilities: Water Services
- December: Professional Services: Legal Costs

The work of the Forum will continue in 2026, with final meetings on Tax Administration and Regulation and Banking, Payments and Financial Services. The Forum will report to Government on its work in 2026.

Retail Forum

The Retail Forum, chaired by the Minister Dillon met three times in 2025 and considered:

- European Accessibility Act, Green Claims Directive, Balance For Better Business – Women in Leadership, Cost of Retail Payments Study (Central Bank of Ireland);
- Retail Crime, Cost of Business Advisory Forum, Budget 2026, Town Centre First Policy; and,
- Retail Crime, Action Plan on Competitiveness and Productivity, EU Deforestation Regulation.

Participation in EU and international SME Policy Committees

The Department is represented on the European Innovation Council (EIC) Forum which is supported and chaired by the European Commission Directorate-General for Research and Innovation. The Forum brings together representatives of Member States and Associated Countries' public authorities and bodies in charge of innovation policy and programmes. Its main role is to promote the coordination and dialogue on the development of the Union's innovation ecosystem and was established under Pillar III of Horizon Europe in 2021. The Forum meets up to four times a year. During 2025, along with the other Member States representatives, the Department contributed to a Forum 'Position Paper on the future European Innovation Act' that was published in December 2025.

Access to Finance and Finance for Scaling

Scaling Finance in Ireland Report

In July 2025, the Department published a report entitled '*Market Demand for and Supply of Scaling Finance in Ireland*' as part of its ongoing work to implement the recommendations of the Finance for Scale-ups Working Group. The report quantifies and describes the gap in finance for scaling companies in Ireland, examining both the supply and demand dimensions of the current ecosystem focusing on Equity Finance and deal sizes of €2 million to €50 million. This analysis is informing the development of detailed policy proposals for actions to address the gap.

Seed and Venture Capital Fund

The Seed and Venture Capital Scheme was established in 1994 and since then has invested €700 million to support and sustain national and regional innovation which, in turn, has leveraged €3.3 billion in private investment. It is funded through the Department and administered by Enterprise Ireland. The scheme's purpose is to increase the supply of risk capital to Irish SME start-ups and scale-ups, to support their growth, leverage private sector investment and establish a robust, commercially viable and sustainable venture capital sector in Ireland. By providing access to finance at the critical start-up phase, the scheme has also played a very important role in developing the pipeline of talent, innovation and high-growth Irish-owned companies.

In August 2024, a new 5-year cycle of the Seed and Venture Capital Scheme was announced with an increased allocation of €250 million to be committed over the lifetime of the Scheme (2025-29). The first open call for the current scheme closed in February 2025 and received a record number of applications, demonstrating that there is a high level of demand for finance to invest in Irish start-ups. Enterprise Ireland made its first commitments to the fund in Q4 of 2025. This will be followed by a period of further fundraising by the funds.

Microfinance Ireland

Microfinance Ireland (MFI) supplies small business loans through the Microenterprise Loan Fund. MFI provides business loans of €2,000 to €50,000 for commercially viable proposals and can consider applications from businesses that may have been declined a loan from their bank. In addition to financing, Microfinance Ireland offers post-approval mentoring services through the Local Enterprise Office network, helping businesses adapt to rising input costs and improve financial planning. Loans are widely distributed across the country, with over 78% approved outside Dublin. Since its establishment in 2012 to end December 2025, Microfinance Ireland has approved 6,105 loans valued at €105 million, supporting 12,071 jobs nationwide.

Growth and Sustainability Loan Scheme

The €500 million Growth and Sustainability Loan Scheme (GSLS) is a key Government support providing long term finance to SMEs, including farmers and fishers and small mid-caps. The scheme offers loans ranging from €25,000 to €3 million, with terms of up to ten years, and includes provision for up to €500,000 in unsecured lending, helping many businesses overcome collateral constraints when investing in their operations. At least 30% of lending is reserved for environmental sustainability projects, with an additional interest rate discount available to support energy efficiency upgrades, renewable energy solutions, and lower emission operations, while also reducing long term operating costs.

Demand for the scheme has been strong, with most participating lenders having largely utilised their existing allocations in 2025. The scheme is currently scheduled to close in June 2026. To ensure the continued availability of long-term, competitively priced finance for enterprises operating in sectors experiencing sustained input cost pressures, the Department is working to expand the GSLS and extend its closing date to June 2029.

Prompt Payments

In March, Government agreed the introduction of measures designed to achieve an improvement in prompt payments that will benefit SMEs that supply goods and services to public authorities and will also see savings for the Exchequer. As payments are made promptly, the amount of late payment interest and compensation will decrease. Timely cash flow is important to the business community and strengthening prompt payments is a practical way to support the SME sector. One of the key measures is the establishment of a cross-Department Prompt Payment Officer Network to champion prompt payments within each body and share information; those bodies with low payment performance are encouraged to make targeted improvements in overall performance.

Goal 4.

Provide the most competitive environment for the attraction and retention of inward investment at the cutting edge of innovation.



Broadening innovation capability

Smart Specialisation Strategy for Innovation 2022-2027

The National Smart Specialisation Strategy for Innovation 2022 to 2027 underpins €200 million worth of Ireland's European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) programmes overseen by this Department and the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science through Enterprise Ireland and Research Ireland respectively. The first *Smart Specialisation Progress Report* was published in March 2025, and the National Implementation Group partners have continued to advance Smart Specialisation, including through the ERDF programme implementation (see below), the Regional Enterprise Plans, and engagement with EU initiatives such as the Interregional Innovation Investments Instrument and Regional innovation Valleys.

ERDF Co-funded Research & Innovation Programmes

Technology Gateways

The Technology Gateway Programme is providing Technological Universities and Dundalk Institute of Technology with seventeen 'industry gateways', dedicated researchers and engineers who work with industry to articulate company problems in a manner that can be addressed by the established expert base in the Technological University. The Technology Gateways are working with companies of all sizes, offering innovation support and assistance to start-ups, High Potential Start Ups (HPSUs), SMEs, large indigenous and multinationals in a wide range of sectors.

KT Boost

The KT (Knowledge Transfer) Boost initiative has established a network of dedicated staff placed within the Technology Transfer Offices (TTOs) of Universities and Technological Universities to ensure that best use is made of research outputs with commercial potential. The initiative facilitates the transfer of research/technology to enterprise or commercialises it within the university and spins it out as a new start-up company.

Innovator's Initiative

The Innovators' Initiative is developing Ireland's innovative entrepreneurs and industry talent through four 'needs-led immersive training' programmes: BioInnovate for Medtech at the University of Galway; Cyber Innovate for Cybersecurity at Munster TU; DigiBio for Digital Health at Dundalk IT; and FAST-IP (Food and Agriculture Sustainable Technology Innovation Programme) at UCD in collaboration with Teagasc. The Initiative is based on expanding the BioInnovate Model (affiliated to Stanford Biodesign) to three new sectors and the first fifty participants under the Initiative completed the programmes in 2025.

Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund

The Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund (DTIF) invests in the development and deployment of disruptive technologies and applications on a commercial basis, drives collaboration between Ireland's world-class research base and industry, facilitates enterprises to compete directly for funding in support of the development and adoption of these technologies, and seeds a new wave of start-ups. Major innovation funding was delivered through DTIF in 2025. A total of €159 million was awarded to 27 projects under the 7th DTIF Call, comprising of €154 million awarded to 26

collaborative projects in 2025, together with one project awarded €4.5 million in 2024. These newly approved projects include advanced healthcare, AI, sustainability solutions and quantum.

Capital Equipment Fund

The Capital Equipment Fund, administered by Enterprise Ireland is designed to enhance the capabilities of our Technology Gateways and Centres through investment in new state-of-the-art research equipment and technologies cross key sectors. It is ensuring Irish based enterprises, particularly SMEs, can access world-class research infrastructure to accelerate product development and competitiveness. Investing in advanced equipment for Technology Centres and Gateways gives Irish based businesses the tools to turn ideas into market-ready solutions faster and with less risk. The results of two separate Calls under the fund were announced in 2025, and a total of just under €18 million in funding was approved towards seventeen projects.

European Digital Innovation Hubs (EDIHs)

In December 2025, €23 million in additional funding was announced for Ireland's four European Digital Innovation Hubs (EDIHs). By the end of 2025, the Hubs delivered over 3,000 services to more than 1,600 companies including over 1,300 SMEs and start-ups and approximately 300 Public Service Organisations. The EDIHs will continue working with SMEs, as well as public service bodies, to support their uptake of AI and other cutting edge digital technologies. Ireland's European Digital Innovation Hubs are supported by Enterprise Ireland and located in Dublin (CeADAR), Cork (ENTIRE), Mullingar (FactoryXChange) and Sligo (Data2Sustain). The additional funding will extend EDIH services, reinforcing national capacity to accelerate SME digitalisation and enable Ireland's progression into Phase 2 of the EDIH Programme (2026–2029).

Technology Centres

The EI/IDA Technology Centre Programme is a strategic pillar of Ireland's innovation infrastructure, designed to bridge the gap between academic research and commercial application, with a particular focus on SMEs. The Centres operate across strategic sectors: food and beverage, pharmaceuticals, medical devices, engineering, ICT, education/training, Artificial Intelligence, microelectronics and construction. Together, these Centres enable prototyping, validation, and commercialisation of research, driving innovation across multiple industries. In 2025, the nine Tech Centres brought in a total industry investment exceeding €20 million, up from €10.5 million in 2024, reinforcing their role as key conduits for enterprise–research collaboration.

Under the NDP review, an additional €50 million in funding will be provided over the next five years to scale the EI/IDA Technology Centre Programme. The focus of this scaling initiative is on IMR (Irish Manufacturing Research) in terms of advanced manufacturing and CeADAR on AI as two centres that can horizontally support all other Technology Centres/sectors. This investment will significantly strengthen the capacity of the Technology Centres to drive innovation and commercialisation in Irish and FDI industry, partnering industry with academia in collaborative research, with a stronger focus on SMEs.

Construction Sector Innovation

The Department is working with partners across Government through the implementation mechanisms under Housing for All and '*Delivering Homes, Building Communities*'. The Department works directly with the sector through the business development and enterprise innovation programmes administered by Enterprise Ireland to help drive increased levels of innovation and productivity in the sector. The Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) Leadership and Integration Group, led by the Department, met four times in 2025. The Group aims to promote a cross-Government approach to MMC adoption, and the Terms of Reference for the Group were amended to formalise regular industry attendance at meetings.

EI Support - Built to Innovate

Enterprise Ireland, through their Built to Innovate programme, delivers firm-level financial support for productivity enhancement and innovation in the domestic residential construction sector. Enterprise Ireland supports companies in the construction sector, including those who are involved in domestic residential construction, who wish to utilise Modern Methods of Construction, digital tools that can bring productivity benefits, and the implementation of lean training in both manufacturing and off-site environments.

Space

2025 saw sustained progress across policy development, improved industry capability, deepened international engagement, and increased investment. At the European Space Agency (ESA) Ministerial Council Meeting in November, Minister Dillon announced additional funding of €40 million, taking Ireland's overall investment to €170 million in European Space Agency (ESA) programmes up to 2030. This strengthening of national investment in space-related innovation is positioning Irish enterprises to compete in a rapidly expanding global sector.

By the end of 2025, 126 Irish-based enterprises had been awarded a contract with ESA, surpassing the target of 100 set out in the 2019–2025 National Space Strategy for Enterprise and reflecting sustained growth in Ireland's space industry. In 2025 ESA entered into 59 contracts, valued at €26.7 million, with Irish industry and researchers– the highest level of contracts and investment secured in any single year to date – providing a clear indicator of strength, capability and competitiveness of Ireland's space sector on the European stage. The Irish Space sector was further boosted by the establishment of an ESA Innovation Lab at Irish Manufacturing Research Technology Centre (Φ-Lab) in 2025 which will support Irish companies and researchers to lead on research, innovation and commercialisation of space technologies.

Silicon Island: Ireland's National Semiconductor Strategy

In May 2025, Minister Burke launched *Silicon Island: Ireland's National Semiconductor Strategy*, the State's first co-ordinated long-term plan to strengthen Ireland's position as a key hub in the European and global semiconductor industry. It was developed in response to global supply chain vulnerabilities, the rapid emergence of AI and quantum technologies, as well as to harness opportunities from the European Chips Act. The Strategy sets out actions to expand Ireland's semiconductor ecosystem comprising over 130 indigenous and foreign subsidiary companies and employing over 20,000 people. It will build on Ireland's already strong semiconductor ecosystem to foster a vibrant environment for start-ups, spin-outs, SMEs and MNCs; develop Ireland's skills pipeline to secure a steady supply of suitable talent; and identify and seize opportunities by strengthening our international collaboration while competing for investment.

The Department also advanced early implementation measures, including establishing the National Competence Centre for Semiconductors (I-C3), supporting Tyndall National Institute's participation in 3 EU pilot lines through over €70 million in national–EU co-funding, and progressing Ireland's involvement in Important Projects of Common European Interest. Ireland had already committed IDA grant-aid support to Analog Device's investment creating 500 additional jobs through its participation in an EU Important Project of Common European Interest.

Ireland's Chips Competence Centre (I-C3)

I-C3 was officially launched in Q4 2025 and will be an independent centre of semiconductor business and technology experts led by consortium partners Tyndall National Institute, MIDAS Ireland (the Microelectronics Industry Association), University College Dublin and the Microelectronic Circuits Centre Ireland (MCCI) - the EI-funded Technology Centre for Microelectronics. EI oversees the governance and management of the national budget of I-C3.

I-C3, one of 27 Chips Competence Centres across the EU, promotes the offerings of the Chips JU Pilot Lines and Design Platform to industrial partners across the semiconductor value chain in Ireland and the EU with a particular focus on the needs of SMEs, startups and academic spinouts, as well as facilitating access to training and funding advice.

Important Projects of Common European Interest (IPCEIs)

In December 2025, the Department issued a Call for Expressions of Interest for participation in the IPCEIs on Advanced Semiconductor Technologies, Artificial Intelligence Services, and the Compute Infrastructure Continuum with a closing date of February 2026. The Semiconductor IPCEI aims to strengthen Europe's leadership in emerging chip technologies, while the AI IPCEI focuses on building a next-generation ecosystem to accelerate industry adoption of advanced AI solutions. The objective of the Compute Infrastructure Consortium IPCEI is to develop a sovereign computing infrastructure in Europe, allowing for secure and confidential transfer and processing of mass data.

National Life Sciences Strategy

The Programme for Government set out a commitment to develop a National Life Sciences Strategy. In 2025, the Policy Unit to lead on the development of the Strategy was established in the Department. In October 2025, a public consultation was launched to support this strategy. 75 submissions were received from representatives across a number of sectors, the inputs of which are providing insights and perspectives on the Strategy.

The Department also supported a number of Life Science related developments at the EU level in 2025. Working with colleagues in the Department of Health several significant legislative proposals were advanced including the Critical Medicines Act (March 2025), Medical Devices Regulation and In Vitro Diagnostics Regulation (December 2025), and Biotech Act 1 (December 2025) and political agreement was reached on the EU Pharma Package (December 2025).

Intellectual Property Policy and legislative framework

At EU level, the Department has contributed to initiatives aimed at advancing Intellectual Property (IP) management policy and practices and the harmonisation of the IP legal framework across the Single Market. During 2025, the Department progressed the implementation of the EU Regulation providing geographical indication protections for craft and industrial products. The implementing legislation, to be set out in a Statutory Instrument, is expected to be finalised and published in H1 2026. The Department also progressed work on the transposition of the EU Design Directive into Irish law, the deadline for transposition is December 2027. The Directive updates the EU design acquis and provides for a more accessible, modern, and effective legal framework for the legal protection of industrial designs.

During 2025, substantive progress was made at EU level on the Patents Package. In December 2025, the regulation on compulsory licensing for crisis management, amending Regulation (EC) No 816/2006, was published in the Official Journal of the European Union. The agreed text emphasises the exceptional and last-resort nature of compulsory licensing, prioritises the use of voluntary

agreements, and includes safeguards relating to the protection of confidential information. Work also continued on the package of proposed Regulations reforming the supplementary protection certificate (SPC) framework, including the introduction of unitary SPCs and the recast SPC Regulations. These proposals remained under active consideration at Council working party level throughout 2025 and are expected to progress further in subsequent reporting periods.

The legislative process to enable Ireland's participation in the Unified Patent Court initially advanced in 2024 with the passage of the Forty-first Amendment of the Constitution (Agreement on a Unified Patent Court) Bill through Dáil Éireann. Following the formation of a new Government, the Bill was reinstated in Seanad Éireann in February 2025, where it remains at Committee Stage. Ratification of the UPC Agreement requires approval by referendum, the timing of which has yet to be determined by Government.

The Copyright and Related Rights (Amendment) Bill was published in June 2025. This Bill provides for the necessary amendments to the Copyright and Related Rights Act 2000 following a ruling of the Court of Justice of the European Union delivered in September 2020. The Bill passed the Committee Stage in Dáil Éireann in November 2025.

At international level, the Department engages with the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO), a UN organisation based in Geneva that promotes the protection of intellectual property rights internationally and provides a forum for discussing, presenting and addressing IP issues. During 2025, the Department's teams in Dublin and Geneva engaged with and represented Ireland at WIPO's various committees and General Assemblies.

Clustering

The *Action Plan on Competitiveness and Productivity* recognises business clustering as an important tool to drive innovation, attract global investment, promote international visibility and support place-based growth. In October the TCI Global Conference, was held in Ireland for the first time. The Conference was held on a cross-border basis and explored opportunities presented by global connectivity, all island collaboration and shared economy ambition and the role which collaboration through clusters can play. The International Impact Clustering Programme announced by An Taoiseach at the conference will be advanced by the Department through the provision of €2.3 million over the next six years to support the development and internationalisation of two initial pilot clusters Cyber Ireland and Advanced Technology in Manufacturing (ATIM) with an aim to scale towards five national clusters.

National Standards

In 2025, National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI) issued five new standards across a range of areas. Its Legal Metrology Service visited over 6,000 premises, with more than 21,000 instruments expected across sectors, while the National Metrology Laboratory completed 5,048 calibrations across industries. The NSAI also advanced the Defective Concrete Blocks (DCB) Review, progressing revisions to I.S. 465 (remediation) and S.R. 16 (aggregates), both reaching public consultation, with publication targeted for 2026. It launched a Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) Toolkit to support certification of innovative building systems, contributing to national housing strategies. NSAI also delivered specialised certification schemes for innovative, sustainable construction products, supporting compliance, innovation and environmental performance across the built environment.

Goal 5.
Provide measured, certain and innovation-friendly regulation for business, workers and consumers.



Cutting Red Tape

In October 2025, Minister Burke updated Government on the considerable progress the Department has made in reducing red tape and simplifying processes for small businesses. Key progress highlights included:

- **Grant simplification:** The newly established Small Business Unit has reviewed all Local Enterprise Office (LEO) grant schemes, resulting in a reduction of application questions, down 47% for Business Expansion Grants, 30% for the Green for Business Grant and 28% for the Feasibility Grant with further reductions targeted;
- **Once only' principle:** Work is underway to merge application processes across different grants, ensuring businesses only need to provide their data once;
- **Regulatory relief:** Minister Burke was among the first in Europe to sign regulations exempting 80% of small businesses from the scope of the EU Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive with a two-year delay granted to others pending further EU negotiations;
- **SME Test expansion:** In 2025, 33 SME Tests were applied across ten Government Departments. This compares to 26 SME Tests across eight Departments in 2024. These tests assess the impact of new legislation on small businesses and propose mitigation measures. This figure is expected to increase with all departments mandated to apply SME Tests for new policies. Since the establishment of the reporting framework in 2021, a total of 81 SME Tests have been applied across fourteen Government Departments and the Department will continue to work across Government to ensure the number of SME tests conducted grows year on year; and,
- **Listening to businesses:** The Department is actively engaging with stakeholders through the Enterprise and Retail Forums and the Cost of Business Advisory Forum to identify high-impact burdens and opportunities for reform.

Broader reform initiatives during 2025 included;

- **Digital transformation:** The Workplace Relations Commission implemented Robotic Process Automation to streamline complaint handling;
- **Business support access:** The National Enterprise Hub managed over 7,500 enquiries, simplifying access to over 250 supports from 29 departments and agencies;
- **Regulatory modernisation:** Updating to the Companies Act with the introduction of an updated audit exemption regime;
- **EU engagement:** The Department continues to shape EU policy through active participation in working groups, supporting simplification efforts such as the EU Startup and Scaleup Strategy and the forthcoming Digital Simplification Package; and,
- **EU simplification and burden reduction:** In 2025, the European Commission published ten Omnibus packages across a range of policy areas with a view to ensuring that obligations on business are proportionate. This included the Omnibus on Sustainability which amended the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive and Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive.

Promote responsible business practices and ensure that Ireland has a robust framework for regulating the export of controlled goods and enforcing sanctions

Inward Investment Screening

In line with Ireland's obligations under the EU Investment Screening Regulation, the Department is the National Contact Point for cooperation with the European Commission, and with Member States of the EU on investment screening matters. In 2025, the Department reviewed 74 notifications shared by other Member States via the cooperation mechanism where the transaction contained an Irish element.

The Screening of Third Country Transactions Act 2023 was commenced in January 2025 and provides the Minister with powers to protect security or public order from hostile actors acquiring ownership of, or influence over, businesses and assets to harm the State. In 2025, a total of 102 notifications were submitted under Section 9 of the Act and further details are provided for in the Screening of Third Country Transactions Act 2023 Annual Report published on the Department's website.

Control of Dual-Use and Military exports

The Department is the Competent Authority for National and EU Export Controls in respect of a range of sensitive goods, principally dual-use items and defence-related equipment. Export Controls form part of a global framework designed to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, to preserve regional stability and to protect human rights. In 2025, the Department maintained a strong focus on raising awareness among Irish exporters and other stakeholders of evolving national and EU export control requirements, reflecting regulatory updates and an increasingly complex global environment. In September, the Department hosted a webinar on export controls to mark one year since the commencement of the Control of Exports Act 2023. The most recent data for 2024 shows a total of 891 authorisations were granted for the export of dual-use and military items, with a combined maximum value of approximately €3.07 billion.

Export Control Enforcement

In 2025, authorised officers conducted fifty company audits, which were a mix of in person and virtual. The virtual audit being a new way of conducting audits that was legislated for in the Control of Exports Act, 2023. Authorised officers also took part in a webinar for exporters on the topic of export controls and presented on items such as open-source intelligence investigations and what to expect during an audit.

Responsible Business

The Forum chaired by Minister Smyth met in June and October and considered the EU's Omnibus I package and efforts to progress the Sustainable Development Goals. Throughout 2025 the Department continued to promote responsible business practices by maintaining a robust framework for the regulation of controlled goods and the enforcement of international sanctions.

In November, the Department launched a public consultation on the new Responsible Business Compass, an online pilot tool designed to help Irish businesses particularly SMEs understand and comply with emerging sustainability related EU Regulations and Directives. This initiative supports companies in getting ahead of evolving EU requirements, strengthening the resilience of their supply chains, and ensuring the delivery of responsibly sourced goods and services. The Compass

represents a significant step in equipping businesses with practical guidance to embed responsible business practices and meet growing expectations around sustainability, due diligence, and ethical trading.

Industrial Relations

Workplace Relations Commission (WRC)

In 2025, the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) celebrated the tenth anniversary of its establishment. The tenth anniversary events recognising that through the WRC's work, the Commission supports a workplace environment where rights are protected, responsibilities are understood, and disputes are resolved with independence, integrity, and respect.

Industrial relations were actively supported through the WRC's Conciliation Service where it achieved over 85% success rate in dispute resolution. Over 700,000 workers were encompassed in the resolution of industrial relations disputes in both the public and private sectors through the WRC's conciliation services. The year saw a substantial rise in complaint applications for adjudication in the WRC, with a 44% increase in applications received, while specific complaints rose by 28%. Consequently, there was a 30% increase in the number of adjudication files created. Notwithstanding, the WRC continued to deliver strong performance with the median timeframe from hearing to decision issuance standing at 39 working days, reflecting continued focus on timely decision making.

The WRC commenced an Organisation Capability and Efficiency Review to identify opportunities to strengthen the WRC's efficiency and effectiveness as demands on its services continue to grow. A Continuous Improvement Office (CIO) was established in the WRC in August 2025, marking a significant milestone in the WRC's organisational development. Its creation delivers on key recommendations of the Organisation Capability and Efficiency Review and aligns with the WRC's strategic ambition to build a modern, data-informed and agile organisation.

64,648 callers were helped by the WRC's Information and Customer Service staff providing information on employment, equality, or industrial relations matters. There were over 4.7-million-page views of the WRC's website in 2025, compared with 4.3 million in 2024. In 2025, 5,145 inspection cases were closed and of these, 1,775 were found to have contraventions of employment law. These cases involved 5,596 individual workplace inspection visits which uncovered 6,751 specific contraventions of legislation. The WRC Inspectorate recovered €1.6 million in unpaid wages in 2025.

Labour Court

The work of the Labour Court in industrial relations and employment rights promotes fairness and effective standards for enterprises and employees, promoting a harmonious industrial relations climate, contributing to making Ireland an attractive place for investment. The Labour Court received 992 appeals and referrals and scheduled 1,018 hearings. In 2025, the Court issued 361 recommendations/ determinations/ decisions and investigated eighteen appeals/referrals that were ultimately settled prior to the issue of a decision by the Court. 334 appeals to the Court were withdrawn in 2024.

Collective Bargaining

Ireland's Action Plan to Promote Collective Bargaining, published in November 2025, demonstrates the Government's clear commitment to strengthening the industrial relations framework and improving the quality of working life. A Technical Sub-Group of Labour Employer Economic

Forum (LEEF), consisting of officials from the Department and the Social Partners are working collaboratively to implement the Action Plan, with the aim of supporting evidence-based decision-making and informed policy development in relation to collective bargaining. At the heart of the Plan are 22 targeted actions, across five strategic pillars. These focus on strengthening the evidence base for collective bargaining, building capacity and awareness, promoting good practice, protecting rights, and reinforcing the key institutions that support our industrial relations system.

Employment Rights

Employment Law Review Group

In March, Minister Burke and Minister Dillon convened the inaugural meeting of the Employment Law Reform Group (ELRG) at which its work programme for 2025–2026 was agreed and published. The ELRG will conduct ongoing assessments of employment law, in accordance with the work programme, to ensure our legal framework is fit for purpose and adapts to changes in the evolving contemporary workplace. During the year, dedicated subgroups were established to progress the three substantive strands of work: the determination of employment status; a review of the Unfair Dismissals Acts 1977–2015; and a review of notice periods under the Minimum Notice and Terms of Employment Act 1973. The ELRG is now fully operational, with quarterly plenary sessions and regular subgroup meetings supporting delivery of the two-year programme. Four plenary meetings were held in 2025. The Group's first Annual Report, detailing its activities during 2025, is due to be submitted to the Minister in 2026.

Employment (Contractual Retirement Ages) Bill 2025

The Employment (Contractual Retirement Ages) Act 2025 was signed into law in December 2025. It will allow employees who do not consent to retire at their contractual retirement age to notify their employer that they intend to remain in their employment until they reach the State Pension Age (66). This is a significant step in helping to protect employees as they approach retirement. The Act implements a key commitment included in the Government's response to the Pensions Commission Recommendations and Implementation Plan and will be commenced in 2026.

Protection of Employees (Employers' Insolvency) (Amendment) Bill 2025

In May 2025, the Department published the Protection of Employees (Employers' Insolvency) (Amendment) Bill 2025. By the end of 2025, the Bill had completed Committee Stage in the Dáil. The Bill introduces changes to the Insolvency Payments Scheme, which protects employees' pay-related entitlements if their employer becomes insolvent. The Bill addresses the Glegola Supreme Court judgment by fully transposing Article 2(1) of Directive 2008/94/EC. It also makes various technical amendments to improve the operation of the Insolvency Payment Scheme.

European Communities (Organisation of Working Time)(Defence Forces) (Regulations) 2025

In January 2025, Minister Burke signed the Regulations to provide that the statutory protection of the Organisation of Working Time Act is now applied to members of the Defence Forces. Due to their specific nature, a number of military activities are now exempt from the provisions of the Act. The application of the Organisation of Working Time Act across the Defence Forces is an important measure which ensures that health and safety protections as prescribed in the Working Time Directive are afforded to its members.

Remote working

The right to request a remote working arrangement came into force for all employees in March 2024. This right is provided for within Part 3 of the Work Life Balance Act and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023. As required by Section 29 of the Act, a legislative review of the operation of the remote working provisions was commenced in November 2025. The review process comprised four key strands of research including a public consultation with over 8,000 responses; a nationally representative employer and employee survey; engagement with the Workplace Relations Commission and employer and employee representatives; and engagement with the Minister for Children, Disability and Equality. In 2026, the Department will progress measures to further improve the effectiveness and uptake of the legislation, including greater awareness and guidance, to underpin the Government's continued support for a balanced approach to remote working which benefits employees, employers and communities.

Employment Regulation Orders

In 2025, Minister Dillon approved new Employment Regulation Orders (EROs) covering workers in the security, early years' service, and the contract cleaning industries. These orders strengthen working conditions by setting the statutory minimum rates of pay and conditions for the relevant sectors. They also provide greater clarity and certainty for both workers and employers and support a more stable and sustainable workforce in these essential services. The Early Years ERO applies to approximately 35,000 staff in the Early Years and School-Age Childcare sector. Alongside this ERO, an additional €45 million in ring-fenced Core Funding will be provided by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality to support early learning and care services in meeting the increased cost of minimum pay rates in the sector. The Security ERO provides for an increase in the minimum rate of pay for an adult worker in the sector from €14.50 to €15.41 per hour. The Contract Cleaning ERO provides for an increase of €14.80 per hour for workers in the sector from 1 January 2026 onwards.

National Minimum Wage and Low Pay Commission

During 2025, the Low Pay Commission (LPC) continued its statutory role in advising on the National Minimum Wage, providing evidence-based recommendations to the Minister. In line with the Commission's 2025 report, Government accepted the recommendation to increase the National Minimum Wage from €13.50 to €14.15, effective of 1 January 2026, with proportionate adjustments to youth rates.

Health and Safety Authority

In 2025, the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) delivered a broad programme of regulatory activity, including 11,834 risk-based inspections across occupational health and safety, chemicals and market surveillance. Its programme combined inspections, investigations and targeted interventions, focusing on high-risk sectors and emerging hazards while supporting compliance and improved understanding of obligations. The HSA continued to expand supports, with 24,497 new BeSMART.ie users and 83,234 e-learning courses delivered. The Farm Safety Partnership Advisory Committee also launched an Action Plan to improve safety culture and reduce injuries and fatalities, supported by targeted campaigns and engagement, including at the National Ploughing Championships.

Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Quarries) Regulations 2025

The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Quarries) Regulations 2025 were formally signed into law in September 2025 to take effect on 1 January 2026, strengthening protections for workers in the quarrying sector by improving safeguards around the use of explosives, simplifying compliance processes, and enabling more efficient regulatory oversight.

Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Exposure to Asbestos) (Amendment) Regulations 2025

These regulations transpose Directive (EU) 2023/2668 on the protection of workers from exposure to asbestos at work. The regulations were signed into law by Minister Dillon in December, increasing the protection of workers from occupational disease and illness. As part of the transposition, the HSA published the 2025 Code of Practice for the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Exposure to Asbestos) Regulations, 2006-2025.

Chemicals Policy

The Department led the Irish position on EU Chemicals files throughout 2025, including the Action Plan on Chemicals. This Action Plan includes proposals on a Basic Regulation for the European Chemicals Agency, the sixth revision of the Carcinogens, Mutagens and Reprotoxic Substances Directive and the EU's simplification omnibuses. These proposals will continue to improve the protection of human health and the environment. The Department also engaged with colleagues across Government on the new requirements introduced by the EU's One Substance, One Assessment legislative package.

Throughout 2025, the Department continued to engage with stakeholders on the proposed universal restriction on all uses of Per- and Polyfluorinated Substances (PFAS) in the EU, keeping them informed of the progress of the proposal. The Department has continued to encourage stakeholders to engage with all EU consultations, which will help to ensure that the final restriction proposal will be balanced and implementable.

Competition and Consumer Protection

State of Competition in Ireland Report

In December, Minister Burke received the Competition and Consumer Protection's (CCPC's) *State of Competition in Ireland Report* which provides insights into the non-financial services sector and the Commission has a series of initiatives underway to address concerns in terms of market concentration, collusion and barriers to entry.

Consumer Protection

Consumer protection remained a core focus for the Department in 2025, reflecting its central role in maintaining trust in markets and supporting a well-functioning economy. Progress during the year included strengthening the mandate and capacity of the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission, advancing legislative reform to enhance enforcement and sanctions, and ensuring Ireland's consumer protection framework remains responsive to digitalisation, cross-border e-commerce and evolving EU requirements. This work complements broader market surveillance efforts and supports fair competition, high standards of consumer safety and confidence across the Single Market.

Market Surveillance

The Department also advanced work to ensure Ireland's market surveillance and enforcement systems remain robust and responsive in the context of digitalisation, cross-border e-commerce and evolving EU product safety and consumer protection legislation. In 2025, the Department coordinated the National Market Surveillance Strategy 2025–2028 in its role as Ireland's Single Liaison Office. The Strategy sets out a coordinated, risk-based approach to ensuring that products placed on the Irish market comply with EU legislation and meet high standards of safety, health, environmental protection and consumer confidence. It strengthens cooperation across Ireland's nineteen Market Surveillance Authorities, enhances oversight of online marketplaces, supports increased use of EU information systems, and positions Ireland to address emerging challenges arising from e-commerce, AI-enabled products and new EU regulatory frameworks.

Competition and Consumer Protection Commission

In November 2025, Minister Burke updated Government on the progress relating to strengthening the mandate of the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC). This initiative forms part of commitments under the Programme for Government and the *Action Plan on Competitiveness and Productivity*. As part of this work the Department worked closely with the CCPC to strengthen its mandate through the addition to and enhancement of its senior leadership team. In parallel, the Department is reviewing the legislative framework governing consumer protection fines. Future penalties are expected to align with those applicable to competition law infringements, ensuring greater consistency and impact across the regulatory landscape. A public consultation on the Consumer Protection, Competition and Enforcement Bill 2026 was launched in December 2025 to seek views on proposals to strengthen consumer rights and enforcement.

In 2025, the CCPC moved to operationalise Ireland's new administrative competition adjudication regime, marking a significant shift in how competition law is enforced. Building on the Competition (Amendment) Act 2022, the regime empowers the CCPC, through independent adjudication officers and subject to court oversight, to determine infringements of EU and Irish competition law and to impose non-criminal financial sanctions of up to €10 million or 10% of an undertaking's worldwide turnover. During 2025, the institutional framework for this system was put in place, including the appointment of a Chief Adjudication Officer and a panel of adjudication officers, alongside the launch of public consultations on detailed rules for oral hearings and guidelines governing adjudication proceedings.

Insurance Reform

In July, the Government published its new '*Action Plan for Insurance Reform 2025-2029 – A Stronger Market, a Fairer Future*'. The Action Plan lists 26 actions (including ten priority actions) focusing on legal reforms, fraud reduction and enhanced competition, led across a range of Government Departments to improve the availability and affordability of insurance. Eleven of the actions relate to the work of this Department and its agencies as part of a cross-Government approach. The Cabinet Committee Sub-Group on Insurance Reform, chaired by the Tánaiste and of which Minister Burke and Minister Smyth are members, meets on ongoing basis to drive the implementation of the Action Plan.

Personal Injuries Resolution Board

Throughout 2025, the Personal Injuries Resolution Board model continued to deliver major benefits by providing a low-cost, quick and fair option in injury compensation. 2025 marked the first full year that the new mediation service was available across all streams of claims, to include workplace accident claims, claims for accidents in public spaces and motor accident acclaims. In October Minister Burke published an independent report *Review of compensation for Minor Soft Tissue Injuries in Ireland* and the UK. The research provides necessary and relevant information to support a review of the Personal Injuries Guidelines as provided for in the Government's Action Plan on Insurance Reform.

Company Law

Updated audit exemption

In July 2025, with the commencement of section 22 of the Companies (Corporate Governance, Enforcement and Regulatory Provisions) Act 2024, an updated audit exemption regime was introduced. Small and micro sized companies will no longer automatically lose the privilege of an audit exemption on a first occasion, in a five-year period, of late filling of an annual return with the Companies Registration Office (CRO). The new regime will ease the burden on small and micro sized companies, reducing paperwork and regulatory obligations on our SME sector, while maintaining a proportionate penalty regime to reflect the importance of timely filing of annual returns with the CRO.

EU Company Law

Throughout 2025, the Department continued to work intensively at EU level on harmonisation of various aspects of EU company law, in order to boost the competitiveness of the EU Single Market. This included work on the negotiation or progressing transposition of EU Directives on multiple-vote share structures, upgrading digital company law, amendments to sustainability reporting and due diligence rules, and insolvency.

Company Law Review Group

The Company Law Review Group (CLRG) is a statutory advisory body established to advise the Minister on the review and development of company law in Ireland. The CLRG met in Plenary session four times in 2025 and progressed work programme items in its Insolvency Committee, Enforcement Committee and Corporate Governance Committee, including two formal reports which have been submitted to the Minister.

Corporate Enforcement Authority

In December 2025, the Authority published its Strategy for the period 2026-2028 which sets out a mission to promote and serve the public interest by ensuring high levels of compliance with company law through effective advocacy and proportionate, robust, and dissuasive enforcement. Following Ministerial approval, sanction was obtained to appoint two new members to the CEA. A recruitment competition was subsequently conducted by the Public Appointments Service (PAS) and closed in December 2025.

Co-operative legislation

The Co-operative Societies Bill provides for the most far-reaching reform of the legislation governing co-operatives in the history of the State. Drafting of this Bill was nearing completion at year end.

Companies Registration Office

The Companies Registration Office (CRO) reported 340,693 total Irish companies registered by the end of 2025, alongside 579,316 total submissions filed throughout the year. Over 95% of all documents filed with CRO were filed electronically. The number of new companies incorporated continued to significantly exceed the number of companies leaving the register. This has been the case for some years, although the impact was amplified by the lengthy suspension of involuntary strike offs for failure to file annual returns. The recommencement of involuntary strike offs from early 2026 should reduce the excess of new incorporations over strike offs in future years.

Register of Beneficial Ownership

The Central Register of Beneficial Ownership is continuing to accept filings and by the end of 2025, 294,541 (89.18%) of companies and 695 societies (77.65%) had filed beneficial ownership information with the register. A total of 84,298 submissions were received in 2025.

Register of Friendly Societies

At the end of 2025, there were 920 industrial and provident societies, 46 friendly societies and 46 trade unions on the register, making a combined total of 1012 registered entities. As such, 2025 saw a decrease of 44 in the number of societies/trade unions on the register compared to the end of 2024.

Goal 6.
Advocate Ireland's values and strengthen our relationship and influence with the EU and international partners.



Change in Department's trade responsibilities

In line with the Programme for Government, responsibility for matters of trade policy and negotiation, representation at the World Trade Organisation and cross-Government coordination of Ireland's international trade policy transferred to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in 2025. This Department remains responsible for matters of trade promotion and development, on economic security, and engagement with the European Union on those aspects of the European Union's Common Commercial Policy that relate to the commercial aspects of intellectual property, foreign direct investment, or export policy, functions under the Screening of Third Country Transactions Act 2023, outbound investment related policy matters and export controls and export licensing, including functions under the Control of Exports Act 2023 and related policy matters.

EU Single Market

The Programme for Government committed to working to deepen the EU Single Market, while the Action Plan for Competitiveness and Productivity called for a reduction in all remaining barriers to a fully functioning Single Market for goods and services, with a view to reducing trade costs and increasing the benefits of scale across the EU. In 2025, Ireland joined with like- minded Member States on a non-paper on the Single Market Strategy, which set out this grouping's collective priorities and recommended actions for removing barriers and deepening the Single Market. These priorities were generally reflected in the Single Market Strategy, across its pillars of the most impactful Single Market Barriers, boosting European Services Markets, enabling SMEs, digitalisation and enforcing respect for Single Market rules.

In May 2025, the European Commission published a strategy for deepening the EU's Single Market. This strategy aims at addressing barriers to the free movement of goods, services and people within the EU's Single Market, which is identified as one of the key enablers of European competitiveness. Following its publication the Department worked to support the implementation of the Single Market Strategy across a range of EU fora, including the Single Market Enforcement Taskforce, the Working Party on Competitiveness and Growth (Internal Market), the High-Level Group on Competitiveness and Growth and the Ministerial level Competitiveness Council. This included discussions around the governance of the Strategy, its monitoring, digitalisation of the Single Market and how to address prominent Single Market barriers.

The Department worked across Government to increase awareness of the strategy and Ireland's Single Market obligations more generally, with a view to enhancing Ireland's compliance with and application of Single Market rules. This included ongoing compliance with the Services and Single Market Transparency directives, to enhance Ireland's administrative capacity to implement and improve the Single Markets in Services, as well for industrially manufactured and agricultural products and information society services.

The Department continued to manage Ireland's SOLVIT centre. SOLVIT is an informal problem-solving network, with centres in each EEA Country, which works to assist citizens and businesses when they have been denied their Single Market rights. Ireland's SOLVIT Centre achieved an 80% case resolution rate when acting as lead centre in 2025.

European Competitiveness Fund

The European Competitiveness Fund (ECF), worth €409 billion over the period 2028-2034, aims to simplify and accelerate EU funding and catalyse private and public investment in strategic technologies, as recommended in the Letta and Draghi Reports. The desired result is a rethinking of how the EU budget funds competitiveness while becoming simpler, policy-driven and delivering more impact. Since the proposal was published on 25 July 2025, Ireland has advocated for a strengthened role for Member States and for making funding more responsive to companies' needs, in particular through a greater focus on SMEs and greater clarity on supports for scale-ups, making it easier for business to navigate EU funding opportunities.

Market Diversification

Action Plan on Market Diversification

Published in August 2025, the *Action Plan on Market Diversification* was developed jointly by this Department and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The Plan is a whole-of-Government initiative designed to bolster Ireland's economic resilience and expand global trade opportunities for Irish businesses. It sets out a path to assist and support Ireland's businesses – large and small – to adapt to a new trading environment by striking out into new and diverse markets and deepening their engagement in existing markets. It comprises more than 100 actions designed to reduce over-concentration in key markets and deepen opportunities in high growth-regions. A first progress report will be published in 2026.

Joint Economic Commissions (JECs)

Joint Economic Commissions provide a forum for officials facilitate dialogue across a range of economic, trade, investment, innovation and science and technology fields. Ireland currently maintains active JECs with China, Saudi Arabia and the Republic of Korea. In April 2025, a Memorandum of Understanding between Ireland and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) was signed on new Joint Economic Commission. December saw Ireland lead its delegation to the inaugural Ireland-UAE JEC, covering trade, investment, advanced technology, finance, tourism, transport and agri-food.

The 14th Ireland-China Joint Economic Commission (JEC) meeting, hosted by Minister Burke in Dublin took place in November 2025. Agriculture and food were identified as priority areas for enhanced cooperation, with Ireland outlining recent progress and opportunities for knowledge exchange including the Knowledge Transfer Programme, which supports innovation and best practice sharing. Discussions on trade in services and export controls reflected the evolving global landscape, with both sides acknowledging the importance of regulatory clarity and cooperation. Ireland also outlined its competitive business environment and highlighted the new Ireland for Finance Strategy, which positions the country as a leading global hub for financial services.

Trade Missions

As part of the Government's programme of international engagement for St Patrick's Day 2025 Minister Burke travelled to the United States for a series of engagements in Boston and Concord to mark St Patrick's Day. Minister Burke met with EI and IDA client companies during his time in New England. As part of the Government's programme of bilateral engagements Minister Smyth travelled to Finland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia and Minister Dillon travelled to Vancouver and Salt Lake City, and the Secretary General was part of the Irish delegation to Washington DC.

US Midwest

US companies employ over 210,000 people in Ireland and our value proposition to companies looking to do business here or expand continues to be strong, with companies based here having access to the European market of 450 million customers. Minister Burke led a four-day US Midwest trade and investment mission in May 2025. This was the largest ever delegation of Irish companies to Select USA, the US Government-backed FDI summit. During this trade mission the Minister strengthened our trade links, promoting and advocating the value of our two-way trade relationship with some of our most important transatlantic businesses.

US West Coast

In September, Minister Burke embarked on a joint IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland trade and investment mission to the USA. The Minister met with some of IDA's largest clients in the technology sector in Seattle, Silicon Valley and San Francisco. During the Trade Mission the Minister opened IDA Ireland's new Palo Alto office providing the IDA with a permanent base in Silicon Valley - one of the world's most dynamic innovation hubs.

Japan

Aligned with the Market Diversification Strategy, in June a Trade and Investment Mission to Japan took place reflecting the strong commitment by the Irish Government to expanding both Investment and Trade with Japan. Minister Burke engaged with dozens of major corporations to highlight Ireland's global position as a stable location for investment, as well as helping Irish companies to build, scale and expand in this region.

Scotland

In May, Minister Smyth visited Scotland for the opening of the new Enterprise Ireland UK Glasgow Office. The opening of this office is an important development in Irish-Scottish trade links with over 300 EI client companies already exporting to Scotland. Minister Smyth's visit also included a meeting with Minister Lochhead to discuss bilateral economic cooperation, international trade challenges and developing sectors such as AI and Quantum computing.

Sweden

Minister Dillon led an Enterprise Ireland trade mission to Sweden with fifty EI client companies in September. The Nordic region is EI's fastest growing export region with client exports reaching €2.1 billion in 2024, up 24% on 2023. Sweden is now the sixth largest export market globally for EI-supported companies with client exports to Sweden surpassing €1billion for the first time in 2024, underscoring the growing strategic importance of this market for Irish business.

Germany

Minister Smyth led a trade mission to Germany in October. Part of the trade mission involved a number of Enterprise Ireland client companies announcing major new contracts and expansion in Germany, underscoring their role in driving technological advancements. Trade between Ireland and Germany exceeds €60 billion annually and Germany is Ireland's third-largest export market. Irish companies now employ over 40,000 people in Germany, and German firms support 15,000 jobs in Ireland across sectors such as technology, life sciences and financial services.

Canada

In November 2025, Minister Peter Burke led a major four day Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland trade mission to Toronto and Ottawa to boost trade. The visit marked a significant step in deepening the economic relationship, coming after a record high in Irish exports to Canada in 2024 a record €585 million. The mission focused on technology, financial services, and life sciences, featuring over thirty Irish companies aiming to expand into the Canadian market.

World Economic Forum

In January 2025, Minister Burke represented Ireland at World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland leading IDA engagement with global CEOs of existing multinationals already in Ireland, as well as meet with CEOs of potential future FDI companies and international leaders.

Small Advanced Economies Initiative

The Small Advanced Economies Initiative aims to enhance the scientific and technological capabilities of small, advanced economies by sharing knowledge and best practices. The Initiative focuses on three key areas: Science and Innovation, Economic Policy and Foreign Affairs and Trade. In November the Department hosted the Principals Meeting on the theme: Adapting to Structural Change in the Global Economy: the 4Ds: Deglobalisation, Digitalisation, Decarbonisation and Deregulation.

Market Access Day

In April, the Department hosted a Market Access Day in Dublin, in conjunction with the European Commission and DG Trade. Access2Markets is an online portal that provides exporters with the information they need when trading with third countries including on tariffs, taxes, procedures, formalities and requirements, rules of origin, export measures, statistics, trade barriers and more. It also provides key information required for trade in services along with investment and procurement in third countries. There is extensive information available on EU trade agreements, how to benefit from them along with illustrative examples of companies using them successfully.

Trade Horizons Conference 2025

The Africa Ireland Trade Horizons took place in Dublin in June and brought together leaders, policy makers and business representatives from Ireland and across Africa to explore opportunities for trade investment and collaboration. The event was hosted by this Department and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, with the opening address delivered by Minister Smyth.

EPSCO Council

Following an interdepartmental transfer of functions in early 2025, lead responsibility at a domestic level for coordinating engagement at the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO) transferred from the Department to the Department of Social Protection. The Department continues to play a key role in this Council formation, with particular focus on leading on employment related files at EPSCO areas given its focus on labour market policies, job creation and improving working conditions.

During 2025, the EPSCO Council considered a wide range of issues and a number of legislative files in line with the respective priorities of the Polish and Danish Presidencies of the Council of the European Union. These included the Directive on improving and enforcing working conditions of trainees and combating regular employment relationships disguised as traineeships ('Traineeships Directive') and the Revision of Directive 2004/37/EC on carcinogens, mutagens and reprotoxic substances at work. The Department's preparation for Irelands' Presidency of the Council of the EU continued throughout the year through engagement with key stakeholders such as the European Commission, Council Secretariat, and Social Partners, with this Department leading Ireland's engagement at the EU Tripartite Social Summit

Council of Europe

The Department continued to represent Ireland at meetings of the Council of Europe's Governmental Committee in 2025, with meetings taking place in May and November where reform of the European Social Charter and the situation regarding the submission of national reports was considered. The Department submitted Irelands national report to the Council of Europe in December 2025. In addition, the Department submitted a report in March 2025 relating to the provisions of the Charter which have not yet been accepted by Ireland: Article 21 – Right to Information and Consultation and Article 31 – Right to Housing.

International Labour Organisation

The Department leads on Ireland's engagement with the International Labour Organisation (ILO), a specialist UN agency which deals with labour market issues. The Department is responsible for the ratification of labour standards and reporting to the ILO on their application in Ireland. In 2025, the Department represented Ireland at the ILO Governing Body sessions in March and November, and in June led a tripartite delegation to the 113th International Labour Conference. At the Conference, Department officials actively engaged in the agreement of a new standard on protection against biological hazards in the working environment and commenced working on a new standard for decent work in the platform economy.

G20 Employment Working Group

The Department participated in the G20 Employment Working Group in South Africa with the Labour and Employment Ministerial Meeting (LEMM) being held there in July 2025. Minster Dillon attended the LEMM the output of which was a Ministerial declaration including the Nelson Mandela Bay G20 Youth Target and the Brisbane-eThekwini Goal. These targets aim to reduce the share of young people who are most of risk of being permanently left behind by the labour market and to reduce gender gaps in labour force participation. Minister Dillon formally announced Ireland's accession to Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC) at the LEMM. EPIC is a multi-stakeholder initiative, supported by a secretariat composed of the ILO, UN Women and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), working to reduce the gender pay gap at global, regional and national levels.

Platform Work

The EU Platform Work Directive (PWD) entered into force in December 2024, with a transposition deadline of December 2026. The Directive is a substantial and wide-ranging instrument, addressing employment status, algorithmic management, reporting, health and safety, information and consultation, and access to redress. Given the breadth of its scope, effective implementation requires coordinated input across multiple Government Departments, agencies, and regulatory bodies. During 2025, the Department engaged key stakeholders to build a shared understanding of the Directive's obligations and to identify the legislative and operational changes required. Through the Department Ireland is also actively participating in the ILO's standard-setting process to develop a Convention and Recommendation on Decent Work in the Platform Economy.

European Works Council

The revised European Works Councils Directive was adopted in late 2025, published in the Official Journal in December 2025, and entered into force on 31 December 2025, with a transposition deadline of 1 January 2028. The revised Directive modernises the EU framework for transnational information and consultation in large multinational undertakings. With the Directive now in force, the Department has begun preparations for national transposition.

Corporate Services Strategy:
Building an innovative, inclusive and agile Department with a strong public service ethos driving effective and responsible policy implementation.

In support of the Departments *Statement of Strategy 2025-2028*, a Corporate Services Strategy ('*Connected for Success*') was published in October 2025. The Strategy draws together the strategic goals of the Corporate Services Division teams under four core areas: collaboration and connection, modernisation and future-focus, leadership and workforce development, and governance and safeguarding.

Corporate Governance and Oversight

In 2025, the Department updated and published the Governance Framework which provides assurance that good governance policies and practices are embedded in the Department. It sets out what we mean by governance, why it is important, how the Department does its work and how it operates to deliver on its mandate and functions. It ensures that the way the Department takes decisions and implements policies is transparent to the public and to the staff within the Department. An external audit of the Department's governance framework commenced in Q4, 2025.

The Department's report on Protected Disclosures received for the year ending 31 December 2025 was published in February 2026. During the period 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2025, five protected disclosures were received.

To support effective oversight and delivery, Oversight and Performance Delivery Agreements were signed between the Department and Agencies under our aegis with Memoranda of Understanding signed with the Offices. The Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies 2016 sets out the requirement to undertake Periodic Critical Reviews (PCRs) of Non-Commercial State Bodies. In 2025, the Department completed a PCR of the Irish Auditing and Accounting Supervisory Authority. A PCR of the Personal Injuries Resolution Board will be undertaken in 2026 and of the National Standards Authority of Ireland in 2027.

Pro-enterprise Measures in Budget 2026

As part of Budget 2026 the Department secured significant Pro-Enterprise Tax Measures totalling €1 billion benefit to business in a full year. Pro-enterprise measures secured as part of Budget 2026 included:

- Hospitality VAT rate reduction from 13.5% to 9%, effective 1 July 2026;
- R&D Tax Credit increase from 30% to 35%;
- Capital Gains Tax revised, Entrepreneur Relief lifetime limit threshold on qualifying gains increased from €1 million to €1.5 million, at a rate of 10%, one of the most substantial changes to this relief since its introduction in 2016;

- €0.65 per hour increase in the National Minimum Wage, effective 1 January 2026. This represents a 4.8% increase and will directly affect over 201,000 workers earning the National Minimum Wage; and,
- Enhancements to the Digital Games Tax Credit. This is a relief for the digital gaming sector that can be claimed on costs incurred in development.

The Revised Estimates 2025 provided the Department with a gross allocation of €1.3 billion for use in 2025. This allocation reflected the full year funding in respect of the trade and related functions transferred to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (€6.5 million) and the Tourism functions transferred from the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media (€243 million).

The Department also had a Supplementary Estimate which was approved by the Dáil in December 2025. The Supplementary Estimate was technical in nature involving the redistribution of monies already voted to the Department. The Supplementary redistributed a total of €34.2 million in savings to meet priority funding requirements in the National Standards Authority of Ireland, the Temporary Partial Credit Guarantee Scheme, the Humanitarian Relief Scheme, Microfinance Ireland and subscriptions to International Memberships, namely the European Space Agency Programme.

The updated National Development Plan (NDP), which was published in July, provides the Department with an exchequer funding envelope of €3.68 billion to support the Department's priority capital programmes/projects in the period 2026-2030. Along with the use of income generated by some of the Department's Agencies the department will spend up to €4.7 billion in capital investment over the next 5 years to strengthen Ireland's enterprise and employment base, attract foreign direct investment, promote innovation and support tourism development across all regions. Key allocations are going to:

- **Helping enterprise to start, grow and scale:** €1.12 billion: Supporting indigenous businesses through Enterprise Ireland grants (€355 million), Local Enterprise and Regional Development (€350 million), Seed and Venture Capital Programme (€250 million), and a new Scaling Fund for Irish SMEs (€100 million);
- **Attracting and sustaining inward investment:** €1.29 billion: Investment through IDA Ireland, including €500 million for regional property solutions and €100 million for Next Generation Sites to secure large-scale advanced manufacturing projects;
- **Tourism development and promotion:** €400 million: Delivering the new tourism policy 'A New Era for Irish Tourism', including €77 million for overseas marketing and €200 million for product development;
- **Enterprise innovation and commercialisation:** €1.33 billion: Funding of €190 million for Technology Centres, €196 million for the Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund, €170 million for the European Space Agency Programme and €120 million for Important Projects of Common European Interest (IPCEI); and,
- **Enterprise decarbonisation: €300 million:** Supporting industry to reduce emissions and transition to low-carbon operations.

The Department's 2024 Appropriation Account was published in the Comptroller Auditor General's 2025 Report and received a clear audit opinion.

Corporate Procurement

The Department's 2025 Corporate Procurement Plan was published in September 2025 and sets out how the Department is committed to best practice in all procurement activities throughout the Department and its Offices. The objectives of the plan are focused on ensuring compliance with procurement legal requirements, adherence to procurement policies, embedding transparency and accountability in procurement practices, supporting SMEs, improving risk management assessments, addressing Ireland's climate action obligations, informing staff how procurement should be developed and delivering excellence in overall procurement outcomes.

Culture, Values and Innovation

In 2025, the Department's Organisation Culture team published our first Culture and Values Action Plan which included the formal unveiling of our five core values (Collaboration, Commitment, Innovation, Integrity and Respect). The team also launched a renewed Innovation Partnership Programme with UCD Innovation Academy, offering bespoke innovation workshops, AI training and a 6-month leadership programme to all staff. The team continued to deliver a range of in person corporate events such as a second All Staff Conference which took place in Dublin Castle, new entrant events with the Secretary General, grade specific seminars and Connected Steering group meetings complemented by three staff focus groups on the new values. Further implementation of the Culture and Values Action Plan continues to be a key focus for the unit in 2026.

Organisational Capability Review

In September 2025, the Department commenced its second Organisational Capability Review (OCR) facilitated by colleagues in the Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation. This pilot OCR is a future focused assessment of the Department's ability to deliver on strategic objectives and Government commitments, undertaken through extensive engagement with staff at all levels, senior management, agencies and external stakeholders.

Human Resources and Workforce Planning

Numbers serving in the Department increased to 1079.75 full-time equivalents at the end of 2025, an increase from 1015.78 full-time equivalents at the end of 2024. Within this increase, the Department received 24 staff following the transfer of the Tourism function, while sixteen staff transferred out of the Department as part of the transfer of Trade policy responsibilities to the Department of Foreign Affairs.

Throughout 2025, natural attrition, additional resources and promotional opportunities accounted for a significant churn of staff during the year with 176 new joiners, 119 exits (including 25 retirements), 103 Internal transfers, and 64 promotions.

The Department continued to operate in a very tight labour market. Regular engagement with Publicjobs was undertaken to recruit general grades and some specialist posts, alongside the use of the Department's recruitment licence to meet specific staffing requirements.

The Department undertook formal workforce planning engagements with the Management Board on two separate occasions during 2025, which informed learning and development initiatives, organisation design and increased resources in areas where the department's mandate continues to grow (digital, climate, economic security and other areas). The Department continued to support the Department of Justice during 2025 in response to Ireland's ongoing assistance for those impacted by the war in Ukraine. Two staff remained on secondment in support of providing this valuable public service.

HR Unit works closely with policy units and colleagues in the Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation to ensure adequate support for staffing in its nine agencies, including Fáilte Ireland which came under the Department's remit in 2025, and assignments to the State Boards under its aegis. 112 requests were processed in 2025 to deal with the filling and establishment of new posts for State Agencies, while work was undertaken to fill seventeen appointments and twelve reappointments arising on the State Boards under the Department's remit.

Learning & Career Development

The Department continued promoting the Enterprise Academy as the internal one-stop shop for all learning and development resources and supports. 880 (81.5%) staff engaged with one of the 336 courses that were offered both internally and by OneLearning throughout 2025. Our in-house training offering provided 21 Information Sessions and seventeen Lunch & Learn Sessions with many sessions recorded and made available to staff for future reference.

In 2025, a focus on the Senior Leadership Team saw 28 staff attend SPS Strategic Leadership Programme with the IPA during the year. Senior leaders also completed the Climate Action Leadership Training in compliance with the mandate in the Irish Government's Climate Action Plan 2023. The Department funded 33 staff who undertook third level academic courses across a range of disciplines aligned to the Department's strategic priorities such as Legal Studies; Business Administration; Leadership & Strategy; Climate Change, and; Public Policy & Administration. Our Mentoring Programme continued to act as a significant tool to support staff growth and development with a total of 32 people taking part. Twenty senior leaders participated in the Executive Coaching programme and 25 in the HEO Coaching Programme.

2025 saw the introduction of the new Civil Service wide Capability Framework with the internal Executive Officer competition used to pilot the change. All internal interviews will now be conducted using the Framework. Training commenced for all Interview Boards within the Department and the Enterprise Academy was updated to reflect the same. The framework was also shared and explained to all the units and offices under the Departments remit.

Climate and Sustainability

The Department published its Climate Action Roadmap 2025 in October 2025, outlining its decarbonisation targets and reporting a 47% reduction in emissions since the baseline year. There has been a slight decrease in Thermal Energy usage and a slight increase in Electricity usage from 2024 figure but fundamentally energy usage has remained constant, this can be looked as a positive. There has been an increase in occupied floor area by approx. 10% with the additional area in Kildare and the adding of the Killarney Offices during the year. With the final complete decampment from Earlsfort and occupation of 5th Floor in Lansdowne House expected in 2026 will mean an overall reduction of approx. 3,300 m2 or 21.5% in floor area occupied by the Department. To meet our total 2030 emissions target, based on 2024 levels, the Department will need to reduce total emissions by a further 168 t CO2. In this regard, the Department will need to continue to seek energy efficiencies, primarily through reducing our accommodation footprint.

The Department adheres to Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation procedures for offsetting the emissions associated with official Air Travel. The Department's liability in 2025 was €14,668. The liability is calculated based on the prevailing rate of carbon tax and all liability must be paid to the Government's Climate Action Fund. In accordance with the Public Sector Mandate, the Department delivered a programme of Climate Action Leadership training aimed at all Senior Managers (PO and Above) to the end of 2025, 67% of Senior Management had completed this training programme. The Department is determined to achieve full compliance with this requirement.

In October 2024, the Department was awarded a Silver Award Smarter Travel Award by Transport for Ireland (TFI). This award recognises the Department as an organisation supports and celebrates active and sustainable travel on the commute to and from work as well as beyond for its workforce and visitors. This support results in a reduction in single-person car usage. The Silver Award demonstrates that the Department has a broad range of measures in place that support sustainable commuting and are committed to further smarter travel actions. To support the Department's Smarter Travel Award status during 2025 Departmental staff were encouraged to take part in a number of sustainable travel events organised by TFI including Marchathon; Walktober; Ready, Steady, Cycle as well as local events such a free Bike Clinic for bicycle maintenance and advice.

Media and Communications

In 2025, the Department responded to 465 media queries, issued 107 press releases and provided 186 Ministerial quotes. This is reflected in substantial media coverage reaching approximately 14 million in print circulation, 140 million online, 21 million on radio and 8 million on television. The Department's digital presence comprises the corporate website enterprise.gov.ie and social media channels LinkedIn, X, YouTube, Facebook and Instagram. The Department's LinkedIn account, one of Government's most followed platforms, grew to 96,000 followers, generating 1.3 million impressions over the year. Although relatively new, the Department's Meta platforms (Facebook and Instagram) recorded a combined 140,000 views in 2025. The corporate website enterprise.gov.ie attracted over 8-million-page views during the year, continuing to serve as a primary source of information for businesses and the public.

The Offices and Agencies Communications Group was reestablished to drive greater alignment and effectiveness, improve cross-communications and amplify the reach of departmental activity.

The events Management Team supported colleagues in the delivery of several externally focused events in Dublin, Cork and Mullingar. With regard to the Department's internal communications, close to 400 news stories were published on the Intranet site during the year, ensuring staff remained well informed of departmental priorities, initiatives and developments.

Irish Language Obligations

In 2025, the Department continued to deliver on obligations under the Official Languages Acts 2003 and 2021 through regular staff updates and events, including social events in Irish and a dedicated Irish page on our intranet. The Department will continue to keep staff informed as new provisions are implemented and increase staff awareness of the Acts. The Department exceeded its statutory obligations under section 10A (Advertising by Public Bodies) of the Acts, requiring a minimum of 20% of all advertising undertaken to be in the Irish language and 5% of annual advertising spend on Irish language, with returns of 23% of all advertising in Irish and 13% of annual advertising spent on Irish language advertising.

Customer Service, Freedom of Information and Data Protection

In 2025, 422 Freedom of Information requests were received and processed, representing a 24% increase year-on-year. More than 500 Data Protection queries were responded to and almost 100 Data Subject Access Requests and Other Rights Requests were administered under the GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018, an increase of almost 40% on the previous year. The Department ensured compliance with data protection legislation while supporting transparency and openness in our work. Customer Services activity also remained high, with the Unit handling over 5,000 phone calls and approximately 10,000 emails. Services are delivered in line with the Department's Customer Charter commitments, ensuring accessibility, timeliness and the protection of personal information.

ICT

Significant progress was made in the digitalisation and enhancement of the Department's information technology systems and capabilities during 2025.

A new Employment Permits portal and back-end case management system was launched in April 2025. This system introduced self service capabilities within a secure portal and provides a stable platform on current generation technology to support the further enhancement of the customer experience with additional features. A project to update the technology capabilities supporting the Register of Beneficial Ownership commenced in 2025 which will progressively deliver additional functionality including 6AMLD which has regulatory deadlines applicable in 2026 and 2027.

The Intellectual Property Office of Ireland successfully completed a project during 2025 to implement the paperless processing of Opposition procedures on Trademark files which introduces greater efficiencies for users and eliminates the need for paper files. This project was successfully completed in Q1 2026. Work also progressed during 2025 within the Office on projects in relation to leveraging the benefits of emerging technology capabilities including BlockChain and AI.

During 2025, Departmental staff were afforded access to Microsoft CoPilot Chat and the rollout of this has been supported by a range of user adoption initiatives to share early exemplars of good practice. Finally, significant work was delivered internally to progress the Department's internal cyber security programme to align with the new requirements which will be applicable once the National Cyber Security Bill is commenced in 2026

Appendix 1: Bills enacted in 2025

Employment (Contractual Retirement Ages) Act 2025

Appendix 2:
Statutory Instruments made in 2025

S.I. No. 11/2025	European Communities (Organisation of Working Time) (Defence Forces) Regulations 2025
S.I. No. 29/2025	European Union (Designation of the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission for Certain Functions) Regulations 2025
S.I. No. 33/2025	Employment Permits (Amendment) (Seasonal Employment) Regulations 2025
S.I. No. 35/2025	European Union (Restrictive Measures concerning Venezuela) Regulations 2025
S.I. No. 36/2025	European Union (Restrictive Measures concerning Iran) (UAV) Regulations 2025
S.I. No. 64/2025	Employment Permits (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2025
S.I. No. 82/2025	European Union (Restrictive Measures concerning Zimbabwe) Regulations 2025
S.I. No. 83/2025	European Union (Restrictive Measures Against Serious Human Rights Violations and Abuses) Regulations 2025
S.I. No. 84/2025	European Union (Restrictive Measures concerning Syria) Regulations 2025
S.I. No. 85/2025	European Union (Restrictive Measures concerning Sudan) Regulations 2025
S.I. No. 119/2025	Employment Permits (Amendment) (No. 3) Regulations 2025
S.I. No. 127/2025	Employment Permits (Amendment) (No. 4) Regulations 2025
S.I. No. 145/2025	European Union (Restrictive Measures concerning Haiti) Regulations 2025
S.I. No. 146/2025	European Union (Restrictive Measures concerning Central African Republic) Regulations 2025
S.I. No. 147/2025	European Union (Restrictive Measures concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo) Regulations 2025
S.I. No. 148/2025	European Union (Restrictive Measures concerning Iran) (Human Rights) Regulations 2025
S.I. No. 210/2025	European Communities (Intra-Community Transfers of Defence Related Products) (Amendment) Regulations 2025
S.I. No. 222/2025	European Union (Restrictive Measures Against the Proliferation and Use of Chemical Weapons) Regulations 2025
S.I. No. 258/2025	European Union (Restrictive Measures concerning Syria) (No. 2) Regulations 2025
S.I. No. 259/2025	European Union (Restrictive Measures Against Serious Human Rights Violations and Abuses) (No. 2) Regulations 2025
S.I. No. 261/2025	European Communities (Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road and Use of Transportable Pressure Equipment) (Amendment) Regulations 2025
S.I. No. 309/2025	European Union (Corporate Sustainability Reporting) Regulations 2025
S.I. No. 328/2025	Companies Act 2014 (Forms) Regulations 2025
S.I. No. 329/2025	Companies Act 2014 (Fees) Regulations 2025

S.I. No. 330/2025	Friendly Societies (Forms) Regulations 2025
S.I. No. 331/2025	Industrial and Provident Societies (Forms) Regulations 2025
S.I. No. 366/2025	European Union (Artificial Intelligence) (Designation) Regulations 2025
S.I. No. 411/2025	European Union (Restrictive Measures concerning Iran) Regulations 2025
S.I. No. 412/2025	European Union (Restrictive Measures concerning Haiti) (No. 2) Regulations 2025
S.I. No. 413/2025	European Union (Restrictive Measures concerning South Sudan) Regulations 2025
S.I. No. 414/2025	European Union (Restrictive Measures Against Serious Human Rights Violations and Abuses) (No. 3) Regulations 2025
S.I. No. 415/2025	European Union (Restrictive Measures concerning Sudan) (No. 2) Regulations 2025
S.I. No. 437/2025	Competition Act 2002 (Adjudication Officers) Regulations 2025
S.I. No. 483/2025	European Union (Restrictive Measures concerning the Republic of Guinea-Bissau) Regulations 2025
S.I. No. 484/2025	European Union (Restrictive Measures concerning Burundi) Regulations 2025
S.I. No. 485/2025	European Union (Restrictive Measures concerning Nicaragua) Regulations 2025
S.I. No. 486/2025	European Union (Restrictive Measures concerning Syria) (No. 3) Regulations 2025
S.I. No. 487/2025	European Union (Restrictive Measures concerning Iran) (No. 2) Regulations 2025
S.I. No. 536/2025	Control of Exports (National military export control list) (Amendment) Regulations 2025
S.I. No. 559/2025	European Communities (Noise Emission by Equipment for Use Outdoors) (Amendment) Regulations 2025
S.I. No. 560/2025	European Communities (Aerosol Dispensers) (Amendment) Regulations 2025
S.I. No. 561/2025	European Union (Simple Pressure Vessels) (Amendment) Regulations 2025
S.I. No. 623/2025	European Union (Prohibiting products made with forced labour on the Union market) (Designation of Competent Authorities) Regulations 2025
S.I. No. 626/2025	Legal Metrology (European Conformity Assessment of Measuring Instruments) (Amendment) Regulations 2025
S.I. No. 627/2025	European Union (Non-Automatic Weighing Instruments) (Amendment) Regulations 2025
S.I. No. 632/2025	Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Exposure to Asbestos) (Amendment) Regulations 2025
S.I. No. 643/2025	Employment Permits (Amendment) (No. 5) Regulations 2025
S.I. No. 644/2025	European Union (Restrictive Measures concerning Sudan) (No. 3) Regulations 2025
S.I. No. 645/2025	European Union (Restrictive Measures concerning Haiti) (No. 3) Regulations 2025
S.I. No. 646/2025	European Union (Restrictive Measures Against Serious Human Rights Violations and Abuses) (No. 4) Regulations 2025
S.I. No. 647/2025	European Union (Restrictive Measures concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo) (No. 2) Regulations 2025

Appendix 3: Public Sector Duty

Under the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act, 2014, all public bodies have a duty to give regard to human rights and equality issues in the performance of their functions. This duty is consistent with the values of the Department which are integrity, innovation, collaboration, commitment and respect. In 2025, the Department continued to value and promote equality and human rights through its ongoing work, whether in delivering services, developing policy or supporting staff.

Equality and Human Rights Assessment

In April the Department published an Equality and Human Rights Assessment, which considered the equality and human rights issues of relevance to the staff and service users of the Department and its Offices. The development of the Assessment included consultation with relevant staff and awareness raising on the Public Sector Duty through presentations and material on the Departmental intranet. A dedicated section on 'Accessibility, Equality and Human Rights' has also been included in the agency Oversight and Performance Delivery Agreements and office Memoranda of Understanding.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

In 2025 the Department continued to progress actions under its ED&I Strategy 2024-2026. This included supporting the establishment of staff networks (multicultural network and neurodiversity network), making our events programme more accessible, expanding our Disability Liaison Officer resources, and presenting on key policies and procedures to our staff to support better understanding of ED&I policies and procedures.

Culture and Values Action Plan

In 2025 the Department published our first Culture and Values Action Plan, which articulates our five core values. Among these is Respect - a commitment to treat every individual with respect and foster a diverse and inclusive organisation where all are valued. As part of this commitment, we will embed our zero-tolerance position on discrimination, harassment, abuse, victimisation and bullying; deliver management and leadership programmes that include tools for building an inclusive culture; and communicate the responsibility on staff to behave in a way that reflects a culture of dignity and respect.

Learning and Development

One of the ways in which the Department has promoted equality and human rights is through ongoing training initiatives. Training on the Public Sector Duty and ED&I is a module of induction training for all new staff. Our Manager Development training includes modules on Inclusion and Wellbeing; Teamwork, Change and Cultural Diversity; Managing a Blended Workforce and Managing for an Inclusive Workforce.

In 2025 the Department became a "Jam card friendly" organisation supporting our customers and staff who may be Jam card users. Showing a "Jam card" allows anyone with a hidden disability or communication barriers to tell others they need 'Just a Minute' of patience when in public or social situations. A total of 158 staff completed Jam card training in 2025.

Blended Working

A second full review of the Department's Blended Working policy was carried out in 2025. 690 staff responded to a survey which assessed how successfully staff, teams, and managers are operating under the Policy. 60 one-to-one interviews were carried out between May and August with staff from CO to PO level. Interviews explored experiences and perceptions of blended working in depth, focusing on themes such as flexibility, team cohesion, performance management, and wellbeing. Findings were integrated to produce an evidence-based overview of blended working culture, risks, and opportunities, presented to the Management Board for review in December.

Gender Pay Gap

The Gender Pay Gap Information Act 2021 Regulations require organisations with more than 250 employees to report on the hourly gender pay gap in their organisation across a range of metrics.

In November 2025, the Department published its third Gender Pay Gap report based on data as of 20 June 2025. Our gender pay gap in 2025 was 8.35%. There is a trend of the GPG in the Department narrowing over the last three years, from 10.86% in 2023 and 9.55% in 2024. The staff cohort as of the snapshot date was 59% female and 41% male. The percentage of female employees within the upper and upper middle remuneration quartiles was 47%. Actions that have been taken and will continue to be prioritised to address the pay gap include enhancing learning and career development opportunities, ensuring fairness and transparency in promotion practices, and strengthening our approach to ED&I.

National Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People 2025 to 2030

The Department is a co-lead of the Employment pillar of the National Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People 2025 to 2030, along with the Department of Social Protection (DSP), and was actively engaged in the development of the strategy prior to its publication in September 2025. Work on the implementation of the Department's commitments has begun. The aim of the Employment Pillar is to bridge the employment gap between disabled people and others who are in employment and to enhance the opportunities for disabled people who can earn a living, to do so.

Appendix 4:
Green Public Procurement Reporting

The Department of Public Expenditure NDP Delivery and Reform Circular 20/2019 requires that each Department must report annually on its green public procurement (GPP). Circular 17/2025 has replaced previous Circular 20/2019, promoting the use of Environmental and Social Considerations in Public Procurement and strengthens the framework for Green Public Procurement (GPP) across the public sector, aligning with the Buying Greener.

The reporting template below includes the eleven priority sectors listed in the EPA's guidance document for the Public Sector Third Edition 2024 and shows the total value of contracts (over €50,000) issued by this Department in 2025 by priority sector, which have incorporated GPP. The sectors were chosen on the basis of expenditure; scope for environmental improvement; impact on suppliers; leadership to market potential; relevance and accessibility of criteria; market availability and economic efficiency (in line with EU policy and practice). Please note, ICT Products and Services are split in two subcategories for reporting purposes.

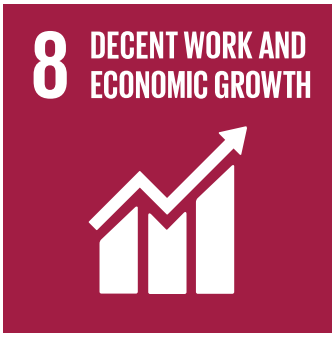
Reference year 2025	Total number of contracts signed over €50,000 by priority sector	Total value of contracts signed over €50,000 by priority sector. All values should be VAT exclusive.	Total number of contracts signed over €50,000 by priority sector which have incorporated GPP	Total value of contracts signed over €50,000 by priority sector which have incorporated GPP. All values should be VAT exclusive.
Priority Sector*				
Energy-related Products Furniture & Related Services Heating Equipment Indoor and Outdoor Lighting Office Building Design, Construction & Management Paper Products and Printing Services Textile Products and Services Road Transport, Vehicles and Services	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Food & Catering Services	1	€100,000	1	€100,000
ICT Products	4	€1,478,956	Nil	Nil
ICT Services	1	€94,053	1	€94,053
Indoor Cleaning Services	1	€67,172	1	€67,172
Totals	**7**	**€2,092,075**	**3**	**€261,225**
**Eleven sectors for which national GPP criteria have been published by the EPA and were based on common EU criteria with adaptations to reflect the Irish market and procurement practices.*				
Other Sectors**				
Professional Services	4	€397,528	2	€208,590
Totals	**4**	**€397,528**	**2**	**€208,590**
*** Sectors which are not covered by national GPP criteria published by the EPA*				

Appendix 5:
Sustainable Development Goals

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity. The Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment supports the implementation of the Goals in Ireland by driving a competitive, resilient, and sustainable economy. Key focuses for the Department include promoting decent work, fostering sustainable industrialisation, and ensuring economic growth through strategic policy.

During 2025, the Department continued to make progress on a number of key SDG targets related to the Department policy focuses and priorities.

Our Goals



Decent work and economic growth



Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure



Responsible consumption and production

Our Targets

8.b Develop and operationalize a global strategy for youth employment and implement the Global Jobs Pact of the International Labour Organisation.

8.2 Achieve higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation, including through a focus on high-value added and labour-intensive sectors.

8.3 Promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the formalisation and growth of micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services.

8.5 By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.

8.8 Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment.

8.9 By 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products.

9.2 Promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and, by 2030, significantly raise industry's share of employment and gross domestic product, in line with national circumstances, and double its share in least developed countries.

12.B Develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products.

12.6 Encourage companies, especially large and transnational companies, to adopt sustainable practices and to integrate sustainability information into their reporting cycle.

Key Progress in 2025

The Programme for Government 2025 included a commitment to publish a new enterprise strategy, Enterprise 2035, as a long-term ambition for enterprise growth and job creation over the coming decade. This new strategy will take account of the four big trends likely to transform Ireland's economy over the next decade, also known as "the four Ds": demographics, decarbonisation, digitalisation and deglobalisation. The development of the new strategy commenced in 2025.

The implementation plan for the White Paper on Enterprise 2022-2030 was completed with the publication of the H2 2024 biannual progress report in H1 2025, with over 90% of activities in the implementation plan either completed or on track for completion at the time of publication.

The Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) continues to engage with employers through inspections to ensure compliance with employment rights, alongside the provision of information, mediation, conciliation, and adjudication services.

During 2025, work commenced on the development of a new Pathways to Work 2026-2030 national employment strategy. This included the initiation of a public consultation process (including online submissions), alongside labour market analysis and policy research. Engagements also included relevant DSP business areas and Government Departments, as well as consultation with the Community and Voluntary Sector.

A new National Tourism Policy Statement was published in December 2025. The Policy Statement reflects the positioning of tourism within the Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment, reinforcing its role as a key driver of economic growth, job creation, and balanced regional development.

- Section 6.1 focuses on Growing a Sustainable Future. The policy aims, "To ensure the tourism sector is resilient to impacts of climate change and that we can sustain and enhance sustainable enjoyment of our natural environment and amenities, DETE will publish and implement a detailed Tourism Sectoral Adaptation Plan.
- Section 6.2 aims, "To ensure that tourism plays its part in achieving national and international emissions reduction targets, a baseline figure for the carbon emissions of the tourism sector will be calculated by Fáilte Ireland. This will require a thorough analysis of current emissions trends and sustainability measures. Subsequent plans to give effect to this policy statement will contain tourism specific emission reduction targets.

The Tourism Policy Framework 2025- 2030 sets out a range of policy proposals across environment, economic and social pillars. This Policy Framework balances economic development with environmental and social considerations. The Policy Framework Commits tourism to national and international emissions reduction targets and prioritise climate-conscious operators demonstrating strong environmental practices.

The Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) was transposed in Ireland by the deadline of 6 July 2024 by S.I. No. 336/2024 - European Union (Corporate Sustainability Reporting) Regulations 2024. The Directive mandates large and transnational companies to disclose sustainability-related information in their management/directors' reports, using the European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS).

The EU Omnibus package, published on February 26, 2025, aims to reduce the administrative burden of sustainability reporting in Ireland and across the EU by at least 25-35%.

The Package introduces simplifications, including limiting the data burden on SMEs in value chains. However, it preserves the Directive's principal intent: to embed sustainability into corporate governance and risk management. By focusing reporting obligations on larger entities, CSRD ensures that the most influential companies lead the transition to sustainable practices.



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