

Small Business is Big Business: the Report of the Small Business Forum is published

Recommendations Made Across Three Key Focus Areas:

- Create a better environment for small businesses
- Stimulate growth
- Inspire Entrepreneurship

Dublin, 16th May, 2006, The Report of the Small Business Forum, *Small Business is Big Business*, was published today and officially launched by Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Micheal Martin T.D. at an event in Dublin Castle.

The Small Business Forum, chaired by Joe Macri, MD, Microsoft Ireland was established by Minister Martin in July of last year to consider the current environment in which small businesses operate and to advise on the appropriateness and adequacy of the public policy responses in place to support small business.

Speaking at the launch of the Forum's Report, Minister Micheál Martin said: "The vibrancy of the small business sector is critical to Ireland's future economic success. With 97% of all businesses in Ireland being classified as small, employing almost 800,000 people it is obviously important to the overall vibrancy of the economy that we ensure that we are doing as much as possible at all times to support their continued growth and development.

The Forum has presented me with a comprehensive set of proposals designed to enable the small business sector to achieve its full potential and enhance the significant contribution the sector already makes to the economic well-being of this country. I am delighted to confirm that I am seeking to implement all the recommendations that fall within my Department's remit, including

- raising the standard of management capability through the establishment of a Management Development Council
- providing Knowledge Acquisitions Grants
- making Innovation Vouchers available to small business
- providing funding to allow small businesses avail of an ICT audit
- developing an National Entrepreneurship Policy
- developing networks of Business Angels
- compiling and publishing comprehensive data on the small business sector

Over the coming months and I will work closely with my Government colleagues to look at an implementation path for the remaining recommendations.

"In order to ensure that the implementation process is as seamless as possible I intend to invite the members of the Forum to remain in place to act as a body in respect of the implementation of the Report," the Minister said.

Commenting on the launch of the Report, Joe Macri, Forum Chair said: "Through the wide ranging consultation process conducted it was clear that there are a number of common issues and challenges which are common to all small businesses regardless of sector. The focus of the Forum members was to produce a series of recommendations that when implemented will address these issues and make a real difference to the future growth and health of the small business sector. The sector is the potential engine of growth for the future of the Irish economy and it is critical that plans are put in place now to create an environment that will allow the sector to grow and flourish.

"We are delighted that the Report has been so positively received by the Minister and that he is fully supportive of the recommendations made by the Forum. The Forum members look forward to providing the necessary support to the Minister and his officials over the months ahead to help move the implementation process forward."

Notes to Editors

The thirteen member forum, comprised of representatives of the small business sector and owners and managers of small businesses, has consulted widely with all stakeholders within the sector and carried out extensive consultation and research in order to prepare the comprehensive report which was published today.

A total of 15 recommendations are included in the final report. The recommendations address ten priority issues which were identified throughout the consultation process and all fall under three focus areas; create a better environment; stimulate growth and inspire entrepreneurship.

The full list of recommendations is available at www.smallbusinessforum.ie

The Forum members included;

Members of the Small Business Forum

1. Mr Joe Macri (Chair)
MD, Microsoft Ireland
Dublin
2. Mr James O'Sullivan
M&P O'Sullivan
Co Cork
3. Rita Shah
Shabra Plastics and Packaging Ireland
Co Monaghan
4. Professor Frank Roche
Smurfit School of Business
Co Dublin
5. Dr Joan Buckley,
Family Business Centre
University College Cork
6. Mr Des Cummins (SFA representative)
National Recycling Limited

7. Co Dublin
Daniel Hickey (ISME representative)
All in All Ingredients Ltd
Dublin
8. Ms Jacqui McNabb (CCI representative)
County Carlow Chamber of Commerce
Carlow
9. Rosemary Sexton
Enterprise Ireland
Dundalk
Co Louth
10. Mr Michael Johnson
Dunlaoghaire/Rathdown CEB
Dublin
11. Mr Conor O'Mahony
Small Business Unit
Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment
Dublin
12. Ms Breda O'Driscoll
Ultrasonic Scientific Limited
Dublin
13. Ms Mary Bennett
The Treasure Chest
Galway

This release is also available on the Department's website www.entemp.ie. A copy of the report is available at:

<http://www.entemp.ie/publications/enterprise/2006/smallbusinessforum.pdf>

