



Department of
Enterprise, Trade
and Employment

Technology Foresight Fund

Investing in future competitiveness





Foreword

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment
Ms Mary Harney T.D.

I am delighted to announce the creation of this Technology Foresight Fund which is the largest single investment in research in the history of the State. It demonstrates this Government's policy of using the benefits of our recent economic success as a building block to reinvest in key research areas that will determine our longer term international competitiveness.

Globalisation of the world's economies continues to fuel competition and competitiveness can be achieved through knowledge-based technological innovation. This requires a significant upgrading of the sources of knowledge, innovation and technology by investing in related R&D personnel and activities.

This Government's commitment to the development needs of the high-tech sector is clearly evident from the fact that an unprecedented level of investment (£1.95 billion) has been earmarked for Research, Technology and Innovation (RTI) activities in the National Development Plan 2000 - 2006. The allocation of £560 million from this amount to this Technology Foresight Fund is a vital element of Government's essential strategy to move Irish industry higher up the value chain.

The establishment of the Technology Foresight Fund, which will be administered by a dedicated Research Foundation, operating as a sub-Board of Forfás, is necessary in order to develop the world-class research capability in niche areas of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and Biotechnology. This will underpin the future development and competitiveness of Irish-owned industry, facilitate the undertaking of Research and Development in this country by multinational companies, attract more high technology companies to Ireland in the future and enhance the environment for the creation of more Irish-owned start ups.

The investment must be seen for what it is - a vision for the future based on highly skilled people and new knowledge leading to high quality industrial development.

Ms Mary Harney T.D

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment

March 2000



Foreword

Minister for Science, Technology and Commerce

Mr Noel Treacy T.D.

Today is a day of great opportunity for the Irish research community and the business sector of Ireland as we announce the setting up of the new Technology Foresight Fund of £560 million.

When I requested Dr Ed Walsh and his colleagues on the Irish Council for Science, Technology and Innovation (ICSTI) to carry out the Technology Foresight exercise in March 1998 I did so in hopeful anticipation that it would start a process which would bring about a sea-change in attitude at all levels to investment in Research Technological Development and Innovation (RTDI). This exercise was carried out in a little over 12 months which was a remarkable achievement. This can be attributed to the outstanding leadership of Mr Brian Sweeney, Chairman of Siemens Group Ireland and Deputy Chairman of ICSTI who brought an unprecedented level of commitment and dedication to the process.

One of the important features of the process was that it involved a wide range of consultation with key industrialists, academics, senior civil servants and other interested parties in an attempt to develop a consensus on the actions required to foster technological development. I sincerely commend all who participated in this process and shared their expertise so willingly and gave so freely of their time and energies to this complex assignment.

Having completed this important task, the recommendations contained in the Technology Foresight Reports have been the subject of both detailed scrutiny and further consultation by us in the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment in order to devise the most appropriate mechanisms for their implementation. The consultation process has culminated in the proposal to set up the £560 million Technology Foresight Fund which was recently approved by the Government.

The setting up of this £560 million Fund clearly puts RTDI investment at the heart of Ireland's economic policy and I am confident that, with continuing consultation, astute management, world-class people and the support of the wider research community we can, in partnership and co-operation with all research interests, deliver many economic benefits for this country and society as a whole.

Mr Noel Treacy T.D.

Minister for Science, Technology and Commerce

March 2000

Technology Foresight Fund

- ▶ The Technology Foresight Fund responds to the recommendations of the Technology Foresight Ireland Reports, published last year by the Irish Council for Science, Technology and Innovation (ICSTI).
- ▶ One of the key recommendations of this Report was that the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment should establish a Fund to invest in research in key areas of technology that can best assist in upgrading the future competitiveness of the traded goods and services sector in Ireland.
- ▶ In response to this recommendation both the Tánaiste and the Minister for Science, Technology and Commerce, have secured Government approval for a Technology Foresight Fund of £560 million as outlined in the National Development Plan, for commitment in the years 2000 - 2006. This will support research excellence in strategic technologies, particularly the development of world-class capabilities in the recommended niche areas of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and Biotechnology.
- ▶ A dedicated Research Foundation, acting as a sub-Board of Forfás, will administer and manage this Fund.
- ▶ This initiative is essentially about investing in human knowledge and people in niche areas which will drive economic development. The availability of highly qualified people will help to attract high technology enterprises to Ireland, will encourage existing enterprises to undertake more sophisticated innovation, and will lead to the establishment of new enterprises based on research findings, thereby supporting social and economic progress and improving living standards.

Research Foundation - Key Principles

- ▶ The long-term objective is to create a critical mass of world-class research excellence in niche areas of ICT and Biotechnology, and thus make Ireland an attractive location for R&D.
- ▶ The Foundation will achieve its objectives by supporting world class research in niche areas within ICTs and Biotechnology.
- ▶ It will consult widely with national and international experts in selecting its niche areas.
- ▶ Funding will be awarded to world class research projects in the selected niches on the basis of a competitive international peer review process.
- ▶ Continuation of support for any project funded by the Foundation will be dependant on a continuing research output at world class level.
- ▶ The Foundation will have the option to establish its own research laboratories if necessary to secure world-class performance in the context of a competitive approach to the allocation of funds.
- ▶ The Technology Foresight funding is additional and complementary to the existing spend by Government Departments and Agencies. It may supplement existing research activities to enable them to achieve the required standard and scale.
- ▶ The key to the ultimate success of this investment will be a strong partnership with the other main players - Industry, Third-level colleges, Research Institutes and research funding bodies.

"The decision of Government to implement ICSTI's key Technology Foresight recommendations, and provide unprecedented funding for the development of Ireland's research capability, represents a quantum leap in policy, as significant for Ireland's future well-being as that to industrialise in the 1960s.

Quickly building Ireland's research strength in ICT and Biotechnology combined with new e-commerce legislation, new fibre optic cable links to North America and Europe, identifies Ireland as one of the world's choice locations for knowledge-age enterprise"

Dr. Ed Walsh

President Emeritus, University of Limerick and Chairman, Irish Council for Science, Technology and Innovation

"The decision by the Government to implement the recommendations of the Technology Foresight Report is one of the most significant decisions of national key importance of the last 40 years.

This commitment will fuel an extremely well conceived and funded programme of R&D that will ensure that Ireland can continue on its curve of prosperity through providing the quality and quantity of world class research resources to support both indigenous and inward investment companies in the high-tech areas over the next 20 years.

I firmly believe that this investment will be a catalyst for making Ireland one of the most attractive locations in the world in which companies would carry out their research activities."

Brian Sweeney, *Chairman, Siemens Group Ireland Ltd. and Deputy Chairman, Irish Council for Science, Technology and Innovation*

" The quality science and engineering education that fuelled Ireland and Intel's growth in the '90s is no longer enough. Today we all need to move up the knowledge curve to remain competitive and maintain growth. The new research investment is the initiative needed to get us there. Intel strongly welcomes it."

John McGowan, *General Manager, Intel Ireland*

"Software will continue to be at the core of future innovation for Ericsson. The Technology Foresight Fund will help us move up the economic value chain and thereby grow employment in globalised markets. For these reasons Ericsson were pleased to contribute to the Technology Foresight process and strongly endorse the Government's proposal."

Ian Cahill, *Chief Executive, Ericsson Ireland*

"The decision by the Tánaiste and by the Minister for Science, Technology and Commerce, to set up this programme will rank in importance with the historic decisions to invest in education in the 1960s and 1970s. This new programme will establish world class research in certain key technologies in order to underpin future industrial competitiveness and so lift our economy and society to greater levels of self-reliance, sophistication and prosperity."

Professor David McConnell , *Professor of Genetics and Vice Provost, Trinity College, Dublin*



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