



Note on the Enterprise Forum of Wednesday, 6 March 2024

Meetings are held under Chatham House rule.

Attendees

Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment	Simon Coveney, TD (Chair)
Minister of State for Trade Promotion, Digital and Company Regulation	Dara Calleary, TD
Minister of State for Business, Employment and Retail	Neale Richmond, TD
Secretary General, DETE	Declan Hughes
DETE officials	Pauline Mulligan, Dermot Mulligan, Gary Tobin, Colm Forde, Ronnie Downes, Maedhbh Cronin, Dermot Coates, Ross Church, John Hughes, Deborah Dignam, Keith Fitzgerald, Brian Walsh, Mark Dugdale, Barry Cullen, Marie McMahon Forum Secretariat: Susan McNamee, Sinéad O'Brien, Anthony Barrett, Jamie Cosgrove
Enterprise Ireland	Joe Healy
IDA	Breda O'Sullivan
Local Enterprise Office Network	John Magee
American Chamber of Commerce	Colm O'Callaghan
Business in the Community Ireland	Tomás Sercovich
British Irish Chamber of Commerce	Paul Lynam
Chambers Ireland	Ian Talbot
Irish Exporters Association	Simon McKeever, Karl Picard
ISME	Damien Heffernan
RGDATA	Tara Buckley
SFA	David Broderick
Retail Excellence	Jean McCabe
IBEC	Sharon Higgins, Fergal O'Brien
Injuries Resolution Board	Rosalind Carroll, Eileen Devereux

Item 1: Welcome and opening remarks

- Minister Coveney welcomed the attendees both in the room and those attending online.
- Minister Coveney spoke of the results from the recently published Annual Employment Survey 2023 and the Annual Business Survey of Economic Impact 2022, acknowledging that these surveys highlight some very positive results for the Irish economy.
- Forum members were informed that Ireland is showing strong resilience with a rate close to full employment, and the business failure rate is very low.

Item 2: Update on Cost of Doing Business.

- Minister Coveney acknowledged that Government measures being introduced to improve working conditions in Ireland will have cost implications for businesses, however, there are also important economic and societal benefits that will ensure that Ireland is brought in sync with competitors.
- An official from the Enterprise Strategy Competitiveness and Evaluation Division, spoke of the recently published evidence-based report “An Assessment of the Cumulative Impact of the Proposed Measures to Improve Working Conditions in Ireland”.
- A report, led by DETE and DSP, looked at the costs and benefits of these measures and the cumulative impacts for businesses and examined how Ireland competes with the rest of the EU regarding employment entitlements.
- DETE will compose an Executive Summary of the findings for Forum members to share with their stakeholders.
- Minister Coveney will contact the Low Pay Commission and ask that they have due regard to the Report’s findings prior to submitting their recommendations to Government.
- Minister Coveney will work with Minister Humphreys, Minister McGrath and Minister Donohoe in relation to Employer PRSI. The Minister will also discuss with Minister Harris the option of using the National Training Fund to help assist in reducing costs for business.
- Minister Coveney informed the Forum members of the top up payment of up to €3,000 in the Energy Efficiency Grant for businesses in the hospitality and retail sectors.
- Minister Coveney updated Forum members on the Increased Cost of Business grant (ICOB). Local Authorities will be sending letters to all eligible businesses during the week of 12th March. To be eligible businesses need to be in good standing with Revenue and the Local Authorities, meaning they must at least have a payment plan

in place for any outstanding debts. The aim is for ICOB payments to be made in mid-April.

- The Minister also spoke of the National Enterprise Hub being developed, which will be available to all businesses to approach for help and advice.
- Forum members highlighted the pressures businesses are currently feeling and the huge costs involved for all sectors. Any reviews (such as the Employer PRSI review) will be welcomed.

Item 3: Update on new mediation functions of Injuries Resolution Board

- As part of the Action Plan for Insurance Reform, the role of PIAB was enhanced and following the enactment of the Personal Injuries Resolution Board Act 2022, PIAB has transformed into the Injuries Resolution Board with new powers to mediate for employer liability claims only.
- The CEO of the Injuries Resolution Board, Rosalind Carroll, gave a presentation on the enhanced functions of the Board.
- The new mediation service is aiming to resolve claims quickly and although the service has only been recently introduced, analysis of the number of claims made shows a positive response.
- Ms Carroll emphasised the savings being made to businesses through the mediation service instead of the litigation process.
- Introduction of the mediation service in public liability and motor liability claims will take place on a phased basis during 2024.
- Ms Carroll asked for the Injuries Resolution Board's services to be promoted to stakeholder groups.

Item 4: Update on Responsible Business Subgroup

- The Assistant Secretary of Trade Division spoke to the overall responsible business agenda items and gave an update on the third meeting of the Responsible Business Subgroup, which was held on 21 February.
- Subgroup members received two presentations at the meeting. The first on the EU proposal for a Directive on common rules promoting the repair of goods, and the second on EU Ecodesign for Sustainable Product Regulation (ESPR).
- DETE have been awarded EU funding for the development of a Responsible Business Compass, which will help companies navigate through the Responsible Business initiatives and supports available.

Item 5: AOB

- Minutes from the Enterprise Forum meeting of 29 November 2023 were approved.
- Members were also reminded to contact the Enterprise Forum Secretariat with any topics they would like discussed at this Forum over the next year.
- Minister Coveney is attending a meeting on the Prompt Payments on 7 March.
- Irish Exporters Association will contact DETE in relation to some issues with the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM).