



**West Region**  
**First Progress Report:**  
**Actions to June 2016**



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## FOREWORD BY AN TAOISEACH



In the Programme for Partnership Government, we acknowledged that as the economy recovers it is essential that Government puts in place measures to revitalise all of Ireland so that the benefits are felt in every home and in community.

A key element of this process is implementing the Regional Action Plan for Jobs, with local input, to help spread growth to all areas. The results to date have been impressive.

The publication of this first Progress Report for the West Action Plan for Jobs is an example of how this approach is getting things working from the ground up; enabling the enterprise sector to work directly with public bodies and agencies to build on local strengths and deliver jobs to Mayo, Galway and Roscommon.

Key projects delivered since the West Action Plan was published in 2015 are the establishment of the West Regional Skills Forum; the launch of a capital programme and domestic and international marketing for the Wild Atlantic Way, Galway securing the winning bid for European Capital of Culture 2020, and the delivery of capital funding through Bord Iascaigh Mhara to support the seafood sector. They all illustrate how the West is working to develop its jobs potential by focusing on its strengths and particular areas of economic opportunity. The commencement of construction of a new IDA Advance Technology Building in Castlebar, will further enhance the region's offering to potential investors.

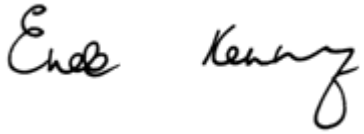
Maximising the potential of these Plans requires everyone coming together to collaborate and deliver new ideas. That is why I am delighted to see that 11 projects from the region secured funding through Enterprise Ireland's Regional Competitive Calls, due to their innovative and collaborative approaches to supporting job creation in the West.

Overall, almost 190,000 more people are at work since the launch of the first Action Plan for Jobs in early 2012. Over the past year, the numbers in employment have improved in every region in the country. Our target is to add 200,000 more jobs to the economy by 2020, including 135,000 outside of Dublin; and while we have made huge progress, there are still too many people out of work. Continuing to reduce unemployment with a special focus on regional and rural development is a top priority.

In addition to the implementation of the Regional Action Plans, Budget 2017 also provides funds to continue to build Advance Factories and to fund Regional Competitive Calls to support innovative and collaborative projects that will lead to job creation across a region or regions. Government is also providing for a wider rural development package with extra resources for the roll out of the National Broadband Plan, boosting the 2017 budget for the Rural Development Programme to over €600 million.

Our focus is on continuing to ensure that every region in the country is supported to achieve its economic potential. The ongoing monitoring of all Regional Action Plans for Jobs, which is being

made possible through the commitment, hard work, and enthusiasm of groups of local stakeholders from the public and private sector, remains at the core of this effort.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Enda Kenny". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'E' and a long, sweeping tail on the 'y'.

**Enda Kenny, TD**  
**Taoiseach**

## MINISTER'S FOREWORD



The Regional Action Plans for Jobs initiative is a key element in supporting the delivery of balanced regional development, which is a key priority of Government. The Programme for a Partnership Government sets a goal to help create 200,000 additional jobs by 2020. Importantly, 135,000 of those jobs are to be in the regions outside Dublin.

The Action Plan for Jobs for the West region, covering the counties of Galway, Mayo and Roscommon, aims to build on the unique strengths of the region to support businesses to start up, grow and generate exports.

While much emphasis is placed on multi-nationals, we remain for the most part, an economy dependent on small, family business. Across the towns and villages of our regions, employment is heavily based on the SME sector. Ensuring these SMEs have access to both supports and market opportunities is vital to ensuring consistent and real recovery across the country. No matter what part of the country you are in, developing an idea with the support of the Local Enterprise Office or Enterprise Ireland and growing to scale is something we want to see happening more and more in every county. The LEO network is a great asset and my firm view is that it offers great potential to support job creation and help entrepreneurs and small businesses start up and grow.

Overall what these reports demonstrate is that we are making progress on the Government ambition to ensure all regions reach their economic potential. We are nowhere near our endpoint, but we are getting better and enhancing both the employment and economic potential of the West.

From a low of 177,000 in 2011, employment levels have now reached 186,400 in this region – an increase of 5.3%. The QNHS shows that there is positive jobs growth across a range of sectors, including Industry and Construction, Accommodation and Food Services, and Agriculture.

In tandem with strong jobs growth, the unemployment rate has reduced from a high of 17.2% in 2011 to 9.1% in Q3 2016. This represents real progress for the West. Every job created has a real effect on men, women and children and the wider community. That is why we cannot be complacent about job creation but I am happy to see that we continue to move in the right direction.

Contrary to popular belief, employment recovery is not confined to Dublin – in fact over 72% of the new jobs created over the last twelve months have gone to people from outside Dublin. As was the case with all regions, the downturn in employment hit the West heavily in 2008 but there is potential to improve that and grow sustainable jobs in the region, based on the sectoral strengths, skills profile and innovative capacity within this region.

Every day, world-leading companies based in the West such as Wayfair, Surmodics, Chanelle Group, CBE, Sportlomo and Alexion Pharmaceuticals, all of which recently announced new jobs in the region, are showing that by investing in people and talent, global opportunities are possible regardless of the location. What we need to do is enhance the job-potential environment and ensure companies based in the West have access to global market opportunities. What this report demonstrates is that in regions like the West, with the right environment, world-leading companies, both Irish and foreign-owned, co-exist and create a dynamic enterprise base. Our enterprise

agencies are available to provide assistance to companies at all stages of their journey, whether as start-ups, companies that are scaling or exporting or companies seeking to invest in Ireland.

Government does not create jobs, but is an enabler of jobs. This region has rich potential in Medical Devices and Medical Technology, Lifesciences and Pharmaceuticals, Tourism and Hospitality. We have responded to the crash, but now is the time to build resilience in the economy with a global competitive business offering.

There is no doubt but that Brexit will test our economic resilience. Many companies in the West will have some exposure to the UK. Although there is still a lack of clarity as to the extent to which Brexit will impact on the businesses in the area, Enterprise Ireland, IDA and the LEOs are working with these companies to focus on talent, innovation, competitiveness and investing in people. This remains the best way to build resilience in a company.

Of course the Regional Action Plans themselves will not solve everything. A full recovery requires more than just jobs. These Plans will be complemented by other programmes the Government is working on at national level, including the Action Plan for Rural Development, infrastructure projects, the Action Plan for Jobs, skills strategies and the Action Plan for Housing.

Employment recovery is a critical element of a wider social recovery. Now is not the time for complacency. Despite global uncertainty, the goal of full employment in the lifetime of this Government is within reach. This employment will be sustainable, built on the back of talent and innovation – something the West, with its excellent skills and talent base and strong education and research infrastructure, has in abundance.

I would also like to pay tribute to Gerry Kilcommins, the Chairman, the Enterprise Champions and all members of the Implementation Committee for their ongoing commitment to the West Regional Action Plan, to job creation within the region and in helping to drive the ambition of the Plan. The input which you bring to the process creates a real step-up in the level of innovation and jobs impact of this process. This is a genuine public service which will make a real impact to the West region.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mary Mitchell O'Connor'.

**Mary Mitchell O'Connor, TD**  
**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation**

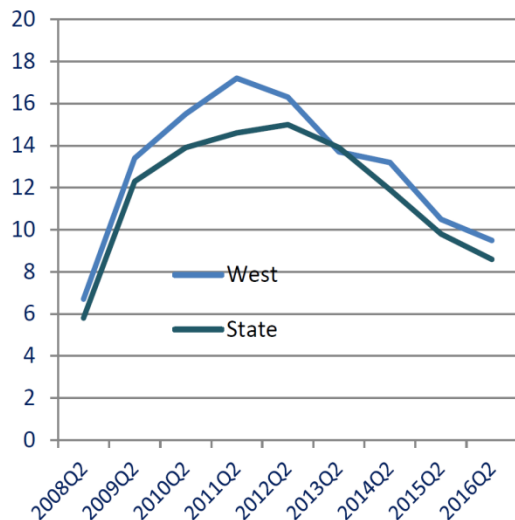




## EMPLOYMENT SNAPSHOT: WEST REGION

	2015 Q1	2016 Q1	2016 Q2
Persons aged 15 years and over in Employment (,000)	177	176.6	185
Unemployed Persons aged 15 years and over (,000)	23.2	19.9	19.1
Persons aged 15 years and over in Labour Force (,000)	200.2	196.5	204.1
ILO Unemployment Rate (15 - 74 years) (%)	11.7	10.2	9.5
ILO Participation Rate (15 years and over) (%)	59.1	58	59.7

ILO Unemployment Rate (15 - 74 years) (%) by NUTS 3 Regions and Quarter



Persons aged 15 and over in employment (ILO) classified by NUTS3 Region and NACE Rev. 2 Economic Sector (,000)



### West Employment/Unemployment Trends as at Q2 2016

(see graph above)

- The Unemployment rate in the West in Q2 2016 stood at 9.5%, compared to the State Unemployment Rate of 8.6%
- In Q2 2016, 8,400 additional people entered employment, while the number of unemployed persons declined by 800
- The size of the Labour Force also increased since Q1 2016 (+7,600), as did the Participation Rate (+1.7%)
- These same trends (Unemployment down, Employment, Labour Force and Participation up), can also be seen in the data from 2015 Q1 to Q2 2016.

Source: CSO QNHS Persons aged 15 years and over by NUTS3 Regions, Statistical Indicator and Quarter

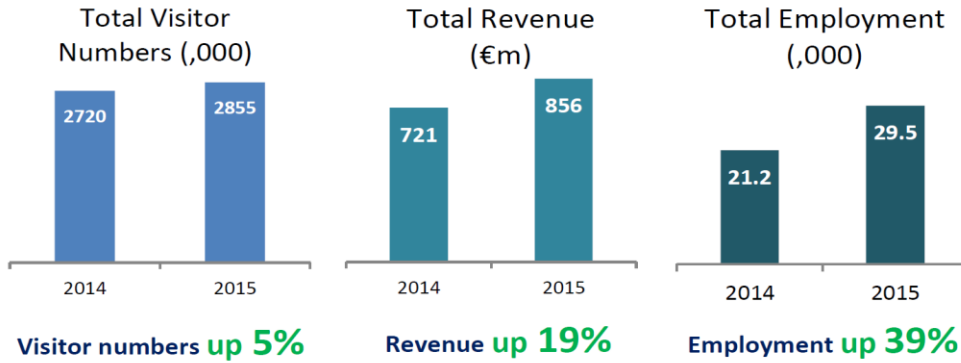
### Sectoral Breakdown of Employment as at Q2 2016

(see chart above)

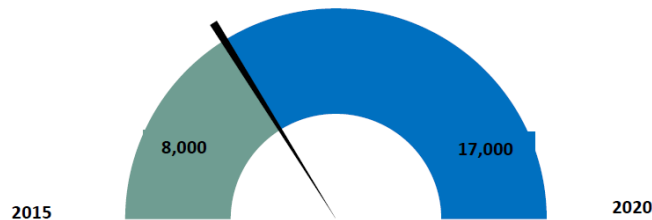
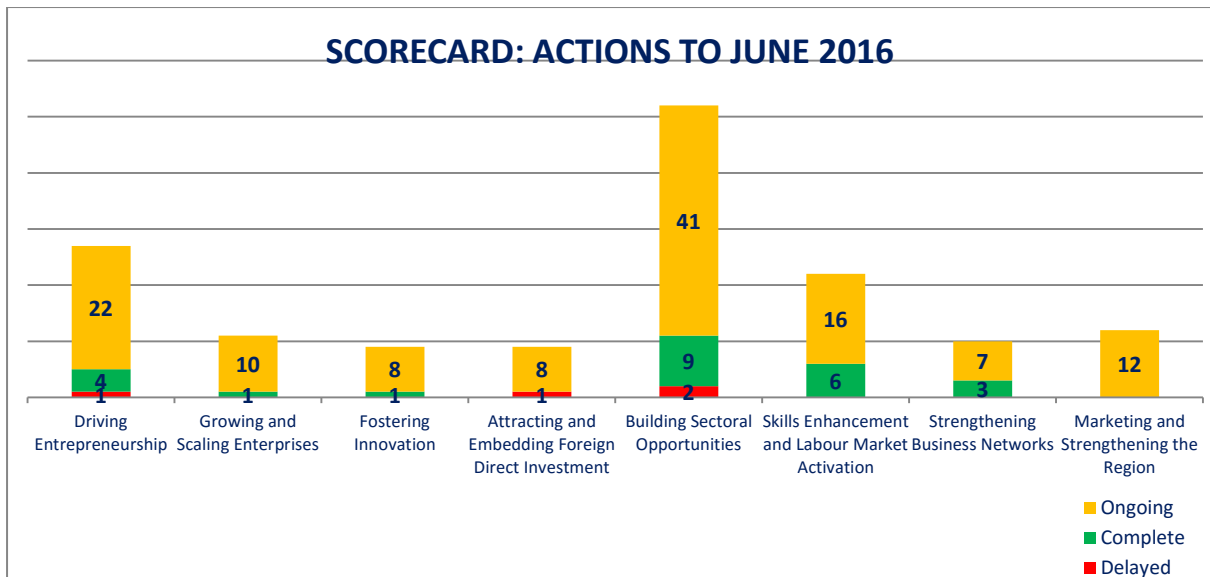
- There were 185,000 people in employment in the West region in Q2 2016
- **Industry**, employing 30,200, was the largest sector
- **Wholesale & retail**, employing 25,500, was the second largest sector
- **Human health and social work** was the third largest at 23,100; however it has also seen the largest decrease in numbers employed (down 4,200) since Q1 2015
- Since the start of 2015, **Accommodation and food services** has seen the largest increase in numbers employed of any sector in the region, almost doubling from 8,300 in Q1 2015 to 16,300 in Q2 2016
- Employment in **Wholesale and retail** has seen the second largest increase (up 2,300) since Q1 2015

Source: CSO QNHS Q2 2016: Persons aged 15 and over in employment (ILO) classified by sex, region and NACE Rev. 2 Economic Sector

## Tourism in the West 2014 -2015



## SCORECARD: ACTIONS TO JUNE 2016



**Jobs Target-  
APJ West Region Q1 2015 to Q2 2016**

### **Actions due by June 2016 (H1 2016)**

By the first half of 2016, Departments and Agencies have already delivered, or are on track for delivering, on time, 147 of the West Regions Action Plan's 194 actions. Only four actions that were due to be delivered by June 2016 will not now be delivered.

## OPENING COMMENTARY

This is the first Progress Report from the Implementation Committee established by the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation to oversee and monitor implementation of the measures contained in the West Region Action Plan for Jobs 2015-2017. The report outlines progress made on measures due for completion up to and including the first half of 2016, as well as progress made on measures that are ongoing during the 2015-2017 period of the Action Plan.

The Action Plan for Jobs for the West Region was launched by the Taoiseach on November 16<sup>th</sup>, 2015, to help progress a key priority for Government – to deliver local jobs and ensure every region achieves its economic potential. This will be achieved through the delivery of 194 collaborative actions focusing on increasing the number of start-up as well as developing the capacity of existing enterprises, with actions targeted at sectors of potential competitive advantage in the West such as agri-food, tourism, medtech, ICT and pharma.

The core objective of the Plan is to support the creation of an extra 25,000 jobs across Galway, Mayo and Roscommon by 2020. This represents an important step towards the Government's ambition of creating 200,000 extra jobs by 2020, with 135,000 of these to be outside Dublin.

The plans are monitored and driven in each region by Implementation Committees, comprising representatives from the Enterprise Sector, as well as the Local Authorities, Enterprise Agencies, and other public bodies in the region. The West Implementation Committee is chaired by Gerry Kilcommins, Vice President Medtronic & General Manger of Medtronic Galway.

In spite of the recovery in employment numbers nationally in the last two years, the West region has yet to see a sustained increase in the numbers at work. Nonetheless, the CSO statistics for Q2 2016 show that there were 185,000 people in employment and the Unemployment Rate had fallen to 9.5%, compared to a high of 17% in 2012, at the start of the National Action Plan for Jobs process.

While the Unemployment Rate was above the national average of 8.6%, the figures are converging towards that of the national average, and the West has seen a decline in the number of unemployed persons (2,200) over the year to Q2 2016. Whilst unemployment is decreasing, there is still a body of work to do for the region. The work of the West APJ Implementation Committee is in bringing all the parties in the region together to rally around this exercise and boost jobs potential in the region.

## KEY HIGHLIGHTS



**11 projects in the West have been successful in securing funding through Enterprise Ireland Regional Competitive Calls (See below; and Action 8 )**



**A new IDA Advance Technology Building is under construction in Castlebar**, due for completion in November, and a number of other investments in the West have been announced in 2015/2016, including Zimmer, Phenox, Moss Vision (MedTech), Shopify, IDT911, IIR (Technology), Apple (Data Centre), and Ipswitch & Wayfair expansion (Technology) **(Actions 63 & 66)**



The **Regional Skills Forum for the West has been established**, and a Forum Manager appointed **(Action 147)**



**A capital programme and international and domestic marketing is underway for the Wild Atlantic Way**; Failte Ireland are also implementing a series of new initiatives that link aquaculture and fisheries producers with tourism interests and food businesses **(Actions 81, 82 & 85)**



Galway has been successful in securing the title of **European Capital of Culture 2020**. Its theme is 'Making Waves – Landscape, Language and Migration', and total budget for the project will be **€45.75 million (Action 104)**



**A number of H2020, Ocean EraNet and INTERREG projects, totalling €1.2m**, have been funded which will support developers and manufacturers of sensors, connectors and ocean energy developers to deploy their technologies at the **SmartBay Test Site in Galway Bay (Action 60)**



**Bord Iascaigh Mhara Bord (BIM) has approved €476,995 in capital funding for the seafood sector**, in addition to supplying Training and Mentoring programmes in the Western region **(Action 121)**



**The NSAI Galway regional office has been established**, aiming to support MedTech, Pharma and ICT clusters by providing a strong presence of local access to technical and clinical experts servicing medical device certification **(Action 77)**



**'Creative Momentum', a new €2 million EU INTERREG funded project** to support the Creative Industries in the Western Region (with Northern Ireland, Finland, Sweden & Iceland) **commenced in 2016** with the launch of the Creative Steps 2.0 innovation process, and the Creative Hotspots programme **(Action 140)**

### Enterprise Ireland Competitive Calls

€50 million is being made available to the 8 regions out to 2020 through three competitive calls administered by Enterprise Ireland. These calls are being targeted at innovative and collaborative approaches to support job creation across the regions. On June 1<sup>st</sup> 2016, the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, Mary Mitchell O'Connor T.D., announced an initial allocation of €5m in competitive funding for local and regional initiatives under the LEO Competitive Fund and the Community Enterprise Initiative. Among the 48 projects allocated funding to date are:

- an initiative by the LEOs in the West to create a gateway to the lucrative London market for West-based micro food and drinks enterprises, through a shared co-opetition logistics and

market development model (lead by Galway LEO in collaboration with Mayo, Roscommon, and others)

- ‘iFactory West’, an initiative by the LEOs in the West to scale up 30 companies with growth potential across the West region through an intensive innovation programme suited to their needs; (lead by Mayo LEO in collaboration with Roscommon LEO, Galway LEO, WestBIC and others)
- the Graduate Internship for Entrepreneurship Programme to transfer new skills and approaches to graduates in the West, Midlands and North East/ North West (lead by Leitrim LEO in collaboration with Roscommon, Cavan, Longford and others)
- an initiative that will provide the opportunity for shared learning, dynamic trade development and knowledge transfer in the creative sector, resulting in job creation and greater sustainability of the often challenged creative sector with a specific emphasis on craft (lead by Leitrim LEO in collaboration with Roscommon, Cavan, Longford and others)
- Galway Chamber of Commerce have been awarded funding to develop the PorterShed – a tech hub and co-working space, involving collaboration with the Western Innovation Network, in order to kick-start the Galway City Innovation District
- IRD Kiltimagh have received funding to promote how CECs can better support local start-up projects
- ‘Enterprise-Goal’, an innovative collaborative partnership established by Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology, National GAA Community Development, Urban and Rural Work Group, Galway County GAA Board and Communities Creating Jobs, to develop an Enterprise-Goal network in order to harness the GAA as a vehicle for enterprise development in communities in the West;
- ‘Love Castlebar Community Project Limited’: a Community Creative Hub providing a unique regional innovation ecosystem for local innovators, artists and entrepreneurs to create, launch and scale exciting new ventures;
- Ballinasloe Area Community Development Limited has been allocated funding for projects to create and sustain employment and economic growth in Ballinasloe and the surrounding hinterland.
- SCCUL Enterprise has been awarded funding to pilot national development of a volunteer mentor panel
- Opportunity in a Million Ltd have been approved €250,000 to develop an Enterprise Hub in Monksland, Co Roscommon

Further funding calls will be announced in early 2017. Enterprise Ireland also ran a Competitive Feasibility Fund for Galway, Mayo and Roscommon in 2015 to assist new start-up companies or entrepreneurs to investigate the viability of a new growth-orientated business proposition which has the potential to become a High Growth Potential Start-up. In Q1 2016, 13 companies /

entrepreneurs (8 from Galway, 3 from Mayo and 2 from Roscommon) were awarded Competitive Feasibility Funding of €199,950 under this call.

### **Local Enterprise Offices**

The Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) in Galway, Mayo and Roscommon play an important role in job creation. They are an excellent example of a collaborative partnership between the LEOs, Enterprise Ireland, Local Authorities and their parent Departments, in delivering supports and signposting to start ups, microenterprise and small businesses nationwide. Through the efforts of the West LEOs, a total of 496 jobs (gross) were created in the West in 2015.

### **Regional Skills Forum**

The Department of Education and Skills has established a network of 9 Regional Skills Fora to foster greater engagement between the education and training system, employers and other enterprise stakeholders in building the skills of each region.

The Regional Skills Fora provide a vehicle for close co-operation at regional level between education and training providers and enterprise, between different education and training providers themselves, and also provide a local link with the implementation of other strategies such as the Regional Action Plan for Jobs and Pathways to Work.

The Regional Skills Forum for the West is comprised of: Galway Roscommon Education Training Board, Mayo Education Board, Skillnets in region Training, Galway Mayo Institute of Technology, National University Ireland Galway, Local Enterprise Offices, Intreo, IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, Western Development Commission, Údarás na Gaeltachta, Fáilte Ireland, Department Social Protection, Recruitment Agencies.

### **NUI Galway enters top 250 global universities**

NUI Galway climbed 22 places to 249 in the QS World University Ranking 2016/2017. This is the fourth consecutive year in which NUI Galway has risen in this annual league table. Among the Irish Universities NUI Galway also secured the highest amount of funding during the first nine months of the EU's Horizon 2020 funding programme in 2015, including the €4.8 million ROCSAFE project which will develop robotics and intelligent reasoning to gather forensic evidence. A major investment by NUI Galway in clinical training across the West/North West region has seen new Medical Academies coming on stream in Mayo, Sligo and Donegal.

### **Horizon2020 funding for WestBIC client**

A WestBIC bid on behalf of a West region client and their consortium has secured the approval of €2.7m of Horizon2020 funding. Now at pre-contract stage, the funds will support the innovation plans of the consortium in the Energy sector. WestBIC are also pursuing several other avenues for participation by WestBIC clients in Internationalisation opportunities through European Business and Innovation Centre Network (EBN) consortia. The avenues being pursued entail linkage to transnational consortia to find opportunities for clients for low cost access to buyers, technology and partnerships to enhance their internationalisation ambitions.

### **National Broadband Plan (Progress to June 2016)**

The National Broadband Plan (NBP) aims to deliver high speed services to every city, town, village and individual premises in Ireland. The Programme for a Partnership Government commits to the

delivery of the NBP as a matter of priority. This is being achieved through private investment by commercial telecommunications companies and through a State intervention in areas where commercial investment is not forthcoming.

The procurement process formally commenced in December 2015 with the publication of the Pre-Qualification Questionnaire and Project Information Memorandum. Five responses were received from prospective bidders to this stage of the competitive procurement process by the deadline of 31 March 2016. These responses have been evaluated by the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources from a technical, financial and legal compliance perspective. A number of companies have qualified to proceed to the next stage of the procurement process, in which qualified bidders will be invited to formally dialogue with the Department, based on detailed schedules drawn up by the Department.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **Medical and Engineering Technology (MET) Gateway**

Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT) launched its new Enterprise Ireland funded Medical and Engineering Technology (MET) Gateway ([www.metcentre.ie](http://www.metcentre.ie)) in June at an industry open day on the GMIT Galway campus.

GMIT's new MET Gateway is an interdisciplinary technology gateway providing world class solutions for SMEs and large organisations across the MedTech and general manufacturing sectors. Based at GMIT's Galway campus, the Gateway offers a range of applied technologies relevant to the engineering design and clinical application phase. By actively engaging with clinical and industry partners, MET produces both knowledge and technology solutions across a range of streams relevant to industry. The MET Gateway in GMIT is a very valuable addition to the Technology Gateway Network and will deliver near to market innovative solutions to companies in the medical device and engineering sectors not just in the West of Ireland but nationwide.

### **Wayfair**

Wayfair Inc., one of the world's largest online destinations for home furnishings and décor, announced in May the expansion of its multi-lingual European Operations Centre in Galway, Ireland. The company will create approximately 160 new jobs in the Galway area as it scales its workforce to keep pace with rapid growth in Europe. To accommodate the expanding team, Wayfair will open a new 30,000 square foot facility on Tuam Road. New employees will join Wayfair's 200 existing Galway-based team members.

### **Surmodics**

In June 2016, the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise & Innovation Mary Mitchell O'Connor TD announced the creation of 100 new jobs by Lifesciences technologies company Surmodics. It follows the company's acquisition of Creagh Medical in Ballinasloe Co. Galway in November 2015. The company plans to develop the Ballinasloe operations, by investing more than €7 million in facility development, including the recently acquired building, and creating 100 new jobs above the current base of 32 over the next five years. The company will invest a further €9.5 million in two significant research and development (R&D) projects in its new Galway facility.



## **Chanelle Group**

In February, Chanelle Pharmaceuticals announced a €70m investment and the creation of 175 jobs over the next 5 years as it expands manufacturing capacity by 30,000 square feet at its Loughrea headquarters and invests in research and development to meet global demand for the company's market-leading pharmaceuticals and new products. This will bring Chanelle's workforce in the West of Ireland to over 550 people.

## **CBE**

CBE, the Mayo-based retail software company, earlier this year announced the creation of 40 new jobs due to major expansion in the UK and significant contract wins in Ireland. The jobs will be based primarily at CBE's international head office in Claremorris. Through its current expansion and development plan, CBE will employ 150 people by the end of 2017. Set up in 1980, CBE have grown to become the largest retail IT company in Ireland.

## **Sportlomo**

In June 2016, County Mayo based sports technology firm, Sportlomo, announced the creation of 25 jobs, following a €270,000 angel investment from West by Northwest. The company makes software for the administration of amateur sports and is used by 52 sports organisations to manage player data and league competitions. The Sportlomo investment was co funded by Enterprise Ireland, which invested in Sportlomo earlier this year as part of a €500,000 funding round with private investors.

## **Alexion Pharmaceuticals**

In July 2016, Alexion Pharmaceuticals announced the creation of 50 new jobs for Monksland. The news, which represents a significant economic boost for Roscommon, comes as part of a €100 million investment by Alexion Pharmaceuticals in a significant expansion of its Athlone operations. It will mean that more than 100 people will be employed at the site.

## **New Transatlantic Cable for Mayo**

In what is the country's first dedicated transatlantic modern subsea fibre optic cable, a \$300million cable, backed by Aqua Comms and coming through Killala, is expected to bring significant investment to the county. The improved internet capabilities will come as a boon to content providers, global data centres and cloud networks, which represent some of the major tech employers in the country. The connection point was opened by An Taoiseach Enda Kenny last year, with hopes that it can foster the creation of thousands of indirect jobs.

The transatlantic cable is able to handle one-third of the world's phone calls, the most advanced of its kind crossing the Atlantic. It will hook up New York and Mayo directly, with Dublin, London and the rest of Europe joining in. Upon completion, the Hibernia Express cable will connect Halifax, Nova Scotia, to Slough in the UK. (This article was originally published on [www.siliconrepublic.com](https://www.siliconrepublic.com/comms/2015/08/14/mayo-due-super-fast-internet-with-us300m-transatlantic-cable) and can be found at: <https://www.siliconrepublic.com/comms/2015/08/14/mayo-due-super-fast-internet-with-us300m-transatlantic-cable>.)

## **BREXIT (Position at end-June 2016)**

The UK decision will not take effect for some time and the precise implications of the referendum result will now depend on the period of negotiation ahead, involving the UK and our EU partners.

Government has a clear plan in place to respond to the referendum outcome and has a Contingency Framework which maps the key issues that will be most important to Ireland in the coming weeks, months and years, including the future changing trading relationship between the UK and Ireland, and the protection of jobs here, both of which are of course interlinked. The Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation is fully engaged in the risk analysis and contingency planning work that is being undertaken at cross-Government level, led by the Department of the Taoiseach.

The Government, the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation and the enterprise agencies are fully committed to supporting business in this period of heightened uncertainty; however, this is being done against the background of a strong economy and a highly competitive enterprise sector.

There have been multiple contacts already between IDA and Enterprise Ireland and their respective senior business clients. Enterprise Ireland, has already set up a helpline and email address to provide assistance to its clients, and will implement a range of plans to assist Irish exporters. In addition, EI will fine-tune existing support tools to address new UK market conditions. The IDA will continue to market Ireland across the globe as the number one location for foreign direct investment.

## **MEASURES NOT DELIVERED AS PLANNED BY JUNE 2016**

As stated above, 4 of the actions due for delivery by June 2016 have not been delivered on schedule:

**Action 31:** Rationalisation of institutional resources has meant that it is not possible to deliver the Spirit of Entrepreneurship event in 2016. In this context Maria Staunton, GMIT Innovation Hub (Mayo) Manager and John Magee, Head of Mayo Enterprise (Acting) have collaborated with the various partners at Mayo Ideas Lab on a replacement 'Spirit of Innovation' event. This will be delivered as part of the annual Mayo Ideas Week initiative.

**Action 72:** Connect Ireland's 'Connectivation' competition has been postponed due to contractual issues; a further update will be provided in H2 2016.

**Action 117:** Due to a re assignment of staff resources in Tesco, delivery of the Tesco Taste Buds project (delivered together with Bord Bia) has been delayed until H2 2016.

**Action 134:** Due to delays in securing appropriate data, the completion of a renewable energy (biomass) analysis and actions for the West has been delayed. A further update will be provided in H2 2016.

## ACTION UPDATES

### DRIVING ENTREPRENEURSHIP & GROWING BUSINESS

#### PROGRAMMES AND MEASURES TO SUPPORT START-UPS AND EARLY STAGE ENTREPRENEURS

**Action 1:** Enterprise Ireland will increase enterprise formation in the West through initiatives such as Enterprise Start workshops, the New Frontiers Entrepreneurial Development Programme, Competitive Feasibility Fund and Competitive Start Fund

**Status:** Ongoing

#### Progress Update:

Regional enterprise development and start-up formation are supported by a range of players at a regional level, such as the Local Enterprise Offices, the Local Authorities, the BICs, Udaras na Gaeltachta, the Higher Education Sector and Enterprise Ireland. To contribute to supporting start-up creation nationally, Enterprise Ireland provides a range of supports which are available regionally; for example as referenced above:

**Enterprise Start Workshops:** These workshops target people who have an idea for an innovative and ambitious start-up business that has the potential for exporting and growth in International Markets. The objective of these workshops is to explore key business areas of focus, such as customer, market and funding needs. Enterprise Ireland ran an Enterprise Start Workshop in the West Region in 2015 with 10 participants. A second Enterprise Start programme took place in April 2016 with 14 people attending.

**New Frontiers Entrepreneurial Development Programme:** New Frontiers is Enterprise Ireland's national entrepreneur development programme for innovative, early-stage startups. It is a three-phased programme, based in 14 campus incubation centres across the country. Nationally, each year, New Frontiers funds approximately 150 companies. In the West Region, New Frontiers is delivered by the Galway Mayo Institute of Technology in Castlebar and Galway, in partnership with Enterprise Ireland. In 2015 - 50 people participated in Phase 1 (6 weeks part-time); 14 projects progressed to Phase 2 (6 months full time); and 10 progressed to Phase 3 (3 months full time approx). In 2016 Enterprise Ireland's Board approved the funding of a revised New Frontiers programme for the period 2016-2020; with this approval in place, GMIT has been issued with a funding contract to deliver the programme in the West Region.

**Competitive Feasibility Fund:** See Action 5 for further detail.

**Competitive Start Fund:** The purpose of the Competitive Start Fund is to accelerate the growth of start-up companies that have the capability to succeed in global markets through the provision of €50,000 seed capital per company against a €5k matched funding. In 2015 Enterprise Ireland provided Competitive Start Funding to 14 companies in the West Region.

**Action 2:** Údarás na Gaeltachta will implement measures to support early stage business with a particular focus on regional competitive advantage in specific sectors, including cultural tourism, audio-visual and digital technology, marine resources, niche manufacturing, food beverages and creative language-based services

**Status: Ongoing**

**Progress Update:**

To support early stage businesses with a focus on these sectors, Údarás na Gaeltachta is promoting/publicising the supports available to Gaeltacht based clients, either from Údarás itself or in conjunction with Enterprise Ireland. Údarás is particularly keen to attract new start-ups in the life science, food, business support services and creative sectors. As part of their promotional activities, Údarás personnel have taken part in a number of sector specific trade missions in Food, Aquaculture and Cultural Tourism to the UK and USA.

Additionally Údarás highlighted supports to the Digital Media sector through participation in the Celtic Media Festival and support of the Creative Desk Europe (Media Office, Galway). Údarás has strong linkages to the Med Tech sector in the West, which is hugely important for the promotion of the Life Science sector in the Gaeltacht. Marketing and promotional activities have been continually updated via all media platforms with regular updates, features and promotional pieces creating awareness and profile raising for the support packages available.

**Action 3:** Each of the Local Enterprise Offices in the West region will develop an annual Local Enterprise Development Plan, setting out targets and objectives to support start-ups and enterprises in their region. Key aggregate targets for the West LEOs for 2015 are: - €1.3 million will be available in grant assistance and enterprise development supports; - 19 Start Your Own Business courses will be run, for over 184 participants; - Over 560 clients will be assigned Start-up mentors; - Over 520 clients will be assigned Business Development mentors; - Over 400 women will participate on core LEO training programmes (Start Your Own Business, Accelerate, Hi Start, Export Awareness, Lean, Mentoring); - 46 schools will participate in Student Enterprise programme.

**Status: Ongoing**

**Progress Update:**

LEO	2015: Client Nos.	2015: Client All Jobs Total (FT+PT)	2015: Gross All Job Gains (FT+PT)	2015 Net All Job Gains (FT+PT)
Galway	245	900	183	87
Mayo	208	1141	168	141
Roscommon	146	666	145	46
<b>Total</b>	<b>599</b>	<b>2707</b>	<b>496</b>	<b>274</b>

In 2015, the following were provided/delivered by LEOs in the West:

- €1.2m was approved to 58 projects for priming, feasibility and business expansion grants, and €386k was allocated for enterprise development supports.
- 19 Start Your Own Business courses were completed with over 200 participants.
- Over 460 mentor assignments were completed.
- Over 1,050 female participants in all LEO training programmes.
- Over 1,560 students from 39 schools participated in Student Enterprise programmes.

2016 Plans are awaiting approval. Implementation of these plans is ongoing and on track to meet identified targets.

**Action 5:** Enterprise Ireland will assist new start-up companies/entrepreneurs in the region, using a €200,000 Competitive Feasibility Fund for the West Region launched in September 2015

**Status:** Complete

**Progress Update:**

Enterprise Ireland offers feasibility funding for business start-ups in various sectors and geographic regions. The objective of the Competitive Feasibility Fund for the West Region was to assist new start-up companies or entrepreneurs to investigate the viability of a new growth-orientated business proposition which has the potential to become a High Growth Potential Start-up in counties Galway, Mayo or Roscommon. In Q1 2016, 13 companies/entrepreneurs (8 from Galway, 3 from Mayo and 2 from Roscommon) were awarded Competitive Feasibility Funding of €199,950 under this call.

**Action 7:** Run a national pilot entrepreneurial development programme to target up to 50 women based in rural locations

**Status:** Complete

**Progress Update:**

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine rolled out the female entrepreneur development programme (ACORNS) in 2015 for aspiring rural female entrepreneurs, to help them achieve their business growth ambitions and help provide beneficial outcomes for rural areas. This programme ran up to April. ACORNS 2 is scheduled to run from October 2016 to April 2017. The following applicants from the west region were successful in 2015: Sligo – 3, Donegal – 3, Galway – 4, Leitrim – 1 & Clare – 1

**Action 8:** Enterprise Ireland will support and monitor successful applicants under the €5 million Community Enterprise Initiative Scheme launched in 2015

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Incubation space for start-ups and entrepreneurs in the West region is a key piece of the start-up ecosystem. In mid-2015 Enterprise Ireland launched the Community Enterprise Initiative. The scheme focused on three elements - Collaboration Initiatives; Renovation Projects; and support for Business Development Managers. Via a national competitive call process, this initiative aims to provide supports for Community Enterprise Centres and other enterprise centres, such as those in the West, to collaborate to utilise and promote their infrastructure to assist in driving start-ups and entrepreneurship in the region.

7 applicants were successful in the West:

- **IRD Kiltimagh Ltd, Mayo:** Promote how CECs can better support local start-up projects
- **SCCUL Enterprise, Galway:** Pilot national development of volunteer mentor panel
- **Galway-Mayo IT (GMIT), Galway:** 'Enterprise Goal' is a partnership with GAA to develop a network to promote enterprise in the community
- **Love Castlebar Community Project, Mayo:** Community Creative Hub for new ideas and projects using the 'dream-learn-make-grow' principle
- **Galway Chamber of Commerce, Galway:** The PorterShed is a tech hub and co working space, involving collaboration with the Western Innovation Network, to kickstart the Galway City Innovation District
- **Ballinasloe Area Community Development, Galway:** A number of community enterprise development projects
- **Opportunity in a Million Ltd:** Develop a high speed Enterprise Hub in Monksland, Co Roscommon

**Action 9:** The local authorities in the West region will each develop and publish a Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) to support economic development and local community development in their administrative regions

**Status:** Complete

**Progress Update:**

The purpose of the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) is to identify and implement actions to strengthen and develop the economic and community dimensions of each Local Authority area.

LECPs for all three Local Authorities have been adopted as follows:

**Mayo LECP** was published in July 2015. The economic element of the Plan considers the context, strengths and opportunities for economic development in Mayo and identifies a three-pronged approach to realising the economic potential of the County- Supporting and Growing the Indigenous Sector, Sustaining/Attracting New Inward Investment, and Developing a Culture of Entrepreneurship.

**Galway County LECP** was also adopted in 2015. Its objectives under developing Employment and Enterprise are focused on Small Enterprise and Community Services, Rural Enterprise and Farm Diversification, Infrastructural Investment, Development of the former Galway Airport Site, Improving the Business Environment, and Labour Market Activation.

**Roscommon County Council** published its LECP in June 2016. Targeted outcomes for economic development are focused on increasing employment rates, improving environmental sustainability indicators, and improving educational attainment rates.

**Action 10:** The West Local Authorities will develop Business Incentive Schemes (e.g. Rates Incentive Scheme, Development Levies Scheme) to support enterprise

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

A Rates Incentive Scheme adopted by Galway County Council May 2016. The scheme aims to support the use of vacant commercial premises in the principal towns of the county.

Roscommon County Council has developed a Business Incentive Scheme to support enterprise, including an Incentive for new businesses to locate in vacant commercial premises for a 5 year period, and an Early Payment Incentive for the SME sector. Both incentives are subject to terms and conditions.

Preparatory work has begun in Mayo with a view to introducing a rates incentive scheme to support enterprise in Mayo.

**Action 11:** Local Development Strategies for the delivery of the LEADER programme will be developed covering the period 2015-2020

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

The LEADER programme supports the delivery of local development actions in rural communities which seek to promote social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development. It is supported by funding from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and is co-financed by the National Rural Development Programme.

Mayo Local Development Strategy has been approved by the Independent Selection Committee (ISC) and contracts signed with the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) Local Action Group and Implementing Partners on 8th July 2016. Animation commenced from 1st August, with the programme open to expressions of interest from 1st September 2016.

Galway Connemara Local Development Strategy has been submitted to POBAL and is awaiting decision of the ISC.

The Roscommon Local Development Strategy was approved in H12016 and is being delivered by Roscommon Leader Partnership.

**Action 14:** Galway, Mayo and Roscommon LEOs will provide access to dedicated business networks at a regional, national and European level in collaboration with other bodies and agencies

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

MeetWest will be held in Claremorris, Co. Mayo in November 2016. MeetWest is a business networking event that is in its sixth year and is delivered by a partnership for business between the Local Authorities, Local Enterprise Offices and State Development Agencies in Galway, Mayo and Roscommon. The event aims to connect people, create opportunities and promote business across all sectors in the West. It is the largest business networking event in the West of Ireland and

brings together a range of companies from the West and further afield, highlighting the range of companies operating successfully in the region, recognising the potential synergies between businesses operating in the region and how they can support one another. The event itself is structured around a conference, information sessions, showcases, and networking opportunities. The LEOs have also supported participation in local networks and the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN).

**Action 16:** In addition to delivering the New Frontiers programme Galway Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT) will work with Enterprise Ireland and the LEOs to design and develop a new start-up programme targeted at entrepreneurs

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

GMIT completed several engagements with Galway and Roscommon County Councils to discuss options for the provision of specific start-up supports for companies based in these regions. Options were scoped out and a proposal submitted to Roscommon County Council. Proposals to co-deliver supports in regional centres are still under consideration by Galway County Council.

**Action 17:** GMIT will pilot a programme to develop the existing Graduate Entrepreneurship Culture foundation to lead to increased start-up opportunities for graduates in the region

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

85 GMIT students from all 5 Campuses applied for the GMIT Student Innovation Awards with 13 shortlisted for the pitching competition in March 2016. Two GMIT student enterprise start-up projects were shortlisted for Enterprise Ireland awards. GMIT's Level 9 Certificate in Food Innovation and Entrepreneurship attracted 35 participants in 2016 in Galway and Mayo, successfully encouraging food start-up enterprises amongst graduates.

**Action 18:** Enterprise Ireland will agree and implement a Service Level Agreement with WestBIC, to ensure their interaction with start-ups in the West region is deepened and the value maximised

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

During 2015, Enterprise Ireland invited submissions from the four Business Innovation Centres (BICs) in Ireland on a proposed Service Level Agreement. Following a review of these submissions, including one from WestBIC, Enterprise Ireland developed and issued a draft Service Level Agreement to WestBIC during H1 2016. It is envisaged that the Service Level Agreement will be delivered in H2 2016.



## ACCESS TO FINANCE FOR START-UPS AND EARLY STAGE ENTERPRISES

**Action 19:** Provide risk capital to micro, small and medium sized and social enterprises in their start-up and expansion phases through the WDC Investment Fund

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

2,200 jobs have been supported in recent years. Approximately €1.5 m was disbursed by the Western Development Commission in 2015, to the following projects: Health Ltd, Amatech Group Ltd, Altocloud Ltd, Atak Sports, Bay Sports, Neuravi Ltd, Ovagen Group Ltd, Syncrophi Systems Ltd, Vivasure Medical Ltd, Drumshanbo Town Enhancements Ltd, Rossinver Youth Project Ltd, Carrabane PreSchool, Jackie Maurer Ceramics, Jennifer Lawlor, Laura Vaughan Design Studio.

**Action 20:** As part of its regionally delivered Finance for Growth workshop series, Enterprise Ireland will run a workshop on Export Finance in Galway in the second half of 2015

**Status:** Complete

**Progress Update:**

Enterprise Ireland runs a series of Finance for Growth workshop throughout the country. The objective of these workshops is to demonstrate how financial information could be used to assist in strategic decisions that will help grow a business. In 2015, Enterprise Ireland ran a Finance for Growth workshop in Galway which was attended by 27 people. In 2016 Enterprise Ireland plan to run three Finance for Growth workshops in the West Region (see the following link for schedule: <https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/Events/OurEvents/Finance-for-Growth>).

**Action 21:** Promote national supports available to provide access to finance to start-ups and existing companies

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Enterprise Ireland have used a range of channels to make entrepreneurs and existing companies aware of the range of supports available to provide access to finance. These have included 1-1 consultations with executives of Enterprise Ireland (regionally & nationally based), briefing seminars, provision of relevant literature, attendance at exhibitions & conferences to promote the supports to new audiences, promotion through social media (regionally & nationally) and via eZines.

**Action 22:** Further strengthen the roll out of the Angels Programme (HBAN) in the West and North West to increase the flow of Private Equity and Smart Capital to match and increase the multiplier effect of State funds into innovative Start-ups

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

HBAN is a joint initiative of InterTradeIreland and Enterprise Ireland responsible for the all-island promotion of business angel investment. WestBIC, who deploy the Programme in the West region, have added a full time executive, mobilising a total of €1.75m of Angel Capital into start-ups in 2015. Additionally, a working model is now in place for the recently established West by North West Syndicate with WestBIC managing the Investor Readiness and filtration of Deal Flow in liaison with the Institutes of Technology, Enterprise Ireland, and other partners in the region.

**Action 23:** Enterprise Ireland will support early stage client entrepreneurs to raise investment by holding two Investor Ready Mentor Panel Pitch meetings in the region annually

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Enterprise Ireland ran two Investor Ready Mentor Panel Pitch meetings in the West Region in 2015 which involved 8 entrepreneurs. Another Investor Ready Mentor Panel Pitch meeting took place in April 2016 and a second is due to take place in the second half of 2016. These meetings provide an opportunity to entrepreneurs to get feedback on their trial pitch for investment, prior to a first meeting with a potential investor.

**Action 24:** InterTradeIreland will run its annual Seedcorn Competition on a regional basis, giving companies the opportunity to improve their investor readiness and greatly increase their chances of raising equity

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

A Seedcorn promotion workshop was held in Galway on the 19<sup>th</sup> March. 13 start up companies registered and 9 attended. The workshop which was hosted in the West BIC offices includes an overview of the benefits of the competition including vox pops by venture capitalists and business angels on why companies should enter, an overview of the process, other InterTradeIreland supports and an outline of what investors look for in a business plan.

**Action 25:** InterTradeIreland will host 10 workshops under its “Funding for Growth” initiative in the region to promote all traditional and non-traditional sources of finance to local businesses. Intertrade Ireland will also deliver a series of equity awareness events, including in the West Region, where companies can meet with an equity expert, participate in business planning workshops and learn from venture capital case studies.

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

A Funding for Growth workshop was held in the West region on 12/05/16, a further clinic held on 18/05/16, and an equity advisory clinic held on 14/04/16. An additional Funding for Growth clinic is scheduled for 17/10/16. A Venture Capital Case study has been scheduled for 03/06/16.

**Action 26:** Operate the Community Loan Fund for community and not-for-profit enterprise in the Western region

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Approximately €196,000 in community loan funds was processed by the Western Development Commission in 2015 to Drumshanbo Town Enhancements Ltd & Rossinver Youth Project Ltd.

## REGIONAL EVENTS

**Action 29:** Enterprise Ireland will run one "Project Assessment & Development Day" in 2015 for Start-ups in the West Region in conjunction with WestBIC, LEOs and Údarás na Gaeltachta to assess early stage start-up projects with high potential for growth. Two further such events are scheduled for 2016

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Enterprise Ireland held two Project Assessment & Development Days (PADD), one in Mayo and one in Galway, in 2015. The PADD Panel is made up of executives from the Local Enterprise Office, WestBIC, EI's High Potential Startup Division and EI's Regions and Entrepreneurship Division. Six entrepreneurs participated in the two PADD events in 2015. Three entrepreneurs progressed to Enterprise Ireland with two of these receiving Competitive Start Funding of €50,000 each. One of the entrepreneurs progressing to Enterprise Ireland was originally supported by the Local Enterprise Office in Mayo. One PADD event with three participants took place in Galway during H1 2016 and a further PADD event is planned for H2 2016.

**Action 31:** As part of Mayo Ideas week, the GMIT Innovation in Business Centre (IIBC) in Castlebar, in association with Inc60 and other relevant bodies, will hold the Spirit of Entrepreneurship Event annually. The event brings together experienced entrepreneurs and new innovative start-ups

**Status:** Delayed

**Progress Update:**

Rationalisation of institutional resources has meant that it is not possible to deliver the GMIT-led Spirit of Entrepreneurship event in 2016. In this context Maria Staunton, GMIT Innovation Hub (Mayo) Manager and John Magee, Head of Mayo Enterprise (Acting) have collaborated with the various partners in Mayo Ideas Lab on a replacement 'Spirit of Innovation' event. This will be delivered as part of the annual Mayo Ideas Week initiative, an inter-agency programme involving LEO Mayo, iHub GMIT Castlebar, WestBIC, Údarás na Gaeltachta, South West Mayo Development Company, Mayo North East LEADER Partnership Company and Mayo Education Centre.

## OTHER COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVES

**Action 32:** The Local Development Companies in the region will provide an area-based response to long-term unemployment and deliver a range of programmes to support entrepreneurship and social enterprise. The Development Companies will work with the LEOs and Údarás na Gaeltachta, with a view to progressing clients to the LEO services

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

On Track for Roscommon and Galway City. A series of protocols have been developed between Mayo LEADER Partners, LEO and Udaras in relation to referral & and delivery of enterprise objectives for Mayo. This includes structures to ensure ongoing communications, referrals and collaboration.

**Action 33:** The Local Enterprise Offices and Údarás na Gaeltachta will maximise collaboration with the Community Enterprise Centres to assist start-ups and existing businesses to grow and develop

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Roscommon County Council has met with Community Enterprise Centres to establish a county level forum with the aim of enhancing collaboration between the LEOs, Udaras na Gaeltachta, and the Community Enterprise Centres.

Collaboration is ongoing in Galway with enterprise centres such as Galway City Innovation centre, Burren Enterprise Centre, Hub in Headford, GMIT, and NUIG Innovation Centre.

Mayo LEO is providing bi-monthly outreach clinics in conjunction with a number of CECs throughout the county to facilitate dispersed geographical access to LEO supports and services.

**Action 34:** Enterprise Ireland will work in partnership with Westport Multi-agency Enterprise Ltd to open the new enterprise centre in Westport

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Enterprise Ireland has approved Westport Multi-Agency Enterprise Limited €445,536 to develop an enterprise centre in Westport, Co Mayo. An 8,000sq ft building has been acquired by the local group who plan to issue an invitation to tender for the conversion of the building into a modern enterprise centre during May 2016. It is envisaged that the centre will be completed by H1 2017.

**Action 35:** Compile a comprehensive report on incubation/co-working space across the region with a view to assessing the region's needs in this regard

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Mayo County Council has completed an inventory of vacant industrial units and undeveloped zoned lands that is being updated on a continuous basis. An audit of vacant units and hot-desking facilities in Co. Roscommon is underway. Galway County Council is commencing an audit of incubation/co-working space in County Galway and will co-ordinate with other Local Authorities regarding same before end of H2 2016.

## GROWING AND SCALING ENTERPRISES

**Action 37:** Enterprise Ireland will work with client companies from the region, including high potential start-ups (HPSUs), to accelerate the capacity of HPSUs to scale up and succeed in international markets, and to increase client engagement with the comprehensive suite of supports that Enterprise Ireland offers, including management capability, innovation vouchers and export readiness programmes/market penetration. Enterprise Ireland will provide an annual update on company participation on key programmes to the Regional Implementation Committee.

**Status:** Ongoing

### Progress Update:

A key focus of Enterprise Ireland is to support the establishment of high potential start up companies and to scale up indigenous industry to compete in international markets. In 2015 financial support was provided to seven high potential start up companies in the West Region. In addition investments of €50,000 each were provided to 14 early stage potential high growth projects in the West Region. 89 companies from the West Region were approved a €5,000 Innovation Voucher.

**Action 38:** Enterprise Ireland will launch a competitive call to support significant projects or initiatives to improve or leverage identified enterprise capability in regions across the country

**Status:** Ongoing

### Progress Update:

#### Five thematic Areas of Focus for Regional Competitive Funding Initiative

On the 15th of January 2016, An Taoiseach and the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation announced the five thematic areas that will form the focus of future competitive funding administered under this initiative; these are:

- Establishing Regional Accelerators
- Opportunities to drive greater Company/Sector Collaboration/Clustering in the Regions
- Driving Procurement Opportunities for start-ups and established small businesses
- Strengthening Third-level as a driver of Regional Enterprise
- Strengthening the Start-up ecosystem locally

In the period 2016 and beyond, Enterprise Ireland will roll out a number of competitive calls under this funding initiative in a systematic manner.

#### Underpinning principles of Focus for Regional Competitive Funding Initiative

The underpinning principles for any call under this funding initiative are as follows:

1. All calls will follow that of a transparent competitive call
2. All calls with target industry-driven project/s that leverage identified regional strengths and sectoral opportunities.
3. All calls will be collaborative in nature, (private–private / public–private) in a region or across more than one region. The collaboration may take the form of “clusters” and “enterprise hubs”, a further deepening of SME–Higher Education Sector engagement in regions, and/or formal structures and teams to drive collaborative projects.
4. All calls must be able to demonstrate clear benefits to the enterprise base and region.
5. All calls will require a leveraging of existing resources and clearly demonstrate additionality and

Value for Money.

6. All calls will be aligned to national enterprise policy and Enterprise Ireland corporate strategy

#### **First Call under Regional Competitive Funding Initiative**

The first of these calls, a €3 million Accelerator Development Scheme, to support entrepreneurs in regions outside of Dublin, was launched by Enterprise Ireland on 22nd January 2016. The overall vision of this Scheme is to increase the number of accelerators operating in the Irish market to support entrepreneurship, company creation and job creation in new Manufacturing and Internationally Traded Services companies in Ireland. To realise this vision, the objectives are;

1. To encourage and leverage private sector investment in the provision of accelerator programmes.
2. To leverage domestic and international private sector investment with the objective of enhancing the entrepreneurial eco-system in Ireland.
3. To support the start-up strategies of Enterprise Ireland's sectors with expertise and early stage investment.
4. To seek innovative funding solutions that reflect current international best practice to enhance the accelerator offering available to Irish entrepreneurs or entrepreneurs locating to Ireland seeking to establish new Manufacturing or Internationally Traded Services companies.

**Action 39:** As part of their Global Sourcing initiative, Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland will work together to increase collaboration - including the sourcing of goods - between Multinational and indigenous companies. The agencies will ensure that their clients in the region, where appropriate, are engaged in this initiative

**Status:** Ongoing

#### **Progress Update:**

Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland held a joint agency workshop in February 2016 to discuss the global sourcing initiative. A key outcome was the decision to undertake a Trade Mission to Ireland in May 2016. The Trade Mission involved 180 clients of Enterprise Ireland and 65 clients of IDA Ireland. Over the course of the Mission to Athlone, Sligo and Limerick over 350 one-to-one meetings took place.

**Action 40:** Enterprise Ireland, Údarás na Gaeltachta and IDA Ireland will work together to introduce indigenous enterprise clients to potential FDI investors to highlight possible collaborations for those investors thinking of locating in Ireland

**Status:** Ongoing

#### **Progress Update:**

Enterprise Ireland provides ongoing support by way of information, client profiles and referrals of indigenous companies to support the work of IDA Ireland in promoting and servicing investors thinking of locating in Galway, Mayo or Roscommon. In 2015, 17 EI companies were introduced on IDA itineraries, and 9 to date in 2016. Global Sourcing events, jointly organised by Enterprise Ireland and IDA, were held in Galway in October 2015, and in Athlone May 2016. The purpose of these events is to link Multinationals with Indigenous companies. Many multinationals across both regions participated in the events. IDA has regular interaction with Údarás na Gaeltachta on the

marketing of the Údarás property portfolio.

**Action 41:** Enterprise Ireland will encourage enterprises to enter export markets through its Potential Exporters Division, and will run two “Get Export Ready” workshops in the West Region in 2015-2016

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Enterprise Ireland runs Get Export Ready Awareness Events throughout the country. The purpose of these events is to help companies thinking about exporting for the first time, now, or in the future, to understand the steps that are required to drive their export potential. In addition, information is presented on programmes available to support new and early stage exporters. As part of this event, the Local Enterprise Offices also outline their available supports.

In December 2015, EI held a Get Export Ready Event awareness event in the West Region which was attended by 45 companies and had 50 participants. To maximise the impact of the Get Export Ready awareness event, Enterprise Ireland delivered a follow-on Export Workshop for 12 pre-exporting companies to drive their export capability (the workshop has a maximum capacity of 15 pre-exporting companies).

**Action 42:** WestBIC will source international fast-tracking opportunities for early stage innovative enterprise through its European networks, including partnering, technology transfer and low-cost access to wider markets and international connectivity

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

WestBIC and the Northern and Western Regional Assembly, together with members from their international network recently launched the TRINNO project approved under the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). It aims to apply the benefits of digital innovation (internet presence, mobile technologies, on-line trading, digital manufacturing, Internet of Things, etc.) to SMEs in traditional sectors, thereby promoting competitiveness in EU markets and reducing their dependence on traditional UK markets.

Additionally, a WestBIC bid on behalf of a West region client and their consortium has secured the approval of €2.7m of Horizon2020 funding. Now at pre-contract stage, the funds will support the innovation plans of the consortium in the Energy sector. WestBIC are also pursuing several other avenues for participation by WestBIC clients in Internationalisation opportunities through European Business and Innovation Centre Network (EBN) consortia. The avenues being pursued entail linkage to transnational consortia to find opportunities for clients for low cost access to buyers, technology and partnerships to enhance their internationalisation ambitions.

**Action 43:** InterTradeIreland will host a “Going North” Seminar in the region to promote North/South trade opportunities for local companies

**Status:** Complete



**Progress Update:**

A “Going North” workshop was held on 30th September 2015 at the Breaffy House Hotel in Castlebar. There were 23 companies in attendance. The aim of the workshop was to highlight to the companies present the trade and business opportunities available to them in Northern Ireland. Of the 23 that attended 12 (8 from Mayo and 4 from Roscommon) took part in a follow up visit to Northern Ireland in November and December of that year. A total of 48 meetings with potential customers were arranged. Initial feedback from all the companies involved was very positive with several having done business before they returned home. A further follow up will be carried up to ascertain what level of business was carried out as a result of the initiative.

**Action 44:** InterTradelreland will promote its Acumen and Elevate programmes in the region. ITI will target 9 Acumen approvals in the West, providing financial assistance to local companies to investigate and pursue export opportunities in Northern Ireland

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

8 companies have been approved to date for the Acumen Programme and 3 for Elevate in the region. The activity is ongoing. InterTradelreland and its Acumen regional representative in Connacht hold regular meetings with the LEOs and other stakeholders in the region to promote the full suite of trade programmes available to SMEs to help them identify new cross border sales opportunities. ITI also had two representatives at the Meet West Business Networking Event in Athlone on 18th and 19th November 2015. ITI also participated on the ISME roadshow in Galway in September 2015. ITI also carried out a direct mail initiative to companies in Galway and Roscommon in January 2016 promoting all its trade programmes.

**Action 46:** InterTradelreland will deliver 3 Public Tendering workshops for SMEs over the period 2015-2016 and provide relevant training for local small businesses (target of 75 participants). It will promote public tendering opportunities, including cross border public sector opportunities, and consortia building for larger contracts and below threshold contracts.

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

3 workshops have been delivered for 54 participants in the region in H2 2015 and H1 2016. A new phase of the programme will begin in June 2016. Go2Tender workshops were held in Galway on 12th and 19th May 2015 and attended by 13 company participants. A Public Tendering workshop was held in Galway 9th October 2015, in partnership with Galway County Council, Galway LEO and InterTradelreland, attended by 41 participants. The new Phase 7 programme of Go2Tender will hold workshops in Galway 13th & 27th October 2016.

**Action 47:** In addition to its procurement workshops, InterTradelreland will hold a regional public sector Meet the Buyer event in the West region in 2016 in collaboration with the Office of Government Procurement (OGP)

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

InterTradeIreland are in the process of planning a Health-specific sectoral Meet the Buyer event for Q4 2016.

**Action 48:** Through its Trade Accelerator Voucher scheme, InterTradeIreland will help companies to identify and break down barriers to trade, leading to new export opportunities in Northern Ireland

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

InterTradeIreland have been proactively engaging with the LEOs in the region to promote the Trade Accelerator Voucher Scheme. InterTradeIreland and its Acumen regional representative in Connacht hold regular meetings with the LEOs and other stakeholders in the region to promote the full suite of trade programmes available to SMEs to help them identify new cross border sales opportunities. This includes the Trade Accelerator Voucher Scheme. ITI also carried out a direct mail initiative to companies in Galway and Roscommon in January 2016 promoting all its trade programmes.

**Action 49:** Increase the number of companies in the region who actively participate in research, training & innovation activities by building on two regional Innovation Forums held in the West region in 2014 /2015. The objective is to encourage more peer-to-peer interactions, maximise SME-HEI linkages, and promote and showcase innovation in areas such as people, resources, training and research

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Enterprise Ireland has held two Innovation Fora in Galway to date with over 100 attendees. In addition to these initiatives, increasing Industry/Third Level linkages is an area that Enterprise Ireland supports strongly through its broad range of innovation activities. In this regard, Enterprise Ireland funds NUI Galway through the Technology Transfer Strengthening Initiative. A proposal to fund NUI Galway's activities in this area from 2017-2021 has been made by the college and is currently being considered by Enterprise Ireland.

## FOSTERING INNOVATION

**Action 50:** Enterprise Ireland will promote Innovation supports which are available to companies across the region on an on-going basis.

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Nationally and via Enterprise Ireland's Regional Office, 1-1 engagements, press advertising, events and social media channels are used to promote and increase awareness of national supports available for innovation. Enterprise Ireland takes a lead nationally with the Enterprise Europe Network, Knowledge Transfer Ireland and Horizon 2020, all of which are very active in promoting innovation. In addition, the Enterprise Ireland team promotes the agency's innovation offering to regional enterprise players and companies on a continuous basis.

**Action 51:** GMIT Innovation in Business Centres (iBCs) in Galway and Castlebar and the Business Innovation Centre in NUI Galway will support high potential start-ups to grow and develop through the provision of supports such as incubation space, mentoring and business development training

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Reviews of client companies and provision of supports for start-up and scaling are ongoing which has led to 8 successful Competitive Start Fund awards and 2 High Potential Start-Up funding awards for client companies.

**Action 52:** Develop 'The PorterShed' innovation hub in Galway city centre to provide collaborative co-working spaces for early-stage tech enterprises in ICT, Digital and Gaming sectors as the hub of an Innovation District

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Galway Porter Shed was opened in May 2016. A number of organisations, including the Galway Chamber of Commerce, Port of Galway, Startup Galway, ITAG, WestBIC, GMIT and NUI Galway, have come together to kickstart a new innovation hub as part of a larger initiative called the Galway City Innovation District; The District will be a cluster of Galway City's entrepreneurs, startups, accelerators and incubators. The opening of the Porter Shed marks the start of this development. Galway Chamber of Commerce have also been successful in securing funding through the Community Enterprise Initiative scheme to further develop the this project. Further details at [www.portershed.com](http://www.portershed.com).

**Action 58:** NUI Galway will partner with University of Limerick (UL) and UCC on the BioInnovate Ireland medical technology innovation training programme, with support from Enterprise Ireland through the provision of funds to support the Fellowship aspects of the Programme

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

BioInnovate, based in NUI Galway and partnering with UL and UCC, is supported by Enterprise Ireland. 12 Fellows have been recruited for the coming year. The Fellowship programme runs for 10 months full time, and combines teams of high-calibre Fellows from either a medical, engineering, business or technical graduate background that aim to align unmet clinical needs with a market opportunity. During the process Fellows focus on one specific clinical area, receive mentorship from Industry, Clinicians, VC's, Domain Experts and Academics and are stipend supported by Enterprise Ireland. 55 fellows have graduated since the course was initiated.

**Action 59:** Support farmers, through a series of programmes, to develop new products that add value to farm produce beyond primary processing, including in areas such as renewable energy and innovation

**Status:** Complete

**Progress Update:**

The Teagasc Options for Farm Families Programme is designed to provide new thinking and assist farmers to generate new ideas and generate additional income on and off farm. The programme consists of a series of workshops covering a wide range of topics, delivered by farmers who have successfully diversified along with Teagasc specialists. Follow-up to Options courses from 2015 is on-going. Information sessions for farmers with Clare Local Development Company took place in Clare over the 16th-25th May, and a further Options course is planned for Autumn 2016 in Galway.

**Action 60:** Promote Galway Bay as the national Smart Bay test and demonstration facility with ongoing testing of advanced marine technologies and systems

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

A pipeline of national and international ocean energy device developers has been identified and is being pursued. Sea Power, an Irish SME, has been awarded funding from the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland and Apple to test and validate a prototype wave energy device at the SmartBay test facility in Galway Bay. Other funding applications to test devices at the site through the SEAI Prototype Development Fund and H2020 proposals are under review. Technology From Ideas have recently completed a successful survivability trial in the SmartBay tests site .

A total of 35 projects have been funded through the National Infrastructure Access programme and 4 of these have been supported during the period. A further call which will be funded by the

Marine Institute was announced in May.

A number of H2020, Ocean EraNet and INTERREG projects have been funded which will fund developers and manufacturers of sensors, connectors and ocean energy developers to deploy their technologies at the SmartBay Test Site. The projects total €1.2M. Ongoing promotion and client engagement is underway to attract companies within the marine sector to test and validate sensors and equipment at the facility.

**Action 61:** InterTradeIreland will promote the Fusion programme in the region and will set a target of at least 5 approvals. The Fusion Programme is a technology transfer programme facilitating partnerships between companies, academic institutions and graduates

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

5 companies from the region have been approved for support through the FUSION programme since 1st January 2015. All have subsequently commenced FUSION.

**Action 62:** InterTradeIreland will provide access to its Challenge programme, giving SMEs the opportunity to learn how to develop a culture of innovation through the use of a sustainable and repeatable innovation process

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Challenge remains open to all eligible companies in the region, and is being actively promoted through engagement with the LEOs. Aimed at MD's and CEOs of SMEs, the Challenge Programme allows business owners to transform their company's prospects over nine months by learning and applying the most effective methods of generating, marketing and launching new products and services. After an introductory briefing, companies are selected to take part in workshops and then go through a competitive process, where successful participants are selected for intensive specialist in-house mentoring and support.

## ATTRACTING AND EMBEDDING FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT

**Action 63:** IDA Ireland will deliver a minimum of 92 additional projects for the West Region up to 2019

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

IDA West secured investment approvals across both new and existing companies in a number of sectors during 2015. There was a strong flow of itineraries to the West Region (46 site visits) up from 23 site visits the previous year. This strong flow of itineraries continued into 2016, with 12 visits in Q1. Significant investment announcements in 2015 included: Zimmer, Phenox, Moss Vision (MedTech), Shopify, IDT911, IIR (Technology), and Apple (Data Centre). Announcements in 2016 included Ipswitch & Wayfair expansion (Technology)

**Action 66:** IDA Ireland will continue to market its property solutions throughout the region for FDI investment

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

A new IDA Advance Technology Building is under construction in Castlebar, due for completion in November. IDA has also requested expressions of interest for new Advance Office Buildings in Parkmore & Dangan, Galway during 2016. There has been strong interest, so IDA property is proceeding to tender process. The IDA has been actively marketing its buildings and private sector property in the Region in H2 2015 and H1 2016.

**Action 67:** IDA Ireland will proactively update its online marketing to include “Invest in the West”

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

IDA has updated its Website to include a ‘Business in the West’ Section, ‘Connect & Invest Galway’, and is developing a Castlebar section. Updates of news and company announcements are ongoing, and IDA has been actively maintaining a dedicated IDA West Twitter account.

**Action 68:** Familiarisation visits will be made by relevant overseas IDA Ireland Executives to the West region and to relevant companies in the region to enhance their knowledge of the West in order to market it to potential investors

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Familiarisation visits to the West Region are proactively encouraged to support the marketing of

the region. Visits facilitated in 2015 include: IDA new recruits/winning abroad team (May) and IDA Medical Technologies team (July). Familiarisation visits in 2016 included: IDA overseas and new recruits (January), IDA BioPharma team (March) and IDA New Forms of FDI team (May).

**Action 69:** IDA Ireland will drive its Transformation and R&D programmes with its established base of client companies in the West Region

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

IDA West has been working closely with Operation Divisions across all sectors to ensure existing companies are supported and encouraged to win new investment in R&D, transformation and expansion. To assist companies engage in a transformation programme, IDA West is offering a range of supports such as technology uplifts, skills enhancement, energy improvements, productivity uplift and investments in new facilities and equipment.

**Action 70:** Building on the successful strategy of providing property solutions, Údarás na Gaeltachta will continue a building and refurbishment programme to help support the attraction/expansion of Foreign Direct Investment and Indigenous Investment in the Gaeltacht areas in the West Region

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

A capital programme has been agreed for 2016 to carry out refurbishments for two successful FDI companies (spend in excess of €2m) in the MedTech sector. Others are being planned for the indigenous sector. The other projects proposed are a major infrastructural project (development of an effluent treatment plant on a business park) and a major tourism project. The total estimated value of all projects is in the order of €5.5m. To mitigate against delays in the FDI projects, they have been given priority in the allocation of funds from the available budget.

**Action 71:** Connect Ireland will develop a Regional Connect Ireland Plan that is integrated with the local authorities' enterprise development and job-creation activities and seek a nominated officer from each county in the region for the roll-out of the Plan

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

ConnectIreland have been working individually with Galway City, Galway County, Mayo and Roscommon County Councils to create a diaspora focused business message. In particular ConnectIreland have worked on brochures, videos and newspaper articles promoting a business message aimed at the diaspora. The next step for this project will be to bring together local liaison offers to convert this county focus into an overall regional message. This is scheduled to take place between Q3 and Q4 2016.

**Action 72:** Connect Ireland will announce and run the Connectivation competition, inviting Third Level students to share their ideas for the future development of the Succeed in Ireland initiative

**Status:** **Delayed**

**Progress Update:**

This competition has been postponed due to contractual issues; a further update will be provided in H2 2016.

**Action 73:** Local Authorities will promote investment in key towns across the region, working with IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland and other agencies as appropriate

**Status:** **Ongoing**

**Progress Update:**

Each Local Authority is currently working on the development of value propositions and appropriate marketing material to highlight the attractiveness of their area and encourage investment. This involves working collaboratively with the IDA and other agencies.

Mayo County Council has put in place a detailed 'Invest Mayo' strategy that promotes investment and development throughout the county. Part of this involved the development of value propositions for key sites in Mayo, with work completed on Killala and nearing completion on Swinford. In addition, Mayo County Council highlights the VISIT, CONNECT, INVEST message to promote Mayo's unique selling points through the continued development of Mayo.ie and Global Mayo Day, and through its work on initiatives and projects that link with the Mayo diaspora.

Galway County Council continues to facilitate investment in key towns in Galway through a range of programmes including REDZ, ERDF funding, and Capital Investment Programmes. Galway City is working on a branding initiative, entitled 'Galway Is..' to create a narrative for Galway City that will be used to market and promote the city. Stakeholder events have taken place and the 'brand' will be launched later this year.

Roscommon County Council is meeting with IDA and Enterprise Ireland to ensure strategies are aligned. The development of a marketing strategy for the key towns in the county is under consideration. Town Teams have been established in 6 towns in the county.



## **BUILDING SECTORAL OPPORTUNITIES**

### **MEDTECH, LIFESCIENCES AND ICT**

**Action 74:** Enterprise Ireland - and Údarás na Gaeltachta in the Gaeltacht areas - will target Manufacturing (including MedTech) and Internationally Traded Services companies in the West region with supports to scale, innovate and develop international markets

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Supporting Manufacturing and Internationally Traded Service companies in the West Region to grow is a key focus of Enterprise Ireland. This is achieved by working with client companies on a 1-1 basis to deliver on their business plans. In 2015 over €9.5m in financial support was provided by Enterprise Ireland to support business growth plans of individual companies in the West Region. In addition to this financial support, extra support was provided through access to a range of programmes such as Management & Leadership development, Trade Missions, Selling Opportunity events, Mentoring, providing Market Intelligence and more. In addition to this Enterprise Ireland has been active in the development of the market for risk money, enterprise space, and innovation infrastructure. Some of the funding is provided to schemes nationally that deliver locally while some funding is provided locally. In 2015 over €2.6m was provided directly to 3rd level colleges to enhance innovation in the West Region.

**Action 75:** Enhance Galway and the West region as a world class Medical Device Hub

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

IDA continues to promote the West Region as an international hub for medical devices by facilitating visits to leading MedTech multinationals and indigenous companies in the region, attending events and developing marketing material on the ecosystem. IDA also engages with MedTech research centres (such as the CURAM centre for medical devices at NUIG and Galway Medical Technology Centre at GMIT) and education & training providers (third level colleges and ETBs) to build greater industry links. New announcements in this sector include investments by Phenox, Medtronic, Zimmer and Surmodics which strengthen the hub.

**Action 76:** Run a series of cross sectoral workshops in the region to bring together a number of other sectors with the MedTech sector to explore best practice

**Status:** Complete

**Progress Update:**

Cross sectoral forums were held on 29th Sept 2015 in Galway and 29th March 2016 in Athlone to develop collaboration between The Irish Medical Devices Association's (IMDA) and ICT Ireland's members. The 'IoT (Internet of Things) for Health' group's function is to share, discuss, review and decide on IoT for Health issues and positions affecting the adoption and commercialisation of connected technologies in Ireland. This group will work towards promoting a positive IoT for

Health environment, and ensuring Ireland can become a centre of excellence for digital health that delivers better patient outcomes, improves the efficiency and effectiveness of health and care services, and drives economic growth.

In 2015 Ibec also developed a 'Product Development Best Practice Model' for the industry to benchmark themselves through Tier 2 to Tier 6 on the innovation cycle. In 2016 Ibec are developing 'Fundamentals in Regulatory Affairs' to convert people to Regulatory Affairs function. On a yearly basis Ibec run over 100 programmes for the sector.

**Action 77:** NSAI will establish a Galway regional office to provide a strong presence for local access to technical and clinical experts servicing medical device certification for the MedTech cluster in the West

**Status:** Complete

**Progress Update:**

The National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI) refurbished its Galway office during 2015 and recruited two medical device clinical assessors. Having completed training in Dublin, the new staff took up their positions in the Galway office in 2016.

**Action 79:** Building on the critical mass of existing enterprise, Roscommon County Council will drive a project to develop the industrial zone of Monksland as a BioPharma/MedTech Hub including the development of a 7 unit incubator hub

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

In H2 2015 and H1 2016 Roscommon County Council has entered discussions with private landowners as a starting point to driving this action.

## TOURISM

**Action 81:** Implement the Wild Atlantic Way Operational Programme to deliver on the four high-level goals of the Wild Atlantic Way as outlined in the Operational Programme 2015-2019, viz:

- To ensure that the Wild Atlantic Way is compelling to the target market segments and that the Wild Atlantic Way itself becomes a world-class visitor experience;
- To ensure that the Wild Atlantic Way delivers balanced and sustainable revenue and jobs growth with greater geographic and seasonal spread;
- To ensure that the Wild Atlantic Way delivers benefits to local communities in the west of Ireland and contributes to a better place to live for everyone;
- To ensure that the implementation of the Wild Atlantic Way Operational Programme facilitates the protection and enhancement of the environment of the west of Ireland – as the fundamental asset that is the basis of the Wild Atlantic Way – in association with other key stakeholders.

**Status: Ongoing**

**Progress Update:**

The Wild Atlantic Way is a long term development programme to develop tourism on the West coast of Ireland, create economic and social benefits through job creation and assist sustainable rural and regional development. Actions that have been and will be implemented under the Programme include:

- A capital programme has been launched and visitor experiences developed
- A small grant scheme has been designed to encourage new start-ups, and existing businesses have been upgraded to bring WAW propositions to life
- The route signage programme has been completed
- 188 Discovery Points and interpretation material have been developed
- An environmental monitoring programme has been put in place
- Implementation of a new brand tracker in holiday research to measure proposition awareness.
- Development of 'Motivating Visitor Experiences' which (a) offer compelling reasons to visit the 6 zones of the Wild Atlantic Way and bring the proposition to life; (b) Harness local communities to be advocates of signature experiences along the Wild Atlantic Way; and (c) Create new reasons to visit.

**Action 82:** Market the Wild Atlantic Way internationally and domestically as a world class tourism experience

**Status: Ongoing**

**Progress Update:**

Ongoing activities to market the Wild Atlantic Way internationally and domestically include:

- Implementing a programme to increase international consumer awareness of the Wild Atlantic way brand proposition
- The continuous targeting of international and domestic media
- The management of the 'always on' social media community and outreach partnerships to grow awareness of the Wild Atlantic Way
- The development of new digital content along with new promotional and point of sale materials for WAW businesses to encourage consumer engagement
- Familiarisation trips and learning journeys for trade professionals are arranged on an ongoing basis. These are arranged by tourist boards to encourage tour operators, journalists, and trade professionals to feature a destination or experience in the programmes for sale to potential visitors. They are an essential part of the distribution process of holiday offers.
- Implement a domestic media campaign to encourage domestic consumers to visit the Wild Atlantic Way catchment.

**Action 83:** Promote a new Discover Ireland home holiday campaign for the Lakelands which includes the West region

**Status: Complete**

**Progress Update:**

The Home Holidays team worked closely with the Lakelands team to deliver the following promotional activities in support of the Lakelands region: Today FM Anton Savage 'Ant-on-Deck' week-long outside broadcast from the Lakelands - May 2015; Maximum Media (Joe.ie&Her.ie) Lakelands Autumn digital partnership including native advertorials, reader competition and HPTOs (Home Page Take Over) October 2015; Today FM Anton Savage 'Back-on-Board' week long outside radio broadcast from the Lakelands - April 2016; Independent News and Media native advertorials, reader competition and HPTOs - May 2016.

**Action 84:** Provide a suite of business supports and toolkits both off and online, including [www.failteireland.ie](http://www.failteireland.ie), to help tourism businesses build capability in the areas of Visitor Experience Development, Sales, and Digital marketing with a view to increasing distribution channels and sales

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Fáilte Ireland are currently providing a suite of business supports and toolkits to raise capability of industry clients in key business areas with a specific focus on sales and hospitality related areas in the WAW programme. Some of these supports include:

- The revision and updating of business mentoring supports to reflect sales focus and capability building
- The development of a specific WAW business supports training programme (delivery of this programme is currently ongoing).

**Action 85:** Develop a range of new tourism products and food offerings to link aquaculture and fisheries producers with tourism interests and food businesses in the region

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Fáilte Ireland are currently implementing a series of new initiatives that link aquaculture and fisheries producers with tourism interests and food businesses to stimulate regional dispersion and season extension along the Wild Atlantic Way, to increase volume of stays along the route. The series of new initiatives includes:

The series of new initiatives includes:

- Addressing WAW seasonality and regionality challenges in home holidays buy through a targeted focus domestically on zones north of Galway. Extending the tourism season (seasonality) and encouraging more tourists to visit less visited areas (regionality) directly supports tourism business and enterprises with increased revenue growth, increasing the creation of additional jobs in the industry
- Developing the new WAW passport with An Post offices along WAW: the WAW passport is a new initiative launched end May 2016, the purpose of which is to encourage visitors to visit all areas, including less travelled areas, along the Wild Atlantic Way. Its impact will be measured by recording the sales of the passports by An Post and will be made available to Failte Ireland
- Expanding seafood trail from Bay Coast zone to incorporate the surf coast. Failte Ireland and BIM launched a pilot sea food trail in Galway-Mayo in 2015 which is being extended to Sligo-Donegal this year

- Reviewing regional festivals for brand alignment and seeking new festival initiatives that would be attractive to overseas segments. Fáilte Ireland launched a public call in May 2016, 'What's the big idea?', for new festivals to attract overseas visitors.

**Action 87:** Údarás na Gaeltachta will support pilot projects in the West region to build capacity in tourism related enterprises under its remit

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

The pilot projects in question are product provider engagement workshops. Up to 15 product providers at a time are brought together and provided with marketing and sales training specific to the needs of Wild Atlantic Way and Tourism Ireland Guidelines in order to allow providers to optimise Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland promotional initiatives. Údarás na Gaeltachta conducted a series of these workshops with Tourism Product Providers in the West Region in 2015. The first of two additional workshops has begun in the region in Q2 2016, with the final workshop planned for late Q3/early Q4. The programme incorporated up-skilling & product building for the overseas markets, provision of marketing support and copywriting for product promotion in line with Tourism Ireland & Fáilte Ireland overseas marketing guidelines.

**Action 88:** Run the Community Tourism Diaspora Initiative to provide support to local and community event organisers and activities/projects that will harness diaspora links for the benefit of local and community tourism

**Status:** Complete

**Progress Update:**

This initiative, a joint partnership between Fáilte Ireland, IPB Insurance and the 34 Local Authorities (under the auspices of the County and City Managers Association), announced in 2014 and due to run for 3 years, consists of an annual fund of €1m to support up to 700 local community-based events and festivals each year. All three Local Authorities in the West have supported this initiative. Applications are being processed and are awaiting confirmation of funding. In 2015 48 applications were received with 34 projects gaining approval. In Mayo 14 of these events were held on Mayo Day or Mayo Day weekend. The Community Tourism Diaspora Initiative has been allocated to 32 groups in Co. Roscommon. A total of 41 groups benefited from this initiative in Galway.

**Action 89:** Harness the LEADER programme to invest in local tourism products throughout the region

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

The LEADER 2014-2020 Programme commenced in July. The programme provides support to entrepreneurs (including people who have been long-term unemployed) and social enterprises

through the provision of a range of supports including capital, analysis & development and training grant assistance. Local Development Companies are also engaging in animation and capacity building to assist individuals and community groups to access LEADER supports and funding.

Contracts in Mayo were signed with the Department on the 8th July 2016 in relation to the LEADER project. The Mayo Local Development Strategy includes a number of Rural Tourism Objectives, based on current allocation from the Department. In Galway a decision is awaited on the granting of the LEADER programme. The Roscommon Local Development Strategy includes tourism objects which will be delivered through the LEADER programme and are aligned to the County Roscommon Local Economic and Community Plan.

**Action 91:** Carry out the necessary planning and environmental assessments to expand the Mayo Greenway

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Mayo County Council is ensuring that all aspects of development of the Greenway infrastructure in the county adheres to the process and procedures as required under the Planning Acts and Planning Regulations. Expansions to the Greenway have been identified to extend the Greenway from Westport to Louisburgh, and from Achill Sound to Keel. Environmental and Planning Assessments have concentrated on the proposed Westport to Louisburgh Greenway. In this regard that proposed Greenway has been split for planning and development purposes into two sections, namely: Section 1 (Westport to Bertra), and Section 2 (Bertra to Louisburgh). Section 1 Environmental and Planning Assessments were conducted in H2 2015. This section has full planning and is shovel ready for construction. Section 2 Route and Planning Assessments are currently underway. Environmental Assessment of this Section was conducted in H2 2015. This section is currently being prepared for Part 8 Planning Permission.

**Action 92:** Secure funding and agreement to progress construction of the Clifden to Oughterard section of the Connemara Greenway

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Discussions are continuing with the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport on the progression of the Dublin-Galway Greenway route, and with Failte Ireland to progress this action. A report has been sent to the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, an application is with Failte Ireland for funding, and landowner consultations are continuing.

**Action 94:** Assist Westmeath County Council in progressing the Dublin-Galway Greenway route selection and planning consent for the project

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Discussions are ongoing with the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport. Further discussions are scheduled to take place to agree a route forward.

**Action 95:** Develop and promote the Shannon Blueway in Roscommon, Westmeath, and Offaly

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

There are ongoing discussions with local councils to further develop Blueways in each of these areas. The promotion of the Shannon Blueway is also ongoing through regular Social Media feeds, sponsorship of events in the area and PR, with further promotion with Failte Ireland through the Lakelands promotional campaign. There will be two further extensions to the Shannon Blueway opening later this year.

**Action 96:** Develop and promote the Shannon and Shannon Erne Blueway (Multi Activity Trail) in Roscommon, Cavan, Leitrim, and Offaly

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

The official opening of the Shannon-Erne Blueway took place in Ballyconnell on May 28th. The Blueway was opened by Minister Humphries with special guest appearance from Karl Henry, fitness trainer and broadcaster. As part of the Rural Economic Development Zones (REDZ) funding initiative, Waterways Ireland held a number of capacity building workshops with activity providers and accommodation providers on Shannon and Shannon Erne Blueways to promote the need for package development and a central promotion of Blueways to "get the most" from any promotion. Waterways Ireland is aware of new businesses opening along the Shannon Erne Blueway as a result of its development and will be carrying out further sessions to support businesses and communities in this area.

**Action 97:** Implement the actions in the Study of Outdoor Recreation in the West 2014, prepared by the Northern and Western Regional Assembly for the local authorities in the West Region

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

This Study proposed the establishment of a National Co-ordinating Body and a Regional Working Group to support the progression of actions in the Study. These groups have not as yet been established, however many of the actions are being implemented at a local level, with outputs to date including:

Promotion of Health in the Outdoors:

- Annual Bike Week campaign with 25 local events and approximately 600 participants
- Operation Transformation campaign: 20 communities participating with 1200 participants

- 6 walking groups established in 2015 and 6 in 2016 through Get Ireland Walking Initiative

#### Inclusivity – Access for All

- 4 Disability Inclusion Training courses held in 2015 / 16
- Calendar of Events produced by Sports Inclusion Disability Officer

#### Research, Education and Training in Outdoor Recreation

- Primary Schools mapped for orienteering with assistance of GMIT
- *Be Active after School* Programme for Primary Schools incorporates an Adventure Strand. 26 schools participating.
- ICA groups and Active Retirement groups supported in Go for Life Small Grant Scheme for outdoor activities

**Action 98:** Develop Marina Facilities at Portumna to cater for Recreational Vehicles (RV's) and increase the attractiveness of Lough Derg as a destination

**Status:** Complete

#### Progress Update:

Development is progressing, and the harbour opened to boats in June. On shore services are underway, and works to the service block including provision for RV's are expected to be completed in September.

**Action 100:** Prepare a roadmap for the development of an ECO Park at Portumna as proposed in the Lough Derg Roadmap for Experience Development and Destination Marketing 2014-2017

**Status:** Complete

#### Progress Update:

Request for tenders to undertake this work issued in May 2016. The development of an ECO Park at Portumna was an action in the Lough Derg Roadmap for Experience Development and Destination Marketing 2014-2017. The tender issued is for consultants to prepare an outline of what is envisaged as an Ecopark and how the various stakeholders can implement this.

The tender for this project has been awarded to a consultancy who have commenced formulating an outline plan of what is envisaged as an ECO Park and identifying the various stakeholders who can implement this objective. This also includes identifying tourism opportunities and additional improvements and infrastructure that may need capital investment and that could be realised over the short and medium term to develop an ECO Park at Portumna.

**Action 102:** Roscommon County Council, neighbouring County Councils and other relevant agencies and stakeholders will explore the development and promotion of a Flagship Shannon Corridor Tourism initiative based around outdoor activities, pursuits, culture, accommodation and hospitality

**Status:** Ongoing



**Progress Update:**

Roscommon County Council is currently working with partners on USEFE (Upper Shannon Erne Future Economy) in developing the Blueway concept and multi-activity trails. The Shannon Blueway is a recreation and tourism initiative centred on outdoor activity along the waterways of Ireland. The Shannon Blueway provides opportunities to enjoy a wide range of activities such as canoeing, cycling and walking.

Four multi-activity trails have been developed and formally launched in May 2016 – Outdoor Activities, Heritage & Culture, Art & Craft and Food. The Blueway from Enniskillen to Boyle has been signed and brochures for each of the trails have been published and disseminated around the region. Roscommon County Council is working with partner agencies – Waterways Ireland, Leitrim County Council, Longford County Council and Cavan County Council – to further develop the Blueway. The trail between Boyle and Carrick on Shannon is due to be launched during H2 2016. A website for the Blueway has also been launched at [www.bluewaysireland.org](http://www.bluewaysireland.org). Roscommon County Council are also working with partners on [Athlone.ie](http://Athlone.ie) to further develop tourism opportunities on the Shannon corridor.

**Action 104:** Galway City and County will bid to become the European Capital of Culture in 2020, supported by Mayo and Roscommon Local Authorities

**Status:** Complete

**Progress Update:**

Each year since 1985 the European Union designates one or more cities as a European Capital of Culture. Chosen cities and their regions are expected to present an innovative year-long cultural programme that highlights the richness and diversity of cultures in Europe.

Galway was successful in the shortlist, and underwent a rigorous bid-programme, culminating in the city successfully being named European Capital of Culture 2020. Galway's theme as European City of Culture 2020 is 'Making Waves: Landscape, Language and Migration'. Its total budget will be €45.75 million. More details are online at [galway2020.ie](http://galway2020.ie)

**Action 107:** Further develop the potential for Irish language tourism to generate employment in the region

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Mayo County Council has in place a Tourism strategy which sets out a series of actions that focus on the potential of the Irish language to generate tourism in the County. (Gno Mhaigh Eo helps local businesses to explore how the Irish language can benefit their businesses)

The objectives in Destination Mayo Tourism Strategy to develop the Irish language as a tourism product include: 1. Creating an environment that supports innovation in special interest educational tourism development; 2. Undertaking an audit of the tourism needs of Gaeltacht

summer schools; 3. Liaising with statutory bodies in relation to developing an Irish Adult Gaeltacht school within the County.

Galway County Council is currently drafting a Tourism Strategy for Galway which includes proposals for development of Irish Language Tourism. Galway City Council is currently drafting Tourism and Cultural strategies; both of which refer to language. This action is also part of Galway City Council's LECP.

There is no Gaeltacht area in Co. Roscommon, thus there are no specific proposals in place at present; however Roscommon County Council is willing to work with Mayo County Council and Galway County Council if there is potential to develop Irish language tourism in the county.

**Action 108:** Implement the initiatives/activities of the Decade of Commemorations scheduled for the West Region

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

All three Local Authorities are implementing a significant programme of activities for the Decade of Commemorations. Some of the activities include:

Galway: May 1 – Jun 30, Battle of Aghrim Interpretive Centre: exhibition of memorabilia and artefacts from the 1916 period from the Martin Joyce Collection; May 1-31, Galway County Council, Prospect Hill: exhibition - Changing Face of Ireland, 1916 and Beyond in photographic and audio recordings, consisting of the gathering of photographs and the recording of stories of life over the past 100 years utilising the network of schools in the County of Galway; June 10-11, Mellows Campus, Athenry, Farming and Country Life 1916- 2016: Hosted by Teagasc and Galway County Council, in partnership with farming organisations and local communities, this event demonstrated changes in farming and country life from 1916 to 2016

Roscommon: May 2016, Boyle: The Conflict Landscape of Roscommon – Digital web project on mapping the archaeology of conflict sites and events of local history of the period. May 2016, King House, Boyle: evening performance of songs and music of the era.

Mayo: 1. Military Parade with a day of Commemoration including street theatre and outdoor family events. 2. An exhibition of 1916 material at the Jackie Clarke Library- Ballina. 1916 Artists in Residence Programme. As part of Mayo Day an event was organised Tourmakeady, Co. Mayo to acknowledge PH Pearse, Roger Casement & Eamon DeValera coming to Tourmakeady to improve their Irish language fluency.

## FOOD, BEVERAGES AND FISHERIES

**Action 109:** Enterprise Ireland and Údarás na Gaeltachta will provide support for high potential food and drinks companies in the region to scale, innovate and develop international markets

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Supporting the creation and development of high potential food and drink companies in the region is an important goal of Enterprise Ireland. This is achieved through supporting food entrepreneurs participate on the New Frontiers Programme and through a dedicated Food Accelerator programme called FoodWorks: a partnership between Teagasc, Bord Bia and Enterprise Ireland. A core element of Enterprise Ireland's activities is working with entrepreneurs on a 1-1 basis and supporting their business plans. During 2015 a number of new high potential food and drink start ups in the West Region were supported financially by Enterprise Ireland. In this regard, An Taoiseach announced 40 new jobs at The Connacht Whiskey Company in Ballina in October 2015 supported by Enterprise Ireland.

Údarás na Gaeltachta is keen to support and grow companies in the food and drinks sector in the West Region. During late 2015/early 2016, Údarás provided grant support (feasibility study & internationalisation), along with incubation space and mentoring to various companies in the Galway and Mayo Gaeltacht. Among the companies assisted were three breweries, a nutritional drinks company, a sea salt production company, a goat's cheese production company and two nutri/functional food companies. Údarás is committed to helping these companies to scale and grow their export sales.

**Action 110:** Implement a project to engage and support traditional and artisan food producing SMEs across the region

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

St Angela's College, Home Economics Department and An Bord Bia Met in May 2016 in Claremorris to discuss, plan and implement a project to engage and support traditional and artisan food producing SMEs across the region.

**Action 112:** Showcase regional food producers, from artisan to large companies, through various food festivals such as Galway Food Festival, Connemara Mussel Festival, Feile na Mara (Achill), Westport Food Festival, and Roscommon Lamb Festival

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Galway County Council has been helping to showcase regional food producers, on an ongoing basis, through providing funding and support to the following Food Festivals: Galway Food Festival, Connemara Mussel Festival, Claregalway Garden Festival, Bia Food Festival, Clarinbridge

Oyster Festival, Bia Bo Finne, and Food on the Edge. Galway City Council has provided support to Galway Food Festival and other food festivals, and is a partner in Region of Gastronomy.

A Showcase for food producers, 'A Taste of Roscommon', was held during Roscommon Lamb Festival in May 2016 and comprised a showcase and tasting by 12 local food producers. A further 'Taste of Roscommon' has been held at the Official Opening of Roscommon County Council's new Civic HQ in June comprising 10 local food producers.

Mayo LEO has been encouraging food producers to participate in festivals around the county, region and country that have a food element attached to them. These included Feile na Tuaithe, Westport Food Festival, Ballina Food Fleadh, Connaught Spring Show, Galway Food Festival, and BITE. Mayo LEO also established and co-ordinated The Mayo Quarter at the National Craft & Design Fair which consists of 8 stands of food producers from Mayo at this large National event. Mayo County Council endeavour to ensure that Mayo food products are featured on menus in events they support such as Mayo Association events. Mayo County Council also ensure that food producers are profiled through media forums and food producers have been profiled on Mayo County Matters (Irish TV), Lords & Ladles and Nationwide (RTE), Radio 1 (Marty Morrissey) and several magazine publications such as Ear to the Ground and Food & Wine Magazine.

**Action 113:** Target an increase in the number of participants on the Food Academy Programme

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

The Food Academy Programme is a collaboration between Bord Bia, Local Enterprise Offices and Supervalu. It offers a 2-month training programme for those looking to develop and grow a small-scale food or drink production business.

Mayo LEO have run three Food Academy Programmes to date (2013, 2014 & 2015) with a number of successful candidates now supplying Supervalu Stores locally, regionally and nationally. Roscommon LEO are currently working with Mayo County Council to increase the number of participants on a jointly run Food Academy – one of these was undertaken in 2015. Increases in the number of participants are as follows:

2013: 4 participants; 2014: 10 participants; 2015: 11 participants (joint programme between Mayo County Council and Roscommon LEO: 8 Mayo participants; 3 Roscommon participants); 3 Roscommon companies are currently supplying Supervalu through Food Academy, and 1 supplying local Supervalu stores only.

The 2016 Food Academy programme is underway in Galway with 14 participants (increase from 12 in 2015). Six of the participants of the 2015 programme are now on trial in Supervalu stores in the region, a number of the others were accepted for trial pending some development. This is the third Food Academy held in Galway.

**Action 114:** To ensure a good pipeline of food entrepreneurs, run a pre Food Works clinic in the region in 2015 and in 2016

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

All of the LEOs encourage and support Food Entrepreneurs and provide the necessary supports for them to grow and develop their business. Roscommon County Council Pre Food Works programme was held in 2015 - 1 company attended and progressed to Food Works Academy. Roscommon LEO proposes to run a further Pre Food Works Clinic in H2 2016.

Mayo LEO have supported, encouraged and assisted food entrepreneurs with a dedicated Food Officer put in place for a period of 18 months to drive the sector. All food entrepreneurs in Mayo were identified and offered opportunities to develop or expand their enterprises through supports provided by the LEO and other additional supports, for example a Market Research trip to the USA, coordination of The Mayo Quarter at the National Craft & Design Fair, and preparation of a dedicated section within the mayo.ie website for the food sector.

**Action 115:** Promote the call for Innovation Vouchers specifically targeting small food companies

**Status:** Complete

**Progress Update:**

In 2016 Enterprise Ireland designed and developed an Innovation Voucher Scheme for Artisan Food Sole Traders and Partnerships. The scheme was launched on 7th March and was open for applications for 6 weeks with a closing date of 21th April. 62 applications were received one of which is from the West Region.

**Action 116:** Work with retailers to increase shelf space for local produce

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

In support of this action, one company from the West has participated in the Food Academy Advance programme which is run in conjunction with SuperValu (Musgraves). This programme affords them the opportunity to grow their business with SuperValu to a provincial (c. 30 stores) or even national level; participants on this programme have already completed the Food Academy Start programme.

**Action 117:** Bord Bia will work with the LEOs to assist food and drink companies in the West to be included in the Tesco Taste Buds programme

**Status:** Delayed

**Progress Update:**

Unfortunately, due to a re assignment of staff resources in Tesco, delivery of this project has been delayed until H2 2016.

**Action 118:** Support the Made in Galway initiative which supports micro food and craft businesses to access online marketing platforms and other new retail opportunities both in Ireland and overseas

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Made in Galway is a free directory listing the range of food and craft producers that Galway has to offer. Galway County Council continues to implement the Made in Galway initiative. Events being held in conjunction with Festivals in 2016 include the Connemara Mussel Festival, Galway Food Festival, Claregalway Garden Festival, Irish Georgian Society Seminar, Galway County Show, Hot Air Balloon Annual Championship, Food on the Edge, Bia Lover Festival, and Claregalway Christmas Market.

Promotional activities undertaken include an article in the Spirit of Ireland Magazine, the production of a Galway Calendar of Events, and input to local radio Food Programme. Galway County Council is also engaging in dialogue with local retailers to reserve shelf and promotional space for Made in Galway products.

**Action 119:** Deliver the EU Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme-funded Craft Reach project

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

The CRAFT REACH project, which is funded by the EU Northern Periphery and Arctic (NPA) programme, started in mid-2015 and will run to mid-2018. Teagasc is the Irish partner in this project which seeks to support the viability of artisan producers by helping them diversify their businesses into the cultural tourism market by using the Économusée model developed in Canada over 25 years ago.

An Économusée is an artisan producer who opens their premises to visitors by providing an interpretive and educational experience. These Économusées form a tourism-based network, or trail, which by bringing people to the premises to participate in a distinctive authentic, interpretive and educational experience assists the businesses expand sales and sustain or create employment.

Actions under the project are progressing as planned and are on target. In this reporting period new artisan producers have been identified to join the network.

**Action 120:** Support the development of local markets in the West Region

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

All Local Authorities have been facilitating local markets through the provision of the necessary supports, such as public space/funding and road closures throughout the year, and encouraging

food and craft producers to participate in local markets in the region as a method of sales and promotion for their products, particularly at client engagement stage with start-up companies.

**Action 121:** Provide supports for the seafood sector, including financial and technical training and mentoring programmes for companies. This will involve collaboration between relevant State agencies to deliver scale in the key seafood sectors, including food ingredients, and upskilling personnel across the sector in the key areas

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM) has approved €476,995 in capital funding for the seafood sector, with announcements made on 27th May 2016. Approvals are as follows:

- Total of €391,232 approved for 4 Companies in the region under a Seafood Processing Capital Investment Scheme.
- Total of €67,375 approved for 6 companies operating in 2 consortia in the region under a Seafood Scaling & New Market Development Scheme.
- Total of €18,348 approved for 1 company in the region under a Seafood Innovation and Business Planning Scheme

BIM have also enabled Training and Mentoring in the Western region in various formats during H1 2016. These have ranged from 1 day workshops, 1 to 1 mentoring, supporting the hiring of strategists/advisors, holding internal company workshops with external facilitators, participation in on-going training and development programmes (Seafood Academy) and recruitment and participation of companies from the region in specialised training courses on matters like food safety. 7 companies have received such Training and Mentoring support during 2016 (some have acquired multiple supports on multiple occasions). Some of this work has been conducted in cooperation with Galway LEO.

**Action 122:** Improve the environmental sustainability of the seafood sector in the West region, including through improved gear selectivity and replenishment of depleted inshore stocks by the use of aquaculture techniques

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

A study to reduce catches of small Nephrops, a square mesh cod-end was conducted in February and work on a draft report commenced in March. Reports were published on 15 Feb & 26 May 2016, details at <http://www.bim.ie/our-publications/fisheries/>. A trial to test T90 cod-ends as a means of improving selectivity for whiting for vessels targeting that species was conducted in March. Preliminary results were very encouraging. A report on results of T90 Grid trails has been published on the Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM) Corporate website.

Aquaculture funding support schemes also opened for applications in 2016. This included:

**The Knowledge Gateway Scheme:** the objective of which is to promote knowledge, innovation and technology, focusing on the following areas: Applied research; New species development and

commercialisation; Research into managing diseases and parasites; The provision of environmental and business planning advice; Training and networking opportunities for industry; Knowledge transfer. 1 application has been approved in the Region under this scheme for a grant of €129,937.

**The Sustainable Aquaculture Scheme:** The objective of this Scheme is to promote the sustainable growth of output, value and employment in the aquaculture sector. This objective will be promoted through supports for sustainably increasing the productive output of aquaculture enterprises, supporting new aquaculture enterprises entering the sector, scaling up of aquaculture enterprises to improve their competitiveness and efficiency, diversification into new species, more farming of underutilised species and promotion of organic aquaculture. Particular attention will also be given to the diversification of aquaculture towards methods with significant commercial output. 3 applications have been approved in the West region under the Sustainable Aquaculture Scheme, approved for grant of €69,656.

**Action 125:** Explore the potential for Tourism and Marine businesses including aquaculture, fisheries, seaweed and other speciality producers, to collaborate to support further job creation

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

The 'Taste the Atlantic' seafood trail as part of Wild Atlantic Way has now been extended to include Donegal Bay. A tourism and aquaculture stakeholder meeting is scheduled for end July 2016; Bord Iascaigh Mhara are currently organising stakeholder participations. The purpose of the meeting is to enable an assessment of the potential of combining tourism with aquaculture, fisheries, seaweed businesses etc.

**Action 128:** Údarás na Gaeltachta will provide capital to develop units to food standard in the Galway Gaeltacht to provide accommodation for start-ups and scaling projects in the food sector

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

A budget has been approved to undertake a feasibility study to explore possible locations and designs for inclusion in the capital programme. The success of this project will depend on budget availability. The feasibility study relates to finding the most suitable design and best location for the development of these units.



## SUSTAINABLE ENERGY

**Action 131:** Continue to develop the Galway Bay marine energy and technology site infrastructure and provide a platform for testing new marine technologies and systems

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

In 2015 a submarine power and data cable was laid from shore to the Galway Bay Test Site and this is currently being tested with a view to formal launch at the SeaFest event in Galway in June/July. The Marine Institute with the support of SEAI has commenced the process for extending the lease for the test site from 2017 and to include additional technologies.

**Action 132:** Develop the Atlantic Marine Energy Test Site (AMETS) in Belmullet as the national deep water test site for ocean energy. This will provide the opportunity to test the performance of pre-commercial wave energy devices and components as well as other marine technologies in extreme open ocean conditions

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

The Atlantic Marine Energy Test Site (AMETS) is being developed by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) to facilitate testing of full scale wave energy converters in an open ocean environment.

The Lease for the AMETS was enacted in H1 2016 and the site is now formally open for testing. SEAI are also progressing the onshore development at the site this year. This development will include construction of a substation at a site close to Belderra strand. The substation will connect underwater cables to the national grid. SEAI submitted a planning permission application for the substation and associated cable works to Mayo County Council on the 13th of May.

**Action 133:** Each local authority will adopt the principles of the guidelines for Local Authority Renewable Energy Strategies (LARES) when reviewing their County Development Plans and collectively examine the potential for Regional Renewable Energy strategies

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

An Asset Management Team with responsibility for energy has been recently established in Roscommon County Council. A Renewable Energy Strategy which will incorporate the principles of the guidelines for Local Development Renewable Energy Strategies is currently being developed.

Mayo County Council published its Renewable Energy Strategy in 2011. This strategy is integrated with and informs other planning processes. Mayo County Council has also recently established a new environment function with a key emphasis on Climate Change.

A Review of Galway County Development Plan is not scheduled until 2021. However, Galway County Council is currently in the early stages of drafting a Renewable Energy Strategy, which will incorporate the principles of the guidelines for Local Development Renewable Energy Strategies. The Galway City Development Plan is in preparation.

All three local authorities will collectively examine the potential for a Regional Renewable Energy Strategies when their respective Development Plans are being reviewed 2020-2021.

**Action 134:** Complete a regional renewable energy analysis on the use of biomass as a local contribution to the national renewable heat target and develop a range of actions to support the development of renewable energy in the region

**Status:** **Delayed**

**Progress Update:**

Analysis resources were not in place to deliver this action by H1 2016. The Western Development Commission are progressing this project in collaboration with the SEAI, and a range of actions are being developed. A further update will be provided in H2 2016.

**Action 135:** Promote and assist the delivery of cost savings through energy efficiency programmes and training for businesses and public sector organisations in the region

**Status:** **Ongoing**

**Progress Update:**

SEAI's free supports for business and the public sector are being actively promoted in the region through the Local Authorities and responsible bodies - see link to SEAI services at [http://www.seai.ie/Your\\_Business/](http://www.seai.ie/Your_Business/). The SEAI is also exploring the potential for further engagement with new models (Energy Intern Programme) for delivery of the programme for business through the Local Authorities.

**Action 136:** Develop and promote the Sustainable Energy Communities (SEC) model in the region and identify willing early adopter communities to act as exemplars and Regional SEC Champions

**Status:** **Ongoing**

**Progress Update:**

A Sustainable Energy Community (SEC) is a community in which everyone works together to develop a sustainable energy system. Significant progress has been made on the model in Belmullet and Crossmolina, County Mayo and Galway City. Applications to become a Sustainable Energy Community have been received from all three counties in the region. Work on the identification of a suitable regional management structure is planned for H2 2016.

## CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

**Action 140:** Implement a new €2 million EU INTERREG funded project to support the Creative Industries in the Western Region (with Northern Ireland, Finland, Sweden & Iceland) called 'Creative Momentum'

**Status:** Ongoing

### Progress Update:

Creative Momentum is up and running, with details as follows:

#### Creative Steps 2.0:

- An open call for applications from creative enterprises in the Western Region of Ireland to join the Creative Steps 2.0 innovation process in May-June 2016 opened on 4 April 2016 on [www.MyCreativeEdge.eu](http://www.MyCreativeEdge.eu). The scheme was open to members of the MyCreativeEdge website and applications were submitted via an online application form. This call for applications was to select a number of enterprises (from the West of Ireland, Northern Ireland and Mid-Sweden) to participate in the first round of the Creative Steps 2.0 programme being run by Lapland University of Applied Sciences. The deadline for applications was Sunday, 17 April 2016.
- The Creative Steps 2.0 programme matches two creative enterprises from different countries. These enterprises are led through a process to define a joint innovation task and are assigned a multidisciplinary team of four students. They work on this task during a 10-day structured workshop process, guided by experts. At the end, they will present their innovation idea to the two companies. The programme will be repeated four times during 2016 and 2017. The first round will run from 18 May to 1 June 2016 at Lapland University of Applied Sciences. Future rounds will be run in Northern Ireland, Mid-Sweden and the West of Ireland (led by NUIG).
- On 19 April, 2 creative enterprises from the West of Ireland were selected to participate in Creative Steps 2.0. They are Sallyann's Handmade Bags and Black Hole Studios. The enterprises represent different creative sub-sectors (Crafts and the Visual Arts) and areas of the Western Region (Co. Clare and Co. Roscommon). The 2 enterprises have already confirmed their participation and have been matched with 2 Finnish companies (Susivilla and Urbanid).
- Jonathon Kavanagh, WDC Investment Executive, is a member of the transnational Creative Cave Pool (Dragon's Den) that will provide feedback on the final concepts.

#### Creative Hotspots:

- Three enterprises from the Western Region of Ireland have been selected to attend the Market Place of Urkult Festival in Mid-Sweden in August 2016. The selection was carried out in consultation with the organisers of Urkult Festival. The selected companies are: Airmid Natural Skincare (Clare), Sallyann's Handmade Bags (Clare) and Bearfoot Enterprises (Galway). The selected enterprises will sell their products and will have the opportunity to speak at a Pecha Kucha event, which will feature in the festival programme. The Irish companies will be joined by 3 companies from Northern Ireland and 2 from Northern Finland.
- The Market Place will also be an opportunity for creative enterprises to network with each other and other creatives. For example, one of the Irish companies will also participate in the Creative Steps 2.0 process. This company will have the opportunity to liaise with the Finnish enterprise that

will participate in both Urkult and Creative Steps 2.0.

**Action 141:** Disburse the targeted Micro-Loan fund for the Creative Industries in the West Region

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

The Micro-Loan fund is accessible to micro enterprises (a company employing less than 10 people), which provides loan finance ranging from €5,000 to €25,000 to grow and develop individual businesses. Quarterly competitive calls have taken place. Details available on [www.wdc.ie](http://www.wdc.ie) website. Some companies that have benefitted from the fund include Bandit Films and StudioNorthWest TV, Nadura Design and FCDM Ltd (Full Circle Digital Media)

**Action 142:** Continue to operate the MyCreativeEdge.eu export platform to showcase creative enterprises based in the Western Region

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Several hundred regional creative businesses are currently accessing this facility. Work is ongoing to test the website and to simplify the user experience. Re-development of MyCreativeEdge has been conducted as follows:

**Communications and Marketing:**

- An electronic newsletter issued mid-May 2016
- GlowMetrics has produced a Customer Insight document and a Google Analytics Audit; Bespoke Communications is currently working on a comprehensive Communications Strategy
- Following the Creative Exchanges in Ennis and Sligo, 2 short videos were produced and added to the project's YouTube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jKjmKDOizpE>

**Website Stats:**

- MyCreativeEdge – 634 Profiles: 254 from West of Ireland
- MyCreativeEdge – 1 January 2016 to 10 May 2016: 10,664 sessions and 8,482 users

**Action 143:** Implement a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Design & Crafts Council of Ireland (DCCoI) to drive growth, including supporting trade fair participation

**Status:** Complete

**Progress Update:**

The Western Development Commission (WDC) engaged in a new MOU with DCCoI in May 2016. The agreement was based around working in partnership to maximise resources that deliver on actions outlined in the Government's 'Action Plan for Jobs 2016' and on objectives as set out in the 'Policy Framework for Design in Enterprise in Ireland'. This MOU seeks to build on existing programmes and to extend and deepen the relationship with the WDC in the context of the APJ and policy framework for design in enterprise.

DCCoI will assign a member of staff to lead the development of initiatives in the Western Region, nationally and at EU level as appropriate. WDC will assign a lead contact to liaise with DCCoI and promote initiatives in the Western Region, nationally and at EU level as appropriate.

The WDC intend to invest €10,000 - €20,000 on an annual basis to support the development and dissemination of joint projects. DCCoI will match funds as appropriate.

**Action 144:** Develop and implement an Action Plan to support the Film industry in Galway and the West region and explore the potential for a Regional Film Fund

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Culture 21 and other lead-in initiatives are being developed to support the Film Industry in Galway. This action plan forms part of the Galway City Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP). A number of short and longer term projects have been planned, and a more detailed action plan will be devised by the UNESCO City of Film group.

Galway UNESCO City of Film, a partnership involving Galway City Council, Galway County Council, Galway Film Centre, The Irish Film Board and Údarás na Gaeltachta are currently working on a bid document/business plan in consultation with Screen Yorkshire, who have been running a European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) funded Regional Film Fund in Yorkshire since 2008. A group of film producers and industry professionals are currently exploring a number of different models and possible structures to ascertain the best mechanism and structure to establish a fund in the West of Ireland.

The process is being led by Declan Gibbons, Manager of Galway Film Centre, and a consultation process is ongoing involving Film Centres across a number of EU countries. A number of International Film Experts have also been consulted to advise on the process.

**Action 146:** Expand Local Authorities role in developing the craft and creative sector through initiatives such as 'Made In Galway'

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

In support of this action Galway County Council is implementing the 'Made in Galway' initiative. Events will be held in conjunction with Festivals throughout the year, and promotional activities are also being undertaken. Some events that have taken place so far this year include:

'Made in Galway' is an initiative that showcases the best of Galway produce from over 400 different food and craft producers that are based in Galway City and County. [www.madeingalway.ie](http://www.madeingalway.ie) provides details on local producers, their products and where these are stocked in one online location.

The 'Made in Galway' initiative marries the online retail world with the traditional marketplace,

and encourages visitors to buy from producers through supporting events like local markets and festivals and directing them to local stockists or retail outlets.

A 'Made in Galway' facebook page provides regular details on local markets, retail events, fashion shows and exhibitions. Producers regularly update their own pages to showcase new products, special offers or events. 'Made in Galway' also supports markets at events such as the Galway Food Festival, Connemara Mussel Festival, and Bia Lover.

Roscommon County Council are currently progressing the objectives that are included in the Upper Shannon Erne Future Economy Project. Achievements to date include the introduction of a craft trail and the inclusion of craft producers in the USEFE Blueway Trail brochures that were officially launched in June 2016, the finalisation of an activity trails brochure. Information packs and lists of exhibitions and trade fairs have also been sent to all producers. 18 local producers from the craft and creative sector were showcased during Roscommon Lamb Festival, and Roscommon LEO have also completed training courses for craft providers.

Mayo LEO supports the development of the craft and creative sector in Mayo through LEO supports including Grant Aid, Mentoring, Web Site Development and New Markets/New Products Trade Shows. Support is also being provided through the initiative 'Deanta I Mhaigh Eo': a branding and promotional initiative developed by Gnó Mhaigh Eo to support and develop the marketing and competitive power of SMEs and local enterprises in Mayo who use the Irish language in the branding and naming of their products and/or services.

## SKILLS ENHANCEMENT AND LABOUR MARKET ACTIVATION

**Action 147:** Establish a Skills Forum in the West region to foster better engagement between education providers, employers and other regional stakeholders to increase the flow of critical skills to the regions' enterprises

**Status:** Complete

The Regional Skills Forum for the West has been established, and is comprised of: Galway Roscommon Education Training Board, Mayo Education Board, Skillnets in region Training, Galway Mayo Institute of Technology, National University of Ireland Galway, Local Enterprise Offices, and Intreo, working in partnership with Industry Representatives Groups including IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, Western Development Commission, Údarás na Gaeltachta, Fáilte Ireland, The Department of Social Protection, and Recruitment Agencies. Claire Hurley was appointed as manager of the West Regional Skills Forum in May 2016, and is a member of the West Action Plan for Jobs Implementation Committee.

**Action 148:** Collaborate with stakeholders in the region to identify and address skills needs and new approaches to learning

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

This is part of the on-going collaboration with GMIT, NUIG, the Department of Social Protection, Industry, and communities through the Regional Skills Forum. Galway Roscommon Education and Training Board (GRETB) are actively engaged in on-line methodologies and blended learning approaches to the delivery of programmes. GRETB personnel are currently working with SOLAS on their strategy for Technology Enhanced Learning.

**Action 149:** Support the ongoing development of the Apprenticeship training programme to develop skill levels via ETBs, with progression to higher skills levels via Higher Education Institutions across all sectors and disciplines

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

A new draft protocol between the Department of Social Protection (DSP) and the relevant Education and Training Boards has recently been agreed and is being rolled out across the regions. DSP is also to participate in the Regional Skills Forum. There are currently 1,740 jobseekers on Back to Education Allowance in the region (354 are under 25).

**Action 150:** Increase collaboration and mentoring through existing training networks and develop communications on the current training supports available in manufacturing

**Status:** Complete

**Progress Update:**

Ibec are currently working on the training available. The Irish Manufacturing Association (IMA) was established by Ibec in Q1 2016. An Irish Manufacturing Conference took place on 23 June 2016, and looked at what the future will entail for manufacturing and the critical trends for the sector. The Irish Medical Device Association (IMDA) Skillnet is currently delivering over 100 programmes each year, primarily to support Medical Technology manufacturing companies. Targets of over 1,100 trainees and 5,800 training days were delivered to the sector in 2015.

**Action 151:** Undertake an audit of the West population to match skill levels to the National Framework of Qualifications and update the database of skill gaps on an ongoing basis

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Galway Roscommon Education and Training Board (GRETB) and the Department of Social Protection (DSP)/INTREO have regular meetings regarding skills needs to design and deliver programmes to meet the skill gaps.

This is a considerable piece of work and involves looking at census statistics for areas which assist with identifying qualification levels. GRETB staff meet with DSP personnel on a quarterly basis across the region and discuss skill gaps and the unemployed with a view to ensuring that programmes provided by GRETB match employment opportunities. DSP personnel attend the GRETB Local Learning Networks across the region. These meetings are also attended by NUIG and GMIT personnel as well as community representatives. A schedule of meetings is being prepared for roll out in H2 2016.

**Action 152:** Address skills need identified for the tourism, aquaculture and rural economy sectors

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Galway Roscommon Education and Training Board (GRETB) is working in partnership with Teagasc on the Agriculture Level 5 and 6, as well as the new Career Traineeship in support of Artisan Food and Craft SMEs. GRETB is also represented on the Standards Advisory Group for Tour Guiding and is currently rolling out a professional Tour Guiding programme, with another scheduled for September 2016. Local & Regional Guiding is scheduled to start in September 2016 in 2 venues in the region. Catering Skills QQI Level 4 and Food Preparation Level 3 is currently being offered by GRETB. GRETB is working with Bord Iascaigh Mhara and Údarás na Gaeltachta with a view to rolling out a Seaweed On-growing and Harvesting programme, as well as other related Aquaculture modules in September 2016.

**Action 153:** Roll out a Traineeship programme in TV and Film at Level 5 to support this growing sector

**Status:** Ongoing



**Progress Update:**

Galway Roscommon Education and Training Board (GRETB) are running a range of Media courses at Levels 5 and 6 and have a number planned for the next academic year. Discussions have taken place with TG4 and Rós na Rún in relation to developing a career traineeship in Film and Television, however this has not reached completion stage as yet. GRETB is currently delivering a range of Media Awards at Levels 5 and 6 as part of their PLC provision, these include animation as well as programmes in production covering pre and post Film and TV production. GRETB is actively supporting this growth area and continues to explore the career traineeship model.

**Action 154:** Roll out a new Traineeship programme in Logistics and Transport to address skills and knowledge of supply chain and logistics

**Status:** Complete

**Progress Update:**

Galway Roscommon Education and Training Board (GRETB) commenced a dedicated Logistics & Distribution Course on February 22 2016, which will run until November 25 2016. 19 participants commenced the programme. HGV, ARTIC and Rigid courses are ongoing, and a Warehouse Operation course commenced on 4 March 2016.

**Action 155:** Roll out two National Career Traineeships pilots for the Hospitality and Engineering sectors

**Status:** Complete

**Progress Update:**

The National Career Traineeship in Hospitality Commenced in H1 2016, with 29 Participants starting in Q1 2016. 20 Participants are still on the programme and will be finished in Q4 2016. All participants are actively participating in Work Based Training (WBL) with host employers. Mayo Sligo Leitrim Education and Training Board (MSLETB) expect to start the next Hospitality Traineeship Programme in Q4 2016. The programme is a work based training model developed in conjunction with employers – a significant amount of this course will be delivered in the workplace with a host/sponsor Hotelier. The Engineering Traineeship Programme is scheduled to commence in H2 2016.

**Action 156:** Roll out a suite of hospitality, ICT and language courses in line with industry requirements and identified skills needs

**Status:** Complete

**Progress Update:**

Hospitality and ICT programmes have been rolled out in 2016. This includes Tourism / Visitor Care Level 4, and Kitchen Skills Level 4. ICT forms part of all QQI (Quality and Qualifications

Ireland) programmes offered. Language programmes are scheduled for later in the year. Galway Roscommon Education and Training Board (GRETB) is also currently working on a Career Traineeship to support the Hospitality sector particularly in the areas of Artisan Food & Craft.

**Action 157:** Skillnets will continue to fund groups of companies with similar training needs, through training networks that deliver subsidised training to Irish businesses and their employees, as well as free training to job-seekers

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Skillnets has continued to provide training to enterprise, their employees and free training to jobseekers within the Western Region in H1 2016. Over 1400 businesses and sole traders have participated in training with Skillnet networks in H1 2016. They have participated in training with over 40 of the 63 Skillnets networks, including four Skillnets networks based in the region such as the Information Technology Association of Galway (ITAG) SKillnet, Galway Executive Skillnet, the High Potential Start-up (HPSU) Skillnet, Role Skillnet and Greasan Na Mean Skillnet.

The training undertaken in H1 2016 was across a range of sectors including ICT, agriculture, retail, food & drink, life sciences, manufacturing and construction. This provisional data from H1 indicates similar levels of network participation in Skillnets training by businesses, trainees and jobseekers in the region in 2016. In 2015, over 4,000 employees and business owners from 1,553 businesses in the region participated in training with a Skillnets training network. 130 business owners and managers in the region participated in ManagementWorks programmes - the Skillnets initiative that focuses on developing SME management capability.

**Action 158:** Encourage engineering at 2nd level using the Coderdojo model and promote uptake of STEM subjects

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Galway Mayo Institute of Technology continues to actively encourage Engineering, and more broadly Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines, through a series of interventions including Institute Open Days (and demos), School Visits, and through its support of the Information Technology Association of Galway (ITAG) at Board Level. ITAG is also involved in supporting CoderDojo and other Computer Science / IT-related initiatives at 2nd level. See also update on Action 159.

**Action 159:** Continue to highlight the enterprise and employment opportunities for Young People and Graduates from STEM subjects through the Galway Science and Technology Festival

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

The Galway Science and Technology Forum held its annual Science and Technology festival for 2

weeks in November 2015. In addition, it ran TeenTech in NUI Galway for 1st Year secondary students in Spring 2016. Galway Mayo Institute of Technology held the annual SciFest festival in May attracting over 100 projects from secondary schools in the region. GMIT has also piloted a Scientist-in-Residence scheme to facilitate STEM projects in secondary schools in the region.

**Action 160:** GMIT, NUI Galway, ETBs and Industry to work with 2nd level education providers to create awareness among students of future career opportunities across all sectors within the region and at all levels from low to high skills

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

A number of initiatives have taken place to highlight careers in STEM areas to 2<sup>nd</sup> level students, as referenced in action 159 above. In addition, the West/ North West HEI Cluster have set the target of deepening engagement with the Further Education Sector and Education and Training Boards (ETBs). Activity includes:

- Cluster partners have shared information on FE/ETB engagement and activities (2015-2016);
- Memorandum of Understanding signed between LYIT and Donegal ETB (2015/16);
- High level Regional HE-FE Planning Group to develop regional learning pathways (LYIT and Donegal ETB) (2014/2015);
- IT Sligo pilot project on ETB engagement (2015-2016);
- LYIT Access Programme with Donegal ETB (2015 and 2016);
- NUI GALWAY and GMIT engaging through Regional Skills Forum (Cluster Programme Manager as Chair) (2015-2016);
- Coordination with North West and West Regional Skills Fora (Programme managers sit on each steering group) (2015-2016);
- Next step identified, Cluster/ETB MOU (Planned 2016-2017);
- Next step, Programme mapping GR ETB and Donegal ETB (2016);
- Next step, GMIT- GRETB Re-engagement Foundation Programme (2016)

**Action 161:** Provide Entrepreneur Skills Development programmes - including partnerships between Higher Education Institutions and successful entrepreneurs, Galway Roscommon Education and Training Board and Local Chambers of Commerce - to provide Level 5 and 6 awards based on local training needs

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

'Scaling a Business', occurred across 8 days from 11th through 17th June 2016, and carries 30 ECTS credits for the award of an NUI Galway Postgraduate Certificate in Applied Entrepreneurship. It can be built upon later, to reach postgraduate diploma (60 ECTS) and Masters degrees (90 ECTS) in entrepreneurship. NUI Galway has created a virtual centre to house entrepreneurial contributions and sponsorship, the Atlantic Centre for Entrepreneurship & Executive Development. Its website is at [www.aceatlantic.com](http://www.aceatlantic.com). The centre is supported by the University and sponsors; including Bank of Ireland (sponsors of the June course).

**Action 162:** Continue to develop proposal for a Technological University for the West/North-West

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Galway Mayo Institute of Technology has developed an implementation plan to achieve the required metrics for designation as a Technological University in collaboration with its partners in the Connacht Ulster Alliance (CUA). The Higher Education Authority has endorsed the vision for the new Technological University. A stage 1 submission was approved in October 2015 and in June 2015 the Finance Committee of the HEA recognised the CUA as a key enabler of regional development committing financial support to progress the project in 2016 and 2017 to a Stage 2 submission.

**Action 163:** Education providers in the West will continue to play an active role in ensuring that graduates are aware of the employment opportunities within the Western Region, e.g. by engaging industry in the selection of final year projects; two-way portal between graduates and employers

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Each year GMIT hosts a general careers fair and in 2016 over 60 perspective employers attended the fair from the West and across Ireland. GMIT also hosts discipline specific careers events and conferences annually in Hotel and Catering, Business (e.g. Accountancy), Science and Engineering. For example, in 2016 GMIT hosted its 6th Annual Construction Management Day Conference and Employment Fair.

Furthermore GMIT hosts all IDA itineraries to the region of relevance to their student population and where necessary has been working with prospective IDA clients to include their requirements in programme curricula. NUI Galway completes a destination survey among students each year and uses the data to inform decision making for students, employers and the university.

Furthermore, through the Regional Skills Forum, NUI Galway are engaging with Roscommon County Council to identify structured opportunities for placement and employment between students, the university and employers.

**Action 164:** Develop tailored programmes to ensure that graduates are ready to enter the workforce and are more attractive to industry, through collaboration between Third Level and Industry

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

GMIT supplied over 1,800 skilled graduates in 2014, rising to over 2,000 by 2016. The supply of graduates and interns by GMIT is its most significant form of permanent knowledge and skill transfer in and beyond the West region. GMIT regularly monitors this activity through the 'First Destinations' Survey and liaison with industry throughout its catchment area. Continuing relevance of programmes is being ensured through consultation and needs analysis amongst industry and community stakeholders, so that graduate demand capacity is met.

For each new programme that the Institute develops and/or revises as part of its response to the needs of business and society, an Internal and External Programme Validation Process is carried out, involving consultation and needs analysis with the relevant stakeholders. This information, which very often includes detailed surveys and survey output, is included in the Institution's documentation for programme development, learning outcomes, curriculum, placements and assessment strategies.

Some 94% of GMIT graduates are in employment, further education or training 9 months after graduation (66% in the Connacht Region). GMIT has been determined to be among the top Irish Higher Education Institutions for economic impact with a Type II multiplier (the direct (raw spend), indirect and induced demand and consumption effects) distinctly higher (top quartile) than most other Higher Education Institutes in Ireland and the UK.

**Action 165:** Promote the Graduate Business Growth Initiative through Enterprise Ireland's regional office in the West. The programme supports the placement of graduates with SME companies

**Status:** Complete

**Progress Update:**

Launched by Enterprise Ireland in 2015, The Graduate Business Growth initiative supports Enterprise Ireland SME client companies to hire up to two graduates per year. The Scheme has been promoted to companies in the West region through 1-1 engagements with clients and through social media in 2015.

**Action 166:** Attract Diaspora Talent by creating awareness among the diaspora of opportunities in region

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Initiatives undertaken by Mayo County Council to attract Diaspora Talent include the rebranding of Mayo.ie, initiating Global Mayo Day (Important buildings and global landmarks were turned green and red for the day.). The major aim of Mayo Day is to promote Co. Mayo internationally. Mayo County Council worked with Irish TV to deliver a 2 hour gala concert, Mayo Day Live, on TV and online to a global audience. The aim of all these initiatives is to engage with the largest possible audience and to spread the message of a positive, welcoming Mayo to the world. Mayo County Council also works with Mayo Associations and Networks across the globe at every possible opportunity on initiatives and projects that link with the Diaspora.

Roscommon County Council - 41 applications have been supported so far this year in Roscommon under the Community Tourism Diaspora initiative. A Diaspora strategy is to be developed later this year, subject to funding. Roscommon County Council has initiated contact with Connect Ireland to explore further opportunities for Diaspora engagement, including an event in H1 2017. The Council are also participating in the Rhode Island initiative (a project that allows companies in the West and North West of Ireland explore and test new markets in the US through the provision of cost effective show space, enterprise support, networking, investment guidance and collaboration).

Galway City Council - Meetings have been initiated with Connect Ireland and this has been included as an action in the Local Economic and Community Plan.

**Action 167:** Deliver the labour market activation strand of the SICAP programme to ensure the skills needs of the long term unemployed and those not in education or training are developed in line with the skills needs in the region

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) provides support and training to disadvantaged individuals and communities by way of training courses for the unemployed and low income workers and households, information events and activities to encourage engagement across communities with SICAP, and one to one guidance for individuals who are seeking employment or looking to become self-employed. SICAP staff are providing supports across a wide spectrum of needs such as CV writing, job search skills, interview techniques and application writing. For those seeking to retrain or upskill, guidance and advice is being offered on a one-to-one basis to help identify the individual's requirements and how to apply for courses. Where an individual has a business idea the SICAP Programme is working closely with them to provide one to one advice on starting a business, funding applications and training courses such as start your own business and bookkeeping and taxation.

Mayo Local Development Company (LCDC) has engaged Mayo North East Development Company and South West Mayo Development Company to deliver the SICAP programme in three lots in County Mayo. To date all targets in relation to the programme have been achieved. Galway City Partnership is actively delivering supports to assist people in gaining employment, including CV workshops, and Employment Skills Workshops. Roscommon LCDC is working with Roscommon Leader Partnership, who implement the SICAP programme in County Roscommon, to ensure that the labour activation strand of SICAP is delivered to the target groups. All targets are being achieved.

**Action 168:** IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland will each work with the Department of Social Protection (DSP) to promote the recruitment of people from the Live Register amongst their client companies

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland are working with the Department of Social Protection on this

action on an ongoing basis. There are nine dedicated Employer Engagement staff working in DSP in the Region who actively work in this area, assisting companies, including IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland client companies, with filling their recruitment needs from people on the Live Register.

DSP staff in Galway have been working with three IDA backed companies over the past number of months. Interaction is varied and subject to the needs and demands of the companies in question. In one case the recruitment process currently underway has resulted in DSP shortlisting a selected 70 approx. jobseekers and eventually referring 18 of them to the company for their own selection process. These roles were for foreign language customer service agents and sales managers. In a second case the recruitment process is a long-term ongoing measure, and at this stage DSP refers any suitable jobseekers they identify (based on the criteria supplied by the company) to the company. In the third case DSP staff met with the company management to explain how DSP can assist them once they start recruitment again.

On 10th May a tripartite conference was organised jointly by the Department of Social Protection, the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation and the Department of Education and Skills, held in Dublin Castle to drive forward the ongoing co-operation between the three Departments, Education and Training Boards and Enterprise Agencies, including IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland. Examples of best practice in co-operation were shared and existing protocols were reviewed.

## STRENGTHENING BUSINESS NETWORKS

**Action 169:** Continue to provide supports to entrepreneurs and SMEs through business networks in the region, including Chambers of Commerce, Ibec, Inc60, iTAG and Online Marketing in Galway

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Galway Chamber continues to provide supports for SMEs in the form of connecting, informing, lobbying, promoting and generally helping businesses to succeed. Galway Chamber provides networking opportunities for business including business lunches, breakfast briefings and business after hours events. The Chamber also supports businesses through its subsidiary company, the Galway Technology Centre, through its founding role in the Galway City Innovation District and the PorterShed as well as its founding and ongoing role in the Atlantic Economic Corridor.

Athlone Chamber has regular networking events such as 'Business after Hours', an informal evening initiative where business people can meet and have the opportunity to showcase their business. The Athlone Business Awards, golf classics and budget breakfasts are some of these networking events. A programme for Autumn 2016 is now being developed and collaboration between Chambers is being proposed.

**Action 170:** Strengthen existing Ibec networks across the West region by developing additional Ibec development and best practice networks in the region together with Leadership Forums

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Work has commenced by Ibec on strengthening the existing networks across the region, with a particular focus on developing the travel, leisure and hospitality sector. Two network meetings with the travel, leisure and hospitality sectors have taken place in Galway. Overall around 50 companies participated at both events. These events focused on the future of the hospitality and tourism sector and the challenges they will face, presentations from Tourism Ireland and their initiatives, and how businesses can link in with these campaigns for business development. Another Network meeting will be held in the Autumn. The first webinar for the network members was also held in May, with a short on line survey. Ibec hopes to further develop the topics and frequency of these.

**Action 171:** Continue to operate Ibec sector-specific regional networks including in Pharma and Medtech, and explore the potential for the ICT sector

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Cross sectoral forums were held on 29 Sept 2015 in Galway, and 29 March 2016 in Athlone, to develop collaboration between the Irish Medical Device Association's (IMDA) and ICT Ireland's members. Terms of reference for a new IoT (Internet of Things) for Health Group has been



established and signed off by both the IMDA and ICT Ireland; a meeting was held on 27 June. 30 attended the previous meeting.

**Action 172:** The local authorities and LEOs in the region will facilitate industry-led networks and clusters to grow and deliver their jobs potential through seminars, conferences, information and other appropriate supports

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Each Local Authority works with local cluster and networks (on a continuous basis) to increase the attractiveness of their county as a location for job creation and investment. In Mayo this includes working with Mayo Industries Group Inc 60, Network Mayo, and Digital Marketing in Mayo. Galway City provides support to festivals and events through a Marketing fund. Roscommon County Council works with partner agencies in the Upper Shannon Erne Future Economy project to support specific industry sectors on a regional basis including: Forestry & Energy; Tourism and Creative. Work around Healthcare & Pharma, ICT and the manufacturing sector is under consideration.

**Action 174:** IDA Ireland will develop and implement an information/networking event across the region for clients. Enterprise Ireland clients will also be invited to this event

**Status:** Complete

**Progress Update:**

Events in the West Region organised by IDA to which EI clients were invited included: April 2016 Seminar on Work Permits and Visas with speakers from the Department of Jobs, Enterprise & Innovation and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. In May 2016 a 'Meet Your Neighbours' Event was held in Galway for Emerging Technology companies, both IDA & indigenous. In May 2016 a Lean Business Event was held in Galway for small IDA and indigenous companies. A number of EI companies in the region have also been invited to IDA company announcement events during 2015/16.

**Action 175:** Údarás na Gaeltachta will develop and host 6 educational seminars (2 per annum) for business people, along with networking events in the region

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

In this period Údarás na Gaeltachta hosted two seminars as follows: Q3, 2015 'Horizon 20:20, Deiseanna do Chuideachtaí' and Q1, 2016 'Pobal na Gaeilge sa Ré Digiteach'. At this event, representatives from Irish language bodies from various sectors including education, television and radio, publishing and internet outlined their vision for a future shaped by Virtual Reality and E-Technology. Further events are being planned for Q4, 2016. Both were one day events and were open to all.

**Action 176**

Hold a Regional Business Roadshow on topics of relevance to business. Ibec will also host a Regional Business Summit for Ibec members.

**Update: Complete**

A Regional Roadshow Series took place on 26th May 2016 in Galway on the topic of innovation, the importance of prioritising innovation and how businesses can avail of funding available and collaborate with HEIs in the region. The event was open to all businesses and stakeholder organisations in the West region. Ibec will also host a Regional Business Summit for Ibec members in Q4 2016.

**Action 177**

Continue to host HR forums through Ibec's regional offices for Ibec members

**Update: Complete**

HR forums have been taking place in this period on a quarterly basis in Galway, and have been open to Ibec members in the West. 80+ businesses have attended.

**Action 180**

Explore areas of collaboration and mentoring through existing networks, and the development of communications of current training supports available in manufacturing

**Update: Ongoing**

Ibec are currently working on the development of communications of the current training supports that are available in the manufacturing sector. An Irish Manufacturing Conference on 23 June 2016 looked at what the future will entail for manufacturing and the critical trends for the sector. The Irish Manufacturing Association (IMA) was established by Ibec earlier this year. The (IMA) is an umbrella association drawing from Ibec's Food and Drink, Pharmaceutical, Medical Technology, ICT, Software, Plastics and Engineering sectors to engage with industry and government to ensure the manufacturing sector reaches its full potential. IMDA Skillnet delivers over 100 programmes each year mostly to support Medical Technology Manufacturing companies. Targets of over 1,100 trainees and 5,800 training days were delivered to the sector in 2015.

**Action 181:** Hold extensive training programmes covering a range of sectors through Skillnets and Springboard

**Status: Ongoing**

**Progress Update:**

Training programmes are being provided across a range of industry sectors. In 2015 7 Ibec

networks— ISA Software Skillnet, ICT Ireland Skillnet, First Polymer Skillnet, IMDA Skillnet, Food & Drink Industry Irl. Skillnet, Summit Finuas Skillnet, and Ibec Retail Skillnet— delivered over 500 training programmes (or 75,000 training days) and trained 4,800 trainees from 653 sector specific companies. In addition, the networks carried out national skills surveys, developed a new masters' programme, developed models to benchmark the industry, and trained the unemployed.

To meet the skills shortages for Quality Engineers in the medical technology sector, the IMDA Springboard trained 60 unemployed engineers in a Certificate in Quality Engineering at Level 8 and converts 82% to employment on a yearly basis. Plastics Ireland Springboard addressed the skills shortages of polymer processing skills at engineering and technician level in the plastics processing and medical technology sector by converting 20 jobseekers into employment in the industry in 2015. Financial Services Ireland is planning to launch 3 new International Financial Services apprenticeship programmes in September.

## MARKETING AND STRENGTHENING THE REGION

### MARKETING THE REGION

**Action 182:** The Western Development Commission will continue to develop the LookWest.ie online guide to business, work and life in the West of Ireland, and the LookWest.ie campaign to promote the unique regional brand

**Status:** Ongoing

#### Progress Update:

LookWest.ie has seen significant year on year traffic increase for regional promotion, positioning the western region of Ireland as a leading global region characterised by a dynamic draw for enterprise, activity and creativity. LookWest.ie bi-monthly eZine feature 'Let's Live in County Roscommon' highlighted the positives of living in the county. The Let's Live in Roscommon feature was hugely popular generating exceptional activity and engagement online. Interactions and activity includes:

- 70% Website traffic increase year on year (9,535 vs 5,593 in April 2015)
- Finalists in the 2016 Social Media Awards in the 'Best Use of Social Media by a State Body' category
- Bi-monthly e-Zine circulated in April to 5,867 subscribers, opened by 24.6% of subscribers
- All social media channels (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram) have seen increases in activity

**Action 183:** While maintaining a whole-of-region approach to enterprise support and job creation, the local authorities will continue to develop branding initiatives that promote their unique selling points such as:- The Portershed in Galway City; - Galway City as Medtech City; - Mayo.ie; - Made in Galway; Invest Roscommon.

**Status:** Ongoing

#### Progress Update:

Launched in May 2015, Mayo.ie is a portal for 3.5 million people globally who claim Mayo heritage and support Mayo.ie's vision for the county. Consisting of three clear pillars 'Visit, Connect & Invest' the site represents the principal county brand and marketing tool. The Invest section promotes the economic proposition in Mayo and markets opportunities for local growth and international investment.

A branding initiative is currently underway by Roscommon County Council, with marketing initiative materials currently being produced. 'Taste of Roscommon' was launched at Meet West 2015; a database of local food producers has been updated, and Roscommon LEO is working to establish a food network in the county.

Galway County Council continues to implement the Made in Galway initiative. Events are being held in conjunction with Festivals in 2016 (See updates for actions 112, 118). Promotional activities are also being undertaken.

**Action 184:** The Western Development Commission will continue to conduct regional analysis to identify regional policy issues and infrastructure priorities and design solutions to these issues/priorities

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Regular submissions, WDC insights and analysis are available on [www.wdc.ie](http://www.wdc.ie).

#### **WDC Insights: Impact of Sectors on Western Region's Jobs Recovery**

A new WDC Insights publication 'Impact of Sectors on Western Region's Jobs Recovery' was published on 19 May. The document is available on the WDC website (<http://www.wdc.ie/publications/reports-and-papers/>), and a Media Release was issued.

This WDC Insights examines the role of sectors in recent jobs trends. Its key findings are:

- Less job diversity with greater concentration of employment in a few sectors
- Higher employment in traditional sectors and public services but lower in knowledge and locally traded services
- Jobs decline in market services sectors in the region compared with growth in the rest of the state (2012-2015)

The analysis shows that slower jobs recovery in the Western Region is mainly due to contraction in market services sectors, in contrast with growth elsewhere. In every year since 2011, the numbers working in the Western Region in both Knowledge Services and in Administration and Other Services has declined. This was during a time of recovery nationally. While the region's strong manufacturing base and Public Services employment have compensated to some extent, it has not been enough to allow the region to enjoy a similar rate of jobs recovery as elsewhere. Optimising growth across all sectors, and addressing challenges in the market services sectors in particular, will be required for a healthier and more resilient regional labour market.

#### **County Incomes and regional GDP**

County income and regional GDP data for 2013 and preliminary statistics for 2014 were released in February. Analysis of the regional GDP data has commenced with a focus on the overall GVA trends for the regions and on the importance of the main sectors contribution to GVA nationally and in each region. The focus of this analysis has been on the 2013 data.

**Action 185:** Údarás na Gaeltachta will provide support and resourcing to community cooperatives to implement a programme for economic, social, linguistic and cultural development in the region

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

14 organisations are currently being financially supported to undertake a programme of activities to assist with regional and rural development. Each co-operative organisation is responsible for designing its own programme of activities while addressing specific economic, social, linguistic and cultural needs of their respective areas.

## STRENGTHENING THE REGION

**Action 186:** Secure resources through LEADER/REDZ/FLAG/Public Enhancement Schemes to invest in Towns and Villages to make them attractive retail and commercial destinations

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Roscommon County Council secured €75,000 funding towards the Town Teams initiative under the Rural Economic Development Zones (REDZ) scheme whereby 6 town teams have been established in Co. Roscommon. These teams are umbrella bodies with representatives from business, community and social inclusion groups within the town. Their remit is to enhance the quality of their town's environment, strengthen the viability of local businesses and generate thriving town centres. Roscommon County Council has allocated a budget of €100,000 per annum to facilitate the development of local Town Team initiatives. Branding for each town is under consideration for completion by H1 2017.

Galway County Local Development Company submitted a bid Local Development Strategy to implement the LEADER programme in County Galway in February 2016. Through the REDZ pilot phase which is close to completion Galway County Council are continuing to promote investment in Towns and Villages.

REDZ funding has been secured in Mayo for a number of projects across the County:

- New Activity Services Centre at Mulranny
- Peer review & Military Barracks Conservation, Castlebar
- Swinford Courthouse refurbishment

Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM) have received applications from 10 groups in 7 areas to act as Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGs). It is expected that the selection of successful applications will be completed by mid-July 2016. Consultants have been appointed by BIM to support the successful groups to draw up their local Strategies. The strategies for the groups will be drawn up over a number of months in 2016 (H2)

**Action 187:** The Northern and Western Regional Assembly will engage in the process of establishing Regional Economic Fora for the West Region

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

The Regional Assembly is currently consulting with the Department of the Environment and Local Government (DECLG) to determine what mechanism will be used to progress this action.

**Action 188:** The Northern and Western Regional Assembly will develop a Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) which will have a co-ordinated focus on identifying and driving sectors that can deliver new investment and employment opportunities in the West region

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Progress on the preparation of the RSES has commenced. The Assembly is working with the DECLG and the ESRI in the preparation of background spatial data and also has commenced work with the Local Authority in identifying suitable land banks at Local Authority level. The Department of the Environment and Local Government are arranging public consultation meetings on the National Planning framework and Regional consultations in relation to the RSES process are commencing in July 2016. The Assembly has also agreed a protocol of the establishment of Strategic Policy Committees at assembly level and these will commence work in July 2016.

**Action 189:** Working with the Regional Airports, the Northern and Western Regional Assembly will undertake work across a range of areas to enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of these airports funded by the EU's SPARA2020 Project (Smart Peripheral and Remote Airports)

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

The SPARA project, within which the NWRA are a partner, commenced in mid 2015. To date there has been good progress with the 2 Regional Airports, who are associate partners of the project; Ireland West Airport Knock and Donegal Airport. The first project was carried out in November 2015; this was a Services Audit of Ireland West Knock Airport's Parking Facilities to Enhance Future Capacity. Following the audit a number of proposals were presented which could be incorporated into Ireland West Knock Airport's car parking system to achieve greater efficiencies. Presently ongoing is an Audit of the Non-Aeronautical Services of Donegal and Knock Airports, which will facilitate the proposal of a number of short and long term measures which will enhance the Non-Aeronautical Services within the airports, which are key to regional airports sustainability. A pilot project will be run within each Regional Airport on the short term solutions and these will commence by the end of 2016.

**Action 190:** Údarás na Gaeltachta will upgrade the broadband infrastructure to its business parks by investing in fibre optic

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Údarás na Gaeltachta is currently in consultation with the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources seeking permission to invest in fibre optic across its business parks. A deregulation from the EU may be necessary.

**Action 191:** Ensure that the electricity transmission grid in the West is strengthened to enable maximum investment by industries that rely on large energy consumption

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Existing Network: EirGrid are carrying out ongoing grid strengthening initiatives in the area. This includes, where required, the upgrade and refurbishment of the existing transmission network, including both line and station improvements. These ongoing works will ensure that the region has a secure and reliable supply of electricity in order to maximise the potential for investment in the region.

Grid West: The Grid West project is being developed to connect renewable energy generation in North West Mayo to the national electricity grid. Following a recent decision by An Bord Pleanála relating to Owenwinny wind farm, EirGrid are assessing the decision and the impact on the requirement to develop the Grid in the West.

**Action 192:** The Northern and Western Regional Assembly will continue to explore possibilities for EU funding for relevant projects in the region. The Assembly also act as the national contact point for three EU Interreg Programmes for the 2014-2020 period: Northern Periphery and Arctic (€56m), Atlantic Area (€140m), and Interreg Europe (€359m; jointly with the Southern Assembly).

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

The Northern and Western Regional Assembly has overseen three calls for proposals under the Interreg Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme since 2014. Twenty Five Projects have been approved to date across the Programme Area, of which 16 involve some 25 Irish partners. In total 48% of the Programme Budget has been allocated to date. A fourth call for projects opened on May 1st and closes on Sept 30th 2016. In the case of the Atlantic Area Programme, the Opening call for projects for Expressions of Interest (EOI) commenced on April 26th 2016 and closed on May 31st 2016.

A total of 425 EOI applications were received by the deadline of May 31st. Of the 425 applications submitted to the call, 149 applications are positioned within the Innovation and Competitiveness priority supporting SME development and innovation capacity building.

In the case of the INTERREG Europe Programme, a total of nine Irish projects were part of the total approved projects.

**Action 194:** The Northern and Western Regional Assembly will continue to lead the implementation of the €320 million Border, Midland and Western Regional Operational Programme 2014-2020 in collaboration with relevant public bodies

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

All measures in the BMW Regional Operational Programme 2014 - 2020 have commenced apart from the National Broadband Scheme, where the National Broadband Steering Committee is finalising the procurement process for the roll out of the National Broadband Plan. The second monitoring Committee meeting of the BMW OP took place on the 12th May, 2016 and progress was reported on all measures in the Operational Programme. Cumulative public eligible



expenditure to end December 2015 is reported as €12.943 million and 12.45% of the overall allocation to the priority. The priority comprises of 2 investment priorities (1a and 1b) and includes the following schemes:

**SFI Research Centres Programme** - Five awards were made under the Research Centre programme with an SFI award value of €122m.

**SFI Spokes Programme** - Ten awards were made under the Spokes Programme with an SFI award value of €17,365m.

**SFI Investigators Programmes** - Six awards were made under the Investigator Programme based in the Northern and Western region.

**Marine Research Programme** -To date no expenditure or achievements have been reported because the Intermediate Body has not entered into any contractual commitments for co-funding under this programme. In addition, the Intermediate Body is considering changing the activities under the priority which might lead to a programme modification. These changes will be discussed between the Intermediate Body and the Managing Authority during the course of 2016.

**EI Commercialisation Fund** - In 2014, 12 applications for Commercial Case Feasibility support from BMW institutions were received and 11 projects were funded. Twenty-four applications for CF support were submitted to the 2014 programme of which 9 projects were funded. In 2015, 14 applications for Commercial Case Feasibility Support from BMW institutions were received and 11 applications were funded.

**EI Innovation Partnerships Programme** - In 2014, 11 projects were approved under the Innovation Partnerships Programme and 18 were approved in 2015.

**EI Industry R&D Fund** - There were 5 enterprises receiving R&D supports in 2015.