

Enterprise Forum meeting

Microsoft Teams

22nd February 2022

1. Introductory remarks

- The members of the Enterprise Forum were welcomed to the discussion.
- The importance of the group was discussed and members of the forum were given the opportunity to consider the Terms of Reference of the group. Members of the group are to revert with feedback on the Terms of Reference for the group.

Climate Action Plan 2021 and enterprise and discussion

- The importance of the Climate Action agenda to this government and the Department, now and going forward, was outlined
- A presentation on the Climate Action Plan 2021 and Enterprise was given, which included an outline of:
 - Irelands current climate ambitions.
 - The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (amendment) Act;
 - Carbon Budget development.
 - The Department's approach to addressing carbon emissions in the Enterprise Sector;
 - The National Recovery and Resilience Fund.
 - The Climate Action Plan 2021;
 - The Enterprise sector in the Plan,
 - The measures to reduce emissions as outlined in the Plan.
- A presentation on the Climate Toolkit 4 Business was delivered.
- Members of the forum commended the work undertaken to develop the Climate Toolkit for Business. Members agreed their clients find the climate agenda important but noted that there is no impetus to act in the absence of correct balance of regulation and support programmes.
- DETE received a query on when the food industry should expect engagement and it was noted that engagement will occur through the Department's enterprise development agencies.
- The Forum was informed that Financial Services Ireland are undertaking significant work in the area of sustainable finance, including working with Skillnet on training for compliance officers.
- Chambers Ireland are committed to delivering on the Climate Agenda. To date, Chambers have noticed a low use of carbon calculators. Chambers suggested the need for a carrot and stick approach.

- Members called for increased investment in the climate agenda and suggested there is the possibility to use taxation measures to incentivise the use of lower carbon products and technologies.

2. Brexit updates and discussion

- An update was given on Brexit, making note of trading patterns between NI and Ireland and noting engagement on the NI protocol is still ongoing. It was recognised the impact that Brexit has had on Irish enterprises and highlighted that there are many positives that have emerged in recent times and complimented the work of members of the Forum in assisting enterprises through Brexit.
- It was observed that there is a high uptake of Brexit related training programmes however members of the forum agreed that, unless you are a food enterprise, the threat of Brexit highly impacting your enterprise has reduced. The impact of current supply chain issues was raised.
- IBEC said that Brexit has fallen down the list of main challenges at the moment. It was noted that given the changes in legislation in the UK, there could be a later assembly formation. IBEC pointed out that this is the time for the EU to begin the process of fostering strong EU/UK relationships.
- IBEC highlighted that Brexit reality is coming to the fore for a lot of food enterprises in the form of decreased IE and UK ferry routes, increased delays and higher uptake in continuous training. Changes in labelling in the UK and divergences between the EU in grocery and food supply chain in labelling will prove difficult for food enterprises going forward.
- DETE responded agreeing that Brexit is not over for food enterprises and that DETE will have continuous engagement with the Department of Agriculture.

3. COVID updates and discussion

- An update was provided to the group on the current situation with regard to Covid. The Government has taken the first step to us living with COVID.
- Members were informed that there would be no vaccine mandate in Ireland, encouragement and education has been the approach taken by Government and will continue to be so.
- Members commented that it was good to hear good news with regard to COVID and it will be welcome news by businesses. Businesses and individuals will welcome further easing of restrictions in Ireland and will be hopeful that other EU countries will follow suit when safe to do so.
- It was noted that as Ireland begins to live with COVID, supply issues are becoming increasingly pertinent, supply chain issues are impacting production lines. He further commented that there has been a shift to airfreight as supply issues continue and ports remain closed with ships docked as a result of COVID in other countries.
- This good news was welcomed and noted that changes in regulation could result in an increase of employees returning to the office.

- It was agreed that further relaxation of rules will be welcomed by enterprises.

4. EU presidency priorities and discussion (15 mins)

- The EU Presidency priorities were presented to the Forum. This presentation outlined that the overview of the French Presidency is focusing on strengthening Europe, ensuring a Humane Europe and driving the new European model for growth.
- The European Union aims to become a sustainable producer, ensuring goods produced in the EU are done so in line with our climate and sustainability objectives.
- The French Presidency has frontloaded the majority of their brief in the first 3 months with a focus on Digital, Climate change and Trade.
- Members of the forum welcomed the update.

5. AOB

- It was noted that inflation is the number 2 item on their lists and Energy costs. Noting increased costs of electricity in recent months.
- Labour is becoming an increasingly prominent issue. If you are employing people remotely, then companies are employing outside of Ireland. Visas for non-EU members are very important. Right to request remote working – there is a reluctance by some to come into the office.
- It was noted that Housing is impacting on Irish enterprise competitiveness and there were growing concerns over the geopolitical tensions arising in the Ukraine and fears for its impact, particularly on supply chains.
- The meeting concluded, noting: the group is very useful. Members were thanked and informed that the Department is pressing forward with a number of items.

Attendees:

Name	Organisation
Tánaiste Leo Varadkar T.D.	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
Minister Robert Troy, T.D.	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
Matt Lynch, Advisor	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
Sarah O'Neill, Advisor	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
Dr. Orlaigh Quinn, Sec Gen (Chair)	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
David Hegarty, ESCED	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
Ronnie Downes, Trade Division	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
Pauline Mulligan, IEED	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
Declan Hughes, IID	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
John Dooley, EU & single Market	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
Anne Coleman Dunne	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
Marie Bourke	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
Sandra Coleman	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
Andrew Moloney	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
Joseph Cummins	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
Aisling McCarthy	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
Leo Clancy	Enterprise Ireland
Martin Shanahan	IDA Ireland
Danny McCoy	IBEC
Pat Ivory	IBEC
Neil Willoughby	IBEC
Aisling McNiffe	IBEC
Elizabeth Bowen	IBEC
Arnold Dillon	Retail Ireland (IBEC)
Sven Spollen-Behrens	Small Firms Association (IBEC)
Neil McDonnell	Irish Small Medium Enterprises
Regina O'Connor	Irish Small Medium Enterprises
Duncan Graham	Irish Small Medium Enterprises
Simon McKeever	Irish Exporters Association
Mathilde Lafranque	Irish Exporters Association
Ian Talbot	Chambers Ireland

Apologies:

Oliver O'Connor	Irish Pharmaceutical Healthcare Association
Tara Buckley	RGDATA